

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

**COMMON
ORIGIN
SIMILAR
ASPIRATIONS**



**An Appreciation of their Common Beliefs, Practices
and Differences: towards a peaceful co-existence.**

Abdullahi Ahmad Imam

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Common Origin Similar Aspirations

An appreciation of their common beliefs, practices and differences, towards a peaceful co-existence.

ABDULLAHI AHMAD IMAM

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Differences: Towards a Peaceful Co-Existence.

ABDULLAHI AHMAD IMAM

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Alh. Abdullahi Ahmadu Imam (fcia)

Muharram 1438 AH.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the loving memory of my late parents Mallam Ahmadu (Baba) Imam and Hajiya Hauwa (bint) Sulaiman; also the memory of my Quranic teacher Mal. Musa Zaria. May their Souls rest with Allah (SWT) in peace.

FOREWORD

From the introduction, the cardinal objective is to bridge the gap of misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians as a necessary knowledge platform for improved peace and avoiding unnecessary conflicts. This is approached by comparing Islam as a religion with Christianity as a religion, hinting on the standard link that should be appreciated by all – that both are offshoots of the nuclear faith of Abraham.

In this work, the Author has profoundly provided a foundation for the universal understanding of what religion ought to be. The wealth and depth of this is however inevitably informed by Islam. The work presents a beautiful definition from philosophy to Sufism (Mysticism) and in fact to Zuhdu (self-restraint).

In the body of the work, I find his attempt to be fair to both parties, and distant from prejudices. I appreciate that his attempt is evidently more than good. My impression here may not be strongly right because I have always avoided the subject of comparative religion. Under Common Heritage, the buildup of the revelation of God Himself to Mankind and the guidance for success through numerous messengers is well presented and fitting.

I consider the book suitable for academics, for schools and for the enlightenment of Muslims on the consistent message of the unity of Allah to Mankind. And Christians will appreciate what is necessarily common with Islam. Teachers and students of both faiths across all levels of schooling will gain by education and strengthening of faith for living a fulfilling life in a secular setting. I recommend it to all believers in and out of school for better appreciation of ourselves and discipline.

I therefore end by appreciating and thanking the Author for giving me the early opportunity to share in this painstaking mission. May Allah reward him for the beautiful and meaningful contribution.

Muhammad Sa'idu Jimada

Sadaqatu Tayyibatun Foundation.
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PREFACE

About the Book

The Title of this Book: *“Christianity and Islam: Common Origin, similar Aspirations”* is based on the common beliefs of both Christianity and Islam which states that *“From God we came and to Him is our return”*. Both Christianity and Islam accept the truth of this statement. Believers of both faiths also accept that Man is created from earth (clay or soil) and to the earth is our return, which is why our religions taught us to bury our dead in the earth. The Christians when they bury their dead never fail to state *“Ashes to Ashes: Dust to Dust”* in the process, to mean the same thing. Muslims are taught by the Prophet Muhammad, that when they are faced with danger and fear the possibility of death, or when somebody dies, to say: *“Inna lillahi Wa’inna ilaihim Raji’un”* meaning: *“We are from Allah and to Him is our return.”* The word Aspiration is used here to allude to the fact that believers of both faiths aspire to go to Heaven (or Paradise).

Many books have been written on the thorny issue of Christian-Muslim relations that another one might appear like an unnecessary repetition. However, it has become necessary because a sizeable number of books written by both Muslims and Christians are replete with heavy bias as they were produced in form of combat writing. That kind of writing unfortunately can only add fuel to the tense situation and further estrange fragile relations, instead of bonding of hearts and instilling confidence in people.

The Initial intention was to approach this work from a general perspective, but this has proved to be quite a challenge, as one writes from one’s own experience or background. Consequently, to support one’s personal or spiritual experience, one must expand oneself by delving into research of the works of others writers. This provided a source of enormous insight for me; thus confirming the truth of what Joseph Addison has said that *“Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation, as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn.”* I have drunk from the fountain of the knowledge which many such Geniuses have left for us that crawl behind.

I am aware that the mere fact that this book is produced by a Muslim, the feeling of resistance may inevitably arise in the mind of the Christian reader, for obvious reasons. Being a Muslim, every effort made to avoid bias and bigotry will still appear to be making a case for Islam. It is hoped that the effort made to look at Christianity through a screen that is devoid of unnecessary negative emotions will not go unnoticed. Thus, the kind indulgence of our Christian friends and brethren is solicited, to bear with this writer regarding the profuse quotations made from the Holy Quran to support the arguments put forth. Of course references have been made to the Holy Bible too.

Thus, this book is not neutral – if neutrality means not saying which side you agree with in a debate. On the other hand, if being ‘objective’ means faithfully reporting the facts of history and the thoughts of (other) human beings, then this book has been written with a concern for objectivity. My desire basically is to bridge the gap of misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians, as a necessary knowledge platform for improved peace and the avoidance of unnecessary conflicts. If it manages to clear up some misunderstandings, to question a few prevailing opinions and to define more clearly the relationship between Islam and Christianity, then it will not have been written in vain.

Be as it may, having considered this factor, I have made effort to offset this by relying heavily on documentary evidence and facts of history from ancient and relatively recent writers. The bulk of my research findings have been presented, as much as possible, though a lot of factual data has to be played down in order not to derail from the set objective. For instance, the history of the Crusades and how it played out, giving birth to perhaps the first and enduring Secret Society known to Christendom, called **‘the Knights Templers**. The society originally called itself the Poor Fellow–Soldiers of Christ of the Temple of Solomon. Later, the name changed to the Knights of the Temple of Solomon, or more simply, the Knights Templers. Eventually, they would become one of the most powerful forces in Europe (particularly France) and later America. A group that would later become politicized and transformed to a world body or cabal (with many braches called the ‘Order’ using different names) that seeks to rule the nations of the world by controlling its

leaders (Ref: Angus Hall, "The Supernatural Strange Cults" Aldous books limited, London (1976) Pg. 42-44).

The complete volume of this book has six Chapters. The first chapter is a discussion on Religion and Mankind, followed by a Chapter that discusses our Commonalities. The third Chapter discusses our Doctrinal differences. The fourth looked at Christian Doctrines and Dogmas; the fifth discussed 28 Misconceptions about Islam; and the sixth presents the Islamic Concept, Creed and Doctrine. The intention is to allow the reader to draw his own conclusion, perchance he will meet with more surprises, as he gets acquainted with more passages of the Holy Books than he has hitherto been opportune (or allowed himself), to come in contact with. The reader may quite possibly come across one or two answers to some elusive questions on religion generally, or on Islam particularly or perhaps even in Christianity, which historical data might have previously defied tracing or of which one might not be aware.

Ample quotations from both Christian and Islamic scriptures have also been cited to support the issues raised. This has been done in spite of Wendell Phillips who said, "*Take the whole range of imaginative literature, and we are wholesale borrowers. In every matter that relates to invention, to use, or beauty, or form, we are borrowers.*" Thus, I lay no claim to absolute originality. It is simply an effort to re-channel or represent the thoughts and reasoning communicated to us by others in my own way, hopefully in a more profound argument to substantiate the claims of Muslims that the true teaching of the original Jesus, the son of Mary (pbuh - peace be upon them), in its basics, is not much different from that of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh - peace be upon him), which further underscore the fact that Islam is not a new religion; neither was the original message of Jesus (pbuh).

This book is therefore for those who wish to get a little bit more understanding about Christianity or Islam, whether they profess either of the faiths or not, with a view to bring us closer. It is hoped that those who wish to find out or ascertain the truth about either faith and are yet unable to conduct the necessary research (for some reason), will find more than enough scriptural and historical facts to meet their needs. In this sense, it is hoped that both the Muslim and non-Muslim brothers will be provided with another view point about his religion, to ignite deeper contemplation. The intention therefore is as Allah said in the Quran: ". . .

in order that the People of the Book may arrive at certainty, and the Believers may increase in faith, - and that no doubt may be left for the People of the Book and the believers, and those in whose hearts is a disease" . . . And this is no other than a warning to Mankind." (Quran 74:31-b)

Of course, this is only our prayer, because as M. K. Gandhi warned: ". . . you can wake a man only if he is really asleep, otherwise, effort that you may make will not produce any effect upon him if he is merely pretending to sleep." (Mahatma K. Gandhi [1972], *'An Autobiography'*). Incidentally, a few more Quotations from Gandhi have been used throughout the book; being neither Muslim nor Christian, it is hoped that a neutral mind will serve to give the reader some sort of balance.

The use of Arabic script in quoting from the Quran has been deliberately avoided as a necessary safe-guard against misrepresentation. As such readers are urged to verify scriptural quotations to ascertain the accuracy of the quotations. Allowance should be made of course, for translators' preferences for certain words or phrases. For the Bible references, quotations have been restricted to the New International version and the Authorized King James Version (AKJV). And for the Quranic quotations reliance has been on the Translation and Commentary of the Quran by (the late) Sheikh (Professor) Abdullahi Yusuf Ali, partly because his commentaries and notations have been heavily adopted, to help shade light on the Quranic texts.

I seek forgiveness from Allah most high, for any mistake or error made in the execution of this task, which may be due to my inadequacy. While beseeching Allah for His pardon, I pray that He may accept this little effort of mine as a part of my *'Ibadat'*. I also pray for guidance for those who may read it and choose, by the will of God, to follow the (guidance of) the noble messenger of Allah. *'Waman Taufiq Illa Billah'*: 'Nothing from me except by the Grace of Allah'. All praise is due to Allah; Lord of the Worlds and May He send His choicest salutations and peace on the seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (as on all the prophets that came before him) and upon his family and companions together, Ameen.

Abdullahi Ahmadu IMAM (fcia)
Muharram 1438 A.H. (October 2016)

CHRISTIANITY & ISLAM: COMMON ORIGIN, SAME ASPIRATIONS

INTRODUCTION:

The Significance of Comparative Religion

The sheer mystery of our lives demands an explanation. As such, we need to study the past in order to understand our present, which we hope will enable us appreciate our future. Some however say that “the past doesn’t matter; that we need to define ourselves in the present in order to see our way into the future.” But in my view, our destination can be better perceived if we allow ourselves to assess or analyze correctly our past (where we came from) in conjunction with our present state of development. To illustrate; It is like a pilgrim who midway on his (spiritual) journey becomes confused (or had partial amnesia) of his destination. He needs to sit down, not only to think things through, but to ask around, study himself and the environment he finds himself. It is only in finding out where he started from (his origin) can he possibly recall where he had set out (or had been set out for him) to go on the journey and how he was to return home safely in glory rather than in ignominy.

Christianity and Islam, two distinct religions characterized by faith in one God, Monotheism, have unhappily been faced by a hard and painful reality. The conflicts in which the two communities have faced each other as enemies down through the centuries bear sad witness to this fact. While sharing a common faith in God, the followers of the two faiths have despite themselves come to share the responsibility of discrediting that faith in the eyes of the world at large. Could they ever humbly admit the wrong they have done before God whose Mercy they praise, and could they firmly resolve to live together in a new relationship which honors that faith which is dear to them? Or do the contrary position adopted by Christians and Muslims mean, then, that these two groups of people must forever be opposed to each other? Not at all! The experiences of recent happenings in northern Nigeria during the ‘Boko Haram’ insurgency which brought Christians and Muslims together, in a spirit of cooperation, and mutual security to save each other’s’ lives, proves that it is possible to have a lasting harmony between the two.

But if we all received the same message, why then are we disputing? Why the conflict? The different posture taken by followers of the two faiths is what has created the necessity for dialogues in the first place. Tensions arise because we tend to see same things differently as we view them from different perspectives and orientations. Thus we marshal (what we believe to be) convincing arguments to support our positions. Consequently, the refusal of each party to learn from the others’ point of view is the reason why mutual understanding has been elusive. In other words, it is due to our mutual apathy

that we have failed to recognize that Islam and Christianity have so much in common without realizing it. However, even while staunchly holding on to our own views, it would be helpful, even if for no other purpose, at least to promote proper adjustments to our surroundings. We may also come to know, to some extent, how the mind of our neighbors work and what the mainsprings of his actions were. From this angle of vision, it is highly desirable that one should try to know about other religions of the world in the proper spirit, so as to promote mutual understanding and better appreciation of our neighbors, immediate and remote.

We must reiterate for the sake of honesty, that historically, peoples of all cultures, traditions, and faiths (Muslims, Christians, Jewish and all others), have had lapses in how they 'honestly' follow the valued ideals of their religions or philosophies. We have all made mistakes and we will continue to do so. Muslims are no exception. Time and again religion has been exploited by ambitious tyrants or violated by ignorant mobs. This is no reflection on religion, but it shows how desperately humanity is in need of better education, more enduring concern for human dignity, rights and freedoms, and vigilant pursuit of justice, even at the price of curbing political and economic greed.

Robert H. Thouless (1953), in his book *'Straight and Crooked Thinking'*, (Pan Piper Books Ltd. London, pages 9 – 10), told us of the implication of the words we chose when we discuss controversial questions (like Faith, Love, and War), he said:

“. . . A word, therefore, can not only indicate a fact, but can also suggest an emotional attitude towards it. Such suggestion of an emotional attitude does go beyond mere factual description because our approvals and disapprovals are individual (personal) – they belong to ourselves and not to the objects we approve or disapprove of. An animal (a Dog, for instance) which to the mind of its master is a faithful and noble dog of mixed ancestry may be a 'Mongrel' to his neighbor whose chickens are chased by it. Similarly, a Negro may be indicated factually as a 'colored man' or with strong emotional disapproval and contempt as a 'Nigger'. The use of the latter word debases any discussion in which it is used below the level of impartial and objective argument. Once we are on the look-out for this difference between factual and emotional meaning, we shall notice that words which carry more or less strong suggestions of emotional attitudes are very common and are ordinarily used in the discussion of such controversial questions as those of Politics, Morals, and Religion. This is one reason why men can go on discussing such questions without getting much nearer to a rational solution of them."

When an attitude of obstinate resistance to truth is adopted, the natural consequence (by God's law) is that the heart and mind get more and more hardened with every act of deliberate rejection. It becomes more and more impervious to the reception of truth, just as a sealed envelope is unable to

receive any further letter or message after it is sealed. The Quran has a question concerning this category of people:

- *“And who doth wrong than one who is reminded of the Signs of his Lord, but turns away from them, forgetting the (deeds) which his hands have sent forth? Verily We have set veils over their ears, deafness, if thou callest them to guidance, even then will they never accept guidance.”(Q. 18:57)*

Man repeatedly misled himself by following his desires, conjectures and conclusions based on superficial observations. His opinion could be arbitrary, often erroneous, and man could always be led astray by his desires and prejudices. In effect, natural reason, as a source of ethical knowledge was demonstrated time and again. The revelations and messages came for mankind, but woe to man that as often as those envoys came; he not only left the chosen path again and again, but also lost or distorts the code of guidance which the prophets left with him. He allowed his own desires, accretions, innovations and superstitions enshroud and clutter up the pristine faith. So we see why other Prophets were sent repeatedly, to represent the original message and bring man back to the right path (again and again). The last of these Prophets was Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who presented God’s guidance in its final form and preserved it for all times to come. The Prophets, even before the Prophet of Arabia, continue the line of men of God who have come to teach mankind and lead men into unity and righteousness. With the passing of every day, the Judgment Day approaches nearer and nearer, only God alone can say at what precise hour it will come to any of us. Both Jesus and Muhammad said they do not know when. It is certain, and yet it is a mystery, only God alone knows.

In spite of these preliminary remarks, Prof. A. Yusuf Ali says that the ground . . . *“in the field of religion where there is often a conflict between intellect and emotion, is so slippery that one is constantly reminded of ‘fools that rush in where angels fear to tread’.* In order to achieve our purpose as true standard bearers for God, we shall have to find true common grounds of belief, as stated in the latter part of verse 46 of chapter 29 of the Quran, and also to show by our urbanity, kindness, sincerity, truth, and genuine anxiety for the good of others, that we are not cranks or merely seeking selfish or questionable aims.” (Prof. (Sheikh) A. Y. Ali – N. 3472 – p. 1041).

The West Re-defines Islam

The West has sought to redefine Islam for Muslims. The fear of Islam has made the West to unleash deliberate propaganda on Islam and Muslims. The propaganda is very thick and it deludes the people in the West. They find it difficult to understand Islam, which they are made to view as an enemy, -

enemy because it does not subscribe to the principle (and immoralities) of the West. This state of affair has led them to go as far as creating and planting their own version of the 'Quran' on the unsuspecting non-Muslims (and Muslims too). Everything that is written which appear to be against Israelis ('bani-Israel') and the 'Gentiles' (Nasara) was edited out. They hoped, by this means, to replace the Holy Quran, so that future Muslims will only know of the subversive version. But they failed woefully because in spite of circulating many copies of it, people refer to it as the '*American Koran*' and it stood rejected till date. Any Muslim who knows his scripture need only look at it once and would know it is a fake. Luckily, millions of Muslims have learnt the whole of the Quran by heart (men, women and children, some 12-year-olds).

Although Islam has certain similarities with Christianity, it is yet unlike it in its history, practice and mode of propagation. The Muslim of their choice is what they call the 'liberal Muslim'. They have other categorizations, such as: the radical, fanatical and fundamentalist groups. The dividing line is even hypocritical. In some circumstances, appearance can simply give one away as a radical or while in some cases it is the speech made at an occasion. But when the facts are laid bare, the dividing line is the individual's disposition towards the West. The Quran has already warned that: "*They will not accept you unless you are willing to be like them*" (Quran 2 :120).

However, Muslims are unperturbed, in that historically, Islam has shown how its ardent enemies become its protagonists. From the time of the Prophet (pbuh) at Mecca, to the present day, one of the positive factors of Islam is that those who set out initially to attack Islam often end up embracing it. Take the case of the Meccans as a community fourteen centuries ago. They opposed Islam and even sought to kill the Prophet but their scheming failed and they later became the champions that spread Islam throughout the world. Without doubt, they didn't mean well in the battles of Badr, Uhud and Khandaq. Khalid bn Walid (one of the ferocious commanders who fought against the Islam) who overran the rear of the Muslims in Uhud, also overran a large chunk of the Roman and Persian armies for Islam. The Western world called the Muslims various names: such as Saracens, Moors and Turks, depending on the point of contact. However, they simply regard them as a danger to the spread of Christianity and its existence in its home places, Jerusalem and Rome. George Guest in his book "*The March of Civilization*" observed that: "*for centuries the Saracens, as the Eastern Muslims were called, were the dreaded foes of Christians*" (George Guest, - page 67).

In this process of re-definition, the West is only guided by its Christian and cultural experiences. The implication of this statement is spelt out by a Christian Arab, Chawkat Georges Moucarray (1984) in his book: '*Islam and Christianity at the Crossroads*'. He wrote that: "*Christianity has become discredited in the eyes of many people who have led to think that Western*

civilization was the actual embodiment of the gospel. This is probably the greatest disservice done by the Church to the name Christ in the Muslim world. In the longer term, this abuse of power led to the eventual separation between church and state in some Western countries. Paradoxically, this separation is much more in line with the pattern of teaching we find in the New Testament. It is true, of course, that technological progress, democracy and the declaration of Human Rights all have some connection with the positive influence of Christianity on Western civilization. However, it cannot be denied, and Muslims quite rightly point out that Western civilization today is also characterized by the rise of atheistic humanism, a decline in moral standards and a certain dehumanization of the individual. . . . Christians who are inclined to look too favorably upon Western cultures should bear these things in mind. They are not so much the price we have to pay for science, freedom and prosperity as they are the result of the departure from Western Judaeo-Christian values. This situation requires Christians, especially in the West, to recognize their dual responsibility. In the first place, they should repudiate, in a true spirit of repudiation, the Church's past errors; but that alone is not enough. They should also learn a lesson from the spirit of today's Islamic revival, and by their complete faithfulness to the gospel, seek to express visibly the kingdom of God in our complex modern world. (p. 18-19)

Christian change of Heart towards Islam.

A noticeable change seems however to be under way at the highest levels of the Christian world. One of the significant milestones of modern times, however, was the radical shift of the views of the Holy See on Muslims, which should hopefully work as a catalyst for better understanding between Muslims and Christians. Whereas in 1095 Pope Urban II (also known as 'Urban the blessed'), who was the first to call for the Crusades, characterized Muslim as "*Godless people, idolaters, Anti-Christ, dogs, chaff destined for eternal fire*" etcetera. The encyclical "*Nostra Aetate*" of 1965 under Pope Paul VI views Muslims in an entirely different light. The document says: "*Upon Muslims, too, the church looks with esteem*", and proceeds to expound that Muslims adore the One God, the God of Abraham with whom the Islamic faith is happy to associate itself; worship, pray and give alms; revere Jesus and his virgin mother, and consider him a prophet and messenger of God. (p. 39-40)

The office for non-Christian affairs at the Vatican has produced a document resulting from the second Vatican council under the French title "*Orientations pour un dialogue entre Chretiens et Musulmans*" (Orientation for a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims; third French edition dated 1970), which bears witness to the profound change in official attitudes. Once the document has invited the reader to clear away the "*outdated image, inherited from the past, or distorted by prejudice and slander*", that Christians have of

Islam. The Vatican document proceeds to *“recognize the past injustice towards the Muslims for which the West, with its Christian education, is to blame.”*

Although my focus is Christian-Muslim relations, I find it needful to reflect on the views of one of the greatest adherents of the Hindu religion, as providing a neutral assessment on Christianity and Islam. Thus, I have used some of the reflections of Mohandas (Mahatma) Karamchand Gandhi, to serve as neutral or ‘non-aligned’ critique of the two monotheistic faiths. My only hope is simply that this humble effort will be able to kindle a spark of light and understanding and inspire the seeker of truth to proceed further along the way of guidance that leads to God and to earn His good pleasure and eternal mercy. Gandhi said: *“Just one Act of yours may turn the tide of another person’s life”*. I hope that this book will be a means for the Muslim to understand his ‘Deen’ (Religion/faith) better and also serve as key to unshackle the minds of people from the dogma that held them captive and prevented them from realizing the purpose of their creation and destiny: a return to their Creator; which will be impossible without totally submitting their will to that of Allah (SWT), the Almighty God. If this humble effort of mine can achieve at least ten percent of this aim, I will be gratified.

CHAPTER ONE

FAITH, RELIGION AND MAN

Introduction

Starting from ancient records, historical research has shown that animism and idol worship of primitive peoples in the world is in all cases a regression from an original unitive belief. Thus, in any tradition the pure teaching is to be found at its beginning, and what follows is necessarily a decline. The belief in one God of Judaism, Christianity and Islam was corrupted into the worship of many-gods rather than evolving out of them. (Muhd. Ata'ur Rahim {1977}). This evolution consequently lead us to find answers to the following questions: How does Religion and Faith feature in the relationship between God (the Creator) and Man (His creation), in the mysteries of man's daily life? Put differently; How much more profound is the contract between God and Man in the apprehension of the higher spiritual problems concerned with Religion and Faith?

WHAT IS RELIGION?

Notable Sages in different religious background described faith as the basis of Religion. Though each described it differently, they still conveyed the same meaning. If all had the same belief about all matters of religion, there would be only one religion in the world. In matters of religion, beliefs differ, and each individual's belief is supreme to him. For different reasons different people have different attitude or sentiments towards religion. Some say that, True religion is keeping one's heart clean and hands dirty – in human service. Others say, Religion is meant to be *"bread for daily use, not cake for special occasions"*.

Thus, Religion is not a mere code or compilation of laws. It is something deeper and more extensive. It governs; it guides, it directs and adorns the entire life in all its complexities. For, life essentially is movement, activity, striving, fighting against baser elements. It cannot take root nor can it flourish unless there is a complete intellectual regeneration. And complete revolution was the direct result of not only the message of the scriptures but also the impact of the prophets and beloved personality who delivered the message. It also requires the lofty standard of piety, dignity and behavior set up by the messenger, and the

sitting assemblies and concourses held by him in which flowed like an unending stream, the nectar of wisdom, soul stirring and sublime preaching.

The term 'Religion' used in its broadest sense, mean self-realization or knowledge of self. The plausibility of the claim of religion to answer our ultimate questions consists in the source of knowledge. The human faculties of sense and reasoning are in their very nature, incapable of arriving at accurate and sure knowledge of the ultimate facts both through logical reasoning and mathematical reasoning. But side by side with that, it gives us a message of hope and imparts to us a very plain and convincing guidance in that behalf. This may perhaps be why the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) said: *"Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue!"* (Narrated by Abu Huraira).

Different advocates for Religion express it as follows:

- *"The body of all true religion consists to be sure, in obedience to the will of the sovereign of the world, in a confidence in His declaration; and in imitation of His perfection."* (Edmund Burke; Reflections on the revolution in France).
- *"A man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him; the thing a man does practically believe... the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this universe, and his duty and destiny there... that is religion"* (Thomas Carlyle – in 'Heroes and Hero-worship')
- *"Religion is the sense of ultimate reality of whatever meaning a man finds in his own existence or the existence of anything else."* (G. K. Chesterton: 'Come to think of it').
- *"At one time or another every human being is confronted with the unknown, incomprehensible, with the purpose of his existence. Questioning himself he creates a belief, a conviction – 'religion' in its widest sense."*
- *"All religion relates to life and the life of religion is to do good."*
- *Every man, either to his terror or consolation; has some sense of religion.* (James Harrington: Oceana).

Sages from different beliefs seem to agree that Faith has been one at all times. They say faith is what we believe in, - the act of trusting by which man humbly listens to God's word - and religion is the practice.

Some say that: *“Faith believes in spite of what the eyes can see”*, and therefore precedes understanding. Others put it differently, they say: *“Faith is being able to see with your heart what you cannot see with your eyes.”* That only the man of faith can truly claim something which, however circumscribed, is still free will. For only a man of faith alone knows of the possibility of miracles, which signifies nothing other than the overturning of physical Laws; and, the laws of the creation can be overturned if the Law Maker so desires. They generally warned that, *‘when Faith is lost, people put off obedience with various excuses: even when at last they obey in the letter, they fail in the spirit, which means that they get fossilized, and their self-sufficiency prevents them from seeing that spiritually they are not alive but dead’* (Prof. Yusuf Ali). This may explain why Guru Nanak (an Indian Sage) said to his adherents: *“Let Faith be thy staff.”* Probably also, why William Newton Clark says that *“Faith is the daring of the soul to go farther than it can see.”* Faith, they all agreed, breeds the confidence that resists peer pressure and the vagaries of temptation. Mahatma Gandhi, another Indian sage sums it up when he said: *“Faith alone saves”*.

In spite of the fore-going, we are yet to grasp the definition of ‘faith’. One of the recorders of the Prophets’ tradition, ‘Muslim’ reported in his ‘Sahih’ (Arabic for ‘authentic’), on the authority of ‘Umar bin Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) that when Angel Gabriel (Jibreel – pbuh) asked Prophet Muhammad about Faith: (Arabic: ‘Imaan’), he said: *“Imaan (faith) is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the last Day, and to believe in destiny, the good and the bad of it.”* (This tradition has also been reported by Al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Hurairah).

The theory of evolution which excludes the Creator at the inception of the world we live in has enjoyed much popularity since the 20th century. This theory however, contradicts or betrays the hearts of many Scientists including that of Charles Darwin – (the supposed progenitor of the theory of evolution). In Al Ghazali’s view, the Atheist tends inescapably towards fatalism, believing that all he does and will do has been preordained by the laws of science. These are those, who failing to find God by observation, conclude that there is no God and that this world of wonders made itself or existed from everlasting. They are like a man who, seeing a beautifully-written letter should suppose that it had written itself without a writer, or had always existed. People in this state of mind are so far gone in error that it is of little use to argue with them

that God exists. The conflict (between religion and science) within the hearts of men has led some to include a creator in the creation of the universe, only this time, it is not God, but 'Nature'.

This of course is an escapist's attitude, for nature is nothing but a term used to represent God's role by a people who after following the misguidance of the likes of Darwin, feel too ashamed to return to the reality of religion. Nevertheless, some have retraced their steps and accepted the idea of God as Creator. An example is the case of Hassan Hathout, who initially was sympathetic to the Darwinian theory, later came to a conclusion, after much thought, to say: *"The issue was finally laid to rest when one evening I opened the dictionary to look up the meaning of a word and an idea dawned on me: suppose someone had suggested to me that the unerring arrangement of the words in the dictionary was the outcome of an explosion in a printer's shop, which caused the lead letters to be blown up in the air and then fall, just like that, in alphabetical order, the way they are in the dictionary, my mind just couldn't take it!"* (Hassan Hathout 1995). Mohandas K. Gandhi in his characteristic manner asked: *"Who can say thus far, no further, to the tide of his own nature? Who can erase the impression with which he is born?" It is idle to expect one's Children and Wards necessarily to follow the same course of evolution as oneself.*" (Mahatma K. Gandhi – 'Autobiography' (1972). It is worth repeating therefore that there is not a single fact or a single hypothesis today, which gives an explanation of the birth of life or of natural evolution.

If there is no God and the world came into being by itself, it means that it came into being by chance. In other words, it is a world of chance in which everything and every event emerges and dies out by chance. And, if we consider the nature of "chance" itself, we find that it always indicates an event which has no pre-conceived cause. In any case, it cannot be said to be a planned event. Again, if there is no plan in an event, there can be no purpose, because all purposive activity is planned, whether the planning is conscious (namely, based on intellectual appreciation) or merely instinctive. Resuming the argument, if the world came into being by chance, it must be a blind and lawless world. Indeed, the very word "chance" means the absence of law.

Taking reference from a book titled 'Human Destiny', Dr. M.F.R. Ansari (1972) called our attention to the fact that, *"... we men at the surface of the earth are witnesses to another kind of evolution; that of living things. We have already seen that the laws of chance, in their actual state cannot account for*

the birth of life. But now we find that they forbid any evolution other than which leads to less and less dissymmetrical states, while the history of the evolution of life reveals a systematic increase in dissymmetries, both structural and functional. Furthermore, this trend can hardly be attributed to a 'rare fluctuation' destined to be ironed out statistically, as it has manifested itself steadily for over one thousand million years (the probable age of life on this globe), and as the dissymmetries, gloriously unconcerned about the law set by man, became greater as eons passed by until they culminated in the brain of man." (p. 158 – 159).

If we are to take it that the world is lawless in its inherent constitution and if everything which is borne out of it is also in its nature without law, it means that the formulation of any law by human beings, whether those laws are scientific, or ethical or political or economic, would be a violation of human nature and the nature of the world itself. But human beings cannot exist without laws. Therefore, they are bound to give up the atheistic hypothesis of the existence of the world in order to live. If they don't and if they carry the atheistic hypothesis to its logical consequences, the only law which they can establish for themselves would be the law of the jungle in political administration and the rule of expediency in moral life.

Speaking from the other angle, namely: affirmation of faith in God's existence, if we believe that God exists and that He has created the world, it means that the world came into being through planned creation, and it is functioning under a system of law and is moving towards a purpose. In other words, purpose and law are inherent in the very constitution of the world. Thus, in turn, provides the ground for every branch of human law – ethical, political, economic, and so on. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972, p.34).

An important part of our knowledge of God arises from the study and contemplation of our own beliefs, which reveal to us the power, wisdom, and love of the Creator. As Harold Sharman illustrated in his writing, where he said: *"If God, the Great Intelligence, has a plan – and reason and faith both tell you that such a plan exists, as it is inconceivable that the Great Architect of this universe would have designed and created these countless heavenly bodies of Suns, Moons, and Planets, and all the myriad forms of life thereon, without having some grand eternal plan in mind, in which His evolving creatures may increasingly participate as they earn the right through continued*

experience and by the acquirement of greater intelligence and spiritual power, - then you may be sure that you and every human creature have a part in it. What that part may be, you may not now possess the development or the wisdom or understanding of your inner possibilities to detect, but you should strive from this day on to attune yourself more closely to the God-power within you and thus draw nearer to the time when your evolving soul will reveal to you the job you came here to do and the service you are destined to perform in the great, unending scheme of things. When this has become your prayer, when it becomes your heartfelt urge, however low in the scale of spiritual development you may consider yourself to be, you have ignited the spark of your divine and your worthiness for survival has been established.” (Harold Sharman [1967] “We Live After Death”).

Most Scientists today believed in the theory of cause and effect – or Man’s realization that *“there can be nothing without a cause.”* The laws of phenomena must be constant, or there could be no such thing as science; *“... the more we scientifically study the universe, the more we realize that we live in a universe of equations so delicately balanced, that the slightest imbalance would lead to a cosmic catastrophe.”* Before stating his famous First Law of Motion, Isaac Newton states that: *“An object will remain in the state of rest or continue in its uniform motion until and unless an external force acts upon it.”* Consequently, Sir Isaac Newton concludes that: ***“God is the first cause of creation of the universe”*** (Ref: Newsweek Magazine, of July 27th, 1998). This was corroborated by a famous 20th Century astronomer named Allen Sandage who said, *“It was my science that drove me to the conclusion that the world is much more complicated than can be explained by science. It is only through the supernatural that I can understand the mystery of existence.”* And according to Albert Einstein, *“Science without Religion is lame, Religion without Science is blind”*.

It is not difficult to fathom, from this opinion, how the conception of God, the very core of religion had become debased by peoples’ creative imaginations. Some have argued that religion, although capable of transforming societies through a fixed outward blueprint which reflects the inward quest of its adherents, must be prepared to adopt new moral and social structure if it is to “turn the clock back.” Al Ghazali however, teaches that *“the true delights of religion cannot be reached by way of formal instruction, but by felt attraction and desire. A man may converse much and write volumes concerning love, faith, piety, and so forth, and blacken paper to*

any extent, but till he himself possesses these attributes all this will do him no good.” (Al Ghazali 1990, p. 45)

The Ultimate is God’s by virtue of His being the Creator. Our ownership is a secondary ownership. We are free to own and to increase our wealth by lawful means, practically without limits, so long as we are aware that capital not only has rights but also duties. God is the owner and Giver of life, and His right in giving and in taking, cannot to be violated. With this Power, He has created, from a mere drop of fluid, the wonderful frame of man. His wisdom is revealed in its intricacies and the mutual adaptability of its parts. And, His love is shown by His not only supplying such organs that are absolutely necessary for existence, as the liver, the heart, and the brain, but also those which are not absolutely necessary, as the hand, the foot, the tongue, and the eye. To these He has added, as ornaments, the blackness of the hair, the redness of lips, and the curve of the eyebrows. (AlGhazali 1990: *‘The Alchemy of Happiness’* 1990).

Moreover, such imperfect knowledge of God as we can attain to is not a mere speculative knowledge, but must be accompanied by devotion and worship. When a man dies he has to do with God alone, and if we have to live with a person, our happiness entirely depends on the degree of affection we feel towards him. Love is the seed of happiness, and love for God is fostered and developed by worship. Such worship and constant remembrance implies a certain degree of austerity and curbing of bodily appetites. Not that a man is intended altogether to abolish these, for then the human race would perish. But strict limits must be set to their indulgence, and as a man is not the best judge in his own case as to what these limits should be, he had better consult some spiritual (endowed) guide on the subject. Such spiritual guides are the prophets, and the laws which they have laid down under divine inspiration prescribe the limits which must be observed in these matters. He who transgresses these limits *“wrongs his own soul”* as it is written in the Qur’an (91:7-10).

To revert to the scriptures which claim to be revelation from God, one might argue that in order to recognize and believe in God and to live happily in a community, it is necessary to believe in divine messages. Throughout history, humanity received a procession of Prophets and Messengers. Of this long chain, some God mentioned by name in the scriptures, some He gave scriptures, and others He gave the power to perform specific miracles. This is the concept of prophethood. The last

three Major Prophets in this chain are the principal personalities of the Abrahamic monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These three figures are all descendants of the patriarch Abraham: Moses and Jesus by way of Isaac (Ishmael and Isaac were the two sons of Abraham), Muhammad by way of Ishmael. God at all times sends these revelations and Messengers to warn us:

- *“By God, We (also) sent (Our apostles) to peoples before thee, but Satan made, (to the wicked), their own acts seem alluring: He is also their patron to-day, but they shall have a most grievous penalty.” (Q16:63).*

The apostles were doubted, insulted, threatened, and persecuted (even killed), but their trust was sure in God. It is evil that will be wiped out. God’s truth is as a goodly tree, firmly established on its roots, stretching its branches high and wide, and bearing good fruit at all times. (A. Y. Ali – C.117 - p. 618).

Not only did the course of ancient history necessitate a sequence of revelations, it also demanded that the scope, as well as the cultural content of the new dispensation be altered. The earlier generations of the Monotheist revelations are grouped into three epochs from a spiritual standpoint:

- a) from Adam to Noah;
- b) from Noah to Abraham; and
- c) from Abraham to an indefinite time; (i.e., to the time when the message of God was corrupted and the need arose for the final apostle of unity and truth).

Three illustrations are given from the past (i.e. from the Monotheistic scriptures), how it affected God’s Messengers. To Moses, God spoke in clouds of glory (or a burning bush): he led his men for forty years through the wilderness, mainly fighting against the unbelief of his own people; he organized them to fight with the sword for Palestine; but was raised to God’s mercy before his enterprise ripened, and it fell to Joshua to carry out his plan. David, though a mere shepherd boy, was chosen by God. He overthrew the greatest warrior of his time, became king, and waged successful wars, being also a prophet, and a poet. Jesus on the other hand, was “strengthened with the holy spirit”: he was given no weapons to fight, and his mission was of a more limited character and

perhaps the most peaceful. In Muhammad's mission these and other characters were combined. *"Gentler than Medina, he ruled, waged wars and gave laws and the Qur'an has a vaster scope than the Psalms of David."*

This process of reminding humanity acknowledges the presence of a fundamental mystery which has been built into the very warp and woof of creation - the paradox of free will. Every gift (be it power or wealth) and benefit we have is from God, and to save us from the just punishment of our sins, different gifts and different modes of procedure are prescribed to God's apostles in different ages, and perhaps their degrees are different. It is not however for us mortals with our imperfect knowledge, to make out any difference between God's Apostles (Quran 2:136). Only Revelations and its derivatives could provide religious authority of law. Inspirations, though clothed in human language, and shaped to the personality of the inspired one, proceeds from the knowledge of God, and therefore often contains more meaning than the inspired one himself realizes. (A. Yusuf Ali, Notes 672)

Chawkat Georges Moucarry (1984) believes that the special revelation enshrined in the Scriptures is the only completely trustworthy basis on which to come to a real knowledge of God. This revelation is therefore the touchstone by which we must measure the truthfulness of all religions, though at the time we must not anticipate the Last Judgment, which will be faced one day by all mankind.

The reason why different people have different attitude or sentiments towards religion has already been told in all the revealed scriptures. After the creation of Adam, God commanded the Angels to bow down to Adam, which they all obeyed, except Satan (or Lucifer - *Iblis*), who refused, failing to recognize the potential superiority of Man. And for this disobedience, Satan was cast out from God's presence to be an instrument of Test (or misguidance as others preferred to call it):

Ever since his fall, Satan has been working to lead man into self-adoration and materialism rather than the worship of the Creator. Hence, the intrinsic reason that propel different people to desecrate religion. Allah warns:

- *"Verily Satan is an enemy to you: so treat him as an enemy. He only invites his adherents that they may become companions of the Blazing Fire."* (Quran 35: 6)

We see therefore, why those people who believe not in religion have less flattering opinions of it. For such people, religion whatever its name, is seen not only as outdated superstition but as a restrictive force and a hindrance to the quest for further scientific knowledge. Some westerners looked upon religion as Mysticism which is why those who are neither for it nor for mysticism expected it not to be taken seriously. A few example of this view will suffice:

- *“Religion, a daughter of hope and fear explaining to ignorance the nature of the “unknowable” (Ambrose Bierce: The Devil’s Dictionary).*
- *“Infantile helplessness” and “regression to primary narcissism.” (Sigmund Freud).*
- *“Religion is the sign of the oppressed creatures, the sentiments of a heartless world and soul of the soulless condition. It is the opium of the people.” (Karl Marx).*
- *“The first requisite for the people’s happiness is the abolition of religion and provision of materialism.” (Karl Marx).*

And the western Mystics on the other hand, view religion as an enemy or a threat that needed to be destroyed. At a Masonic conference of the Eastern bloc held in 1923, the chairman of the occasion made the following comments:

- *“We must work hard and expand more generosity to maintain the existing secular or anti-clerical laws. Our purpose is to eradicate ALL RELIGION from the world. They are our deadliest enemies.” (Abdus-sabou M.).*
- *“We must crush Religion, for they are the cause of all international friction, open war and other calamities.” (Abdus-sabou M.).*

Some, who may not altogether be called atheists, are still unbelievers, because this kind says: *“The law tells us to abstain from anger, lust, and hypocrisy; this is plainly impossible, for man is created with these qualities inherent in him. You might as well tell us to make black white.”* In Al Ghazali’s view, these kind whom he describes as foolish, ignore the fact that the law does not tell us to uproot these passions, but to restrain them within due limits, so that, by avoiding the greater sins, we may obtain forgiveness of the smaller ones. Even the Prophet of God said *“I am a man like you, and get angry like others”* and in the Qur’an it is written *“God loves those who swallow down their anger”* not those who have no anger at all. (Al Ghazali 1990).

As religion moved out of focus, the human creature progressively loses his awareness of the immediate presence of God as he is initiated into the world. God was dethroned, and when man dethroned God he slipped into self-worship. To further replace God with man, between the two world wars a movement arose called "Morality without Religion," accusing religion – not human error – of causing enmity and conflict between people. Members of that movement assumed that high moral standards could be attained without necessarily ascribing them to religion and called these standards "unattached moralities." While few officially belonged to this movement, the philosophy it espoused gradually became more prevalent as people lost confidence in religion because of discrepancies between the Bible and scientific findings. New codes of morality were issued wherein the immoralities of yesterday became the normalcies of today, and secular humanism could at last frankly declare that human values must be determined by human beings and without reference to any non-human or supernatural criterion.

With the shift towards materialism, such values as honor, chastity and purity became empty words and non-viable currency. A full range of indoctrination worked to stretch the boundaries of freedom to include license, and in a society that emphasized individuality, every human whim then became a human right. It is noteworthy that the moral principles of chastity before marriage and fidelity thereafter formerly prevailed in America and the West, but with the slippage of more and more people into atheism or micro-theism, change was inevitable. This erosion of faith set the stage for the "sexual revolution" as all religious values became subject to radical revision.

Without the values of chastity outside marriage and fidelity within it, there came the discretion of sex as a very special bond between a man and a woman, widespread promiscuous sex, rapes, unwanted pregnancies ending in abortion or unwanted children stripped of their right of two legitimate parents, and children begetting children. Further, family trust is eroded when even among stable families some fifteen percent of children are illegitimate. Added to all this are health hazards due to the epidemic spread of sexually transmitted diseases, whether new diseases or the recurrence of old ones we thought had been conquered long ago, the causative organisms of which have acquired resistance to known antibiotic therapy, and which are exacting a heavy toll on society, especially the youth, because of increased promiscuity.

What we have today, is a society that has sought to question the authority of God – the Creator and Law Giver. His unity is shown in His Creation; yet, man will turn to false gods, and dispute about Religion. Our society today has become Godless, whereby the Creator has been relegated to the background in the scheme of things. In Atheism, God is denied; and in Micro-theism God is acknowledged, but with greatly reduced reverence. This group worship God but on their own terms. They visit the houses of worship, usually on weekends or during religious festivals, but they do not allow God to tell them what to do with their private or public lives. Why do they not accept God's Grace instead of disputing about it, is a question that those who believe kept asking?

As a consequence of the warped mind-sets today, the following developments in the sphere of religion have manifested:

- a) The anthropomorphic tendency of making God into a being with a human shape and human passions. (God wrestled Jacob? God was tired and rested after the act of creation? God slept? God begot? etc.)
- b) The association of other persons with the One and Only God in his God Head (as in Hinduism and Christianity).
- c) The deification of the Angels e.g. Devas in Hinduism, the Yazatas in Zoroastrianism and Angel Gabriel (Holy Ghost) in Christianity ;
- d) The making of the Prophets into incarnations of God (Avatas) e.g. Jesus of Nazareth in Christianity, the Budha in Buddhism, Krishna and Rama in Hinduism; and,
- e) The personification of the attributes of God into separate divine persons e.g. the Trinity of Christianity, the Trimurti of the Hindus (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), and the Amesha Spentas of Zoroastrianism.

The quest to strip God of his attributes is indeed an ageless quest. In the so-called modern world, the approach might be different but the goal remains the same. By stripping God of His attributes, the human race is being misdirected towards accepting others beside God as Supreme Beings. Man is not the Supreme Being of this universe, but is responsible and accountable to the Supreme Being, called God! With God everything becomes possible and anything can be rationalized and justified.

How did Man come into the Equation?

Our definition of mankind's relationship to God will depend, of course, on our definition of God, and, consequently, of mankind. So, before we can answer this question, we need to look at the concept of God as found in Islam and Christianity. (p.47)

Most religious scholars tend to profess that belief in God is ingrained in the nature of man, and all the great religions of the world, in one way or another teach that men are brothers belonging to one world family. And as long a man existed on earth, the knowledge of God Almighty also co-existed. Chawkat Georges Moucarry (1984), a Christian Arab, in his book 'Islam and Christianity at the Crossroads' explains this view thus: *"As the image of God, disfigured by sin but not completely annihilated, mankind possess a religious sense which enables him to glimpse some aspects of the truth without the help of any revealed religion (Acts 17: 22-29). In addition to these partial insights into the truth which man can find for himself, God bears witness to Himself in the created world, which is the work of His hands (Psalm 8; 19:1-7). This Testimony, though silent, nonetheless displays God's eternal Nature, Power and Glory. This double witness gives every human being a natural knowledge of God independently of any particular self-revelation on God's part. But God also lavishes material and spiritual blessings on mankind without any discrimination (Matthew 5:44-45; Acts 14:16-17). Among the most precious of blessings are the manifestations which God grants to anyone who seeks Him."*

The medieval Muslim philosopher of Spain, Ibn Tufyl, sought to approach the explanation of this belief by means of a parable. He tells the story of a child stranded on a desert Island, who, without even the benefit of language, grows into manhood. In his quiet and idyllic isolation, he is able to think deeply and without prejudice about the signs of nature and beauty which surround him, and he comes to the conclusion that only a Good and Omnipotent First Cause could account for what he sees. With this innate (or inborn) theology, with this strong and unaffected faith, the young man discovers the ideal way to live in his small world; a style of life in which every action reflects joyfully and spontaneously his love of his Creator. And when at last he is rescued by a ship of Muslim sailors, he recognizes Islam to be none other than that 'elan' for dealing with the world which he had found within himself. (Al Ghazali, 'The Alchemy of Happiness' (1990)).

The moral of Ibn Tufyl's parable is that man, in his natural state, is in harmony with God and the created world over which he has been given authority. In religious language, all things move in submission to God's ordering of His creation. Into this flawless, elaborate system, He has set man, His viceroy. Even so, Man was not abandoned to his natural intelligence which was bound to be evolutionary and conflicting. But man is not created in a state of some 'original sin' as is believed in Christianity, but rather in a condition of grace. Although man's physical elements are in themselves intrinsically bound to obey the inexorable Laws of creation, he is set apart in having been endowed with a soul, which is in its innermost core not of this world, but of God. Our Maker has provided us with what we need to succeed. Man has been given the faculty of thinking, of knowing and to distinguish between right and wrong and also given a natural inclination or conscience to shun evil and to follow the path of goodness.

