

religion

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Detail of *Religion*, a mural in lunette from the Family and Education series by Charles ...

human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, absolute, spiritual, divine, or worthy of especial reverence. It is also commonly regarded as consisting of the way people deal with ultimate concerns about their lives and their fate after death. In many traditions, this relation and these concerns are expressed in terms of one's relationship with or attitude toward gods or spirits; in more humanistic or naturalistic forms of religion, they are expressed in terms of one's relationship with or attitudes toward the broader human community or the natural world. In many religions, texts are deemed to have scriptural status, and people

are esteemed to be invested with spiritual or moral authority. Believers and worshipers participate in and are often enjoined to perform devotional or contemplative practices such as prayer, meditation, or particular rituals. Worship, moral conduct, right belief, and participation in religious institutions are among the constituent elements of the religious life.

The subject of religion is discussed in a number of articles. For treatment of major and historical religious traditions, *see* African religion; Anatolian religion; ancient Iranian religion; Arabian religion; Baltic religion; Buddhism; Calvinism; Celtic religion; Christianity; Confucianism; Daoism; Eastern Orthodoxy; Eastern rite church; Egyptian religion; Finno-Ugric religion; Germanic religion and mythology; Greek religion; Hellenistic religion; Hinduism; Islam; Jainism; Judaism; Mesopotamian religion; Middle Eastern religion; Mormon; mystery religion; Native American religions; Neo-Paganism; new religious movement; Old Catholic church; Orphic religion; prehistoric religion; Protestantism; Protestant Heritage, The; Roman Catholicism; Roman religion; Shintō; Sikhism; Slavic religion; Syrian and Palestinian religion; Vedic religion; Wicca; Zoroastrianism. For discussion of perspectives on the existence or role within human life of a supreme God or gods, *see* agnosticism; atheism; humanism; monotheism; pantheism; polytheism; theism. For cross-cultural discussion of religious beliefs, phenomena, and practices, *see* angel and demon; ceremonial object; covenant; creed; death rite; dietary law; doctrine and dogma; dualism, religious; eschatology; ethics; evil, problem of; feast; Five Ways, the; heaven; hell; Last Judgment; meditation; millennialism; miracle; monasticism; Moon worship; mysticism; myth; nature worship; prayer; priest; priesthood; prophecy; Providence; purgatory; purification rite; reincarnation; religious dress; religious symbolism and iconography; rite of passage; ritual; sacrament; sacrifice; sacred; sacred kingship; saint; salvation; scripture; shamanism; sin; soul; Sun worship; theology; worship. For a review of the efforts to systematically study the nature and classify the forms of religious behaviour, experience, and phenomena, *see* religion, phenomenology of; religion, philosophy of; religion, study of; religions, classification of; religious experience.

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Buddha

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Introduction

Sanskrit “awakened one” clan name (*Sanskrit*) *Gautama* or (*Pali*) *Gotama*, personal name (*Sanskrit*) *Siddhartha* or (*Pali*) *Siddhatta*

born c. 6th-4th century BCE, Lumbini, near Kapilavastu, Shakya republic, Kosala kingdom [now in Nepal]

died, Kusinara, Malla republic, Magadha kingdom [now Kasia, India]

the founder of Buddhism, one of the major religions and philosophical systems of southern and eastern Asia. *Buddha* is one of the many epithets of a teacher who lived in northern India sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries before the Common Era.

His followers, known as Buddhists, propagated the religion that is known today as Buddhism. The title *buddha* was used by a number of religious groups in ancient India and had a range of meanings, but it came to be associated most strongly with the tradition of Buddhism and to mean an enlightened being, one who has awakened from the sleep of ignorance and achieved freedom from suffering. According to the various traditions of Buddhism, there have been buddhas in the past and there will be buddhas in the future. Some forms of Buddhism hold that there is only one buddha for each historical age; others hold that all beings will eventually become buddhas because they possess the buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*).

All forms of Buddhism celebrate various events in the life of the Buddha Gautama, including his birth, enlightenment, and passage into nirvana. In some countries, where the older and more conservative Theravada tradition predominates, the three events are observed on the same day, which is called Wesak. In regions adhering to the other major form of Buddhism, the Mahayana tradition, the festivals are held on different days and incorporate a variety of rituals and practices. The birth of the Buddha is celebrated in April or May, depending upon the lunar date, in these countries. In Japan, which does not use a lunar calendar, the Buddha's birth is celebrated on April 8. The celebration there has merged with a native Shintō ceremony into the flower festival known as Hanamatsuri.

General considerations

The clan name of the historical figure referred to as the Buddha (whose life is known largely through legend) was Gautama (in *Sanskrit*) or Gotama (in *Pali*), and his given name was Siddhartha (*Sanskrit*: “he who achieves his aim”) or Siddhatta (in *Pali*). He is frequently called Shakyamuni, “the sage of the Shakya clan.” In Buddhist texts, he is most commonly addressed as Bhagavat (often translated as “Lord”), and he refers to himself as the Tathagata, which can mean both “one who has thus come” and “one who has thus gone.” Information about his life derives largely from Buddhist texts, the earliest of which were not committed to writing until shortly before the beginning of the Common Era, several centuries after his death. The events of his life set forth in these texts cannot be regarded with confidence as historical, although his historical existence is accepted by scholars. He is said to have lived for 80 years, but there is

considerable uncertainty concerning the date of his death. Traditional sources on the date of his death or, in the language of the tradition, “passage into nirvana,” range from 2420 BCE to 290 BCE. Scholarship in the 20th century limited this range considerably, with opinion generally divided between those who place his death about 480 BCE and those who place it as much as a century later.

Historical context

The Buddha was born in Lumbini (Rummin-dei), near Kapilavastu (Kapilbastu) on the northern edge of the Ganges River basin, an area on the periphery of the civilization of North India, in what is today southern Nepal. Scholars speculate that during the late Vedic period the peoples of the region were organized into tribal republics, ruled by a council of elders or an elected leader; the grand palaces described in the traditional accounts of the life of the Buddha are not evident among the archaeological remains. It is unclear to what extent these groups at the periphery of the social order of the Ganges basin were incorporated into the caste system, but the Buddha's family is said to have belonged to the warrior (Kshatriya) caste. The central Ganges basin was organized into some 16 city-states, ruled by kings, often at war with each other.

The rise of these cities of central India, with their courts and their commerce, brought social, political, and economic changes that are often identified as key factors in the rise of Buddhism and other religious movements of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE. Buddhist texts identify a variety of itinerant teachers who attracted groups of disciples. Some of these taught forms of meditation, Yoga, and asceticism and set forth philosophical views, focusing often on the nature of the person and the question of whether human actions (karma) have future effects. Although the Buddha would become one of these teachers, Buddhists view him as quite different from the others. His place within the tradition, therefore, cannot be understood by focusing exclusively on the events of his life and times (even to the extent that they are available). Instead, he must be viewed within the context of Buddhist theories of time and history.

According to Buddhist doctrine, the universe is the product of karma, the law of the cause and effect of actions, according to which virtuous actions create pleasure in the future and nonvirtuous actions create pain. The beings of the universe are reborn without beginning in six realms: as gods, demigods, humans, animals, ghosts, and hell beings. The actions of these beings create not only their individual experiences but the domains in which they dwell. The cycle of rebirth, called *samsara* (literally “wandering”), is regarded as a domain of suffering, and the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice is to escape from that suffering. The means of escape remains unknown until, over the course of millions of lifetimes, a person perfects himself, ultimately gaining the power to discover the path out of *samsara* and then compassionately revealing that path to the world.

A person who has set out on the long journey to discover the path to freedom from suffering, and then to teach it to others, is called a bodhisattva. A person who has discovered that path, followed it to its end, and taught it to the world, is called a buddha. Buddhas are not reborn after they die but enter a state beyond suffering called nirvana (literally “passing away”). Because buddhas appear so rarely over the course of time and because only they reveal the path to liberation (*moksha*) from suffering (*dukkha*), the appearance of a buddha in the world is considered a

momentous event in the history of the universe.

The story of a particular buddha begins before his birth and extends beyond his death. It encompasses the millions of lives spent on the bodhisattva path before the achievement of buddhahood and the persistence of the buddha, in the form of both his teachings and his relics, after he has passed into nirvana. The historical Buddha is regarded as neither the first nor the last buddha to appear in the world. According to some traditions he is the 7th buddha; according to another he is the 25th; according to yet another he is the 4th. The next buddha, named Maitreya, will appear after Shakyamuni's teachings and relics have disappeared from the world. The traditional accounts of the events in the life of the Buddha must be considered from this perspective.

Sources of the life of the Buddha

Accounts of the life of the Buddha appear in many forms. Perhaps the earliest are those found in the collections of sutras, discourses traditionally attributed to the Buddha. In the sutras, the Buddha recounts individual events in his life that occurred from the time that he renounced his life as a prince until he achieved enlightenment six years later. Several accounts of his enlightenment also appear in the sutras. One text, the *Mahaparinirvana-sutra* ("Discourse on the Final Nirvana"), describes the Buddha's last days, his passage into nirvana, his funeral, and the distribution of his relics. Biographical accounts in the early sutras provide little detail about the Buddha's birth and childhood, although some sutras contain a detailed account of the life of a prehistoric buddha, Vipashyin.

Another category of early Buddhist literature, the *vinaya* (concerned ostensibly with the rules of monastic discipline), contains accounts of numerous incidents from the Buddha's life but rarely in the form of a continuous narrative; biographical sections that do occur often conclude with the conversion of one of his early disciples, Shariputra. While the sutras focus on the person of the Buddha (his previous lives, his practice of austerities, his enlightenment, and his passage into nirvana), the *vinaya* literature tends to emphasize his career as a teacher and the conversion of his early disciples. The sutras and *vinaya* texts, thus, reflect concerns with both the Buddha's life and his teachings, concerns that often are interdependent; early biographical accounts appear in doctrinal discourses, and points of doctrine and places of pilgrimage are legitimated through their connection to the life of the Buddha.

Near the beginning of the Common Era, independent accounts of the life of the Buddha were composed. They do not recount his life from birth to death, often ending with his triumphant return to his native city of Kapilavastu (Pali: Kapilavatthu), which is said to have taken place either one year or six years after his enlightenment. The partial biographies add stories that were to become well-known, such as the child prince's meditation under a rose-apple tree and his four momentous chariot rides outside the city.

These accounts typically make frequent reference to events from the previous lives of the Buddha. Indeed, collections of stories of the Buddha's past lives, called *Jatakas*, form one of the early categories of Buddhist literature. Here, an event reminds the Buddha of an event in a past life. He relates that story in order to illustrate a moral maxim, and, returning to the present, he identifies various members of his audience as the present incarnations of characters in his past-life tale, with himself as the main character.

The *Jataka* stories (one Pali collection contains 547 of them) have remained among the most popular forms of Buddhist literature. They are the source of some 32 stone carvings at the 2nd-century BCE stupa at Bharhut in northeastern Madhya Pradesh state; 15 stupa carvings depict the last life of the Buddha. Indeed, stone carvings in India provide an important source for identifying which events in the lives of the Buddha were considered most important by the community. The *Jataka* stories are also well-known beyond India; in Southeast Asia, the story of Prince Vessantara (the Buddha's penultimate reincarnation)—who demonstrates his dedication to the virtue of charity by giving away his sacred elephant, his children, and finally his wife—is as well-known as that of his last lifetime.

Lives of the Buddha that trace events from his birth to his death appeared in the 2nd century CE. One of the most famous is the Sanskrit poem *Buddhacharita* (“Acts of the Buddha”) by Ashvaghosa. Texts such as the *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya* (probably dating from the 4th or 5th century CE) attempt to gather the many stories of the Buddha into a single chronological account. The purpose of these biographies in many cases is less to detail the unique deeds of Shakyamuni's life than to demonstrate the ways in which the events of his life conform to a pattern that all buddhas of the past have followed. According to some, all past buddhas had left the life of the householder after observing the four sights, all had practiced austerities, all had achieved enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, all had preached in the deer park at Sarnath, and so on.

The life of the Buddha was written and rewritten in India and across the Buddhist world, elements added and subtracted as necessary. Sites that became important pilgrimage places but that had not been mentioned in previous accounts would be retrospectively sanctified by the addition of a story about the Buddha's presence there. Regions that Buddhism entered long after his death—such as Sri Lanka, Kashmir, and Burma (now Myanmar)—added narratives of his magical visitations to accounts of his life.

No single version of the life of the Buddha would be accepted by all Buddhist traditions. For more than a century, scholars have focused on the life of the Buddha, with the earliest investigations attempting to isolate and identify historical elements amid the many legends. Because of the centuries that had passed between the actual life and the composition of what might be termed a full biography, most scholars abandoned this line of inquiry as unfruitful. Instead they began to study the processes—social, political, institutional, and doctrinal—responsible for the regional differences among the narratives of the Buddha. The various uses made of the life of the Buddha are another topic of interest. In short, the efforts of scholars have shifted from an attempt to derive authentic information about the life of the Buddha to an effort to trace stages in and the motivations for the development of his biography.

It is important to reiterate that the motivation to create a single life of the Buddha, beginning with his previous births and ending with his passage into nirvana, occurred rather late in the history of Buddhism. Instead, the biographical tradition of the Buddha developed through the synthesis of a number of earlier and independent fragments. And biographies of the Buddha have continued to be composed over the centuries and around the world. During the modern period, for example, biographies have been written that seek to demythologize the Buddha and to emphasize his role in presaging modern ethical systems, social movements, or scientific discoveries. What follows is an account of the life of the Buddha that is well-known, yet synthetic, bringing together some of the more famous events from various accounts of his life, which often describe and interpret these events differently.

Previous lives

Many biographies of the Buddha begin not with his birth in his last lifetime but in a lifetime millions of years before, when he first made the vow to become a buddha. According to a well-known version, many aeons ago there lived a Brahman named (in some accounts) Sumedha, who realized that life is characterized by suffering and then set out to find a state beyond death. He retired to the mountains, where he became a hermit, practiced meditation, and gained yogic powers. While flying through the air one day, he noticed a great crowd around a teacher, whom Sumedha learned was the buddha Dipamkara. When he heard the word *buddha* he was overcome with joy. Upon Dipamkara's approach, Sumedha loosened his yogin's matted locks and laid himself down to make a passage across the mud for the Buddha. Sumedha reflected that were he to practice the teachings of Dipamkara he could free himself from future rebirth in that very lifetime. But he concluded that it would be better to delay his liberation in order to traverse the longer path to buddhahood; as a buddha he could lead others across the ocean of suffering to the farther shore. Dipamkara paused before Sumedha and predicted that many aeons hence this yogin with matted locks would become a buddha. He also prophesied Sumedha's name in his last lifetime (Gautama) and the names of his parents and chief disciples and described the tree under which the future Buddha would sit on the night of his enlightenment.

Over the subsequent aeons, the bodhisattva would renew his vow in the presence of each of the buddhas who came after Dipamkara, before becoming the buddha Shakyamuni himself. Over the course of his lifetimes as a bodhisattva, he accumulated merit (*punya*) through the practice of 6 (or 10) virtues. After his death as Prince Vessantara, he was born in the Tusita Heaven, whence he surveyed the world to locate the proper site of his final birth.

Birth and early life



Dream of Maya presaging the Buddha's birth, marble relief from Nagarjunikonda, Andhra Pradesh ...

He determined that he should be born the son of the king Shuddhodana of the Shakya clan, whose capital was Kapilavastu. Shortly thereafter, his mother, the queen Maha Maya, dreamed that a white elephant had entered her womb. Ten lunar months later, as she strolled in the garden of Lumbini, the child emerged from under her right arm. He was able to walk and talk immediately. A lotus flower blossomed under his foot at each step, and he announced that this would be his last lifetime. The king summoned the court astrologers to predict the boy's future. Seven agreed that he would become either a universal monarch (*chakravartin*) or a buddha; one astrologer said that there was no doubt, the child would become a buddha. His mother died seven days after his birth, and so he was reared by his mother's sister,

Mahaprajapati. As a young child, the prince was once left unattended during a festival. Later in the day he was discovered seated in meditation under a tree, whose shadow had remained motionless throughout the day to protect him from the sun.

The prince enjoyed an opulent life; his father shielded him from exposure to the ills of the world, including old age, sickness, and death, and provided him with palaces for summer, winter, and the rainy season, as well as all manner of enjoyments (including in some accounts 40,000 female attendants). At age 16 he married the

beautiful princess Yashodhara. When the prince was 29, however, his life underwent a profound change. He asked to be taken on a ride through the city in his chariot. The king gave his permission but first had all the sick and old people removed from the route. One old man escaped notice. Not knowing what stood before him, the prince was told that this was an old man. He was informed, also, that this was not the only old man in the world; everyone—the prince, his father, his wife, and his kinsmen—would all one day grow old. The first trip was followed by three more excursions beyond the palace walls. On these trips he saw first a sick person, then a corpse being carried to the cremation ground, and finally a mendicant seated in meditation beneath a tree. Having been exposed to the various ills of human life, and the existence of those who seek a state beyond them, he asked the king for permission to leave the city and retire to the forest. The father offered his son anything if he would stay. The prince asked that his father ensure that he would never die, become ill, grow old, or lose his fortune. His father replied that he could not. The prince retired to his chambers, where he was entertained by beautiful women. Unmoved by the women, the prince resolved to go forth that night in search of a state beyond birth and death.

When he had been informed seven days earlier that his wife had given birth to a son, he said, “A fetter has arisen.” The child was named Rahula, meaning “fetter.” Before the prince left the palace, he went into his wife’s chamber to look upon his sleeping wife and infant son. In another version of the story, Rahula had not yet been born on the night of the departure from the palace. Instead, the prince’s final act was to conceive his son, whose gestation period extended over the six years of his father’s search for enlightenment. According to these sources, Rahula was born on the night that his father achieved buddhahood.

The prince left Kapilavastu and the royal life behind and entered the forest, where he cut off his hair and exchanged his royal robes for the simple dress of a hunter. From that point on he ate whatever was placed in his begging bowl. Early in his wanderings he encountered Bimbisara, the king of Magadha and eventual patron of the Buddha, who, upon learning that the ascetic was a prince, asked him to share his kingdom. The prince declined but agreed to return when he had achieved enlightenment. Over the next six years, the prince studied meditation and learned to achieve deep states of blissful concentration. But he quickly matched the attainments of his teachers and concluded that despite their achievements, they would be reborn after their death. He next joined a group of five ascetics who had devoted themselves to the practice of extreme forms of self-mortification. The prince also became adept at their practices, eventually reducing his daily meal to one pea. Buddhist art often represents him seated in the meditative posture in an emaciated form, with sunken eyes and protruding ribs. He concluded that mortification of the flesh is not the path to liberation from suffering and rebirth and accepted a dish of rice and cream from a young woman.

The enlightenment

His companions remained convinced of the efficacy of asceticism and abandoned the prince. Now without companions or a teacher, the prince vowed that he would sit under a tree and not rise until he had found the state beyond birth and death. On the full moon of May, six years after he had left his palace, he meditated until dawn. Mara, the god of desire, who knew that the prince was seeking to put an end to desire and thereby free himself from Mara’s control, attacked him with wind, rain, rocks,

weapons, hot coals, burning ashes, sand, mud, and darkness. The prince remained unmoved and meditated on love, thus transforming the hail of fury into a shower of blossoms. Mara then sent his three beautiful daughters, Lust, Thirst, and Discontent, to tempt the prince, but he remained impassive. In desperation, Mara challenged the prince's right to occupy the spot of earth upon which he sat, claiming that it belonged to him instead. Then, in a scene that would become the most famous depiction of the Buddha in Asian art, the prince, seated in the meditative posture, stretched out his right hand and touched the earth. By touching the earth, he was asking the goddess of the earth to confirm that a great gift that he had made as Prince Vessantara in his previous life had earned him the right to sit beneath the tree. She assented with a tremor, and Mara departed.

The prince sat in meditation through the night. During the first watch of the night, he had a vision of all of his past lives, recollecting his place of birth, name, caste, and even the food he had eaten. During the second watch of the night, he saw how beings rise and fall through the cycle of rebirth as a consequence of their past deeds. In the third watch of the night, the hours before dawn, he was liberated. Accounts differ as to precisely what it was that he understood. According to some versions it was the four truths: of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering. According to others it was the sequence of dependent origination: how ignorance leads to action and eventually to birth, aging, and death, and how when ignorance is destroyed, so also are birth, aging, and death. Regardless of their differences, all accounts agree that on this night he became a buddha, an awakened one who had roused himself from the slumber of ignorance and extended his knowledge throughout the universe.

The experience of that night was sufficiently profound that the prince, now the Buddha, remained in the vicinity of the tree up to seven weeks, savouring his enlightenment. One of those weeks was rainy, and the serpent king came and spread his hood above the Buddha to protect him from the storm, a scene commonly depicted in Buddhist art. At the end of seven weeks, two merchants approached him and offered him honey and cakes. Knowing that it was improper for a buddha to receive food in his hands, the gods of the four directions each offered him a bowl. The Buddha magically collapsed the four bowls into one and received the gift of food. In return, the Buddha plucked some hairs from his head and gave them to the merchants.

The first disciples

He was unsure as to what to do next, since he knew that what he had understood was so profound that it would be difficult for others to fathom. The god Brahma descended from his heaven and asked him to teach, pointing out that humans are at different levels of development, and some of them would benefit from his teaching. Consequently, the Buddha concluded that the most suitable students would be his first teachers of meditation, but he was informed by a deity that they had died. He thought next of his five former comrades in the practice of asceticism. The Buddha determined through his clairvoyance that they were residing in a deer park in Sarnath, outside Varanasi (Banaras). He set out on foot, meeting along the way a wandering ascetic with whom he exchanged greetings. When he explained to the man that he was enlightened and so was unsurpassed even by the gods, the man responded with indifference.

Although the five ascetics had agreed to ignore the Buddha because he had given up self-mortification, they were compelled by his charisma to rise and greet him. They asked the Buddha what he had understood since they left him. He responded by teaching them, or, in the language of the tradition, he “set the wheel of the dharma in motion.” (*Dharma* has a wide range of meanings, but here refers to the doctrine or teaching of the buddhas.) In his first sermon, the Buddha spoke of the middle way between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification and described both as fruitless. He next turned to what have come to be known as the “Four Noble Truths,” perhaps more accurately rendered as “four truths for the [spiritually] noble.” As elaborated more fully in other discourses, the first is the truth of suffering, which holds that existence in all the realms of rebirth is characterized by suffering. The sufferings particular to humans are birth, aging, sickness, death, losing friends, encountering enemies, not finding what one wants, finding what one does not want. The second truth identifies the cause of this suffering as nonvirtue, negative deeds of body, speech, and mind that produce the karma that fructifies in the future as physical and mental pain. These deeds are motivated by negative mental states, called *klesha* (afflictions), which include desire, hatred, and ignorance, the false belief that there is a permanent and autonomous self amidst the impermanent constituents of mind and body. The third truth is the truth of cessation, the postulation of a state beyond suffering, called nirvana. If the ignorance that motivates desire and hatred can be eliminated, negative deeds will not be performed and future suffering will not be produced. Although such reasoning would allow for the prevention of future negative deeds, it does not seem to account for the vast store of negative karma accumulated in previous lifetimes that is yet to bear fruit. However, the insight into the absence of self, when cultivated at a high level of concentration, is said to be so powerful that it also destroys all seeds for future lifetimes. Cessation entails the realization of both the destruction of the causes of suffering and the impossibility of future suffering. The presence of such a state, however, remains hypothetical without a method for attaining it, and the fourth truth, the path, is that method. The path was delineated in a number of ways, often as the three trainings in ethics, meditation, and wisdom. In his first sermon, the Buddha described the Eightfold Path of correct view, correct attitude, correct speech, correct action, correct livelihood, correct effort, correct mindfulness, and correct meditation. A few days after the first sermon, the Buddha set forth the doctrine of no-self (*anatman*), at which point the five ascetics became arhats, those who have achieved liberation from rebirth and will enter nirvana upon death. They became the first members of the sangha, the community of monks.

