

THE ISLAMIC INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 14:16-17

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John 14:16–17

καὶ γὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἄλλον παράκλητον δώσει ὑμῖν, ἵνα μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν αἰώνα ἥτις, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὃ ὁ κόσμος οὐδέποτε λαβεῖν, ὅτι οὐ θεωρεῖ αὐτὸν οὐδὲ γινώσκει· ὑμεῖς γινώσκετε αὐτόν, ὅτι παρ' ὑμῖν μένει καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

Surah As-Saff 61:6

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى أَبْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَدْبَرِنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
إِلَيْكُمْ مُّصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِّ مِنَ الْتُّورَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ
بَعْدِي أَسْمُهُ أَحْمَدٌ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is the Praised One (Ahmed). Then, when he showed them the clear proofs, they said, “This is profound magic.”

Islamic scholars teach that the Greek παράκλητος in John 14:15-16 means “one whom people praise exceedingly.” It actually means “one who is called to someone’s aid” (which became *advocatus* in Latin),¹ “a mediator,” or “an intercessor.” This παράκλητος became the loanword פֶּרְקָלִיט in Hebrew (Jastrow ,1241). The promise of “the other Paraclete/Advocate” in John 14:16 was applied by Mohammed to himself by a confusion of παράκλητος/פֶּרְקָלִיט with περικλύτος, meaning “heard all round, famous” (Liddell and Scott, 1377). περικλύτος would have been translated into Arabic as أَحْمَد (*Aḥmed*), meaning “the glorified, the illustrious, the

¹ In the Vulgate John 14:16 reads, *et ego rogabo Patrem et alium paracletum dabit vobis ut maneat vobiscum in aeternum*, “and I will ask the Father: and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever:” The *paracletum* is obvious a transliteration of the παράκλητος.

famous one.” (أحمد) was one of the Mohammed’s names, derived from the same stem, حمد (*hmd*) (Lane 1865: 638–640; Wehr, 239). The Hebrew cognates of حمد (*hmd*) are חִמְדָה, חִמְדָת, חִמְדָתָה, and מְחִמְדָה, all of which speak of desire, delight, and something precious (BDB, 326–327; Castell, 1274–1276). If περικλύτος had been a loanword in Hebrew, it would have been spelled as פַּרְקָלּוֹת (= פְּרָקְלִית) and could have been easily confused with the latter. But περικλύτος is not cited in the Hebrew lexicons. In the Septuagint παρακαλεῖν, παράκλησις, and παράκλητικός translated most frequently מְחִמְדָה “to comfort,” but these words were never used to translate חִמְדָה or its derivatives (Hatch and Redpath, 1060–1061).²

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² For the different words used to translate חִמְדָה and its derivatives, see Hatch and Redpath, 176c, 181a, 226b, 437c, 520bc, 521a, 568a., and Appendix IV, 234a.

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