According to Al-Ghazali, a man's condition, while he is in this world, with regard to the vision of God, is like that of a lover who should see his beloved's face in the twilight, while his clothes are infested with hornets and scorpions, which continually torment him. But should the sun arise and reveal his beloved's face in all its beauty, and the noxious vermin leave off molesting him, then the lover's joy will be like that of God's servant, who, released from the twilight and the tormenting trials of this world, beholds Him without a veil. He quotes Abu Suleiman, who said *"He who is busy with himself now will be busy with himself then, and he who is occupied with God now will be occupied with Him then."* (Al Ghazali)

The Nature of Man:

The question: "What am I?" is a question about the nature of human beings. Dr. M.F.R. Ansari (1972) explains that this simple question opens up a whole field of questions which shoots off in a continuous chain and whose links are forged with the unbreakable bond of necessity. Consideration of this first question therefore, leads to the next one namely: "From where have the human beings come?" Then the third question arises: "What is the nature of human life?" And then a fourth question: "What is the purpose and end of human life?"

'Man' (a generic term for both men and women), amongst all the species known to us, ours alone is the species that has gone beyond biology. We are supra-biologic beings for whom biology is not the

ultimate guide of behavior. Man has the same instincts and drives, but whereas animals simply respond to these in a simple one-step fashion, man's response is regulated by a complex mechanism that goes beyond inherent programming. Man may share his biology with animals but his nature has definitely ventured beyond biology into the realm of values, principles and spirituality. Indeed, it is true to say that we are spiritual creatures housed in biological containers (our bodies). Those of us whose concern in life is to cater to the needs (and greed) of their biological component and who fall short of the spiritual might well be described as animals, at least figuratively.

Man – a created Being

In the Holy Bible, the book of Genesis, God says: *'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.'* (Genesis 1:26; James 3: 9). Christian thinkers have drawn from this verse the conclusion that man exists in a face-to-face relationship with God and therefore can communicate with him. They also conclude that, in his relationship to the created world, man stands as God's representative on earth, and that man, as God's most privileged creature, shares to some extent some of God's attributes. This leads to the conclusion that God is a body and that man was made in the likeness of this body. Or that God made Adam, the first man, in His Image, and so all men resemble their original ancestor. Also, Christians believe Jesus to be the perfect image of the invisible God (Colossians 1: 15), that he calls his disciples not "servant" but 'friends' because, he says, *"a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father, I have made known to you"* (John 15: 15). Yet, we find in the Holy Bible, the disciples calling Jesus the servant of God!

The Quran affirms that man is God's supreme creation and His steward on earth (Q.2:30; Q. 6:165). The Muslim is also God's servant and his role is to glorify God by obeying His Law. His submission to God is seen both in his faith in God, His angels, His books, His apostles, the Last Judgment and predestination, and also in his observance of the five Pillars of Islam – the confession of faith, prayer, alms-giving, fasting and pilgrimage. Chawkat Georges Moucarray (1984) underscore this when he observes that *"the Muslim's love for God, referred to several times in the Quran (Q. 2: 165; Q.3:31; Q. 5:54 etc.) is generally understood to mean love of His word or of His commandments and only rarely as love of His person. . . . The*

etymological meaning of the word 'Islam' perfectly illustrates the essential nature of man's relationship to God. It means the trusting 'submission' of the servant to his divine Master, not out of fear or forced obedience as unbelieving Muslims do (Q. 49:14), but out of love for His Will. This is the call to all people as proclaimed loud and clear by the Quran.

Muslim writers in their interpretation of a saying attributed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) explains God's image in man in terms of man's stewardship. Consequently, man possesses certain divine attributes such as Life, Knowledge, Perfection, Will and Speech. The Holy Quran says:

- *"But does not Man call to mind that We (God) created him before when he was naught?" (Q. 19:67)*
- *"Verily, We created Man from a drop of mingled sperm, in order to try him: so We gave him (the gift of) Hearing and Sight (i.e. endowed him with responsibility). We showed him the Way (of Right and Wrong: it now rest on his will) whether to be grateful (submit to the Will of God) or ungrateful (by serving Evil through his free-will: rest with him)." (Q. 76: 2-3)*
- *"And surely He hath created you by stages (i.e. by various steps or changes from the original form till ye acquired the full stature of human personality)" (Q. 71:14)*
- *"Certainly, We created man in the best make" (Q. 95:4)*
- *"Then He causeth him to die, and putteh him in his Grave; Then, when it is His Will, He will raise him up (again)(Qur'an 80:21 – 22)*

The evolutionary character of the human personality has been affirmed in the following, (among other verses):

- *"Man We did create (at the earthly stage) from a quintessence of clay; then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (fetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature (a creature that is not a mere animal but a being endowed with spiritual, moral, aesthetic and intellectual faculties and capable of pursuing ideals). So blessed is Allah, the Best*

to create! After that, at length ye will die. Again, on the Day of Judgment, will ye be raised up.” (Q. 23: 12-16)

Purposiveness has been affirmed thus:

- *“Deem ye that We have created you in vain (i.e. with no serious purpose) and that unto Us ye are not to be returned (for account)? So Exalted be Allah, the True King. . . .” (Q. 23: 115 – 116)*

While considering the definition of man’s relationship to God as held by mainstream Islam, we must not ignore the view held by Sufism. This spiritual movement has had a profound effect on many Muslims and its influence is still felt today. It emphasizes inner faith, the importance of love and the union between the believer and God.

We are therefore the species that lead a life of continual self-debate and continual decision-making. Quite often we emotionally vacillate between what we know is right and what we know is wrong and have to resort to our will power and our faculty of self-restraint when indicated, or else we fall into wrong and must face the consequences of our acts. Animals are exempt from this continuous battle within the self; without blame, they simply respond to whatever they felt like doing. The Scriptures tell us that angels are not only good, but that is because they are incapable of evil. The others respond to programming; we respond to (God given) choice. This is indeed the nobility of humanity. It explains why God, according to the scriptures ordered the angels to bow to Adam, although they are immune to sin and Adam was not, and they obeyed Him.

But even if man is supreme in creation, he is a finite being – an imperfect being – and his powers are not unlimited; and as such he must suffer from definite shortcomings and weakness. The Holy Quran says: “Man is weak and susceptible to error.” Man’s need for God arises in his weakness and shortcomings, which are found in him as definite facts of his life. For instance, man’s physical wellbeing (his health) is a state of equilibrium (placed on a balance); while he needs oxygen to live, too much oxygen will kill him just as too little of it will be inadequate to maintain life. His dietary intake must be balanced or the scale of the balance will tip to one side which will result in ill-health. We know that the intake of the same food item at the detriment of other important ones will result in imbalance causing malnutrition and consequently death. The blood pressure must not be too high or too low, as either state will

result in ill-health, and life cannot be sustained. A balance must be maintained. A high or low blood sugar in the system will be a state of imbalance, and therefore ill-health. In fact, what we take as medicine is usually a compensation for the imbalance or a means of reducing or eliminating the excess matter in the body, to return us to a state of balance. That is man's constitution.

From his own creation man comes to know God's existence, from the wonders of his bodily frame, God's power and wisdom. In other words, man finds in his own being reflected in miniature form, so to speak, the power, wisdom, and love of the Creator from the ample provision made for his various needs. In this way, the knowledge of oneself becomes a key to the knowledge of God. Man has been truly termed as "microcosm" or a little world in himself. He is a microcosm, for he summed up God's great world. Not only are man's attributes a reflection of God's attributes, but the mode of existence of man's soul affords some insight into God's mode of existence. That is to say, both God and the soul (of man) is invisible, indivisible, unconfined by space and time and outside the categories of quantity and quality; nor can the ideas of shape, color, and size be attached to them.

Moreover, man is a created being and as such, dependent on his Creator. He therefore, needs help from the Creator, Who, with all His attributes of Perfection and through His Grace, is prepared to help man in the realization of the moral ideal. To obtain this divine Help and Grace and to save himself from pessimism, despair and frustration, man should by nature be a worshipping being – namely, faith in God and quest for God should be ingrained in man's nature. Man should possess freedom of will, without which moral struggle would be absolutely inconceivable. Freedom is therefore the core and essence of being human, both from a religious and a secular perspective. In creating a species that will bear responsibility for its actions therefore, God created a species whose hallmark is freedom. Events that are beyond our sphere of choice or capacity to influence are a matter of "fate", and, of course, we cannot be held accountable for them. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972)

So in conceiving of the ultimate realities, God and the soul, we find ourselves in a region in which sense-concepts can bear no part. So much, however, we can see that as God is Ruler of the Universe, and being Himself beyond space and time, quantity and quality, governs things that are so unconditioned; so the soul rules the body and its

members, being itself invisible, indivisible and unallocated in any special part. For how can the indivisible be located in that which is divisible? From all this we see how true is the saying of the prophet of Islam (pbuh), that *"God created man in His own likeness."* And Jesus (pbuh) in turn, said that *"God created man in His Own Image."*

When a man considers his creation, he knows that there was a time when he was non-existent, as it is written in the Quran: *"Does it not occur to man that there was a time when he was nothing?"* And he knows that he has no power to bring himself into existence. Further, he knows that he was made out of a drop of fluid in which there was neither intellect nor hearing, nor sight; no head, hands, or feet etc. From this it is obvious that whatever degree of perfection he may have arrived at, he did not make himself, nor can he now make a single hair. Consequently, man cannot claim more than being just a particle of creation in its magnificent perfection. As such no man-creature can be God!

Al-Ghazali believes that unless a man maintains the strictest watch he is certain to be fascinated and entangled by the world. Some, through ignorance of the real nature of the soul repudiate the doctrine of a future life, in which man will be called to account and be rewarded or punished. Those who repudiate the doctrine of a future life regard themselves as no better than animals or vegetables and equally perishable. The nature of the matter is that, each of our faculty delights in that for which it was created: Lust delights in accomplishing desire, Anger in taking vengeance, the Eye in seeing beautiful objects, and the Ear in hearing harmonious sounds. The highest function of the soul of man is the perception of truth; in this accordingly it finds its special delight. Even in trifling matters such as learning chess, this holds true and the higher the subject matter of the knowledge obtained the greater the delight. Anyone who gave strong thought into the matter will see that happiness is necessarily linked with the knowledge of God.

The aim of moral discipline said Al Ghazali, is to purify the heart from the rust of passion and resentment until it reflects, like a clear mirror, the light of God. The essence of each creature, he said, is to be sought in that which is highest in it and peculiar to it. With man, the highest faculty in him is reason, which fits him for the contemplation of God. If this predominates in him, when he dies, he leaves behind him all tendencies to passion and resentment, and becomes capable of association with angels.

Thus, man is capable of existing on several different planes, from the animal to the angelic, and precisely in this lays his danger, that is, the danger of falling to the very lowest. As regards his mere animal qualities, man is inferior to many animals, but reason makes him superior to them, as it is written in the Qur'an: *"To man we have subjected all things in the earth."* But if his lower tendencies have triumphed after death, he will ever be looking towards the earth and longing for earthly delights. This understanding inspired Al Ghazali to exclaim: *"Know, O beloved that man was not created in jest or at random, but marvelously made and for some great end. Although he is not from everlasting, yet he lives forever; and though his body is mean and earthly, yet his spirit is lofty and divine. When in the crucible of abstinence he is purged from carnal passions he attains to the highest, and in place of being a slave to lust and anger, he becomes endued with angelic qualities"* (Al Ghazali, *'The Alchemy of Happiness'* (1990) p. 4, 8-9), and all this only by the grace of God.

God intended a very high destiny for man, and placed him in his uncorrupted state even above the angels, but in his corruption, man made himself even lower than the beast. What was it that made man so high and noble? The differentiating quality which God gave man was that God breathed something of His Own spirit into man (Quran 32:9 and 15:29). The verse *"I breathed into man of My Spirit"* also points to the celestial origin of the human soul. So says also the Holy Bible. The reason why the human spirit seeks to return to that upper world (Heaven) is that its origin was from thence; and that it is of angelic nature. It was sent down into this lower sphere against its will to acquire knowledge and experience, as God said in the Qur'an:

- *"Get down from hence, all of you; there will come to you instruction from Me, and they who obey the instruction need not fear, neither shall they be grieved."* (Q.2:38)

However, in spite of Man's elevation to a higher station by God, above the angels, Man, by the same token as Satan, can be lower than the angels and lower even than the animals, should he refuse to worship his creator and thank Him for the gift of life and the blessings showered upon him in this world and (we are given to hope) in the next.

- *"Certainly, We created man in the best make, then We render him the lowest of the low except those who believe and do good, so they shall have a reward never to be cut off (everlasting)"* (Q. 95:4-6)

It is in this sense that we are to understand the story of Adam's repentance, told at the beginning of the Qur'an.

Among the passages where the creation of Adam is referred to; the emphasis is on three points:

- i. The breathing of God's Spirit into man, i.e. the faculty of God-like knowledge and Will, which, if rightly used, would give man superiority over other creatures;
- ii. The origin of evil in arrogance and jealousy on the part of Satan , who saw only the lower side of man (his clay origin) and failed to see the higher side, the faculty brought in by the spirit of God; and,
- iii. That this evil only touches those who yield to it, and has no power over God's sincere servants, purified by His Grace (Quran 15:40, 42).

If man has a true spiritual understanding, he has nothing to be afraid of. He is protected by God in many ways that he does not even know. He may be an insignificant creature as a mere animal, but his soul raises him to a dignity above other creatures. And all sorts of divine forces guard and protect him. The Quran says:

- *"But verily over you (are appointed angels) to protect you. Kind and honorable, writing down (your deeds): They know (and understand) all that ye do. (Quran 82 :10 – 12)*
- *"There is no soul but has a protector over it." (Quran 86 : 4)*

Majority of men choose to remain in the two lower stages mentioned above and *"the stationary are always hostile to the travelers or pilgrims whom they far outnumber"*. Our imprisonment in bodies of clay and water, and entanglement in the things of senses constitute a veil which hides the vision of God from us, although it does not prevent our attaining to some knowledge of Him. For this reason, God said to Moses on Mount Sinai *"Thou shalt not see Me."*

Al Ghazali further categorizes man's journey through the world into four stages – *the Sensuous, the Experimental, the Instinctive and the Rational*. In the first he said, Man is like a moth which though it has sight, has no memory, and will singe itself again and again at the same candle. In the second stage, Man is like a dog which, having once been beaten will run away at the sight of a stick. In the third, he is like a horse or a

sheep, both for which instinctively fly at the sight of a lion or wolf, their natural enemies, while they will not run away from a camel or a buffalo, though these ones are much greater in size. In the fourth stage man altogether transcends the limits of the animals and becomes capable, to some extent, of foreseeing and providing for the future. His movements at first may be compared to ordinary walking on land, then to transverse the sea in a ship, then, on the fourth plane, where he is conversant with realities, to walking on the sea; while beyond this plane, there is a fifth known to the prophets and saints, whose progress may be compared to flying through the air. (Al Ghazali)

That man should undertake the God-like attributes (in however small a degree) of Will, Forbearance, Love, and Mercy, brought him nearer to God than was possible for any other creature of God. This was part of God's will and Plan, but little did man realize then what a tremendous task he was undertaking or question himself whether he would be equal to it. Neither animals nor angels can change their appointed rank and place. But man may sink to the level of an animal or soar to the lofty level of an angel, and this is the meaning of his undertaking that "burden" of which the Quran speaks. It is written:

- *"We proposed the burden (i.e. responsibility or free-will) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they refused to undertake it. But man took it upon himself: verily he is ignorant."*(Quran 30:72)

Man signally failed to measure his own powers or his own knowledge, because the Quest of Mankind's high and noble Destiny is arduous - beyond the reach of other creatures. But God's Grace came to his assistance where man did his best, he won through by God's Grace, even though man's 'best' was but a poor good. But how did man generically undertake this great responsibility, which made him vicegerent of God? (Quran 2:30).

God grants Man autonomy and holds him accountable. Imperfect as the world and the human personality are, man should survive his earthly existence with the self same identity and should be subject to Resurrection and final Accountability for his moral actions in this world. It is a necessary condition for the realization of the moral ideal wherein virtue should be adequately rewarded and vice adequately punished. The Human being is not a perfect creature, nor was he meant to be. The human being is part of a whole; as such, he can only fulfill his purpose of

living by carrying out his functions in relating himself to the whole and to other living parts. It is the harmonious relationships between the parts and the whole that makes life purposeful. That is what is needed to bring it nearest to perfection which helps the human being to achieve contentment and happiness.

Thus, man was guided to religion as a way to worship God. We are required to do our best in the face of difficulty and temptation, and often our “best” is not foolproof. We strive, and our life is a perpetual battle. It is reasonable therefore, that God acknowledges or endeavors, to appreciate our striving and loves us as His noblest creature. He would certainly love to see us pass the test of accountability, our freedom of choice notwithstanding.

The best way to do that is to keep us reminded of Him as the Ultimate Resort and Lord, of what is good and evil as He delineates them to us, and of the inevitable Day of Judgment, when we will be held accountable. This He has done by selecting certain members of the human family, contacting them in His own way (e.g. direct talk, written tablets, inspiration, or through an angel) and giving them the assignment of carrying His message to their fellow humans: Worship God and only God, achieve goodness and refrain from evil, and always remember your inevitable accountability before Him on the inescapable Day of Judgment.

Man, a Pilgrim

Prophets and Sages have told us, over time that this world is a stage or market-place passed by pilgrims on their way to the next. It is here that the pilgrims are to provide themselves with provisions for the way, or, to put it plainly, man acquires here, on this earth, by the use of his bodily senses, some knowledge of the works of God, and through them, of God Himself, the sight of whom will constitute his future beatitude. It is for the acquirement of this knowledge that the spirit of man has descended into this world of water and clay. As long as his senses remain with him he is said to be “in the world” when they depart, and only his essential attributes remain, he is said to have gone to the next world. The use of the term ‘Pilgrim’ here is significant; our attention is being drawn to the objective of a pilgrim, which is to worship. Pilgrimage is a journey undertaken with the sole intention of worshipping the Creator.

No visions are necessary to prove what will occur to every thinking man, that when death has stripped him of his senses and left him nothing

but his bare personality, while on earth, if he has too closely attached himself to objects perceived by the senses, such as spouses, children, wealth, lands, etc. He must necessarily suffer when bereft of those objects. The reality of excessive love of instinctive desires in human nature has been emphasized in these words of the Quran:

- *“Fair-seeming in the eyes of human beings is the love of things they covet (under the impact of instinctive urges): women and sons, heaped up hoards of gold and silver, horses branded (for blood and excellence), and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. All that is the enjoyment of the life of the world; but in nearness to God is the best of goals.” (Q. 3:14).*

Whereas, if a man has as far as possible turned his back on earthly objects (excepting the bare necessities) and fixed his supreme affection upon God instead, he will welcome death as a means of escape from worldly entanglements, and of union with Him whom he loves. In this case, the Prophet’s saying will be verified: *“Death is a bridge which unites ‘friend’ to ‘friend’”* and *“the world is a paradise for infidels, but a prison for the faithful.”* (Al Ghazali).

While man is in this world, two things are necessary for him: Firstly, the protection and nurturing of his soul; and secondly, the care and nature of his body. The proper nourishment of the soul, as above shown, is the knowledge and love of God, and to be absorbed in the love of anything but God, is the ruin of the soul. In our Study of man, we realize that the Creator has endowed us with four cardinal features that are unique to our species: Knowledge, an awareness of Good and Evil, Freedom of Choice, and Accountability.

Al Ghazali made reference to what the saints have said, that: *“even suppose God should forgive thee, after a wasted life, thou will not attain to the ranks of the righteous and must deplore thy loss.”* He therefore, advised that man should keep a strict watch over his tongue, his eyes, and each of his ‘seven members’, (eyes, tongue, nose, ears, genitals, hands & feet) for each of these is, as it were a possible gate (way) to hell. So we are guided to know that though the flesh is headstrong, it is capable of receiving instruction and can be trained by austerity. Such then is the aim of self-examination and the Prophet has said *“Happy is he who does now that which will benefit him after death.”* (Al Ghazali 1990, p. 50)

Love of the World

The world is like a table spread of successive relays of guests who come and go. There are gold and silver dishes, abundance of food and perfumes. The wise guest eats as much as is sufficient for him, smells the perfumes, thanks his host and depart. The foolish guest, on the other hand, tries to carry off some of the gold and silver dishes and utensils, only to find them wrenched out of his hands at the gate and himself thrust out forth-with disappointed and disgraced."

The Quran condemns 'love of this world's life' (Q. 79: 38, 39; etc.), it invites repeated attention to the emptiness of the pleasures of worldly life (Q. 3:185; etc.), forbids all vain spending and waste (Q. 7:31; etc.) which is the basis of luxurious living, castigates the Covetous for 'loving wealth' too dearly (Q. 89:20), commands the Muslims not to follow the behests of their animal self (Q. 4:135; etc.), and finally invites them to a life dedicated to the love of God (Q. 2:165), which should manifest itself in the love for fellow-beings (Q. 2: 177; etc.). This makes moderation the ideal in respect of Islamic life, as exemplified at its highest in the life of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), and practiced by all those who have walked in his footsteps. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972)

Those who have indulged themselves in the pleasures of this world, without limit will at the time of death be like a man who has gorged himself to repletion on delicious viands and then vomits them up. The delicious pleasure has gone, but the disgrace remains. The greater the abundance of the possession which they have enjoyed in the shape of gardens, male or female spouses, gold, silver, etc. the more keenly they will feel the bitterness of parting from them. This is a bitterness which will outlast death; for the soul which has contracted covetousness as a fixed habit will necessarily suffer in the next world from the pangs of unsatisfied desires. The pains which souls suffer after death all have their source in excessive love of the world. We learn from the scriptures that Jesus (pbuh) said *"The lover of the world is like a man drinking sea-water, the more he drinks, the thirstier he gets till at last he perishes with thirst unquenched."* And Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said *"You can no more mix with the world without being contaminated by it than you can go into water without getting wet."*

It may be observed that, according to the Holy Quran, the attraction for the objects of instincts is neither condemnable in itself nor irrelevant to the requirements of the "best make" in which Man has been

created (Quran 95:4). The Quranic moral guidance aims at the balanced, appropriate and just satisfaction of both the aspects of human nature – the sentient (conscious) and the rational – that have been bestowed upon it by its Creator. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972)

It must be remembered however, that there are some things in the world which are not of it, such as knowledge and good deeds. A man carries that knowledge he possesses with him into the next world, and though his good deeds have passed, yet the effect of them remains in his character. Especially is this the case with acts of kindness and devotion, which results in the perpetual remembrance and Love of God. These are among “*those good things*” which, as the Qur’an says “*pass not away.*” Other things which engross the mind, causing it to cleave to this world and to be careless of the next, are purely evil and were alluded to by the Prophet when he said “*The world is a curse, and all which is in it is a curse, except the remembrance of God, and that which aids it.*” (Al Ghazali).

On the other side, there is ingrained in the human soul the pursuit of ideals – the highest among them being the ideal of attaining nearness to God, referred to at the end of verse 14 of chapter 3 of the Quran. Leading one’s life in the pursuit of noble ideals has been beautifully emphasized in the verses which immediately follow. There, it has been said:

- “*Say (O Muhammad!): shall I give you glad tidings of things far better than those (i.e. objects of instinctive desires recounted in Q3:14)? For the righteous are Gardens in nearness to their Lord with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home; with companions pure (and holy); and the Good pleasure of Allah. For in Allah’s Sight are all His servants, - (namely) those who say: ‘Our Lord! We have indeed believed, wherefore forgive us our sins and protect us from the agony of the Fire’: those who practice ‘Sabr’ (i.e. patience, perseverance and self-control), who are truthful, who worship devoutly, who spend (for their fellow-beings), and who pray for forgiveness in the early hours of the morning.*” (Q. 3:15 – 17).

Love of God

For perfect happiness, mere knowledge of God, unaccompanied by love, is not enough. Many claim to love God, but each person should examine himself as to the genuineness of the love which he professes. A man who profess to love God, may easily test himself by watching which way the balance of his affection inclines when the commands of God

come into collision with some of his desires. The profession of love of God which is insufficient to restrain him from disobedience to God is a lie. One test of sincerity is that a man should be willing to sacrifice his (own) will, to God's. He should embrace what brings him nearer to God and shun what places him at a distance from God. He, in whose heart the love of God has prevailed over all else will derive some joy from this vision than the one in whose heart it has not so prevailed. Just as in the case of two men with equally powerful eyesight, gazing on a beautiful face, he who already loves the possessor of that face will rejoice in beholding it more than he who does not. And the love of God cannot take possession of a man's heart till it is purified from love of the material world, which purification can only be affected by devotion to God and selfless service to lift up his fellow man.

But even among those who have worldly possessions, there are those who though they have some affection for these possessions, love God yet more. There are those who though, have some love of God, but the love of the world so preponderates in them that they will have to suffer a good deal of pain after death before they are thoroughly weaned from it. However, the fact of a man's sinning is no proof that he does not love God at all, but it proves that he does not love Him with his whole heart. (Al Ghazali).

Another test is that such a person will be covetous of retirement and privacy for purposes of devotion; he will long for the approach of night, so that he may hold communion with his Creator without let or hindrance (just as did Jesus and Muhammad [pbut]). If he prefers conversation by day and sleep at night to such retirement, then his love may be imperfect. God said to David *"Be not too intimate with men, for two kinds of persons are excluded from my presence: those who are earnest in seeking reward and slack when they obtain it, and those who prefer their own thoughts to the remembrance of Me. The sign of My displeasure is that I leave such to themselves."* In truth, if the love of God really takes possession of the heart all other love recedes into the background and eventually fades away. With the Love of God, worship becomes easy. When the love of God is complete no joy is equal to the joy of worship. (Al Ghazali, 1990). Of course, the reference is to a higher level spiritual development such as obtained by saints and sages.

Another evidence of the love of God is when the remembrance of God always remains fresh in a man's heart without effort, for what a man loves he constantly remembers and if his love is perfect he never forgets.

It is possible, however, that while the love of God does not take the first place in a man's heart, the love of the love of God may be high, for love is one thing, and the love of love, is another. All lovers of God will love those who obey Him and hate those disobedient of His commandments. The Prophet of Islam once asked God and said *"O Lord, who are Thy lovers?"* and the answer came, *"those who cleave to Me as a child to its mother, take refuge in the remembrance of Me as a bird seeks the shelter of its nest, and are as angry at the sight of sin as an angry lion who fears nothing."* and the Quran says: *"they are strenuous against the unbelievers and merciful to each other."* (Al Ghazali).

Seeing then that nothing is higher than God, how great must be the delight which springs from the true knowledge of Him! A person in whom the desire for this knowledge has disappeared is like one who has lost his appetite for healthy food, or who prefers feeding on clay to eating bread. All bodily appetites perish at death with the organs they use but the soul dies not, and retains whatever knowledge of God it possesses; in fact increases it. The truth of the matter is that, just as the seed of man becomes a man, and a buried acorn becomes a tree, so the knowledge of God acquired on earth will in the next world change into the vision of God, and he who has never learnt the knowledge will never have the vision. This vision will not be shared alike by all who know, but their discernment of it will vary exactly as their knowledge. God is one, but He will be seen in many different ways, just as one object is reflected in different ways by different mirrors, some showing it straight, and some distorted, some clearly and some dimly. This perhaps is the explanation for divisions or sects appearing within a religious body. A mirror may be so crooked as to make even a beautiful form appear misshaped and a man may carry into the next world a heart so dark and distorted that the sight which will be a source of peace and joy to others will be to him a source of misery. (Al Ghazali, 1990)

The Spiritual World

Saints, being people who are spiritually endowed, have always understood that they have come into this world to carry on a spiritual traffic, the resulting gain or loss of which is heaven or hell. They have therefore always kept a jealous eye upon the flesh, which like a treacherous partner in business, may cause them great loss. The soul has

only one life, no single moment that has passed can be recovered, for in the counsel of God the number of breaths allotted it is fixed, and cannot be increased. The Quran said:

- *“But to no soul will God grant respite when the time appointed (for it) has come; and God is well acquainted with (all) that ye do.” (Q. 63:11).*

When life is over, no further spiritual traffic is possible for anyone; therefore what we need do now is to treat this day as if one’s life had been already spent, and this were an extra day granted us by the special favor of the Almighty. What can be greater folly than to lose it by letting it go to waste through meaningless or mindless activities?

Many people, having no fixed convictions about the future world, when mastered by their sensual appetites, deny that a future world exists altogether. They say that hell is merely an invention of theologians to frighten people and they regard theologians with thinly veiled contempt. Some allowance however, must be made for them, for it is as difficult to believe in the reality of states of which one has no personal experience as it is for a blind man to understand the pleasure of looking at green grass and running water, or for a child to comprehend the pleasure of exercising sovereignty. A wise man, who though lacks personal experience of those states himself, may not therefore deny their reality; for what folly can be greater than the person who desires the reality of a thing merely because he himself has not experienced it? Of such people, it is written in the Quran, *“Those who have not the guidance will say: This is a manifest imposture.”*

Al Ghazali speaks of men of talent and position who claim to have reached such a degree of sanctity that sin cannot affect them. Yet, if you treat one of them with disrespect he will bear grudge against you for years, and if one of them be deprived of a morsel of food which he think his due, the whole world will appear dark and narrow to him. Men such as these, with a materialistic turn of mind, whose desires are bounded by sex and material things, will not go beyond those things; their knowledge will be limited to the narrow circle in which their thoughts move. Even if any of them do really conquer their passions, they have no right to make such a claim, for the prophets, the highest of human kind, constantly confessed and bewailed their sins. Some of them had such a dread of sin that they even abstained from lawful things: thus, it is related of the Prophet of Islam that one day, when a (fruit) had been brought to him, he

would not eat it, as he was not sure that it had been lawfully obtained. His guidance is the Quran which says:

- *“The (material) things which ye are given are but the conveniences of this Life and the glitter thereof, but that which is with God is better and more enduring: will ye not then be wise?”* (Q. 68:60).

Whereas the free-livers alluded to above, will swallow gallons of wine and tons of animal flesh, yet claim to be superior to the Prophet whose sanctity was endangered by a date-fruit. While theirs is unaffected by all that gluttony! Satan sees his opportunity and catches them unawares. Instead of rising higher in the spiritual world, their selfish and worldly desires and ambitions pull them down, and they are lost. Surely such men deserve that the devil should drag them down to perdition. Real saints know that he who does not master his appetites does not deserve the name of a man, and that the true believer is one who will cheerfully acknowledge the limits imposed by the law. He who endeavors on whatever pretext to ignore its obligations is certainly under satanic influence. The spiritual world is beyond their kin. But persons with a spiritual outlook, even though they may fail again and again in attaining their full ideals, are on the right path. They are willing to receive guidance and God’s grace will find them out and help them.

Material good is nothing compared to the spiritual. In the Hereafter, no plea ‘that others misled us’ will avail anyone. Each soul must answer for itself, whether it honored God alone or worshipped something else, and whether it received or rejected the Teachers and Guides sent by God. The wisdom and plan of God are beyond all praise: All mercy and truth proceed from Him, and there is no other, – None! – besides Him.” (Sheikh A.Y.Ali, C- 175)

The saints know that in the heart of the enlightened man there is a window opening on the realities of the spiritual world, so that he knows, not by hearsay or traditional belief but by actual experience, what produces wretchedness or happiness in the soul just as clearly and decidedly as the physician knows what produces sickness or health in the body. He recognizes that knowledge of God and worship are medicinal, and that ignorance and sin are deadly poisons for the soul. Many even so-called ‘learned’ men, from blindly following other’s opinions, have no real certainty in their beliefs regarding the happiness or misery of souls in the next world. But he who will attend to the matter with a mind unbiased by prejudice will arrive at clear convictions on this matter. Just

as the health of the animal soul consists in the equilibrium of its component, by appropriate medicine, so the health of the human soul consist in a moral equilibrium which is maintained and repaired, when needful, by ethical instruction and moral precepts. (Al Ghazali).

In the words of M. K. Gandhi: *“God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. Self purification therefore must mean purification in all the walks of life – purification being highly infectious. Purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one’s surroundings.”* (M. K. Gandhi, ‘Auto-biography’).

Here we are confronted by the mystic doctrine of a covenant, express or implied, between God and Humanity. God said in the Quran:

- *“When thy lord drew forth from the children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): “Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)? – They said: “Yea! We do testify!” (This) lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: “Of this we were never mindful”; or lest ye should say: “Our fathers before us may have taken false gods, but we are (their) descendants after them: wilt Thou then destroy us because of the deeds of men who were futile?” (Quran 7:172-173)*

The words in this text refer to the descendants of the children of Adam i.e. to all humanity, born or unborn, without any limit of time. Adam’s seed carries on the existence of Adam and succeeds to his spiritual heritage. Humanity as such has a corporate aspect. God has given Humanity certain powers and faculties, whose possession creates on our side special obligations which we must faithfully discharge. These obligations may from legal point of view be considered as arising from implied covenants of the Jewish nation. Now we consider the implied covenant of the whole of humanity. By our Faith, we acknowledge that God is our Creator, Cherisher, and Sustainer: therefore we acknowledge our duty to Him: when we so testify concerning ourselves, the obligation is as it were assumed by us; for it follows from our very nature when it is pure and uncorrupted. (Shiekh A. Yusuf Ali – C. 1146 - 1147)

A covenant necessarily implies Trust, and its breach necessarily implies punishment. The latent faculties in man are enough to teach him the distinction between good and evil, to warn him of the dangers that

beset his life. But to awaken and stimulate them, a personal appeal is made to each individual through the "still small voice" innate within him. This meant that man was given a limited choice of good and evil, and that he was made capable of Forbearance, Love, and Mercy. This in its uncorrupted state acknowledges the truth and metaphorically swears its covenant with God. There is, therefore, no excuse for any individual to say, either: that he was unmindful, or that he should not be punished for the sins of his fathers, because his punishment (if any) comes from his personal responsibility and is for his own rejection of faith and the higher spiritual influences. (Sheikh A. Yusuf Ali, Note -1148, p.394).

It is left to man to strive in faith, and fulfill God's Trust, - by the Grace and Mercy of God. What this means is that after striving in good works that will earn us credit in the hereafter, our salvation will still depend on the Grace and Mercy of the Almighty. Consequently, those who believe in God are reminded in the Quran, to always fulfill their obligations. It says:

- *"O ye who believe! fulfill (all) obligations. . ."(Quran 5:1)*

But what are these obligations?

First, there are the divine obligations that arise from our spiritual nature and our relation to God. He created us and implanted in us the faculty of knowledge and foresight; besides the intuition and reason which He gave us, he made Nature responsive to our needs, and His Signs in Nature are so many lessons to us in our own inner life. He further sent Messengers and Teachers, for the guidance of our conduct in individual, social, and public life. All these gifts create corresponding obligations which we must fulfill. But in our own human and material life we undertake mutual obligations (covenants), expressed and implied. We make a promise; we enter into a commercial or social contract; we enter into a contract of marriage: we must faithfully fulfill all obligations in all these relationships.

Truth and Fidelity are parts of religion in all relations of life. Our group or society or our Nation-state enters into a treaty: every individual in that group or state is bound to see that as far as it lies in his power, such obligations are faithfully discharged. There are tacit obligations: living in civil society, we must respect its tacit conventions unless they are morally wrong, and in that case we must get out of such society. There are tacit obligations in the character of a host and his guest, the wayfarer and his companion, the employer and the employee, etc., which

every man of faith must discharge conscientiously. The man who deserts those who need him and goes to pray in a desert is a coward who disregards his obligations. All these obligations are inter-connected. (Shiekh A. Yusuf Ali – Notes: 682). From all that we have said, it follows that man’s chief business in this world is to prepare for the next. Even if he is doubtful about a future existence, considering the tremendous issues at stake, reason suggests that he should act as if there is one.

Islam invites all people to the truth: there is no cause for dissembling or disputing. False are the people who corrupt God’s truth, or hinder men from coming to God, for the ultimate judge is God Himself. The Quran says:

- *“Your return in the end is towards Allah... He will tell you the truth of the things wherein you disputed.” (Q 6: 164) (p. 13)*
- *“He (God) has decreed for you the same religion decreed for Noah, and what is revealed herein, and what was decreed for Abraham, Moses and Jesus. You shall uphold the one religion, and do not be divided. It is simply too difficult for the Idol worshippers to accept what you advocate. God is the One who brings towards Him whomever He wills; He guides towards Himself those who submit.” (Quran 42: 13)*

Since there is only one God, alone without partners, argues Professor Dauda Ojobi, it follows that; *“All human beings are creatures of the same God and are equal in his sight and hence the (Islamic believe in) the equality of all men and women. As God is the Creator and Nourisher of all the world, he must provide not only for the physical needs of man but for the moral and spiritual needs (also) by revealing to man the path of truth and righteousness and hence the Islamic belief in the Divine revelation. Moreover, the Divine revelation must come wherever and whenever needed for revealing his message. God must choose men who are completely devoted to truth; who are leading godly and sinless life and can inspire others to follow the true path. And finally, since God is the God of goodness and His plan in creating the world and making man a free moral agent is not frivolous and meaningless; there must be life-after-death, where man may reap the fruits of their beliefs, intentions and actions and continue their blissful journey to God and in God; and hence the Islamic belief in the Hereafter (Prof. D. Ojobi ‘Comparative Religion’ p.46).*

As such we see that the word ‘Religion’ in Western usage falls short of expressing the totality of Islam as a comprehensive system

influencing all aspects of life, individual as well as communal. Islam is not an exclusive religion. It is a universal call to mankind (not “an Arab” or “an Eastern” religion as many depict it), and no human being, clergy or otherwise, is permitted to set limits on God’s mercy and forgiveness, or to speak on His behalf in assigning reward or punishment.

A Muslim Scholar’s view of the Soul of Man

Some theologians have supposed that the human Soul is annihilated after death and then restored; but this is contrary, both to reason and to the Scriptures. The former shows us that death does not destroy the essential individuality of man, and the Quran says:

- *“Think not that those who are slain in the path of God are dead; nay they are alive, rejoicing in the presence of their Lord, and in the grace bestowed on them.”(Q 3:169)*

And again:

- *“Every Soul shall have a taste of death: And We test you by evil and by good, by way of trial. To Us must ye return.” (Quran 21:35).*

Imam Al Ghazali is of the view that, as regards its future existence, the human soul is essentially independent of the body. A little further consideration will show how entirely distinct the human soul is from the body and its members. Limb after Limb may be paralyzed and ceased working but the individuality of the soul is unimpaired. Further, the body which you have now is no longer the body which you had as a child, but entirely different, yet your personality now is identical with your personality then. It is therefore easy to conceive of it as persisting when the body is done with altogether; along with its essential attributes which were independent of the body, such as the knowledge and love of God. This is the meaning of the saying of the Qur’an *“The good things abide”*. But if instead of carrying away with you knowledge, you depart in ignorance of God, this ignorance also is an essential attribute; and will abide as darkness of the soul and the seed of misery. This is reflected by the saying of the Quran:

- *“He who is blind (spiritually) in this life will be blind in the next life and astray from the path.”(Quran 17:72)*

The effect of death on the composite nature of man, according to Al Ghazali, is as follows: *“Man has two souls, the animal soul and a spiritual soul, which latter is of angelic nature. The seat of the animal soul is the heart, from which this soul issues like a subtle vapor and pervades all the members of*

the body, giving the power of sight to the eye, the power of hearing to the ear, and to every member, the faculty of performing its own appropriate functions. It may be compared," he said, "to a lamp carried about within a cottage, the light of which falls upon the walls where-ever it goes. The heart is the wick of this lamp, and when the supply of oil is cut off for any reason, the lamp dies. Such is the death of the animal soul." (Al Ghazali 1990).

The body may be compared to a steed and the soul to its rider, said Al Ghazali. The body was created for the soul, the soul for the body. The body, so to speak, is simply the riding-animal of the soul, and perishes while the soul endures. If a man knows not his own soul, which is the nearest thing to him, what is the use of his claiming to know others? It is as if a beggar who has not the wherewithal for a meal should claim to be able to feed a town. (Al Ghazali 1990).

With the spiritual or human soul, the case is different. It is indivisible, and by it man knows God. It is, so to speak, the rider of the animal soul, and when that perishes it still remains, but is like a horseman who has dismounted, or like a hunter who has lost his weapons. That steed and those weapons were granted the human soul that by means of these it might pursue and capture the phoenix of the knowledge of God. If it has affected that capture, it is not a grief but rather a relief to be able to lay those weapons aside, and to dismount from that weary steed. Therefore, the Prophet said *"death is a welcome gift of God to the believer"* but (alas), for that soul which loses its steed and hunting weapons before it has captured the prize, its misery and regret will be indescribable. The Quran says:

- *"And by the soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!"*
(Quran 91:7 - 10)

But when all is said, the knowledge of the soul plays a more important part in leading to the knowledge of God than the knowledge of our body and its functions. The Quran for one has made knowledge one of the two most fundamental pillars of the pursuit of greatness by human communities (Q. 58:11), and the Holy Prophet (pbuh) has made the pursuit of education for the acquisition of knowledge obligatory for every Muslim, man and woman. In this respect the Qur'an is marvelous. It is for the simplest as well as the most advanced. A soul which allows its lower faculties to dominate the higher, says Al Ghazali, is as one who should

hand over an angel to the power of a dog. The cultivation of demonic, animal or angelic qualities, he adds, results in the production of corresponding characters which on the Day of Judgment will be manifested in visible shapes: The sensual appearing as Swine (pigs), the ferocious as Dogs and Wolves, and the pure as Angels." Thus, Al Ghazali led us further into profound cosmic knowledge. He said, "*the true greatness of man lies in his capacity for eternal progress, otherwise in his temporal sphere he is the weakest of all things, being subjected to hunger, thirst, heat, cold and sorrow.*" And in truth, Man in this world is extremely weak and contemptible; it is only in the next world that he will be of value. For, those things he takes most delight in are often the most injurious to him and those things which benefit him are not to be obtained without toil and trouble." (Al Ghazali)

Al Ghazali believes that the rational soul in man abounds in marvels, both of knowledge and power. Accordingly, in his informed opinion, a man's soul has a window which opens on the unseen world of spirits. In the state of sleep, when the avenues of the senses are closed, this window is opened and man receives impressions from the unseen world and sometimes fore-shadowing or glimpses of the future. A man's soul is then like a mirror which reflect what is pictured in the tablet of fate. But even in sleep, thoughts of worldly things dull this mirror, so that the impression it receives are not clear. After death, however, such thoughts vanish and things are seen in their naked reality, and the saying in the Qur'an is fulfilled: *'We have stripped the veil from off thee and thy sight today is keen.'*(Q. 50: 22- b)

He taught that the more a man purifies himself from fleshy lusts and concentrates his mind on God, the more conscious will he be of such intuitions (prophetic inspiration); adding that such intuitions are however not confined only to those of prophetic rank. Just as iron, by sufficient polishing, can be made into a mirror, so any mind by due discipline can be rendered receptive of such impressions. He bids us to recognize that it is not only by reason of knowledge acquired and intuition that the soul of man holds the first rank among created things, but also by reason of power. Just as angels preside over the elements, so does the soul rule the members of the body. Those souls which attained a special degree of power not only rule their own body but those of others also. If they wish a sick man to recover, they can influence such recovery by Allah's permission, and he recovers; or a person in health to fall ill he becomes ill;

or if they will the presence of a person, he comes to them. Accordingly, as the effects produced by these powerful souls are good or bad they are termed miracles or sorceries.

Al Ghazali observes that these souls (of the righteous ones) differ from common folk in three ways:

- a) What others only see in dreams they see in their waking moments;
- b) While the will of others only affect their own bodies, these, by their will
power can move bodies extraneous to themselves; (just as did Jesus Christ,
Muhammad and other Prophets (pbut) and Saints);
- c) The knowledge which others acquire by laborious learning comes to them
by intuition (as in the case of Joseph, Elijah, Jesus and Muhammad).

Therefore, he who neglects his soul and suffers its capacities to rust or to degenerate must necessarily be the loser in this world and the next. It will be well for us to remember that in the Quran God had said:

- *"We will set up a just balance on the Day of Resurrection, and no soul shall be wronged in anything. Whosoever has wrought a grain of good or ill shall then behold it."* (Q. 21:47)

It is also written:

- *"Let every soul see what it sends on before it for the Day of Account."*

A favorite saying of Caliph Umar (may God be pleased with him) is said to be: *"Call yourselves to account before ye be called to account,"* and God says in the Quran:

- *"O ye who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy, vie in such perseverance, strengthen each other; and fear Allah that ye may prosper."* (Q. 3:200)

A piece of Poetry by Sheikh Abdullahi Yusuf Ali, lucidly describe how it works:

*"Spiritual Truth finds its lodgment in all sorts of unexpected places,
And in all sorts of unexpected ways.
The Man of God, when most depressed by the buffets of a world*

*Steeped in selfishness, sees a glorious vision:
Hidden spiritual forces work for him,
Make known the truth in marvelous ways,
And proclaim the Goodness and Judgment of God.
They reject all errors and lead others to purify their wills and come to God.
Behold! Every place and time, every gift is meet for
The service of God, the One, the True, Whose Word,
The righteous one proclaims and, must proclaim at all cost.
Man's duty is plain, but in the Kingdom of God,
Through God's chosen ones, we rise to higher, and
Higher Mysteries, as may be expedient for us.
Yet when or how our end may be, is not given to men to know:
Let him but take the Treasures well-guarded, that come to him, and
Praise the Lord of all Knowledge and Wisdom!"*

Chapter TWO

COMMON HERITAGE

In determining the commonalities existing between Christianity and Islam, we need to look at various aspects of the doctrines, practices and beliefs of the two faiths as revealed in their Scriptures (the Bible and the Quran) comparatively. Some of the crucial questions need to be highlighted:

- What is the nature of each of the Faiths?
- Who is being worshipped?
- What is His nature?
- What is our relationship with Him?
- Who brought the Faith to us (the Apostles)?
- What is his (their) identity?
- How did the Message get to him?
- How did it come to us (in what form)?
- What are the cardinal beliefs (the Creed, Doctrines, Ethics, Norms)?
- What are the practices (worship, behaviors, attitudes, relationship)?
- What is the end result or destination? i.e.:
 - a. What do we stand to gain or benefit by obedience/acceptance?
 - b. What shall we lose or suffer by disobedience/unbelief? etc.