The post-enlightenment period

The Buddha soon attracted more disciples, sometimes converting other teachers along with their followers. As a result, his fame began to spread. When the Buddha's father heard that his son had not died following his great renunciation but had become a buddha, the king sent nine successive delegations to his son to invite him to return home to Kapilavastu. But instead of conveying the invitation, they joined the disciples of the Buddha and became arhats. The Buddha was persuaded by the 10th courier (who also became an arhat) to return to the city, where he was greeted with disrespect by clan elders. The Buddha, therefore, rose into the air, and fire and water issued simultaneously from his body. This act caused his relatives to respond with reverence. Because they did not know that they should invite him for the noon meal, the Buddha went begging from door to door instead of going to his father's palace. This caused his father great chagrin, but the Buddha explained that this was the

practice of the buddhas of the past.

His wife Yashodhara had remained faithful to him in his absence. She would not go out to greet him when he returned to the palace, however, saying that the Buddha should come to her in recognition of her virtue. The Buddha did so, and, in a scene often recounted, she bowed before him and placed her head on his feet. She eventually entered the order of nuns and became an arhat. She sent their seven-year-old son Rahula to his father to ask for his patrimony, and the Buddha responded by having him ordained as a monk. This dismayed the Buddha's father, and he explained to the Buddha the great pain that he had felt when the young prince had renounced the world. He asked, therefore, that in the future a son be ordained only with the permission of his parents. The Buddha made this one of the rules of the monastic order.

The Buddha spent the 45 years after his enlightenment traveling with a group of disciples across northeastern India, teaching the dharma to those who would listen, occasionally debating with (and, according to the Buddhist sources, always defeating) masters from other sects, and gaining followers from all social classes. To some he taught the practice of refuge; to some he taught the five precepts (not to kill humans, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie, or use intoxicants); and to some he taught the practice of meditation. The majority of the Buddha's followers did not renounce the world, however, and remained in lay life. Those who decided to go forth from the household and become his disciples joined the sangha, the community of monks. At the request of his widowed stepmother, Mahaprajapati, and women whose husbands had become monks, the Buddha also established an order of nuns. The monks were sent out to teach the dharma for the benefit of gods and humans. The Buddha did the same: each day and night he surveyed the world with his omniscient eye to locate those that he might benefit, often traveling to them by means of his supernormal powers.

It is said that in the early years the Buddha and his monks wandered during all seasons, but eventually they adopted the practice of remaining in one place during the rainy season (in northern India, mid-July to mid-October). Patrons built shelters for their use, and the end of the rainy season came to mark a special occasion for making offerings of food and provisions (especially cloth for robes) to monks. These shelters evolved into monasteries that were inhabited throughout the year. The monastery of Jetavana in the city of Shravasti (Savatthi), where the Buddha spent much of his time and delivered many of the discourses, was donated to the Buddha by the wealthy banker Anathapindada (Pali: Anathapindika).

The Buddha's authority, even among his followers, did not go unchallenged. A dispute arose over the degree of asceticism required of monks. The Buddha's cousin, Devadatta, led a faction that favoured more rigorous discipline than that counseled by the Buddha, requiring, for example, that monks live in the open and never eat meat. When the Buddha refused to name Devadatta as his successor, Devadatta attempted to kill him three times. He first hired assassins to eliminate the Buddha. Devadatta later rolled a boulder down upon him, but the rock only grazed the Buddha's toe. He also sent a wild elephant to trample him, but the elephant stopped in his charge and bowed at the Buddha's feet. Another schism arose between monks of a monastery over a minor infraction of lavatory etiquette. Unable to settle the dispute, the Buddha retired to the forest to live with an elephant for an entire rainy season.

The death of the Buddha

Shortly before his death, the Buddha remarked to his attendant Ananda on three separate occasions that a buddha can, if requested, extend his life span for an aeon. Mara then appeared and reminded the Buddha of his promise to him, made shortly after his enlightenment, to pass into nirvana when his teaching was complete. The Buddha agreed to pass away three months hence, at which point the earth quaked. When Ananda asked the reason for the tremor, the Buddha told him that there are eight occasions for an earthquake, one of which was when a buddha relinquishes the will to live. Ananda begged him not to do so, but the Buddha explained that the time for such requests had passed; had he asked earlier, the Buddha would have consented.



Reclining Buddha,
Polonnaruwa, Sri
Lanka.

At age 80 the Buddha, weak from old age and illness, accepted a meal (it is difficult to identify from the texts what the meal consisted of, but many scholars believe it was pork) from a smith named Chunda, instructing the smith to serve him alone and bury the rest of the meal without offering it to the other monks. The Buddha became severely ill shortly thereafter, and at a place called Kusinara (also spelled Kushinagar; modern Kasia) lay down on his right side between two trees, which immediately blossomed out of season. He instructed the monk who was fanning

him to step to one side, explaining that he was blocking the view of the deities who had assembled to witness his passing. After he provided instructions for his funeral, he said that lay people should make pilgrimages to the place of his birth, the place of his enlightenment, the place of his first teaching, and the place of his passage into nirvana. Those who venerate shrines erected at these places will be reborn as gods. The Buddha then explained to the monks that after he was gone the dharma and the *vinaya* (code of monastic conduct) should be their teacher. He also gave permission to the monks to abolish the minor precepts (because Ananda failed to ask which ones, it was later decided not to do so). Finally, the Buddha asked the 500 disciples who had assembled whether they had any last question or doubt. When they remained silent, he asked two more times and then declared that none of them had any doubt or confusion and were destined to achieve nirvana. According to one account, he then opened his robe and instructed the monks to behold the body of a buddha, which appears in the world so rarely. Finally, he declared that all conditioned things are transient and exhorted the monks to strive with diligence. These were his last words. The Buddha then entered into meditative absorption, passing from the lowest level to the highest, then from the highest to the lowest, before entering the fourth level of concentration, whence he passed into nirvana.

The Buddha's relics

The Buddha had instructed his followers to cremate his body as the body of a universal monarch would be cremated and then to distribute the relics among various groups of his lay followers, who were to enshrine them in hemispherical reliquaries called stupas. His body lay in a coffin for seven days before being placed on a funeral pyre and was set ablaze by the Buddha's chief disciple, Mahakashyapa, who had been absent at the time of the Buddha's death. After the Buddha's cremation, his relics were entrusted to a group of lay disciples, but armed men arrived from seven other regions and demanded the relics. In order to avert bloodshed, a monk divided the

relics into eight portions. According to tradition, 10 sets of relics were enshrined, 8 from portions of the Buddha's remains, 1 from the pyre's ashes, and 1 from the bucket used to divide the remains. The relics were subsequently collected and enshrined in a single stupa. More than a century later, King Ashoka is said to have redistributed the relics in 84,000 stupas.

The stupa would become a reference point denoting the Buddha's presence in the landscape of Asia. Early texts and the archeological record link stupa worship with the Buddha's life and the key sites in his career. Eight shrines are typically recommended for pilgrimage and veneration. They are located at the place of his birth, his enlightenment, his first turning of the wheel of dharma, and his death, as well as sites in four cities where he performed miracles. A stupa in Samkashya, for example, marked the site where the Buddha descended to the world after teaching the dharma to his mother (who died seven days after his birth) abiding in the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods.

The importance given to the stupa suggests the persistence of the Buddha in the world despite his apparent passage into nirvana. Two types of nirvana are commonly described. The first is called the "nirvana with remainder," which the Buddha achieved under the Bo tree, when he destroyed all the seeds for future rebirth. This first nirvana is therefore also called the final nirvana (or passing away) of the afflictions. But the karma that had created his present life was still functioning and would do so until his death. Thus, his mind and body during the rest of his life were what was left over, the remainder, after he realized nirvana. The second type of nirvana occurred at his death and is called the "final nirvana of the aggregates (*skandha*) of mind and body" or the "nirvana without remainder" because nothing remained to be reborn after his death. Something, in fact, did remain: the relics found in the ashes of the funeral pyre. A third nirvana, therefore, is sometimes mentioned. According to Buddhist belief, there will come a time in the far distant future when the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha will disappear from the world and the relics will no longer be honoured. It is then that the relics that have been enshrined in stupas around the world will break out of their reliquaries and magically return to Bodh Gaya, where they will assemble into the resplendent body of the Buddha, seated in the lotus posture under the Bo tree, emitting rays of light that illuminate 10,000 worlds. They will be worshiped by the gods one last time and then will burst into flame and disappear into the sky. This third nirvana is called the "final nirvana of the relics." Until that time, the relics of the Buddha are to be regarded as his living presence, infused with all of his marvelous qualities. Epigraphic and literary evidence from India suggests that the Buddha, in the form of his stupas, not only was a bestower of blessings, but was regarded as a legal person and an owner of property. The relics of the Buddha were, essentially, the Buddha.

Images of the Buddha

The Buddha also remains in the world in the form of the texts that contain his words and statues that depict his form. There is no historical evidence of images of the Buddha being made during his lifetime. Indeed, scholars of Indian art have long been intrigued by the absence of an image of the Buddha on a number of early stone carvings at Buddhist sites. The carvings depict scenes in which obeisance is being paid, for example, to the footprints of the Buddha. One scene, considered to depict the Buddha's departure from the palace, shows a riderless horse. Such works have led to the theory that early Buddhism prohibited depiction of the Buddha in bodily form

but allowed representation by certain symbols. The theory is based in part on the lack of any instructions for depicting the Buddha in early texts. This view has been challenged by those who suggest instead that the carvings are not depictions of events from the life of the Buddha but rather represent pilgrimages to and worship of important sites from the life of the Buddha, such as the Bo tree.

Consecrated images of the Buddha are central to Buddhist practice, and there are many tales of their miraculous powers. A number of famous images, such as the statue of Mahamuni in Mandalay, Myanmar, derive their sanctity from the belief that the Buddha posed for them. The consecration of an image of the Buddha often requires elaborate rituals in which the Buddha is asked to enter the image or the story of the Buddha's life is told in its presence. Epigraphic evidence from the 4th or 5th century indicates that Indian monasteries usually had a room called the "perfumed chamber" that housed an image of the Buddha and was regarded as the Buddha's residence, with its own contingent of monks.

The Mahayana tradition and the reconception of the Buddha

Some four centuries after the Buddha's death, movements arose in India, many of them centred on newly written texts (such as the *Lotus Sutra*) or new genres of texts (such as the *Prajnaparamita* or Perfection of Wisdom sutras) that purported to be the word of the Buddha. These movements would come to be designated by their adherents as the Mahayana, the "Great Vehicle" to enlightenment, in contradistinction to the earlier Buddhist schools that did not accept the new sutras as authoritative (that is, as the word of the Buddha).

The Mahayana sutras offer different conceptions of the Buddha. It is not that the Mahayana schools saw the Buddha as a magical being whereas non-Mahayana schools did not. Accounts of the Buddha's wondrous powers abound throughout the literature. For example, the Buddha is said to have hesitated before deciding to teach after his enlightenment and only decides to do so after being implored by Brahma. In a Mahayana sutra, however, the Buddha has no indecision at all, but rather pretends to be swayed by Brahma's request in order that all those who worship Brahma will take refuge in the Buddha. Elsewhere, it was explained that when the Buddha would complain of a headache or a backache, he did so only to convert others to the dharma; because his body was not made of flesh and blood, it was in fact impossible for him to experience pain.

One of the most important Mahayana sutras for a new conception of the Buddha is the *Lotus Sutra (Saddharmapundarika-sutra)*, in which the Buddha denies that he left the royal palace in search of freedom from suffering and that he found that freedom six years later while meditating under a tree. He explains instead that he achieved enlightenment innumerable billions of aeons ago and has been preaching the dharma in this world and simultaneously in myriad other worlds ever since. Because his life span is inconceivable to those of little intelligence, he has resorted to the use of skillful methods (*upaya*), pretending to renounce his princely life, practice austerities, and attain unsurpassed enlightenment. In fact, he was enlightened all the while yet feigned these deeds to inspire the world. Moreover, because he recognizes that his continued presence in the world might cause those of little virtue to become complacent about putting his teachings into practice, he declares that he is soon to pass into nirvana. But this also is not true, because his life span will not be exhausted

for many more billions of aeons. He tells the story of a physician who returns home to find his children ill from having taken poison during his absence. He prescribes a cure, but only some take it. He therefore leaves home again and spreads the rumour that he has died. Those children who had not taken the antidote then do so out of deference to their departed father and are cured. The father then returns. In the same way, the Buddha pretends to enter nirvana to create a sense of urgency in his disciples even though his life span is limitless.

The doctrine of the three bodies

Such a view of the identity of the Buddha is codified in the doctrine of the three bodies (*trikaya*) of the Buddha. Early scholastics speak of the Buddha having a physical body and a second body, called a “mind-made body” or an “emanation body,” in which he performs miraculous feats such as visiting his departed mother in the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods and teaching her the dharma. The question also was raised as to whom precisely the Buddhist should pay homage when honouring the Buddha. A term, *dharmakaya*, was coined to describe a more metaphorical body, a body or collection of all the Buddha's good qualities or dharmas, such as his wisdom, his compassion, his fortitude, his patience. This corpus of qualities was identified as the body of the Buddha to which one should turn for refuge.

All of this is recast in the Mahayana sutras. The emanation body (*nirmanakaya*) is no longer the body that the Buddha employs to perform supernatural feats; it is rather the only body to appear in this world and the only body visible to ordinary humans. It is the Buddha's emanation body that was born as a prince, achieved enlightenment, and taught the dharma to the world; that is, the visible Buddha is a magical display. The true Buddha, the source of the emanations, was the *dharmakaya*, a term that still refers to the Buddha's transcendent qualities but, playing on the multivalence of the term *dharma*, came to mean something more cosmic, an eternal principle of enlightenment and ultimate truth, described in later Mahayana treatises as the Buddha's omniscient mind and its profound nature of emptiness.

The presence of multiple universes

Along with additional bodies of the Buddha, the Mahayana sutras also revealed the presence of multiple universes, each with its own buddha. These universes—called buddha fields, or pure lands—are described as abodes of extravagant splendour, where the trees bear a fruit of jewels, the birds sing verses of the dharma, and the inhabitants devote themselves to its practice. The buddha fields became preferred places for future rebirth. The buddhas who presided there became objects of devotion, especially the buddha of infinite light, Amitabha, and his Western Paradise called Sukhavati. In the buddha fields, the buddhas often appear in yet a third form, the enjoyment body (*sambhogakaya*), which was the form of a youthful prince adorned with the 32 major marks and 80 minor marks of a superman. The former include patterns of a wheel on the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet, elongated earlobes, a crown protrusion (*usnisa*) on the top of his head, a circle of hair (*urna*) between his brows, flat feet, and webbed fingers. Scholars have speculated that this last attribute derives not from a textual source but the inadequacies of early sculptors.

The marvelous physical and mental qualities of the Buddha were codified in numerous

litanies of praise and catalogued in poetry, often taking the form of a series of epithets. These epithets were commented upon in texts, inscribed on stupas, recited aloud in rituals, and contemplated in meditation. One of the more famous is “thus gone, worthy, fully and completely awakened, accomplished in knowledge and virtuous conduct, well gone, knower of worlds, unsurpassed guide for those who need restraint, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, fortunate.”

Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

Additional Reading

Translations of influential traditional biographies of the Buddha include: E.H. JOHNSTON (trans.), *The Buddhacarita, or, Acts of the Buddha*, 2 vol. (1935-36, reprinted 2 vol. in 1, 1972), a translation of the famous poem by Ashvaghosa. WILLIAM WOODVILLE ROCKHILL (trans.), *The Life of the Buddha and the Early History of his Order* (1884, reprinted 1976) is a translation from the Tibetan of the biography found in the *vinaya* of the Mulasarvastivada sect. N.A. JAYAWICKRAMA, *The Story of Gotama Buddha: The Nidāna-kathā of the Jātakattha-kathā* (1990) provides a translation of an important Pali biography. *The Voice of the Buddha, The Beauty of Compassion*, 2 vol. (1983) is a translation of PHILIPPE EDOUARD FOUCAUX'S 1884 French rendering of the extravagant Sanskrit biography, the *Lalitavistara*. DONALD S. LOPEZ, JR. (ed.), *Buddhism in Practice* (1995), pp. 39-180, contains translations of texts from a number of Buddhist traditions concerning the Buddha in his various forms.

Studies of the development of the Buddha's biography include ÉTIENNE LAMOTTE, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka Era* (1988; originally published in French, 1958), pp. 639-685, which identifies some of the important sectarian and historical factors that shaped the biographies; FRANK E. REYNOLDS, “The Many Lives of Buddha: A Study of Sacred Biography and Theravāda Tradition,” chapter 1 in FRANK E. REYNOLDS and DONALD CAPPIS (eds.), *The Biographical Process: Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion* (1976), pp. 37-61; and FRANK E. REYNOLDS and CHARLES HALLISEY, “The Buddha,” chapter 2 in JOSEPH M. KITAGAWA and MARK D. CUMMINGS (eds.), *Buddhism and Asian History* (1989), pp. 29-49, which provides useful surveys of the past century of scholarship on the development of the biographical cycles. JULIANE SCHOBER (ed.), *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia* (1997), contains essays on manifestations of the biography of the Buddha in texts, icons, and local practices.

Important biographies of the Buddha by modern scholars include HERMANN OLDENBERG, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, trans. by WILLIAM HOEY (1882; originally published in German, 1881), which draws exclusively on Pali sources in an attempt to separate history from legend; BHIKKU NANAMOLI, *The Life of the Buddha, According to the Pali Canon, The Oldest Authentic Record* (1972), which arranges the various events described in the Pali canon and places them in chronological order; A. FOUCHER, *La Vie du Bouddha* (1949, abridged translation as *The Life of the Buddha, According to the Ancient Texts and Monuments of India*, 1963), explores the events of Buddha's life as represented in Indian art and architecture; and EDWARD J. THOMAS, *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* (1927), which also considers Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan sources. HAJIME NAKAMURA, *Gotama Buddha* (1977), is an English translation of part 1 of the author's important study in Japanese. The scholarly debate concerning the dating of the historical Buddha is collected in HEINZ BECHERT (ed.), *When Did the Buddha Live?* (1995). JOHN S. STRONG, *The Buddha: A Short Biography* (2001) is a very useful survey of

the events of the Buddha's previous lives and final lifetime, with analyses of their meaning.

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Jesus Christ

Encyclopædia Britannica Article

Introduction

also called Jesus of Galilee or Jesus of Nazareth

born c. 6–4 BC, Bethlehem

died c. AD 30, Jerusalem

religious leader revered in Christianity, one of the world's major religions. He is regarded as the incarnation of God by most Christians. His teachings and deeds are recorded in the New Testament, which is essentially a theological document that makes discovery of the "historical Jesus" difficult. The basic outlines of his career and message, however, can be characterized when considered in the context of 1st-century Judaism and, especially, Jewish eschatology. The history of Christian reflection on the teachings and nature of Jesus is examined in the article Christology.

Name and title

Ancient Jews usually had only one name, and, when greater specificity was needed, it was customary to add the father's name or the place of origin. Thus, in his lifetime Jesus was called Jesus son of Joseph (Luke 4:22; John 1:45; 6:42), Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 10:38), or Jesus the Nazarene (Mark 1:24; Luke 24:19). After his death, he came to be called Jesus Christ. *Christ* was not originally a name but a title derived from the Greek word *christos*, which translates the Hebrew term *meshiah* (Messiah), meaning "the anointed one." This title indicates that Jesus' followers believed him to be the anointed son of King David, whom some Jews expected to restore the fortunes of Israel. Passages such as Acts of the Apostles 2:36 show that some early Christian writers knew that *the Christ* was properly a title, but in many passages of the New Testament, including those in Paul's letters, the name and the title are combined and used together as Jesus' name: *Jesus Christ* or *Christ Jesus* (Romans 1:1; 3:24). Paul sometimes simply used *Christ* as Jesus' name (e.g., Romans 5:6).

Summary of Jesus' life



Stained-glass window depicting Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus.

Although born in Bethlehem, according to Matthew and Luke, Jesus was a Galilean from Nazareth, a village near Sepphoris, one of the two major cities of Galilee (Tiberias was the other). He was born to Joseph and Mary shortly before the death of Herod the Great (Matthew 2; Luke 1:5) in 4 BC. According to Matthew and Luke, however, Joseph was only his father legally. They report that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived and that she "was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18; cf. Luke 1:35). Joseph is said to have been a carpenter (Matthew 13:55), that is, a craftsman who worked with his hands, and, according to Mark 6:3, Jesus also became a carpenter.

Luke (2:41-52) states that as a child Jesus was precociously



"Tree of Jesse," symbolizing Jesus' descent from the house of David, illuminated page ...

learned, but there is no other evidence of his childhood or early life. As a young adult, he went to be baptized by the prophet John the Baptist and shortly thereafter became an itinerant preacher and healer (Mark 1:2-28). In his mid-30s, Jesus had a short public career, lasting perhaps less than one year, during which he attracted considerable attention. Some time between AD 29 and 33—possibly AD 30—he went to observe Passover in Jerusalem, where his entrance, according to the Gospels, was triumphant and infused with eschatological significance. While there he was arrested, tried, and executed. His disciples became convinced that he still lived and had appeared to them. They converted others to belief in him, which eventually led to a new religion, Christianity.

Jewish Palestine at the time of Jesus

The political situation

Palestine in Jesus' day was part of the Roman Empire, which controlled its various territories in a number of ways. In the East (eastern Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt), territories were governed either by kings who were "friends and allies" of Rome (often called "client" kings or, more disparagingly, "puppet" kings) or by governors supported by a Roman army. When Jesus was born, all of Jewish Palestine, as well as some of the neighbouring Gentile areas, was ruled by Rome's able "friend and ally" Herod the Great. For Rome, Palestine was important not in itself but because it lay between Syria and Egypt, two of Rome's most valuable possessions. Rome had legions in both countries but not in Palestine. Roman imperial policy required that Palestine be loyal and peaceful, so that it did not undermine Rome's larger interests. This end was achieved for a long time by permitting Herod to remain king of Judaea (37-4 BC) and allowing him a free hand in governing his kingdom, as long as the requirements of stability and loyalty were met.

When Herod died shortly after Jesus' birth, his kingdom was divided into five parts. Most of the Gentile areas were separated from the Jewish areas, which were split between two of Herod's sons, Herod Archelaus, who received Judaea and Idumaea (as well as Samaria, which was non-Jewish), and Herod Antipas, who received Galilee and Peraea. (In the New Testament, Antipas is somewhat confusingly called Herod, as in Luke 23:6-12; apparently the sons of Herod took his name, just as the successors of Julius Caesar were commonly called Caesar.) Both sons were given lesser titles than king: Archelaus was *ethnarch*; Antipas was *tetrarch*. The non-Jewish areas (except Samaria) were assigned to a third son, Philip, to Herod's sister Salome, or to the province of Syria. The emperor Augustus deposed the unsatisfactory Archelaus in AD 6, however, and transformed Judaea, Idumaea, and Samaria from a client kingdom into an "imperial province." Accordingly, he sent a prefect to govern this province. This minor Roman aristocrat (later called a *procurator*) was supported by a small Roman army of approximately 3,000 men. The soldiers, however, came not from Italy but from nearby Gentile cities, especially Caesarea and Sebaste; presumably the officers were from Italy. During Jesus' public career, the Roman prefect was Pontius Pilate (ruled AD 26-36).

Although nominally in charge of Judaea, Samaria, and Idumaea, the prefect did not

govern his area directly; instead, he relied on local leaders. The prefect and his small army lived in the predominantly Gentile city Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast, about two days' march from Jerusalem. They came to Jerusalem only to ensure peace during the pilgrimage festivals—Passover, Weeks (Shabuoth), and Booths (Sukkoth)—when large crowds and patriotic themes sometimes combined to spark unrest or uprisings. On a day-to-day basis Jerusalem was governed by the high priest. Assisted by a council, he had the difficult task of mediating between the remote Roman prefect and the local populace, which was hostile toward pagans and wanted to be free of foreign interference. His political responsibility was to maintain order and to see that tribute was paid. Caiaphas, the high priest during Jesus' adulthood, held the office from about AD 18 to 36, longer than anyone else during the Roman period, indicating that he was a successful and reliable diplomat. Since he and Pilate were in power together for 10 years, they must have collaborated successfully.

Thus, at the time of Jesus' public career, Galilee was governed by the tetrarch Antipas, who was sovereign within his own domain, provided that he remained loyal to Rome and maintained peace and stability within his borders. Judaea (including Jerusalem) was nominally governed by Pilate, but the actual daily rule of Jerusalem was in the hands of Caiaphas and his council.

Relations between Jewish areas and nearby Gentile areas

Galilee and Judaea, the principal Jewish areas of Palestine, were surrounded by Gentile territories (i.e., Caesarea, Dora, and Ptolemais on the Mediterranean coast; Caesarea Philippi north of Galilee; Hippus and Gadara east of Galilee). There also were two inland Gentile cities on the west side of the Jordan River near Galilee (Scythopolis and Sebaste). The proximity of Gentile and Jewish areas meant that there was some interchange between them, including trade, which explains why Antipas had *telōnēs* (often translated "tax collectors" but more accurately rendered "customs officers") in the villages on his side of the sea of Galilee. There also was some exchange of populations: some Jews lived in Gentile cities, such as Scythopolis, and some Gentiles lived in at least one of the Jewish cities, Tiberias. Jewish merchants and traders could probably speak some Greek, but the primary language of Palestinian Jews was Aramaic (a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew). On the other hand, the Jews resisted paganism and excluded temples for the worship of the gods of Greece and Rome from their cities, along with the Greek educational institutions the *ephebeia* and *gymnasion*, gladiatorial contests, and other buildings or institutions typical of Gentile areas. Because Jewish-Gentile relations in the land that the Jews considered their own were often uneasy, Jewish areas were usually governed separately from Gentile areas. The reign of Herod the Great was the exception to this rule, but even he treated the Jewish and the Gentile parts of his kingdom differently, fostering Greco-Roman culture in Gentile sectors but introducing only very minor aspects of it in Jewish areas.

In the 1st century, Rome showed no interest in making the Jews in Palestine and other parts of the empire conform to common Greco-Roman culture. A series of decrees by Julius Caesar, Augustus, the Roman Senate, and various city councils permitted Jews to keep their own customs, even when they were antithetical to Greco-Roman culture. For example, in respect for Jewish observance of the Sabbath, Rome exempted Jews from conscription in Rome's armies. Neither did Rome colonize Jewish Palestine. Augustus established colonies elsewhere (in

southern France, Spain, North Africa, and Asia Minor), but prior to the First Jewish Revolt (AD 66-74) Rome established no colonies in Jewish Palestine. Few individual Gentiles from abroad would have been attracted to live in Jewish cities, where they would have been cut off from their customary worship and cultural activities. The Gentiles who lived in Tiberias and other Jewish cities were probably natives of nearby Gentile cities, and many were Syrians, who could probably speak both Aramaic and Greek.

Economic conditions

Most people in the ancient world produced food, clothing, or both and could afford few luxuries. Most Palestinian Jewish farmers and herdsmen, however, earned enough to support their families, pay their taxes, offer sacrifices during one or more annual festivals, and let their land lie fallow in the sabbatical years, when cultivation was prohibited. Galilee in particular was relatively prosperous, since the land and climate permitted abundant harvests and supported many sheep. Although it is doubtful that Galilee was as affluent in the 1st century as it was during the late Roman and Byzantine periods, archaeological remains from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries nevertheless confirm the plausibility of 1st-century references to the region's prosperity. There were, of course, landless people, but the Herodian dynasty was careful to organize large public works projects that employed thousands of men. Desperate poverty was present, too, but never reached a socially dangerous level. At the other end of the economic spectrum, few if any Palestinian Jews had the vast fortunes that successful merchants in port cities could accumulate; however, there were Jewish aristocrats with large estates and grand houses, and the merchants who served the Temple (supplying, for example, incense and fabric) could become very prosperous. The gap between rich and poor in Palestine was obvious and distressing to the poor, but compared with that of the rest of the world it was not especially wide.

The Jewish religion in the 1st century

Judaism, as the Jewish religion came to be known in the 1st century AD, was based on ancient Israelite religion, shorn of many of its Canaanite characteristics but with the addition of important features from Babylonia and Persia. The Jews differed from other people in the ancient world because they believed that there was only one God. Like other people, they worshiped their God with animal sacrifices offered at a temple; unlike others, they had only one temple, which was in Jerusalem. The sanctuary of the Jewish temple had two rooms, as did many of the other temples in the ancient world, but the second room of the Jewish temple was empty. There was no idol representing of the God of Israel. The Jews also believed that they had been specially chosen by the one God of the universe to serve him and obey his laws. Although set apart from other people, they believed God called on them to be a "light to the Gentiles" and lead them to accept the God of Israel as the only God.

An important part of Jewish Scripture was the Torah, or Pentateuch, comprising five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) that were believed to have been given to Moses by God. For Jews and their spiritual descendants, these books contain God's law, which covers many aspects of ordinary life: it requires that males be circumcised; regulates diet; mandates days of rest for humans and animals alike (Sabbaths and festival days); requires pilgrimage and sacrifice; stipulates

recompense and atonement following transgression; and specifies impurities and required purification before entry to the Temple. Moreover, it provides both rules and principles for the treatment of other people: for example, calling for the use of honest weights and measures in trade and for "love" (that is, upright treatment) of both fellow Jews and foreigners (Leviticus 19). The laws governing worship (sacrifice, purification, admission to the Temple, and the like) were similar to the religious laws of other people in the ancient world. Judaism was different because in most other cultures divine law covered only such topics, but in Judaism it regulated not only worship but also daily life and made every aspect of life a matter of divine concern.

Since both faith and practice were based firmly on the five books of Moses modified slightly over time, they were shared by Jews all over the world, from Mesopotamia to Italy and beyond. The common features of Jewish faith and practice are reflected in the decrees from various parts of the ancient world that allowed Jews to preserve their own traditions, including monotheism, rest and assembly on the Sabbath, support of the Temple, and dietary laws. There were, naturally, variations on each main theme. In Jewish Palestine, for example, there were three small but important religious parties that differed from each other in several ways: the Pharisees (numbering about 6,000 at the time of Herod), Essenes (about 4,000), and Sadducees ("a few men," according to Flavius Josephus, in *The Antiquities of the Jews* 18.17). A largely lay group that had the reputation of being the most precise interpreters of the law, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead. They also relied on the nonbiblical "traditions of the fathers," some of which made the law stricter, while others relaxed it. The Essenes were a more radical sect, with extremely strict rules. One branch of the group lived at Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea and produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. At some point in their history the Essenes were probably a priestly sect (the Zadokite priests are major figures in some of the documents from Qumran); however, the composition of their membership at the time of Jesus is unclear. Many aristocratic priests, as well as some prominent laymen, were Sadducees. They rejected the Pharisaic "traditions of the fathers" and maintained some old-fashioned theological opinions; most famously, they denied resurrection, which had recently entered Jewish thought from Persia and which was accepted by most Jews in the 1st century.

Most Jews based their faith and practice on the five books of Moses (slightly modified by the passage of time) and rejected the extreme positions of the three parties. The Pharisees were respected for their piety and learning, and they may have exercised substantial influence on belief and practice. The Essenes were a fringe group, and those who lived at Qumran had dropped out of mainstream Judaism. Their interpretation of the Bible led them to reject the priests and the Temple as they existed in Jerusalem, and they looked forward to the time when they could seize control of the Holy City. To the degree that any of these parties had power, however, it belonged to the Sadducees. More precisely, the aristocratic priests and a few prominent laymen had power and authority in Jerusalem; of the aristocrats who belonged to one of the parties, most were Sadducees. According to the Acts of the Apostles (5:17), those who were around the high priest Caiaphas were Sadducees, which recalls the evidence of the Jewish priestly aristocrat, historian, and Pharisee Josephus.

While the vast majority of Jews did not belong to a party, the study of these parties reveals the substantial variety within the general framework of Judaism. Another indicator of this variety was the diversity of Jewish leaders; among them were charismatic healers and miracle workers, such as Honi the Circle Drawer and Hanina

ben Dosa; hermitlike sages, such as Bannus; eschatological prophets, such as John the Baptist; would-be messianic prophets, such as Theudas and the Egyptian; and apocalyptic visionaries, represented by the pseudepigraphal First Book of Enoch.

Most Jews had some form of future hope; in general, they expected God to intervene in history and to restore Israel to a state of peace, freedom, and prosperity. Not all Jews expected God to send a son of David as Messiah to overthrow the Romans, though some did. The Qumran sect believed that there would be a great war against Rome, that the sect would emerge victorious, and that the main blows would be struck by the angel Michael and finally by God himself. Notably, a Messiah plays no role in this war of liberation. Some Jews were ready at any moment to take up arms against Rome, thinking that if they started the fight God would intervene on their side. Others were quietists, hoping for divine deliverance without having a more specific vision of the future but entirely unwilling to fight. Whatever their specific expectations, very few Palestinian Jews were completely satisfied with the governments of Antipas, Pilate, and Caiaphas. As God's chosen people, the Jews felt they should be free both of foreign domination and of ambitious worldly leaders.

In the final analysis, variety and commonality are equally important to the understanding of Palestinian Judaism in Jesus' day. Jews agreed on many basic aspects of their religion and way of life, and they agreed that they did not want to surrender their covenant with God to accept the lure of pagan culture; but, when it came to details, they could disagree with one another violently. Since God cared about every aspect of life, competing groups and leaders often saw themselves as representing the side of God against his adversaries.

Sources for the life of Jesus



"St. Matthew,"
page from the Ada
Codex, c. 890; in
the Stadtbibliothek
Trier, ...

The only substantial sources for the life and message of Jesus are the Gospels of the New Testament, the earliest of which was Mark (written AD 60–80), followed by Matthew, Luke, and John (AD 75–90). Some additional evidence can be found in the letters of Paul, which were written beginning in AD 50 and are the earliest surviving Christian texts. There are, however, other sources that may have further information. Noncanonical sources, especially the apocryphal gospels, contain many sayings attributed to Jesus, as well as stories about him that are occasionally held to be "authentic." Among these apocrypha is the Gospel of Judas, a Gnostic text of the 2nd century AD that portrays Judas as an important collaborator of Jesus and not his betrayer. Another important text, the mid-2nd-century-AD Gospel of Thomas, has attracted much attention. A "sayings" gospel (114 sayings attributed to Jesus, without narrative), it is grounded in

Gnosticism, the philosophical and religious movement of the 2nd century AD that stressed the redemptive power of esoteric knowledge acquired by divine revelation. For Thomas, salvation consists of self-knowledge, and baptism results in restoration to the primordial state—man and woman in one person, like Adam before the creation of Eve (saying 23). Spiritual reversion to this state meant that nakedness need not result in shame; one passage (saying 37) allows us to suspect that the early Christian followers of the Gospel of Thomas took off their garments and trampled on them as part of their baptismal initiation. There are a few connections between this

worldview and that of Paul and the Gospel According to John, but the overall theology of the Gospel of Thomas is so far removed from the teaching of Jesus as found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in which Jewish eschatology is central—that it is not considered a major source for the study of Jesus. It is, of course, possible or even likely that individual sayings in Thomas or other apocryphal gospels originated with Jesus, but it is unlikely that noncanonical sources can contribute much to the portrait of the historical Jesus. As in the case of the Gospel of Thomas, the traditions found in other apocryphal gospels are often completely unlike the evidence of the canonical gospels and are embedded in documents that are generally believed to be unreliable.

There are a few references to Jesus in 1st-century Roman and Jewish sources. Documents indicate that within a few years of Jesus' death, Romans were aware that someone named Chrestus (a slight misspelling of Christus) had been responsible for disturbances in the Jewish community in Rome (Suetonius, *The Life of the Deified Claudius* 25.4). Twenty years later, according to Tacitus, Christians in Rome were prominent enough to be persecuted by Nero, and it was known that they were devoted to Christus, whom Pilate had executed (*Annals* 15.44). This knowledge of Jesus, however, was dependent on familiarity with early Christianity and does not provide independent evidence about Jesus. Josephus wrote a paragraph about Jesus (*The Antiquities of the Jews* 18.63ff.), as he did about Theudas, the Egyptian, and other charismatic leaders (*History of the Jewish War* 2.258-263; *The Antiquities of the Jews* 20.97-99, 167-172), but it has been heavily revised by Christian scribes, and Josephus's original remarks cannot be discerned.

The letters of Paul contain reliable but meagre evidence. Their main theme, that Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead, is especially prominent in 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul evokes an early tradition about Jesus' death and subsequent appearances to his followers. The Crucifixion and Resurrection were accepted by all first-generation Christians. Paul also quotes a few of Jesus' sayings: the prohibition of divorce and remarriage (1 Corinthians 7:10-11), the words over the bread and cup at Jesus' last supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-25), and a prediction of the imminent arrival of the Saviour from heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

Fuller information about Jesus is found in the Gospels of the New Testament, though these are not of equal value in reconstructing his life and teaching. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree so closely with one another that they can be studied together in parallel columns in a work called a synopsis and are hence called the Synoptic Gospels. John, however, is so different that it cannot be reconciled with the Synoptics except in very general ways (e.g., Jesus lived in Palestine, taught, healed, was crucified and raised). In the Synoptics, Jesus' public career appears to have lasted less than one year, since only one Passover is mentioned; in John, three Passovers occur, implying a ministry of more than two years. In all four Gospels, Jesus performs miracles, especially healings, but, while exorcisms are prevalent in the Synoptics, there are none in John. The greatest differences, though, appear in the methods and content of Jesus' teaching. In the Synoptic Gospels, he speaks about the kingdom of God in short aphorisms and parables, making use of similes and figures of speech, many drawn from agricultural and village life. He seldom refers to himself, and, when asked for a "sign" to prove his authority, he refuses (Mark 8:11-12). In John, on the other hand, Jesus employs long metaphorical discourses, in which he himself is the main subject. His miracles are described as "signs" that support the authenticity of his claims.

Scholars have unanimously chosen the Synoptic Gospels' version of Jesus' teaching.

The verdict on the miracles is the same, though less firmly held: in all probability Jesus was known as an exorcist, which resulted in the charge that he cast out demons by the prince of demons (Mark 3:22-27). The choice between the narrative outline of the Synoptics and that of John is less clear. Besides presenting a longer ministry than do the other Gospels, John also describes several trips to Jerusalem. Only one is mentioned in the Synoptics. Both outlines are plausible, but a ministry of more than two years leaves more questions unanswered than does one of a few months. It is generally accepted that Jesus and his disciples were itinerant; that they traveled around Galilee and its immediate environs; and that Jesus taught and healed in various towns and villages, as well as in the countryside and on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. But where did they spend their winters? Who supported them? None of the Gospels explains how they lived (though Luke 8:1-3 alludes to some female supporters), but the omission is even more glaring in John, where the longer ministry presumes the need for winter quarters, though none are mentioned. This and other considerations are not decisive, but the brief career of the Synoptic Gospels is slightly to be preferred.

The Synoptic Gospels, then, are the primary sources for knowledge of the historical Jesus. They are not, however, the equivalent of an academic biography of a recent historical figure; instead, the Synoptic Gospels are theological documents that provide information the authors regarded as necessary for the religious development of the Christian communities in which they worked. The details of Jesus' daily life are almost entirely lacking, as are such important features as his education, travel, and other developmental experiences. The characters on the whole are "flat": emotions, motives, and personalities are seldom mentioned. There are, nevertheless, a few exceptions that show how little is actually known. Peter wavers (Matthew 14:28-31; Mark 14:66-72); James and John ask for preferential treatment in the coming kingdom (Mark 10:35-40); and Pilate anguishes over the decision to execute Jesus (Matthew 27:15-23; Luke 23:2-25). On the other hand, the Pharisees and scribes periodically challenge Jesus and then disappear, with little indication of what, from their point of view, they hoped to accomplish. Even Jesus is a rather flat character in the Gospels. He is sometimes angry and sometimes compassionate (Mark 3:5; 6:34, respectively), but one can say little more. This is a frustrating aspect of the Gospels. The situation is different with regard to Paul, whose letters are extant and self-revelatory. The force of his personality is in the letters, but the force of Jesus' personality must be found somewhere behind the Gospels.

The Gospels comprise brief, self-contained passages, or *pericopēs* (from the Greek word meaning "cut around"), relating to Jesus. Further study reveals that the authors of the Synoptic Gospels moved these pericopes around, altering their contexts to suit their own editorial policies—for example, by arranging the pericopes according to subject matter. In chapters 8 and 9, Matthew collects 10 healing pericopes, with a few other passages interspersed. Mark and Luke contain most of these passages, but their arrangements are different. Table 1 delineates the Synoptics' accounts of 10 of Jesus' healings. Matthew put all of these healings in one place; Mark and Luke scattered them, but in different ways. Since the authors of the Gospels rearranged the material to suit their own needs, it must be assumed that earlier Christian teachers had also organized stories about Jesus didactically. This means that the sequence of events in Jesus' ministry is unknown.

Moreover, the Evangelists and other early Christian teachers also shaped the material about Jesus. During the course of transmission, the factual narrative elements that surrounded each saying or event were stripped away, leaving only a central unit, which was applied to various situations by the addition of new introductions and

conclusions. For example, both Matthew and Luke relate the Parable of the Lost Sheep. In Matthew 18:12-14, the parable is told to the disciples, and the meaning is that they, like the shepherd, should go in search of the lost. In Luke 15:4-7, the same story is directed at the Pharisees, this time to instruct them not to grumble because Jesus has attracted repentant sinners. Both applications of the parable were useful homiletically, and therefore were preserved. The context in which Jesus originally used the parable, however, is unknown. Another example is the saying "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44). Homiletically, it may be applied to numerous circumstances, which makes it very useful for sermons and teaching. Historically, however, it is not known to whom Jesus referred when he spoke these words. The lack of firm knowledge of original context makes the precise interpretation of individual passages difficult.

Further, not all the sayings and deeds in the Synoptic Gospels are reports of things that Jesus actually said and did. Believing that Jesus still lived in heaven, the early Christians spoke to him in prayer and sometimes he answered (2 Corinthians 12:8-9; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:13). These early Christians did not distinguish between "the historical Jesus" and "the heavenly Lord" as firmly as most modern people do, and some sayings heard in prayer almost certainly ended up in the Gospels as sayings uttered by Jesus during his lifetime.

Since both the original context of Jesus' sayings and deeds and those passages in the Gospels that go back to the historical Jesus are unknown, there are substantial difficulties in attempting to reconstruct the Jesus of history. Of these two difficulties, the lack of immediate context is the more serious. It must be admitted that, on many points, precision and nuance in describing the teaching and ministry of Jesus cannot be achieved.

There are, however, tests of authenticity that make it possible to acquire good general information about Jesus' teachings. One of the most important of these is "multiple attestation": a passage that appears in two or more independent sources is likely to be authentic. A prime example is the prohibition of divorce, which appears in the letters of Paul and in two different forms in the Synoptic Gospels. The short form, which is focused on remarriage after divorce, is found in Matthew 5:31-32 and Luke 16:18. The long form, which is more absolute in prohibiting divorce, appears in Matthew 19:1-12 and Mark 10:1-12. Paul's version (1 Corinthians 7:10-11) agrees most closely with the short form. Because of this excellent attestation, it is almost indisputable that Jesus opposed divorce and especially remarriage after divorce, though study of the five passages does not reveal precisely what he said.

A second test is "against the grain of the Gospels": a passage that seems to be contrary to one of the main themes or views expressed in one or more Gospels is likely to be authentic because the early Christians were not likely to have created material with which they disagreed. Matthew's depiction of John the Baptist is a good example. The author apparently found it to be embarrassing that Jesus received John's baptism of repentance (why would Jesus have needed it?). Thus, he has John protest against the baptism and claim that Jesus should instead baptize him (Matthew 3:13-17; this objection is not in Mark or Luke). These verses in Matthew assume that John recognized Jesus as being greater than he, but Matthew later shows John, in prison, sending a message to ask Jesus whether he was "the one who is to come" (Matthew 11:2-6). These passages make it virtually certain that John baptized Jesus and highly probable that John asked Jesus who he was. John's protest against baptizing Jesus appears to be Matthew's creation. In keeping these passages while, in effect, arguing against them, Matthew validates the authenticity of the tradition that

John baptized Jesus and later enquired about his true identity.

These are only a few examples of tests that may confirm the authenticity of passages in the Gospels. In many cases, however, the criteria do not apply: many passages neither meet nor fail the tests. Grouping passages into categories—probable, improbable, possible but unconfirmed—is a useful exercise but does not go very far toward determining a realistic portrayal of Jesus as a historical figure. More is needed than just the minute study of the Gospels, though that is an essential task.

The context of Jesus' career

Good historical information about Jesus can be acquired by establishing the overall context of his public ministry. As noted earlier, he began his career by being baptized by John, an eschatological prophet, and an understanding of eschatology is pivotal to interpreting Jesus' world. Although eschatology is the doctrine of last things, the Jews who anticipated future redemption did not expect the end of the world. Instead, they thought that God would intervene in human history and make the world perfect: that is, the Jews would live in the Holy Land free of foreign domination and in peace and prosperity. Many Jews, including John, expected final judgment to precede this golden age, and he taught that people should repent in view of its imminence (Matthew 3:1-12; Luke 3:3-9). Since Jesus accepted John's baptism, he must have agreed with this message, at least in part. After Jesus' death and Resurrection, his followers believed that he would soon return to bring in the kingdom of God. The clearest expression of this belief is offered by Paul, whose earliest letter indicates that the Lord will return before most of the people then alive die (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). If Jesus began his career by being baptized by an eschatological prophet and if after his Crucifixion his followers expected him to return to save them (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28), it is highly probable that he himself shared the basic views of Jewish eschatology.

Many aspects of Jesus' career support the view that he expected divine intervention. One of the most common beliefs of Jewish eschatology was that God would restore the Twelve Tribes of Israel, including the Ten Lost Tribes. That Jesus shared this view is indicated by his call of 12 disciples, who apparently represented the 12 tribes (Matthew 19:28). Moreover, he proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God; he predicted the destruction of the Temple (Mark 13:2) and possibly its rebuilding "without hands" (Mark 14:58); he entered Jerusalem on a donkey, symbolizing his kingship (Mark 11:4-8; Matthew 21:1-11; see Zechariah 9:9 for the symbol); and he had a final meal with his disciples in which he said that he would "drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it in the new kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25). It is no surprise that after his death his disciples formed a small community that expected Jesus to return and inaugurate a kingdom in which the world would be transformed.

In this light, Jesus can be seen as an eschatological prophet, grouped historically in the same general category as John the Baptist and a few other 1st-century Jewish prophets, such as Theudas. Like John, Jesus believed in the coming judgment, but he stressed inclusion more than condemnation and welcomed "customs officers and sinners" in the coming kingdom of God (Matthew 11:18-19; 21:31-32). Moreover, his teaching was rich and multifaceted and was not limited to eschatological expectation.

Main aspects of Jesus' teaching

The kingdom of God

While the Gospels agree that Jesus proclaimed the eschatological kingdom of God, they offer different versions of his view of that kingdom. One is that the kingdom of God exists in heaven and that individuals may enter it upon death (Mark 9:47). Since God's power is in some respects omnipresent, Jesus may have seen "the kingdom," in the sense of God's presence, as being especially evident in his own words and deeds. The parable that the kingdom is like yeast that gradually leavens the entire loaf (Matthew 13:33) indicates that Jesus may have understood the kingdom of God to be beginning in the present. These other ways of viewing the kingdom do not, however, dominate the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. Statements about the heavenly kingdom, or the kingdom as partially present on earth, do not negate the eschatological nature of Jesus' message. The essence of his teaching is that the kingdom would come to earth in its full power and glory, at which time God's will would be done "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Jesus died before heaven came down to earth, and this, coupled with the Resurrection appearances, led his followers to expect him to return in the near future, ushering in the kingdom and ruling in God's stead.