In spite of what some people would say to the contrary, it is necessary to recognize that Christianity and Islam have a great deal in common – both share many beliefs, like belief in one God, His Messengers and Prophets, the Divine Revelation sent to them, Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, Heaven and Hell, etc. And Prophet Muhammad is made to declare further, in the Quran, that:

- *“We believe in Allah, and we believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one and we submit our wills to Him.” (Qur’an 29:46).*

Researchers into the origin of religion reveal to us that *“the Old Testament explicitly and unambiguously credits Abraham with being the founder of monotheism. Abraham worshipped only One (unitary) God who was simply referred to as the ‘God of Abraham.’ God declared in the Bible:*

- ❖ *“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” (Exodus 3:6)*

Monotheism, which is at the root of both Christianity and Islam, remains the common belief of both Faiths, an inexhaustible source of spiritual

enrichment for believers on both sides and a ground on which both sides can meet. The Bible (Gospel) and the Quran, call on Christians and Muslims to renounce their comfortable ignorance of each other, to seek to get to know the other better and accept them as they are. It also involves making the most of the heritage which is common to both Christianity and Islam, as well as appreciating the differences, not to mention the contradictions, between the two faiths. At the same time, however, each must always respect the other's conscience and free-will. (Chawkat Georges Moucarry (1984). This is the significance of comparative religion; to shorten the gulf of misunderstanding and distrust with a view to bring the parties closer, for peace to reign. Doubtlessly what should be of cardinal importance is gaining the understanding and confidence for one another.

All the Prophets of God called humanity to the way of the Lord, the way of submission to the Creator. The long line of the Prophets brought one and the same message to lead man to the path of happiness and salvation. All of them stood for the same cause: submissiveness and peaceful cohabitation (Peace). This message was preached by all the Prophets of God, who were sent to guide man to the right path. All of them gave the same message or part of it, which is why it should not come as a surprise that both the Bible and the Quran contain passages that bear great semblance.

Prophets that came before now were practicing the religion of God without a specific name. Both the Bible and Quran tell us that it was referred to simply as 'The WAY' or 'the Path' (Bible: Acts 24:14; Quran: 5:48, 6:153, 16:9, 16:125, 17:81, 42:52, 43:43, etc.). They called to the unity of God commonly, advised to righteousness, trust and patience and admonished people to abstain from innovation, iniquities and evil. That was the characteristics of the religion of the prophets. Israelites of old referred to this creed as the religion of 'the God of Abraham' or the 'God of Moses', as per their advents. The purpose of the message was always to guide erring humanity, to pluck up courage and cunning and re-integrate him into the world of spirit and serenity.

The phenomenon of the message of the prophets was explained by Abdul Wadod Shalabi in his book edited by A.H. Murad, thus: *"The consciousness shared by the prophets and saints of history necessarily expressed itself in terms which best conveyed it in a rich variety of cultural worlds. But with the inauguration of each new revelation the same energy was at work, the Divine secret called by some the Logos, by others the light of Muhammad: the uncreated point of contact between the absolute and the contingent, the Creator and the created."* (Abdul Wadod Shalabi in "Islam Religion of Life" 2006, p.5-6).

We may ask ourselves whether it is possible for God to have revealed anything other than the truth. It is difficult to entertain the idea that God taught

man ideas that were not only fictitious, but also contradictory. In his commentary to the Quran, Sheikh (Professor) Abdullahi Yusuf Ali observes that: *“The Prophets of God formed a series that worked in God’s service to instruct their fellow-men. In case of distress, God helped and delivered them. Men did flout and persecute them, but they carried out their mission with constancy; and God’s purpose always won, to the destruction of Evil. So was it in the story of Noah and the flood, of Abraham the True, of Ishmael ready for self-sacrifice, of Isaac the righteous, of Moses and Aaron, of Elias and Lot: all men of faith, salutation from God Most Gracious”(C198).* He further observes that, *“The Apostle’s credentials are the revelation he brings; let them not wonder at the message or at the news of the hereafter. They have but to look at the starry heavens and at nature around them to see God’s goodness and His power to bring life out of the dead, and to punish all wrong. Every deed, word and thought is in the eternal record. Death will open your eyes and make you see realities. Then will every action bear its due fruit, and no soul can shift its responsibility on to another.”* Sheikh Abdullahi Yusuf Ali (C. 244)

Consequently, Allah (SWT – *Subhanahu Wa Ta’ala*) commanded his prophet to tell the idolaters to ask the Jews and Christians about things which were continuously revealed to them as in the following verse states:

- *“We only sent before you men to whom we gave revelation. So ask the people of the book if you all do not know.”* (Qur’an 16: 43 and Qur’an 21:7)
- *“And when there comes to them a Book from God, confirming what is with them, - although from of old, they had prayed for victory against those without Faith, - when there comes to them that which they (should) have recognized, they refuse to believe in it; but the curse of God is on those without Faith.”* (Quran 2: 89)
- *“Nay, this (Quran) surely is an admonition: Let any who will keep it in remembrance! But none will keep it in remembrance except as God wills: He is the Lord of Righteousness, and the Lord of Forgiveness.”* (Quran 74: 54 – 56).

The situation is as described by Prof. (Sheikh) A. Yusuf Ali. He said: *“unfaith has no stable foundation to rest on: Misleaders and the misled will all be responsible for their deeds. True values are not to be judged by the seeming good of this life: True good, will come to its own in the end, however derided and scorned in the period of Trial. Revelation and the Mission of the men of God will stand every test. God’s Truth will endure, while falsehood will perish, and its votaries find the door of Repentance closed in the End.”* (A. Yusuf Ali: *‘The Holy Quran – Translation and Commentary’* - C191 – p.1143).

○ **Abraham**

Abraham is the spiritual father of Jews and Christians; as he is equally the spiritual father of Muslims. So, Jews, Christians and Muslims all claim Abraham as their “Father.” And, because they believe in the Oneness of God, Jews and Christians have special status within the Muslim community. The Quran expressly forbids Muslims to force anyone to convert to Islam (Q. 2:256). That is why such harmonious relationships existed between Jews, Christians and Muslims at the height of the Muslim Empire’s glory. However, Abraham was not a Jew or Israeli; the name “Jew” started with Jacob, who according to the Bible was renamed ‘Israel’ (Genesis 6:32). The Quran stated unequivocally that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian (Q. 3: 67).

- *“Also mention in the book (the story of) Abraham: He was a man of truth; a prophet.”(Quran 19: 41)*
- *“Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah, he showed his gratitude for the favours of Allah, who chose him, and guided him to a Straight Way.” (Quran 16:120-121)*

The Quranic revelation has, step by step, confirmed the Laws of Abraham and Moses and the Gospel of Jesus. It is a guide from God, and it appeals to reason and understanding. The three religions share a common moral code. The Islamic morality is comparable to Christian and Jewish morality in their pure form as prescribed by the Bible (or Torah and the Injeel i.e. the Old and New Testaments) and devoid of the latter-day revisionism of groups that have played havoc with the Abrahamic moral heritage and changed the moral code in such a way that made the immoralities of yesterday look like the moralities of today. These immoralities have been coated with new innocuous and euphemistic terms such as “love”, “gay”, “sexual partners”, “boyfriend/girlfriend”, “lover”, “single-parent”, etc., by those who hoped that nice names might camouflage (or help promote) the sins of old. ((Hassan Hathout, p. 75)

Before Abraham, the people were worshipping idols – objects they carved with their own hands - mementos representing some prominent ancestral figures in the society, which they later revered as gods. Some even worship images of Animals they carved out of wood, and stone. Then, along came Abraham, who told them to leave idolatry and accept the worship of only One God. That was why God was called “the God of Abraham.” Both Christianity and Islam claim origin from the religion of Abraham (pbuh), the father of both the Jewish and the Arab nations. Strangely enough, despite the primeval of it all, those who believed in what was then considered a ‘new’ religion brought by Abraham did not make the mistake of calling Abraham a god or son of god.

○ **Abraham (in the Bible and the Qur’an):**

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“To this he (Stephen) replied: “Brothers and fathers listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. ‘Leave your country and your people, God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.” (Acts 7: 2 – 3)</i> ❖ <i>“And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him (Abraham) saying; This (Eliezer of Damascus) shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.” (Genesis 15:4)</i> ❖ <i>“. . . unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the Euphrate.” (Genesis 15:18)</i> ❖ <i>Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5); . . . and Ishmael was 13 years old when Abraham was 99, (Genesis: 24-25)</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Ye people of the Book! Why dispute ye about Abraham, when the law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have ye no understanding?”(Quran 3: 65)</i> • <i>“O my Lord! Make this city one of peace and security! And prevent me and my sons from worshipping idols”(Q. 14:35)</i> • <i>“O my Lord! They have indeed led astray many among mankind; he then who follows my (ways) is of me, and he that disobeys me, but thou art indeed oft – forgiving, most merciful.”(Quran 14: 36)</i> • <i>“Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian: But he was true in faith, and bowed his will to God’s (which is Islam) and he joined not gods with God” (Quran 3: 67)</i> • <i>“Praise be to God, who hath granted unto me in old age Ishmael and Isaac: for truly my Lord is He, the Hearer of prayers!(Quran 14:39)</i> • <i>“O my Lord! Make me one who establishes regular prayers, and also (raise such) among my offspring. “O our Lord! and accept thou my prayer.”(Quran 14: 40)</i> • <i>“And they say: Be Jews or Christians, then ye will be rightly guided. Say (unto them O Muhammad): Nay, but (we follow) the religion of Abraham the upright, and he was not of the Idolaters.” (Quran 2:135)</i>
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○ **Ishmael & Isaac - Abraham’s Offspring:**

Rev. Rick Richter presented a rather futile argument on descendants of Abraham, implying that, it is not the biological children who are Abraham’s children, but the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. This is how he stated his argument: *“It is not as though God’s Word*

had failed. For not all who are descendent from Israel are Israeli. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary," he said, "it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned," But we learn from the book of Genesis 16:11, that Ishmael is also a child of promise!

- ❖ "And the Angel of the Lord said unto her (Hagar or Agar); Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael, because the Lord hath heard thy affliction." (Genesis 16:11;)
- ❖ "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee; behold **I have blessed him** and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly."(Genesis 17:20). And,
- "And also of the son of the bondwoman (Ishmael) **will I make a nation**, because he is **thy seed**." (Genesis 21:13).
- "**God was with the boy** as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt." (Genesis 21:20 – 21)

BIBLE:	QURAN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ "And the Angel of the Lord said unto her (Hagar); Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael, because the Lord hath heard thy affliction." Genesis 16:11;) ❖ "And Abraham was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bore Ishmael for Abraham." (Genesis16:16) ❖ "And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the self same day was Abraham circumcised and Ishmael his son. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him."(Genesis 17: 24-27) ❖ "Sarah said to Abraham, "get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."(Genesis 21:10) ❖ "The matter distressed Abraham greatly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "So We gave him (Abraham) tiding of a gentle son." (Quran 37:101) • "And make mention in the scripture of Ishmael. Lo! He was a keeper of his promise, and he was a messenger (of Allah), a Prophet." (Quran 19:54) • "He enjoined upon his people worship and alms-giving, and was acceptable in the sight of his Lord." (Quran 19:55) • "And (remember) when his Lord tried Abraham with (His) commands and he

<p>because it concerned his son. But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. . ." (Genesis 21:11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ "Arise, lift up the lad (Ishmael), and hold him in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation." (Genesis 21: 18) ❖ "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee; behold I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly."(Genesis 17: 20) ❖ "And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed." (Genesis 21:13) ❖ "I will make the son of the maid servant into a nation also because he is your offspring." (Genesis 21:13) ❖ "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child. . . . (Genesis 21:14-21) ❖ "Do not be afraid, God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."(Genesis 21:17-18) ❖ "And the Angel of the Lord said unto her (Hagar), I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude."(Genesis 16:10) ❖ "And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him."(Genesis 21: 4-5) ❖ "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."(Genesis 21: 8-10) ❖ "God said: "And I will give unto thee and to 	<p>fulfilled them, He said: Lo! I have appointed thee a leader for mankind." (Quran 2: 24)</p> <p>(Abraham's Prayers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own who shall recite unto them Your Verses and instruct them in the Book (the Qur'an) and Al-Hikmah (Knowledge) and purify them. Verily! You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." (Quran 2:127 & 129). • "O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Thy sacred house; in order, O our lord, that they may establish regular prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them, and feed them with fruits: so that they may give thanks." (Q 14:37) • "And We bestowed upon him Isaac, and
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<p><i>thy seed (Isaac) after thee, the land wherein thou art a Stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” (Genesis 17:8)</i></p>	<p><i>Jacob as a grandson. Each of them We made righteous.” (Quran 21:72)</i></p>
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We note that in the New Testament, Paul used words of defamatory nature against Hagar’s (*Agar*) origin when he said:

- “ . . . *The mount in Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar (Hagar). . . . But Jerusalem . . . is free, which is the mother of us all. Now we, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. Nevertheless, what says the scripture? ‘Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.’ So then, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.” (Galatians 4; 24-31)*

This statement is nothing short of a contradiction of the Old Testament (Genesis 17: 20), where God blessed Ishmael, Agar’s son. Secondly, Paul’s calling Agar a bondwoman, after she has been married to Abraham is, technically speaking, untrue. When a bondwoman gets married to a free-born her child is considered a free-born like the father. Thus Hagar’s child with Abraham is a free-born becomes their marriage is legal in the eyes of God. We can take a cue from Paul’s own logic. Jacob married some bondwomen (slaves) and four of his sons were the children of the bondwomen. This means that one third of Jacob’s sons who descended from bondwomen are therefore not free, based on the criterion set by Paul. Thirdly, Paul says it was the scripture that ordered for Hagar and her son to be cast out. This is quite untrue because these words in the Old Testament were Sarah’s words not God’s words. We note in Genesis 21:11 & 12, that this decision or demand made by Sarah “was very grievous in Abraham’s sight. And knowing Abraham’s faithfulness to God, he will not feel as he did if it was God’s command to cast out his son with his mother. Besides, in verse 12, God comforted Abraham saying: “. . . *Let it not be greivous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman . . .*” (Genesis 21:12). So once Hagar became Abraham’s wife, she and son Ishmael were not slaves and therefore Ishmael is also heir, actually the first heir.

To Muslims however, both Ishmael and Isaac are equally blessed and beloved prophets of God. Besides, we are told in the Bible that in answer to Abraham’s prayer God said:

- “. . . *unto **thy seed** (Ishmael or Isaac?) have I given **this land**, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the Euphrates.” (Genesis 15:18);.*

- *“And I will give unto thee and to **thy seed** (Isaac or Ishmael?) after thee, **the land** wherein thou art a stranger, **all the land of Canaan**, for an everlasting possession, and **I will be their God.**” (Genesis 17:8).*
- *“And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee; behold I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly.”(Genesis 17:20).*

River Euphrates originated in Turkey and flows through Syria and Iraq to join the Tigris river in the Shatt Al-Arab which empties into the Persian Gulf.

Abraham was the progenitor of the Arab and Jewish race through Ishmael and Isaac. The progeny of Isaac (the younger son) developed the faith of Israel and that of Jesus. And Ishmael’s progeny perfected the more universal faith of Islam through Muhammad. We see also in the Quran (14:35) that Abraham prayed to God:

- *“O my Lord! Make this city one of peace and security! And perceive me and my sons from worshipping idols” (Q. 14:35).*

According to the Qur’an, as a test for Abraham and a fulfillment of God’s plan, God ordered Abraham to take Hagar and his only son, Ishmael, to a barren land surrounded by hills, where he left them. The Bible also stated as much. This is the place where centuries later, the cities of Makkah (Mecca) and Medina would be located, and where Prophet Muhammad would eventually be born. Arab tradition connects various places in and around Mecca with the name of Abraham and identifies the well of Zam-zam with the well in the story of the child ‘Isma’il’ (Ishmael). Hagar’s searching for water for her son (stated also in the Bible – Genesis 21:15-19) after their provisions were exhausted. The Holy Bible said:

- ❖ *“Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.” (Genesis 21:19).*

And the unexpected eruption of the well of Zam-zam, is also commemorated annually by Muslims amongst the rituals of hajj (pilgrimage).

From the time that Abraham took Hagar with the lad to the barren land as ordained by God. Arab tradition also refers the story of the sacrifice to Ishmael and not Isaac, therein differing to the Jewish tradition in Genesis 12, Verse 1-19. Ishmael (or Isma’il) in Muslim tradition was “Zabihullah” (i.e. the chosen sacrifice of God). Abraham had formed the habit of visiting Hagar and the child periodically. The records show that this visitation had continued up to the time Ishmael became an adult and married. It was during one of these visits, when Abraham told Ishmael that he was commanded to sacrifice him that he voluntarily offered himself for it, and never flinched, thereby keeping his promise to be patient and abiding (Quran). However, the sacrifice was redeemed by the substitution of a ‘Worthy Sacrifice’ (as stated in the Quran)

under God's commands. The commemoration of this trying test of Abraham; his submission to God (which he demonstrated by abandoning his wife and beloved son, born to him after 90 years of infertility); and his willingness to slay the (then) only son (Ishmael) is also commemorated annually by Muslims as one of the rituals of Hajj (pilgrimage).

The rituals of Hajj (pilgrimage) also include visiting the Kaaba, - the first Mosque - built for the worship of the One God, erected by Abraham and Ishmael. Indeed Arabic history revealed that Abraham and 'Isma'il' together built the Kaaba, the House of God in Mecca, - the first House of Allah, built for the worship of the One God, - long before the temple of Jerusalem was built. Historically, the temple of Mecca must have been a far more ancient place of worship than the Temple of Jerusalem. Another version of the story has it that the foundation of the House was there already, Abraham and Ishmael only built on it. The Meccan valley is enclosed by hills on all sides, unlike Medina, which has level cultivated plains. They purified it to be a centre of worship for the entire world: For God is the God of all peoples. They thereby laid the foundations of the universal religion, which is summed up in the word 'Islam': the complete submission to the will of God. Abraham and Ishmael were thus true Muslims. The Qur'an also told us that Abrahams and his first born - Ismail - when they were raising the foundations of the Ka'aba at Makkah, also prayed to God thus:

- *"Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own who shall recite unto them Your Verses and instruct them in the Book (the Qur'an) and Al-Hikmah (Knowledge) and purify them. Verily! You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."*(Qur'an 2:127 & 129).

And indeed Allah answered their invocation and Ishmael became the fountain-head of the Arab nations and in his posterity came Muhammad, the Apostle of God: "An apostle from Allah, reciting pure pages, wherein are all the right ordinances." (Q.98:2-3). The Ummah and the book of Islam reflect back the Apostleship of Prophet Muhammad on Isma'il.

1. Monotheism: Worship of one God – 'Allah' (The Creator)

In all of God's intercourse (contact) with Mankind: Adam, Noah and the other patriarchs, no mention is made of more than one being who addressed them under that character. God is one and alone, as also believed by the Jews. It is so evident that it requires no expanding that God alone is the self-existing God; and that a being that is not self-existing cannot be God. The name by which He is distinguished by Christians is sometimes "Jehova", and at other times, "the God of Abraham." But no doubt can be entertained that this was the same being that is first mentioned under the general title of God and to whom the making of the Heavens and the Earth is ascribed.

And in Professor A. Yusuf Ali' words, there is but One God, He Who gives all blessings to man and other creatures. His greatest gift is that He reveals Himself in many tangible ways. He cares for man and provides for his growth and sustenance. In providing us with rain, milk, fruits and honey, and in Nature and the life of man, with his opportunities of social, moral, and spiritual growth, are Signs for those who understand. Why then does man show ingratitude by going after false gods and forgetting God? (Sheikh A. Yusuf Ali – C 125).

God in the Bible and Quran

BIBLE:	QURAN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>"Jehova, He is God, there is none beside Him"</i> (Deuteronomy 4:35) ❖ <i>"Jehova, He is God in the heavens above and upon earth beneath: there is none else"</i> (Deuteronomy 5:39) ❖ <i>"I, even I, am He and there is no God <u>with</u> me"</i> (Deuteronomy 32:39) ❖ <i>"... that all the people of the earth may know that Jehova is God and that there is none else"</i> (1 Kings 8:60) ❖ <i>"... thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth"</i> (2 Kings 19:15). ❖ <i>"Is there a God besides Me? Yea, there is no God"</i> (Isaiah 44:8) ❖ <i>"I am Jehova and there is no God besides Me"</i> (Isaiah 45:5) ❖ <i>"There is no God else besides me... there is <u>none</u> besides me"</i> (Isaiah 45:21). ❖ <i>"I am God and there is <u>none</u> else"</i> (Isaiah 45:21) ❖ <i>"I am God and there is <u>none</u> else. I am God and there is <u>none</u> like me"</i> (Isaiah 46:9). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"God! There is no God but He; The Living; The Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep. . ."</i> (Quran 2:255). • <i>"Your God is One God!"</i> (Q. 16:22). • <i>"And He is God: There is no god but He. To Him be praise, at the first and at the last : for Him is the Command, and to Him shall ye (all) be brought back."</i> (Q. 68:70). • <i>"Verily, verily, your God is One! Lord of the heavens and of the earth, and all between them, and Lord of every point at the rising of the Sun!"</i>(Q. 37:4 – 5). • <i>"O My servants who believe! Truly, spacious is My Earth: Therefore, serve ye Me – (and Me Alone)!"</i> (Q. 29:56). • <i>It is God Who created you in a state of (helpless) weakness, then gave (you) strength after weakness, then after strength, gave (you) weakness and a hoary head: He creates as He wills, and it is He Who has all Knowledge and Power."</i> (Q. 30:54)

The scriptures of the Old Testament throughout speak of only one 'Being' (one 'Person' or Spirit), as God by Himself; Alone and Creator of all things. This is what Jesus, being a true Jew, believed.

2. The Nature of God/Allah

Who can describe the nature of God? When He is “The Living, the Eternal: His throne extends over worlds that no imagination can compass. His truth is clear as daylight: How can compulsion advance religion? The keys of life and death, and the mysteries of everything around us, are in His Hands.” (Sheikh Yusuf Ali – C52).

Chawkat Georges Moucarray (1984) gave us a Christian view of who God is. He said: *“When Christians call God their Father, they do so in two senses. Firstly, in the sense that God is the Creator; Christians believe that men are unique creatures, unlike any other. They believe that the relationship God wanted to establish with mankind is, consequently, a privileged relationship. This in no way implies that mankind in any sense shares God’s nature. Even less does it imply that mankind has a mother who took part in God’s creative act. Secondly, in the sense that God is the Redeemer, by calling God ‘Father’, Christians bear witness to the fact that God the Savior, as revealed in Jesus Christ, has given them the immense privilege of being adopted as his sons and daughters. This shows what an intimate relationship they have with God, but in no way does it imply that they have become divine beings. They have become sons and daughters of God, not by natural birth, but by adoption. Bowing before God’s unfathomable and transcendent nature, Muslims say ‘what’ God is. Receiving his love, which is all the more unfathomable because it has been given to us to experience; Christians confess ‘who’ God is.”*

Indeed, in the Holy Bible we receive God’s clear and unambiguous communication of who He is. The Lord God said:

- ❖ *“I am God and there is none else. I am God and there is none like Me” (Isaiah 46:9).*
- ❖ *“I, even I, am He and there is no God with Me” (Deuteronomy 32:39).*
- ❖ *“I am Jehova and there is no God besides Me” (Isaiah 45:5)*
- ❖ *“Is there a God besides Me? Yea, there is no God” (Isaiah 44:8)*
- ❖ *“There is no God else besides Me... there is none besides Me” (Isaiah 45:21).*
- ❖ *“... that all the people of the earth may know that Jehova is God and that there is none else” (1 Kings 8:60)*
- ❖ *“I am God and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:21)*

And in the Quran speaks plainly without any ambiguity:

- *“Your God is One God!” (Q. 16:22).*

- *“Say; He, Allah is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him. (Quran 112:1-4)*
- *“God! There is no God but He; The Living; The Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep. . . “(Quran 2:255).*
- *“Verily, verily, your God is One! Lord of the heavens and of the earth and all between them, and Lord of every point at the rising of the Sun!”(Q. 37:4 – 5).*
- *“And He is God: There is no god but He. To Him be praise, at the first and at the last: for Him is the Command, and to Him shall ye (all) be brought back.” (Q. 68:70).*
- *“Say:”Praise be to God, Who begets no son, and has no partners in (His) dominion: nor (does He need) any to protect Him from humiliation . . . ” (Q. 17: 111).*

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“God is spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truths.” (John 4:24).</i> ❖ <i>“Thy God is a jealous God, He shall have no other god before Him, not even of the likeness of the things on earth, or in the heavens above, or in the waters beneath the sea”(Exodus 20:3–5).</i> ❖ <i>“The man without the spirit does not accept the things that come from the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1st Corinthians 2:14)</i> ❖ <i>“(God) cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.” (James 1:13–14)</i> ❖ <i>“(God) will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear”(1st Corinthian 10:13)</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“. . . therefore, exalted be God, the King, the Reality: There is no god but He, the Lord of the Throne of Honour!” (Quran 23:116).</i> • <i>“God is the Light of heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: The Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant Star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the East nor of the West, whose Oil is well-nigh Luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! God doth guide whom He will to His Light: God doth set forth parables for men: and God doth know all things.” (Q 24: 35).</i> • <i>“He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him.”(Qur’an 3:1-4).</i> • <i>On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear. . .” (Q. 2:286)</i>
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However, in the words of Wordsworth in ‘Tintern Abbey’, we get an infinite scope of God’s nature. For him, God is He: *“whose dwelling is the light of setting*

suns, and the round ocean and the living air, and in the blue sky, and in the mind of man: A motion and a spirit that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thoughts, and rolls through all things.” (Wordsworth).

King Solomon, after building the Temple said;

- ❖ *“Will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, the Heaven and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built.” (1 Kings 8:27)*

The Bible warned in the book of John 4:24 that God is spirit and they that worship Him must do so in spirit. Not in form, or shape or size, but in **“Spirit.”** The Apostle Paul said he speaks “not in words taught us, by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit”. (1 Corinthians 2:13). ‘Heaven’ may have been used symbolically in most ancient cultures, to describe (the abode of) God, but this symbolism seems to have created a fixation of a narrow perception for the Lord of the Universe in many civilizations.

Furthermore, in several passages of the Bible, God repeatedly warned that:

- ❖ *“Thy God is a jealous God, He shall have no other god before Him, not even of the likeness of the things on earth, or in the heavens above, or in the waters beneath the sea” (Exodus 20:3–5).*
- ❖ *“I am the Lord: that is My Name: and My Glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images.” (Isaiah 42:8)*

We have seen how the scriptures of the Bible (Old Testament) and the Quran throughout speak of only one ‘Being’ as God by Himself. Even at the risk of being repetitive, the Old Testament has maintained that:

- ❖ *“... He is God, there is none beside Him” (Deuteronomy 4:35)*
- ❖ *“... He is God in the heavens above and upon earth beneath: there is none else” (Deuteronomy 5:39)*
- ❖ *“... I, even I, am He and there is no God **with** Me” (Deuteronomy 32:39)*

Note the emphasis on the word **‘with’** (meaning in association or collaboration or partnership).

- ❖ *“... Jehova is God and that there is none else” (1 Kings 8:60)*
- ❖ *“... thou art the God, even thou Alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth” (2 Kings 19:15)*
- ❖ *“... Is there a God besides Me? Yea, there is no God (Isaiah 44:8)*
- ❖ *“... I am Jehova and there is no God besides Me” (Isaiah 45:5)*
- ❖ *“... There is no God else besides Me... there is **none** besides Me” (Isaiah 45:21)*
- ❖ *“... I am God and there is **none** else” (Isaiah 45:21)*
- ❖ *“... I am God and there is **none** else. I am God and there is **none** like Me” (Isaiah 46:9).*

- ❖ “. . . I am God and there is none else. I am God and there is **none** like Me” (Isaiah 46:9).

Note also the stressed word “none” - none is a universal negative. And for how long does the Almighty have to drum it into us, that He is One and Alone? “None” - means there is no spirit, no person, or being, *absolutely nothing* beside Himself. Jesus himself proclaimed in the New Testament:

- ❖ “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. In answer to which the scribe asserted, “Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is One God; and there is none other than He.” (Mark 13:29 – 32).

We might do well here to consider what God is NOT in order to better appreciate what He is:

- God does not have a beginning; He is *Uncreated*. Since God has no beginning, it follows that God cannot create another God. Hence, none born of a woman can be God (Job 25: 4 – 6). There is no contradiction or blasphemy here.
- He does not beget, because begetting is an animal act, which is far below His Supreme Majesty. It is a lower animal function – just like eating and excreting. It simply means that God cannot have a biological son.
- God cannot die! For if God Almighty dies, who runs the universe? But according to Christianity Jesus was killed, he was crucified, he died. If Jesus’ death does not mean that God died simultaneously, then it means that we are talking about two separate beings and not one God.

3. God’s Will

The Bible in the book of James (NT) states that the Lord God “*cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.*” (James 1:13–14). And that “*the Lord God is not the author of evil. All things are under his control and pass in his review*” (see book of Job), and the Lord God “*will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear*” (1st Corinthian 10:13).

The Quran holds that Allah determines human’s path for both good and evil. The Quran chapter 14:4 states: “*Allah determines the present and eternal destiny for good or ill of human beings.*” This is his immutable will. Orthodox Islam teaches the absolute predestination of both good and evil, that all our thoughts, words and deeds, whether good or evil, were foreseen, foreordained, determined and decreed for all eternity, and that everything that happens takes place according to what has been written for it. This is because God ‘is the irresistible’ (Q. 6:18).

- *“Had Allah willed He could have made you (all) one nation, but He sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will, and ye will indeed be asked of what ye were asked to do” (Quran 16:93).*
- *“And if We had so willed, We could have given every soul its guidance, but the word from Me concerning evil-doers took effect: that I will fill hell with the jinn and mankind together.” (Surah 32:13)*
- *“Lo! Allah sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth unto Himself all who turn (unto Him) (surah 13:27)*
- *“Then Allah sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will.” (Quran 14:4)*
- *“...Thus doth God leave to stray whom He pleaseth, and guide whom He pleaseth: and none can know the forces of thy Lord, except He. And this is no other than a warning to mankind.”(Quran 74:31 {b})*

The Bible similarly teaches that:

- ❖ *“God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy and He hardens whom He wants to harden (Rom 9:18).*

It is thus apparent that man in the Quranic view is neither a slave to inexorable fate, nor completely self-determined because every sentiment, idea and desire of a human being is thus conceived as being pre-destined. It is man’s inherent capability to obey the immutable Law and choose to tread **either the path** of rectitude or sin that makes him a free human being.

And God asks:

- *“Does he think nobody sees him? Haven’t We made for him a pair of eyes? And a tongue, and a pair of lips? And then shown him the two paths? (Quran 90:7 - 10)*

It is therefore provable that man is created with free-will which he can always employ positively or negatively. The free-will is a trust from God; and equipped with it, man can indeed modify the condition in which certain behaviors take place. Personality and behavior are not solely determined by forces and influences beyond the control of the individual. Consequently, man is held responsible for his willful actions.

- *“Every soul has the consequence of its own action; no bearer of burden can bear the burden of another. Your goal as the ultimate is Allah. He shall tell the truth of what you disagree upon.” (Quran 6:164)*

And Prophet Muhammad was cautioned in the Quran thus:

- *“Wilt thou compel men to become believers? No soul can believe but by the permission of God.” (Qur’an 10:99-100).*

His mission was to lead erring humanity from the depth of darkness into the clearest light. Consequently, mankind left to exercise his free will, is admonished in the Quran to the effect that:

- *“He who receiveth guidance, receiveth it for his own benefit: Who goeth astray doth so to his own loss.”* (Quran 17:15)

There is a story, that in the year of deputations, 10th year of the Hegira (Hijra), when a Christian embassy came from Najran (towards Yemen, about 150 miles north of Sana’a, a city in Yemen). They were much impressed on hearing this passage of the Qur’an explaining the true position of Christ, and they entered into tributary relations with the new Muslim State. But ingrained habits and customs prevented them from accepting Islam as a body. The Holy Apostle, firm in his faith, proposed a solemn meeting (a ‘Muqabala’), in which both sides should summon not only their men, but their women and children, earnestly pray to God, and invoke the curse of God on those who should lie. Those who had a pure and sincere faith would not hesitate. The Christians declined and they were dismissed in a spirit of tolerance, with a promise of protection from the state in return for tribute, “the wages of rule,” as it is called in the ‘Ain-i-Akbari’.

4. Primary Sources (Bible / Quran)

Just as observed by Rev. Rick Richter (2011), a religious faith is only as trustworthy as the primary source from which it derives its teaching. So we ask: How are the Quran and the Bible presented as the “primary sources” for Islam and Christianity?

The prophets of the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) attest again and again that their testimony comes from Lord God (Isaiah 1:1; Jeremiah 1:1; Ezra 1:3; Hosea 1:1; etc.). The apostle Paul, in reference to the Scriptures of his day, asserts that, “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). However, the New Testament writers say that their writings are validated by God’s Spirit; but also by eyewitness account of happening during Jesus’ time and beyond. John asserts that: *“that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim.”* (1 John 1:1). Is it not really asking too much of non-Christians to accept John’s assertion in 1st John 1:1 as revelation from God? How can “eyewitness account of happening during Jesus’ time and beyond” be classified as the word of God?

Of course, Muslims look upon the Quran as the highest authority in the Islamic faith. They believe that “The Quran is a transcript of the eternal Book” in heaven; it is “sublime and full of wisdom.” (Quran 43: 3-4). It is “Glorious” and “inscribed on an imperishable tablet” (Quran 85: 21-22). It “confirms” and explains “the scriptures and is “beyond doubt from the Lord of the Universe”

(Quran 10: 37). Only Allah could have devised it. Allah proclaim in the Quran that:

- *“This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear God. Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in Prayer, who spend out of what We have provided for them; and who believe in the Revelation sent to thee. And sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter. They are on (true) guidance, from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper.”* (Quran 2: 2-5)

We must note however, that unlike the Bible, eyewitness account on the life happenings, teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad are not contained in the Quran. These are collected separately as the ‘Hadith’ (a collection of the prophet’s traditions, his ways and manners of behaviors, habits and relation with people young and old, men and women: in private and official capacities) .

BIBLE:	QURAN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“All scriptures is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.(2 Timothy 3:16 – 17)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Praise be to God, Who hath sent to His servant the Book, And hath allowed therein no Crookedness; (He hath made it) Straight (and clear) in order that he may warn (the godless) of a terrible Punishment from Him, and that He may give Glad Tidings to the Believers who work righteous deeds, that they shall have a goodly reward; Wherein they shall remain forever; Further, that He may warn those (also) who say:“God hath begotten a son”. No Knowledge have they of such a thing, nor had their fathers. It is a grievous thing that issues from their mouths as a saying. What they say is nothing but falsehood.”</i> (Quran 18: 1- 5)

Allah revealed to us the basis of the monotheistic religion in the Holy Quran, in chapter 53, verses 38 – 50. These have been given to us as a series of eleven aphorisms which seems apparently to be a redefinition of ancient revealed wisdom incorporated in current Semitic folklore. No doubt the origin had been the ancient Scriptures revealed to Abraham and Moses. It states that:

- A man’s spiritual burden – the responsibility for his sin – must be borne by himself and not by another.
- Man must strive or he will gain nothing; that is: he can have nothing but what he strives for.
- The fruits of man’s striving will soon come in sight and he will find his reward in full measure (he will not be cheated in the least!).
- It is God who gives wealth and satisfaction; (every gift and benefit you posses is from God).

- All our hopes should be in God and we should fear none but Him.
- God alone is the giver of life and death.
- All things are created in pairs: each sex performs its proper function, and yet its wonderful working is part of the creative process of God.
- All things return to God (in the end).
- God has promised to bring the dead back to life (a second creation).
- God is the Lord, Creator and Cherisher of the most magnificent part of creation, and worship is due to Him alone.
- God will destroy the most powerful peoples for their sins, as He did before of the ancient peoples (and empires).

(Suratul Najmu – “The Star” Quran: 53:38 – 50)

5. Revelations/ the Message

Both Christianity and Islam claim to be revelation from God. Jesus Christ declares that the message he was delivering was not his own but God’s. Jesus described himself as *“a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God”* (John 8:40). The Quran in the same way declared that the revelation which came to Prophet Muhammad was from God, the Lord of all beings (see Quran 26:192- 194; 34:28; 48:28). Allah told us in Qur’an 19: 58 that:

- *“Those were some of the Prophets on whom God did bestow His grace, - of the posterity of Adam, and of those whom we carried (in the Ark) with Noah, and of the posterity of Abraham and Israel – of those whom we guided and chose. Whenever the signs of (God) Most Gracious were rehearsed to them, they would fall down in prostrate adoration and in tears”.* (Quran 19:58)

Prof. A. Y. Ali in his commentary observes that: Revelation leads mankind from the depth of darkness into light. It comes to every age and nation in its own language. So was it before; so is it always. The apostles were doubted, insulted, threatened, and persecuted, but their trust was sure in God. It is evil that will be wiped out. God’s truth is as a goodly tree, firmly established on its roots, stretching its branches high and wide, and bearing good fruit at all times. (A. Y. Ali, C117 - P. 618)

<p>BIBLE: (<i>Jesus' words</i>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>"I have not spoken of myself, but the father which sent me. He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 8:40).</i> ❖ <i>"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I Judge, and my judgment is just because I seek to do not my own will, but of Him who sent me." (John 5:30)</i> ❖ <i>"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to complete His work." (John 4:34)</i> ❖ <i>"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, is my brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50)</i> ❖ <i>A man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God" (John 8:40)</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"The revelation of the Book is from God the Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom." (Quran 46:2)</i> • <i>"It is He Who has sent His Apostle with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion: and enough is God for a Witness." Quran 48:28)</i> • <i>"And lo it (the Quran) is a revelation of the Lord of the Worlds, which the True Spirit (Angel Gabriel) hath brought down upon thy heart (O Muhammad) that thou may be one of the Warners" (Quran 26:192-194).</i> • <i>"We believe in Allah, and we believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one and we submit our wills to Him." (Qur'an 29:46).</i>
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If we take into consideration the objective facts of history of religions, we must place the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Qur'an on the same level as being collections of written revelations. Although this attitude is a principle held by Muslims, the faithful in the West under the predominantly Judo-Christian influence refuse to ascribe to the Qur'an the character of a book of revelation. Such an attitude may be explained by the position each religious community adopts towards the other two with regards to the scriptures. Since Christianity takes no account of any revelation subsequent to Jesus and his Apostles, it therefore rules out the Qur'an.

It is obvious that the degree of preservation of the original is what should matter and not its age. From this, it follows that the truth of either religion depends on the accuracy with which the inspired message has been recorded and on the textual purity of the scripture. If the message which was revealed by

God was misrepresented or tempered with or altered, to that extend the religion may be regarded as a deviation from the truth (Ojobi p.20).

If the object of a message is to make things clear, it must be delivered in the language current among the people to whom the apostle is sent. It comes to every age and nation in its own language. So was it before; so is it always. Revelation leads mankind from the depth of darkness into light. Through them it can reach all mankind. There is even a wider meaning for 'language'. It is not merely a question of alphabets, letters or words. Each age or people – or world in a psychological sense – cast its thoughts in a certain mould or form. God's message – being universal – can be expressed in all moulds and forms, and is equally valid and necessary for all grades of humanity and must therefore be explained to each according to his or her capacity or receptivity. The following verdict of an English Scholar is the ultimate: *"The truth of the message is intimately connected with the authenticity of the record, and a critical theory which assails the one assails the other."* (*The Church Times*, February 10th 1905).

The Holy Bible itself reveal that 'Christianity', in the sense of the original teaching of Jesus (pbuh) **is not a fresh teaching of a new faith**. The teaching of Jesus (pbuh) was really not new; it arose out of the message of the earlier Prophets therefore not new but a clarification of the old message. (Mark 1:14, 15) (A. S. Suleman 1976 p.2). Thus, it is clear that what Muslims do, is not something new or strange, as it may seem to the uninformed Christian, but is actually Biblical. It is also clear that 'Islam' was the religion of all the Prophets of God. Islam was very much the religion of Jesus (pbuh). Not only this, the continuity of the Abrahamic faith till Muhammad (pbuh) is also seen in the Bible, as we find prophecies in both the Old and the New Testaments about the coming of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) though this has been contested or refuted by Christian theologians. (Syed R. Ali). This has been treated in the next chapter.

6. Prophets/ Apostles/Messengers

A Prophet is one who receives divine revelation for the guidance of man and this Guidance he conveys to mankind as received without any addition or deletion. The Quran says that *"Prophets are bearers of good tidings and as Warners; and revealed therewith the scripture with truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed."* (Qur'an 2:213)

<p>BIBLE:</p> <p>❖ <i>“There is no eternal life for anyone who does not believe in God as the only true God (to be worshipped) and also believe in him (Jesus) as God’s sent (Messenger)” (John 17:3)</i></p> <p>❖ <i>“The Crowd answered, “This is Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”(Matthew 21:11)</i></p>	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Mankind are one community, and so God sent (unto all sections of them). Prophets are bearers of good tidings and as Warners; and revealed therewith the scripture with truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed.” (Qur’an 2:213)</i> • <i>“There is not a nation but a Warner hath passed among them” (Qur’an35:24).</i> • <i>“And for every nation there is a Messenger” (Qur’an10:48).</i> • <i>“Verily, we sent Messengers before thee, among them are those of whom we told thee and some of whom we have not told thee.” (Qur’an 40:8).</i> • <i>“We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not” (Quran 34:28)</i> • <i>“And remember We took from the Prophets their covenant: as (We did) from thee (Muhammad): from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary: We took from them a solemn Covenant: That (God) may question the (Custodian) of Truth concerning the Truth they (were charged with) and He has prepared for the Unbelievers a grievous Penalty.”(Quran 33:7-8)</i> • <i>“As we have sent a messenger (i.e. Muhammad) reciting to you Our verses (i.e. Quran) and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom.” (Q 2:151).</i>
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History has not provided us the names of all the prophets, much less the details of their story. Whatever information that reaches us, it is to give us spiritual instruction for our own lives. But it was revealed to us that some people to whom came apostles with clear (signs) put their hands up to their mouths and said *“we do deny (the mission) on which ye have been sent, and we are really in suspicious (disquieting) doubt as to that to which ye invite us.”* The Apostles (generally) clear both kinds of doubts: *“you cannot doubt the existence of God! Behold His works! We are not speaking for ourselves or deceiving you, we speak according to the message of inspiration from God.”* (Prof. A. Yusuf Ali,

N 1885). The Quran confirms that God communicates to humanity through inspiration sent via messengers:

- *“It is not fitting for a man that God should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a Messenger to reveal, with God’s permission, what God wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise.”* (Quran 42:51)

The doubters however, had said to the prophets: *“it is you who invite us”*. But the prophets say: *“It is God who invites you, and He does it to save you by His grace and give you plenty of time (but not indefinite time) for penitence and amendment.”* The Quran further stressed: *“Whoever obeys the messenger, has indeed obeyed Allah, but whoever turns back, you shall not watch over them,”* (Q 4:80).

And as Dr. (Prof) Dauda Ojobi rightly pointed out; *“Since there are some people who deny that Allah (SWT) had chosen messengers among mankind, Allah informs them that those messengers whom He sent before Muhammad (pbuh) were humans, and He tells the disbelievers to ask the Jews and the Christians for confirmation of that, if they are truly unaware.”* This obviously is because it has been recorded in their scriptures. (Dr. Ojobi, ‘Comparative Religion’, p. 21-22).

It is important that Christians realize the point of the message conveyed by Jesus Christ in the Parable of the Tenants (Matthew 21:33 – 44), which reads:

- ❖ *“Listen to another Parable: There was a landowner who planted a Vineyard. He put a wall round it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the Vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The Tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent ‘his son’ to them. ‘They will respect my son’, he said. But when the Tenants saw the son, they said to each other: “This is the Heir. ‘Come let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ So they took him and threw him out of the Vineyard and killed him. “Therefore, when the owner of the Vineyard comes, what will he do to those Tenants?” “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, and he will rent the Vineyard to other Tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures? “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore, I tell you that the Kingdom of God will be*

taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruits. "He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." (Matthew 21:33 – 44)

From this powerful parable we can deduce that the 'Landowner' would refer to God, while the 'Tenants' would obviously refer to mankind; and the 'Servants' of the Landowners would refer to God's procession of Apostles that came one after the other. The 'Heir' would supposedly be Jesus, as per the Christian ideology. We learn from the story that as a consequence of killing his son, the landowner "*will bring those wretches to a wretched end.*" But we see that the story did not end there, for he rented "*the Vineyard to other Tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.*" So, some questions become relevant. Would the Vineyard be the kingdom, rejected by people of Israel, which would be given to a new people? (John 10:16). Who would these new people (Tenants) be? Would this refer to the people of Jerusalem who had not recognized the time of God's coming to them, for which reason the city of Jerusalem would be taken from the people of Israel and would be 'trampled on by the Gentiles'? (Luke 21:24). Who would be the ones to take over from the people of Israel (Matt. 8:11-12; 21: 43). Would the Landowner need to send another, perhaps a greater servant this time to these new people, since he has dealt the old Tenants a good lesson for taking his son's life? Would the new servant be conveying the same message as his predecessors or a different one? What would happen should the Tenants reject this new servant and the message he brought with him?

Another view to this set of questions worth considering is: Supposing any of the servants that were sent would decide to present himself as the son of Landowner? Or suppose: the son would present himself as the Landowner himself in disguise or that he is actually the Landowner but disguised himself as the son? When the son got killed, wouldn't that mean that the Landowner got killed too? Would the Landowner and the son be two people or one person? Who is meant by the stone in part that said: *He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed*"? We note that the stone will be so strong as to break those who fall on it, as it can crush those he falls upon. Obviously this will not be Jesus or his kingdom, since he is the one giving the parable, and I don't think anyone will be so foolish as to suggest the Holy Ghost, as is often the response given in similar predictions given by Jesus. At any rate the Holy Ghost is a spirit. If I am to venture a possible answer to this puzzle, my suggestion will be the only personality that came to proclaim a faith and succeeded in doing so within a space of twenty three years. And, within that period he and his successors crushed all the empires that fought him or those he had cause to go to war with across half of the world. He had in addition left behind an enduring legacy that thrives till date with more than a billion following worldwide and counting.

As to this first part of the Parable of the Tenants, the Holy Quran revealed to us passages that would seem to explain what the passage is about. God said in the Quran:

- *“We sent aforetime Our apostles with clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice. . . .”* (Quran 57:25a)
- *“And We sent Noah and Abraham and established in their line Prophethood and Revelation: and some of them (the people) were on right guidance, but many of them became rebellious transgressors.”* (Quran 57:26)
- *“We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of Apostles; We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear (signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you an apostle with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride? – some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!”* (Quran 2:87)
- *“Then in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our apostles: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary. And bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy.”*(Quran 57:27)
- *“Thou art no other than a Warner. Verily, We have sent thee (O Muhammad) in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and a Warner. And there never were a people without a Warner, having lived among them (in the past). And if they reject thee, so did their predecessors, to whom came their apostles with Clear Signs, Books of dark prophecies and Books of enlightenment. In the end did I punish those who rejected Faith: and how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)!”* (Quran 35: 23 – 26).

Sheikh A.Yusuf Ali said of this that: *“Our attention having been directed to various Apostles, who were sent with missions to their several peoples and in each of whose careers there is some pre-figurement of the life of the last and greatest of them, we are now asked to listen to the proclamation of Muhammad’s universal mission. We contemplate no longer, after this, partial truths. It is not now a question of saving Israel from the bondage of Egypt; nor teaching Median the ethics of business, nor reclaiming the people of Lot from sexual sin or Thamud (people) from the sin of oppression in power, or Ad (people) from arrogance and ancestor-worship. Now are set forth plainly the*

issues of life and death, the message of the one universal God to all mankind.”
(Prof. Abdullahi Yusuf Ali).