Jesus himself apparently anticipated the arrival of a heavenly figure whom he called "the Son of Man," who would come on clouds of glory and gather the elect. The Hebrew Bible laid the foundation for this teaching in two ways. First, several prophets expected "the day of the Lord," when the wicked would be punished or destroyed and the good would be spared, though the emphasis was on punishment (Amos 5:12-20; Zephaniah 1; Joel 1:15; 2:1; Obadiah verse 15). Second, Daniel 7 describes various kingdoms that are represented by four fantastic beasts, all of which are destroyed. Then, according to Daniel, the Son of Man, representing the people of Israel, ascends to God and receives "dominion and glory and kingship" (Daniel 7:14), after which Israel is to reign supreme (7:27). These passages seem to have led Jesus to depict the arrival of the Son of Man from heaven as initiating the coming judgment and the redemption of Israel. The theme appears in numerous passages in the Synoptic Gospels (*see* Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5).

Paul's depiction of the coming kingdom also merits consideration (*italics indicate the closest agreements with the passages in the Gospels*):

For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that *we who are alive*, who are left until the appearance of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself *will come down from heaven with a command, with the voice of an archangel, and with a trumpet of God*; and the dead in Christ will rise first. *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds* together with them to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

Paul changed "the Son of Man" to "the Lord." It is not known whether Jesus intended to refer to himself or to another figure when he used the term *Son of Man* in this context (he did refer to himself as a Son of Man in the sense of "a human being," as in Matthew 8:20). By Paul's time, however, Christians made no such distinction and interpreted the heavenly Son of Man as the risen Jesus.

Jesus' belief that the Son of Man would soon arrive to usher in the kingdom is confirmed as authentic by multiple attestation. It is also "against the grain" of the Gospel According to Luke, since the author tended to downplay eschatology (e.g., Luke 17:21 and Acts, written by the same author). Moreover, Paul, whose letters are earlier than the Gospels, thought that most people then living would still be alive at the time of Jesus' return, whereas the Synoptic Gospels state that "some standing here will not taste death." The change from "most" to "some" probably demonstrates that the expectation was beginning to fade when the Gospels were written.

Inclusion in the kingdom

Several passages indicate that following Jesus was highly desirable for those who wished to be included in the coming kingdom. Jesus called on some people to give up everything in order to follow him (Mark 1:16-20; 10:17-31) and promised that their reward would be great in heaven. It cannot be said, however, that Jesus viewed personal loyalty as a prerequisite for inclusion in the kingdom. Often he simply urged all to fix their attention on the kingdom, not on material possessions (Matthew 6:19-21; 6:25-34; Luke 12:13-21). The majority of his teaching in the Synoptic Gospels is about God and the value of returning to him. Thus, in one parable the "prodigal son" returns to "the father," presumably representing God (Luke 15:11-32).

Perhaps faith in God and treating other people with love (Matthew 25:34-40) would suffice for entry into the kingdom. This seems to be indicated by the study of children, the childlike, the poor, the meek, the lowly, and the sinners, whom Jesus especially called and favoured. "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (Mark 10:14). In the coming kingdom, moreover, the last would be first (Mark 10:31); those who held the chief positions in the present world would be demoted (Luke 14:7-11); those who gave up everything and followed Jesus would receive "a hundred-fold" (Mark 10:30); and sinners, exemplified by the customs officers and prostitutes, also would be included in the kingdom (Matthew 21:31). The Beatitudes, drawn from the Sermon on the Mount, particularly stress Jesus' concern for the poor and the meek who will be blessed (Luke 6:20; Matthew 5:3-5). This emphasis probably rests in part on his sympathy for those of his own socioeconomic class or below it. Significantly, Jesus and his disciples were not themselves from the very bottom of society. His father worked with his hands, but he was not destitute, and some of Jesus' disciples were from families who owned fishing boats and houses (Mark 1:19, 29). They were not rich, but they also were not day labourers, beggars, or homeless, all of whom were the focus of Jesus' sympathy.

His message had a social dimension in two respects. He thought that in the kingdom there would be social relationships, not a collection of disembodied spirits floating on the clouds. He also believed that the disadvantaged of the present world would be in some sense or other advantaged in the new age (Matthew 5:3-11; Luke 6:20-23). It is possible that the promise of houses and lands in Matthew 19:29 and Mark 10:29-30 is metaphorical, but it is also possible that Jesus envisaged a future society in which property would still count, though it would be redistributed.

Jesus' appeal to sinners, according to Luke 5:32, meant that he called them to repent, but neither Matthew 9:13 nor Mark 2:17 mentions the word *repentance*. Most likely, Jesus' message was more radical than a simple call for repentance, a

proposition with which everyone would have agreed. He wanted sinners to accept him and his message, and he promised inclusion in the kingdom if they did so. This acceptance doubtless included moral reformation, but Jesus probably did not mean that they had to conform precisely to the standards of righteous Jewish society, which demanded repayment of money or goods obtained dishonestly, the addition of one-fifth as a fine, and the presentation of a guilt-offering in the Temple (Leviticus 6:1-7). Instead, Jesus called people to follow him and to be like his disciples. He evidently expected more people to be like him (accepting sinners, loving even enemies) than to join the small band that followed him. Although Jesus specifically called several followers, he seems not to have viewed personal faith in and commitment to him as absolute necessities (though faith in him became the standard requirement of early Christianity).

Whether he made this particular requirement or not, Jesus certainly attached great importance to his own mission and person. The Christian preoccupation with titles (did he think that he was the Messiah, Son of God, heavenly Son of Man, son of David, or king?) obscures the issue. Jesus sometimes called himself the *Son of Man*, though perhaps not meaning the heavenly Son of Man, and according to two passages he indirectly accepted the epithets *Messiah* (or *Christ*) and *Son of God* (Matthew 16:16; Mark 14:61-62). In both cases, however, the parallel passages (Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; 22:67-70; Matthew 26:63-64) are less strongly affirmative. In any case, Jesus apparently did not make an issue of titles. He called people to follow him and to devote themselves entirely to God, not to accord him a particular appellation. If he was preoccupied with titles, the evidence is so scant that it cannot be known what those titles meant to him or others. If, however, this uncertain evidence is overlooked, a clearer picture of his self-conception emerges: Jesus thought that he was God's last emissary, that he and his disciples would rule in the coming kingdom, and that people who accepted his message would be included in it. He may also have believed that inclusion in the kingdom would be granted to those who loved their neighbours and were meek and lowly of heart.

The relation of Jesus' teaching to the Jewish law

Jewish law is the focus of many passages in the Gospels. According to one set, especially prominent in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus admonished his followers to observe the law unwaveringly (Matthew 5:17-48). According to another set, he did not adhere strictly to the law himself and even transgressed current opinions about some aspects of it, especially the Sabbath (e.g., Mark 3:1-5). It is conceivable that both were true, that he was extremely strict about marriage and divorce (Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:2-12) but less stringent about the Sabbath. The study of Jesus and the law is, like any other study of law, highly technical. In general, the legal disputes in the Gospels fall within the parameters of those of 1st-century Judaism. Some opposed minor healing on the Sabbath (such as Jesus is depicted as performing), but others permitted it. Similarly, the Sadducees regarded the Pharisees' observance of the Sabbath as too lax. There also were many disagreements in 1st-century Judaism about purity. While some Jews washed their hands before eating (Mark 7:5), others did not; however, this conflict was not nearly as serious as that between the Shammaites and the Hillelites (the two main parties within Pharisaism) over menstrual purity. It is noteworthy that Jesus did not oppose the purity laws. On the contrary, according to Mark 1:40-44, he accepted the Mosaic laws on the purification of lepers (Leviticus 14).

In one statement in the Gospels, however, Jesus apparently opposed Jewish law as universally understood. Jews agreed not to eat carnivores, rodents, insects, and weasels, as well as pork and shellfish (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14), and the last two prohibitions set them apart from other people. According to Mark 7:19, Jesus “declared all foods clean.” If he did so, Jesus directly opposed the law of God as given to Moses. This seems to be only Mark’s inference, however, and is not in the parallel passage in Matthew 15. More importantly, Peter seems to have first learned of this after Jesus’ death, by means of a heavenly revelation (Acts 10:9-16). Perhaps Jesus did not, then, directly oppose any aspect of the sacred law.

He probably did, however, have legal disputes in which he defended himself by quoting scriptural precedent, which implies that he did not set himself against the law (Mark 2:23-28). His willingness to make his own decisions regarding the law was probably viewed with suspicion. Ordinarily, legal debates were between competing camps or schools, and individuals who decided how to observe laws were deemed troublemakers. That is, Jesus was *autonomous*; he interpreted the law according to his own rules and decided how to defend himself when criticized. He was by no means the only person in ancient Judaism who struck out on his own, acting in accord with his own perception of God’s will, and so he was not uniquely troubling in this respect, but such behaviour might nevertheless be suspicious.

Ethics

Along with his teachings on the kingdom and the law, Jesus advocated ethical purity. He demanded complete devotion to God, putting it ahead of devotion to self and even to family (Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 10:35-37), and taught that people should give up everything in order to obtain what was most precious (Matthew 13:44-46). According to Matthew 5:21-26 and 5:27-30, Jesus also held that observance of the law should be not only external but internal: hatred and lust, as well as murder and adultery, are wrong. The Jesus of Matthew in particular is a moral perfectionist (5:17-48). This fits quite well with the proclamation of the eschatological kingdom of God because Jesus believed, as fellow moral perfectionist Paul did, that divine intervention was near at hand, and therefore people had to be “blameless” for only a short time (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The difficulty with perfectionism in a continuing society is evident in later traditions regarding divorce. Paul quoted Jesus’ prohibition of it but then proceeded to make an exception—that if a Christian was married to an unbeliever, and the unbeliever wished a divorce, the Christian should agree to it—which he explicitly said was his own opinion, not the Lord’s (1 Corinthians 7:10-16). Similarly, Matthew depicts the disciples as responding to Jesus’ prohibition by proposing that if divorce is impossible it is better to avoid marriage (Matthew 19:10). The impossibility of being perfect during a full lifetime leads some modern interpreters to propose that Jesus intended these admonitions to be only an ideal, not a requirement. It is more likely, however, that Jesus the eschatological prophet regarded perfection as quite possible during the short period before the arrival of the Son of Man.

Miracles

A prophet and teacher of ethics, Jesus was also a healer and miracle worker. In the 1st century, healers and miracle workers were fairly well known, though not precisely common, and were not considered to be superhuman beings. Jesus himself granted

that others were capable of performing miracles, such as exorcisms, regardless of whether they followed him (Matthew 12:27; Mark 9:38-41; 6:7). Thus, the significance of this very important aspect of his life is frequently misunderstood. In Jesus' time, it was accepted that people could heal and perform nature miracles, such as causing rain. The question was, by what power, or spirit, they did so. Some of Jesus' opponents accused him of casting out demons by the prince of demons (Mark 3:19-22; Matthew 12:24; Luke 11:15). He countered that he did so by the spirit of God (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20). Obviously, many people disagreed, but this was the issue in Jesus' lifetime—not whether he, like a few others, could perform miracles, but by what power he did so. In his own day, miracles were proof neither of divinity nor of messiahship, and, at most, they might be used to validate an individual's message or way of life.

Controversy and danger in Galilee

Crowds and autonomy

Jesus' reputation as healer had one very important historical consequence: he attracted crowds, as the early chapters of Mark (e.g., 1:28, 45; 2:2) reveal. By doing so Jesus could spread his message to more people, but he also ran the risk of attracting those whose interest in him was purely selfish and who came hoping for cures only. Moreover, crowds were politically dangerous. One of the reasons Herod Antipas executed John the Baptist was because he drew such large crowds that Antipas feared an uprising (Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 18.116-119).

Although Jesus' message was not necessarily socially dangerous, the revolutionary implications of its promise of future reversal of status may have made some a little uneasy, and Jesus' promise to sinners might have been irritating to the scrupulous. Still, without crowds these aspects of his message would not have mattered very much. He did not strike at the heart of the Jewish religion as such: he did not deny the election of Abraham and the requirement of circumcision; nor did he denounce Moses and the law. Nevertheless, during his Galilean ministry some people regarded him with hostility and suspicion, partly because of the crowds and partly because of his autonomy. It was impossible to know what someone who was autonomous might do next, and this could be dangerous, especially if he had a following.

Scribes and Pharisees

In the 1st century, scribes and Pharisees were two largely distinct groups, though presumably some scribes were Pharisees. Scribes had knowledge of the law and could draft legal documents (contracts for marriage, divorce, loans, inheritance, mortgages, the sale of land, and the like). Every village had at least one scribe. Pharisees were members of a party that believed in resurrection and in following legal traditions that were ascribed not to the Bible but to "the traditions of the fathers." Like the scribes, they were also well-known legal experts: hence the partial overlap of membership of the two groups. It appears from subsequent rabbinic traditions, however, that most Pharisees were small landowners and traders, not professional scribes.

In Mark's view, Jesus' main adversaries in Galilee were scribes, but, according to Matthew, they were Pharisees. These apparently conflicting views are readily

reconciled: men knowledgeable about Jewish law and tradition would have scrutinized Jesus carefully, and it is likely that both scribes and Pharisees challenged his behaviour and teaching, as the Gospels indicate (e.g., Mark 2:6, 16; 3:22; Matthew 9:11; 12:2). According to one passage, the Pharisees (along with the Herodians, Mark adds) planned to destroy Jesus (Matthew 12:14; Mark 3:6). If the report of this plot is accurate, however, it seems that nothing came of it, since the Pharisees did not play a significant role in the events that led to Jesus' death. Mark and Luke assign them no role, while Matthew mentions them only once (Matthew 27:62).

Some people in Galilee may have distrusted Jesus, and legal experts probably challenged his interpretation of the law, but he was never charged formally with a serious legal offense, and opposition in Galilee did not lead to his death. Mortal danger faced Jesus only after he went to Jerusalem for what turned out to be the last time.

Jesus' last week

In about the year AD 30, Jesus and his disciples went to Jerusalem from Galilee to observe Passover. Presumably they went a week early, as did tens of thousands of other Jews (perhaps as many as 200,000 or 300,000), in order to be cleansed of "corpse-impurity," in accordance with Numbers 9:10-12 and 19:1-22. The Gospels do not mention purification, but they do place Jesus near the Temple in the days preceding Passover. He entered Jerusalem on a donkey, perhaps intending to recall Zechariah 9:9, which Matthew (21:5) quotes: "your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey." This touched off a demonstration by his followers, who hailed Jesus as either "Son of David" (Matthew 21:9) or as "the one who comes in the name of the Lord" (Mark 11:9). Matthew speaks of "crowds," which suggests that many people were involved, but the demonstration was probably fairly small. Jerusalem at Passover was dangerous; it was well known to both Caiaphas, who governed the city, and Pilate, the prefect to whom the high priest was responsible, that the festivals were likely times of uprisings. Pilate's troops patrolled the roofs of the porticoes of the Temple. A large demonstration would probably have led to Jesus' immediate arrest, but, because he lived for several more days, it is likely that the crowd was relatively small.

Jesus spent some time teaching and debating (Mark 12) and also told his disciples that the Temple would be destroyed (Mark 13:1-2). On one of the days of purification prior to the Passover sacrifice and meal, he performed his most dramatic symbolic action. He entered the part of the temple precincts where worshipers exchanged coins to pay the annual temple tax of two drachmas or bought pigeons to sacrifice for inadvertent transgressions of the law and as purificatory offerings after childbirth. Jesus turned over some of the tables (Mark 11:15-17), which led "the chief priests and the scribes" ("and the principal men of the people," Luke adds) to plan to have him executed (Mark 11:18; Luke 19:47; cf. Mark 14:1-2).

Later, the disciples found a room for the Passover meal, and one of them bought an animal and sacrificed it in the Temple (Mark 14:12-16; verse 16 states simply, "they prepared the passover"). Judas Iscariot, however, one of the 12, betrayed Jesus to the authorities. At the meal, Jesus blessed the bread and wine, designating the bread "my body" and the wine "my blood of the covenant" (Mark 14:22-25) or "the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25). He also stated that he

would not drink wine again until he drank it with the disciples in the kingdom (Matthew 26:29).

After supper, Jesus took his disciples to the Mount of Olives to pray. While he was there, Judas led armed men sent by the chief priests to arrest him (Mark 14:43-52). They took Jesus to Caiaphas, who had gathered some of his councillors (called collectively the Sanhedrin). Jesus was first accused of threatening to destroy the Temple, but this charge was not substantiated. Caiaphas then asked him if he was "the Christ, the Son of God." According to Mark (14:61-62), Jesus said "yes" and then predicted the arrival of the Son of Man. According to Matthew (26:63-64), he said, "You say so, *but* [emphasis added] I tell you that you will see the Son of Man," apparently implying the answer was no. According to Luke he was more ambiguous: "If I tell you, you will not believe" and "You say that I am" (22:67-70). (Some scholars believe that the New International Version misrepresents Jesus' answer in Matthew and Luke.)

Whatever the answer, Caiaphas evidently had already decided that Jesus had to die. He cried "blasphemy" and rent his own garments, a dramatic sign of mourning that the Hebrew Bible prohibits the high priest from making (Leviticus 21:10). The gesture was effective, and the councillors agreed that Jesus should be sent to Pilate with the recommendation to execute him.

It is doubtful that the titles *Messiah* and *Son of God* were actually the issue because there was no set meaning for either in 1st-century Judaism. As Mark, reprised by Matthew and Luke, presents the scene, when the attempt to have Jesus executed for threatening the Temple failed, Caiaphas simply declared whatever Jesus said (about which we must remain uncertain) to be blasphemy. This may be what convinced the council to recommend Jesus' execution. It appears, however, that the charges against Jesus that Caiaphas transmitted to Pilate (Mark 15:1-2, 26) may have included the accusation that Jesus claimed to be "king of the Jews."

Although Pilate did not care about the fine points of Jewish law or Jesus' alleged blasphemy, most likely he saw Jesus as a potential troublemaker and therefore ordered his execution. The Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John ascribe a rather good character to Pilate and show him as troubled over the decision but yielding to Jewish insistence (Matthew 27:11-26; Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28-40). In Luke, for example, Pilate states three times that he finds no fault with Jesus. This passage suggests that the early church, faced with making its way in the Roman Empire, did not wish its leader to be thought of as being truly guilty in Roman eyes. From other evidence Pilate is known to have been callous, cruel, and given to wanton executions (Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, 300-302). He was finally dismissed from office for executing a group of Samaritans (Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.85-89), and he probably sent Jesus to his death without anguishing over the decision.

Crucified as would-be "king of the Jews" (Mark 15:26 and parallels Matthew 27:37; Luke 23:38; John 19:19), Jesus also was taunted on the cross as the one who would destroy and rebuild the Temple (Mark 15:29). These two charges help to explain the decision to execute him. Jesus' minor assault on the Temple and prediction of its destruction seem to be what led to his arrest. His own thinking was almost certainly that God would destroy the Temple as part of the new kingdom, perhaps rebuilding it himself (Mark 14:58). The Temple Scroll from Qumran has a similar expectation. Caiaphas and his advisers probably understood Jesus well enough: they knew that he was a prophet, not a demolition expert, and that his disciples could not damage the Temple seriously even if they were allowed to attack its walls with picks and sledges.

But someone who spoke about the Temple's destruction, and who turned over tables in its precincts, was clearly dangerous. These were inflammatory acts in a city that, at festival time, was prone to uprisings that could lead to the death of many thousands of Jews. Caiaphas probably had the thought that John 11:50 attributes to him, that "it is better to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." The high priest, under Roman rule, was responsible for keeping the peace, and he and his advisers acted accordingly.

The accusation that Jesus claimed to be "king of the Jews" was also sufficient to account for his execution. There is no direct evidence that Jesus ever said, "I am the king," but his preaching on "the kingdom of God" was inflammatory. This phrase could have been interpreted several ways, but it certainly did not mean that Rome would continue to govern Judaea. Many people resented Roman rule, and Rome was quick to dispatch those who became too vocal in their opposition. Nevertheless, Pilate did not think that Jesus and his followers constituted a military threat. Had he thought so, he would have had the disciples, too, executed, either at the time or when they returned to Jerusalem to take up their new mission. Instead, the prefect limited his actions to their charismatic leader and turned Jesus over to his soldiers for execution. They took him and two thieves outside Jerusalem and crucified them.

Although Caiaphas did not think that Jesus could actually destroy the Temple, and Pilate did not believe that he could organize a serious revolt, inflammatory speech was a problem. Moreover, Jesus had a following, the city was packed with pilgrims who were celebrating the exodus from Egypt and Israel's liberation from foreign bondage, and Jesus had committed a small act of violence in the sacred precincts. He was dangerous, and his execution is perfectly understandable in this historical context; that is, he was executed for being what he was, an eschatological prophet. Caiaphas and his councillors fulfilled their mandate to keep the peace and suppress any signs of an uprising. Pilate presumably acted from similar motives. It is unlikely that the responsible parties lost much sleep over their decision; they were doing their duty.

Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom and his apparent threats against the Temple were based on his view that the kingdom was at hand and that he and his disciples would soon feast in it. It is possible that even to the end he expected divine intervention because among his last words was the cry "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34).

The Resurrection



The Deposition of Christ, oil on canvas by Caravaggio,

What happened next changed history in a way quite different from what Jesus seems to have anticipated. Some of his followers claimed to have seen him after his death. The details are uncertain, since the sources disagree on who saw him and where he was seen (the final sections of Matthew, Luke, and John; the beginning of Acts; and the list in Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians, 15:5-8). According to Matthew, an angel showed the empty tomb to Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" and instructed them to tell the disciples to go to Galilee. While still in Jerusalem, the two Marys saw Jesus, who told them the same thing, and he appeared once more, to the disciples in Galilee. Matthew's account is implied in Mark 14:28 and 16:7, though the

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Gospel of Mark does not have a resurrection story, ending instead with the empty tomb (Mark 16:8; translations print scribal additions in brackets). According to Luke, however, while the disciples remained in Jerusalem, the women (Mary Magdalene; Joanna; Mary, the mother of James; and "the other women") found the empty tomb. "Two men in dazzling clothes" told them that Jesus had been raised. Later, Jesus appeared to two followers on the road to Emmaus (near Jerusalem), then to Peter, and later to the disciples. John (now including chapter 21, usually thought to be an appendix) mentions sightings in Galilee and Jerusalem. Acts provides a more extensive series of appearances than Luke, though written by the same author, but like it places all of these in or near Jerusalem. Paul's list of people to whom Jesus appeared does not agree very closely with the other accounts (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

Because of the uncertain evidence it is hard to say what really happened. Two points are important: the sources describe the resurrected Jesus as neither a resuscitated corpse, a badly wounded man staggering around, nor as a ghost. According to Luke, the first two disciples to see Jesus walked with him for several hours without recognizing him (24:13-32). Luke also reports that Jesus could disappear and reappear at will (24:31, 36). For Paul, the bodies of Christian believers will be transformed to be like the Lord's, and the resurrection body will not be "flesh and blood" (1 Corinthians 15:42-53). According to these two authors, Jesus was substantially transformed, but he was not a ghost. Luke says this explicitly (24:37-39), and Paul insists on using the word *body* as part of the term *spiritual body* rather than *spirit* or *ghost*. Luke and Paul do not agree entirely, since Luke attributes "flesh and bones" to the risen Jesus (24:39). Luke's account nevertheless requires a transformation. The authors, in other words, were trying to explain something for which they did not have a precise vocabulary, as Paul's term *spiritual body* makes clear.

It is difficult to accuse these sources, or the first believers, of deliberate fraud. A plot to foster belief in the Resurrection would probably have resulted in a more consistent story. Instead, there seems to have been a competition: "I saw him," "so did I," "the women saw him first," "no, I did; they didn't see him at all," and so on. Moreover, some of the witnesses of the Resurrection would give their lives for their belief. This also makes fraud unlikely.

The uncertainties are substantial, but, given the accounts in these sources, certainty is unobtainable. We may say of the disciples' experiences of the Resurrection approximately what the sources allow us to say of the life and message of Jesus: we have fairly good general knowledge, though many details are uncertain or dubious.

E.P. Sanders

The picture of Christ in the early church: The Apostles' Creed

Even before the Gospels were written, Christians were reflecting upon the meaning of what Jesus had been and what he had said and done. It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose that such reflection is a later accretion upon the simple message of the Gospels. On the contrary, the early Christian communities were engaged in witness and worship from the very beginning. The forms of that witness and worship were also the forms of the narratives in the Gospel accounts. From this fact it follows that to understand the Gospel accounts regarding Jesus we must consider the faith of the

early church regarding Christ. In this sense it is valid to maintain that there is no distinction between "the Jesus of history" and "the Christ of faith," and that the only way to get at the former is by the latter. Christology, the doctrine about Christ, is then as old as Christianity itself.