7. The Commandments:

Jesus said that we were to obey the Ten Commandment given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The first commandment in the Bible reads:

❖ ***“I am the Lord thy God, thou shall have no other gods but “Me”***
(Deut 5:6-7)

This has however been compromised by the Doctrine of Trinity. Christian’s believe that Christ is God incarnate; that God shares His Godhood with two others; the son and also with the Holy Ghost.

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“I am the Lord thy God, thou shall have no other gods but “Me”(Deut. 5:6-7)</i> ❖ <i>“Thou shall not make for thyself any graven image”</i> ❖ <i>“Thou shall not bow down nor worship them.”</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There is only One God, worthy of worship, alone without partners or associates in whatever sense;</i> • <i>“Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him . . .”(Quran 17:23)</i> • <i>“Take not with God another object of worship; or thou (O man!) wilt sit in disgrace and destitution.” (Quran 17:22)</i> • <i>“. . . Take not, with God, another object of worship, lest thou shouldst be thrown into Hell, blame-worthy and rejected.” (Quran 17:39)</i>
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In the first letter of John, the recorder of the book of the Bible according to John, (not to be confused with John the Baptist or John the disciple of Jesus), he wrote:

❖ *“For there are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth, the Spirit, the Water and the Blood, and the three are in agreement.” (1 John 5:7-8)*

Perhaps due to this passage, loyalty to Christ is prized more highly than loyalty to God because they believed that Christ can intercede on their behalf on the day of Judgment or actually sit at Judgment; ultimately saving them from God’s punishment (wrath) or prevent it from being meted on them. This is obviously the reason Jesus is referred to as the Savior. Due to the Doctrine of Trinity, Christianity has also compromised the second commandment which states:

❖ ***“Thou shall not make for thyself any graven image”*** and later it says:

❖ ***“Thou shall not bow down nor worship them.”***

There are Churches and Cathedrals littered with images to this day, to which some people actually do bow down. (H. F. Fellows in ‘Islam Our Choice’ p.93).

Likewise, on the part of Islam, God admonishes Muslims in the Quran as follows:

- ***“Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him . . .”***(Quran 17:23);
- ***“Take not (for worship) two gods: for He is just One Allah, then fear Me (and Me alone) (Quran 16:51)***
- ***“Take not with God another object of worship; or thou (O man!) wilt sit in disgrace and destitution.”***(Quran 17:22);
- ***“. . . Take not, with God, another object of worship, lest thou shouldst be thrown into Hell, blame worthy and rejected.”*** (Quran 17:39)

The Muslim’s conception of God has always been that He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Eternal, Self-subsisting, Ever-existing; Indivisible and without partners. He has neither beginning nor end. He begets not, nor is He begotten and there is none like unto Him (Quran 112:1-4).

8. Creed of the Prophets:

If it is true that all the Prophets of God believed in the same faith, then their creed should bear close semblance. In explaining this point, Abdul Wadod Shalabi (2006) in *“Islam Religion of Life”* observed as follows: *“. . . from this it is clear that every religious creed must have two fundamental elements. Firstly, it must affirm the absolute unity of the Transcendent; and secondly, it must affirm the existence of a way of life which reflects this unity and assists mankind to draw near to it. In the context of Islam, this creed is called the Dual Testimony, that there is no deity save God (La’ilaha illa’Llah) and that Muhammad is the final Messenger of God (Muhammad rasulu Llah). In other words, we are speaking of doctrine and practice.”* This means the Creed of the other Prophets should include both:

- i. The belief in the One True God, that none is worthy of worship except Him. This belief means pure monotheism, which remains as it has been throughout history. This is also as revealed in the Christian Bible: Exodus 20:2-5; 1st Kings 8:60, Deuteronomy 4:39, Isaiah 43:10-11, Isaiah 45:21-23, Isaiah 46:9, and Mark 12:29.
- ii. The belief in the Messenger of God of the time (epoch) as part of the institution of prophethood. This belief has varied with time as to the specific individual manifesting prophethood. Thus, at the time of Moses (pbuh) for example, the creed would read: *“... and Moses is Messenger of God.*

The Creed of Monotheism, from the Bible:

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ God said to Moses: <i>“I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other God before me”</i> (Deuteronomy 5:6-7). ❖ <i>“... the Prophet Elijah came near and said ‘O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your command’.</i> (I kings 18:36). ❖ <i>“And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the Only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent”.</i> (John 17:3). ❖ <i>“There is no eternal life for anyone who does not believe in God as the only true God (to be worshipped) and also believe in him (Jesus) as God’s sent (Messenger)”</i> (John 17:3) 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There is no deity except Allah (God); Muhammad is Messenger of Allah (God)”</i> (is the Islamic Creed)
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We have seen from above that the declaration of the Will of God began with the first commandment:

- ❖ *“I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other God before Me”* (Deut 5:6-7).

This is the word of God which Moses (pbuh) declared to his people. Before that, he said to them:

- ❖ *“I stood between the lord and you to declare to you the word of the Lord...”* (Deuteronomy 5:5).

And the people answered Moses (pbuh):

- ❖ *“Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey”* (Deuteronomy 5:27).

So Moses was the Messenger of God, or the mediator of God’s Will. From the above statements in the Bible we get a creed similar to the ‘Islamic’ creed stated by Prophet Muhammad: **“There is no deity except the One True God, and Moses is Messenger of God.”** The Bible gave us yet another fact from Prophet Elijah:

- ❖ *“... the Prophet Elijah came near and said ‘O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your command’.* (I kings 18:36).

We can paraphrase this also as: **“There is no deity except the one True God, and Elijah is Messenger of God.”** Jesus (pbuh) stated the complete ‘Islamic’ Creed in a single sentence:

- ❖ *“And this is eternal life, that they may know **You, the Only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent**”.* (John 17:3).

Jesus also confirmed in the Bible that: *“There is no eternal life for anyone who does not believe in God as the only true God (to be worshipped) and also believe in him (Jesus) as God’s sent (Messenger)”* (John 17). This verse (John 17:3) can also be paraphrased in a way parallel to the present Islamic Creed to read:

‘There is no deity except the One True God, and Jesus Christ is Messenger of God’.

We see then from these proclamations that all the Jewish Prophets confessed to being God's Apostles (messengers of God), none of them claimed to be God or a member on the Godhead, including Jesus Christ. Thus, the proclamation of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) when he announced the '*Kalimat Shahada*' is a repeat and confirmation of the same old prophetic creed which is:

"There is no deity except Allah (God); Muhammad is Messenger of Allah (God)."

We have therefore been confronted with unequivocal proof that the Prophets formed a procession from the same source which is God. This confirms further that the message they each bear has very close semblance in nature and of the same essence as pointed out by He Who sent them, that:

- *"An Apostle from God, rehearsing scriptures kept pure and holy: wherein are Laws (or decrees) right and straight."* (Quran 98: 2-3).

This is of course in reference to Prophet Muhammad, but the statement could obviously be true for each one of them. Jesus being one of them had said:

- ❖ *"My food is to do **the will of Him who sent me**, and to complete **His work**."* (John 4:34)

So the question remains: What has been that message that they (all) brought (their work)? The Quran, in the same chapter reveals the Message:

- *"And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship God, offering Him sincere devotion, being True (in Faith); To establish regular Prayer; And to practice regular Charity; and that is the Religion Right and Straight."* (Quran 98: 5)

Prophet Muhammad was precisely commanded to:

- *". . . Call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as thou art commanded; nor follow thou their vain desires but say: "I believe in the Book which God has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. God is our Lord and your Lord: for us (is the responsibility for) our deeds, and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. God will bring us together, and to Him is (our) final goal."* (Q. 42: 15)

9. Creation of the World

We now turn our attention to the views of the two faiths with regard to the creation of the world by the One and only Creator. From the Scriptures, the creative Act has been described:

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing, so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” (Genesis 2:2)</i> ❖ <i>“And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.” (Genesis 2:3)</i> ❖ <i>“but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your man-servant or maid-servant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.” (Exodus 20:10).</i> ❖ <i>“By the word of the Lord were the heaven made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.” (Psalm 33:6)</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before We clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?”(Quran 21:30)</i> • <i>“Verily your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority), regulating and governing all things.” (Q. 10:3).</i> • <i>“Your Guardian-Lord is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority): He draweth the night as a veil over the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession: . . . (Quran 7:54a). (See also Quran 32:4).</i> • <i>“He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority). He knows what enters within the earth, and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wheresoever ye maybe. And God sees well all that ye do.” (Quran 57:4)</i> • <i>“He has created the heavens and the earth for just ends: Far is He above having the partners they ascribe to Him!” (Q.16: 3)</i> • <i>“We created not the heavens and the earth and all between them but for just ends, and for a term appointed: But those who reject Faith turn away from that whereof they are warned.”(Quran 46:3)</i> • <i>“Blessed is He Who made constellations in the skies, and placed therein a Lamp and a Moon giving light; And it is He Who made the Night and the Day to follow each other: for such as have the will to celebrate His praise or to show their gratitude. (QURAN 25:61 -62)</i> • <i>“And We have made the heavens as a canopy well guarded: yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)!” (Quran 21:32)</i> • <i>“It is He Who created the night and the Day, and the Sun and the Moon: All (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course.” (Quran 21:33).</i>
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The concept of creation alone involves the necessary existence of an All-Wise, All-Powerful, All-Controlling Creator. And His Wisdom, Power and Control are also proven in respect of being evident in the very constitution of the world as it exists. The existence of an All-Wise, All-Powerful, All-Controlling Creator involves, in its turn, the necessary existence of a Plan and Purpose in the working of the world. This compels us to recognize that:

- i) The world is not eternal but has been created by God:
 - *“To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: when He decreeth a matter, He (only) saith to it: ‘Be’, and it is.”* (Q. 2:117)
 - *“Allah originateth the creation (nothing existing of its own accord or fortuitously)”* (Q. 30:11)
 - *“. . . We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe? (Quran 21:30- b).*

The world has been created with exquisite plan and design by the All-Wise, All-Powerful, All-Controlling God. This means that the ‘BIG BANG’ (theory) was by design. Compare the following Quranic verse with the scientific theory of the ‘Big Bang’:

- *“Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before **We clove them asunder?** We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?”(Quran 21:30).*

Two phenomena are mentioned here which are completely in concert with scientific findings. Firstly, one unit of creation that was clove asunder by God’s command, and the fact that all living things originate from water.

- ii) The affirmation of *creation* implies the existence of Plan and Purpose.
 - *“Blessed is He Who sent down the Criterion to His Servant (Muhammad), that he may be unto all nations a Warner – He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: no son has He begotten, nor has He a partner in His dominion: It is He Who created everything, and ordained for it a measure (establishing thereby exquisite plan and Design)”* (Q. 25:1-2).
 - *“No want of proportion wilt thou see in the creation of (Allah) Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again, seest thou any flaw?”* (Q. 67:3)
- iii) The world is created for a serious and definite Purpose:
 - *“Not falsely, nor without purpose did We create the heavens and the Earth and all between! Thos were the thoughts of the Rejecters of Truth.”* (Q. 38:27)
 - *“We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, merely in (idle) sport: We created them not except for just ends. But most of them do not understand.”* (Q. 44: 38-39)

- *“He (i.e., Prophet Abraham) said: ‘Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He Who brought them into existence: and I am a witness to this (truth)’.” (Q. 21:56)*
- iv) Creation of the world is for a moral end – the world is a Moral Order:
- *“And Allah has created the heavens and the earth with purpose (and for just ends) and in order that every soul may find the recompense of what it has earned and none of them be wronged.” (Q. 45: 22)*
 - *“Blessed is He in Whose hands (i.e. possession) is the Dominion; and He over all things has power; - He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deeds: and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.” (Q. 67: 1-2).*
- v) The World is real:
- *“And it is He Who has created the heavens and the earth in Truth (or, as real).” (Q. 6: 73)*
 - *“Behold! In the constitution of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the Day and the Night, there are indeed Signs for those who possess and employ understanding (they are those) who remember Allah standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and contemplate the (wonder of) creation in the heavens and the earth (and say): “Our Lord! Thou hast created not all this falsely (and in vain). Glory be to Thee! Preserve us from the doom of the Fire.” (Q. 3: 191)*

Both the Bible and the Qur’an have revealed the Almighty God as creating the world in six days (Surah 41:9-12). And the Bible (in Genesis 1:31), says the Lord God created all things in six days. However, the Bible said further that the Lord God rested on the seventh day. In the words of the Bible:

- ❖ *“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing, so on the seventh day he rested from all His work.” (Genesis 2:2).*
- ❖ *“And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.” (Genesis 2:3).*

This is in contrast to the Islamic belief. Allah, in the Quran says:

- *“We created the Heavens and the earth and all between them in six days. Nor did any sense of weariness touch Us.” (Quran 50 :38)*

God need no rest nor does He suffer any fatigue. He does not slumber *“no slumber overtakes Him nor sleep”* as the Quran stated:

- *“God! There is no God but He; the Living; the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep. . .”(Quran 2:255).*

However, in both the Qur’an and the Bible, there is agreement; in that a day of creation *“is a thousand years or a span of fifty thousand years”*.

10. Creation of Mankind

In the Quran, God announced to the congregation of Angels of His intended creation of Mankind, a decision which caused the angels to show concern. Allah said:

- *“Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: “I will create a vicegerent on earth.” They said: Will Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? – whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)? He said: “I know what ye know not.” (Quran 2:30)*

Allah also addressed us regarding our creation thus:

- *“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, (Adam and Eve) and made you into Nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (Not that ye may despise each other). Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (Qur’an 49: 13)*
- *“O ye People! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness; Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance, then set not up rivals unto God when ye know (the truth)” (Quran 2:21-22)*

Creation in the Holy Books:

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“And God said, let us make man in our own image” (Genesis 1:26)</i> ❖ <i>“And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7)</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We have created man from an extract of Mud.” (Q 23:12)</i> • <i>“Seeing that it is He that has created you in diverse stages . . . And God has produced you from the Earth, growing (gradually), and in the End He will return you into the (earth),” (Q. 81: 14, 17)</i> • <i>“Proclaim! (or Read): In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created – created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. . . “ (Q. 96:1 – 2)</i> • <i>“From what stuff hath He created him? From a sperm-drop: He hath created him, and then mouldeth him in due proportions; then doth He make his path smooth for him; (Qur’an 80: 18 – 20)</i>
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10.1 Purpose of Creation

Allah said in the Holy Quran that the purpose for which Human kind and Jinn are created is to serve His purpose alone:

- *“I have only created Jinn and Men, that they may serve Me. No sustenance do I require of them, nor do I require that they should feed Me. For God is He Who gives (all) Sustenance, - Lord of Power, - Steadfast (for ever).” (Q. 51:56 – 58)*

And God addresses those who worship Idols carved by their own hands from stone and wood, along with those engaged in spirit and ancestral worship, whether these objects of their worship can compare to Him?

- *“Is then He Who creates like one that creates not? Will ye not receive admonition?” (Q.16:17)*

10.2 Concept of Rebirth (creation anew or a second creation):

Christianity and Islam both believe in Rebirth or life after death. Though Christianity also believes in death, resurrection and judgment day, just as Islam believes. However, when Christianity speaks of Rebirth it would appear that it has a different concept from that of Islam. Rebirth imply that when the body dies here on earth, the spirit is resurrected again to face judgment on a Day that (according to Jesus), *“no one knows, not even the son nor the angels in heaven.”* So, while Christianity speaks of Spiritual rebirth *“... born of the Spirit”* (John 3:8), there appears to be a curious twist in the Christian concept of rebirth. We find in 2nd Corinthian 5:17 that *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation”* meaning, he or she is *“in Christ”* – that is, in intimate union with Christ. That through faith, the believer is *“a new creation”* with a new start. The old is gone they say, *“the new has come.”* (2 Cor. 5:17). This is what obviously gave rise to the concept of ‘born again’.

So, Christianity says that anyone who believes in Jesus as the Christ receives from God the forgiveness of their sins. God’s spirit then comes to live in him, makes him into a new person, sanctifies them and gives them the strength to do God’s will.

BIBLE: ❖ (Jesus’ words) <i>“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again . . . I tell you the truth,</i>	QURAN: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“If thou dost marvel (at their want of faith), strange is their saying: “when we are (actually) dust, shall we indeed then be in a creation renewed?” (Q 13:5a)</i>• <i>“They say: “What! When we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new creation? Say:”(Nay) be ye stones or iron or created matter which, in your minds is</i>
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<p>no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the spirit" (John 3:3, 5)</p> <p>❖ "But when the kindness and love of our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:4-5)</p> <p>❖ "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)</p>	<p>hardest (to be raised up), - (yet shall ye be raised up)! . . . Then will they say: "Who will cause us to return?" Say: "He Who created you first!" Then will they wag their heads towards thee, and say, "When will that be?" Say, "May be it will be quite soon!" (Quran 17: 49 – 51).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "They say (now): "What! Shall we indeed be returned to (our) former state? – "What! – when we shall have become rotten bones?"They say: "It would, in that case, be a return with loss!" (Q. 89:10 – 12). • "If He pleased, He could blot you out and bring in a New Creation. Nor is that (at all) difficult for God." (Quran 25:16 – 17). • "To Him will be your return – of all of you. The promise of God is true and sure. . . " (Q. 10:4 a) • ". . . It is He who beginneth the process of creation, and repeateth it, that he may reward with justice those who believe and work righteousness; . . ." (Q. 10:4 [b], also Q. 27:64 [a], also Q. 29 :19) • "Say: "Travel through the earth and see how God did originate creation: so will God produce a later creation: for God has power over all things." (Q. 29:20) • "The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books (completed), - Even as We produced the first creation, so shall We produce a new one: a promise We have undertaken: Truly shall We fulfill it." (Quran 21-104) • "We have decreed death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated from changing your forms and creating you (again) in (forms) that ye know not. And ye certainly know already the first form of (your) creation. Why then heed ye not?" (Q. 56: 60-62).
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As far as Islam is concerned, the concept of rebirth refers to resurrected life after death (which will be subjected to judgment), not while the person is still alive. The Quran has it that "Whoever works righteousness, men or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life; a life that is good and pure,

and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.” (Quran 16: 97). It further states:

- *“We have decreed death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated from changing your forms and creating you (again) in (forms) that ye know not. And ye certainly know already the first form of (your) creation. Why then heed ye not?”* (Q. 56: 60-62)
- *“. . . And We give (new) Life therewith to land that is Dead: Thus will be the Resurrection.”* (Quran 50: 11)
- *“I do call to witness the Resurrection Day; and I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit: (eschew Evil). Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones? Nay, We are able to put together in perfect order **the very tips of his fingers.**”* (Q. 75:1- 4).

(The “*Tips of his fingers*” is an idiom for the most delicate parts of his body. Other commentators believe this refers to the unique finger prints believed to be unique for every single individual, even identical twins, which Police (all over the world) use to identify criminals).

God, in the Quran further asks Man the following questions:

- *“Did you think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to us (for account)?”* (Quran 23:115)
- *“Seeing that it is He that has created you in diverse stages . . . And God has produced you from the Earth, growing (gradually), and in the End, He will return you into the (earth), and raise you forth (again at the Resurrection).”* (Q. 81: 14, 17 & 18)
- *“Is He Who creates from the very beginning, and He can restore (life)”* (Quran 85:13).
- *“That is their recompense, because they rejected our Signs, and said, “When we are reduced to bones and broken dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new creation?” See they not that God Who created the heavens and the earth, has power to create the like of them (anew)? . . .”* (Quran 17:98 – 99)
- *“. . . After that, at length ye will die. Again, on the Day of judgment, will ye be raised up”.*(Q. 23:15 – 16)
- *“Were We weary with the first Creation, that they should be in confused doubt about a new Creation?”* (Q. 50:15).
- *“Say: “Travel through the earth and see how God did originate creation: so will God produce a later creation: for God has power over all things.”* (Q. 29:20)

Concluding in another chapter that it is by His Will that He creates, causes to die and raises man up again:

- *“Then He causeth him to die, and putteh him in his Grave; Then, when it is His Will, He will raise him up (again)(Qur’an 80:21–22)*

Restating this fact in other words, the form of human personality – its constitution – will be changed in the next world. It will exist in a different dimension – on a different plane, - with all the grossness and carnality of its earthly physical existence removed. Thus, the individual will enjoy all that he desires here in respect of physical happiness, but he will enjoy it in a sublimated form, i.e. without the grossness and other limitations of the physical existence. He will also enjoy the aesthetic pleasure, but those pleasures shall be free of all morbidity and grossness, experienced as they will be on the non-physical plane.

11. Godly Life.

Godly life refers to living in concert with the commandments of God. This means doing those things which God approves as good, and which He promised to reward; while abhorring those that are bad (evil), and which will attract His punishment. These acts, the good and the bad have been clearly identified in the holy Books and both Christian and Islamic faiths are in accord. The Quran draws our attention to what God has forbidden; it directs us to:

- *“Say: The things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are: Shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth or reason; assigning of partners to God, for which He hath given no authority; and saying things about God of which ye have no knowledge.” (Quran 7:33)*

In the book of Mathew 7 verse 17, Jesus said:

- ❖ *“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. . . “(Matthew 12:35).*

He said further that:

- ❖ *“Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” (Matthew)*

The Quran says in Sura Al-Namli, (chapter 27) that:

- *“Whoever brings good, he shall have better than it, (good will accrue to them therefrom); and they will be secured from terror on that Day. And if any do evil, their faces will be thrown headlong into the Fire: shall you be rewarded for other than that which you have earned by your deeds?” (Quran 27: 89 – 90).*

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Worship none save Allah (only), and be good to parents and to kindred and to orphans and the needy and speak kindly to mankind, and establish worship and pay the poor-due.” (Surah</i>
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<p>swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”(1st Corinthians 6: 9 – 10)</p> <p>❖ <i>“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:19 – 23)</i></p> <p>❖ <i>“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited; Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “it is mine to avenge; I will repay” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry,</i></p>	<p>2:83)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Lo! Allah enjoineth justice and kindness and giving to kinfolk, and forbidden lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorteth you in order that ye may take heed.”(Quran 16:90)</i> • <i>“Whosoever doth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life, and We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do.”(Quran 16:97)</i> • <i>“Give the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and squander not (thy wealth) in wantonness...Slay not your children, fearing a fall to poverty. We shall provide for them and for you. Lo! The slaying of them is great sin... And come not near onto adultery. Lo! It is an abomination and an evil way... And slay not the life which Allah hath forbidden save with right... come not near the wealth of the orphan... fill the measure when ye measure... And walk not in the earth exultant.”(Quran 17:26, 31-35, 37)</i> • <i>“Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him, and (that ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or</i>
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<p><i>feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning, coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."</i> (Romans 12: 9 – 21)</p> <p>❖ <i>"Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead (ancestors). Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord..."</i> (Deuteronomy 18:10 – 12)</p>	<p><i>both of them attain to old age with thee, say not "fie" (expression of disapproval) unto them nor repulse them, but speak unto them a gracious word."</i> (Quran 17:23)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"They ask thee concerning wine and gambling say: "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; But the sin is greater than the profit."</i> (Quran 2:219)
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Prof. A. Yusuf Ali in Reference to Quran 29:156, says; There is no excuse for anyone to plead that he could not do good or was forced to evil by his circumstances and surroundings, or by the fact that he lived in evil times. We must shun evil and seek the good and God's creation is wide enough to enable us to do that, provided we have the will, the patience, and the constancy to do it. It may be that we have to change our village or city or country; or that we have to change our neighbors or associates; or to change our habits or our hours, our positions in life or our human relationships, or our callings. Our integrity before God is more important than any of these things, and we must be prepared for exile (or Hijrat) in all these senses. For the means with which God provides us for His service are ample, and it is our own fault if we fail. (Note: 3489, p. 1045)

12. Purification :

Islam teaches that Allah loves those who engage in acts of cleanliness or purification:

- *" . . . Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly in repentance and He also loves those who keep themselves pure and clean." (Q 2:222).*

In Islamic terminology, the act of physical purification is 'At-Tahaarah' which, in other words, literally means 'An-nadhaafah', i.e. Cleanliness, purification or cleansing – an act of purging the self of the effects of dirt and filth. At-tahaarah is usually aimed at purifying the self in preparedness for spiritual devotions. Christians are also taught, in the Book of Revelation thus:

- ❖ *"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life ...". (Revelation 22: 14)*

❖ *“If one of your men is unclean because of a nocturnal emission ... he is to wash himself...” (Deuteronomy 23:10).*

Hence, sundry acts of cleanliness such as ablution, ritual bath are basic elements of cleanliness or purification.

Cleanliness draws a believer closer to Allah as much as he desires purity. Those who cultivate such habits (of purification) are indeed exposed not only to the benefits of being loved by God (Allah), but He also pardons their sins from time to time. For indeed, Allah loves those who purify themselves both physically and spiritually:

- *“Men who love to be purified; and Allah loves those who make themselves clean.” (Q 9:108)*
- *“O thou wrapped up (in a mantle)! Arise and deliver thy warning! And thy Lord do thou magnify! And thy garments keep free from stain! And all abomination shun!” (Quran 74: 1 - 5)*
- *“O ye who believe! Approach not prayer with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say, - nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (except when travelling on the road). Untill after washing your whole body. If ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women . . . ” (Quran 4:42)*
- *“O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbow; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If you era in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body . . . ” (Quran 5:6)*

<p>BIBLE:</p> <p>❖ <i>“Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes, who are they, and where did they come from?” I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of great tribulation, they have washed their robes and made them white . . .” Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and (for they) serve him day and night in his Temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tent over them.” (Revelation7:9 – 17).</i></p> <p>❖ <i>“If one of your men is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, ... he is to wash himself...”(Deuteronomy 23:10)</i></p>	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Men who love to be purified; and Allah loves those who make themselves clean.” (Q 9:108)</i> • <i>“. . . Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly in repentance and He also loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.” (Q 2:222)</i> • <i>“O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbow; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If you era in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body . . . ” (Quran 5:6)</i>
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13. Clean and Unclean Food

Rev. (Rick) Eldor William Richter on page 125 of his book: *'Comparing the Quran and the Bible'*, fingered Islam, by saying that the Qur'an looks upon certain foods as forbidden and unclean, and went on to demonstrate that it is not so with Christianity, because in Levitian II, Jesus said:

- ❖ *"Listen and understand, what goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean', but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.'* (Matt 15: 10-11)

As far as Islam is concerned, this argument is null and void, because in the passage Jesus is talking about food being unclean, whereas Rev. Richter's supporting quotation talks about an unclean person. This is a fraudulent argument. He further cited Acts 10: 9 – 16 and Matthew 15: 10–11 and concluded that "on this basis, the New Testament states:

- ❖ *"Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4: 4 – 5, see also Romans 14: 14 – 15)"*

We must note that the good Reverend failed to notice Deuteronomy 14: 3, 8, 21, and Deut. 15: 23, where God spelled out the unclean things that the Christians must not eat (or touch). These prohibitions are found in the Bible:

- ❖ *"You shall not eat anything that dies of itself;" (Deuteronomy 14: 21)*
- ❖ *If an animal has a defect, is lame, or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 15:21)*
- ❖ *"But, you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water." (Deuteronomy 15:23)*
- ❖ *"You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts;" (Exodus 22: 31)*
- ❖ *"Do not eat any detestable thing... the pig is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses... do not eat anything you find already dead." (Deuteronomy 14: 3, 8, 21)*

Those who eat the flesh of pigs are referred by God as:

- ❖ *". . . rebellious people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations" (Isaiah 65: 1-4)*

Muslims are as well prohibited from eating the meat of an animal found dead, or an animal torn up by wild beasts. The Quran says:

- *"Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than God. That which that been killed by strangling or by a violent*

blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death. That which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless ye are able to slaughter it (in due form); That which is sacrificed on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows: that is impiety.”(Quran 5:3)

- *“He has only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of Swine, and any (food) over which the name of other than God has been invoked. But if one is forced by necessity, without willful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, - then God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Q. 16:115).*
 - *“To the Jews We prohibited such things as We have mentioned to thee before: We did them no wrong, but they were used to doing wrong to themselves.” (Q. 16:118)*

14. Aggression/Use of Force:

The judicious use of force against wrong-doers is justified according to the good Rev. William (Rick) Richter, for the apostle Paul writes that:

- ❖ *“Governing authorities’ of the state are God’s servants; they are “an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. They do not bear the sword for nothing” (Romans 13: 1 – 4).*

This position cannot be faulted even from Islam’s point of view, except for Matthew 5:43 which states that mere opposition to faith should not give sufficient cause for pre-emptive aggression. The Quran admonished Muslims similarly, to fight wrong doers only:

- *“Fight them. Allah will punish them by your hands and bring them to disgrace, and assist you against them and heal the hearts of a believing people.” (Q. 9:14)*

So here also we have a common ethics or values.

Compare:

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Jesus words: “Those enemies, who did not want me to be their king, bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.” (Luke 19:27).</i> ❖ <i>Jesus words: “Do you suppose that I came to establish peace on earth? I have not come to establish peace but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a young wife</i> 	<p>QUR’AN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors.” (Quran 2:190)</i> • <i>“Fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrongdoers.” (Qur’an 2:193).</i> • <i>“Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed able to give them victory.” (Qur’an 22:39):</i>
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<p><i>against her mother-in-law, and a man shall find his enemies under his own roof.” (Matthew 10:34, 35) (Luke 12:44-52) (Luke 22:36-38)</i></p> <p>❖ <i>Jesus words: “. . . but now he that hath a purse, let him take it and likewise his scimitar, and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garments and buy one.” (Luke 22:36).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“If two parties among the believers fall into a fight, make peace between them, but if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. But if it complies, then make peace with justice and be fair, for God loves those who are fair.” (Qur’an 49:9).</i>
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14.1 Use of Force

Indeed both faiths abhor the use of force for the same reason, being that mere opposition to Faith should not give sufficient cause for pre-emptive aggression. In the case of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) received his first revelation, giving him permission to wage war against his persecutors who also prevented him and his followers from performing their religion. Muhammad’s life was threatened in Mecca and he was stoned, humiliated, and nearly assassinated. He and a handful of his followers were sanctioned, their houses sacked, their personal belongings confiscated, and turned out of their homes, starved of food, outlawed, and finally had to escape into exile. It was during this time that the revelation came to him from Allah to the effect that:

- *“Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed able to give them victory.” (Qur’an 22:39):*
- *“Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loved not transgressors.” (Quran 2:190):*
- *“Fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrongdoers.” (Qur’an 2:193).*

15. Law of Retaliation

Both the Bible and the Quran speak with one voice on the law of retaliation: “A life for life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and wounds equal for equal; as he has injured the other, so he is to be injured. Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death.”

Compare what the Bible and the Quran say on this topic:

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death. Anyone who takes the life of someone’s animal must make restitution – life for life. If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, a tooth for a tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured. Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death. You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the lord your God.” (Levitiations 24: 17-21)</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We ordained therein for them; “life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal.” But if anyone remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself.” And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what God hath revealed, they are (no better than) wrong-doers.”(Quran 5:45)</i> • <i>The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God; for (God) loveth not those who do wrong.” (Quran 42: 41)</i>
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16. Peace/ Forgiveness/ Mercy

In the Bible, Jesus admonishes his followers with these words: *“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also... Do to others as you would have them do to you.”* He teaches that because: *“God has mercy on whomever he wants to have mercy and He hardens whom He wants to harden (Rom 9:18); we should endeavor not to repay anyone evil for evil and not to allow ourselves be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17, 21).*

The Holy Quran similarly says: *“Do not let your dislike for a people cause you to be unjust. Be just, for it is closer to being God-fearing...” (Qur’an 5:8).* Thus the Prophet teaches that a Muslim should repay evil with good deeds; to be kind and forgive those who wronged us, and be generous in giving to both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The Quran also teaches Muslims to maintain peaceful relations with the People of the Book: Christians and Jews. It says:

- *“Say: O People of Book... come to common terms as between us and you, that we worship none but God, that we associate no partners with Him, that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than God: If they then turn back, then say (to them) ‘bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (submitters to God’s will).” (Q 3:64).*

- *“And dispute you not with the People of the Book except in the most kindly manner – unless it be those of them who wronged – but say ‘we believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is one, and it is to Him we submit (in Islam).”(Qur’an 29:46).*

Peace Doctrine in the Bible and Quran:

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>[Jesus words:]“And whosoever shall not receive you nor hear you, then ye depart there...” (Mark 6:2).</i> ❖ <i>[Jesus words:] “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those you curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also... Do to others as you would have them do to you.”</i> ❖ <i>[Jesus’ words] “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may become of your father in heaven.” (Mathew 5:43 – 45)</i> ❖ <i>Jesus said “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” (John 18:36)</i> ❖ <i>Jesus said “Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.” (Mathew</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Summon them to the way of thy lord with wisdom and with kindly warning.” (Qur’an 16: 126).</i> • <i>“It is part of the Mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them; were you severe or harsh-hearted they would have broken away from you...” (Qur’an 3:159)</i> • <i>“Say, O my servants who have transgressed against their own selves, despair not of the mercy of God, for God forgives all sins, for He is opt forgiving, Most-Merciful.” (Qur’an 39:53)</i> • <i>“So say: “O my Lord! Grant Thou forgiveness and Mercy! For Thou art the best of those who show mercy!” (Quran 23:118)</i> • <i>“And those who having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring God to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins, - and who can forgive sins except God? – and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done . . . “(Quran 3:135)</i> • <i>“Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous, . . .” (Quran 3:133)</i> • <i>“Those who spend (freely) whether in</i>
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<p>26:52).</p> <p>❖ <i>“Do not repay anyone evil for evil... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17, 21)</i></p>	<p><i>prosperity or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; - for God loves those who do good; . . . For such the reward is forgiveness from their lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing underneath, - an eternal dwelling: How excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)” (Quran 3:134,136)</i></p>
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The Quran also urges believers to be quick in the race for forgiveness from their Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heaven and of the earth, prepared for the Paradise: (Q. 89: 41). It teaches us further:

- *“But indeed if any show patience and forgives, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs.” (Quran 42: 43)*

17. Striving /Struggle/ Toil/ Adversity/ Hard life:

Though both Islam and Christianity do agree that man is born to strife and struggle (Q. 90:4); it would appear that from the biblical view, man’s striving or toiling is pointless and futile. We see according to the Bible that man’s life is full of sorrow and vexation. *“Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards.” (Job 5:7). “For all his days are sorrow, and his travails grief” (Ecclesiastes 2:23). “What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labours under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest.” (Ecclesiastes 2:23).* This is not the case from Islamic view.

The Quranic text has a different shade of meaning: It states that if Man suffers from hardships, he must exercise patience (Quran 2:177), for he is expected *“... to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing.” (Q. 2:177 b);* for God will make his way smooth for him (see Quran 65:7 and 94:5-6) to achieve the purpose in sight.

<p>BIBLE:</p> <p>❖ <i>“To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and from the tree about which I commanded you; “You must not eat of it.”</i></p>	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Verily, We have created man into toil and struggle. Thinketh he that none hath power over him? Does he think nobody sees him? Haven’t We made for him a pair of eyes? And a tongue, and a pair of lips? And then</i>
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<p><i>Cursed is the ground because of you, through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life” . . . “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken for dust you are and to dust you will return.” (Genesis 3: 17 &19).</i></p> <p>❖ <i>“To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” (Genesis 1: 3 – 16).</i></p>	<p><i>shown him the two paths? (Quran 90:4 - 10)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience; and We shall try your reported (mettle).” (Q. 47:31)</i> • <i>“If a wound hath touched you, be sure a similar wound hath touched the others. Such days (of varying fortunes) we give to men and men by turns: that God may know those that believe, and that He may take to Himself from your ranks Martyr-witness (to Truth). And God loveth not those who do wrong.” (Quran 3:140).</i> • <i>“So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief: verily, with every difficulty there is relief.” (Q. 94: 5 – 6)</i> • <i>“Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of Bliss – ‘Paradise’) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? They encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit that even the Apostle and those of faith who were with him cried: “When (will come) the help of God?” Ah! Verily, the help of God is (always) near!” (Quran 2 :214)</i>
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But what is the purpose? Why must man suffer so?

The Quran says:

- *“O thou man! Verily thou art ever toiling on towards thy Lord – painfully toiling, - but thou shalt meet Him.” (Q. 84: 6)*

From this passage we can deduce that man’s toiling and striving is not pointless, it is a necessary step towards obtaining salvation. In other words, the aim is to reach God and His Mercy.

The Holy scriptures have revealed to us that two paths have been provided for man to take, one towards salvation and the other towards perdition. *“And (We have) shown him the two highway,”* Allah says, *“But he hath made no haste on the path that is steep.” (Q. 90:10-11).* The steep path would obviously refer to striving and toiling. The smooth and pleasurable leads away from salvation, it is the entrapment of the Devil; while the steep and hard,

full of strife and adversity leads to salvation and Paradise. In other words, the hard and laborious leads one to the Creator. But what is the nature of this steep path? The Quran answers this question also:

- *“And what will explain to thee the path that is steep? (It is) freeing the bondmen (slave); or the giving of food in a day of privation to the orphan with claims of relationship, or to the indigent (down) in the dust. Then will he be of those who believe, and enjoin patience, (constancy, and self-restraint), and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion. Such are the Companions of the Right hand.”(Q. 90: 12-18)*

The prophets obviously lived selflessly, and led a life of austerity and deprivation, to teach us, even those few who were meant to rule, like David, Solomon and Joseph (pbuh) did not let their affluence go to their heads. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), in spite of holding a powerful position, with all the spiritual glory and worldly might at his disposal lived such an austere life that even a Christian Father sang his praises: *“Head of the State as well as the Church (Islam), he was Pope without the Pope’s pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesars, without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed revenue. If ever a man had the right to say that he ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad, for he held all the powers without their supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life.”* (Rev. R. Bosworth-Smith: *‘Mohammed & Mohamedanism’*). There is no doubt that if Jesus (pbuh) had lived on long enough to rule the Church, he would have married, have children and led exemplary life also; and things would have certainly been different with the Church today.

Man’s experiences have shown that whatever difficulties or troubles are encountered by man, God always provides a solution, a way out, a relief, a way to lead us to ease and happiness, if only we follow His Path and show our faith by patience and well-doing. The solution or relief does not merely come after the difficulty: it is provided (along) ‘with’ it (in other words, it is like two sides of the same coin). No trouble for the Righteous (man) but is linked with ease and joy in the end. He must strive at every stage, and look to God alone as the goal of all his hopes. (Prof. A.Yusuf Ali)

18. State of War:

The act of war has been a tradition with all living creature from the beginning of time. Ancient civilizations wage war against each other for different reasons, some were just, some unjust. In the olden times, there are no rules of engagement. Men, women and children are either killed or captured into slavery. Whole cities and villages are burn down, trees cut down, farm lands wasted and sources of water poisoned. The list is endless. Even in the Bible, the

Old Testament gave detailed instruction on how to deal with enemies in war situation. Strong passages like the following are found in Deuteronomy:

- ❖ “. . . If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves... This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you . However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them. . . . as the Lord your God commanded you.”(Deuteronomy 20: 16 – 17)

Both Christianity and Islam engaged in wars which they called holy, because it was considered a religious duty. The records showed that Christianity waged a holy war on Islam called a Crusade. Of course Muslims were accused of waging a similar war on Christians because they fought back, and is referred to as ‘Jihad’. However, the meaning of the term “Jihad” as far as Islam is concerned is much wider than what the West wants it to be. ‘Jihad’ means striving, this could be physical or spiritual, and in all facet of life, be it education, preaching, philanthropy, and of course war. So, Jihad does not carry the same exact meaning with crusade.

The Crusade was armed campaign, which was waged by Christianity at the behest of the Pope to win over Palestine from the hands of Muslims (during the period 1096 to 1291 AD). Undoubtedly, the crusade was the most well-known and most devastating religious war in history that was waged by Christianity on the Islamic world. Countless Muslims not only lost their faith but equally their lives. The Crusades were waged in stages, the first pronounced by Pope Urban II on 26 November, 1096 AD. The second, third and fourth took place in the years 1147 AD, 1188 AD and 1204 AD respectively, while the fifth, sixth and seventh were in 1217 AD, 1228 AD and 1291 AD accordingly. The land of Jerusalem had been under Muslim rule since the year 637AD. But, in 1099AD (i.e. four hundred and sixty two years later) the rule was brought to a bloody and sudden end. It was related that *“In the name of the cross, women were raped, contents of their womb removed and murdered, children were put to the sword and it is said that blood ran in the streets knee high to the horses.”* (Bamber Gascoign *“The Christians”* by Bambar Gascoigne (London, Jonathan Cape 1977 page 113)).

As an eloquent proof that this ignominious act had been perpetrated in truth by the Christian West, Pope John Paul II, in March 2000, apologized to the world in general and the Muslims in particular for the years of violence, persecution and blunders perpetrated by the Church in the name of Christ. He thus sought forgiveness for the sins committed against the non-Christians.

The story of the Crusades cannot be told without the mention of Saladin the Great. His name will be eternally recognized for his triumphant victory over the crusaders in Hettin, in October 1187 AD. Despite their power, number and military might, the fall of the Templers started with their defeat by the forces of Saladeen Al-Ayyube during the second crusade in October 1187 AD. Saladeen, whose full name is Salahudeen Bin Yusuf Bin Al-Ayyub, commonly referred to as 'Saladin the Great' in western literatures, together with his followers, he liberated or recaptured the land of Palestine and Jerusalem from the crusaders, resulting in many of the Templers being held captive. He treated the Christians in the recaptured territory with kindness and generosity unlike the manner of crusaders. He has been acclaimed as a most generous leader of men. The kind-hearted Sultan gave the Christians an unprecedented magnanimity, with full civil rights to those of them who wanted to live in Jerusalem or in other parts of Palestine as peaceful subjects.

This magnanimity was obviously the result of the code of conduct or rules of engagement which the Prophet had set down for his followers during the wars that he was involved at the time. His guidance came from the Quran and he obeyed the order which he turned into the discipline that he infused in his followers.

- *“You shall fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not aggress, for God does not love the aggressors. You may kill them if they attack you, and evict them whence they evicted you; Oppression is worse than murder. Do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque, unless they attack you therein. If they attack you, then you may kill them, and this would be their just retribution. However, if they refrain, then God is Forgiver, Merciful. You may fight them to prevent oppression, and to practice God’s religion in complete freedom. Once they refrain, there shall be no aggression, except against the wicked.” (Qur’an 2 :190-193)*

A western writer gave an inkling of this kind of discipline entrenched by the prophet. He reported that *“Even amidst the dust and storm of warfare, the Prophet of Islam taught the Arab ‘Barbarians’ (his followers) to pray to God Almighty, not individually but in congregations. Whenever the time for prayer came, - and it comes five times everyday - the congregational prayer had not to be abandoned or even postponed. A party had to be engaged in bowing their heads before God while another was engaged with the enemy. After finishing the prayers, the two parties had to exchange their positions.”*

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labour and shall work for you”(Deuteronomy 20: 10 – 15)</i> ❖ <i>“However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them. . . . as the Lord your God commanded you.”(Deuteronomy 20: 16 – 17)</i> ❖ <i>“When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an axe to them, because you can eat their fruits... However, you may cut down trees that you know are not fruit trees, and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls. (Deuteronomy 20: 19 – 20)</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“You shall fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not aggress, for God does not love the aggressors. You may kill them if they attack you, and evict them whence they evicted you; Oppression is worse than murder. Do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque, unless they attack you therein. If they attack you, then you may kill them, and this would be their just retribution. However, if they refrain, then God is Forgiver, Merciful. You may fight them to prevent oppression, and to practice God’s religion in complete freedom. Once they refrain, there shall be no aggression, except against the wicked.” (Qur’an 2 :190-193)</i>
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19. Sin and its Origin:

The Church believes that all men (mankind) are born sinners, (Romans 5:12). The Bible says, *“Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned”* (Romans 5:12). The common Christian teaching is that all human beings inherit that sin, and that every newborn is born in sin. We find the book of Ezekiel in sharp contradiction to this position. It states that *“The Soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.”* (Ezekiel 18:20)

Yet, the Bible is clear on the devil being the 'angel' that fell into sin and caused the fall of humankind into sin. Islam does not believe that the devil is an angel. The Quran says that Angels are created from light, while Iblis (Satan) is created from fire. Islam also does not believe that the sin of Adam was inherited or inheritable because, before setting them down on earth, God has forgiven both Adam and Eve.

Judging from some texts of both the Bible and Quran, Adam and Eve were responsible for their own sin, for which they had also been punished. Both were removed from paradise after the offence and set down on earth as a punishment. And as we shall see later, Jesus who was a righteous prophet prayed to God to spare him from death, and the Bible gave us other proofs that his prayers were heard and answered. This can also mean that perhaps by answering his prayers, God must have forgiven the sins of Adam which Jesus supposedly bore on his head, as Christianity believed. It is indeed curious, that Jesus who was immaculately conceived (i.e. without a Father) and had no genealogical link with Adam, to now be an inheritor of Adam's sin, when children reflect the genealogy of their male parents!

From the Islamic perspective, a child is born without sin and all children belong to the kingdom of heaven guiltless, blameless, innocent, pure and sinless at birth. So the nature (or soul) of the child is sinless and he who aspires for the kingdom of God must come sinless (like a child); which is why Islam condemns the dogma of the original sin. Accordingly therefore, sin is something which each person acquires for himself, by doing what God has prohibited and failing to do what God has ordained. Sin is a willful transgression of God's Law. The responsibility or blame for it must lie only on the head of the person who committed it, and not on his children or progeny. God made this abundantly clear in the Bible and the Quran. In the Quran He says:

- *"It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein. Behold, two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his doings) Learn (and note them), one sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him (ready to note it)." (Q. 50: 16 – 18)*

One of the recorders of the Prophet's tradition and teachings (Hadith), named 'MUSLIM', (may Allah be pleased with him) reported the saying of Prophet Muhammad to the effect that: *"Hearts are exposed to temptations persistently. If a heart succumbs to the temptation, it will be dotted by dark spots; but if it rejects the temptation, it will be characterized by purity; and thus the heart is classified into two: one that is purely white and clean, such that no temptation will ever overcome it so far as the heavens and earth exist. The*

second will be deeply dark stained and such that it will not be able to identify righteousness and abstain from vices, but what its desire dictates.” (Muslim).

‘Tirmidhi’ (may Allah be pleased with him), another Islamic scholar, reported in a ‘Hadith’ that Prophet Muhammad said: “Certainly, if a servant (of God) commits a sin, a black spot will be dotted in his heart, then if he repents, it will be erased, but if he commits more sins, the black spot shall increase. That is meant by the words of Allah, the Most High, as recorded in the Quran: *“Nay rather, the stain has covered their hearts because of that which they were doing . . . But on their hearts is the stain of the (ill) which they do! Verily, from (the Light of) their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled.”* (Quran 83:14 -15) (Tirmidhi)

Compare the scriptures:

BIBLE:	QURAN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1st John 3:8)</i> ❖ <i>“And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out; where their worm does not die, and the fire is not put out (not quenched) . . . Everyone will be salted with fire.” (Mark 9:42 – 44, 49).</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“And those who, having done an act of indecency or wronged their own souls, remember God and ask for forgiveness for their sins – and who can forgive sins except God? – and never knowingly persist in the sin they have done: for such, the reward is forgiveness from their Lord...”(Qur’an 3:135) p. 33)</i>

Chawkat Georges Moucarry (1984) in ‘Islam And Christianity At The Crossroads’ gave us his view on the concept of Sin or Sacrifice in Christianity. He said: *“The background to the Christian interpretation of Jesus’ death is the biblical concept of sin; because of the covenant between God and Adam, the whole human race is responsible only for our own sins. As leader of a new human race, Jesus Christ is the new Adam who rescues mankind from the death into which the first Adam’s sin had led them. Those who now enter into the new covenant, which has been made possible by Jesus Christ, share in the life of the risen Christ.”* (p.64)

Moucarry also gave his considered opinion of the Islamic perspective. He said: *“There are clear reasons why Islam has no concept of sacrifice as a means of obtaining forgiveness for sins. According to the Quran, man’s soul is prone to evil (Q.12:53), but evil is not inherent in human nature. Adam repented of his disobedience and God forgave him (Q. 2:37). Consequently, no one is born into sin: people become sinners by disobeying God’s Law. Anyone can follow the straight path **provided God guides him to it** and God’s spirit strengthens him (Q. 58:22). If he strays from it he should repent and trust to God’s mercy for the forgiveness of his sins (Q.15: 56; Q.39:53; Q.42: 28). At the Last Judgment he will be saved if his good deeds outweigh his bad deeds, unless he has committed any really serious sin.”* (like associating God with a partner in worship) (p.64-65). Moucarry captured the Islamic view accurately.

Allah has revealed to us that the plots (designs) of sinners are known fully to Him, and He can fully circumvent them if necessary, according to the fullness of His Wisdom. The word used is: *‘compass them round’*; not only does God know all about it, but He is all round it: if in His Wisdom He allows it, it is not because He does not have complete control over it, but because He has it as it were, enclosed – encapsulated - in a complete circle, He can use it to further His own Plan. Even out of evil He can bring about goodness. (C. 623 - p.215) . . . so, good follows good and evil must fall, cursed, loathed, disgraced, and despised. (Prof. A. Yusuf Ali, C.173, p. 1001).

Through man’s spiritual endeavors, involving his acknowledgement of Allah, devotional worships, self-discipline and constant remembrance of Allah (God), man can indeed cleanse himself of sins and vices; and also ascend to higher states of being. Evil already committed can indeed be blotted out with regards to the spiritual effects in the sinner’s personality if, firstly, an evil doer repents sincerely and, secondly, he wages a determined struggle for pursuing the acts of righteousness.

20. Satan (Devil/Lucifer) and Evil:

The Quran admonishes Believers to beware of Satan and his schemes: *“O ye who believe! Follow not Satan’s footsteps: if any will follow the footsteps of Satan, he will (but) command what is shameful and wrong: And were it not for the grace and mercy of God on you, not one of you would ever have been pure: But God purify whom He pleases: and God is One who hears and knows (all things).”* (Q 24:21). It says also: *“Lo! The devil is an enemy for you, so treat him as an enemy.”*(Qur’an 35:6). In the Hadith of the Prophet, Abu Sa’id Al Khudiri (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: *“Whoever amongst you sees an evil, he must change it with his hand, if he is*

unable to do so, then with his tongue (mouth); and if he is unable to do so, then with his heart; and that is the weakest form of Faith.” (Muslim)

In the Bible, Peter exhorts Christian Believers to: *“Be Self controlled and alert” because our “enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.”* (1st Peter 5: 8 – 9). We are warned that through the devil’s machination believers: *“. . . have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful, they invent ways of doing evil, they disobey their parents, they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless . . . they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them.”* (Romans 1:19 – 31 & 32). The list will include corrupt officials, armed robbers, kidnappers etc.

<p>BIBLE:</p> <p>❖ <i>“While the Lord God permits evil, he does not cause evil or approve of evil. The devil is the author of sin and evil, and he caused humankind to fall into sin. Human beings are responsible for their actions in that not only do they have the inherited sin of Adam but they repeat the sin of Adam, and “in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12)</i></p>	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Satan has “no power over those who believe and put trust in their Lord.” (Quran 16: 98 – 99)</i> • <i>“Nay rather, the stain has covered their hearts because of that which they were doing . . . “or “. . . But on their hearts is the stain of the (ill) which they do! Verily, from (the Light of) their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled.” (Quran 83:14 -15)</i>
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20.1 Protection from Satan (The Devil)

The devil, along with his evil demons continues to mislead mankind into unbelief and despair. According to Rev. Eldor William (Rick) Richter, Jesus resisted the devil with the words “it is written, the armor of Christ and the Word of God, which is the sword of the spirit, are sufficient to overcome the temptations of the devil and his evil angels.” Those who believe in Christ are secure and need not fear.

Like in the Bible, the Qur’an (Surah 35:6) says, “Lo! The devil is an enemy for you, so treat him as an enemy.” The Devil, according to the Qur’an, has as his aim to divert humankind from allegiance to Allah, by temptations, and leading man astray. And indeed, Allah has warned mankind of this happening. He said in the Quran,

- *“Did I not enjoin on you, O ye children of Adam, that ye should not worship Satan; for that he was to you an enemy avowed? And that ye should Worship Me, (for that this was the straight Way? But he did lead astray a great multitude of you. Did ye not, then, understand?”(Q. 36: 60-62)*

However, in Chapter 16, verses 98–99 of the Quran assures those who recited the Qur’an and seek refuge in Allah that they need have nothing to fear. Satan has *“no power over those who believe and put trust in their Lord.”*

21. Day of Resurrection:

Both Christianity and Islam believe in the Day of Resurrection. In its attempt to assure us of the inevitability of the Day of Resurrection, the Quran addresses us thus: *“O Mankind! If you have a doubt about the Resurrection, (consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of Sperm, then out of a leech-like Clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (Our Power) to you; and We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term, then do We bring you out as babes, then (foster you) that ye may reach your age or full strength; and some of you are called to die, and some are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known (much). And (further), thou seest the earth barren and lifeless, but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it put forth every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs).” (Quran 22:5)* But what does the Bible and the Quran say to describe this Day?

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“No-one knows about the Day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the son, but only the Father.” (Mark 13:32)</i> ❖ <i>“Do you see all these great buildings? Replied Jesus, “Not one stone here will be left on another, everyone will be thrown</i> 	<p>Quran:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“They ask thee about the Hour, - “When will its appointed time?” . . . The Day they see it, (it will be) as if they had tarried but a single evening, or (at most till) the following morn!” (Q. 89:42 & 46).</i> • <i>“Verily the Day of sorting out is a thing appointed; - The Day that the Trumpet shall be sounded, and ye shall come forth in crowds; and the heavens shall be opened as if there were doors, and the mountains shall vanish, as if they were a mirage. Truly Hell is a place of ambush, for the transgressors a place of destination:” (Q. 78:17 - 22).</i> • <i>“One Day everything that can be in commotion will be in violent commotion, followed by Oft-repeated (commotion): Hearts that Day will be in agitation; cast down will be (their owners) eyes.”(Q. 89:6 – 9)</i> • <i>“The trumpet shall be sounded, when behold! From the graves (men) will rush forth to their</i>
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<p>down.” (Mark 13:2)</p> <p>❖ “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16)</p> <p>❖ “All who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” (John 5:28 – 29)</p> <p>❖ “But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it</p>	<p>Lord!”(Quran 36:51)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “But verily, it will be but a single (compelling) cry. When behold, they will be in the (full) awakening (to Judgment).” (Q. 89: 13 – 14). • “Then when one blast is sounded on the Trumpet, and the earth is moved, and its mountains, and they are crushed to powder at one stroke – on that Day shall the (great) Event come to pass, and the sky will be rent asunder, for it will that Day be flimsy, and the angels will be on its sides, and the angels will, that Day, bear the Throne of thy Lord above them. That Day shall ye be brought to Judgment: Not an act of yours that ye hide will be hidden.” (Q. 69:13 – 18) • “Nay! When the earth is pounded to powder, and thy Lord cometh, and His angels, ranks upon rank, and Hell, that Day is brought (face to face), - on that Day will man remember, but how will that remembrance profit him?” (Q. 89:21 – 23). • “And the Day that the Trumpet will be sounded – then will be smitten with terror those who are in the heavens, and those who are on earth, except such as God will please (to exempt): and all shall come to His (Presence) as beings conscious of their lowness.” (Quran 27:87) • “And the Trumpet is blown, and all who are in the heaven and earth swoon away, save him whom Allah willeth. Then it is blown a second time, and behold them standing waiting!” (Quran 39: 68) • “At length, when there comes the deafening noise, - that day shall man flee from his own brother, and from his mother and his father, and from his wife and his children. Each one of them, that Day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to the others. . (Qur’an 80: 33-37). • “When the sun (with its spacious light) is folded up; when the stars fall, losing their luster; when the mountains vanish (like a mirage; when the she-camels, ten month (pregnant) with young, are left untended: when the wild beasts are herded together (in human habitation); when the oceans boil over with a swell; when the souls are sorted
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<i>will be laid bare.” (2 Peter 3:10)</i>	<i>out, (being joined, like with like); when the female (infant) buried alive, is questioned – for what crime she was killed; when the scrolls are laid open; when the world on high is unveiled; when the blazing fire is kindled to fierce heat; and when the garden (paradise) is brought near; (then) shall each soul know what it has put forward.” (Qur’an 81: 1 – 4)</i>
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22. Day of Judgment:

What came to the fore is that the Holy Bible agrees with the Quran in admitting that every person is accountable to the Lord God. However, inspite of this we find the same Bible in 2nd Corinthian 5:10 contradicting this common belief. The passage states: *“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (who Paul said is the son of God), that each one may receive what is due (to) him.”* This statement is certainly not in the same spirit with the teaching of Islam, nor that of Jesus himself. When asked about God’s coming execution of Judgment, Jesus (pbuh) proclaimed:

❖ *“... On that Day or that Hour, no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven nor the son, but only the Father.”* (Mark 13:32; and Mathew 24:36).

We found support for Jesus in the Quran thus:

- *“They ask thee (Muhammad) about the Hour, - “When will its appointed time (be)?”(Q.89:42).*

The Prophet was instructed to –

- *“Say: As to the knowledge of the time, it is with Allah alone. I am (sent) only to warn plainly in Public.”(Q. 67:26).*

The Quran further said:

- *“(It will be) the Day when no soul shall have Power (to do) aught for another: for the command that Day, will be (wholly) with God.”(Quran 82:19).*
- *“The Day they see it, (it will be) as if they had tarried but a single evening, or (at most till) the following morn!” (Q. 89:46).*

The Quran stressed that in the end

- *“every Soul shall have a taste of death: in the end to Us shall ye be brought back.”(Q. 29:57). It then asks:*
- *“... And what will make thee realize that perhaps the hour is close at hand? At hand?” (Q. 42:17 b)*
- *“Only those (who) wish to hasten it, who believe not in it: those who believe hold it in awe, and know that it is the Truth. Behold, verily those that dispute concerning the hour are far astray.” (Q. 42:18)*

Allah further said in the Quran:

- *“That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths. But their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did.” (Q. 36:65)*

Some may find this verse (65 of chapter 36) hard to believe. So, for the benefit of the doubting Thomases perhaps a scientific angle possibly will help to convince them of how this could be possible. A scientist, Lyall Watson, in his book, *‘The Romeo Error’* (1974), told us of Dean W. R. Matthews of the Society of Psychological Research, who had suggested a working definition of survival after death which seems to make biological sense. Matthews hypothesis is, that *“the centre of consciousness which was in existence before death does not cease to be in existence after death and that the experience of this centre after death has the same kind of continuity with its experience before death as that of a man who sleeps for a while and wakes up again.”* (Matthews, W. R. *“Psychical Research and Theology”*, *proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 46:15, 1940).

Lyall Watson helps to clarify this. He said: *“It seems that, quite apart from their normal specific function of providing information about sights, sounds and smells going on outside; the eyes, ears and nose (including the sense of touch) also collect stimuli which have the general function of maintaining arousal in the brain”*. Continuing further, he adds that *“the information coming in from any environment is received by the sense organs and conveyed to the brain of the individual, so the whole argument boils down to a question of whether or not a personal identity can exist without this feedback.”* According to him, *“This leaves us in the following position: We know that personality grows from a biological base, but depends on individual experience. We know that this experience is stored as memory and can be drawn on in dreaming to allow the personality full and independent expression. We know that all mammals are capable of this kind of expression, but in none of them can we find any physical trace of such a memory bank. Therefore, there is at the moment no valid biological objection to the suggestion that personality, in the form of an individual set of memories, could survive beyond the point of clinical death; (as suggested by Dean W. R. Matthews).”* (Lyall Watson, pp. 95-96, &112)

What we should learn from these two scientists is that even in death the recorded experiences gathered by our sense perceptions and stored in our memory bank are not immediately deleted due to death but retained somehow (perhaps in the soul that lives on); which is why the Quran told us that: *their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did.* Allah knows best.

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ “. . . . Man is destined to die once, and after that to face Judgment.” (Hebrews 9: 27) ❖ “So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:12) . ❖ “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the Throne and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.” (Revelation 20:12) 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “. . . Nay, it (the time) may come to them all of a sudden and confound them: no power will they have then to avert it, nor will they (then) get respite.” (Quran 21:40) • “And the earth shineth with the light of her Lord, and the book is set up, and the Prophets and the witnesses are brought, and it is judged between them with truth, and they are not wronged.” Quran 39: 69) • “ “The Day that the Spirit and the angels will stand forth in ranks, none shall speak except any who is permitted by (God) Most Gracious, and he will say what is right.” (Q. 78:38). • “Then those whose balance (scales of good deeds) is heavy, they will attain salvation: But those whose balance (scales) is light will be those who have lost their souls; in Hell will they abide.”(Quran 23: 102) • “Some faces that Day will be beaming, laughing, rejoicing. And other faces that Day will be dust-strained, blackness will cover them: such will be the Rejecters of God, the Doers of Iniquity. (Qur’an 80: 38-42).
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According to the Bible, Jesus had said that:

- ❖ “When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All nations will be gathered before him, and **he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.**” (Matthew 25: 31 -32).

That Jesus further said:

- ❖ “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they are spoken. For by your words you will be acquainted, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:35 – 37).

In other words it will be a day of sorting out just as the Holy Quran had stressed:

- “Verily the Day of sorting out is a thing appointed; - The Day that the Trumpet shall be sounded, and ye shall come forth in crowds; and the heavens shall be opened as if there were doors. And the Mountains shall vanish, as if they were a mirage.” (Q. 78: 17-20)

- *“On the Day that the hour will be established, that Day shall (all men) be sorted out” (Q. 30: 14)*
- *“(A voice will say) “This is the Day of sorting out, whose Truth ye (once) denied!” (Q. 37:21)*
- *“On that Day will men proceed in companies sorted out, to be shown the Deeds that they (had done). Then shall anyone who has done an atom’s weight of good see it. And anyone who has done an atom’s weight of evil shall see it.” (Q. 99:6)*

To further underscore this, the Quran tells us also that, on that day, God will ask Jesus (pbuh) pointedly:

- *“And behold! Allah will say: “O Jesus son of Mary did you say unto the people: ‘Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah?’ He will say: ‘Glory to You (Oh Allah!), never could I say what I had no right (to say), had I said such a thing you would indeed have known it, you know what is in my heart though I don’t know what is in Yours, for you know in full all that is hidden. Never said I to them ought except what You did command me to say:”Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.” And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them; when You take me up You were the watcher over them, and You are a witness to all things. If You punish them, they are Your servants; if You forgive them, You are indeed the Exalted (in power), the Wise.” (Q 5:116-118).*

From this, it is evident that not Moses, nor Jesus, nor Muhammad, would be in a position to judge anyone, for they too would present themselves for judgment before they can after that, intercede on our behalf.

It is narrated, on the authority of Anas (bin Malik) that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: *“Every Prophet has a plea which will be fulfilled, and every Prophet hastened to make his plea, while I withheld mine (he said), so that I may intercede for my ‘Ummah’ (nation) on the Day of Judgment. And, by the will of Allah, my intercession will include all of my ‘Ummah’ who have departed from this world without setting up partners to Allah in worship.”*

The right to be worshipped is reserved for Allah alone, and it is forbidden to worship anyone or anything other than Allah, whether they are prophets, saints or angels. This emphasizes the fact that intercession is with Allah the Almighty alone, as stated in the Quran:

- *“Say: To Allah belongs all intercession ...” (Q. 39:44)*

No one shall deserve intercession except by God’s permission. And He, the Almighty, will permit intercession only for those who believe in the true Oneness of Allah, as has been revealed in the Quran:

- *No intercessor (can plead with Him) except after His leave (hath been obtained) (Quran 2:257).*

One fact however should be clear to him who worships his would-be intercessor, for on that day, Judgment will not be in the hands of his intercessor.

As such those who worship Moses, Jesus or Muhammad (pbuh) or perhaps numerous angels (and the Holy Ghost), Deities and Saints, will definitely find that their return was to God Almighty, and not to any of their self-acclaimed gods (deities). In other words, they will find to their chagrin and disgrace that they have been paying their 'rent' (as it were) to another fellow 'tenant' and not to the 'Landlord', so to speak; for as Prof. Yusuf Ali poetically says:

*“When the Day comes, men will be taken aback.
The Judgment-seat will be established.
Blessed will be those who attain Salvation:
Their Joy, Satisfaction, and Peace will be crowned with nearness to their Lord!
Alas for the Sinful, who deliberately followed Evil;
Their own nature and actions will speak against them:
They will face the realities of Punishment:
Both Revelation and Nature are eloquent in instructing man
For his own good in the hereafter, which will come as a certainty.
Praise and Glory to God!”* (Prof. A. Yusuf Ali – C196)

23. Heaven (Paradise)

The Holy Quran describes Heaven as the reward of righteous life, Peace, Security, Eternal Life – nay, the realization of all positive human yearnings and ideals (as earlier mentioned) and more. This to my mind fits the Christian idea of Heaven. Heavenly ideal consists in the attainment of perfection adequate to human personality in respect of the national, moral and spiritual values. The luxuries which the righteous ones denied themselves in this earthly life will, however be compensated *in a transcendental and hallowed form*, in keeping with the holiness of Heaven; as a further reward implying the perfection also of the sentient dimension of human personality which it lived in its earthly life. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972).

Those who will go to heaven or enter heaven are described variously as: the god-fearing righteous; such as fear the time when they will stand before (the) Judgment Seat (of) their Lord; those who believe (in the Quran); any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness; to include those (certainly, among the People of the Book [Quran 3:199]), who believe in God, in the revelation to the Prophet (of Islam), and in the revelation to them, bowing in humility to God: who will not sell the Signs of God for a miserable gain!; and those (among the people of the book [Quran 5:114]) who believe in God and the Last day; who enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works.

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.” (Revelation 22:1–5).</i> ❖ <i>“God . . . has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you. (1 Peter 1: 3-4)</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“ But for such as fear the time when they will stand before (the) Judgment Seat (of) their Lord, there will be two Gardens . . .containing all kinds (of trees and delights) . . . In them (each) will be two Springs flowing (free) . . . in them will be fruits of every kind, two and two, . . . They will recline on Carpets, whose inner linings will be of rich brocades: the Fruits of the Gardens will be near (and easy to reach), . . . In them will be (Maidens), chaste, restraining their glances, whom no man or Jinn before them has touched - like unto rubies and corals, . . . Is there any reward for Good – other than Good?” (Q. 55:46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58).</i> • <i>“And besides these two, there are two other Gardens,. . . Darkgreen in colour (from plentiful watering) . . . In them (each) will be two Springs pouring forth water in continuous abundance: . . . In them will be Fruits, and Dates and Pomegranates: . . . In them will be fair (companions), good, beautiful; - . . . companions restrained (as to their glances) in (goodly) pavilions; - . . . whom no man or Jinn before them has touched; - . . . Reclining on green cushions and rich carpets of beauty.” (Q. 55: 62, 64,66, 68, 70, 72, 76).</i> • <i>“But it is for those who fear their lord, that lofty mansion, one above another, have been built: beneath them flow Rivers (of delight): (such as) the Promise of God: never doth God fail in (His) Promise.” (Q.39:20)</i> • <i>“And those who feared their Lord will be led to the Garden in crowds: until behold, they arrive there; its gates will be opened; and its Keepers will say:“Peace be upon you! Well have you done! Enter ye here, to dwell therein. . . . And thou wilt see the Angels surrounding the Throne (Divine) on all sides, singing Glory and Praise to their Lord. The decision between them (at Judgment) will be in (perfect) Justice, and the cry (on all sides) will be, “Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds!” (Q. 39: 73-75)</i>
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24. Hell:

In the Bible, Hell has been described as a place where sinners are punished with fire: *“They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power . . .”* (2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9). And in the Quran, Hell has been described as a place of ambush, for the transgressors. A Blazing Fire prepared for those who “reject faith”, and those who deny “the Hour”: those who are “rebellious and wicked.” *“It is the Fire kindled by Allah, which rises above the Hearts.”* (Q. 104:6-7). *“Verily, from (the light of) their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled”* (Quran 83:15). This shows that the Quran and the Bible are in accord.

BIBLE:	QURAN:
<p>❖ <i>“ . . . when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing Fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power . . .”</i> (2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9)</p> <p>❖ <i>“ . . . Still another angel, who had charge of the Fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the share sickle, “Take your sharp sickle and gather the cluster of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.” The angel</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Fear the Fire, which is prepared for those who reject Faith”</i> (Quran 3:131) • <i>“. . . truly Hell is a place of ambush, for the transgressors a place of destination:”</i> (Q. 78:22) • <i>“And thou wilt see the sinners that day bound together in fetters; their garments of liquid pitch, and their faces covered with Fire;”</i> (Q. 14: 49-50) • <i>“Nay, they deny the Hour (of the Judgment to come): but We have prepared a Blazing Fire for such as deny the Hour: when it sees them from a place far off, they will hear its fury and its raging sigh.”</i> (Q. 25:11-12) • <i>“As to those who are rebellious and wicked, their abode will be Fire: every time they wish to get away therefrom, they will be forced thereinto; and it will be said to them: “Taste ye the penalty of the fire, that which ye were wont to reject as false.”</i> (Q. 32:20) • <i>“In front of such a one is Hell, and he is given, for drink, boiling fetid water. In gulps will he sip it, but never will he be near swallowing it down his throat; death will come to him from every quarter, yet will he not die: and in front of him will be a chastisement unrelenting.”</i> (Q. 14:16-17) • <i>“. . . (They will be) in the midst of a fierce Blast of Fire and in Boiling water, and in the shades of Black Smoke: Nothing (will there</i>

<p>swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's Wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1'600 stadia." Revelation 14:18-20)</p>	<p>be) to refresh, nor please:" (Q. 56: 42-44)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "... those who deny (their Lord), - for them will be cut out a garment of Fire: over their heads will be poured out boiling water. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as (their) skins. In addition there will be maces of iron (to punish) them. Every time they wish to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said), "Taste ye the Penalty of Burning!" !Q. 22:19-22) • "(It is) the Fire of God (namely, having come into existence under the command of God); kindled (to a blaze), which rises above the hearts: It shall be made into a vault over them, in columns outstretched" (Q.104:7-9).
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The life of the inmates of Hell will, indeed, be a life of roasting in agony (Q. 4: 56; 14:17; 25:13-14; 25:55; 32:20). They will be held in bondage to the punishment brought on them by their evil beliefs and evil deeds (Q. 32:19-22; 69:30-37). Their faces will be covered with humiliation (Q. 88:23-26), and their surroundings will be pervaded by ugliness and darkness "*in the shades of black smoke: nothing will be there to refresh, or to please: for that they were wont to be indulged, before that, in wealth (and luxury), and persisted obstinately in wickedness supreme!*" (Q. 56:43-46). The life will be a life of horrible misery, even in respect of their "foods" and "drinks" which will be of the most painful (vile) type (Q. 14:17; 14:49-50; 37:62-67; 44:43-48; 55:43-44; 56:52-55; 78:21-25). (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972);

24.1 Spiritual Hell:

The Quran says that the hell-fire originates within the hearts of those who reject the Source of Goodness, namely: God; and the pattern of Goodness, namely: the Prophet(s) of God, and instead nurtured evil in their breasts. They will be those "*to whom God will not speak, nor will He look at them on the Day of Judgment: nor will He purify them (on that Day)*" (Q. 2:77); because in the hearts of those who earn Hell in this life "*is the stain of the (evil) which they do. Verily, from (the light of) their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled*" (Q. 83:14-15), becoming thus deprived of all the Blessings which will flow to the inmates of Heaven from the bounties of God. Every sinner thus carries with him into the world beyond death the instruments of his own punishment, and the Quran says truly:

- *“Verily you shall see hell, you shall see it with the eye of certainty” and “hell surrounds the unbelievers.”*

It does not say “will surround them” for it is round them even now. Some may object, *“If such is the case, then who can escape hell, for who is not more or less bound to the world by various ties of affection and interest?”* To this, Al Ghazali answered that there are some, notably *“Faqirs”* who have entirely disengaged themselves from love of the world. John the Baptist (Prophet Yahya), Prophet Elijah (Ilyas), Jesus Christ and of course Prophet Muhammad are such good example.

But if in a man’s heart there has been growing up a love of what is opposed to God (and may God preserve us from such a doom), the conditions of the next life will be altogether alien to him, and that which will cause joy to others will to him, cause misery. This may be illustrated by the following anecdote related by Al-Ghazali: ‘a certain scavenger went into the perfume-sellers’ bazaar and, smelling the sweet scents, fell down unconscious. People came round him and sprinkled rose-water upon him and held musk to his nose, but he only became worse. At last one came who had been a scavenger himself, he held a little filth under the (unconscious) man’s nose and he revived instantly, exclaiming, with a sigh of satisfaction *“Ah! This is perfume indeed!”* Thus in the next life a wording will no longer find the filthy lucre and the filthy pleasures of the world, the spiritual joys of that (next) world will be altogether alien to him, but (will only) increase his wretchedness (Al-Ghazali, *‘The Alchemy of Happiness’*).

The path of self purification is hard and steep says Mahatma Gandhi. To attain the perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action; to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. (Mohandas K. Gandhi). For the next world is a world of spirit and of the manifestation of the Beauty of God; happy is that man who has aimed at and acquired affinity with it. All austerities, devotions, studies have the acquirement of that affinity for their aim, and that affinity is love. This is the meaning of that saying in the Quran: *“He who has purified his soul is happy.”* Sins and lusts directly oppose the attainment of this affinity. Therefore, the Quran goes on to say: *“And he who has corrupted his soul is miserable.”* Those who are gifted with spiritual insight have really grasped the truth as a fact of experience, and not merely a traditional maxim. Their clear perception of it leads them to the conviction that he by whom it was spoken was a prophet indeed, just as a man who has studied medicine knows when he is listening to a physician. This is a kind of certainty which requires no support from miracles such as the conversion of a rod into a snake or walking upon water or red-hot coals, the credit of which may be shaken by apparently equally extraordinary miracles performed by magicians.

25. Common Grounds

The undisputable fact remains that there is a great deal of common ground between Muslims and Christians. Outside of Christianity, there is no other religion beside Islam that makes it an article of faith to believe in Jesus Christ (pbuh) and in God's revelation to him – the Gospel. Muslims believe that he was conceived supernaturally without a human father, and that he performed great miracles, like giving life to the dead and healing the blind and lepers, by God's power (permission). Muslims also believe in his second coming. Jesus and his mother Mary (pbuh), are highly respected and revered in Islam. In fact, Muslims are closer to the teaching of (the historical) Jesus (pbuh) in their beliefs and practices than are 'Christians' (Syed R. Ali). Both Muslims and Christians have a common heritage and both should benefit from it. This is the reason why the true teachings of Jesus (pbuh) need special attention.

Hassan Hathout (1995), in his book *'Reading the Muslim Mind,'* (American Trust Publication), gave an indication of the vastness of the common grounds. He said: *"The commonalities that Islam shares with Judaism and Christianity are vast, and its reality is very different from the stereotype that is held by a major segment of the population in the West. Islam, in fact is nearer to both Christianity and Judaism than they are to each other, since it recognizes both as religion based upon divine revelation, whereas the Jews recognize neither Christianity nor Islam as such. In this respect it would seem that the term "Judeo-Christian" is a misnomer, and in my opinion it was coined, politically, for the sole purpose of excluding Muslims. A more appropriate description of our current civilization would be Judeo-Christian-Islamic, in that the three religions are rooted in the Abrahamic tradition and the civilization of the Islamic era furnished the foundation for the present civilization. It was a civilization in which Muslims, Christians, and others lived in safety and justice under a system of tolerance and cooperation."* (Hassan Hathout, p. 16-17).

If all true prophets received their original teaching from the same 'Teacher' (God – their Creator), it is only natural that we find similarities between their own teachings and the scriptures handed down to them. The Quran states:

- *"The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah – that which We have sent by inspiration to thee (Muhammad) – and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no divisions therein: To those who worship other things than God, hard is the (way) to which thou callest them. God chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him)."* (Q. 42: 13)

The stories of Abraham and later Prophets abound in the Bible and the Qur'an with uncanny similarities. Perhaps that was why Muhammad was accused of copying from the Bible, which is quite unfortunate. Maurice Bucaille,

the French Medical Doctor and Author of *'La Bible, le Coran et la Science'* wrote in response to this accusation thus: *" . . . since in the West, Jews, Christians and Atheists are unanimous in stating (without a scrape of evidence however) that Muhammad wrote the Quran or had it written as an imitation of the Bible. It is claimed that stories of religious history in the Quran resume Biblical stories. This attitude is as thoughtless as saying that Jesus Himself duped His contemporaries by drawing inspiration from the Old Testament during His preaching: the whole of Mathew's Gospel is based on this continuation of the Old Testament, as we have seen already. What expert in exegesis would dream of depriving Jesus of His status as God's envoy for this reason? This is nevertheless the way that Muhammad is judged more often than not in the West: "all he did was to copy the Bible" they say. It is a summary judgment that does not take account of the fact that the Quran and the Bible provide different versions of a single event. People prefer not to talk about the differences in the descriptions. They are pronounced to be the same and thus scientific knowledge need not be brought in.* (Dr. Maurice Bucaille, p.124).

It therefore makes the hypothesis advanced by those who see Muhammad as the author of the Quran quite untenable. How could a man, from being illiterate, become the most important author, in terms of literary merit, in the whole of Arabic literature (and in fact, the world!) How could he then pronounce truths of a scientific nature that no other human being could possibly have developed at the time (over fourteen hundred years ago), and all this without once making the slightest error in his pronouncements on the subjects! Before the advent of Muhammad (God's peace and blessing be upon him), the seventh-century Arabs of Makkah (Mecca) were not capable of establishing a civilization of which the hallmark was knowledge, for they were generally ignorant and illiterate. This was confirmed by the Quran:

- *"It is He Who has sent amongst the unlettered, an apostle from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, - although they had been, before, in manifest error. As well as (to confer all these benefits upon) others of them, who have not already joined them: And He (God) is Exalted in Might, Wise."*(Quran 62:2-3)

It was Prophet Muhammad's call that shook them to their foundations and turned their social structure upside down. He was commanded to:

- *" . . . Call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as thou art commanded, nor follow thou their vain desires; but say: "I believe in the Book which God has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. God is our Lord and your Lord: for us (is the responsibility for) our deeds, and for you for your deeds. There is no*

contention between us and you. God will bring us together, and to Him is (our) final goal.” (Q. 42: 15)

Though the call is not to his kinsmen alone but to all, they were transformed by that call and that divine message, which they accepted and set off in every direction of the then-known world, changing the course of history as they went along.

From amongst humanity, Jews and Christians are the nearest (in faith) to Muslims and are given the honorary title of “People of the Book” (or People of the Scriptures). They are believed to be fellow believers in the One God (monotheism) and the recipients of scriptures from Him. And because they believe in the Oneness of God, Jews and Christians have special status within the Muslim community. That is why such harmonious relationships existed between Jews, Christians and Muslims at the height of the Muslim Empire’s glory. Muslims are to *“forgive and be indulgent” toward them until Allah commands otherwise* (Quran 2: 109). They share the belief in the line of prophethood and many of our Jewish and Christian brethren are taken by surprise when they learn that all biblical prophets are also embraced by Muslims as Islamic prophets. It is pertinent to note that the religion of Jesus of Nazareth was obviously that of Moses and the Jewish people, and therefore not a new religion. Muslims feel that their love for God and love for Jesus (pbuh) is as much their right as it is for Christians. Majority of Christians do not know that no person can be a true Muslim unless he believes in, and accept Jesus (pbuh) as a righteous Prophet of God. (Syed R. Ali, p.17).

However, the religion preached by Paul is the new introduction or interpolation, which was not practiced or advocated by Jesus when he was alive. In other words, Jesus while alive never advocated or believed in the new Doctrine propagated by St. Paul, which he did in the name of Jesus. The Teachings of Jesus and of Paul are clearly opposed to each other, but the Church takes them to be the same. Andrew Douglas-Hamilton, underlined this point in an introduction to a Book, thus:

“Only great determination, great sympathy, can bring true brotherhood and understanding between nations and fear of the unknown is the greatest obstacle. Many Muslims looking westward at the lost moral values feel it should be a simple matter to introduce Islam into the spiritual vacuum, but such hopes are a matter of building castles in the sky. Mass education of the people necessary for the growth of western technology and industry has shown those people all too clearly that religion, as they know it, is based on dogmas unsupported by fact. Consequently, it is small wonder that the intellectual, elite of this industrial society, were the first to withdraw their support, finding a great sense of freedom in their new-found independence from the monopolistic priesthood of the Christian Church; a priesthood which had contained the spread

of education over the centuries. For such people, religion whatever its name, is seen not only as outdated superstition but as a restrictive force and a hindrance to the quest for further scientific knowledge. Born Muslims, unused to interference between themselves and Allah, appear not to appreciate that, for the lapsed Christian, the loss of faith is only the dropping of a man-made philosophy which in the past, had some expediency as a method of maintaining law and order". (A. Douglas-Hamilton in Muhd Ata'Ur Rahim's 'Jesus a Prophet of Islam', page 4).

A Social Worker from Canada, Thomas Irving, gave an insight from his experience with religion. He said: *"In my first year course in oriented literature, I had learned of the progression of human thought in its attempt to perfect its conception of God. Jesus had culminated the teaching of a loving God. This idea had been lost in a cloud of lethargically daggered and atavistic paganism; a Beneficent, Merciful Deity had been obscured by an implacable overlord who could only be reached through an intercessor."* (Thomas Irving, in *"Islam Our Choice"* by Ebrahim Bewany 1963)

Dr. Maurice Bucaille (MD) confirmed that not so very long ago, the majority of Christians know only selected sections of the Gospels that were read and translated to them at services or commented upon during sermons. With the exception of the Protestants, it was not customary for Christians to read the Gospel in its entirety. Books of religious instruction only contained extracts; the 'in extensor' text hardly circulated at all. He adds further: *"In the West the critical study of the scriptures is something quite recent. For hundreds of years people were content to accept the Bible – both Old and New Testaments – as it was. A reading produced nothing more than remark vindicating it. It would have been a sin to level the slightest criticism at it. The clergy were privileged in that they were easily able to have a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, while the majority of laymen heard only selected reading as part of sermon or the liturgy"*(Maurice Bucaille: p.v & 44) .

A former Baptist Church Minister, S. S. Mufassir, in an article taken from *'Impact International'*, had this to say in this regard. He said: *"There are an amazing number of things which the Christian reader of the New Testament misses even in the most thorough reading, because his scrutiny is controlled carefully by official Church dogma. My own case is instructive. I was raised and baptized in the Baptist Church and spent much of my youth seriously studying the Bible and religious discipline. At a still young age, I entered the ministry. I thought I knew the Bible well. As paradoxical as it seems, I must admit that I never possessed as complete knowledge of the Bible as a Christian as I have gained since embracing Islam. The reason is that, in general, the Christian interpreter presents a puzzle with major parts missing and those parts can be supplied only by Islam. The Christian sees the Bible as an end in itself, whereas in*

reality it is but an indicator pointing the way to something else which was then yet to come. Until this event occurred, the Bible was an incomplete, unfulfilled Book, and many of its profound prophecies could not be grasped completely. Christian theologians and scholars, eager to impress their following, often erred in assigning premature "fulfillments" to those fore- gleams of the future. When the prophecies actually came true these erroneous conjectures had assumed the status of dogma, blinding Christians to the fruition of their own beliefs." (S.S. Mufassir 28th December 1973)

Chapter THREE

CHRISTIAN/MUSLIM RELATIONS

Introduction:

Christianity and Islam, the two great religions of the world, with over a billion followers each, in spite of having many things in common, have yet a wide gulf separating them. It is unfortunate that though the cardinal beliefs of the two faiths have the same historical origin; fertile minds within, have succeeded in introducing strange dogmas and ideologies which have crept in with time, even on the basic essence of the nature of God. The main reason for this gulf is ignorance and vanity (pride): the refusal to understand each other's' viewpoints. The adherents of both faiths need to explore the possible avenues provided by their common heritage to bring the two together for a mutual bonding and peace to manifest. There is no gain-saying that a modicum of bias is unavoidable. It is conceivable that each camp may feel the need to manufacture arguments simply to justify their strongly held beliefs and dogmas. The lack of adequate knowledge regarding each other's' faith has been the unfortunate problem. It would appear that each party knows only that which concern itself but not enough about the faith of the other and no willingness to learn the truth about the other's faith. There is of course, the propaganda that is at work which ensures that those who may wish to learn the truth are cofounded and prevented from succeeding.

Of the three traditions of Middle Eastern origin, Judaism has historically restricted the message to the Jewish people and has regarded with skepticism the claims of Jesus and Muhammad (pbuh) to be new manifestations of the divine scheme of revelation and guidance. Similarly, Christians have throughout their history rejected the prophetic status of Muhammad (pbuh). Catholic theology traditionally consigns Abraham to purgatory and Muhammad to the inferno, along with his followers. But Islam, coming after its two great predecessors, was able to recognize the genuineness of the prophetic mission of the Jewish Prophets and of the messianic status of Jesus Christ. (M. Ata-Ur Rahim? p.7-8).

From its inception the Islamic society was a pluralistic society. Several Jewish communities existed in Arabia, particularly in the city of Yatrib (present day Medina). Their Judaism was based on the Talmud and strongly influenced by the Apocrypha. Christianity was also present in that area. The Christians in the east were Nestorians, supported by the Sassanid Empire. In the north of the Peninsula were the Monophysites, vassals of the Byzantine Empire. As soon as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) migrated to 'Madinah' (Medina) to establish the

earliest Islamic state, a treaty was concluded between all the tribes, including the Jewish tribes who lived there, establishing religious freedom and equal rights and duties. Because they believe in the Oneness of God, Jews and Christians have special status within the Muslim community. The Quran expressly forbids Muslims to force anyone to convert to Islam (Q. 2:256). That is why such harmonious relationships existed between Jews, Christians and Muslims at the height of the Muslim Empire's glory.

The facts concerning Islam are not generally known in the West (Christian world). This is hardly surprising, when we consider the way so many generations in the West were instructed in the religious problems facing humanity and the ignorance in which they were kept about anything related to Islam. Terms are used which give or maintain false notion that Islam involved in beliefs that were spread by the work of a man among which God (in the Christian sense) had no place. (M. Ata-Ur Rahim, p.ii)

Name and Identity

The first thing that needed consideration in discussing the contrast between Islam and Christianity is their identity, which is embedded in their names. This helps us to appreciate the origin, make up, focus and vital (propelling) force behind any organization or establishment. To validate the name of an organization we have recourse to rely on two factors. A record of such establishment and the authority which has certified it. Similarly, a religion such as Christianity or Islam, being Organizations with over a billion followers, ought to have the origin of their establishment authenticated. The two factors we need to verify are: the origin of the name, and the statutory authority to which we can link the names.

So, in order to establish the origin of the name "Christianity," and "Islam", we start by asking the following questions:

- ❖ Are the names 'Christianity' and "Islam" really the intended names for the so-called religion of Jesus Christ, and that of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)?
- ❖ How did the names come about or in what circumstance did they originate?
- ❖ Who gave or coined the names; i.e. who is the naming authority?

The Concept of 'Christianity' by definition:

Starting with Christianity, the obvious source of reliable information in this case would be the Holy Bible itself, which is why we must turn to it for answers. What we can deduce from the Bible is that 'Christianity' was not the (intended) name of the Faith that Jesus of Nazareth preached. Jesus (pbuh) and his twelve disciples never call what they preached "Christianity". We learn from the Apostle Paul that the 'movement' or 'following' which was assumed to be a

Sect (sectarian), was formerly referred simply as 'The way'. We note this fact from the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul was questioned by the Governor, as to his faith, his response in part, is:

❖ “. . . However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers, as a **follower of the Way**, which they call a Sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets.” (Acts 24:14)

We should note that he did not say he was a Christian, but “a follower of the Way”. No doubt, the name 'Christianity' is derived from the word 'Christ', as Buddhism was derived from the name Buddha, and is used for identification. The terms 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' are not found in the Bible. No Israelite Prophet mentioned the word Judaism; neither did Jesus, while on earth, ever claimed to establish Christianity as a religion and he never called himself a Christian. The Bible also reveals to us the following facts:

1. The word 'Christianity' is not found anywhere in the Old Testament. But in books of the New Testament however, the word 'Christian' is mentioned in a few places (Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, 1st Peter 4:16). This is understandable because the term was coined much later, when Jesus (pbuh) had left this world.
2. We read in the Bible (Acts 11:25-26) that the name 'Christian' was used for the first time in Antioch. In short, historical records reveal that the name was first used derogatorily by Jews and pagans in Antioch; in other words, by foes rather than by friends.
3. As to who gave this name, there is no doubt that it was neither God nor Jesus (pbuh) that gave the name. The name was given after Jesus (pbuh) was no more, which means that Jesus never knew that his followers were called 'Christians'. Therefore the name bears the authority of neither God nor Jesus (phub).

Our next concern would be how to define the term 'Christianity'. This immediately poses a problem for us especially when we consider how the name originated. However, let's attempt to define who deserve to be called a Christian. Putting aside the derogatory infernece attached to the name, three options are worth considering:

- i. Firstly, one may say that a 'Christian' is one who believes in Jesus Christ (pbuh). This makes the term to be applicable to others as well. Muslim also believes in Jesus – it is an article of faith for Muslims to believe in him. So, Muslims can also be called 'Christians' by this standard. Muslims feel that their love for God and love for Jesus (pbuh) is as much their right as it is for Christians. No person can be a Muslim unless he believes in the miraculous birth and prophethood of Jesus (pbuh).
- ii. Secondly, one may say equally that a Christian is one who follows the teachings of the (original) historical Jesus (pbuh). Muslims claim to follow his teaching more than those who call themselves Christians,

because many of the Biblical practices attributed to him, as contained in the Bible are practiced by Muslims. Many of his teachings are ignored by the generality of Christians today, as they prefer to follow the practices laid down by the Church instead, much of which contradict what is in the Bible. (see details later). Perhaps two simple but significant examples may be given to underscore the point:

We find evidence in the Holy Bible that two particular teachings of Jesus (from the Bible) are ingrained practices of Muslims also.

Firstly, there is the Muslim mode of greeting: *“Assalam Alaikum”* or *‘Peace be upon you’* which is the standard form of greeting by all Muslims. This happens to be the practice of Jesus Christ (pbuh) also. We see in the Bible that:

❖ *“ . . . Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace with you’”* (John 20:19; 21& 26; Luke 24: 36)

Jesus, in fact when sending his disciples on a mission, instructed that they should use this form of greeting when they enter a house:

❖ *“As you enter a house, greet it [say: ‘Peace be with you’ – in TEV]. If the house is worthy let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.”* (Matthew 10: 12-13)

Secondly, when making statements which one has no control over or no certainty, Muslims are taught to use the phrase *“Insha-Allah”*, which means *‘God willing’* or *‘if God wills’*. Again, we find this instruction in the Bible:

❖ *“ . . . Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say: ‘If it is the Lord’s will we will live and do this or that.’”* (James 4: 14-15)

These two instances go to provide ground for Muslims to feel that they deserve to be ‘Christians’ also because they observe the teachings of Jesus (pbuh).

- iii) The third option in defining a Christian is to suggest that a Christian is one who worships Jesus Christ (pbuh) which is the case today among most people who call themselves Christians, though many among them would object to this definition. Muslims particularly find it unacceptable. Why? Simply because Jesus (pbuh) never claimed (or said): *“I am God”* or that he is co-equal and co-eternal with God; neither did he ever tell anyone: *“You must worship me, because I am God!”* There is no evidence of a categorical utterance of such statement by Jesus (pbuh) even once. What obtained are only the curious interpolations that pop up several years after his death.

The Concept of 'Islam' by definition:

'*Islam*' is an Arabic word which derives its meaning from two sources '*Taslim*' i.e. submission and '*Salam*' i.e. peace, and it is in essence, a complete and integrated ideology that governs the relationship between man and his creator and the relationships of human beings amongst themselves.

To validate the name "Islam" likewise, we also have to rely on the Islam's Holy Book - the Qur'an - for answers. The name and identity of the faith (religion) practiced by 'Muslims' i.e. those who believe in the religion of 'Islam' is not given (or coined) by the Prophet Muhammad himself or by his disciples or by the Arab people, or by any other people or even by practicing Muslims themselves, neither was it acquired through usage in the course of time. "Islam" is the original name of this religion revealed by God, as recorded in the holy Qur'an. It said:

- ❖ *"... It is He (God) who has named you Muslims both before and in this (Revelation). (Quran 22:78).*
- ❖ *"The (only true) religion (way of life) in the sight of God is Islam."(Qur'an 3:19).*

Allah further said to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the Quran:

- ❖ *"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you 'Al Islam' as your religion". (Qur'an 5:3).*
- ❖ *"if anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never it be accepted of him; and in the hereafter he shall be among the losers". (Quran 3:85).*

The long and short of it is that, the name 'Islam' is given by none other than Allah Himself. As a matter of fact, the Qur'an refers to a number of prophets (God's peace be upon them all [pbuh]) who appeared before the advent of Prophet Muhammad as Muslims. Thus the religion of Abraham, according to Quran was Islam and in fact the religion of all the prophets, as the Qur'an tells us,:

- *"... the creed of your forefather Abraham. It is He (God) Who has named you Muslims, both before and in His (book), that the Apostle may be a witness for you, and you may be witness for mankind." (Q 22:78)*

As such, Prophet Muhammad had called the religion by that name and had called his followers 'Muslims'.

Islam connotes *submission, surrender and obedience*. As a religion, Islam stand for complete submission and obedience to Allah – and that is why it is called **Islam**. When asked to tell about Islam, Prophet Muhammad said: *"Islam is to testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."* This is one of the reasons why it is not

acceptable to call adherents of the Islamic faith “Mohammedans” in place of “Muslims.” Even though Muslims are the followers of Muhammad (pbuh), they do not worship Muhammad. There are two elements to the meaning:

- a) **Submission** to the Will of the One and only God; the True God.
- b) **Peace** (the same as in ‘*As-Salam Alaikum*’ which means ‘*peace be unto you*’).