To comprehend the faith of the early church regarding Christ, we must turn to the writings of the New Testament, where that faith found embodiment. It was also embodied in brief confessions or creeds, but these have not been preserved for us complete in their original form. What we have are fragments of those confessions or creeds in various books of the New Testament, snatches from them in other early Christian documents, and later forms of them in Christian theology and liturgy. The so-called Apostles' Creed is one such later form. It did not achieve its present form until quite late; just how late is a matter of controversy. But in its earliest ancestry it is very early indeed, perhaps dating back to the 1st century. And its confession regarding Christ is probably the earliest core, around which later elaborations of it were composed. Allowing for such later elaboration, we may say that in the Apostles' Creed we have a convenient summary of what the early church believed about Christ amid all the variety of its expression and formulation. The creeds were a way for Christians to explain what they meant by their acts of worship. When they put "I believe" or "We believe" at the head of what they confessed about God and Christ, they meant that their declarations rested upon faith, not merely upon observation.

Preexistence

The statement "I believe" also indicated that Christ was deserving of worship and faith, and that he was therefore on a level with God. At an early date, possibly as early as the words of Paul in Phil. 2:6-11, Christian theology began to distinguish three stages in the career of Jesus Christ: his preexistence with the Father before all things; his Incarnation and humiliation in "the days of His flesh" (Heb. 5:7), and his glorification, beginning with the Resurrection and continuing forever.

Probably the most celebrated statement of the preexistence of Christ is the opening verses of the Gospel of St. John. Here Christ is identified as the incarnation of the Word (Logos) through which God made all things in the beginning, a Word existing in relation to God before the creation. The sources of this doctrine have been sought in Greek philosophy, both early and late, as well as in the Jewish thought of Philo and of the Palestinian rabbis. Whatever its source, the doctrine of the Logos in John is distinctive by virtue of the fact that it identifies the Logos with a specific historical person. Other writings of the New Testament also illustrate the faith of the early Christians regarding the preexistence of Christ. The opening chapters of both Colossians and Hebrews speak of Christ as the preexistent one through whom all things were created, therefore as distinct from the created order of things in both time and preeminence; the preposition "before" in Col. 1:17 apparently refers both to his temporal priority and to his superior dignity. Yet before any theological reflection about the nature of this preexistence had been able to find terms and concepts, the early Christians were worshipping Christ as divine. Phil. 2:6-11 may be a quotation from a hymn used in such worship. Theological reflection told them that if this worship was legitimate, he must have existed with the Father "before all ages."

Jesus Christ

By the time the text of the creed was established, this was the usual designation for the Saviour. Originally, of course, "Jesus" had been his given name, meaning "Yahweh saves," or "Yahweh will save" (see Matt. 1:21), while "Christ" was the Greek translation of the title "Messiah." Some passages of the New Testament still used "Christ" as a title (e.g., Luke 24:26; II John 7), but it is evident from Paul's usage that the title became simply a proper name very early. Most of the Gentiles took it to be a proper name, and it was as "Christians" that the early believers were labelled (Acts 11:26). In the most precise language, the term "Jesus" was reserved for the earthly career of the Lord; but it seems from liturgical sources that it may actually have been endowed with greater solemnity than the name "Christ." Within a few years after the beginnings of the Christian movement, Jesus, Christ, Jesus Christ, and Christ Jesus could be used almost interchangeably, as the textual variants in the New Testament indicate. Only in modern times has it become customary to distinguish sharply among them for the sake of drawing a line between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, and this only in certain circles. The theologians and people of many churches still use phrases like "the life of Christ," because "Christ" is primarily a name. It is difficult to imagine how it could be otherwise when the Old Testament implications of the title have become a secondary consideration in its use—a process already evident within the New Testament.

God's only son

The declaration that Jesus Christ is the son of God is one of the most universal in the New Testament, most of whose books refer to him that way. The Gospels do not quote him as using the title for himself in so many words, although sayings like Matt. 11:27 come close to it. There are some instances where the usage of the Gospels appears to echo the more general implications of divine sonship in the Old Testament as a prerogative of Israel or of the true believer. Usually, however, it is evident that the evangelists, like Paul, meant some special honour by the name. The evangelists associated the honour with the story of Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:17) and transfiguration (Matt. 17:5), Paul with the faith in the Resurrection (Rom. 1:4). From this association some have argued that "Son of God" in the New Testament never referred to the preexistence of Christ. But it is clear in John and in Paul that this implication was not absent, even though it was not as prominent as it became soon thereafter. What made the implication of preexistence more prominent in later Christian use of the term "Son of God" was the clarification of the doctrine of the Trinity, where "Son" was the name for the eternal Second Person (Matt. 28:19). As the Gospels show, the application of the name "Son of God" to Jesus was offensive to the Jews, probably because it seemed to smack of gentile polytheism. This also made it all too intelligible to the pagans, as early heresies indicate. Facing both the Jews and the Greeks, the apostolic church confessed that Jesus Christ was "God's only Son": the Son of God, in antithesis to Jewish claims that the eternal could have no sons; the only Son, in antithesis to Greek myths of divine procreation.

The Lord

As passages like Rom. 1:4, show, the phrase "Jesus Christ our Lord" was one of the ways the apostolic church expressed its understanding of what he had been

and done. Luke even put the title into the mouth of the Christmas angel (Luke 2:11). From the way the name "Lord" (*Kyrios*) was employed during the 1st century it is possible to see several implications in the Christian use of it for Christ. The Christians meant that there were not many divine and lordly beings in the universe, but only one *Kyrios* (I Cor. 8:5-6). They meant that the Roman Caesar was not the lord of all, as he was styled by his worshippers, but that only Christ was Lord (Rev. 17:14). And they meant that Yahweh, the covenant God of the Old Testament, whose name they pronounced as "Lord," had come in Jesus Christ to establish the new covenant (see Rom. 10:12-13). Like "Son of God," therefore, the name *Kyrios* was directed against both parts of the audience to which the primitive church addressed its proclamation. At times it stood particularly for the risen and glorified Christ, as in Acts 2:36; but in passages that echoed the Old Testament it was sometimes the preexistence that was being primarily emphasized (Matt. 22:44). Gradually "our Lord," like "Christ," became a common way of speaking about Jesus Christ, even when the speaker did not intend to stress his lordship over the world.

Incarnation and humiliation

Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary

Earlier forms of the creed seem to have read: "Born of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary." The primary affirmation of this article is that the Son of God, the Word, had become man or, as John's Gospel put it, "flesh" (John 1:14). Preexistence and Incarnation presuppose each other in the Christian view of Jesus Christ. Hence the New Testament assumed his preexistence when it talked about his becoming man; and when it spoke of him as preexistent, it was ascribing this preexistence to him whom it was describing in the flesh. It may be that the reference in the creed to the Virgin Mary was intended to stress primarily her function as the guarantee of Christ's true humanity, but the creed also intended to teach the supernatural origin of that humanity. Although it is true that neither Paul nor John makes reference to it, the teaching about the virginal conception of Jesus, apparently based upon Isa. 7:14, was sufficiently widespread in the 1st century to warrant inclusion in both Matthew and Luke, as well as in creeds that date back to the 1st century. As it stands, the creedal statement is a paraphrase of Luke 1:35. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit was also involved in the baptism and the Resurrection of Jesus.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried

To a reader of the Gospels, the most striking feature of the creed is probably its omission of that which occupied a major part of the Gospels, the story of Jesus' life and teachings. In this respect there is a direct parallel between the creed and the Epistles of the New Testament, especially those of Paul. Judging by the amount of space they devoted to the Passion story, even the writers of the Gospels were apparently more interested in these few days of Jesus' life than they were in anything else he had said or done. The reason for this was the faith underlying both the New Testament and the creed, that the events of Jesus' Passion, death, and Resurrection were the events by which God had accomplished the salvation of human beings. The Gospels found their climax in

those events, and the other material in them led up to those events. The Epistles applied those events to concrete situations in the early church. From the way Paul could speak of the Cross (Phil. 2:6-11) and of "the night when he [Jesus] was betrayed" (I Cor. 11:23), it seems that before our Gospels came into existence the church commemorated the happenings associated with what came to be called Holy Week. Some of the earliest Christian art was a portrayal of these happenings, another indication of their importance in the cultic and devotional life of early Christianity. How did the Cross effect the salvation of human beings? The answers of the New Testament and the early church to this question involved a variety of metaphors: Christ offered himself as a sacrifice to God; his life was a ransom for many; his death made mankind alive; his suffering was an example to people when they must suffer; he was the Second Adam, creating a new humanity; his death shows people how much God loves them; and others. Every major atonement theory of Christian theological history discussed below was anticipated by one or another of these metaphors. The New Testament employed them all to symbolize something that could be described only symbolically, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (II Cor. 5:19).

He descended into hell

This phrase was probably the last to be added to the creed. Its principal source in the New Testament was the description in I Pet. 3:18-20 of Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison. Originally the descent into hell may have been identified with the death of Christ, when he entered the abode of the dead in the underworld. But in the time before it entered the creed, the descent was frequently taken to mean that Christ had gone to rescue the souls of the Old Testament faithful from the underworld, from what western Catholic theology eventually called the *limbo patrum*. Among some of the Church Fathers the descent into hell had come to mean Christ's declaration of his triumph over the powers of hell. Despite its subsequent growth in importance, however, the doctrine of the descent into hell apparently did not form an integral part of the apostolic preaching about Christ.

Glorification

The third day he rose again from the dead

The writers of the New Testament nowhere made the Resurrection of Christ a matter for argument, but everywhere asserted it and assumed it. With it began that state in the history of Jesus Christ that was still continuing, his elevation to glory. They used it as a basis for three kinds of affirmations. The Resurrection of Christ was the way God bore witness to his son, "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4); this theme was prominent also in the Book of Acts. The Resurrection was also the basis for the Christian hope of life after death (I Thess. 4:14), and without it that hope was said to be baseless (I Cor. 15:12-20). The Resurrection of Christ was also the ground for admonitions to manifest a "newness of life" (Rom. 6:4) and to "seek the things that are above" (Col. 3:1). The writers of the New Testament themselves expressed no doubt that the Resurrection had really happened. But

Paul's discussion in I Cor. 15 shows that among those who heard the Christian message there was such doubt, as well as efforts to rationalize the Resurrection. The differences among the Gospels, and between the Gospels and Paul, suggest that from the outset a variety of traditions existed regarding the details of the Resurrection. But such differences only serve to emphasize how universal the faith in the Resurrection was amid this variety of traditions.

He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the father almighty

As indicated earlier, the narrative of the Ascension is peculiar to Luke-Acts, but other parts of the New Testament may refer to it. Eph. 4:8-10 may be such a reference, but many interpreters hold that for Paul Resurrection was identical with Ascension. That, they maintain, is why he could speak of the appearance of the risen Christ to him in continuity with the appearances to others (I Cor. 15:5-8) despite the fact that, in the chronology of the creed, the Ascension intervened between them. Session at the right hand of the Father was apparently a Christian interpretation of Ps. 110:1. It implied the elevation—or, as the doctrine of preexistence became clearer, the restoration—of Christ to a position of honour with God. Taken together, the Ascension and the session were a way of speaking about the presence of Christ with the Father during the interim between the Resurrection and the Second Advent. From Eph. 4:8-16, it is evident that this way of speaking was by no means inconsistent with another Christian tenet, the belief that Christ was still present in and with his church. It was, in fact, the only way to state that tenet in harmony with the doctrine of the Resurrection.

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead

The creed concludes its Christological section with the doctrine of the Second Advent: the First Advent was a coming into the flesh, the Second Advent a coming in glory. Much controversy among modern scholars has been occasioned by the role of this doctrine in the early church. Those who maintain that Jesus erroneously expected the early end of the world have often interpreted Paul as the first of those who began the adjustment to a delay in the end, with John's Gospel as a more advanced stage of that adjustment. Those who hold that the imminence of the end was a continuing aspect of human history as Jesus saw it also maintain that this phrase of the creed was a statement of that imminence, without any timetable necessarily implied. From the New Testament it seems that both the hope of the Second Coming and a faith in the continuing presence of Christ belonged to the outlook of the apostolic church, and that seems to be what the creed meant. The phrase "the quick and the dead" is a summary of passages like I Cor. 15:51-52 and I Thess. 4:15-17.

In order to complete the confession of the creed regarding the glorification of Christ, the Nicene Creed added the phrase: "Of His kingdom there shall be no end." This was a declaration that Christ's return as judge would usher in the full exercise of his reign over the world. Such was the expectation of the apostolic church, based upon what it knew and believed about Jesus Christ.

The dogma of Christ in the ancient councils

The main lines of orthodox Christian teaching about the person of Christ were set by the New Testament and the ancient creeds. But what was present there in a germinal form became a clear statement of Christian doctrine when it was formulated as dogma. In one way or another, the first four ecumenical councils were all concerned with the formulation of the dogma regarding the person of Christ—his relation to the Father, and the relation of the divine and the human in him.

Such a formulation became necessary because teachings arose within the Christian community that seemed to threaten what the church believed and confessed about Christ. Both the dogma and the heretical teachings against which the dogma was directed are therefore part of the history of Jesus Christ.

The councils of Nicaea and Constantinople

Early heresies

From the outset, Christianity has had to contend with those who misinterpreted the person and mission of Jesus. Both the New Testament and the early confessions of the church referred and replied to such misinterpretations. As the Christian movement gained adherents from the non-Jewish world, it had to explain Christ in the face of new challenges.

These misinterpretations touched both the question of his humanity and the matter of his deity. A concern to safeguard the true humanity of Jesus led some early Christians to teach that Jesus of Nazareth, an ordinary man, was adopted as the Son of God in the moment of his baptism or after his Resurrection; this heresy was called adoptionism. Gnostics and others wanted to protect him against involvement in the world of matter, which they regarded as essentially evil, and therefore taught that he had only an apparent, not a real body; they were called docetists. Most of the struggle over the person of Christ, however, dealt with the question of his relation to the Father. Some early views were so intent upon asserting his identity with the Father that the distinction of his person was lost and he became merely a manifestation of the one God. Because of this idea of Christ as a "mode" of divine self-manifestation, proponents of this view were dubbed "modalists"; from an early supporter of the view it was called "Sabellianism." Other interpretations of the person of Christ in relation to God went to the opposite extreme. They insisted so strenuously upon the distinctness of his person from that of the Father that they subordinated him to the Father. Many early exponents of the doctrine of the Logos were also subordinationists, so that the Logos idea itself became suspect in some quarters. What was needed was a framework of concepts with which to articulate the doctrine of Christ's oneness with the Father and yet distinctness from the Father, and thus to answer the question (Adolf von Harnack): "Is the Divinity which has appeared on earth and reunited men with god identical with that supreme Divinity which governs heaven and earth, or is it a demigod?"

Nicaea

That question forced itself upon the church through the teachings of Arius. He maintained that the Logos was the first of the creatures, called into being by God as the agent or instrument through which he was to make all things. Christ was thus less than God, but more than man; he was divine, but he was not God. To meet the challenge of Arianism, which threatened to split the church, the newly converted emperor Constantine convoked in 325 the first ecumenical council of the Christian church at Nicaea. The private opinions of the attending bishops were anything but unanimous, but the opinion that carried the day was that espoused by the young presbyter Athanasius, who later became bishop of Alexandria. The Council of Nicaea determined that Christ was "begotten, not made," that he was therefore not creature but creator. It also asserted that he was "of the same essence as the Father" (*homoousios to patri*). In this way it made clear its basic opposition to subordinationism, even though there could be, and were, quarrels about details. It was not equally clear how the position of Nicaea and of Athanasius differed from modalism. Athanasius asserted that it was not the Father nor the Holy Spirit, but only the Son that became incarnate as Jesus Christ. But in order to assert this, he needed a more adequate terminology concerning the persons in the Holy Trinity. So the settlement at Nicaea regarding the person of Christ made necessary a fuller clarification of the doctrine of the Trinity, and that clarification in turn made possible a fuller statement of the doctrine of the person of Christ.

Constantinople

Nicaea did not put an end to the controversies but only gave the parties a new rallying point. Doctrinal debate was complicated by the rivalry among bishops and theologians as well as by the intrusion of imperial politics that had begun at Nicaea. Out of the post-Nicene controversies came that fuller statement of the doctrine of the Trinity which was needed to protect the Nicene formula against the charge of failing to distinguish adequately between the Father and the Son. Ratified at the Council of Constantinople in 381, but since lost, that statement apparently made official the terminology developed by the supporters of Nicene orthodoxy in the middle of the 4th century: one divine essence, three divine persons (*mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*). The three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, were distinct from one another but were equal in their eternity and power. Now it was possible to teach, as Nicaea had, that Christ was "of the same essence as the Father" without arousing the suspicion of modalism. Although this doctrine seemed to make problematical the unity of God, it did provide an answer to the first of the two issues confronted by the church in its doctrine of the person of Christ—the issue of Christ's relation to the Father. It now became necessary to clarify the second issue—the relation of the divine and the human within Christ.

The councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon

By excluding several extreme positions from the circle of orthodoxy, the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the 4th century determined the course of subsequent discussion about the person of Christ. It also provided the terminology for that discussion, since 5th-century theologians were able to describe the relation between the divine and the human Christ by analogy to the relation between the

Father and the Son in the Trinity. The term that was found to express this relation in Christ was "nature," *physis*. There were three divine persons in one divine essence; such was the outcome of the controversies in the 4th century. But there were also two natures, one of them divine and the other human, in the one person Jesus Christ. Over the relation between these two natures the theologians of the 5th century carried on their controversy.

The abstract questions with which they sometimes dealt in that controversy, some of them almost unintelligible to a modern mind, must not be permitted to obscure the fact that a basic issue of the Christian faith was at stake: how can Jesus Christ be said to partake of both identity with God and brotherhood with humanity?

The parties

During the half century after the Council of Constantinople several major points of emphasis developed in the doctrine of the person of Christ; characteristically, these are usually defined by the episcopal see that espoused them. There was a way of talking about Christ that was characteristic of the see at Alexandria. It stressed the divine character of all that Jesus Christ had been and done, but its enemies accused it of absorbing the humanity of Christ in his divinity. The mode of thought and language employed at Antioch, on the other hand, emphasized the true humanity of Christ; but its opponents maintained that in so doing it had split Christ into two persons, each of whom maintained his individual selfhood while they acted in concert with each other. Western theology was not as abstract as either of these alternatives. Its central emphasis was a practical concern for human salvation and for as irenic a settlement of the conflict as was possible without sacrificing that concern. Even more than in the 4th century, considerations of imperial politics were always involved in conciliar actions, together with the fear in countries like Egypt that Constantinople might come to dominate them. Thus a decision regarding the relation between the divine and the human in Christ could be simultaneously a decision regarding the political situation. Nevertheless, the settlements at which the councils of the 5th century arrived may be and are regarded as normative in the church long after their political setting has disappeared.

The conflict between Alexandria and Antioch came to a head when Nestorius, taking exception to the use of the title "Mother of God" or, more literally, "God-Bearer" (*Theotokos*) for the Virgin Mary, insisted that she was only "Christ-Bearer." In this insistence the Antiochian emphasis upon the distinction between the two natures in Christ made itself heard throughout the church. The Alexandrian theologians responded by charging that Nestorius was dividing the person of Christ, which they represented as so completely united that, in the famous phrase of Cyril, there was "one nature of the Logos which became incarnate." By this he meant that there was only one nature, the divine, before the Incarnation, but that after the Incarnation there were two natures indissolubly joined in one person; Christ's human nature had never had an independent existence. There were times when Cyril appeared to be saying that there was "one nature of the incarnate Logos" even after the Incarnation, but his most precise formulations avoided this language.

The Council of Ephesus in 431 was one in a series of gatherings called to settle this conflict, some by one party and some by the other. The actual settlement

was not accomplished, however, until the calling of the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

The settlement at Chalcedon

The basis of the settlement was the Western understanding of the two natures in Christ, as formulated in the *Tome* of Pope Leo I of Rome. Chalcedon declared: "We all unanimously teach . . . one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in deity and perfect in humanity . . . in two natures, without being mixed, transmuted, divided, or separated. The distinction between the natures is by no means done away with through the union, but rather the identity of each nature is preserved and concurs into one person and being." In this formula the valid emphases of both Alexandria and Antioch came to expression; both the unity of the person and the distinctness of the natures were affirmed. Therefore the decision of the Council of Chalcedon has been the basic statement of the doctrine of the person of Christ for most of the church ever since. The western part of the church went on to give further attention to the doctrine of the work of Christ. In the eastern part of the church the Alexandrians and the Antiochians continued the controversies that had preceded Chalcedon, but they clashed now over the question of how to interpret Chalcedon. The controversy over the Monophysite and the Monothelite heresies was an effort to clarify the interpretation of Chalcedon, with the result that the extremes of the Alexandrian position were condemned just as the Nestorian extreme of the Antiochian had been.

Emerging from all this theological discussion was an interpretation of the person of Christ that affirmed both his oneness with God and his oneness with humanity while still maintaining the oneness of his person. Interestingly, the liturgies of the church had maintained this interpretation at a time when the theologians of the church were still struggling for clarity; and the final solution was a scientifically precise restatement of what had been present germinally in the liturgical piety of the church. In the formula of Chalcedon that solution finally found the framework of concepts and of vocabulary that it needed to become intellectually consistent. In one sense, therefore, what Chalcedon formulated was what Christians had been believing from the beginning; but in another sense it represented a development from the earlier stages of Christian thought.

The interpretation of Christ in Western faith and thought

With the determination of the orthodox teaching of the church regarding the person of Christ, it still remained necessary to clarify the doctrine of the work of Christ. While it had been principally in the East that the discussion of the former question was carried on—though with important additions from the West, as we have seen—it was the Western Church that provided the most detailed answers to the question: granted that this is what Jesus Christ was, how are we to describe what it is that he did?

Doctrines of the person and work of Christ

The medieval development

The most representative spokesman of the Western Church on this question, as on most others, was St. Augustine. His deep understanding of the meaning of human sin was matched by his detailed attention to the meaning of divine grace. Central to that attention was his emphasis upon the humanity of Jesus Christ as man's assurance of his salvation, an emphasis to which he gave voice in a variety of ways. The humanity of Christ showed how God elevated the humble; it was the link between the physical nature of human beings and the spiritual nature of God; it was the sacrifice which the human race offered to God; it was the foundation of a new humanity, recreated in Christ as the old humanity had been created in Adam—in these and other ways Augustine sought to describe the importance of the Incarnation for the redemption of man. By combining this stress upon the humanity of Christ as the Saviour with a doctrine of the Trinity that was orthodox but nevertheless highly creative and original, St. Augustine put his mark indelibly upon Western piety and theology, which, in Anselm and in the reformers, sought further for adequate language in which to describe God's deed of reconciliation in Jesus Christ.

During the formative centuries of Christian dogma, there had been many ways of describing that reconciliation, most of them having some precedent in biblical speech. One of the most prominent pictures of the reconciliation was that connected with the biblical metaphor of ransom: Satan held the human race captive in its sin and corruptibility, and the death of Christ was the ransom paid to the Devil as the price for setting mankind free. A related metaphor was that of the victory of Christ: Christ entered into mortal combat with Satan for the human race, and the winner was to be lord; although the Crucifixion appeared to be Christ's capitulation to the enemy, his Resurrection broke the power of the Devil and gave the victory to Christ, granting to mankind the gift of immortality. From the Old Testament and the Epistle to the Hebrews came the image of Christ as the sacrificial victim who was offered up to God as a means of stilling the divine anger. From the sacrament of penance came the idea, most fully developed by St. Anselm, that the death of Christ was a vicarious satisfaction rendered for mankind. Like the New Testament, the Church Fathers could admonish their hearers to learn from the death of Christ how to suffer patiently. They could also point to the suffering and death of Christ as the supreme illustration of how much God loves mankind. As in the New Testament, therefore, so in the tradition of the church there were many figures of speech to represent the miracle of the reunion between man and God effected in the God-man Christ Jesus.

Common to all these figures of speech was the desire to do two things simultaneously: to emphasize that the reunion was an act of God, and to safeguard the participation of man in that act. Some theories were so "objective" in their emphasis upon the divine initiative that man seemed to be almost a pawn in the transaction between God in Christ and the Devil. Other theories so "subjectively" concentrated their attention upon man's involvement and man's response that the full scope of the redemption could vanish from sight. It was in Anselm of Canterbury that Western Christendom found a theologian who could bring together elements from many theories into one doctrine of the Atonement, summarized in his book, *Cur Deus homo?* According to this doctrine, sin was a violation of the honour of God. God offered man life if he rendered satisfaction for that violation; but the longer man lived, the worse the situation became. Only a life that was truly human and yet had infinite worth would have

been enough to give such a satisfaction to the violated honour of God on behalf of the entire human race. Such a life was that of Jesus Christ, whom the mercy of God sent as a means of satisfying the justice of God. Because he was true man, his life and death could be valid for men; because he was true God, his life and death could be valid for *all* men. By accepting the fruits of his life and death, mankind could receive the benefits of his satisfaction. With some relatively minor alterations, Anselm's doctrine of Atonement passed over into the theology of the Latin church, forming the basis of both Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant ideas of the work of Christ. It owed its acceptance to many factors, not the least of them being the way it squared with the liturgy and art of the West. The crucifix has become the traditional symbol of Christ in the Western Church, reinforcing and being reinforced by the satisfaction theory of the Atonement.

Scholastic theology, therefore, did not modify traditional ways of speaking about either the person or the work of Christ as sharply as it did, for example, some of the ways the Church Fathers had spoken about the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. The major contribution of the scholastic period to the Christian conception of Jesus Christ appears to lie in the way it managed to combine theological and mystical elements. Alongside the growth of Christological dogma and sometimes in apparent competition with it was the development of a view of Christ that sought personal union with him rather than accurate concepts about him. Such a view of Christ appeared occasionally in the writings of Augustine, but it was in men like Bernard of Clairvaux that it attained both its fullest expression and its most adequate harmonization with the dogmatic view. The relation between the divine and the human natures in Christ, as formulated in ancient dogma, provided the mystic with the ladder he needed to ascend through the man Jesus to the eternal Son of God, and through him to a mystical union with the Holy Trinity; this had been anticipated in the mystical theology of some of the Greek fathers. At the same time the dogma saved mysticism from the pantheistic excesses to which it might otherwise have gone; for the doctrine of the two natures meant that the humanity of the Lord was not an expendable element in Christian piety, mystical or not, but its indispensable presupposition and the continuing object of its adoration, in union with his deity. As a matter of fact, another contribution of the medieval development was the increased emphasis of St. Francis of Assisi and his followers upon the human life of Jesus. These brotherhoods cultivated a more practical and ethical version of mystical devotion, to be distinguished from speculative and contemplative mysticism. Their theme became the imitation of Christ in a life of humility and obedience. With it came a new appreciation of that true humanity of Christ which the dogma had indeed affirmed, but which theologians had been in danger of reducing to a mere dogmatic concept. As Henry Thode and others have suggested, this new appreciation is reflected in the way painters like Giotto began to portray Jesus, in contrast with their Western predecessors and especially with the stylized picture of Christ in Byzantine icon painting.

The Reformation and classical Protestantism

The attitude of the reformers toward traditional conceptions of the person and work of Christ was conservative. Insisting for both religious and political reasons that they were orthodox, they altered little in the Christological dogma. Martin Luther and John Calvin gave the dogma a new meaning when they related it to

their doctrine of justification by grace through faith. Because of his interpretation of sin as the captivity of the will, Luther also revived the patristic metaphor of the Atonement as the victory of Christ; it is characteristic of him that he wrote hymns for both Christmas and Easter but not for Lent. The new attention to the Bible that came with the Reformation created interest in the earthly life of Jesus, while the Reformation idea of "grace alone" and of the sovereignty of God even in his grace made the deity of Christ a matter of continuing importance.

In the ideas about the Lord's Supper set forth by Huldrych Zwingli, Luther thought he saw a threat to the orthodox doctrine of Christ, and he denounced those doctrines vehemently. As this controversy progressed, Luther interpreted the ancient dogma of the two natures to mean that the omnipresence of the divine nature was communicated to the human nature of Christ, and that therefore Christ as both God and man was present everywhere and at all times. Although he repudiated both Luther's and Zwingli's theories, Calvin was persuaded that the ancient Christological dogma was true to the biblical witness and he permitted no deviation from it. All this is evidence for the significance that "Jesus Christ, true God begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary," to use Luther's formula, had in the faith and theology of all the reformers.

At one point the theology of the reformers did serve to bring together several facets of the biblical and the patristic descriptions of Jesus Christ. That was the doctrine of the threefold office of Christ, systematized by Calvin and developed more fully in Protestant orthodoxy: Christ as prophet, priest, and king. Each of these symbolized the fulfillment of the Old Testament and represented one aspect of the church's continuing life. Christ as prophet fulfilled and elevated the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament, while continuing to fulfill his prophetic office in the ministry of the Word. Christ as priest brought to an end the sacrificial system of the Old Testament by being both the priest and the victim, while he continues to function as intercessor with and for the church. Christ as king was the royal figure to whom the Old Testament had pointed, while exercising his rule among men now through those whom he has appointed. In each of the three, Protestants differed from one another according to their theological, ethical, or liturgical positions. But the threefold office enabled Protestant theology to take into account the complexity of the biblical and patristic pictures of Christ as no oversimplified theory was able to do, and it is probably the chief contribution of the reformers to the theological formulation of the doctrine of the person and work of Christ.

The debate over Christology in modern Christian thought

Few Protestant theologians in the middle of the 20th century were willing to endorse the ancient dogma of the two natures in Christ as unconditionally as the reformers had done, for between the Reformation and modern theology there intervened a debate over Christology that altered the perspective of most Protestant denominations and theologians. By the 20th century there was a wider gap between the theology of the reformers and that of many modern Protestants than there had been between the theology of the reformers and that of their Roman Catholic opponents.

Origins of the debate

The earliest criticism of orthodox dogma came in the age of the Reformation, not from the reformers but from the "left wing of the Reformation," from Michael Servetus (1511?-53) and the Socinians. This criticism was directed against the presence of nonbiblical concepts and terms in the dogma, and it was intent upon safeguarding the true humanity of Jesus as a moral example. There were many inconsistencies in this criticism, such as the willingness of Servetus to call Jesus "Son of God" and the Socinian custom of addressing prayer and worship to him. But it illustrates the tendency, which became more evident in the Enlightenment, to use the Reformation protest against Catholicism as a basis for a protest against orthodox dogma as well. While that tendency did not gain much support in the 16th century because of the orthodoxy of the reformers, later criticism of orthodox Christology was able to wield the "Protestant principle" against the dogma of the two natures on the grounds that this was a consistent application of what the reformers had done. Among the ranks of the Protestant laity, the hymnody and the catechetical instruction of the Protestant churches assured continuing support for the orthodox dogma. Indeed, the doctrine of Atonement by the vicarious satisfaction of Christ's death has seldom been expressed as amply as it was in the hymns and catechisms of both the Lutheran and the Reformed churches. During the period of Pietism in the Protestant churches, this loyalty to orthodox teaching was combined with a growing emphasis upon the humanity of Jesus, also expressed in the hymnody of the time.

When theologians began to criticize orthodox ideas of the person and work of Christ, therefore, they met with opposition from the common people. Albert Schweitzer dates the development of a critical attitude from the work of H.S. Reimarus (1694-1768), but Reimarus was representative of the way the Enlightenment treated the traditional view of Jesus. The books of the Bible were to be studied just as other books are, and the life of Jesus was to be drawn from them by critically sifting and weighing the evidence of the Gospels. The Enlightenment thus initiated the modern interest in the life of Jesus, with its detailed attention to the problem of the relative credibility of the Gospel records. It has been suggested by some historians that the principal target of Enlightenment criticism was not the dogma of the two natures but the doctrine of the vicarious Atonement. The leaders of Enlightenment thought did not make a sudden break with traditional ideas, but gave up belief in miracles, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and the Second Advent only gradually. Their principal importance for the history of the doctrine of Christ consists in the fact that they made the historical study of the sources for the life of Jesus an indispensable element of any Christology.

The 19th century

Although the Enlightenment of the 18th century was the beginning of the break with orthodox teachings about Jesus Christ, it was only in the 19th century that this break attracted wide support among theologians and scholars in many parts of Christendom—even, for a while, among the Modernists of the Roman Catholic Church. Two works of the 19th century were especially influential in their rejection of orthodox Christology. One was the *Life of Jesus*, first published in 1835 by David Friedrich Strauss; the other, bearing the same title, was first

published by Ernest Renan in 1863. Strauss's work paid more attention to the growth of Christian ideas—he called them “myths”—about Jesus as the basis for the picture we have in the Gospels, while Renan attempted to account for Jesus' career by a study of his inner psychological life in relation to his environment. Both works achieved wide circulation and were translated into other languages, including English. They took up the Enlightenment contention that the sources for the life of Jesus were to be studied as other sources are, and what they constructed on the basis of the sources was a type of biography in the modern sense of the word. In addition to Strauss and Renan, the 19th century saw the publication of a plethora of books about the life and teachings of Jesus. Each new hypothesis regarding the problem of the Synoptic Gospels implied a reconstruction of the life and message of Jesus.

The fundamental assumption for most of this work on the life and teachings of Jesus was a distinction between the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith.” Another favourite way of putting the distinction was to speak of the religion *of* Jesus in antithesis to the religion *about* Jesus. This implied that Jesus was a man like other men, but with a heightened awareness of the presence and power of God. Then the dogma of the church had mistaken this awareness for a metaphysical statement that Jesus was the Son of God and had thus distorted the original simplicity of his message. Some critics went so far as to question the very historicity of Jesus, but even those who did not go that far questioned the historicity of some of the sayings and deeds attributed to Jesus in the Gospels.

In part this effort grew out of the general concern of 19th-century scholarship with the problem of history, but it also reflected the religious and ethical assumptions of the theologians. Many of them were influenced by the moral theories of Kant in their estimate of what was permanent about the teachings of Jesus, and by the historical theories of Hegel in the way they related the original message of Jesus to the Christian interpretations of that message by later generations of Christians. The ideas of evolution and of natural causality associated with the science of the 19th century also played a part through the naturalistic explanations of the biblical miracles. And the historians of dogma, climaxing in Adolf von Harnack (1851-1931), used their demonstration of the dependence of ancient Christology upon non-Christian sources for its concepts and terminology to reinforce their claim that Christianity had to get back from the Christ of dogma to the “essence of Christianity” in the teachings of Jesus about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

The 20th century

At the beginning of the 20th century the most influential authorities on the New Testament were engaged in this quest for the essence of Christianity and for the Jesus of history. But that quest led in the early decades of the 20th century to a revolutionary conclusion regarding the teachings of Jesus, namely, that he had expected the end of the age to come shortly after his death and that his teachings as laid down in the Gospels were an “interim ethic,” intended for the messianic community in the brief span of time still remaining before the end. The effort to apply those teachings in modern life was criticized as a dangerous modernization. This thesis of the “consistent eschatology” in Jesus' message was espoused by Johannes von Weiss (1863-1914) and gained wide circulation through the writings of Albert Schweitzer.

The years surrounding World War I also saw the development of a new theory regarding the composition of the Gospels. Because of its origin, this theory is usually called form criticism (German *Formgeschichte*). It stressed the forms of the Gospel narratives—parables, sayings, miracle stories, Passion accounts, etc.—as an indication of the oral tradition in the Christian community out of which the narratives came. While the attention of earlier scholars had been concentrated on the authenticity of Jesus' teachings as transmitted in the Gospels, this new theory was less confident of being able to separate the authentic from the later elements in the Gospel records, though various proponents of it did suggest criteria by which such a separation might be guided. The studies of form criticism made a life of Jesus in the old biographical sense impossible, just as consistent eschatology had declared impossible the codification of a universal ethic from the teachings of Jesus. Some adherents of form criticism espoused an extreme skepticism regarding any historical knowledge of Jesus' life at all, but the work of men like Martin Dibelius and even Rudolf Bultmann showed that such skepticism was not warranted by the conclusions of this study.

Influenced by these trends in New Testament study, Protestant theology by the middle of the 20th century was engaged in a reinterpretation of the Christology of the early church. Some Protestant churches continued to repeat the formulas of ancient dogma, but even there the critical study of the New Testament documents was beginning to call those formulas into question. The struggles of the evangelical churches in Germany under Adolf Hitler caused some theologians to realize anew the power of the ancient dogma of the person of Christ to sustain faith, and some of them were inclined to treat the dogma with less severity. But even they acknowledged that the formulation of that dogma in static categories of person, essence, and nature was inadequate to the biblical emphasis upon actions and events rather than upon states of being. Karl Barth for the Reformed tradition, Lionel Thornton for the Anglican tradition, and Karl Heim for the Lutheran tradition were instances of theologians trying to reinterpret classical Christology. While yielding nothing of their loyalty to the dogma of the church, Roman Catholic theologians like Karl Adam were also endeavouring to state that dogma in a form that was meaningful to modern men. The doctrine of the work of Christ was receiving less attention than the doctrine of Christ's person. In much of Protestantism, the concentration of the 19th century upon the teachings of Jesus had made it difficult to speak of more than the prophetic office. The priestly office received least attention of all; and, therefore, despite the support accorded to efforts like that of Gustaf Aulén to reinterpret the metaphor of the Atonement as Christ's victory over his enemies, Protestant theology in the middle of the 20th century was still searching for a doctrine of the Atonement to match its newly won insights into the doctrine of the person of Christ.

In a curious way, therefore, the figure of Jesus Christ has become both a unitive and a divisive element in Christendom. All Christians are united in their loyalty to him, even though they express their loyalty in a variety of doctrinal and liturgical ways. But doctrine and liturgy also divide Christian communions from one another. It has not been the official statements about Christ that have differed widely among most communions. What has become a sharp point of division is the amount of historical and critical inquiry that is permitted where the person of Christ is involved. Despite their official statements and confessions, most Protestant denominations had indicated by the second half of the 20th century that they would tolerate such inquiry, differ though they did in prescribing how far it would be permitted to go. On the other hand, the exclusion of Modernism

by the Roman Catholic Church in 1907-10 drew definite limits beyond which the theological use of the methods of critical inquiry was heretical. Within those limits, however, Roman Catholic biblical scholars were engaging in considerable critical literary study, at the same time that critical Protestant theologians were becoming more sympathetic to traditional Christological formulas.

Jaroslav Jan Pelikan

Additional Reading

Texts, translations, and synopses

The principal source for the life and teachings of Jesus is the Greek New Testament, and the most useful edition is EBERHARD NESTLE et al. (eds.), *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 26th new rev. ed. (1979). The best edition of the synopsis of the first three Gospels, which prints the text in parallel columns, is ALBERT HUCK, HANS LIETZMANN, and FRANK LESLIE CROSS (eds.), *A Synopsis of the First Three Gospels*, 9th ed. (1936, reissued 1976); and the best translation of Huck is BURTON H. THROCKMORTON, JR. (ed.), *Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels*, 5th ed. (1992). E.P. SANDERS and MARGARET DAVIES, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (1989), examines the difficulties of using the Synoptic Gospels. There are also numerous translations of the Bible, and among the better are WAYNE A. MEEKS et al. (eds.), *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (1993); and HERBERT G. MAY and BRUCE M. METZGER (eds.), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: Revised Standard Version, Containing the Second Edition of the New Testament and an Expanded Edition of the Apocrypha* (1977).

There are several noncanonical sources that may shed light on the life and teachings of Jesus. Good editions of the noncanonical sources are EDGAR HENNECKE (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vol., ed. by WILHELM SCHNEEMELCHER, vol. 1, *Gospels and Related Writings*, English translation ed. by R.McL. WILSON (1963; trans. from German 3rd ed., 1959-64); and BENTLEY LAYTON (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7*, 2 vol. (1989), for the Gospel of Thomas. Jewish sources that provide the context in which Jesus lived and worked include JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (1983); FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Josephus*, trans. by H.ST.J. THACKERY, RALPH MARCUS, and L.H. FELDMAN, 9 vol. (1926-65, reissued in 10 vol., 1981-93), text in Greek and English; PHILO, *Philo: With an English Translation*, vol. 10, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, trans. from Greek by F.H. COLSON (1962, reprinted 1998); HERBERT DANBY (ed. and trans.), *The Mishnah* (1933), available in many later printings; and GEZA VERMES (trans. and ed.), *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (1997). Important Roman sources include SUETONIUS, *Suetonius*, rev. ed., trans. from Latin by J.C. ROLFE, vol. 2, *Lives of the Caesars, Book V-VIII* (1998), text in Latin and English; and MOSES HADAS (ed.), *The Complete Works of Tacitus*, trans. from Latin by ALFRED JOHN CHURCH and WILLIAM JACKSON BRODRIBB (1942).

General books on the historical Jesus

ALBERT SCHWEITZER, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1910, reissued 1998; originally published in German, 1906), establishes the importance of Jewish eschatology for understanding Jesus and his teachings. RUDOLF BULTMANN, *Jesus and the Word* (1934, reissued 1989; originally published in German, 1926), accepts the importance of

eschatology but interprets it in existentialist categories. C.H. DODD, *The Founder of Christianity* (1970, reissued 1973), redefines eschatology as referring not to the future but to a higher order. GEZA VERMES, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (1983), describes Jesus as thoroughly Jewish and as a Galilean charismatic, and *The Gospel of Jesus the Jew* (1981) examines the Jewish parallels to Jesus' teaching. BEN F. MEYER, *The Aims of Jesus* (1979), proposed, against the then prevailing opinion, that Jesus' intentions can be discerned. E.P. SANDERS, *Jesus and Judaism*, 2nd ed. (1987), and *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993, reissued 1996), place Jesus in the context of Palestinian Judaism and reject excessive historical skepticism about the life of Jesus. JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991), and *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (1994), argue that Jesus was not a Jewish eschatological prophet but a cynic-like philosopher and that Galilee was Hellenistic and not distinctively Jewish. This is an extremely eccentric interpretation. JOHN P. MEIER, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 2 vol. (1991-94), is a very thorough account along the lines established by Schweitzer, Vermes, and Sanders.

Along with the general works, there are many studies of specific aspects of the life and teachings of Jesus. RAYMOND E. BROWN, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke*, new updated ed. (1993, reissued 1999), is an encyclopedic account of the birth narratives in the Gospels. MORTON SMITH, *Jesus the Magician* (1978, reissued 1998), is a study of the miracles of Jesus and their parallels in Hellenistic traditions. RAYMOND E. BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah, from Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, 2 vol. (1994, reissued 1998), is an excellent introduction to the Passion of Jesus. PAULA FREDRIKSEN, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (1999), emphasizes the importance of the Crucifixion for understanding the life and teachings of Jesus.

First-century Judaism

The standard account of all aspects of 1st-century Judaism, though it is weak on the Jewish religion, is EMIL SCHÜRER, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.- A.D. 135)*, trans. from German, rev. and ed. by GEZA VERMES and FERGUS MILLAR, 3 vol. in 4 (1973-87). E.P. SANDERS, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66 CE* (1992, reprinted with corrections 1994), provides a good overview of the Jewish religion in the 1st century. GEZA VERMES, *An Introduction to the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, rev. ed. (2000), is a good study of the collection at Qumran. YIGAL YADIN (ed.), *The Temple Scroll*, 3 vol. in 4 (1977-83; originally published in Hebrew, 1977), is a valuable study of the longest and most important scroll from Qumran.

The Roman Empire in the East

FERGUS MILLAR, *The Roman Near East: 31 B.C.-A.D. 337* (1993, reprinted 1996); and A.H.M. JONES, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 2nd ed., rev. by MICHAEL AVI-YONAH et al. (1971, reprinted 1983), are the standard works on the Roman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean.

Galilee, Tiberias, and Sepphoris

SEAN FREYNE, *Galilee, from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (1980, reissued 1998), is the standard study of the

ancient Galilee. SEAN FREYNE, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (1988), and LEE I. LEVINE (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (1992), are also good studies of the region in antiquity. A.H.M. JONES, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (1940, reissued 1979), is a good introduction to ancient cities like Tiberias and Sepphoris. ZEEV WEISS, "Sepphoris," in EPHRAIM STERN, AYELET LEWINSON-GILBOA, and JOSEPH AVIRAM (eds.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vol. (1993; originally published in Hebrew, 1992), pp. 1324–28; YIZHAR HIRSCHFELD, GIDEON FOERSTER, and FANNY VITTO, "Tiberias," in EPHRAIM STERN, AYELET LEWINSON-GILBOA, and JOSEPH AVIRAM, *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vol. (1993; originally published in Hebrew, 1992), pp. 1464–73, are good, short introductions to the cities that take into account the ongoing archaeological work at the sites. REBECCA MARTIN NAGY et al. (eds.), *Sepphoris in Galilee: Crosscurrents of Culture* (1996), is a well-illustrated, general introduction to the history and culture of the city.

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Muhammad

Encyclopædia Britannica Article

Introduction

in full **Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim**
born 570, Mecca, Arabia [now in Saudi Arabia]
died June 8, 632, Medina

founder of the religion of Islam, accepted by Muslims throughout the world as the last of the prophets of God.

Although his name is now invoked in reverence several billion times every day, Muhammad was the most-reviled figure in the history of the West from the 7th century until quite recent times. Because Muhammad is one of the most influential figures in history, his life, deeds, and thoughts have been debated by followers and opponents over the centuries, which makes a biography of him difficult to write. At every turn, both the Islamic understanding of Muhammad and the rationalist interpretation of him by Western scholars, which grew out of 18th- and 19th-century philosophies such as positivism, must be considered. Moreover, on the basis of both historical evidence and the Muslim understanding of Muhammad as the Prophet, a response must be fashioned to Christian polemical writings characterizing Muhammad as an apostate if not the Antichrist. These date back to the early Middle Ages and still influence to some degree the general Western conception of him. It is essential, therefore, both to examine the historical record—though not necessarily on the basis of secularist assumptions—and to make clear the Islamic understanding of Muhammad.

Methodology and terminology

Sources for the study of the Prophet

The sources for the study of Muhammad are multifarious and include, first and foremost, the Qurʾān (or Koran), the sacred scriptures of Islam. Although the Qurʾān is considered by Muslims to be the word of God and not of Muhammad, it nevertheless reveals the most essential aspects associated with Muhammad. There are also the sayings of Muhammad himself (Hadith) and accounts of his actions (Sunnah). Furthermore, there are biographies (*sīrah*) of him going back to the works of Ibn Ishāq (c. 704-767) in the 9th-century recensions of Ibn Hishām and Yūnus ibn Bukayr. Works of sacred history by later writers such as al-Ṭabarī and al-Thaʿalibī also contain extensive biographies of Muhammad. Then there are the accounts of the *maghāzī* (“battles”) that determined the fate of the early Islamic community. The most important of these works is the *Kitāb al-maghāzī* of al-Wāqidī (747-823). The *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* of Ibn Saʿd (died 844/845) is another important source on the life of Muhammad, his companions, and later figures in Islamic history. Finally, there are oral traditions. Although usually discounted by positivist historians, oral tradition plays a major role in the Islamic understanding of Muhammad, just as it does in the Christian understanding of Jesus Christ or the Jewish understanding of Moses and the other ancient prophets of Israel.

Beyond these there are later Western works, many of which, from the 18th century onward, distanced themselves from the polemical histories of earlier Christian authors. These more historically oriented treatments, which generally reject the prophethood of Muhammad, are coloured by the Western philosophical and theological framework of their authors. Many of these studies reflect much historical research, and most pay more attention to human, social, economic, and political factors than to religious, theological, and spiritual matters. It was not until the latter part of the 20th century that Western authors combined rigorous scholarship as understood in the modern West with empathy toward the subject at hand and, especially, awareness of the religious and spiritual realities involved in the study of the life of the founder of a major world religion.