In fact, these two meanings are interrelated and inseparable. Thus, the fullest meaning of Islam is ‘the attainment of peace through submission to the Will of the One True God’. Peace in Islam is bounded with ‘faith in God’. As the Qur’an declares:

❖ “O Ye who believe, come all of you into submission (unto Him) (Q. 2:208).

‘**Peace**’, being the lateral meaning of the word signifies that one can achieve real peace of body and of mind only through submission and obedience to the Will of God. Such a life of obedience brings in peace of the heart and establishes real peace in the society at large. The Quran has it:

- “Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the thought of Allah – indeed, it is in the thought of Allah alone that the heart (of men) doeth really find rest – those who believe and act righteously, joy is for them, and a blissful home to return to.” (Qur’an,14: 29)

Furthermore, Islam means peace between the Creator and His creatures. It consists in submission to the will of God, which wider significance includes:

- a sense of security and performance, which is unknown in this life;
- soundness, freedom from defects, perfection, as in the word ‘*Salim*’;
- preservation, salvation, deliverance, as in the word ‘*Salama*’;
- salutation, (an initial step towards developing) accord with those around us;
- resignation in the sense that we are satisfied and not discontented;
- freedom from any jarring element; i.e. besides the ordinary meaning of peace.

From the fore-going, we see that the word also carries some functional meaning and not just a name for identification. Its meaning conveys the essence of the concept and objective of the religion. All who have faith should bow to the will of God and be Muslims. Such is the peace which Islam ensures to man, in response to his aspiration. Consequently, for the devout Muslim, submission to the Will of God implies:

- Faith,
- Doing right; - being an example to others to do right, and having the power to see that the right prevails.
- Eschewing wrong; - being an example to others to eschew wrong, and having the power to see that wrong and injustice are defeated.

Islam is further distinguished by the fact that **the Muslim who must be at peace with others must be also at peace with himself**. This is a necessary effect of the Muslim's total submission to From the fore-going, we see that the word also carries some functional meaning and not just a name for identification. Its meaning conveys the essence of the concept and objective of the religion. the will of God. Islam is unique in the compatibility and the harmony it creates between the spiritual and material aspects of life. The Muslim's conduct in material matters is controlled and channeled by the spiritual teachings of his faith, as those familiar with Islamic law concerning business transaction or personal conduct may well appreciate. (Hassan Hatout, in 'Reading the Muslim Mind,' p. xiii)

Bishop Lefroy (1907), in a book, expressed an admiration. He said, *"One may notice and admire the kind of chivalrous pride which the average Mohammedan takes in his faith"*. (Bishop Lefroy, in 'Mankind and the Church', P.289 – London 1907).

The Concept of 'Islam' in the Bible

Except through its meaning, as we have already seen (i.e.: submission to the will of the one and only God), the term "Islam" cannot be found in the Bible for obvious reason, one of which is simply because Islam is an Arabic word, and the (present day) Bible is an English Translation from ancient Greek and the Greek translation from Hebrew and Aramaic documents, the language in which it was originally recorded.

Peace is used in a comprehensive sense – peace with the Creator, peace of mind, peace at heart, peace in society, etc. as Jesus spoke about. He referred to:

- the peace that was his Peace;
- the Peace that he was passing over to others;
- the Peace that was not worldly (peace);
- the Peace that was to comfort the heart; and,
- the Peace that was to remove fear.

These shades of meaning of peace do not seem to occur as frequently as does the first one. Following are some of the Bible verses which are suggestive of this translation:

- ❖ *"The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever."* (Isaiah 32:17)
- ❖ (Jesus' words) *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."* (John 14:27).

The 'Peace' to which Jesus referred here, was not a worldly peace; it was the one which he called his food and mission, as we have read in John 4:34. He

possessed it and wanted to pass it on to others. It was to remove the fear of damnation, and was to comfort the heart for life eternal.

But one other factor allows us to find Islam as a concept in the Bible because “Islam” is a translatable word. And since it bears some meaning, it lends itself to translation. Obviously, if we want to look for the term “Islam” in the Bible, we have to look for its translated meaning only i.e. **“Submission to the will of the one True God.”**

The word “submission” means total obedience (loving and willing surrender). In the Biblical terminology, it means “keeping the commandments” or “doing the will of God.” We find these phrases in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and New Testament. The following examples are instructive.

i) In the Old Testament we read about what God requires of his people:

❖ *“So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God; to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his decrees that I am commanding you this day for your own well-being.” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)*

These verses (12 &13) clearly state that God requires his people, to fear Him (revere: be in awe). In one phrase, this means **“total loving and willing submission to God”**. This phrase is the meaning of the Arabic word “Islam”.

But because God is for all people in the world, the creator of all, it is conceivable that he will require of all the people of the world what He required of the Israelites. It is evident therefore, that God wants man to be submissive to Him. This translates to being a “Muslim” (a submitter to God’s Will) wherever he is or wherever man finds himself, as we read in the great commandment.

❖ *“Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Build them as a sign on your hand, fix them as a frontlet on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)*

The same message was proclaimed by other Prophets of God. A few examples will suffice:

ii) David charged his son Solomon, saying:

❖ *“I am about to go the way of all the earth,” he said, “so be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires: walk in his ways, and keep his decree and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the law of*

Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.” (1st King 2:2-3) see also (1st Kings 8:60-61), (1st Samuel 12:14, 15 and 24) and (Joshua 24:22-24)

- iii) We find Jesus (pbuh) teaching the same in the New Testament: – to keep the commandment, and to do the will of God, i.e. to submit to the will of God. Examples of this are: Eternal life through submission to God’s Commands:
 - ❖ *“Then someone came to him and said, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? And he said to him, why do you ask me about what is good? “There is*
 - ❖ *and Islam is produced here below,: only one who is good, if you wish to enter in to life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:16-17)*
- iv) Find the Kingdom of heaven through submission to the will of God:
 - ❖ *“Not everyone who says to me; Lord; Lord; will enter the kingdom of heaven but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven”. (Matthew 7:21)*
- v) Even the word ‘submit’ is used in the Bible:
 - ❖ *“Submit yourself therefore to God” (James 4:7) (i.e. be a Muslim).*
- vi) How humbly and beautifully Jesus (pbuh) showed his submission to God and declared it as his mission:
 - ❖ *“I can do nothing **on my own**. As I hear, I Judge, and my judgment is just because I seek to do **not my own will**, but of **Him who sent me**.” (John 5:30)*
 - ❖ *“My food is to do **the will of Him who sent me**, and to complete **His work**.” (John 4:34)*
- vii) Jesus also declared his kinship to those whose faith (Way) is to submit to the will of God (Muslim):
 - ❖ *“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, is my brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:50)*

Considering the points raised above, does it not strike a chord that all the Prophets of God including Jesus were virtually teaching the same thing, namely: **‘submission to the will of God’?** Is it not possible that they were in fact calling their people to ‘Islam’?

Let’s consider a few factors in summary:

1. The Term ‘Muslim’ (in its essence) goes back much further than Muhammad, because the Qur’an referred to other people from the past as Muslims (submitters to His Will).
2. Islam is not a new religion, which was founded or started by Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), neither is Christianity (in its origin), for Jesus said he came to complete the Laws of Moses.

3. Prophet Muhammad's role was simply the completion of the original message, fulfillment of the original religion, and presentation of the final, pure and permanent guidance to mankind, as revealed to him by God. The Qur'an tells us:-
 - *"Say (O Muslim): We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: we make no distinction between any of them and we bow to God (Islam)" (Qur'an 2:136)*
 - *"the same religion had He established for you as that He enjoined upon Noah - that which We revealed to thee - that We enjoined upon Abraham, Moses and Jesus, that you should remain steadfast in religion and make no divisions therein." (Qur'an 42:13)*
4. Jesus' role was similarly aimed at the extension of the original message, the fulfillment of the original religion of Abraham and Moses, as he said:
 - *"Think not that I am come to destroyed the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroyed, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one dot or one title shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17-18)*
5. All the prophets sought after the same thing; to serve the will of the Almighty God and to uphold the commandments.

Classification of Basic concepts of the 2 Monotheistic Faiths

Dr. M.F.R. Ansari (1972) classified the basic concepts of the three Monotheistic Religions. To keep within the scope of this book, only that of Christianity and Islam has been reproduced:

Concepts	Christianity	Islam
Concept of God	Monotheistic with the concept of a compound Deity – the Triune God, consisting of three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.	Monotheistic with the concept of one and indivisible God, who neither incarnates nor has any partner or son or compeer.
Outlook	Mystical, earthly life being conceived as incompatible with human yearning.	Universal and integralistic on the basis of spiritual orientation of human life.
Standpoint	Mystical	Dynamic and comprehensic.
Ideal	Salvation of the individual in the life-	Realistic of the status of Vicegerency of God for entire humanity.

	after-death	
Standard of behavior	Ascetic. In fact, no standard of behavior or principle of evaluation is needed, because it would necessitate obedience to law and thus annul the efficacy of Atonement.	Integralistic and comprehensive, in terms of the concept of 'fulfillment' and on the basis of the model of comprehensive Human Perfection enshrined in the Personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
Mission	To lead its followers into Divine Grace through the mystery of Vicarious atonement.	Establishment of all that is good for human beings and eradication of all that is evil, on the basis of godliness and unity of humankind.
Programme	Ritualistic and Ascetic exercise for the attainment of "Saintliness".	Constant spiritual, moral and intellectual struggle (Jihad) for the fulfillment of the above mission in terms of: i. Conquest of the lower self by the Higher self; ii) Conquest of Evil by Good in respect of social order; iii). Conquest of Nature for the realization of 'Vicegerency of God'.

Christian / Muslim Attitudes

Nothing brings out the contrast between Islam and Christianity so much as the comparison between the Muslim attitude towards Jesus (pbuh) and the Christian attitude towards Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). For, while Muslims without exception believe Jesus was a great prophet of Allah who they love and respect, as they love and respect their own prophet in accordance with the Qur'anic injunctions and the teaching of Prophet Muhammad. The Quran states that there is no difference between any of the Prophets (from Adam down to Muhammad, the seal of prophethood). However, many Christians not only reject Muhammad but are never tired of speaking of him in the most disparaging manner.

Chawkat Georges Moucarray (1984) a Christian Arab, in a book: '*Islam and Christianity at the Crossroads*' admits that: "*It is true, however, that some Christians have a negative approach to Islam and to its prophet. I myself have often been shocked and embarrassed by some Christians' hasty judgments on Muhammad, whom they consider as an impostor, a false prophet and even an anti-Christ. Such judgments, far from being inspired by the teaching of Jesus and*

his apostles, betray a great ignorance of Islam and a lamentable lack of understanding of the biblical doctrine of revelation. . . . Men who were well-informed about the Christian faith and who had even been members, for a time, of the apostolic communities, began spreading doctrines that were alien to the gospel. As a result, the apostles had to expose them as heretical. But the early Christians were also faced with spiritual phenomena for which they were not really prepared; so the apostles told them to examine these things carefully, to hold on to the good and to avoid every kind of evil (I Thessalonians 5:19-22).

But what of Islam, which appeared some six centuries after Christianity in an area where Christianity was scarcely present and poorly represented?" queried Chawcat G. Moucarry. He offered a response to his question: "It is not a question of making a value judgment on the religious life of Muslims; only God knows men's heart! Taken as a whole, Christians probably do not live up to the teachings of the gospel any better than Muslims follow the teaching of the Quran. But, when a Muslim asks for an opinion of Islam, it is the Christian's duty to formulate a fair and informed assessment of that religion. The Christian's assessment, on the other hand, must be set in the context of the biblical view of revelation and its specific standards;. . . Islam also presents a coherent body of teaching about God, Creation, Revelation, Mankind, the general Resurrection and Day of Judgment, to mention only the major Quranic themes. In their broad outline, these themes fit the general framework of Judae-Christian revelation." (C.G. Moucarry (1984), pp. 97-98).

From the fore-going we can say that there is a strong possibility that the fundamental beliefs of both Islam and Christianity are basically the same. An impartial study of the lives of Jesus and Muhammad (pbut) shows that these prominent leaders, of Islam and Christianity were godly men, completely dedicated to the task of preaching God's religion; which underlying duty is to deliver man from error and sin and making the will of Allah prevail in the world. But a further examination from the facts of history and the text of the Scriptures is however necessary to compare certain aspects of the religious beliefs of Jesus from the Bible, and that of Muhammad from the Quran, to enable us establish the faithfulness and reliability of those who shouldered the responsibility of delivering the message from the hands of the medium who conveyed the complete message of God to mankind.

Authenticity of Revelations:

The followers of some faith would want us to believe that because one scripture is older than the other it should be considered more authentic or less contaminated by change. This is not necessarily so otherwise it will mean that the Hindu scriptures are more authentic than the Old Testament which in turn should be more authentic than the New Testament. It is obvious that the degree of preservation of the original is what should matter and not its age. From this, it follows that the truth of either religion depends on the accuracy

with which the inspired message has been recorded and on the textual purity of the scripture. If the message which was revealed by God was misreported or tempered with or altered, to that extent the religion may be regarded as a deviation from the truth (Ojobi). If we take into consideration the objective facts of religious history, we must place the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Qur'an on the same level as being collections of written revelations. Although this attitude is a principle held by Muslims, the faithful in the West under the predominantly Judo-Christian influence refuse to ascribe to the Qur'an the character of a book of revelation. Such an attitude may be explained by the position each religious community adopts towards the other with regards to the scriptures. Since Christianity takes no account of any revelation subsequent to Jesus and his Apostles, it therefore rules out the Qur'an.

The stories of Abraham and later Prophets abound in the Bible and the Qur'an with uncanny similarities. Perhaps that was why Muhammad was accused of copying from the Bible. Maurice Bucaille, the French Medical Doctor and Author of '**La Bible, le Coran et la Science**' wrote in response; ". . . since in the West, Jews, Christians and Atheists are unanimous in stating (without a scrape of evidence however) that Muhammad wrote the Quran or had it written as an imitation of the Bible. It is claimed that stories of religious history in the Quran resume Biblical stories. This attitude is as thoughtless as saying that Jesus Himself duped His contemporaries by drawing inspiration from the Old Testament during His preaching: the whole of Mathew's Gospel is based on this continuation of the Old Testament, as we have seen already. What expert in exegesis would dream of depriving Jesus of His status as God's envoy for this reason? This is nevertheless the way that Muhammad is judged more often than not in the West: "all he did was to copy the Bible" they say. It is a summary judgment that does not take account of the fact that the Quran and the Bible provide different versions of a single event. People prefer not to talk about the differences in the descriptions. They are pronounced to be the same and thus scientific knowledge need not be brought in. (Dr. Maurice Bucaille [MD], 1979, p.124).

The Holy Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in portions as a series of revelations spanning over twenty three years. His life passed through very complicated and varied circumstances; events of very different types took place. Indeed, the situation remained throughout such as to invite discrepancies of principles by him. Had the Holy Quran been a product of the Prophet's mind, it was bound to have registered numerous inconsistencies, and those inconsistencies were bound to have been present in it because its piecemeal revelation was recorded once for all, on all the occasions of revelation and was preserved as such. But under the circumstances that we have noted, the presence of consistency in it is a definite and miraculous proof of the truth of its revelation, as well as of its preservation, by God.

Also, if Muhammad (pbuh) had not been truly a Divine Messenger, living his entire life under the guidance of God, his conduct was bound to have registered numerous discrepancies. But we find his whole conduct and his entire career as absolutely self-consistent. Rev. Bosworth-Smith confesses this fact in these words: *“On the whole the wonder to me is not how much, but how little, under different circumstances, Muhammad differed from himself. In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitary of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the exile of Medina, in the acknowledged conqueror, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heraclitus, we can still trace a substantial unity. I doubt whether any other man, whose external condition changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them: the accidents are changed, the essence seems to be same in all.”* (Rev. Bosworth-Smith in *‘Mohammad & Mohammadanism’*, London 1874). Furthermore, Muhammad has been known to be unlettered, that is, he could not read or write. In fact, the accusation is an unwitting tribute to him. Muslims are proud to call him the unlettered Prophet, an epithet given to him by Allah in the Qur’an. He was not only unlettered, he was also not taught by any human agent.

Islam is a call to Monotheism, the worship of one God, and the return to belief in God (Allah). In its origin, Islam is the belief of Abraham in the unity and oneness of the one God. Muslims have “surrendered unto Him.”(Quran 2:136). This belief in the God of Abraham was handed down from Abraham through Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes. It is also the religion that Moses and all the prophets “received from their Lord.” (Quran 2:136). Islam, according to the Quran, is the religion “which is revealed unto us”, that is, to Believers through the revelations given to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and it is the religion “which was revealed unto Abraham.”

Though Chawkat Georges Moucarry, a Christian, admits that Islam is a true monotheism, he still accuses it of rejecting ‘the divine trinity’, an act which is only logical. By that I mean that true monotheism is antithesis of Trinity, for it is more akin to Polytheism. It would be contradictory and illogical for anyone to believe the two concepts at the same time. Here is what Moucarry said: *“Islam was, it is true, the triumph of monotheism over Arab polytheism. Its crowing success was the capitulation of the people of Mecca and the abolition of Idolatry in the Ka’aba which, from that time on, became the temple of Islamic monotheism. Islam also presents a coherent body of teaching about God, Creation, Revelation, Mankind, the general Resurrection and Day of Judgment, to mention only the major Quranic themes. In their broad outline, these themes fit the general framework of Judae-Christian revelation. But it must at least be said that Quranic doctrine knows little of the incarnation of the son of God, misunderstands the divine Trinity and knows nothing at all of the redemption of mankind by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Muslim theology has*

explicitly rejected these doctrines, which are central to biblical revelation. (p. 104).

Chawkat Georges Moucarry (1984) again admits that: *“These accusations leveled against Christians are not without historical basis. Church history indeed shows that Christians have not always been monotheists beyond reproach! If all Christian Arabs of Muhammad’s time had kept strictly to their master’s teaching, they would perhaps not have been so severely criticized by the Quran. Their beliefs and practices concerning the divinity of Christ and the holy trinity, such as are referred to and rightly condemned in the Quran, perfectly illustrates the serious departures from Christian truth of which those particular Christians were guilty. Their tritheism is completely foreign to biblical teaching. The same is true of their representation of Christ’s divinity in terms of earthly sonship beginning from the moment of Jesus’ conception in his mother’s womb. Their worship of monks and other religious leaders as well as Christ (Q. 9:31) is in open opposition to the teaching of Jesus.(Matt 23:8-12) This religious confusion certainly did nothing to clarify the position occupied by Jesus in authentic Christianity.”*

In an attempt to broaden our understanding of the origin of the Gospel, Maurice Bucaille has this to say: *“The majority of Christians believes that the Gospel were written by direct witnesses of life of Jesus and therefore constitute unquestionable evidence concerning the events high-lighting his life and preaching. One wonders, in the presence of such guarantees of authenticity, how it is possible to discuss the teachings derived from them and how one can cast doubt upon the validity of the Church as an institution applying the general instructions Jesus gave As far as the decades following Jesus’ mission are concerned, it must be understood that events did not at all happen in the way they have been said to have taken place and that Peter’s arrival in Rome in no way laid the foundation for the Church. On the contrary, from the time Jesus left earth to the second half of the second century, there was a struggle between two factions. One was what one might call Pauline Christianity and the other Judeo-Christianity. It was only very slowly that the first supplanted the second, and Pauline Christianity triumphed over Judeo-Christianity. . . . The Judeo-Christians have now disappeared as a community with any influence, but one still hears people talking about them under the general term of ‘Judaistic’. This is how Cardinal Danielou describes their disappearance:*

“When they were cut off from the Great Church, that gradually freed itself from its Jewish attachments, they petered out very quickly in the West. In the East however, it is possible to find traces of them in the third and fourth centuries A.D., especially in Palestine, Arabia, Transjordan, Syria and Mesopotamia. Others joined in the orthodoxy of the Great Church, at the same time preserving traces of Semitic cultures; some of these still persist in the

Churches of Ethiopia and Chaldea.” (Maurice Bucaile, (1979): *‘The Bible, the Quran and Science’*, p. 50-53)

So at this point, the Christian might want to ask: “Granted that Muslims recognize the authenticity of their predecessors’ messages, why then is the need for a new religious dispensation at all?” According to Abdul Wadod Shalabi in his book *‘Islam Religion of Life’*, edited by A. H. Murad (2006): *“The answer lies in humanity’s development as this has taken place through history. The religious system given to the wandering tribes at the time of Abraham was tailored to its age and to a certain set of cultural circumstances. With the advent of classical civilization, this system stood in need of re-articulation in a language intelligible in the Greco-Roman world. And when this world declined and was replaced by new civilizations, the revelation of Islam was inaugurated. In this sense, **there is no such thing as a new religion.** Eternal truth, in order that it may be fully understood, must present itself differently to different worlds. Thus Islam, despite certain real but superficial differences, is also the faith of Jesus, Abraham, and Moses.”*(p. 8-9).

Religious Tolerance

One of the charges leveled against the demand of Islamic nations to be ruled by Islamic laws pertains to the status of Christian (and Jewish) minorities who are citizens of those countries. This objection is being played upon and blown up by both the media and politicians although in reality it has no credence whatsoever. We will not be completely honest, however, without voicing a few (remarks and) apprehensions about the question of implementing the Shariah. In various instances it has been relegated to the realm of sloganism and emotionalism. Some over-enthusiastic youth have transformed it into a confrontation with fellows of other religions. The Shariah however, requires them to behave in a completely opposite way, aimed at dissipating fears, alleviating anxieties and exhibiting the ethics of good citizenship in a practical way, a task that mainstream Muslims and the great majority of Islamic movements are actively pursuing, although with hardly any coverage in the media or in professional political circles in the West.

Colonel Donald S. Rockwell an American citizen, a Poet, Critic and Author, reported that Bosworth-Smith wrote about Islam’s tolerance; that: *“The broadminded tolerance of Islam for other religion recommends it to all lovers of liberty. Muhammad admonished his followers to treat well the believers in the Old and New Testaments; and Abraham, Moses and Jesus are acknowledged as co-prophets of the one God. Surely this is generous and far in advance of the attitude of other religions. . . . The very existence of so many Christian sects and communities in countries that have been for centuries under Mohammadan rule, is an abiding testimony to the toleration they have enjoyed, and shows that the persecutions they have, from time to time, been called upon to endure at the hands of bigots and fanatics, have been excited by some special and local*

circumstances rather than inspired by a settled principle of intolerance.”
Bosworth-smith (1889): ‘*Mohammad and Mohammadanism*’, 3rd edition, p. 420
London).

Myopic Tendencies:

Tensions arise because we tend to see same things differently as we view them from different points of view and perspectives. Thus, we marshal arguments (that we hope to be) convincing enough to support our positions. Consequently, the refusal of the two parties to learn from each others’ view point is the reason why mutual understanding has been elusive. For instance, when the Muslim argues or contests the issues of belief and doctrine with the Christian Brother, the Muslim relies mostly on the Holy Qur’an for support as he believes it to be divinely inspired like the other Holy Scriptures. This, as far as the Christian is concerned, weakens the Muslim’s argument, since he, the Christian, views the Holy Qur’an as fiction and therefore irrelevant. Most Christians view Islam as a totally new religion with nothing in common with Christianity. They reject the Holy Qur’an and the Prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh), just as the Jews reject the New Testament and the Divine sonship of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Bible itself reveal that ‘Christianity,’ in the sense of the original teaching of Jesus (pbuh) **is not a fresh teaching of a new faith**. The teaching of Jesus (pbuh) was really not new; it arose out of the message of the earlier Prophets therefore not new but a clarification of the old message. (Mark 1:14, 15) (A.S. Suleman p.2). Thus, it is clear that what Muslims do, is not something new or strange, as it may seem to the uninformed Christian, but is actually Biblical. (Syed R. Ali p.16).

Furthermore, when Muslims make reference to the Holy Bible to support their arguments, they take it that both the Old and New Testament are equally respected and binding on all Christians, just as one cannot imagine any Muslim who would consider any part of the Quran as irrelevant or outdated. Yet it would seem that quite a number of Christians do not hold both the Old and the New Testaments in equal esteem. This is obviously the effect of Paul’s doctrines as we shall see in the next chapter.

Missed Opportunity to Learn:

Another factor that creates room for suspicion, as pointed out earlier, is that the Christian allows himself very little opportunity to know about Islam, the Quran and Prophet Muhammad. The little he allows himself is mostly based on heresy and outright fabrication by propagandist. For instance, if a man who holds firmly to a certain belief (or Faith), but does not allow himself to learn or even hear what others’ belief is all about (or teaches), such a one is like somebody who decides to go on a pilgrimage (to a sacred place) told to him by

his one and only source. If he sets out with that single information, knowledge or description, it is quite likely that he may very well miss his way and hence, his destination. So we should endeavor to learn of the other religions so as to provide ourselves with checks and balances, to ensure that we are on the right track. But this is not surprising as many Christians are in Christianity because they have no experience of another alternative. By this I mean the Christian is taught to believe that his religion is the only true one, with Judaism as a preparation for Christianity, and all other religions are false. How is such a one to know any better? Propaganda and sheer falsehood have been used to cloud his mind and convince him that other religions, particularly Islam is the worship of the Sun or the Moon, thus denying him the opportunity to learn the truth about other religions. The Muslim unlike the Christian is taught to believe in all the prophets and all the revealed books. Islam declares that God raised prophets in every nation to guide the people to the truth and righteousness. Muslims feel regretful to see how Jews and Christians have in part forsaken and altered the true teachings of Moses and Jesus. The Muslim does not speak ill of them because he is commanded to believe in all prophets of God.

A single source of information about something (even if it is true on the face value), may very well entrench us in the wrong direction unknowingly, because we have come to cling to that only knowledge available to us as the obvious truth even if it is not. It can even be worse, when our informant kept telling us fabricated lies (propaganda) about the other faith in order to keep us in check, thus preventing us from knowing the truth, (ultimately hindering our free-will and spiritual growth). For instance, in some western country soon after the 9/11 unfortunate incident, a certain group decided to place copies of propaganda literature against Islam in Hotel rooms, just like the Bible is placed in almost every hotel room, but this time around with the objective of poisoning the reader's mind. Unfortunately for them, not all the people that read the piece stopped there. Many actually went further to surf the internet to learn more about Islam. Eventually many learned the truth and converted to Islam. This was of course the very opposite of the propagandist's intention.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille (1979) also, made significant observation in this regard. He said: *"Far too many Christians brought up in a spirit of open hostility, are against any reflection about Islam on principle... it is on account of this that they remain totally ignorant of what Islam is in reality, and they retain notions about the Islamic Revelation which are entirely mistaken . . . Muslims are held in such contempt by certain Christian circles. In a religious discussion of a comparative nature one will usually notice a systematic refusal, even for the purpose of simple reflection, to take any account of what the Qur'an had to say on the subject at hand. It is as if a quote from the Qur'an were a reference to the Devil."* Dr. Bucaille further observed that: *"The use of such terms as 'Mohammedan religion' and 'Mohammedans' has been instrumental – even to*

the present day – in maintaining the false notion that beliefs were involved that were spread by the work of one man among which God (in the Christian sense) had no place". He noted however that, *"Many cultivated people today are interested in the philosophical, social and political aspects of Islam, but they do not pause to inquire about the Islamic Revelation itself, as indeed they should.* (Dr. Maurice Bucaille (MD): 'The Bible, the Quran and Science' 1979, p. ii, iii, & iv).

Closed-mindedness:

Another ground for mutual suspicion is the tendency for both camps to be closed-minded, though this is hardly surprising considering that it is a question of faith. Only the true seeker after the Truth and the truly enlightened will open his heart to genuine guidance from God. But then, *"only God determines whom He guides"* says the Quran. Where a person sees the truth in an argument but refuses to acknowledge it merely out of fear of confessing to being in the wrong, or out of fear of being ridiculed or subjected to something worse by his people, such a situation can only be described as unfortunate. It is a paradox, says a Christian convert, who observed that: *"If you (a Christian) never go near a Church, nobody thinks anything about it. If you become a Muslim you are liable to be considered eccentric to say the least."* He adds further: *"There are thousands of men – and women too, I believe – who are at heart Muslims, but convention, fear of adverse comments, and desire to avoid any worry or change, conspire to keep them from openly admitting the fact. I have taken the step, though I am quite aware that many friends and relatives now look upon me as a lost soul and past praying for. And yet I am just the same in my beliefs as I was twenty years ago. It is the outspoken utterance which has lost me their good opinion."* (Rt. Hon. Sir Rowland George Allanson (England); later known as, Lord Headley al-Farooq, born 1855 A.D. reported in Ebrahim Ahmad Bawany's 'Islam Our Choice') pp. 95 & 18-19)

Farouk B. Karai, an Indian convert, is another case in point. He relates that: *"The reason for my becoming a Muslim was an inward feeling... furthermore, I was living in Zanzibar where many Muslim friends gave me an opportunity to study and understand Islam thoroughly. I used to read the Islamic literature secretly for fear of my relatives. However, in December 1940, I found myself ready to face the world and I announced about my acceptance of Islam and then began the story of my 'persecution' at the hands of my family members and others of the Parsee community to which I had formerly belonged. It is a long story of hardships that I have undergone. My family strongly disapproved of my becoming a Muslim and they employed all conceivable methods to harass me. Since the 'truth' dawned upon me, nothing could deter me from following my chosen path, of accepting one God and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as His last messenger. The Holy Quran which I studied in Gujrati, helped me a lot and I*

can say without any fear of contradiction that no other religious book can stand equal to it. This is the only 'Book' which is complete in itself, teaching simplicity, love, brotherhood, equality and humanity. It is a wonderful Book indeed and guided by its sublime precepts, the Muslims will live forever." (Farouk B. Karai, in Ebrahim Ahmad Bawany's 'Islam Our Choice'[1963]).

Pursuit of Worldly Advantage

Of course, there is also the strong possibility that persons on whom their religious faith sat lightly would be readily influenced by considerations of worldly advantage, and ambition to the extent that self-interest would take the place of more laudable motives for conversion; and this can happen in either faith. St. Augustine made a similar complaint in the fifth century that many entered the Christian church merely because they hoped to gain some temporal advantage thereby. This is particularly the case of those who have attained a high position in the Church and fear to lose the exalted position. (in *'Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus'*, xxv). This unfortunate occurrence applies equally in Islam. Muslim scholars have been known to deviate from the true teaching of the faith and create cults that raise them shoulder high in the pursuit of worldly ambition.

Mahatma K. Gandhi commented at the worldly-minded manner a church congregation attended worship; he said: *"... I came in contact with another Christian family. At their suggestion I attended the Wesleyan Church every Sunday. For these days I also had their standing invitation to dinner. The Church did not make a favorable impression on me. The sermons seemed to be uninspiring. The congregation did not strike me as being particularly religious. They were not an assembly of devout souls; they appeared rather to be worldly-minded people, going to church for recreation and in conformity to custom."* (*'Autobiography' p. 148*).

Fear of Investigation:

The kinds of pressure people suffer from friends and especially family cannot be the spirit of a truly enlightened Soul. Harold Sharman (1967) a Christian Psychic, in his book *"We Live After Death"* believed that: *"Religion should welcome constructive criticism, without the fear that religion will be destroyed by it. Faith should not fear investigation – else how strong is Faith? If you protect or shield an individual from facing a life experience, you have not done him a kindness. You have only weakened him. If you have encouraged your children to lean upon you, you have to a considerable degree destroyed their self-reliance, so also with Faith. You cannot give an individual something to believe in and at the same time, hide some important information which is relevant to that belief, no matter how perilous it may be to the Faith, in the name of helping the individual. That will not be a complete truth. One should be given the right to choose the right path by displaying all the cards on the table. .*

. *What I think a true world religion should do, is to allow every individual the privilege of thinking and choosing and deciding by himself. The direct and indirect exercise of influence and pressure is unfair as well as undesirable. It is for this reason that I think the truth about how the holy Bible came to be, which is largely unknown by the rank and file of Church members, should be made known.*" (Harold Sharman (1967).

Professor Haroon Mustapha Leon, an English Etymologist, Geologist and Author, who converted to Islam, wrote: *The parable of the "talents" narrated by Jesus (pbuh) is in strict accordance with Islamic doctrine, as also is the maxim: 'prove all things; hold fast to that which is good'. The similitude of those who follow blindly and who neglect to use the intelligence which the Divine giver of all good, hath bestowed upon them is declared in the imperishable pages of Al-Qur'an (Sura 52) "to be that of an Ass laden with books" (in Ebrahim Ahmad Bawany's 'Islam Our Choice'). It is as Socrates also observed: "The unexamined life is not worth living". The Bible in the book of 1st Thessalonians 5:21 advised believers to: "find out about everything and hold unto that which is the truth". And when you find out what the truth is, you are on your way to follow Jesus' counsels, in John 8:32, that: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free". Therefore, it is very important for us all to study both the Quran and the Bible and consider the contents of each carefully, to enable us know which of the two can advance us towards our Creator.*

"One of the glories of Islam," the good Professor Haroon M. Leon wrote, "is that it is founded upon reason, and that it never demands from its followers an abnegation of that important mental faculty. Unlike certain other faiths, which insist upon their votaries implicitly accepting certain dogmas without independent inquiry, but simply on the authority of "the Church." Islam courts inquiry and counsels its disciples to study, search and investigate prior to acceptance. The Holy Prophet of ever-blessed memory, said: "Allah has not created anything better than reason, the benefits which Allah gives are on its account, and understanding is begotten of it". On another occasion the Prophet said: "verily, I tell you a man may have performed prayers, fast, charity, pilgrimage and all other good works, but he will not be rewarded but by the manner in which he hath used and applied his reason".

Superstitious fear of Islam

Ebrahim Ahmad Bawany (1963), reported in his book, '*Islam Our Choice*' of an English Statesman and Baronet, Sir Abdullah Archibald Hamilton, who wrote on prejudice against Islam: *"There is no religion that is so maligned by the ignorant and the biased as is Islam; yet if people only knew; it is the religion of strong for the weak, the rich for the poor. Humanity is divided into three classes. First, those on whom God has, out of his bounty, bestowed possessions and wealth; secondly, those who have to work to earn their living; and lastly, the*

great army of the unemployed, or those who have fallen by the way side through no fault of their own” (in Ebrahim Ahmad Bawany, ‘Islam Our Choice’ 1963).

And Andrew Douglas-Hamilton in an effort to lessen the superstitious fear of Islam held by most Christians wrote the following in an introduction, he said: *“We, as Muslims, know how baseless these fears are. We are secure in our knowledge of Allah as one All-merciful, All-beneficent to man; untouchable by human qualifications: “There is nothing like unto Him, and he is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing” (Qur’an; 42:11). We are secure in our knowledge of His prophets, may peace be upon them; secure in the knowledge they have given us of Allah and his covenant for us to follow on earth. Muslims following the unchanging completeness of the Holy Qur’an know all this but, perhaps fail at times to make it obvious to others.” (Andrew Douglas – Hamilton – in ‘Jesus a Prophet of Islam’, p.4).*

Another Englishman, Sir Lauder Brunton, a Baronet and a public man of wide repute, educated at Oxford University, made an observation akin to this. He said: *There was something in Islam which appealed to me at this time . . . I eventually took up the study of the life of Prophet Muhammad. I knew very little of what he did, but I know and felt that the Christians with one voice condemned the celebrated Prophet of Arabia. I was now determined to look into the matter without the spectacles of bigotry and malice. After a little time I found that it was impossible to doubt the earnestness of his search after Truth and God. I felt that it is wrong, in the extreme, to condemn this Holy man after reading his great achievements for humanity. People who were wild idol-worshippers, living in crime, filth and nakedness, he taught them how to dress, filth was replaced by cleanliness, and they acquired personal dignity and self-respect, hospitality became a religious duty, their idols were destroyed and they worship the True and only one God. Islam became the most powerful Total Abstinence Association in the world. And many other good works were accomplished which are too numerous to be mentioned. In the face of all this and (considering) his own purity of mind, how sad to think that such a Holy messenger of God should be run down by the Christian (bigotry).” (in Ebrahim Ahmad Bawany’s ‘Islam Our Choice’).*

Another English convert, Lady Mavis B. Jolly, had this to add: *“. . . It was whilst in this frame of mind that I saw a copy of “The Islamic Review” on a bookstall. I don’t know what made me pay two shillings and six pence for a magazine which expressed doctrines that I had been told by Christians, Communists and Fascists were only believed by cut-throats and bandits and were not worth two-pence. I did buy it however, and I read and re-read it. In Islam I found all that was good in Christianity, Communism and all the other “isms” with a bit more as well. I instantly took out a year’s subscription and a few months later I become a Muslim, since that day I have been very happy in my new faith. (in Ebrahim Ahmad Bawany’s ‘Islam Our Choice’).*

Forcible Conversion (forbidden):

Forcible conversion was forbidden in accordance with the precepts of the Qur'an. Conversion, according to the Qur'an, should come out of free choice and spontaneous judgment, and never be attained by means of compulsion. Similarly, the Quran forbids the Muslim from persecuting the non-Muslim in order to compel him to change his religion; thus allowing them the right to freedom of conscience (Q. 2: 256). Compulsion is incompatible with religious belief for three reasons, these are:

- religion depends upon Faith and Will and these would be meaningless if induced by force;
- Truth and Error have been so clearly shown up by the mercy of God that there should be no doubt in the minds of any person of goodwill as to the fundamentals of Faith;
- God's protection is continuous, and His wish is that we invite people to 'the Way of God' with wisdom and with kindly warning." (Qur'an 16:126). The verse says:
 - *"Summon them to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and with kindly warning."* (Qur'an 16: 126).
 - *"And unto Allah leads straight the Way, but there are ways that turn aside: if Allah had willed, He could have guided all of you."* (Quran 16: 9).

And the Holy Qur'an in chapter 10 verse 99- 100, says:

- *"No soul can believe, except by the will of God and he will place doubt (or obscurity) on those who will not understand."* (Qur'an10: 99 -100).

Jesus (pbuh) meant the same thing when he said to his disciples:

- ❖ *"And whosoever shall not receive you nor hear you, when ye depart there..."* (Mark 6:2).

Furthermore, the Quran emphasizes that Muslims should not abstain from doing good to the non-Muslim, unless they are in a state of active enmity (Q. 60: 8-9).

Religious Bigotry

There is yet the issue of religious bigotry. One finds that many Muslim writers on their part, in condemnation of the Christian position, are downright condescending to the point of insolence. In my view, an enlightened mind should show more restraint and understanding when discussing with another who harbors a contrary opinion to his own. You do not sneer at someone you wish to win over to your way of thinking. Such 'holier-than-thou' attitude has been partly responsible for giving Islam a bad name.

Until roughly half a century ago, Muslims approach to active missionary type propagation has been exclusive. They mostly tended to concentrate their attention more on declared Muslims than on non-Muslims. In other words, they had preferred to let non-Muslims to find Islam for themselves. This attitude is immediately obvious from the attitudes of the supposed Muslim scholars towards pagans, particularly in the northern parts of Nigeria. They use derogative terms to address them, and treat them with so much disdain. They will not preach to them or show them good examples, disdaining to associate with them except when they develop interest in sharing their women or defrauding them. Yet, they expect them to convert to Islam without any behest. In Nigeria, like in other African countries, enlightenment came to us in the wake of the new Islamic sects, like the *Ansar-u-deen*, like the *"Izalatul Bidi'a wa Iqamatul Sunnah"* and other Movements.

Muslims are also guilty of paying lip service to the religion; they swear by Allah yet cheat even fellow Muslims. Not that it is okay to cheat non-Muslims. As a cardinal principle, the Prophet strongly prohibited cheating, lying, and breaking of promises which he says are signs of the inhabitants of hell. In one Hadith, Abdullahi bin Amr bin Al-As (may Allah be pleased with them) reported that: *"The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whoever possesses these four (4) characteristics is a sheer hypocrite, and anyone who possesses one of them, possesses a characteristic of hypocrisy till he gives it up. (These are) Whenever he talks, he tells a lie; when he makes a covenant, he acts treacherously; when he is given something in trust he betrays the trust; and when he quarrels, he utters foul language."* (Al-Bukhari & Muslim). There was a time when Islamic scholars of those days (perhaps even today in remote areas) demand monetary gratification before converts are accepted into Islam, some even make the slaughtering of a ram a precondition for conversion; and engaging in child abuse and child labor in the guise of giving them Qur'anic education ('Almajirci').

But the bigotry is not one-sided; John (M.) Webster, an English man, (President of the English Muslim Mission); explained this from westerner's perspective: *"We in the West find it difficult to acquaint ourselves with Islam, for since days of the Christian Crusades there has been either a conspiracy of silence or a deliberate perversion of Islam matters. Anyway, at the time living in Australia I asked for a copy of the Holy Quran at the Sydney Public Library, when I was given the Book and was reading the preface by the translator, the bigotry against Islam was so obvious that I closed it up. Some weeks later in Perth, Western Australia, I again asked at the library for a copy of the Qur'an stipulating that the translator must be a Muslim. It is difficult to put into words my immediate response to the first SURA (Chapter), the seven Opening Verses; then I read something of the life of the Prophet (Peace be on him). I spent hours in the Library that day; I had found what I wanted by the Mercy of Allah, I was a Muslim. I had not at this time met any Muslim, I came out of the Library that day*

exhausted by the tremendous intellectual and emotional experience I had received.” (in Ebrahim Ahmad Bawany, ‘Islam Our Choice’)

Over-zealousness:

The over-zealousness with which some Christian evangelists preach the religion, from door to door is nothing short of aggression. Muslims do not preach in this type of do-or-die approach. Lord Headley al-Farooq (a former British peer and Statesman) had this to say: *“I have known very many instances of zealous Protestants who have thought it their duty to visit Roman Catholic homes in order to make ‘converts’ of the inmates. Such irritating and un-neighbourly conduct is, of course, very obnoxious, and has invariably led to much ill-feeling, stirring up strife and tending to bring religion into contempt. I am sorry to think that Christian Missionaries have also tried these methods with their Muslim brethren; though, I am at a loss to conceive why should they try to convert those who are already better ‘Christians’ than they are themselves? I say ‘better Christians’ advisedly, because charity, tolerance and broad-mindedness in the Muslim faith come nearer to what Christ himself taught than do the somewhat narrow tenets of the various Christian Churches.”* (Lord Headley, formerly Rt. Hon. Sir Rowland George Allanson (England); in Ebrahim Ahmad Bawany’s ‘Islam Our Choice’ p. 17)

Sheikh A. Yusuf Ali in his commentary to the Quran remarked: *“Just as a foolish servant may go wrong by excess of zeal for his master, so in religion, people’s excesses may lead them to blasphemy or a spirit the very opposite of religion. The Jewish excesses in the direction of formation, racialism, exclusiveness and rejection of Jesus Christ have been denounced in many places. Here the Christian attitude is condemned, which raises Jesus to an equality with God; in some cases venerates Mary almost to idolatry; attributes a physical son to God; and invents the doctrine of the Trinity which is opposed to all reason. And, according to the Athanasian Creed, unless a man believes it, he is doomed to hell for ever. Let Muslims also beware lest they fall into (similar) excesses either in doctrine or in formalism.”*

Western Propaganda and Influence:

Technological progress, democracy and the declaration of Human Rights all have some connection with the positive influence of Christianity on Western civilization. Chawkat Georges Moucarry (1984) while agreeing to the truth of this statement said: *However, it cannot be denied, and Muslims quite rightly point out that Western civilization today is also characterized by the rise of atheistic humanism, a decline in moral standards and a certain dehumanization of the individua. . . . Christians who are inclined to look too favorably upon Western cultures should bear these things in mind. They are not so much the price we have to pay for science, freedom and prosperity as they are*

the result of the departure from Western Judaeo-Christian values. This situation requires Christians, especially in the West, to recognize their dual responsibility. In the first place, they should repudiate, in a true spirit of repudiation, the church's past errors; but that alone is not enough. They should also learn a lesson from the spirit of today's Islamic revival, and by their complete faithfulness to the gospel, seek to express visibly the kingdom of God in our complex modern world." (p. 18 &19)

Perhaps the situation is worse in Islam. Despite its posture as a religion of peace, today, no effort is spared in trying to give it a new garb of violence and terror. You see people killing and maiming the innocent in the name of Islam, screaming 'Allahu Akbar' and using our own children whom they have recruited or captured and indoctrinated for their dastardly acts. Any Muslim who harbours strong hatred enough to take any human life should have his faith checked. Only those who are spiritually possessed or who worship the Devil find it easy to kill. For the Prophet said hot temper, hatred and inordinate haste is of the Devil. These groups are as far from Islam as the brightest Day is from the darkest stormy Night. Today, new groups are surfacing who insult and degrade even the Prophet of Islam (peace and mercy of Allah be upon him) his closest disciples, particularly the four guided Caliphs and members of the prophet's family. Subhanallah! Consequently, we see today in both Christianity and Islam, groups who claim to be more Christian or more Islamic than both Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad (pbut). These "super-faithfuls" are actually members of Mystical Institutions or Cults of Fraternity that infiltrated both Christianity and Islam. You see them prophesying in the name of Christ in magnificent edifices they call 'New Evangelism Churches'.

Apart from a few intellectuals, the masses of the West are extremely ignorant about Islam. This makes it easy to compound their ignorance with propaganda. The Muslims were not used to propaganda. Propaganda is all about making falsehood become the truth. Books have also been written to reinforce the falsehood and make it like the truth about Islam. When falsehood is repeated over and over again; plays written about it, stories fabricated about it and books produced to reinforce it, overtime, the falsehood will become the truth and it would be difficult to establish the real truth. That axiom is also justified which says that "*A lie becomes truth only if a person want to believe it.*" Formerly peaceful and innocent Muslim nations and leaders for instance, are eventually branded terrorists, their properties are confiscated and they are sometimes sent to jails for simply professing Islam in a way that exposes the weaknesses of the heirs of the colonialists. Gene Bird, a former US Foreign Service officer who heads the Washington council on the National interest and closely follows Middle-East related activities also noted that 'Muslim Terrorist' is a phrase that is commonly used to promote western sentiments and build

support for Israel. It is thus a propaganda message that is very effective when it is time to lobby Western law makers. In Gene Bird's words:

"It is used frequently, because it gets actions. It plays on fears and stirs emotions. It is cultivated and propagated by lobbyists, because they know it wins support for multiplying dollars, specter of Muslim – sponsored terrorism is a frequent theme. It is used to rationalize the Jewish state's harsh treatment of Palestinians, most of whom are Muslims, and to justify Israel's periodic military assaults against Lebanon, where Muslims predominate. The terrorist image is the foundation of Israelis demand for regular US grant of high-tech. weaponry... attacks from Syria, Iraq and Iran, as well as other states where Islam is dominant." (p. 82-83)

These are the images cast over Muslims by Western propaganda. This has a lasting effect on Muslims. Propaganda has made the Muslim blood the cheapest thing on earth; it is shed with impunity all over the world. Muslims then become shy to identify themselves with Islam, some (a large percentage) would not even want to do anything that can link them with Islam in the open even though they still love and cherish their religion. They are scared of joining other Muslims in collective affirmative action to propagate Islam or demand for the rights of Muslims. Muslims become scared of speaking out for Islam whenever there is need, for this would turn their names and appellations to ridiculous meanings and others would be scared of them. Muslims are scared of spending their wealth for the sake of Islam, for fear of being dubbed 'supporters of terrorism'. The lasso of terrorism is a rope used to silence Muslim action and secure loyalty to Western actions.

Invariably, there is hardly any war fought by Muslims today which is not as designed by the West, either in the colonial process or through the manipulation of the indigenous foreigners who are leaders of Muslim communities today. They lead according to the dictates of the West and survive through western protection. The western love of democracy stops where it would empower Muslims or radicals who could interrupt, even if for a brief moment, the west controls the destiny of the Muslims.

But they are yet to learn that, the only way they can succeed over Islam or Christianity for that matter, is when they separate the Christian or the Muslim from his belief in One God. And that is what they have been working on, and they seem to be succeeding, initially with Christianity and now with Islam as well. When their ploys seem to fail with Islam, they resort to hacking the faith from within the fold, by infiltrating it and trying to portray it as a violent and blood-thirsty religion. In the West today, when the word 'terrorism' is mentioned, the average person thinks of Islam or Muslims. This is exactly what Western propaganda has done to Islam. Propaganda has blackened the face of Islam and Muslims in the West to such an extent that politicians and decision

makers of the West are not just biased; they are open and unrepentant about it. It would appear that being a Muslim is a crime today.

Edward W. Sa'id, a Professor at Columbia University, New York, and a Palestinian activist, explains:

“What matters to ‘experts’... plus a whole battery of Israeli academics, is to make sure that the ‘threat’ (of Islam) is kept before our eyes, they excoriate Islam for terror, despotism and violence, while assuring themselves profitable consultancies, frequent TV appearance and book contract. The Islam threat is made to seem disproportionately fearsome, leading support to the thesis (which is an interesting parallel to anti-Semitic paranoia) that there is a worldwide conspiracy behind every explosion.”

The fact of the matter is that a true Muslim faithful is neither liberal nor radical; he is simply a Muslim. At any particular time in the life of a Muslim he is doing is either representing Islam or he is on his own i.e. outside the pale of Islam. And for this reason, the individual actions or inactions is not what makes Islam. The continuous fighting between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland has not produced liberals and radicals from either side. Individuals are taken for whatever they have done. Therefore, dividing Muslims into liberals and radicals is a hypocritical way of tying them to a psychological divide that makes Muslims prey to western hegemony. Whenever the West wants to take an action against a group, all it cares to say is that it is dealing with the fundamentalists and by an extension, the terrorists. Invariably, all Muslims are fundamentalists because they all follow the fundamentals of their religion: Islam. And whoever chooses not to follow the fundamentals the religion is practicing Islam with a minus ('x' factor). That 'x' factor makes his Islam deficient and when it is such, it must then be called something else, not Islam.

Unknown to many Muslims, they are just too eager to declare themselves as liberals. This is the effect of propaganda. Who wants to stand out and announce that he is a fundamentalist, in the face of such astounding propaganda (Blitzkeg)? In spite of the fact a true Muslims should be a follower of the fundamentals of his faith; many Muslim elites find it difficult to carry anything that can identify them as Muslims in public. In fact, in the past, in a country like Nigeria, particularly in the South, it would take courage to be a Muslim and remain so practically after a university education. The image (painted) of Islam and Muslims by outsiders (particularly the western media) worries Muslim elites and they therefore run away from identifying with Islam.

The propaganda in the West is even firing back. Perhaps the Timothy McVeigh bombing of the Oklahoma city on 20th April 1995 exposed the propagandists who went ahead to attack Islam and Muslims without proof. Eventually, facts revealed that a man without any Islamic connection carried out

the act; no one felt that all Americans should be condemned for it. The Gulf war has provided another opportunity for Westerners to learn more about Islam. Contact with Islam and Muslims produced such positive effects that made them realize the level of negative propaganda they have been exposed to. Western soldiers who participated in the war returned home with a different view of Islam and a fair number actually embraced Islam and became ardent followers of the religion.

Spectrum of the Muslim World:

The Muslim world presents a spectrum. At one end are Muslims living under conditions detrimental to their existence. At the other end are Muslims enjoying such vast majorities in their countries that makes them take Islam for granted and unwilling to take precautions against the impact of international environment including alien ideologies! Islam, however, has been the religion of the Muslims, a people spread all over the globe. They are the Uzbeks, the Tajiks, the Turkmen, the Bashkirs, the Kazakhs, the Kirghiz, the Tartars, the Azerbaijanis, Africans and the peoples of Kagestan and Malays for centuries. In spite of the different conditions under which these Muslims live in their lands, the uniting factor of **“La’ilaha illa Allah”** is ever there and their commitment to Islam remains. This is why despite all the efforts of the West to uproot Islam, it has not succeeded. And it remains ever impossible. Malcolm X rightly observed during his only pilgrimage to Mecca, that:

“America needs to understand Islam, because this is one religion that erases from its society the race problem... I have never before seen sincere brotherhood practiced by all colour together, irrespective of their colour. You may be shocked by these words coming from me, but on this pilgrimage, what I have seen and experienced has forced me to rearrange much of my thought patterns previously held and to toss aside some of my previous convictions.”. . . “In the words, in the action and in the deeds of the white Muslims, I felt the same sincerity I felt among the black African Muslim of Nigeria, Sudan and Ghana... I could see from this, that perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, too they could accept in reality the oneness of man- and cease to measure, and hinder and harm others in terms of their ‘difference’ in colour.”

Decay in Islam

Abdul Wadud Shalabi (2006) in his book, *‘Islam Religion of life’* traces the cause of the decay in the religion of Islam. He said: *“The reader may already have guessed why, despite their principle, the Islamic world is in its present state of disarray. The sad answer is that what we call ‘the world of Islam’ is in reality something rather different. Although the Muslim religion seems to be the most living of the world’s great faiths, it is nevertheless not immune to the deadening*

*modern diseases of materialism and greed. The reality, however, of present day Muslim life appeared to be very far from the ideal possibilities given in the religious teachings of Islam. Whatever, in Islam, had been progress and movement had turned, among the Muslims, into indolence and stagnation; whatever there had been of generosity and readiness for self-sacrifice, had become, among the present-day Muslims, perverted into narrow-mindedness and love of an easy life. ... I realized that the one and only reason for the social and cultural decay of the Muslims consisted in the fact that they had gradually ceased to follow the teachings of Islam in spirit. Islam was still there; but it was a body without a soul. The very element which once had stood for the strength of the Muslim world was now responsible for its weakness; Islamic society had been built, from the very outset, on religious foundations alone, and the weakening of the foundations has necessarily weakened the cultural structure – and possibly might cause its ultimate disappearance. . . With its geography shattered into over forty fragments by the **colonial power** of the last century, those who lay claim to it are only just beginning to regain their former sense of unity and purpose. Yet despite all the odds, Islam re-grows in its traditional homelands, and now also in expanding communities in the West. Its future in our age seems bright. Amidst the rains of a thousand faiths and secular ideologies, Islam, the religion of life, lives on.” (Abdul Wadud Shalabi (2006) ‘Islam Religion of life’ p.80)*

Muslim Merchants have also contributed in no small way in giving Islam a bad name, through the practice of dishonesty and Usury in their businesses. Indian Merchants who have settled in African countries like South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Swaziland etc. are particularly guilty. Many have been involved in cheating and under-handed dealings in their commercial activities with the indigenes and even with fellow Muslims. This has become like a culture with them, transgressing religious boundaries, to the extent that every Indian cheat is considered a Muslim, when only a few of them are Muslims (in comparison to say, Hindus). Thus, Islam is blamed for the action of every Indian merchant, hence resulting in the suspicion of all Muslims in these places. But they are not the only ones. Usury has eaten deep into the fabric of our society that inspite of persistent preaching by Islamic scholars, at the approach of the month of Ramadan, merchants resort to price increase on food items and other perishable commodities that people need during this month of mercy.

Promoting Understanding:

One sure way to achieve religious tolerance is to promote understanding of each others’ views about our respective faiths. And for that understanding to be, we have to let the other party know how we view and what we truly think of their faith in relation to ours. This exposition of our differences and similarities should be with the utmost sincerity and objectivity. We cannot hope to achieve

harmony or concord by sweeping our differences under the carpet, as it were. We have a responsibility to each other to bring them out into the open and calmly and critically look over and come to terms for what they are i.e. misconceptions and prejudices. Only then can our brothers and sisters in the other faith set aside their firmly held notions or opinions and accept to rationally consider our sincere views about their faith, no matter how unpleasant. Perhaps in the process, some might let go of their misconceptions about our faith, as we also let go of ours. This is the objective of comparative religion.

Such an approach could be for a Muslim to help make his Christian brother understand that Islam is not (in any conceivable way) an alien religion, contrary to preconceived belief. Islam is very much biblical in the sense that what was taught by all the Prophets of God (as we find in the Bible) is being practiced today religiously by Muslims perhaps more so than by Christians (as enshrined in the Islamic fundamental doctrine). In other words, it is as Syed R. Ali (1996), said in his book: *“Islam and Christianity as seen in the Bible”* that the Muslim who is best adhering to the (original) teaching of Jesus (pbuh) (as still contained in the Bible), is he who rightly deserve to be called the ‘true followers of Jesus Christ’.

Doctrinal Differences

Let us now consider the doctrinal differences between Christianity and Islam. Vast as the common grounds might be, it is beneficial to also be aware of doctrinal differences that exist between the communities of the Abrahamic faiths. A general outline will be given with no intention whatsoever of confrontation or attacking other faiths, but to enable Jewish and Christian readers to clarify and re-appraise their position towards Islam, rather than continuing to malign it out of ignorance and misunderstanding, which underlies much of the existing animosity and ill will.

These doctrinal differences are neither trivial nor unfounded, as such it would be foolish and counterproductive to fight or hate one another over them. Debate over differences of belief should abide by the highest ethics of civilized engagements. The Quran advised Muslims not to antagonize people of the other faiths:

- *“And dispute you not with the People of the Book except in the most kindly manner – unless it be those of them who wronged – but say ‘we believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is one, and it is to Him we submit (in Islam).”*(Qur’an 29:46)

Notwithstanding the serious differences between the views of Christians and Muslims, Islam is very keen on expounding the common grounds and enjoying their spaciousness. The Prophet was directed to:

- *“Say: O People of the Book... come to common terms as between us and you, that we worship none but God, that we associate no partners with Him, that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and partners other than God: If they then turn back, then say (to them) ‘bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (submitters to God’s will).” (Q 3:64)*

Beyond that, relations should remain peaceful, cordial and friendly. Let us enumerate some of the differences.

The **first** and foremost of the differences, from doctrinal point of view perhaps, is how the Muslim and Christian perceive God and express themselves towards him. It seems that the main difference appears to be that Islam is saying: ***There is only One God, worthy of worship, alone without partners or associates in whatever sense. Muslims believe that God is an unchanging, indivisible, and ever-existing continuum, without a beginning nor end. “He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like Him.”(Qur’an 112:1-4).*** Christianity on the other hand, is saying: ***“There is One God, which it agrees is Almighty and although He is the Supreme, He is not alone by Himself, and so addressed as ‘the Father’. He shares His functions (perhaps not equally) with two others, (the Son & the Holy Ghost) that are part of His ‘One-Self’, yet remaining as one at the same time.”***

To the Muslim, God is the eternal, the infinite and the absolute in all His attributes. It is beyond us to imagine a form for Him or define Him in any way that portrays Him as limited or as less than the infinite being that He is. The most reverent language is used when referring to God. It is therefore alien to the Muslim mind to read that God walked in the Garden of Eden, or that He said to an assemblage of angels (about Adam): *“Behold, the man is become as one of us”* or that He regretted His own decision and action (after the flood), saying: *“I wish I had not done it,”* or that God after working for six days (which Islam also says as much), but that He then had to rest on the seventh day due to tiredness; or that anyone wrestled with God and almost defeated Him.

Francis David’s (1510 – 1579) mind was troubled by these inexplicable articles of faith: the Divinity of Jesus and the Trinity. He could not see why anyone who believed in these mysteries without trying to understand them was considered to be a better Christians. He was not prepared to follow the faith blindly. Gradually, he reached the conclusion that Jesus was not Divine, and affirmed belief in the existence of One God. He proclaimed that: *“God is only One, the Father, from Whom and by Whom is everything and Who is above everything, Who created everything through the word of His wisdom and the breath of His mouth. Outside of this God, there is no other god, neither three, nether four, neither in substance, neither in persons, because the Scripture nowhere teaches anything about a triple God.”* Francis David was born in

Kolozsar, Transylvania in 1510 (Muhammad Ata'ur Rahim, *'Jesus a Prophet of Islam'*, p. 125 &127).

The **second** aspect concerns prophets and messengers appointed by God. Muslims believe that these are handpicked by God, both to convey His message and to be role models for their communities. Whenever societies slipped back to wrong doing: i.e. into idol worship or associating partners with God or deviated from the moral code ordained by Him; Prophets and messengers were sent to remind and maintain the course. If human perfection were ever tenable, they would be its epitome and embodiment. The idea that God's prophets committed serious transgressions against His laws, as depicted in biblical portrayals of them cheating and committing carnal sins (such as Jacob's supposed betrayal of his brother, and Prophet Lot's supposedly having committed incest with his daughters while drunk), is at complete variance with Islamic teachings. The only conclusion open to Muslims is that such depictions of the prophets resulted from human interpolation into the scriptures.

Thirdly, Muslims are somewhat dismayed that large segments of Jews and Christians do not consider Ishmael to be Abraham's legitimate son, because Hagar (Agar) Abraham's wife was Sarah's maid servant (Genesis 16: 3). In the King James Version of the Bible, the name of Ishmael is altogether missing from the glossary, and one can only retrieve his story by using Abraham as the key to the search. Time and again Genesis (16:16; 17:23, 25, 26; 21:11) refers to Ishmael as "**his son**" (Abraham's son), thus making it impossible to deny that son-hood. Moreover, tracing the maternal side of the children of Israel, the book of Genesis tells us that Israel married his two cousins, Rachel and Leah, and their two maids, (Zilpah and Bilhah), and out of the four women, came the twelve children of Israel. Yet no one has ever claimed that any of them were less the children of Israel because their mothers were maids! Is there a double standard set against Ishmael? With regard to the account in Genesis 22:2, stating that God said to Abraham:

- *"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."*(Genesis 22:2)

Muslims feel that the mention of Isaac's name was a deliberate interpolation, for at no time was Isaac the only son of Abraham, (according to Genesis 17: 24-26). The only time this could be true of Abraham would be before the birth of Isaac, for he had Ishmael as the only son for thirteen years. Isaac was thirteen years younger than Ishmael, and both sons being alive when their father died. (Hassan Hathout [1995]). This last point has been treated in an earlier chapter.

Fourthly, a principal and obvious difference between the Jews and Christians is their stand on Jesus, who Muslims believe was a true and genuine Messenger of God to his fellow Jews. Everyone knows that Jesus Christ is a

bonafide Jew. He believed and used the Old Testament to teach his message. According to Jesus, he came to uphold and not to destroy the law as contained in the Old Testament up to the time of his death. It would therefore be nothing less than ridiculous that he will appear after his death, in a dream or a hallucination to someone, to virtually denounce all that he (Jesus) taught and stood for while alive, to the extent that he declared himself (in a dream to someone) to be divine (one with God or God Himself) and worthy of worship beside God. This is unbelievable! We are talking about the Jesus who believed in and upheld the Commandments of Moses. Clearly, those who believed it know that they are not on the same page with the real Jesus (the son of Mary), they believed in a Mirage – a Fantasy. Those who worship Jesus as a god have doubtlessly turned their backs on the God of Abraham and Moses; for to worship any other but Him, is a clear deviation which contradicts the First and Second Commandments of God, given to Moses and which Jesus himself upheld.

- *“O you who believe, be the helpers to (the cause of) God, as said Jesus the son of Mary to the disciples: ‘who will be my helpers to the work of God?’ said the disciplines ‘We are God’s helpers.’ Then a portion of the children of Israel believed and a portion disbelieved.”* (Qur’an 61:14)

The Qur’an says God is the eternal and the absolute:

- *“Say: He is Allah (God) the One; Allah the Eternal and Absolute; he begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him.”* (Qur’an 112: 1-4).

Fifthly, Muslims believing in the chastity of the Virgin Mary, say that Jesus was “created” by God without a father, yet do not say “begotten” by God. It would appear that a section of Christians agree with Muslims that Jesus is not the begotten son of God, as recently admitted by Rev. E.W. Richter (2011), while the Bible steadfastly applies the designation “Son of God” to the person of Jesus; “it is clear that he is not the son by means of sexual relations between God and Mary” declared Rev. Eldor William (Rick) Richter.

The belief in God begetting a son is not a question merely of words or of speculative thought. It is a stupendous blasphemy against God. It lowers God to the level of an animal. When this is combined with the doctrine of vicarious atonement, it amounts to a negation of God’s Justice and man’s personal responsibility. It is destructive of all moral and spiritual order, and is condemned in the strongest possible terms by Islam. God is beyond such biological characterizations. The Qur’an holds Jesus in very high regard. He is called “the servant of Allah” (Surah 19:30), as also in Acts 3:13 of the Bible. He is called the “Messenger” of God (surah 19:19) as also the “Mercy” (Surah 19:21); a “Word” (Surah 19:30). The people of his time recognize him as a Prophet: *“The Crowd*

answered, "This is Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." (Matthew 21:11).

In the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the "son of man" or "son of God" over forty times in the Gospel of Mathew. In the Qur'an the name of Prophet Muhammad was mentioned only four times, while the name of Jesus (or 'Iysa') occurs twenty five times, and as "Jesus the son of Mary" twenty-three times. The use of all names and titles for Jesus adds up to 35 times. He is called "son of God" some sixty times in the Gospel and Epistle of John. In all, Jesus is referred to as "son of God" 121 times in the New Testament (he is called Jesus the son of Mary once, in Mark 6:3, and the son of Joseph twice, in Luke 3:23 and John 6:42; and "Son of man" in Daniel 7:14. Consequently, a belief in the literal son-hood of Jesus is at variance with the Islamic faith (although it is acceptable to say that, metaphorically, we are all the children of God as we are His servants. By servant, it is meant those who serve the purpose of the Creator. He created us to serve Him didn't He?

Those (Jews) who rejected Jesus and accused his mother of being unchaste are rebuked by the Qur'an time and again.

- *"... they uttered against Mary a grave false charge, they said (in boast) 'we killed Christ Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God.' ... But they killed him not, nor crucified him... only a likeness of that was shown to them, and those who differ therein are filled of doubt with no (certain) knowledge but only conjecture to follow. For surely they killed him not: Nay, God raised him up unto Himself, and God (Allah) is Most Exalted, Wise." (Qur'an 4: 156-158).*

Islam therefore, completely absolved the Jews from Christ's blood. At any rate, the view that the person arrested and crucified was other than Jesus is held also amongst a faction of Christians.

Sixthly, also unacceptable to Muslims, is the doctrine that Mary is the Mother of God, as believed by Catholics. Both Mary and Jesus are human beings highly honored by Islam. Christianity's claim of divinity for Jesus and his mother was refuted by the Qur'an as well as the Bible. The Holy Quran states:

- *"Most certainly, the Messiah Jesus son of Marry is nothing but our Messenger his mother is a virtuous woman, and they both ate food."(Quran 5:75).*

The fact that they both ate food makes them human, for it implies that they must answer to the call of nature. The Qur'an informs us that on the Day of Judgment, Jesus will be asked:

- *"And behold! Allah will say: O Jesus son of Mary did you say unto the people: Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah? He will say: Glory to You (Oh Allah!), never could I say what I had*

no right (to say), had I said such a thing you would indeed have known it, you know what is in my heart though I don't know what is in yours, for you know in full all that is hidden. Never said I to them ought except what You did command me to say: Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them; when You take me up You were the watcher over them, and You are a witness to all things. If You punish them, they are Your servants; if You forgive them, You are indeed the Exalted (in power), the Wise.” (Q 5:116-118)

And the fact that Jesus was born without a father does not, according to Islamic doctrine, make him “*the only begotten son of God.*” According to the Bible, God has sons by the tones. Furthermore, in stressing that Jesus was created by God, the Quran refutes the sonship doctrine claimed by the Church:

- *“The similitude (of the creation) of Jesus before God is as that of Adam: He created him from dust, then said to him: ‘Be’ and he was.” (Qur’an 3:59).*

Seventhly, the whole concept of Trinity and, or the triune God has no place in Islam. Muslims do not conceive that infinity can be divided or compartmentalized into three, or accept the deification of Jesus (pbuh) or the Holy Spirit. Allah also said in the Quran:

- *“Say not three; desist, it will be better for you, for God is One God, glory be to Him, (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in Heaven and on earth.” (Qur’an 4:171).*

Muslims hold that Jesus never said anything about three divine persons in a ‘single Godhead’ and that his concept of God never differed from that of the earlier prophets who preached the unity (never the trinity) of God. The new Catholic Encyclopedia states categorically that: **“The formulation ‘One God in three persons’ was not solidly established into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the 4th century.”**

In the concept of Trinity, God is one, yet three, three unequal, functional essences. So we ask, whether God can accordingly separate into three distinct ‘Beings’, or ‘Essences’, or ‘Persons’, and still remain linked as one. (This is like saying that a set of triplets are one single person). This doctrine, in other words makes God changeable, when we know Him as changeless. Hence, He can be God, Man, and Spirit all existing and functioning at the same time; which implies three natures, with each having a specific function not executable or exercised by the other two Natures. For example, the Holy Spirit (Ghost) does not do the job done by the Father or the Son, nor can the Son do that of the Father or the Holy Spirit; etc. Only philosophy can create such complication.

The **Eighth** area of variance is the concept of original sin. According to the Bible, the devil tempted Eve to eat from the forbidden (fruit) tree, and she

then tempted Adam to do the same: thus committing the sin. They were then punished by banishment in shame to planet earth, with more blame befalling Eve as the prime perpetrator. The Bible, in the book of Genesis, has it that due to this sin, the whole of womanhood was cursed. It says:

- ❖ *“Unto the woman He said: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee.” (Genesis 3:16).*

And Jesus was supposed to die on the cross in atonement for the sin of Adam. But what of Eve’s share of the sin? Who bears the responsibility for its atonement? Or, was hers forgiven while Adam’s alone needs to be redeemed by blood?

In the Quranic version of this event, the devil tempted both Adam and Eve, they both sinned, they both repented, they both were forgiven. The Holy Quran mentions elsewhere that immediately after that lapse, Adam acquired perfect firmness of resolve (Q. 20:122) through repentance (Q. 6:23) and that was the end of the original sin. The idea that Jesus, or anyone else, had to be slain in atonement for human sins is unacceptable to Islam. The holy Quran says:

- *“Assuredly, We have created Man in the best make (having the goodliest nature).” (Q. 95:4)*

This verse establishes the essential goodness of human nature in contradistinction to ideational culture where man has been conceived to have been born either with the stigma of sin or fettered to the chains of re-incarnation. It also proves human competence for pursuing good successfully and fighting evil on individual and collective levels. In short, Man is the goodliest specimen of God’s handiwork, born sinless and with essentially good nature. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972;)

God’s forgiveness, according to Islam, is to be sought through sincere repentance and doing righteousness, without need for blood shedding. Salvation is granted by the Grace of God:

- *“And those who, having done an act of indecency or wronged their own souls, remember God and ask for forgiveness for their sins – and who can forgive sins except God? – and never knowingly persist in the sin they have done: for such, the reward is forgiveness from their Lord...”(Qur’an 3:135) p. 33)*

No sin is too great for God’s forgiveness:

- *“Say, O my servants who have transgressed against their own selves, despair not of the mercy of God, for God forgives all sins, for He is opt forgiving, Most-Merciful.” (Qur’an 39:53)*

As regards the initial weakness of the human will, the reference to Adam’s lapse is significant. The Quran says:

- *“And certainly, We made a covenant with Adam before now, but he forgot and We found in him no strong will. Then Adam was taught some words by His Lord with which he repented; He (God) is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.” (Q 20:115 - 116)*

Adam was then raised to prophet-hood and the human race was delegated to Planet Earth as God’s vicegerent. Satan swore to follow them and corrupt them, but God promised to provide them with such guidance as to immunize them against Satan’s plots, the only exception being those who willed to turn their backs to divine guidance. Like at the time of Prophet Noah when the people refused guidance inspite of nearly a thousand years of his efforts to win them over when they faltered, they still continue to go astray. And the Quran chapter 81 tells us that:

- *“Because of their sins they were drowned (in the flood), and were made to enter the fire (of punishment): and they found – in lieu of God - “O my God! Leave not of the Unbelievers, a single one on earth!” For, if thou dost leave (any of) them they will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones.” (Quran 81: 25-27)*

After the flood, every human being thereafter is born pure. Sin, according to Islam, is not something that children inherit from their parents. It is only later on that our choices blemish us and make us sinners once again. There is guidance in this for all human beings that they have to train their will by committing themselves to higher ideals, by cultivating patience and constancy in respect, and through communion with God. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972)

The **Ninth** observed differences is the absence of any kind of priesthood in Islam or any ecclesiastical organization whatever that has caused the missionary energy of the Muslims to exhibit itself in forms very different to those that appear in the history of Christian missions. To the modern Christian world, missionary enterprise without a regularly constituted and continuous organization seems a missioner. Missionary work implies missionary societies, paid agents, subscriptions, reports and journals. By origin, there are no missionary societies in Islam, no specially trained agents, very little continuity of effort; organization based on the model of Christian missionary societies do not begin to make their appearance until the twentieth century. The only exception appears to be found in the religious orders of Islam whose organization resembles to some extent that of the monastic orders of Christendom. But even here, the absence of the priestly ideal, of any theory of the separateness of the religious teacher from the common body of believers or of the necessity of a special consecration and authorization for the performance of religious functions, makes the fundamental difference in the two systems stand out as clearly as elsewhere.

The role of forgiveness, (or Absolution) whether between individuals, tribes, or nations, is of the essence to Islam. Though there is theological scholarship, there is no priesthood in Islam. As a matter of fact, there is no institution of clergy. Unlike Christianity, the Muslim does not have recourse to go to a fellow mortal for confession, upon which he would say something to the effect: *“Go my child, you have been forgiven.”* In Keith Woodward’s words, *“It was another setback for morality when the tidal wave that hit society deluged also many of the traditional custodians of religion and its values – the clergy. They started working on religion itself, constructing new re-interpretations and exegeses of the texts to render lawful and permissible what had been unlawful and reprehensible throughout the entire history of religion. Many of these clergy themselves fall prey to the germs they were supposed to fend off. Some even interpreted the institution of celibacy as refraining from marriage but not from having sex.* (Keith L. Woodward et al; *“Gays in the Clergy”* Newsweek, February 23, 1987, 58). The result, as expected, is the chaotic sexual conduct of whole societies.

This role apportioned to the Clergy in Christianity has no place in Islam, because forgiveness is the domain of God alone. In Islam, an individual can commune with God any time, any place, and seek forgiveness directly; he or she needs no intermediary or intercession, for every person, male or female, has a direct link to their Creator. Whenever they cry for mercy and forgiveness, He responds and forgives. Religious knowledge and studies are open to all, and interpretation is not the monopoly or privilege of an elite group. Scholastic specialization is appreciated and respected, but not sanctified. Nor is it part of Islam that only religious scholars should conduct the government, for obviously they may lack the technical expertise in various divisions of the executive branches.

Whatever disadvantages may be entailed by this want of a priestly class, specially set apart for the work of propagating the faith, are compensated for by the consequent feeling of responsibility resting on the individual believer. There being no intermediary between the Muslim and his God, the responsibility of his personal salvation rests upon himself alone. Consequently he becomes as a rule, much stricter and careful in the performance of his religious duties, he takes more trouble to learn the doctrines and observance of his faith, and thus becoming deeply impressed with the importance of them to himself. He is also more likely to become an exponent of the missionary character of his creed in the presence of the unbeliever; for he is ordained to:

- *“Summon them to the way of thy lord with wisdom and with kindly warning.”* (Qur’an 16:126)

The **Tenth** observed major difference between the two Faiths is identifiable in the separation of Church and the State (Country) in western democracies as against the Shariah in the Islamic rule. The Separation of Church is consistent with the essential ideals of Christianity, as its (supposed) primary purpose is to purify the human soul and ennoble the human character, not to pursue the organization of the state. Jesus' kingdom, according to the book of John chapter 18, verse 36 of the New Testament, was not of this world. (Jesus' words):

- ❖ *“My kingdom is not of this world. If my Kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from hence.”* (John 18:36)

Jesus claimed a spiritual kingdom only. In other words, he only claims to be a prophet, no more.

Chawkat Georges Moucarray (1984) explains that *“although Christians believe in the Sovereign rule of God, this does not mean that the state and the kingdom of God are one and the same. The concept of the state is based on natural Law (Matthew 22:21; Romans 2:14-15; 13: 1-7), the Law written by God in the heart of every person. It is this which explains the ability of non-religious people to distinguish good from evil. Sin weakens this ability but does not destroy it. Because of the effect of sin in the world, it is important for Christians to be, in the words of Jesus, the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13-14). (p. 17-18)*

This distinction between the state and the kingdom makes the law of the state clearly different from the gospel of the kingdom. The Western church has not generally maintained a clear distinction between the state and the kingdom. The law of the state rewards those who do good and punishes those who do evil. The gospel of the kingdom is the good news of salvation – that people can be saved by God from the power of sin within their own human nature. Christians, by obeying God and doing what is right, aim to leave a mark on the world. A mark, which will act as a sign announcing the coming kingdom. (p.18)

Ever since the reign of Constantine, through the period of the Crusades and until recent times, whenever politics and religion have worked together, they have suppressed individual freedom to a greater or lesser extent. This partly explains why Islam was so successful soon after the death of (Prophet) Muhammad in countries such as Syria and Egypt which were originally Christian. Many Christians in these countries had not accepted the official teachings of their church, which was the church of the Byzantine Empire. They welcomed the arrival of the victorious Muslim armies, hoping that the Muslims would free them from the yoke of the Empire.” (Chawkat Georges Moucarray (1984) in: *'Islam And Christianity At The Crossroads'*, p. 15)

In a western democracy, God can be voted for or voted out, if His opponents can muster a majority vote. Under Islam, the constitution is based on

the Shariah (Islamic Law), so any legislation that conflicts with it will be unconstitutional. Within that context, the democratic process takes its course one hundred percent. The Qur'an (fourteen centuries ago) spelled out explicitly the principle of 'Shura', which means that issues are to be decided by joint deliberation and consultation. That is why Muslims are described in the Quran as those ". . . *who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation;*" (Q. 42: 38). The practical applications of this principle in the earliest days of Islam (the time of the prophet and his immediate successors) qualify it to be considered the forerunner of democracy. The prophet was inspired in the Qur'an thus:

- *"... and consult them in affairs (of moment), then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in God; For God loves those who put their trust (in Him)."* (Qur'an 3:15)

'Shura' (Consultation or Conference), is to pervade all walks of life at all levels, even in the seemingly small matters mentioned in the Qur'an; such as the Qur'anic commandment that the decision to wean a suckling infant should be taken by mutual shura and consent of both parents. In a word, the Muslim's allegiance is not to a secular power, be it the state or its legislators, but to the Sharia, which transcends both humanity and temporality. Sharia is a way; a methodology; a road map; a regulation; the Law.

The fact that God is the Legislator gives the legal system a specific configuration. In Islam or in the Muslim Ummah, leadership is a divine call to service; people do not need to beg or campaign to be made leaders. In fact, those who beg (lobby) to be appointed are automatically disqualified. Sovereignty is not vested in the people; it is (vested) in Allah (SWT) and the leaders see their duty as a continuation of their service to Him. They are therefore, not only answerable to the people, they will also account on the Day of Judgment. Here, in the Sharia, morality is an anchor, but Western democracy is amoral. This is why people see politics as a dirty game. Interference by the state in any matter admitted to be within the domain of the Sharia predisposes acceptance of the western idea of sovereign secular power. Whereas a traditional Muslim ruler must, by definition, remain the servant of the sacred law of Islam, a modern Government, on the other hand, and particularly a parliament with the modern idea of sovereignty behind it, can constitute itself its master.

Eleventh, the idea behind the Muslim weekly "Day of Assembly" (Friday) is different from that behind the Christian Sunday. The Jewish weekly "Day of Assembly" (Saturday) is different from that of the Christians. The Jewish Sabbath is primarily a commemoration of God's ending His work of creation, and resting on the seventh day – Saturday; Sunday being the first day of the week) (Genesis 2:2, Exodus 20:11). The Jewish command forbids work on Saturday but says nothing about worship or prayer on that day. (Exodus 20:10).

- ❖ “. . . but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it, you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your man-servant or maid-servant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.” (Exodus 20:10).

Although the Christian Church has changed the Sabbath day from Saturday to Sunday, there is no biblical injunction to that effect. Nowhere in the Bible are Christians directed to go to church on Sunday. The Sabbath day ordained by God is Saturday and not Sunday. Conversely, the Muslim weekly congregational Prayer on Friday, is ordained in the Quran (Chapter 62 verses 9 and 10), and surprisingly, the exact ritual format of the prayer in the Quran is similarly described in the book of Nehemiah chapter 8:1-6.

The Jewish formalism went so far as to kill the spirit of the Sabbath, and call forth the protest of Jesus. (Mark 2:27).

- ❖ “Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27).

The **twelfth** difference is with regards to the Character (signs) of the Believer. The yard stick provided by Christianity for recognizing a true believer is much different from that given in Islam. According to the Bible, in Mathew chapter 16, verse 17-18, Jesus gave the identity of his followers:

- ❖ “And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes (serpents) with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”(Mark 16:17 – 18).

While we can agree that a true Christian believer (adept or prophet) can possibly drive demons, (as also done in other faiths, as in Islam) and pick up snakes (as done by the Indian Hindu worshipper), it is however a bit far-fetched for a Christian to drink deadly poison and survive it, as a proof of the truth of his belief. However, A. S. Suleman (1976) believes that what Jesus is saying in this passage is that, as long as one is not a Jew, one has an impossible condition to fulfill to become a true believer in Christ. He based this view on the uncompromising posture of Jesus against the non-Jews, with his categorical affirmation that:

- ❖ “Salvation belongs to the Jew” (John 4:22)

I believe that the signs outlined for identifying a true Muslim Believer are much more realistic, simple, and believable. The Quran says that Muslims are:

- ❖ “Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayers; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation, who spend out of what We bestow on them for sustenance.” (Q. 42:38)

- ❖ *“And the servant of (God) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, “Peace!; (Quran 25:63)*
- ❖ *“Then will he be of those who believe, and enjoin patience, (constancy, and self-restraint), and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion. Such are the companions of the Right Hand.” (Q. 90:17 – 18).*
- ❖ *Those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord, prostrate and standing;*
- ❖ *Those who say: “Our Lord! Avert from us the wrath of Hell, for its Wrath is indeed an affliction grievous, - Evil indeed is it as an abode, and as a place to rest in; Those who, when they spend are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes);*
- ❖ *Those who invoke not, with God, any other god, nor slay such life as God has made sacred, except for just cause, nor commit fornication . . . Those who witness no falsehood, and if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honourable (avoidance) . . . ; (Q. 25: 63 – 77).*
- ❖ *And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.” (Q.42: 39)*

When asked which Muslim was better on account of his faith, the Messenger of Allah answered: *“They are those who are better in conduct and dispositions.”* This is so because even the Prophet himself was described as a being favored with the most laudable virtues and generous character in the Quran:

- *“. . . and you (Muhammad) are most exalted in Character. . .” (Q 68:4).*

(see Non-Muslim verdict on Muhammad, at the Appendix)

It is also clear that ‘Islam’ was the religion of all the Prophets of God. Islam was very much the religion of Jesus (pbuh). Not only this, the continuity of the Abrahamic faith till Muhammad (pbuh) is also seen in the Bible, as we find prophecies in both the Old and the New Testaments about the coming of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) though this has been contested or staunchly refuted by some Christian theologians.

Muhammad in the Bible

Many a times Christians refute any imputation that the advent of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned in the Bible. Some will say, “I have read the Bible several times over, but nowhere did we see the name Muhammad.” However, Christian theologians find no difficulty in pointing out what they consider as

clear prophecies of the advent of Jesus (pbuh) in the Old Testament, yet nowhere in the OT did the name Jesus appeared in connection with the prophecies. Nowhere!

A characteristic of what is termed biblical prophecy is that it merely gives outlines which become perfectly distinct only upon the unfolding of reality. But biblical prophecy does have certain safeguards which make the intended interpretation sure beyond all doubts. Giving the Christian scholars the benefit of doubt, with regards to the standard Christian exegesis of the Bible (for instance: Deuteronomy, Isaiah, & John), we will assume that the accepted Greek text has captured, in general, the actual saying of Jesus (pbuh).

The main question is whether or not the profile of “that Prophet” to come has materialized, and who fits that profile? There are several Bible prophecies which for so long, have been misinterpreted so as to apply it to Jesus (pbuh). One such prophecy is in the Book of Deuteronomy, in the Old Testament, wherein God promised Prophet Moses (pbuh):

❖ *“The Lord said to me: “What they say is good . . .; ‘I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers (brethrens in another version) like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” (Deuteronomy 18:17-18).*

The Quran related that Prophet Abraham prayed to Allah as follows:

- *“Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own who shall recite unto them Your Verses and instruct them in the Book (the Qur’an) and Al-Hikmah (Knowledge) and purify them. Verily! You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.” (Quran 2:127 & 129).*

Three important conditions are indicated in the Deuteronomy prophecy; and these are:

- i. That a prophet will come from among the brethrens of the Israelites;
- ii. This Prophet will be “like unto Moses”;
- iii. God will put his words in the mouth of this prophet.

Let us look closely at each of these conditions individually:

1. Prophet from among the Brethrens (Brothers) of Israelites

These words were addressed to the Israelites. The most notable ‘brethrens’ of the Israelites (descendants of Abraham through his second son Isaac), are the Ishmaelites (descendants of Abraham through his first son Ishmael). Obviously, the ‘brethrens’ of a nation cannot be a tribe or a family of the same nation itself, but rather, another nation related to it racially (by blood) (Genesis 25:18).

2. A Prophet Like unto Moses

Christians contend that the “prophet like unto Moses” was Jesus. We know for certain that both are Israelites and spiritual guides. But was this prophecy really about Jesus?

It is clear that we need to do a comparison in order to arrive at a lucid picture of the prophet meant who is like Moses. To begin with, it is granted that both Moses and Jesus are Israelites, which makes them alike. However, this applies to all Jewish prophets. Secondly, there is no dispute that Moses is a prophet, but going by how Christianity today regards Jesus, we cannot in clear conscience say so for sure, that ‘the Prophet’ applies to Jesus. Since Pauline Church has insisted that Jesus is divine, it means then that we have already failed the test at the second count, unless we agree to go strictly by the Bible’s reference of him as a prophet and servant of God. So to find out which prophet fits the prophecy, we need to identify some crucial happenings in the life of Moses, perhaps of historical nature, and compare those to the life history of Jesus and that of Muhammad, with which we can possibly clarify the identity of ‘that prophet’ who was to come after Moses. The areas we need to consider will include the circumstances of his birth, his growing up, his family life, his struggles, and various stages of his age: prophethood, at death and how he died etc. This is placed in a Table below:

Area of comparison	Moses	Muhammad	Jesus
1. Birth	Normal birth, had 2 parents.	Normal birth, had 2 parents.	Abnormal birth, by single Parent.
2. Family Life	Married with Children.	Married with Children.	Not Married, no Child.
3.. Exile	To Median	To Medina	Not exiled
4. Career	Prophet/ Statesman	Prophet/ Statesman	Prophet?
5. Encounter with Enemies	Hotly Pursued	Hotly Pursued	Not the case
6. Result of Encounter	Moral/Physical victory. in Wilderness	Moral/Physical victory. In Cave	Moral victory only
7. Revelation: how received	at 40 years of age	at 40 years of age	In childhood
8. Age of Prophethood	Spiritual/ Legal Commander of Host	Spiritual/ Legal Commander of Host	As a baby
9. Nature of Teaching	Natural death	Natural death	Spiritual only
10. Political Leadership	Lived to over 60 yrs	Lived to over 60 yrs	No Command
11. Death	Had a Father, but Adopted as a Child	Had a Father, but Adopted as a Child	Crucified
12. Age (life-span)			Died B4 age 40
			Had only Mother, Not adopted.
			Rejected by

13. Parentage & Childhood	Rejected initially then accepted. Established a nation	Rejected initially then accepted. Established a nation	most Israelites. Not Applicable
14. Acceptance by his People			
15. National Leader			

The table above shows that while Jesus is very much unlike Moses and therefore does not fit this particular prophecy, Muhammad on the other hand is very much like Moses in many respects, and therefore fits the prophecy perfectly.

3. God will put His Words in the Prophet's Mouth

(i) Generally speaking, this description may apply to any prophet of God who is communicating God's message to mankind. While that message may come in the form of 'written Tablets' as is the case with Moses, the specific wording of the verse above is a vivid description of the type of revelation received by Prophet Muhammad. Angel Gabriel was sent to dictate to him specific portions of the Quran, which he repeats verbatim exactly as he heard them. Muhammad's own thinking or authorship was not involved in any way in what he uttered. The words of God (the Quran) were "put into his mouth". As the Quran itself said: "*He (Muhammad) does not speak of his own desire, it is no less than a revelation sent down to him.*" (Quran 53:3-4). And as can be verified, of the 114 chapters of the holy Quran, all but one (chapter 9) started with the opening invocation: ('*Bismillahi Rahmani Rahiym*'), meaning: "*In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*". However, one of the chapters has an additional 'Bismillah' invocation embedded within the chapter, bringing the total to 114. Furthermore, numerous passages in the Quran command the prophet in such terms as: 'Say', 'Remind', 'Inform', etc. Other passages start with such expression as "*and your Lord said*"; still other passages state: "*and they ask you (O Muhammad) . . . say . . .*".

(ii) Fulfillment of God's promise through the Israelite branch of Abraham which God made before the birth of Isaac is clearly and abundantly articulated in the Bible. In the book of Genesis, we read that after the birth of Ishmael and before the birth of Isaac, God made a promise to Abraham to bless Ishmael's descendants:

- ❖ "*As for me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shall be a father of many nations.*" (Genesis 17:4)
- ❖ "*And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.*" (Genesis 21:13)

How was this promise fulfilled through the Ishmaelite branch of Abrahamic family tree?

Jesus was the last Israelite messenger of God and prophet. After him, it was time that God fulfills the promise He made to bless Ishmael and his descendants. The last messenger of God came roughly 600 years after Jesus, in the person of Prophet Muhammad, from the progeny of Abraham through Ishmael, whose followers constitute one fifth of the total world population, spread out in all corners of the earth.

(iii) The Promise to Ishmael's Descendants through Kedar

A most revealing profile is found in the Book of Isaiah which relates to Kedar ('Qaydar') second son of Ishmael and the fore-father of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). As we shall see, no other descendant of Ishmael fits this description but Prophet Muhammad. In the Book of Isaiah we read:

- ❖ *"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my spirit on him."*(Isaiah 42:1) (also called "My Messenger" in verse 10)

Indeed, all prophets were messengers, servants and elects of God of course.

It would appear that Jesus had been opportune to make the acquaintance of 'that prophet' which might have been the basis of his prophecy to his disciples. A passage in the book of Matthew chapter 17 verses 1-11, it was reported that Jesus went up the mountain with some of his disciples, and while they watched, *"Jesus was transfigured (his appearance changed) . . . and their appeared unto them (the Disciples) Moses, and Elias talking with him (Jesus) . . . while he yet spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud said: "This is my beloved (son) in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."*(Matthew 17:1-11). Clearly, we see from this passage that another figure appeared to the trio (Moses, Elias and Jesus) who was being introduced as the 'beloved son'; obviously, the reference was not to Jesus. And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no 'man', save Jesus only; which means that Moses, Elias and the new comer (or presence) have all gone except Jesus. Now, who could that 'figure' be? Or are we to believe instead that Jesus was being introduced to Moses, Elias and the other 'man' (figure)?

The Book of Isaiah, chapter 42 also referred to 'that prophet' thus:

- ❖ *"He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth."* (Isaiah 42:4) . . . *he shall prevail against his enemies (Isaiah 42:13) . . . and will bring Justice to the nations."* (Isaiah 42:1)

We know for a fact that even if we discount his 'crucifixion', Jesus did not live long enough for us to talk about his prevailing over his enemies during his short mission, beyond a moral victory, which is a common factor for all prophets; not that length of time is a necessary factor in achieving victory over enemies. However, even during that short period of his mission, we find him expressing disappointment: *"Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith"* (Matt 8:26); *"Are you*

even yet without understanding?” (Matt 15:16); *“O ye of little faith”* (Matt 16:8); *“ . . . because of their lack of Faith.”* (Matt 13:58); *“O ye faithless and perverse generation . . . how long shall I suffer you?”* (Matt 17:17). And on more than one occasion, he was saddened by the Israelites’ rejection of him by addressing them in very strong terms including VIPERS. For instance:

- *“Woe to you, Korazim!”* (Matthew 11:21)
- *“A wicked and adulterous generation . . .”* (Matthew 12:39)
- *“ . . . that is how it will be with this wicked generation.”* (Matthew 12:45)
etc.

In Prophet Muhammad’s case on the other hand, we find no trace of discouragement from him, even in the most critical moments of his mission. After the bitter struggle he ‘prevailed against his enemies’, and established a strong community of believers who indeed *‘brought judgment to the nations’*. Yet again, the book of Isaiah said:

- ❖ *“He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.”*
(Isaiah 42:2)

The above passage again reflects exactly the character of Prophet Muhammad. Not only was this his distinct characteristic and mark of decency, it was indeed the embodiment of the revelation given to him: *“Be modest in thy bearing and subdue thy voice”* was the command given to him in the Quran (Chapter 31:19). The prophecy also said:

- ❖ *“In his Law the islands will put their hope.”* (Isaiah 42:4).

The only prophet that came after this prophecy was made, with a complete and comprehensive code of Law was Prophet Muhammad. The Law revealed to him spread in a relatively short span of time to all corners of the earth, through continents and Islands. Again, the prophecy has it that ‘that prophet’ was . . .

- ❖ *“To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”* (Isaiah 42:7)

Blind eyes here could refer to spiritual blindness. People who lived in the darkness of an unholy life came to the light of truth completed through the mission of Prophet Muhammad. This is confirmed by Isaiah Chapter 60

- ❖ *“Arise shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”* (Isaiah 60:1-30)

At the beginning of his mission, many of his followers were captured and imprisoned in dark rooms and denied even a wick of light for months. Many of them were tortured and killed in the attempt to force them to recant their new religion. They were in this condition until the prophet came back in victory and

took possession of the city of Mecca. He freed the prisoners from the dungeon where they were kept in total darkness. Many of those who opposed him or opposed the truth and fought bitterly with him ended up among the most devout believers. Their blindness to truth was cured. God addressed Prophet Muhammad describing the Quran as: *“A Book which We revealed unto you, in order that you may lead mankind out of the depths of darkness unto light . . .”* (Quran 14:1).