Names and titles of the Prophet

The most common name of Muhammad of Islam, Muhammad (“the Glorified One”), is part of the daily call to prayer (*adhān*); following the attestation to the oneness of God, the believer proclaims, “Verily, I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God” (*Ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūl Allāh*). When this name is uttered among Muslims, it is always followed by the phrase *ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* (“may God’s blessings and peace be upon him”), just as, whenever Muslims mention the name of other prophets such as Abraham, Moses, or Jesus, they recite the words *‘alayhi al-salām* (“upon him be [God’s] peace”). Muhammad also became widely known in Europe by diverse forms of the name such as Mahon, Mahomés, Mahun, Mahum, and Mahumet (all French), Machmet (German), and Maúmet (Old Icelandic). Moreover, Muhammad is the most popular male name in the Islamic world either by itself or in combination with other names such as ‘Alī and Ḥusayn.

Muhammad, however, has many other names, including “sacred names,” which Muslims believe were given to him by God and by which he is called in various contexts. Muslim tradition counts 99 names for Muhammad. Among the most often used and also central to the understanding of his nature is Aḥmad (“the Most Glorified”), which is considered an inner and celestial name for Muhammad. Over the centuries Muslim authorities have believed that, when Christ spoke of the coming reign of the Paraclete, he was referring to Aḥmad. Also of great importance are the names that identify Muhammad as the Prophet, including Nabī (“Prophet”) and Rasūl Allāh (“the Messenger of God”). Other names of the Prophet are Ṭaha (“the Pure Purifier and Guide”), Yāsīn (“the Perfect Man”), Muṣṭafā (“the One Chosen”), ‘Abd Allāh (“the Perfect Servant of God”), Ḥabīb Allāh (“the Beloved of God”), Dhikr Allāh (“the Remembrance of God”), Amīn (“the Trusted One”), Sirāj (“the Torch Lighting the True Path”), Munīr (“the Illuminator of the Universe”), Hudā (“the Guide to the Truth”), Ghiyāth (“the Helper”), and Ni‘mat Allāh (“the Gift of God”). These and his many other names play a major role in daily Muslim piety and in the practice of Sufism. An understanding of their meaning is essential to gaining any serious knowledge of the Islamic view of Muhammad or what some have called Islamic prophetology.

The life of Muhammad

Genealogical roots and early life

Both before the rise of Islam and during the Islamic period, Arab tribes paid great attention to genealogy and guarded their knowledge of it with meticulous care. In fact, during Islamic history a whole science of genealogy (*ilm al-anṣāb*) developed that is of much historical significance. In the pre-Islamic period, however, this knowledge remained unwritten, and for that very reason it has not been taken seriously by Western historians relying only on written records. For Muslims, however, the genealogy of Muhammad has always been certain. They trace his ancestry to Ismāʿīl (Ishmael) and hence to the prophet Abraham. This fact was accepted even by medieval European opponents of Islam but has been questioned by modern historians.

According to traditional Islamic sources, Muhammad was born in Mecca in “the Year of the Elephant,” which corresponds to the year AD 570, the date modern Western scholars cite as at least his approximate birth date. A single event gave the Year of the Elephant its name when Abrahah, the king of Abyssinia, sent an overwhelming force to Mecca to destroy the Kaʿbah, the sanctuary Muslims believe to have been built by Adam and reconstructed by Abraham and which Abrahah viewed as a rival to his newly constructed temple in Sanaa in Yemen. According to tradition, the elephant that marched at the head of Abrahah’s army knelt as it approached Mecca, refusing to go farther. Soon the sky blackened with birds that pelted the army with pebbles, driving them off in disarray. Thus, the sanctuary that Muslims consider an earthly reflection of the celestial temple was saved, though at the time it served Arab tribes who (with the exception of the *ḥanīfs*, or primordialists) disregarded Abrahamic monotheism.

Soon after this momentous event in the history of Arabia, Muhammad was born in Mecca. His father, ʿAbd Allāh, and his mother, Āminah, belonged to the family of the Banū Hāshim, a branch of the powerful Quraysh, the ruling tribe of Mecca, that also guarded its most sacred shrine, the Kaʿbah. Because ʿAbd Allāh died before Muhammad’s birth, Āminah placed all her hopes in the newborn child. Without a father, Muhammad experienced many hardships even though his grandfather ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib was a leader in the Meccan community. The emphasis in Islamic society on generosity to orphans is related to the childhood experiences of Muhammad as well as to his subsequent love for orphans and the Qurʾānic injunctions concerning their treatment.

In order for Muhammad to master Arabic in its pure form and become well acquainted with Arab traditions, Āminah sent him as a baby into the desert, as was the custom of all great Arab families at that time. In the desert, it was believed, one learned the qualities of self-discipline, nobility, and freedom. A sojourn in the desert also offered escape from the domination of time and the corruption of the city. Moreover, it provided the opportunity to become a better speaker through exposure to the eloquent Arabic spoken by the Bedouin. In this way the bond with the desert and its purity and sobriety was renewed for city dwellers in every generation. Āminah chose a poor woman named Ḥalīmah from the tribe of Banū Saʿd, a branch of the Hawāzin, to suckle and nurture her son. And so the young Muhammad spent several years in the desert.

It was also at this time that, according to tradition, two angels appeared to Muhammad in the guise of men, opened his breast, and purified his heart with snow. This episode, which exemplifies the Islamic belief that God purified his prophet and protected him from sin, was also described by Muhammad: “There came unto me two men, clothed in white, with a gold basin full of snow. Then they laid upon me,

and, splitting open my breast, they brought forth my heart. This likewise they split open and took from it a black clot which they cast away. Then they washed my heart and my breast with the snow” (Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life, Based on the Earliest Sources*, 1991). Muhammad then repeated the verse, found in the Hadith, “Satan toucheth every son of Adam the day his mother beareth him, save only Mary and her son.” Amazed by this event and also noticing a mole on Muhammad's back (later identified in the traditional sources as the sign of prophecy), Ḥalīmah and her husband, Ḥārith, took the boy back to Mecca.

Muhammad's mother died when he was six years old. Now completely orphaned, he was brought up by his grandfather ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who also died two years later. He was then placed in the care of Abū Ṭālib, Muhammad's uncle and the father of ‘Alī, Muhammad's cousin. Later in life Muhammad would repay this kindness by taking ‘Alī into his household and giving his daughter Fāṭimah to him in marriage.

It is believed that Muhammad grew into a young man of unusual physical beauty as well as generosity of character. His sense of fairness and justice were so revered that the people of Mecca often went to him for arbitration and knew him as al-Amīn, “the Trusted One.” His striking appearance is the subject of countless poems in various Islamic languages. Muhammad, according to ‘Alī,

was neither tall nor lanky nor short and stocky, but of medium height. His hair was neither crispy curled nor straight but moderately wavy. He was not overweight and his face was not plump. He had a round face. His complexion was white tinged with redness. He had big black eyes with long lashes. His brows were heavy and his shoulders broad. He had soft skin, with fine hair covering the line from mid chest to navel. The palms of his hands and the soles of his feet were firmly padded. He walked with a firm gait, as if striding downhill. On his back between his shoulders lay the Seal of Prophethood [a mole], for he was the last of the prophets. (Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, *The Name & the Named: The Divine Attributes of God*, 2000)

Islamic sources indicate that others recognized the mole as the sign of prophethood, including the Christian monk Baḥīrā, who met Muhammad when the Prophet joined Abū Ṭālib on a caravan trip to Syria.

When he was 25 years old, Muhammad received a marriage proposal from a wealthy Meccan woman, Khadījah bint Khuwaylid, whose affairs he was conducting. Despite the fact that she was 15 years older than he, Muhammad accepted the proposal, and he did not take another wife until after her death (though polygyny was permitted and common). She bore him two sons, both of whom died young. It is from the first son, Qāsim, that one of the names of the Prophet, Abū’ al-Qāsim (“the Father of Qāsim”), derives. She also bore him four daughters, Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthūm, and Fāṭimah. The youngest, Fāṭimah, who is called the second Mary, had the greatest impact on history of all his children. Shī’ite imams and sayyids or sharifs are thought to be descendants of Muhammad, from the lineage of Fāṭimah and ‘Alī. Khadījah herself is considered one of the foremost female saints in Islam and, along with Fāṭimah, plays a very important role in Islamic piety and in eschatological events connected with the souls of women.

By age 35, Muhammad had become a very respected figure in Mecca and had taken ‘Alī into his household. When he was asked, according to Islamic tradition, to

arbitrate a dispute concerning which tribe should place the holy black stone in the corner of the newly built Ka'bah, Muhammad resolved the conflict by putting his cloak on the ground with the stone in the middle and having a representative of each tribe lift a corner of it until the stone reached the appropriate height to be set in the wall. His reputation stemmed, in part, from his deep religiosity and attention to prayer. He often would leave the city and retire to the desert for prayer and meditation. Moreover, before the advent of his prophecy, he received visions that he described as being like "the breaking of the light of dawn." It was during one of these periods of retreat, when he was 40 years old and meditating in a cave called al-Ḥirā' in the Mountain of Light (Jabal al-Nūr) near Mecca, that Muhammad experienced the presence of the archangel Gabriel and the process of the Qur'ānic revelation began.

The advent of the revelation and the Meccan period

In the month of Ramadan, in the year 610, Gabriel, in the form of a man, appeared to Muhammad, asked him to "recite" (*iqra*), then overwhelmed him with a very strong embrace. Muhammad told the stranger that he was not a reciter. But the angel repeated his demand and embrace three times, before the verses of the Qur'ān, beginning with "Recite in the Name of thy Lord who created," were revealed. Although the command *iqra* is sometimes translated as "read," "recite" is a more appropriate translation because, according to traditional Islamic sources, the Prophet was *ummī* ("unlettered"), meaning that his soul was unsullied by human knowledge and virginal before it received the divine Word. Many Western scholars and some modern Muslim commentators have provided other connotations for the word *ummī*, but "unlettered" has been the traditionally accepted meaning.

In any case, Muhammad fled the cave thinking that he had become possessed by the jinn, or demons. When he heard a voice saying, "Thou art the messenger of God and I am Gabriel," Muhammad ran down the mountain. Gazing upward, he saw the man who had spoken to him in his real form, an angel so immense that in whatever direction the Prophet looked the celestial figure covered the sky, which had turned green, the official colour of Islam to this day. Muhammad returned home, and, when the effect of the great awe in his soul abated, he told Khadījah what had happened. She believed his account and sent for her blind cousin Waraqah, a Christian who possessed much religious wisdom. Having heard the account, Waraqah also confirmed the fact that Muhammad had been chosen as God's prophet, and shortly afterward Muhammad received a second revelation. As the Prophet said later, the revelation would either come through the words of the archangel or be directly revealed to him in his heart. The revelation also was accompanied by the sound of bell-like reverberations. According to Islamic tradition, this was the beginning of the process of the revelation of the Qur'ān that lasted some 23 years and ended shortly before the Prophet's death.

Muhammad first preached his message to the members of his family, then to a few friends, and finally, three years after the advent of the revelation, to the public at large. The first to accept Muhammad's call to become Muslims were Khadījah; 'Alī; Zayd ibn al-Ḥārith, who was like a son to the Prophet; and Abū Bakr, a venerable member of the Meccan community who was a close friend of the Prophet. This small group was the centre from which Islam grew in ever-wider circles. Besides his family and friends, a number of prominent Meccans embraced Islam. However, most influential figures and families rejected his call, especially those prominent in

trade. Even within his family there were skeptics. Although Muhammad gained the support of many of the Banū Hāshim, his uncle Abū Lahab, a major leader of the Quraysh, remained adamantly opposed to Islam and Muhammad's mission. These naysayers feared that the new religion, based on the oneness of God and unequivocally opposed to idolatry, would destroy the favoured position of the Ka'bah as the centre of the religious cults of various Arab tribes and hence jeopardize the commerce that accompanied the pilgrimage to Mecca to worship idols kept in or on the Ka'bah.

As Muhammad's message spread, opposition to him grew and was led by 'Amr ibn Hishām, dubbed Abū Jahl ("Father of Ignorance") by the early Muslims. Abū Jahl even had some early converts tortured, which resulted in the death of one of them named Summayyah. Muhammad himself, unharmed because of the protection of his family and especially his uncle Abū Ṭālib, then gave permission to a number of early disciples to migrate temporarily to Abyssinia, where the country's monarch, the negus, received them with kindness and generosity. They joined Muhammad later in Medina.

Meanwhile in Mecca, life for Muhammad and the early Muslims was becoming ever more difficult and dangerous as the result of extreme pressure exerted upon them by the Quraysh rulers of the city. Even the conversions of leaders of the Meccan community, such as 'Umar al-Khaṭṭāb and 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, did not diminish the severe difficulties encountered by Muhammad in his later years in Mecca.

In 619 Muhammad was greatly saddened by the death of two people who were especially close to him, Khadījah and his uncle Abū Ṭālib. Not only was Khadījah his devoted wife of 25 years and the mother of his children, but she was also his friend and counselor. Only after her death did Muhammad marry other women, mostly as a means of creating alliances with various families and tribes. The exception was the daughter of Abū Bakr, 'Ā'ishah, who was betrothed to the Prophet when she was very young and in whose arms he would die in Medina. Later in the year the death of Abū Ṭālib, Muhammad's protector, created a much more difficult situation for him and for the young Islamic community in Mecca. These deaths, combined with Muhammad's lack of success in propagating the message of Islam in the city of Ṭā'if, severely tested his determination and resolve.

As if by heavenly compensation, during this extremely difficult time Muhammad underwent the supreme spiritual experience of his life. On one of his nightly visits to the Ka'bah, he fell asleep in the Ḥijr, an uncovered sanctuary attached to the north wall of the Ka'bah, and experienced the Nocturnal Ascent (Isrā' or Mi'rāj), which is mentioned in the Qur'ān, numerous Hadith, and nearly every work of Islamic sacred history. It has also been described and elaborated on in countless later mystical and philosophical writings. According to traditional accounts, among which there are certain minor variations, Muhammad was taken by the archangel Gabriel on the winged steed Burāq to Jerusalem. From the rock upon which Abraham offered to sacrifice his son (now the site of the Dome of the Rock, one of Islam's earliest and greatest mosques), they ascended through all the higher states of being to the Divine Presence itself. At one point Gabriel explained that he could go no farther because, were he to do so, his wings would be burned; that is, Muhammad had reached a state higher than that of the archangels. Muhammad is said to have received the supreme treasury of knowledge while he stood and then prostrated himself before the divine throne. God also revealed to him the final form and number of the Islamic daily prayers. In addition, it is said that, while going through

the higher states of being symbolized by the heavenly spheres, Muhammad met earlier great prophets such as Moses and Jesus.

Traditional Muslims believe that the Miʿrāj of the Prophet was not only spiritual but also corporeal in the same way that Christ's Ascension was accomplished in both body and spirit, according to traditional Christian belief. Modern Western scholars usually consider Muhammad's experience to be an inner vision or dream, while some modernized Muslims, responding to secularist and rationalistic objections, claim that the Miʿrāj was only spiritual. The Miʿrāj is the prototype of spiritual realization in Islam and signifies the final integration of the spiritual, psychic, and physical elements of the human state. Because of its central spiritual importance, the Miʿrāj has been the source of many major literary and metaphysical works in both prose and poetry, and figures as different as Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and Ibn al-ʿArabī have written of its inner meaning. The idea of a journey through the levels of being, symbolized by the celestial spheres, to the presence of God, which marks the peak of the Miʿrāj, even reached Europe and, as some have argued, may have been instrumental in the structure of *The Divine Comedy* by Dante. The Miʿrāj is also one of the reasons why Muslims hold Jerusalem sacred.

The idea of spreading the message of Islam beyond Mecca grew in Muhammad's mind despite the setback in Ṭāʾif. In or around 621 a delegation from Yathrib, a city north of Mecca, contacted Muhammad and, having heard of his sense of justice and power of leadership, invited him to go to their city and become their leader. At that time Yathrib suffered from constant struggle between its two leading tribes, the ʿAws and the Khazraj, with a sizable Jewish community constituting the third important social group of the city. After some deliberation by Muhammad, a preliminary meeting was held in Al-ʿAqabah (now in Jordan), and during the pilgrimage season of 622 a formal agreement was made with the people of Yathrib according to which Muhammad and his followers would be protected by the people of that city. Upon finalizing the agreement, Muhammad ordered his followers to leave Mecca in small groups, so as not to attract attention, and to await him in Yathrib.

Finally, he departed one evening with Abū Bakr for Yathrib, using an indirect route after commanding ʿAlī to sleep in the Prophet's bed. The Quraysh, who had decided to get rid of the Prophet once and for all, attacked the house but found ʿAlī in his place. They then set out to find the Prophet. According to the traditional Islamic version, rejected by most modern Western historians, Muhammad and Abū Bakr hid in a cave that was then camouflaged by spiders, which spun webs over its mouth, and birds, which placed their nests in front of the cave. Once the search party arrived at the mouth of the cave, they decided not to go in because the unbroken cobwebs and undisturbed nests seemed to indicate that no one could be inside. This story, mentioned in chapter 9 of the Qurʾān, is of great symbolic importance and is also a popular part of Islamic piety and Sufi literature.

On September 25, 622, Muhammad completed the Hijrah ("migration"; Latin: Hegira) and reached Yathrib, which became known as Madīnat al-Nabī ("City of the Prophet"), or Medina. This momentous event led to the establishment of Islam as a religious and social order and became the starting point for the Islamic calendar. The caliph ʿUmar I was the first to use this dating system and established the first day of the lunar month of Muḥarram, which corresponds to July 16, 622, as the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

Muhammad arrived in Qubāʾ, on the outskirts of Medina, where he ordered the first

mosque of Islam to be built. The people of the city came in large numbers to greet him, and each family wanted to take him to its own quarters. Therefore, he said that his camel, Qaṣwrā', should be allowed to go where it willed, and where it stopped, he would stay. A mosque, known later as the Mosque of the Prophet (Masjid al-Nabī), was built in the courtyard next to the house where the camel stopped and Muhammad lived. Muhammad's tomb is in the mosque.

The Medinan period

When Muhammad first settled in Medina, his most trusted followers were those who had migrated from Mecca—some before him and some, including 'Alī, shortly after. Soon, however, many Medinans embraced Islam, so the early Islamic community came to consist of the emigrants (*al-muhājirūn*) and the Medinan helpers (*al-anṣār*). A few Medinan families and some prominent figures such as 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy held back, but gradually all the Arabs of Medina embraced Islam. Nevertheless, tribal divisions remained, along with a continued Jewish presence that included wealthy tribes that enjoyed the support of Jewish communities farther north, especially in Khaybar. Muhammad hoped that they would embrace Islam and accept him as a prophet, but that happened in only a few cases. On the contrary, as Muhammad integrated the Medinan community—the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār* and the 'Aws and Khazraj tribes—into an Islamic society, the enmity between Medina's Jewish community and the newly founded Islamic order grew.

During the second year of the Hijrah, Muhammad drew up the Constitution of Medina, defining relations between the various groups in the first Islamic community. Later generations of Islamic political thinkers have paid much attention to the constitution, for Muslims believe that Muhammad created the ideal Islamic society in Medina, providing a model for all later generations. It was a society in which the integration of tribal groups and various social and economic classes was based on social justice. According to Islamic belief, that same year the direction of daily prayers, or the *qiblah*, was changed by divine order from Jerusalem to Mecca, which marked the clear crystallization of Islam as a distinct monotheistic religion. Jerusalem has continued to be revered as the first direction of the prayers chosen by God for Muslims, and, according to Islamic eschatological teachings, the first *qiblah* will become one with the *qiblah* at Mecca at the end of time.

It was also in the year 622 that the message of Islam was explicitly defined as a return to the pure monotheism of Abraham, or the primordial monotheism (*al-dīn al-ḥanīf*). Some in the West have called the second year of the Hijrah the period of the establishment of a theocracy led by Muhammad. But what in fact occurred was the establishment of a nomocracy under Divine Law, with Muhammad as the executor. In any case, from that time until his death, Muhammad not only continued to be the channel for the revelation of the Qur'ān but also ruled the community of Muslims. He was also the judge and supreme interpreter of the law of Medinan society.

The early battles

The enmity between the Quraysh and Muhammad remained very strong, in part because of the persecution, aggression, and confiscation of property the Muslims suffered at the hands of the Quraysh. On several occasions warriors from Medina

intercepted caravans from Mecca going to or coming from Syria, but Muhammad did not want to fight a battle against the Meccans until they marched against the nascent Medinan community and threatened the very future of Islam. At this time the following Qur'ānic verse was revealed: "Permission to fight is granted to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged, and God indeed has the power to help them. They are those who have been driven out of their homes unjustly only because they affirmed: Our Lord is God" (22:39-40). Muslims saw this verse as a declaration of war by God against the idolatrous Quraysh. In 624 an army of 1,000 assembled by the Quraysh marched against Medina and met a much smaller force of 313 Muslims at a place called Badr on the 17th day of the month of Ramadan. Although the number of those involved was small, this event is seen by Muslims as the most momentous battle of Islamic history, and many later crucial battles were named after it. Muhammad promised all those who were killed at Badr the death of a martyr and direct entry into paradise. Although heavily outnumbered, the Muslims achieved a remarkable victory in which, however, nine of the Companions of the Prophet (*al-ṣaḥābah*), the close associates of Muhammad and the faithful who were associated directly with him, were killed. Muslims believe that the battle was won with the help of the angels, and to this day the whole episode remains etched deeply in the historical consciousness of Muslims. Although seemingly an insignificant foray in a faraway desert between a few fighters, the battle changed world history.

The Quraysh, however, did not give up their quest to destroy the nascent Islamic community. With that goal in mind, in 624-625 they dispatched an army of 3,000 men under the leader of Mecca, Abū Sufyān. Muhammad led his forces to the side of a mountain near Medina called Uḥud, and battle ensued. The Muslims had some success early in the engagement, but Khālīd ibn al-Walīd, a leading Meccan general and later one of the outstanding military figures of early Islamic history, charged Muhammad's left flank after the Muslims on guard deserted their posts to join in the looting of the Quraysh camp. Many of Muhammad's followers then fled, thinking that the Prophet had fallen. In fact, although wounded, he was led to safety through a ravine. Meanwhile, the Quraysh did not pursue their victory. A number of eminent Muslims, including Muhammad's valiant uncle Ḥamzah, however, lost their lives in the struggle. The Jews of Medina, who allegedly plotted with the Quraysh, rejoiced in Muhammad's defeat, and one of their tribes, the Banū Naḍīr, was therefore seized and banished by Muhammad to Khaybar.

The Jews of Medina then urged the Quraysh to take over Medina in 626-627. To this end the Quraysh helped raise an army of 10,000 men, which marched on Medina. Salmān al-Fārsī, the first Persian convert to Islam whom Muhammad had adopted as a member of his household, suggested that the Muslims dig a ditch around the city to protect it, a technique known to the Persians but not to the Arabs at that time. The Meccan army arrived and, unable to cross the ditch, laid siege to the city but without success. The invading army gradually began to disperse, leaving the Muslims victorious in the Battle of the Ditch (*al-Khandaq*).

When it was discovered that members of the Jewish tribe Qurayzah had been complicit with the enemy during the Battle of the Ditch, Muhammad turned against them. The Qurayzah men were separated from the tribe's women and children and ordered by the Muslim general Sa'd ibn Mu'adh to be put to death; the women and children were to be enslaved. This tragic episode cast a shadow upon the relations between the two communities for many centuries, even though the Jews, a "People of the Book" (that is, like Christians and Zoroastrians, as well as Muslims, possessors

of a divinely revealed scripture), generally enjoyed the protection of their lives, property, and religion under Islamic rule and fared better in the Muslim world than in the West. Moreover, Muslims believe that the Prophet did not order the execution of the Jews of Medina, but many Western historians believe that he must have been, at the very least, informed of it.

The Islamic community had become more solidly established by 628, and in that year Muhammad decided to make the *ʿumrah* (“lesser pilgrimage”) to the Kaʿbah. He set out for Mecca with a large entourage and many animals meant for sacrifice, but an armed Meccan contingent blocked his way. Because he had intended to perform a religious rite, he did not want to battle the Meccans at that time. So he camped at a site known as Al-Ḥudaybiyah and sent ʿUthmān to Mecca to negotiate a peaceful visit. When ʿUthmān was delayed, Muhammad assembled his followers and had them make a pact of allegiance (*al-bayʿah*) to follow him under all conditions unto death, an act of great significance for later Islamic history and Sufi belief and practice. ʿUthmān finally returned with Quraysh leaders who proposed as a compromise that Muhammad return to Medina but make a peaceful pilgrimage to Mecca the next year. In addition, a 10-year truce was signed with the Meccans.

In 628-629 Muhammad's first conquest was made when the Muslims captured Khaybar in a battle in which the valour of ʿAlī played an important role. The Jews and Christians of Khaybar were allowed to live in peace, protected by the Muslims, but they were required to pay a religious tax called the *jizyah*. This became the model for the later treatment of People of the Book in Islamic history.

It was also at this time that Muhammad, according to Islamic sources, sent letters inviting various leaders to accept Islam, including Muqawqis, the governor of Alexandria; the negus of Abyssinia; Heraclius, the emperor of Byzantium; and Khosrow II, the king of Persia. There are several letters kept in various libraries today that some claim to be Muhammad's original invitations, although many Western scholars have doubted their authenticity. Few, however, doubt that he sent the letters, although a number of Western scholars believe that they were addressed to the surrogates of these rulers. In any case, he emphasized in these letters that there should be no compulsion for People of the Book—Jews, Christians, or Zoroastrians—to accept Islam.

In 628-629 Muhammad finally made a pilgrimage to Mecca and reconciled members of his family and also of many of his followers. It was also during this pilgrimage that a number of eminent Meccans—including two later major military and political figures, Khālīd ibn Walīd and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ—accepted Islam and that Muhammad's uncle al-ʿAbbās, then the head of the Banū Hāshim family, is said to have secretly become a Muslim.

Meanwhile, Islam continued to spread throughout Arabia, although military expeditions to the north were not successful. In one battle at Muʿtah in Byzantine territory, Zayd ibn Ḥārith, the adopted son of the Prophet, and Jaʿfar ibn Abī Ṭālib, the brother of ʿAlī, were killed. Still, many northern tribes embraced Islam.

In 628-629 the Quraysh broke the pact agreed upon at Al-Ḥudaybiyah, freeing Muhammad to march on Mecca, which he did with a large group of the *anṣār*, the *muhājirūn*, and Bedouins. The Quraysh pleaded for amnesty, which was granted. After many years of hardship and exile, Muhammad entered Mecca triumphantly and directed his followers not to take revenge for the persecution many of them had

endured. He went directly to the Kaʿbah, where he ordered ʿAlī and Bilāl, the Abyssinian caller to prayer (*al-muʿadhdhin*), to remove all the idols and restore the original purity of the Kaʿbah, which Muslims believe was built by Abraham as the house of the one God. All the Meccans then embraced Islam.

The Islamization of Arabia, however, was not as yet complete. The Hawāzin tribe rose against Muhammad, and the city of Ṭāʾif, which had treated him so harshly during his Meccan years, still followed idolatrous practices. Muhammad's army defeated the Hawāzin but could not capture Ṭāʾif, which surrendered of its own volition a year later.

In 630-631 embassies from all over the Arabian Peninsula arrived in Medina to accept Islam, and by that time most of Arabia, save for the north, had united under the religion's banner. Muhammad, therefore, marched with a large army north to Tabūk but did not engage the enemy. Nevertheless, the Jews and Christians of the region submitted to his authority, whereupon Muhammad again guaranteed their personal safety and freedom to practice their religion as he did for the Zoroastrians of eastern Arabia. At that time too the pagan Arab tribes in the north, as well as in other regions, embraced Islam. By 631 Muhammad had brought to a close “the age of ignorance” (*al-jāhiliyyah*), as Muslims called the pre-Islamic epoch in Arabia. He united the Arabs for the first time in history under the banner of Islam and broke the hold of tribal bonds as the ultimate links between an Arab and the society around him. Although tribal relations were not fully destroyed, they were now transcended by a more powerful bond based on religion.

Finally, in 632, Muhammad made the first Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca (*al-ḥajj*), which remains the model to this day for the millions of Muslims who make the hajj each year. This event marked the peak of Muhammad's earthly life. At that time he delivered his celebrated farewell sermon, and the last verse of the Qurʾān was revealed, completing the sacred text: “This day have I perfected for you your religion and fulfilled My favour unto you, and it hath been My good pleasure to choose Islam for you as your religion” (5:3). On the way back from Mecca, he and his entourage stopped at a pond called Ghadīr Khumm where, according to both Sunni and Shīʿite sources, he appointed ʿAlī as the executor of his last will and as his *walī*, a term that means “friend” or “saint” and also describes a person who possesses authority. This major event is seen by Sunni Muslims as signifying a personal and family matter, while Shīʿites believe that at this time ʿAlī received the formal investiture to succeed the Prophet.

Late in the spring of 632 Muhammad, who had been considering another expedition to the north, suddenly fell ill and, according to tradition, died three days later on June 8, 632. His legacy included the establishment of a new order that would transform and affect much of the world from the Atlantic to the China Sea, from France to India. According to Islamic norms that he established, his body was washed by his family, especially by ʿAlī, and buried in his house adjacent to the mosque of Medina. His tomb remains the holiest place in Islam after the Kaʿbah; it is visited by millions of pilgrims annually.

Muhammad and the Qurʾān

Those who do not consider Muhammad a prophet believe that the Qurʾān contains his words as compiled by his companions. For Muslims of all schools of law and theology,

the Qurʾān is considered to be the word of God received by the Prophet and uttered verbatim by him to those around him. Moreover, there is a subtle and profound relationship between Muhammad and the Qurʾān. First, there are direct references in the Qurʾān to Muhammad, his nature, and his function. Notably, the Qurʾān asserts that he was a man and not a divine being, that he was the “seal of prophets” (*khātam al-anbiyā*), that he was endowed with the most exalted character, and that God had placed him as the “goodly model” (*uswah ḥasanah*) for Muslims to follow. The Qurʾān is, in fact, the richest source for the understanding of Muhammad’s nature and mission.

Second, Muhammad was the person who best comprehended the meaning of the Qurʾān and was its first interpreter and commentator. Over the centuries all traditional Muslims have understood the Qurʾān through Muhammad’s interpretation, and whenever they recite the Qurʾān or seek to put its teachings into practice, they experience his presence. Islamic sages over the ages, in fact, have insisted that God granted to the Prophet alone the understanding of all levels of the Qurʾān’s meaning that humans could grasp and that those who later came to know something of the inner meaning of the Qurʾān were heirs to the knowledge given to Muhammad by God.

There is also something of the soul of Muhammad in the Qurʾān, which was, according to traditional beliefs, originally a sonorous revelation imprinted upon his heart and only later written down. If the text of the Qurʾān is comparable to words heard by the ear, the soul of the Prophet is like the air that carries the sound and allows it to be heard by humanity. According to a famous saying of the Prophet (known as *ḥadīth al-thaqalayn*), Muhammad said that, when he departed from the world, he would leave behind two precious gifts (*thaqalayn*): the Qurʾān and his family. Moreover, his wife ʿĀʾishah once asked Muhammad how he should be remembered after his death, and he replied, “By reciting the Qurʾān.” There is also a very subtle relationship between the Qurʾān and the Prophet that causes Muslims to feel his grace (*barakah*) whenever they read the Qurʾān, which they nevertheless understand to be the word of God and not of Muhammad or any other human being.

The Sunnah and Hadith

The deeds of the Prophet, called the Sunnah—which technically also embraces his sayings, or Hadith—are, after the Qurʾān, the most important source of everything Islamic from law to art, as well as from economics to metaphysics, and are the model of behaviour that all pious Muslims seek to emulate. At the heart of the Sunnah is what may be called the quintessential Sunnah, which concerns the spiritual life. The Sunnah also covers a broad array of activities and beliefs, ranging from entering a mosque, practicing private hygiene, and dealing with family to the most sublime mystical questions involving the love between humans and God. In addition, it addresses everyday activities, including the greeting that Muhammad taught Muslims to offer each other—*al-salāmu ʿalaykum* (“may peace be upon you”)—a greeting still used in tens of languages from Jakarta to London and from Rio de Janeiro to San Francisco. Intimate matters of personal life as well as the social and economic life of Muslims have been governed over the ages by the Sunnah. Even the details of all the major rites of the religion—that is, the daily prayers, the fasting, the annual pilgrimage, etc.—are based on the prophetic Sunnah. The Qurʾān commands believers to perform the canonical prayers, to fast, and to perform the pilgrimage, but it was the Prophet who taught them how to perform these acts along with other religious

rituals such as marriage and burial of the dead.

During the Prophet's life and shortly thereafter, his sayings were written down on media such as parchment, papyrus, and shoulder bones of camels. They were also preserved orally by a people whose long poetic tradition had been carried on solely by word of mouth in the period preceding the rise of Islam. In the 8th and 9th centuries, however, scholars began to collect the sayings of the Prophet after devising rigorous criteria for examining the authenticity of the chain of transmission (*isnād*). The result of this herculean task was the Sunni compilation of six collections of sayings known as the *Ṣiḥāḥ* (plural of *Ṣaḥīḥ*; "correct"), the most famous of which was compiled by al-Bukhārī. In the 10th century the Shī'ites brought together their own collection in four volumes known as *The Four Books (Al-Kutub al-arba'ah)*, of which the most famous was by al-Kulaynī, but some Shī'ite authorities believe that Shī'ism also has six canonical collections of Hadith. Most of the sayings in the Sunni and Shī'ite collections are the same, but the chain of transmission differs between them. Sunni Muslims believe that many of the sayings were transmitted by Ibn al-'Abbās and 'Ā'ishah, but Shī'ites accept only members of the household of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) as legitimate transmitters. There are also a number of prophetic sayings known as *al-aḥādīth al-qudsiyyah* ("sacred sayings") in which God speaks in the first person through Muhammad. In general, these sayings are of an esoteric character and have been of great importance in the development of Sufism.

The ethical and spiritual character of Muhammad

Muslims believe that Muhammad was the most perfect of God's creatures, and, although not divine, he was, according to a famous Arabic poem, not just a man among men but like a ruby among ordinary stones. In the same way that in Christianity all virtues are associated with Jesus Christ, in Islam they are associated with the Prophet. The ethical teachings of Islam are rooted in the Qur'ān, but the model of perfect ethical character, which is called Muhammadan character by Muslims, has always been that of the Prophet. The virtues that characterize him are humility and poverty, magnanimity and nobility, and sincerity and truthfulness. Like Jesus Christ, Muhammad loved spiritual poverty and was also close to the economically poor, living very simply even after he had become "the ruler of a whole world." He was also always severe with himself and emphasized that, if exertion in the path of God (*al-jihād*; commonly translated as "holy war") can sometimes mean fighting to preserve one's life and religion, the greater jihad is to fight against the dispersing tendencies of the concupiscent soul.

These virtues have served as models and sources of inspiration for all Muslims and have been applied on many levels from the most outward to the most inward. The great classical texts of Islamic ethics, such as those of al-Qushayrī and al-Ghazzālī, which are still widely read, are expositions of ethical and spiritual virtues that all Muslims believe the Prophet possessed on the highest level. Along with these works, there is a genre of prophetic biography based on Muhammad's inner reality and ethical character rather than the external episodes of his life. These biographies parallel a certain type of "lives of Christ," which were written in the West in such a way as to make possible the *imitatio Christi* ("imitation of Christ").

Muhammad and Islamic law and theology

All schools of Islamic law (Sharī'ah), both Sunni and Shī'ite, agree that the Sunnah and Hadith of the Prophet serve as the most important source of Islamic law after the Qur'ān. In Islam even a prophet is not by himself a legislator; instead, God is ultimately the only legislator (*al-Shāri*). Muslims believe, however, that, as God's prophet, Muhammad knew the divine will as it was meant to be codified in Islamic law. His actions and juridical decisions therefore played an indispensable role in the later codification of the Sharī'ah by various legal schools. Muslims believe that Muhammad brought not only the word of God in the form of the Qur'ān to the world but also a divine law specific to Islam, a law whose roots are contained completely in the Qur'ān but whose crystallization was not possible without the words and deeds of the Prophet.

Theology, sometimes called *kalām*, as a discipline does not play the same central role in Islam as it does in Christianity. Nevertheless, this discipline, usually translated in Western sources as scholastic theology—popularly held to have been founded by 'Alī—has its roots through 'Alī in some of Muhammad's teachings. At the same time, all schools of *kalām* address the question of revelation and the relation of the words of the Prophet to religious truth on the one hand and rational discourse on those truths on the other. Moreover, if theology is understood to be general religious thought, then Muhammad's teachings are even more central. There has never been a Muslim religious thinker who has not been deeply influenced by the words of the Prophet, whose presence is felt in all forms of religious teachings throughout the Islamic world. Islamic religious thought, therefore, is inconceivable without the Prophet, just as Christian theology is inconceivable without Jesus.

Muhammad and Sufism

The Sufis have always believed that the reality that constitutes Sufism issued from the inner meaning of the Qur'ān and the inner nature of the Prophet. According to Sufism, Muhammad is at the origin of the *silsilah*, or the chain of spiritual descent of every Sufi order, and Sufis believe that he was both the perfect prophet and the perfect saint (*walī*). Upon his death, the prophetic function came to an end, but the saintly power (*walāyah/wilāyah*) continued and was transmitted through 'Alī and others to later generations so that the journey along the spiritual path could be made. Sufis, as well as Shī'ites, believe that there is a prophetic light called the Muhammadan Light (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*), which, originating from the Prophet, will continue to shine through the later saints and, for the Shī'ites, the imams until the end of the world. Sufis also identify the inner reality of the Prophet, or the Muhammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyyah*), with God's first creation, which became finally manifested on earth in his last prophet, who once said, "I was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay." The love of the Prophet plays an especially central role in Sufism, and litanies consisting of his names and qualities form an integral part of Sufi practice. Indeed, the Muhammadan grace (*al-barakāt al-muḥammadiyyah*) is said to be nowhere stronger than in the spiritual practices of the Sufis when they celebrate the divine names and seek to remember God with the help of the Prophet. Sufis take great pride in calling themselves "the poor" (*al-fuqarā*) because Muhammad said, "Poverty is my pride." The Mi'rāj, or Nocturnal Ascent, of the Prophet is the prototype of all spiritual wayfaring in Islam, and no group in Islamic society has been as conscientious as the Sufis in emulating the Prophet as the perfect saint and what later Sufis were to call the Perfect or Universal Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*).

Muhammad in Islamic art and literature

In contrast to Christianity and Buddhism, whose major sacred art is iconic, Islamic art is strictly aniconic, and Muslims are not permitted to make images of God or of the Prophet. There is therefore no iconic representation of the Prophet in Islamic art, but that does not mean that he is not present in other ways in that art. Many forms of Islamic art celebrate Muhammad's name and presence. There are calligraphic representations of his various names, especially Muhammad, found everywhere in the Islamic world and preserved in many mosques, especially those of the Ottoman Empire in which they held a prominent position. There are also many Persian, Turkish, and Mogul miniatures in which his figure is represented in a stylized fashion, though his face is usually hidden or effaced. Miniatures of the Mi'rāj represent some of the greatest masterpieces of this genre of painting.

It is, however, in music and poetry that Muhammad is especially celebrated. Some of the most beautiful Islamic poetry is devoted to the love of the Prophet, and Islamic poetry in Arabic, Persian, Swahili, Turkish, and other languages often deals with his life, character, and spiritual presence. Perhaps the most famous of these is *The Mantle (Al-Burdah)* by the 13th-century Egyptian Sufi al-Būṣīrī, which is sung every Friday after congregational prayers in al-Būṣīrī's mausoleum in Alexandria and is heard throughout the Arab world on various occasions. Moreover, there are many forms of music, from elegies to Sufi music of celebration, directly concerned with the virtues and character of the Prophet. For example, *qawwālī* music and chanting, which is very popular on the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, returns over and over to the theme of the Prophet. The same can be said of *ilāhī*, or Sufi songs, in Turkey. Music devoted to the Prophet, however, is not confined to Sufi circles but is found everywhere among the Islamic population at large. Furthermore, there is an Arabic song celebrating Muhammad's entry into Medina that is known to practically every Arab child and that has become popular even among young Muslims in Europe and the United States. Almost all forms of art permitted by Islam have been used over the ages and throughout the Islamic world to celebrate the presence of the Prophet as a living reality in everyday Islamic life.

Muhammad and Islamic piety

One cannot understand Islamic piety without comprehending the role of Muhammad in it. His birthday is celebrated throughout the Islamic world during the month of Rabī' al-Awwal, not in the same way that Christians celebrate Christmas but as a major feast. Only in Wahhābī-dominated Saudi Arabia are these celebrations not encouraged publicly; there they are somewhat subdued. In the rest of the Islamic world, the miracles associated with his life, such as the "cleaving of the moon" (*shaqq al-qamar*), the Qur'ānic revelation through an unlettered (*ummī*) person, his Nocturnal Journey, and other events, are celebrated in numerous ways. Ordinary Muslims as well as the highly educated repeat the Qur'ānic dictum that Muhammad was sent as "mercy unto all the worlds" (*raḥmatan lī' al-ālamīn*). People ask for his *shifā'ah*, or intercession on the Day of Judgment, hoping to assemble that day under the green "flag of praise" (*liwā' al-ḥamd*) carried by him. Muslims experience the Prophet as a living reality and believe that he has an ongoing relation not only with human beings but also with animals and plants. His relics are held sacred, and major edifices such as the Jāmi' Mosque of Delhi, India, have been constructed around them.

His own tomb is, after the Ka'bah in Mecca, the most important site of Islamic pilgrimage, and all other pilgrimage sites—from Moulay Idrīs in Morocco to the Shi'ite places of pilgrimage in Iran and Iraq to the tomb of Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī in Ajmer in India—are considered “extensions” of his mausoleum in Medina.

The benediction upon the Prophet punctuates daily Muslim life, and traditional Islamic life reminds one at every turn of his ubiquitous presence. He even plays a major role in dreams. There are many prayers recited in order to be able to have a dream of the Prophet, who promised that the Devil could never appear in a dream in the form of Muhammad. Not only for saints and mystics but also for many ordinary pious people, a simple dream of the Prophet has been able to transform a whole human life. One might say that the reality of the Prophet penetrates the life of Muslims on every level, from the external existence of the individual and of Islamic society as a whole to the life of the psyche and the soul and finally to the life of the spirit.

The image of Muhammad in the West

In contrast to the Islamic understanding of Muhammad, the Western image of him remained highly negative for over a millennium and has only recently begun to change. From the time when a polemical work by John of Damascus was translated from Greek into Latin, some knowledge of Muhammad's life was available in the West but was nearly always used abusively. Another influential work of the earlier Middle Ages was the *Epistolae Saraceni* (“Letters of a Saracen”) by an Oriental Christian and translated from Arabic into Latin. Besides Byzantine sources, the West gained some knowledge of Muhammad from the Mozarabs of Spain, including figures such as Eulogius of Cordova in the 9th century and Petrus Alfonsi, a Jew who converted to Christianity, in the 11th century. After the 9th century highly negative biographies of Muhammad appeared in Latin. In the 12th century Peter the Venerable ordered the Qur'ān to be translated into Latin and information about Muhammad to be collected so that the teachings of Islam could be refuted by Christian thinkers.

During the 13th century European medieval knowledge of the life of Muhammad was “completed” in a series of works by scholars such as Pedro Pascual, Ricoldo de Monte Croce, and Ramon Llull. In these works, however, Muhammad was depicted as an imposter and Islam as a Christian heresy, and in some of them Muhammad was portrayed as the Antichrist. That he was considered unlettered by Muslims, that he married a wealthy widow, that he ruled over a human community and was therefore involved in several wars, and that in his later life he had several wives were all facts interpreted in the worst light possible. That he died like “an ordinary person” was contrasted with the supernatural end to Christ's earthly life.

This highly negative image of Muhammad as a heretic, false prophet, renegade cardinal, or founder of a religion that promotes violence found its way into many other works of European literature over the centuries, such as the chansons de geste, William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and John Lydgate's *The Fall of the Princes*. Even Dante, who knew much about Islamic esoteric teachings, was forced to place the Prophet along with 'Alī in the inferno in the 28th canto of the *Inferno* of his *Divine Comedy*. From the 13th century onward, romantic representations of Muhammad's life also appeared, as in Alexandre du Pont's *Roman de Mahom*; and the *Mi'rāj* was translated by a certain Abraham, the court physician of Alfonso X of Castile and Leon and his son, as *Escala de Mahoma* (“The Ladder of Muhammad”) and was definitely

known by Dante in some version.

In the early modern period, the medieval image of Muhammad continued to be promoted by a variety of Western writers. The general hostility toward Islam formed part of Martin Luther's polemic against the Roman Catholic church, and the image of Muhammad as the Antichrist appeared in Alexander Ross's introduction to his translation of the Qur'ān in 1649. Apocalyptic interpretations of Muhammad continued into the 19th century in America, notably in George Bush's *Life of Mohammed* (1830).

The first fairly positive biography of Muhammad not based on Christian "ideology" of the medieval period was Boulainvilliers's *La Vie de Mahomet* ("The Life of Muhammad"), published in London in 1730. The philosopher Voltaire had a fairly positive view of him as well. In 1742 Voltaire's tragedy *La Fanatisme; ou, Mohamet le prophète* ("Fanaticism; or, Muhammad the Prophet") was performed in Paris, and Goethe translated it into German in 1799. This most revered of German writers was deeply attracted to Islam and planned to write a drama on this theme but completed only the famous poem *Mahomets-Gesang* ("Mahomet's Singing"). In the 19th century Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall was among those who wrote dramas and novels about Muhammad. At the same time, Thomas Carlyle broke new ground in *On Heroes*, in which he provided a positive evaluation of the Prophet. Images of Muhammad were also used by Victor Hugo in his *The Legend of the Centuries* (*La Légende des siècles*) at a moment when Western Orientalism was turning to biographies about Muhammad based on modern historical and analytic methods.

Assessment

During the 23-year period of his prophethood, Muhammad accomplished what by any account must be considered among the most significant achievements of human history. First, he transmitted both the text of the Qur'ān and his own understanding of the Divine Word, which is the foundation of all later Qur'ānic commentaries. Second, he established a body of Sunnah and Hadith that are, after the Qur'ān, the most important sources for all things Islamic. Third, he laid the foundation for a new religious and spiritual community, taught many disciples, and created the means for the continuity and transmission of the Islamic tradition. Finally, he formed a new society, unifying Arabia in a sociopolitical structure based on the Qur'ān and establishing an empire of faith in the hearts and minds of his followers, who then took his message to the farthest confines of the Earth. It can therefore be argued that Muhammad's mark on history was as profound and enduring as anything recorded in the pages of human history.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Additional Reading

Primary sources

The starting point for understanding the life and teachings of the Prophet is the Qur'ān, which exists in numerous editions and translations. Also of value are the sayings (Hadith) of the Prophet; ABDULLAH AL-MA'MUN AL-SUHRAWARDY (compiler), *The Sayings of Muhammad* (1905, reprinted with revisions, 1995), is an excellent

collection of these many works. ‘ABD AL-MALIK IBN HISHAM, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishāq’s Sīrat rasūl Allāh*, ed. and trans. by A. GUILLAUME (1955, reissued 1997), is the most important early biography of Muhammad. A much later but still valuable premodern life of the Prophet by an influential 14th-century theologian and historian is IBN KATHIR (ISMĀ‘IL IBN ‘UMAR IBN KATHIR), *The Life of the Prophet Muhammad: A Translation of Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, trans. from Arabic by TREVOR LE GASSICK (1998-).

Modern biographies

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ANNEMARIE SCHIMMEL, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (1985; originally published in German, 1981), addresses the pious devotion Muslims feel toward the Prophet. NORMAN DANIEL, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (1960, reissued 1997); DAVID BLANKS and MICHAEL FRASSETTO (eds.), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (2001); and JOHN VICTOR TOLAN (ed.), *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* (1996, reissued 2000), are good introductions to the often hostile Western views of Muhammad and Islam.

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