When Prophet Muhammad conquered Mecca, the city was surrendered to him, and not a single drop of blood was shed that day. His first place of call was the Kaaba, the House of worship; and he went into the Kaaba declaring God’s holy words (as stated in the Quran: *“Behold! We gave the site (of the Sacred House) to Abraham saying: “Associate not anything (in worship) with Me; and sanctify My House . . .”* (Quran 22:26); he entered the Kaaba and destroyed all the idols inside and outside it, chanting the words of Allah: *“Truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished. For Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish.”* (Q. 17:81). These words correspond to the prophecy in the Book of Isaiah 42: 8-9:

- ❖ *“I am the Lord: that is My Name: and My Glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images.”* (Isaiah 42:8)
- ❖ *“behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare . . .”* (Isaiah 42:9)

The prophet then directed Bilal (one of the disciples) to climb upon the Kaaba and (‘sound’) the call for prayer: *“Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! . . . Ashhadu AnLa’iLaha illa Allah . . .”* : *“God is Great! God is Great!, I bear witness that there no deity worthy of worship save Allah; I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah! . . .”* This is in obedience to God’s command in the Quran:

- *“ . . . Whoever honours the sacred rites of Allah, for him it is good in the sight of his Lord . . . but shun the abomination of Idols, and shun the word that is false. Being true in faith to Allah, and never assigning partners to Allah . . .”* (Quran 22:30-31)
- *“He doth send down His angels with inspiration of His Command, to such of His servants as He pleaseth, (saying): “Warn (man) that there is no god but I: so do your duty unto Me.”* (Quran. 16:2)

It is already over 1400 years since Prophet Muhammad was sent and the Quran revealed through him, yet there has been no genuine prophet of comparable magnitude and influence on humanity to be placed on equal footing with Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Nor do we find any holy book since the Holy Quran that has influenced mankind and continued to hold influence to the degree it has. And no prophet in history is as universally called by the specific titles (‘Abdullah’: Servant of God; ‘Rasoolulah’: Messenger of God; and ‘Mustapha’: the Chosen one, respectively) as is Prophet Muhammad.

The most common title he is called by since his mission began, to this day, is 'Rasoolulah' (the Messenger of God). This title is given to him in the Quran, a fact not known to the generality of Christian faithfuls.

Returning to the Book of Isaiah, we read further that, '*that prophet*' (and his followers) will:

❖ "*Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His Praise from the end of the earth . . .*" (Isaiah 42:10)

A "*new song and His praise from the end of the earth*" would be an indication of melodious call to prayer (and praise of God) being chanted in Arabic (*Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! Ashhadu an La'ilaha Il'La Allah . . .*, {as above}) five times daily from the Minarets of millions of Mosques across the globe, in all the continents of the World. A new song may also refer to a new Scripture in a new language other than the language of the Israelite scripture. This seems consistent with the mention of "*another tongue will he speak*" in Isaiah 28:11. Christians would have no knowledge of this to connect it to the prophecies in the book of Isaiah 28 & 42. The prophecy also states:

❖ "*Let the desert and its towns raise their voices, let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice; Let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the Mountains.*" (Isaiah 42:11)

Kedar (Arabic: 'Qaydar') was the second son of Ishmael (Genesis 25:13). The well-known prophet who came from Ishmael's descendants is Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). His enemies who were misled by their leaders or '*mighty men*' as described in the book of Isaiah (21:17) ultimately embraced Islam.

Indeed, they have reason to '*lift up their voices*', to '*sing*' praises of God, and '*shout from the top of the mountains*'. The reference is quite obviously to the raised voices made by millions of pilgrims at Mecca and Mount Arafat: "*Labaika Allahuma Labaika, Labaika Lasharika Laka Labaika, Inal'Hamda Wani'imata Laka wal Mulk Lasharika Lak*": "Here I come (for Your worship) O Allah! Here I come; there is no partner with You; Here I come. Verily, to You belong the Praise, the Blessings and Sovereignty, Here I come".

That is chanted annually from Mount Arafat near Mecca by multitudes of Muslim faithfuls who come from all over the world to observe the annual rites of the Hajj Pilgrimage. Many Christian faithfuls will not know that this is in response to God's command in the Quran:

- "*And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways:*" (Quran 22:27).

They all come in fulfillment of the fifth cardinal pillar of Islam.

Note also a reference made of the activities of the Hajj Pilgrimage in the Book of Isaiah 60.

- ❖ *“Herds of Camels will cover your land, young camels of Median and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense **and proclaiming the praise of the Lord**. All Kedar’s flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you, they will be accepted as offerings on My alter, and I will adorn My glorious Temple.” (Isaiah 60: 6-7)*

Rams, Cattle, Camels, Goats are brought from all over the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, to be used for sacrifice by pilgrims. During this time, the House of God (the Kaaba) is annually adorned each pilgrimage season. Of course, Christian faithfuls know nothing of this reality.

And in the Book of John, we read that Jesus highlights the brevity of his own mission, showing its intermediate status as a link between the prophetic past and the prophetic future. It is significant that Jesus never called himself the last prophet of God or even a universal prophet, though Christians later came to consider him as both. On the contrary, when we read the verses carefully with regards to the Greek text, rather than the creeds of the established Churches, Jesus points specifically to the coming of another prophet after him who would:

- i. Be eminently truthful and trustworthy;
- ii. Teach only what God revealed to him; and
- iii. Honor Jesus by carrying the prophetic mission onward to its logical conclusion.

The New Testament records Jesus (pbuh) as saying:

- ❖ *“Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me I go to prepare a place for you . . . and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter (Greek: Parakletos), that he may abide with you forever: even the spirit of truth.” (John 14: 1, 16, 17).*

Jesus says that the Comforter (or Prophet) who would come after him would be a true messenger commissioned by God who, like Jesus, would possess a heavenly Revelation from God, teaching not words of his own composition. He spoke only that which God gave him to speak:

- ❖ *“But when he, the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you in all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear (from God) that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall show unto you.” (John 16:13-14)*

Thus, this coming ‘Comforter’, ‘Spirit of truth’ (or prophet) would not spurn the mission of Jesus, but would recognize it and actually ‘glorify’ Jesus by removing from association with him all the false doctrines with which others surrounded the name (of Jesus). Unlike the Jews in general, this prophet would not belie

the mission of Jesus, but take the prophetic mission onward to its conclusion. We read further in the Bible that God made a promise to *'that prophet'* and his descendants:

- ❖ *"As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the Lord. "My spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth or the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever." Says the Lord.*" (Isaiah 59:21)

Now, who would this prophet be? Jesus called him *"Paraclete"*. We cannot discount the opinion that what Jesus really said, in his own language of Aramaic, which was nearer in meaning to the Greek word *"Pericyte"* i.e. *"the Praised One"* and is also similar in sound, which 'John', an unknown writer, in the second century of the Christian era (i.e. not the Disciple) picked up *"Paraclete"* instead, probably in error. However, until positive textual evidence is available, we shall continue to give the benefit of doubt, because *even in its admittedly defective condition*, the light of truth shines in it with startling brilliance.

Based on the King James' Version, Christendom has, for centuries, translated *"Paraclete"* as *'the Comforter'* though that is not precisely what *"Paraclete"* means. Even so, *"Comforter"* would be an acceptable title for the one who is *'the Mercy of all creatures'*. What *"Paraclete"* means though, is an *"advocate"*, one who pleads the cause of another, one who counsels or advises. Note that *'solicitor'* in the English language is synonymous with *"advocate"* in the legal sense. The word points to one who would be an advocate for and counselor to mankind, who, as the Quran puts it, would be *'harisun alaikum'*: *"solicitous for your welfare"*. Another indicator which further corroborates the true meaning of these verses is that the *"Paraclete"* is also given the title *"Spirit of Truth"*(Greek to *pneuma tees aletheais*). It would appear that some hasty editor was not satisfied with the expression *"spirit of truth"*, or did not understand it, and assumed that this must be the same as the *"Holy Spirit"*. The words at John (14:26) which identify the *"Paraclete"* as the Holy Spirit are the result of this. Yet, this premature interpolation, unsound textually, is the one generally accepted by the Church, as explanation for who is to be the *"Paraclete"*!

But Jesus has spoken of someone who would dwell physically with mankind, advising and counseling them, in effect. *"Pleading their case"* with God and showing them the sure way of return, by adherence to the truth, to the Divine Judge. He was not someone who was already present, but someone yet to come (as at Jesus' time). This is clear when one realizes that in the New Testament (Greek version) *'pneuma'* can mean *"possessor of a spiritual communication"*, i.e. an inspired person, as well as a *"spirit"* per se. (A Greek-

English Lexicon to the New Testament, by Rev. Thomas S. Green). Thus, to *pneuma tees aleetheais*, “the inspired truthful one”, means that the “Paraclete” would be so truthful and trustworthy in discharging his responsibilities to the Divine Revelation that “the Truthful” or “the Trustworthy” would be identifying titles for him. The Greek *aleetheais* corresponds exactly with the Arabic “*Al-Amin*”, “the Trustworthy”, which was a title of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from very early in his life.

The event, of the coming of the new prophet and the law he brought with him was also foretold in the Book of Jeremiah. The people, who must have lost their Way and forsaken the religion of God for idol worship, were urged to go and ‘*observe closely*’ the magnificent changes and indeed the brilliance of the new faith in Arabia (‘Kedar’) where gods of Idol were dethroned: where ‘*a nation has changed its gods*’. This of course may have been a vision God gave to Prophet Jeremiah, of the advent of Islam:

❖ *“Cross over to the coast of Kittin and look, send to Kedar and observe closely, see if there has ever been anything like this: Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all). But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols.”* (Jeremiah 2: 10-11).

Let us now consider a reconstruction of some verses from the book of John Chapters 14 and 16. Jesus, while preparing his disciples for his departure said:

“I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming.”(John 14:30). *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. (John 14:15) “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. (John 14:15). “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another counselor to be with you for ever – the spirit of truth. (John 14:16–17). “But I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict **the world** of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. (John 16:7- 8) “If you love me, you will obey what I command. (John 14:15). Note: the ‘World’ is significant here, for Jesus had said that his Kingdom is not of **this world**. Note also God’s command in Deuteronomy 18: “. . . You must listen to him” (Deut. 18:15). “If anyone does not listen to My Words that this prophet speaks in My name, I Myself will call him to account.” (Deut. 18:18)*

Christian theologians said that the predicted ‘Counselor’ to come (the Comforter) is the Holy Ghost because of John 16:7; yet we find that the same Bible has made it abundantly clear that Jesus’ going away has nothing to do with the coming of the Holy Ghost, because the presence of Holy ghost or holy Spirit, the angel of revelation, was already manifest; that is, he has been present all the while. The Holy Ghost was present already during the ministry of Jesus, a

fact which the New Testament acknowledges abundantly (Matthew 3: 16, 17; 12:27-33). Other instances of his presence are::

- i. Bezaleel son of Uri was filled with the Spirit (Exodus 31:3);
- ii. Spirit of God was with Daniel (Daniel 6:40);
- iii. David knew him, and prayed to God not to take the Holy Spirit from him. (Psalm 51:11)
- iv. John (the Baptist) was filled with the holy Ghost before he was born (Luke 1:15), so it is not dependent on Jesus going away;
- v. The Holy Ghost is there with Elizabeth (Luke1:41), so it is not dependent on Jesus going away;
- vi. The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon (Luke 2:25), Jesus had nothing to do with it.
- vii. The Holy Ghost was helping Jesus (Matthew 12:28), so his going away is not relevant;
- viii. Jesus said, “receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22), so it has been there even before Jesus left:
- ix. The Holy Ghost was helping the disciples (Mark 13:11), so it has been already present;
- x. It is also stated that: *“likewise the spirit also helpeth . . . for we know not how to pray as we ought but the spirit maketh intercession for us . . . for the saints according to the will of God”* (Romans 8:26-27), so not dependent on Jesus going away.

Considering these instances, it would have been ridiculous and redundant for Jesus to speak of the future coming (“He shall /will give you . . .”) of what had existed already. Furthermore, The Bible gave us enough indication that the Holy Spirit was not a person, and “not an intelligent being”, but only the extra-ordinary power or gift of God, imparted on God’s chosen before the coming of Jesus, and to Jesus Christ himself in his life-time, and afterwards, to the apostles and many of the first Christians, to empower them to preach and propagate the gospel with success. (Acts 1:2)

What is being established here is that based on the ‘facts’ of the Bible, the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18 could not have been about Jesus. Firstly, because we have established that Jesus is unlike Moses in so many ways; secondly, the ‘counselor’ who also is “that Prophet” which Jesus spoke of in the Books of Isaiah and John, etc., could not have been Jesus himself, unless there are two different prophets being prophesized. We have also seen that the ‘counselor’ or ‘Spirit of Truth’ could not be the Holy Ghost because apart from the fact that the Holy Ghost is not human but a spirit, (as the Bible confirmed), perhaps the greatest of God’s angels; the Holy Ghost has been with Jesus and others before and after Jesus existence, which nullified the notion that his coming has anything to do with Jesus’ going away.

We should note that another counselor will imply somebody like Jesus, - another or similar to. And being imbued with 'the spirit of truth' would mean a pure soul, other than the Holy Ghost or Angel Gabriel (?) (as usually speculated) and, the "Prince of this world" - i.e. not a spiritual world but the physical or tangible world. This clearly cannot be the Holy Ghost, which is a spirit. In fact John 16:14, mentioned 8 masculine pronouns to stress that the Comforter is a man not a Ghost. We note further that Jesus had said that his kingdom is not of this world. And again, Jesus points to a fundamental distinction between the "Paraclete" and all other prophets: "that he may abide with you forever". This is the same as saying: "the Last Prophet whose mission has permanence, voiding the need of any additional prophet."

So we ask again, based on the above, which great prophet came after Jesus, to this world through whom *"God will speak (has spoken) to this people with foreign lips and strange tongues (Arabic?); Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners God will speak to this (the) people (of the world)"*. This Counselor, or Spirit of Truth, or Prophet whom Jesus said: *"unless I go away, the counselor will not come to you"*; who has been acclaimed as *"the spirit of truth"(Al-Ameen)?; who God said He will put His words in his mouth and he will tell them everything God commanded him; who will not speak on his own (accord); he will speak only what he hears; who will remind you of everything Jesus had said to you and bring glory to Jesus' name by taking from what is of Jesus and making it known to you; who will guide you into all truth; also bring justice to the nations in faithfulness; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth". WHO?!*

The Book of Isaiah further describes the nature or stature of the prophet to come:

- ❖ *"The Lord (of the Host?), will march out like a mighty man, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies."* (Isaiah 42:13)

In addition to Isaiah 42:13 above, the prophet will actually *"convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment"*. This has also been realized in the person of Prophet Muhammad, the only prophet since the exit of Jesus (pbuh) who has triumphed over his enemies in countless battles (inspite of the Crusades) and his known battle cry heard all over the world, has been : *'Allahu Akbar!'*.

We learn from the Holy Quran that Allah describes Prophet Muhammad as:

- ❖ *"An Apostle from God, rehearsing scriptures kept pure and holy: wherein are laws (or decrees) right and straight."* (Quran 98: 2-3).
- ❖ *". . . Neither does he speak from his own whims. It is but a revelation revealed."* (Q53:3 – 4).

And that he (Prophet Muhammad) was precisely commanded to:

- “. . . Call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as thou art commanded; nor follow thou their vain desires but say: “I believe in the Book which God has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. God is our Lord and your Lord: for us (is the responsibility for) our deeds, and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. God will bring us together, and to Him is (our) final goal.” (Q. 42: 15)

According to the Holy Bible, God will speak to the people through the lips of foreigners, men of strange tongues (Isaiah 28:11; and 1st Corinthians 14:21): The verses state as follows:

- ❖ “Very well then, **with foreign lips and strange tongues**, God will speak to this people. . . (Isaiah 28:11).
- ❖ “For then will I turn to the people a pure language that they may call upon the name of the lord, to serve him with one consent (in accord).” (Zephaniah 3:9)
- ❖ “In the new Law it is written: Through **men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people**, but even then they will not listen to me,” says the Lord.” (1st Corinthians 14:21).

We must note here that the mother-tongue of Jesus is the original language of the Israelite, which is Aramaic. A tongue foreign to Jesus’ language will certainly not be his. Furthermore, as we have seen above, the prophet to come after Jesus, whom God will send, is from the brethren (or brothers) of his people - the Israelites. These (Beni Isra’el) are the progeny of Abraham through Isaac down to Jesus through his mother Mary. The Arabs are also the progeny of Abraham through Ishmael down to Muhammad (through his father Abdullah), which makes them brothers (or brethren). We must note here that another tongue means another language, not Hebrew or Aramaic the languages of the Israelites, but of the language of their brethren: i.e. Arabic. So if we believe the Bible, that a counselor or a truthful prophet (“spirit of Truth”) will come, who speaks a foreign language different from Jesus’ tongue and through whose ‘strange tongue’, God will speak the new Law to the people, then we have no option but to believe that the new language must be Arabic.

And, we have it on the authority of the Holy Quran that “*There is not a nation but a Warner hath passed among them*” (Qur’an 35:24). “*And for every nation there is a Messenger*” (Qur’an 10:48). “*And we never sent a Messenger save with the **language** of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them...*” (Qur’an 14:4). Alas the Truth came in Arabic, the language of Prophet Muhammad, but they recognize it not.

The Holy Quran states further: “*We know indeed what they say (that), “It is a man that teaches him.” The tongue of him they wickedly point to is notably*

foreign, while this is Arabic, pure and clear.” (Q. 16:103). “We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran in order that ye may learn wisdom.” (Q. 12:2). “Thus have We revealed it to be a judgment of authority in Arabic. . . .” (Q. 13:37). “Had We sent this as a Quran (in a language) other than Arabic, they would have said: “Why are not its verses explained in detail? (They would have said) What! (a Book) not in Arabic and (a messenger) an Arab? . . .” (Q. 41:44). “Thus have We sent by inspiration to thee an Arabic Quran: that thou mayest warn the mother of cities and all around her, - and warn (them) of the Day of Assembly, of which there is no doubt: (when) some will be in the Garden (Paradise), and some in the Blazing Fire.” (Q. 42:7). “As we have sent a messenger (i.e. Muhammad) reciting to you Our verses (i.e. Quran) and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom.” (Q 2:151). **“Whoever obeys the messenger, has indeed obeyed Allah, but whoever turns back, you shall not watch over them,”** (Q 4:80).

To this effect Moses declared:

- ❖ *“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. **You must listen to him.**” (Deuteronomy 18:15)*

And the Lord God affirms it:

- ❖ *“. . . I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. **If anyone does not listen to My words that the prophet speaks in My name, I Myself will call him to account.**” (Deuteronomy 18:18)*

The Qur’an is the Word of God revealed to Muhammad through angel Gabriel and it is beyond human imagination to produce anything like it. Muhammad had no formal schooling and he made no secret of it. It was his greatest duty to teach the whole of mankind, literate and illiterate alike, the true message of God.

- *“We sent down the (Quran) in Truth, and in Truth has it descended: and We sent thee but to give Glad-tidings and to warn (Sinners).” (It is) a Quran which We have divided (into parts from time to time), in order that thou mightiest recite it to men at intervals: We have revealed it by stages.” (Quran 17:105 – 106)*

The mighty angel revealed the Quran to Prophet Muhammad in the cave, where he goes to seclude himself for months on end. The angel appeared to him and ordered Muhammad to “Read”, but the prophet told him I am not learned. The angel repeated the command a second and a third time, eliciting the same response: I am not learned! Said he. Thereby, angel Gabriel recited the first five verses of Chapter 96 (Al-Alaq), which reads:

- *“Read (or proclaim) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created;
Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:*

*Read! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful;
He Who taught (the use of) the Pen;
Taught man that which he knows not.” (Quran 96: 1-5)*

Similar passages are found in the Bible, prophesying the advent of the Quran, bearing very close semblance to the verse above:

- ❖ *“And the Book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, read this, I pray thee and he saith, I am not learned” (Isaiah 29:12; see the original KSV)*
- ❖ *“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to his people.” (Isaiah 28:10-11)*

The verses (Isaiah 29:12 and 28:10-11) above have been recasted differently by later reviewers, a Committee for Bible Translation of the New International Version for the New York International Bible Society, obviously with the purpose of obscuring the clarity of the intended message. Here is how it is casted (note and compare):

- *“Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say, “Read this, please,” he will answer, “I don’t know how to read.” (Isaiah 29:12)*
- *For it is: do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there. Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to his people,” (Isaiah 28:10-11).*

(Note how nonsensical the verses have turn out to be (excepting the latter part of the second quote, i.e. verse 28”11)

However, the Holy Quran has in fact encapsulated the prophecies that appear in the Books of Deuteronomy (18), Isaiah (28), Isaiah (chapters 42; 59; 60; 1st Corinthians (14); Matthew 12: (15-21) and John (16), adequately. It reads:

- *“Those who follow the messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures) – in the Law and the Gospel; - for He commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil, He allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believes in him, honor him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him, - it is they who will prosper.” (Quran 7:157)*

It therefore Commands the Holy prophet to:

- *“Say: ‘O man! I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah, to Whom belongeth the dominion of the heaven and the earth: there is no god but He: It is He that giveth both life and death. So*

believe in Allah and His Words: follow him (so) that ye may be guided.” (Quran 7: 158)

The authenticity of the Qur’an leaves no doubt as to the purity and originality of its text. Serious scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, have agreed that the Qur’an we use today, contain beyond a doubt, the very same Message which Muhammad received, taught, lived by and bequeathed to humanity fourteen centuries ago. Some observations may illustrate this outstanding authenticity of the Qur’an. The Qur’an was revealed in portions and piecemeal, but it was never without some form of order and arrangement. The name of the Qur’an indicates that it was a Book from the very beginning (see Chapters 22; 41:41- 42). The arrangements of the Qur’an and the gradual revelation of its passages were the Plans and Will of God Almighty, a plan which Muhammad had no choice but to abide by (see Chapters 25:32; 75:17).

What is the Message of the Quran? The Qur’an aims at (the):

- i. Abolition of all practices or customs regarded as unreasonable in human life.
- ii. Organic reform of society, through its structure and legislative concepts which are based on humanitarianism. These are built on the following:
 - a. Quest for a more abundant life, without any racial discrimination;
 - b. Universal equality and brotherhood in the exercise of rights and duties;
 - c. Exhorting good behaviors or practices and condemning or abolishing evil practice;
 - d. Condemning the use of force in matters of faith and restricting against violence in favor of peace; and
 - e. Encouraging the search for knowledge and reflection over God’s creation and favors for the benefit of mankind.

Chapter FOUR

A CRITICAL VIEW OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES AND DOGMAS

Details and observations on the 5 Cardinal Doctrines of Christianity

The Cardinal Doctrines of Christianity which we shall consider herein are five, namely:

1. The Doctrine of Trinity,
2. The Doctrine of Incarnation of Christ,
3. The Divine Son-ship of Jesus,
4. The Doctrine of Original Sin, and
5. The Doctrine of Atonement.

1.0 The Doctrine of Trinity

The Doctrine of Trinity teaches that there are three separate and distinct divine persons in the Godhead. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, as described in the Athanasian Creed which reads:

“There is one person of the father, another of the son, another of the holy ghost, all are one, the glory equal, the majesty co- eternal, the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God and yet they are not three Gods, but one God.” For likes as we are compelled by Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there are three Gods or three Lords. (the authority Ulfat-Aziz-Us Samad, p.29)

It is difficult not to notice the obvious self-contradiction in this statement. It is like saying one plus one plus one (1+1+1) is not three (3) but one (=1); or like taking a child’s baby doll and splitting it into three pieces and giving one of the pieces back to the child and telling the child that each one piece is the same as the whole doll that you broke. We know that even the child will not believe that! If there are three separate and distinct persons and each is God, there must be three Gods.

Of course we find an excuse for this, as given by C. G. Moucarry (1984). He said: *“The writings of the apostle (of Jesus) bear unanimous witness that the one and only eternal son of God became incarnate in the person of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the eternal Spirit of God whose mission is to reveal the son to mankind. The Son, who is the perfect image of the invisible God, makes the Father known to them. The fatherhood of God, the sonship of Jesus Christ, and the procession of the Holy Spirit define the eternal relationships between the three persons of the Godhead. But this divine tri-unity does not mean that God is One and Three from the same point of view, since this would be a contradiction*

in terms. This concept of God consequently rules out the possibility of placing any created being on an equal footing with God. . . . The Trinitarian monotheism of the Bible is radically opposed to the tritheism denounced in the Quran. Jesus is not the Son of God in the sense that God begat a human child in Mary's womb. Albeit miraculously . . ." (C. G. Moucarry: *'Islam And Christianity at the Crossroads'*, Publisher: Presses Bibliques Universitaires (1988) p. 81)

So we gather from this passage a separation between God and the Spirit of God (which is the holy Spirit). How can God who Himself is a Spirit have a spirit? The Bible warned in the book of John 4:24 that God is spirit and they that worship Him must do so in spirit. And here we have Moucarry telling us that *"The Holy Spirit is the eternal Spirit of God"* which obviously makes God a different entity, whose nature, it would appear, will be different from His spirit!

Of course Moucarry continues to argue this point by saying that: *"There is a very real difference between the oneness of God's nature and the 'threeness' of his persons, just as there is a very distinction between 'begetting' in the human sense and 'fatherhood' in the divine sense. That is why it is vital to maintain, as the famous Quranic verse does, that "God does not beget nor is He begotten" (Q. 112:3). On the other hand, despite these important distinctions, the Bible teaches that the Father 'begets' the Son, the 'only begotten Son' of the Father. To confess that Jesus is the incarnate son of God is not at all the same thing as making a man into a god, because the incarnation of the son of God is exactly the opposite of the deification of the man Jesus. The union of the divine and human natures in the single person of Jesus neither deifies human nature nor humanizes divine nature, and this alters neither of them. According to the biblical conception of God, Jesus is the second person of the divine trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and not the third after God and Mary. Nor can God be reduced to the person of the son alone. This is why it is correct to say that Christ is God, but incorrect to say that God is Christ."* (Moucarry: *'Islam and Christianity at the Crossroads'* (1988) p.82)

Wow! What acrobatics? Looking at the above argument, one is forced to ask the following questions, particularly where it is said:

- 1) . . . that "Jesus is not the Son of God in the sense that God begat a human child", yet the Bible teaches that "the Father 'begets' the son, the only 'begotten son' of the Father! (Remember: *"Begotten not made"*?) How does that sit well with rational mind?
- 2) . . . that "to confess that Jesus is the incarnate son of god, is not at all the same thing as making a man a god etc.
- 3) . . . that divine tri-unity does not mean that God is one and three from the same point of view, when he agreed that this would be a contradiction in terms! Yet, still maintain that God is one in essence, but

three in persons? Because as they see it, there is a very real difference between the oneness of God's nature and the threeness of his person?

- 4) Why is Jesus the second person and not the third after God and Mary! The question is how did Mary come into the equation when she is not con-joined as a member of the Tri-unity?
- 5) . . . that it is correct to say Christ is God, but incorrect to say God is Christ! What is being implied here? . . . that one can say Christ is the same as God, but not that God is the same as Christ? This to the lay mind will be the same as saying: the Egg is laid by the Chicken, but cannot say: the Chicken laid the Egg?

The Christian Church recognizes the impossibility of harmonizing the belief in three divine persons with the Oneness of God, thus it declares the doctrine of the Trinity to be a mystery in which a person must have blind faith, as declared by Rev. J. F. De-Groot in his book *Catholic Teaching*: he said:

"The most Holy Trinity is a mystery in the strictest sense of the word. For reason alone cannot prove the existence of triune God, Revelation teaches it and even after the existence of the mystery has been revealed to us, it remain impossible for the human intelligence to grasp how three persons have but one divine nature" (Rev J. F. De Groot, page 101)

Strangely enough, C. G. Moucarray declares that: *"In his public life Jesus never hesitates to declare himself as a human being in the full sense of the word (John 8:40) like all human beings, he experiences tiredness, hunger and thirst (John 4: 6-8) and he weeps over the death of a friend (John 11: 35). Gentle and humble in heart (Matthew 11:29), he makes friends with very ordinary people and even with social outcasts. His relationship with God seems nothing unusual, except that he spends whole nights praying. He does not lay claims to divine goodness (Mark 10:18), he states that God is greater than he is (John14:28) and he willingly admits his own ignorance of some things which only God knows (Mark 13:32). He refers to himself most frequently as the son of man, a title which, more than any other, underlines his humanity is seen most clearly, when he begs God to save him, if possible, from the suffering he is about to face. Yet, – and this is to be noted – he also knows that it is for this very purpose that he has come, and he declares his resolve to glorify, above all, the name of the One who sent him (John 12:27-28). In this light, then, we see Jesus as a perfect 'Muslim' (in the sense that he is totally submitted to God)"* (p.79).

Even more strange is that Jesus (pbuh) himself never ever mentioned the Trinity. He knew or said nothing at all about there being three divine persons in the Godhead. His conception of God was in no way different from that of the early Israelite Prophets (Moses, Ezra, Elias, John etc.) who had always preached the Unity of God and not the Trinity. Jesus had echoed the same message of the earlier Prophets when he said:

- ❖ *“The first of all the commandments is, hear O Israel: the lord our God is only One lord and thou shall love the lord your God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” (Mark 12:29-30).*

He (Jesus) believed in One Divine Being, One God as is evident from the Bible. Jesus said:

- ❖ *“Thou shall worship the lord thy God and Him alone shall thou serve;” (Matthew 4:10)*

From the point of view of the Church, the Christian metaphysical construct suggest that Trinity by definition implies that there are three distinct beings in union who are co-equal, yet juxtaposed in a kind of hierarchical arrangement. And this hierarchical order of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (or Ghost) must be maintained by all who speak of it or risk committing blasphemy. The Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinate to the Father (because He is All-Powerful and All-Knowing enough to send both of them as His messengers and teach them what to speak or do). And we find the Holy Spirit (which is supposedly “the eternal Spirit of God”) to be subordinate to the Son. He supports the son and is always sent on errands to the son and others, by the Father. Yet this does not disturb the idea of equality of the Tri-unity. Another factor worthy of note is that one third (the son) of this Trinity or three persons ‘Unity’ or Tri-unity, took a form that had a beginning (because it was ‘begotten not made’) and had an end (because he died), even though the nature of the true Almighty God does not have a beginning nor an end and is everlasting.

The truth that we learn from records of history is that the doctrine of the Trinity was coined about three hundred years after Christ’s exit (300 AD). The four Canonical Gospels written between 70 A.D. and 115 A.D. (i.e. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) contain no reference to the Trinity. The New Catholic Encyclopedia (*Nihil obstat and Imprimatur*) admits that the doctrine of the Trinity was unknown to the early Christians and it was formulated in the last quarter of the fourth century. It is emphatically stated therein that the formulation “*one God in three persons*” was not solidly established into the Christian professions of faith prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title of “*the Trinitarian Dogma*”. (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia* [1967], under Holy Trinity, Volume 14 page 295). Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity was not taught by Jesus Christ (pbuh - peace and blessings of God be upon him).

A contemporary of Martin Luther and Calvin, Michael Servetus (1511 – 1553), found out upon examining the Bible more closely, that the doctrine of Trinity was nowhere a part of its teaching. He further discovered that the Bible did not always support what was being taught by the Church. His studies had shattered his belief in the doctrine of Trinity and resulted in his believing that there is only One God and that Jesus was one of His prophets. Servetus printed

his views in a book which he called *'The Errors of Trinity'*. It was published in 1531. In the same year, he published another book called *'Two Dialogues on Trinity'*. The two books took the whole of Europe by storm. An excerpt of Servetus's writing which caused such violent actions against him is here reproduced. He wrote:

"The philosophers have invented a third separate being truly and really distinct from the other two, which they call the third Person, or the Holy Spirit, and thus they have contrived an imaginary Trinity, three beings in one nature. But in reality three Gods, or one three-fold God, are foisted upon us under the pretence, and in the name of Unity. . . . For with them it is very easy, taking the words in their strict sense, for three beings to exist, which they say and yet strictly simply, and really, so different or distinct yet one is born of another, and one is breathed out of the others, and yet all these three are shut up in one jar. Since I am unwilling to mis-use the word Persons, I shall call them the first being, the second being, and the third being, for in the Scripture I find no other name for them. . . . Admitting therefore these three, which after their fashion they call Persons, they freely admit a plurality of beings, a plurality of entities, a plurality of essences, a plurality of substances, and taking the word God strictly, they will have a plurality of Gods."(Michael Servetus in M. Ata'ur Rahim: *'Jesus a Prophet of Islam'*, p. 119)

He laments the situation:

"How much this tradition of the Trinity has alas, alas! been the laughing stock of Mohammedons only God knows. The Jews also shrink from giving adherence to this fancy of ours, and laugh at our foolishness about the Trinity, and on account of its blasphemies, they do not believe that this is the Messiah promised in their Law. And not only the Mohammedons and the Hebrews, but the very beasts of the field, would make fun of us, did they grasp our fantastic notion, for all the workers of the Lord bless the One God. . . . This most burning plague, therefore, was added and superimposed, as it were, on the new gods which have recently come, which our fathers did not worship. And this plague of philosophy was brought upon us by the Greeks, for they above all men are most given to philosophy; and we, hanging upon their lips, have become philosophers, and they never understood the passages of the Scriptures which they adduced with regard to this matter."
(Michael Servetus in M. Ata'ur Rahim: *'Jesus a Prophet of Islam'*, p. 120)

No one had ever written such a daring book within living memory. The result was that the Church hounded Servetus from one place to another. Servetus was forced to change his name, but not his views. Servetus of course is only one case. Other notable names of those who strongly objected to doctrine of Trinity from the 1500s to 1800s, and took a stand against it, at the risk of their lives in the process; in fact some paid the full prize; they are:

Lelio Francesco Muria Sozini (Born 1525 – Died 1562)
 Fausto Paolo Sozini (1539 – 1604)
 John Biddle (1615 – 1662)
 J. Milton (1608 – 1674)
 John Locke (1632 – 1704)
 Sir Isaac Newton (1642- 1727)
 Thomas Emlyn (1663 – 1741)
 Theophilus Linddsey (1723 – 1808)
 Joseph Priestly (1733 – 1804)
 William Ellery Channing (1780 – 1842)

2.0 The Doctrine of Incarnation of Christ

The Doctrine of incarnation of Christ, like the doctrine of Trinity, was also introduced long after the demise of Jesus (pbuh). In fact one can trace the stages through which Jesus was gradually deified. Due to many miracles attributed to him, attempt was made to glamorize him. In works of the first and second centuries A.D. (After Death), he was presented as Almighty Angel, the first born of all creatures, and finally in the preface to John's Gospel and other works of the third and fourth centuries A.D., he was made into a god. In the Nicene Creed (325A.D.) an Oath was decreed against those Christians who will deny the divinity of Jesus, thus:

❖ *"I believe in . . . one lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God; Born of the father before all ages. God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God, begotten not made, being one of substance with the Father"* (p 34).

Christians both of the Catholic and Protestant denominations believe that Jesus Christ is God from all eternity, the second person of the divine Trinity. It was related that two thousand years ago he chose to appear in human body and was born of a virgin. The author of '*Catholic Teaching*' asserts the Godhead of Jesus in these words:

"This teaching about Christ divinity which is to be found in many places of scripture has always been proclaimed by the Church as one of the most important truths of the Catholic faith." (Rev. J. F. Groot: '*Catholic Teaching*' page 149).

The author of the '*Truth of Christianity*' W. H. Turton, a protestant, expressed himself on the subject of the divinity of Christ in two torts as follows:

"Evidently then, the expression, the son of God mean to him (John) and therefore presumably to other New Testament writers, who use it frequently, that Christ was truly God, (and) God the son, in the fullest and most complete sense." (W. H. Turton, '*The Truth of Christianity*', p. 507).

The Athanasian Creed states :

“Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believes rightly in the incarnation of our lord Jesus Christ.”

The first General Council (the Council of Nicea), persecuted Unitarian Priests; it solemnly condemned Arius (250 – 336 AD), who contended that Christ was not God but a “Creature” (created by God). This Dogma also has no support of the word of Jesus Christ (pbuh) in the recorded Gospels. The truth is that Jesus (pbuh) strongly disclaimed being part of the Godhead or Divinity. His very words in effect are:

❖ *“Why callest thou me Good? There is none good but the One that is God.”* (Mark 10:18).

Furthermore, Jesus spoke of God as:

❖ *“My Father and your Father” and “My God and your God”* (John 20:17)

How can ‘The God’ have a God? These words of Jesus which was reported in the Bible show that Jesus stood in the same relation to God as any other man. He was a creature (creation) of God, as can be proved by the agony he experienced on the Cross, when he cried out:

❖ *“Eloi Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?”* (Mark 15:34).

Meaning as interpreted *“My God, My God, Why has thou forsaken me?”* Is what we have here not the cry of a helpless man in agony, and which he was addressing to his Creator, his maker and Lord, a Power greater and Mightier than he?

I ask again, how can ‘God’ have a God? Or was Jesus making fun of those who supposedly believed him to be God or was he jesting with his ‘Father’, (who he supposedly knows to be his co-equal?) But really, can anyone imagine these words coming out of the mouth of the everlasting God?

God is the object of our worship, the Supreme Being to whom we creatures address our prayers and direct our worship. We cannot imagine God praying to anyone, certainly not to himself. Imagine Pharaoh, (the self-styled god), praying to himself for a favor!. Yet, it is written in the Gospel that Jesus did pray to God, when the Christians considered him to be God!:

❖ *“And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into the mountain apart to pray! And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and prayed”.* (Luke 5:16)

Does this give an indication of the behavior of a God?

According to C. G. Moucarry, Christians believe that *“the Quran’s rejection of Christ’s divinity is really the rejection of a false concept of that divinity which was brought to Muhammad’s attention by a number of Christians living in Arabia and the surrounding area. That the true Christian doctrine should have*

been confused with tritheism is all the more understandable coming from a setting in which a degenerate form of Christianity was found alongside the Arab polytheism that held sway before the coming of Islam. As a skillful iconoclast, the prophet of Islam successfully rid the Arabs of their idols. Was he an anti-trinitarian in the biblical sense of the term? It does not appear so. Having said this, later Muslim thinkers quite clearly opposed the Christian doctrine.” (p.90).

He said further that,

“In the Christian view, this truth (of the doctrine of trinity) is inevitably too high above mankind to be grasped by our unaided reason. It therefore includes ‘mysteries’ which the scriptures reveal and which can be grasped only by faith. Faith – the act of trusting by which man humbly listens to God’s Word - therefore precedes understanding, but the latter, once it has been enlightened, supplements the former. Thus the Christian accepts by faith these mysteries, which are above reason but not opposed to it, before he tries to penetrate them with his intellect and with the help of God’s spirit who revealed them.”(C. G. Moucarray, 1984).

So I ask: Why did God who wants to reveal Himself to mankind, instead decide to present to us a doctrine that is “too high above” our common understanding to grasp? He created us after all and He knows what our constitution is capable of assimilating. We believe that God will not lay on our heads such a burden that we will be unable to bear.

Moucarray continue to say that: *“Muslim doctrine knows nothing of such mysteries but it does admit that some things are known only by God. For example, the Quran does not deny that God could have chosen a son for himself had he wished (Quran 39:4). One verse which perfectly expresses the monotheistic passion of the Quran and the majestic Sovereignty of God goes as far as to call the prophet to submit his intelligence to revelation: “Say: if the Lord of Mercy had a son, I would be the first to worship” (Q. 43:81)*

The attention of the reader is here drawn to the next verse after the one under reference (i.e. verse 82) which continues to say:

- *“Glory to the lord of the heavens, and earth, the Lord of the Throne (of Authority)! (He is free) from the things they attribute (to Him)!” (Q. 43:82)*

While Quran 39 verse 4 cited first, actually states:

- *“Had Allah wished to take to Himself a son, He could have chosen whom He pleased out of those whom He doth create: but Glory be to Him! (He is above such things). He is Allah, the One, the Irresistible.” (Q. 39:4).*

Mahatma K. Gandhi (1972), a Polytheist, in his Autobiography, even as a believer in the worship of many gods, made a profound observation on this

topic also. He said: “. . . My difficulties lay deeper. It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only incarnate son of God, and that only he who believed in him would have everlasting life. If God could have sons, or God Himself, then all men were like God and could be God Himself. My reason was not ready to believe literally that Jesus by his death and by his blood redeemed the sins of the world. Metaphorically there might be some truth in it. Again, according to Christianity only human beings had souls, and not other living beings, for whom death meant complete extinction; while I held a contrary belief. I could accept Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice, and a divine teacher, but not as the most perfect man ever born. His death on the cross was a great example to the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it my heart could not accept. The pious lives of Christians did not give me anything that the lives of men of other faith had failed to give. I had seen in other lives just the same reformation that I had heard of among Christian principles. From the point of view of sacrifice, it seemed to me that the Hindus greatly surpassed the Christians. It was impossible for me to regard Christianity as a perfect religion or the greatest of all religions.” (Mahatma K. Gandhi (1972), ‘Autobiography’ p. 126)

The facts, as given to us in the Bible are that Jesus never claimed to be God, but only a Prophet or Messenger of God. He was a man to whom God has revealed His Message for the guidance of humanity. His very words and actions as recorded in the Gospels are:

- ❖ “And this life eternal, that they may know the only true God and Jesus Christ, **whom thou has sent**” (John 17:3)
- ❖ “Jesus saith unto them if ye are children of Abraham ye will do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, **a man** that had told you the truth which **I heard from God**” (John 8:39-40).

We find that Jesus (pbuh) also urged his followers to be faithful to the teachings of Moses (pbuh):

- ❖ “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believed not his writing, how shall ye believe my words?” (John 5:46, 47; see also Matthew 23: 1-3).

These words of Jesus prove:

- Firstly, that Jesus laid no claim to being on the Godhead for he referred to a Being other than (and greater than) himself as the Only God.
- Secondly, that Jesus only claimed to be a Messenger of God. (“Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”).
- Thirdly, that there is only One Divine Being and that Jesus knew nothing about the Trinity, nor believed himself to be a member.

Rational, down-to-earth reason refuses to accept a man, born of a woman, to be God. Even the Bible disagrees to the idea of a man being equated with God. It says:

- ❖ *“How then can man be justified with God? How can he be clean that is born of a woman, when even the moon is not bright and the stars are impure in His Sight? How much less is man, who is but a maggot – and the son of man, who is only a worm?” (Job 25:4 – 6)*

The Quran states categorically that:

- *“Most certainly, the Messiah Jesus son of Marry is nothing but our Messenger, his mother is a virtuous woman, and they both ate food.”(Quran 5:75)*

This is to make it clear that by eating they cannot be God, because God has no need for food. If they ate then it is obvious that they most certainly answer the call of nature, an action that is not in keeping with the character of God. The argument here is basic, how can a man who suffered from human want and needs, depravations, inadequacies and limitations, who gradually grew in stature, power and wisdom, like all other human beings become God or equal to God?

Clearly, to believe in God’s incarnation in human body is to deny the perfection of God. In the pre-Christian mythologies of the Greeks and Romans, we often read of the Heroes being regarded as gods (e.g. Zeus, Apollo, Venus etc). The Hindus in India to this day, worship their ancient Heroes, Rama and Krishna, as incarnation of Vishnu, the second person of the Hindu Trinity. No matter how much we need to respect the sentiments of our Christian brethrens, the fact remains that the dogma of the incarnation was transferred into Christianity from paganisms, like many other Christian notions.

3.0 The Doctrine of Son-ship of Christ

The third dogma is that “Jesus is the son of God in a special and exclusive sense.” This dogma is also not in conformity with the sayings and teaching of Jesus (pbuh). Paul was the first to declared Jesus as ‘son of God’ or the incarnation of God, as recorded in the Bible.

- ❖ *“At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, ‘isn’t he the man who caused havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? and, hasn’t he (Paul) come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priest? Yet Paul (Saul) grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus...”(Acts 9:20 – 22)*

The Jewish Priests who heard his sermon were dumbfounded.

- ❖ *“... And some of them asked: what is this blabber trying to say? Others remarked, he seems to be advocating foreign gods. They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection”. (Acts17:18)*

- ❖ *“You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean. All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the **latest** (new) ideas”. (Acts 17: 20–21)*

Paul was dreaded so much that some group conspired to kill him and he had to run away from Jerusalem to Damascus and from Damascus to Jerusalem. It is clearly obvious that Paul must have been preaching something contrary to the teachings of Jesus and the disciples; and they said: – he was ‘bringing strange ideas’.

- ❖ *“After many days had gone by the Jews conspired to kill him... when he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples (of Jesus), but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple”.(Acts 9:23 & 26)*

It is necessary that we recognize that the phrase “son of God” meant nothing more than nearest to God in love: *“those who had love in their heart and lived in peace with their fellow men are sons of God”*.

Jesus, who is believed to be the ‘founder’ of Christianity, himself, said that any man who did the will of the Father in Heaven is the son of God. He said further:

- ❖ *“Love your enemies, that ye may be the children of your father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:44).*
- ❖ *“Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9).*

These passages leave no doubt in the mind of any rational person, as to what these phrases meant for Jesus (pbuh). It is clear that for Jesus, the term “Son of God” carried no particular import other than the Biblical idiom permitted. Jesus (pbuh) was referred to as ‘*son of Man*’ **eighty-three** (83) times in the Bible, and **only 13 times** as ‘*son of God*’. This is seventy times more than the latter; yet the enormity of the numbers seems not to carry any weight or have any impact. It is said that even a lie repeated so many times will, like a rolling stone, generate so much credibility for people to believe it as the truth. There is therefore no cause for singling out Jesus as the ‘son of God’ in a special and literal sense, nor is there any justification for regarding him as the ‘son of God’ in an exclusive or unique sense, when the Bible seemed to be hammering it on us that Jesus is “**son of Man**” eighty-three times!. Jesus as Biblical record show, called himself the ‘son of God’ in the same sense in which Adam, Israel, David and Solomon were called ‘sons of God’ before him and in which he (Jesus) himself has spoken of:

- ❖ *“those who had love in their heart and lived in peace with their fellow men are sons of God’.*

Also in Psalms 82 verse 6 and 7 Jesus said:

- ❖ *“Ye are gods and all of you are children of the Most High but ye shall die like men and fall like one of the princes.”*

In another situation Jesus said: *“Is it not written in your law? I said ye are gods.”*

The Holy Qur’an in a very forceful language rejects the dogma of the sonship of Jesus Christ in whatever sense; it says:

- *“And they said, God hath taken unto Himself a son, be He glorified. Nay, but whatsoever is on the Heaven and Earth is His. All are subservient unto Him.”* (Quran 2:116)
- *“It befitted not (the Majesty) of God that He should take unto Himself a son. Glory be to Him, when He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only, “Be! and it is.”* (Quran 19:35)

Undoubtedly, and without apology, this doctrine is the greatest untruth ever told against God. The Holy Quran screamed at the blasphemy in utter disgust:

- *“They say: (God) Most Gracious has begotten a son!” Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous! At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin; that they should invoke a son for (God) the Most Gracious. For it is not consonant with the Majesty of (God) Most Gracious that He should beget a son. Not one of the beings in the heaven and the earth but must come to (God) Most Gracious as a servant.”* (Quran 19:88-93)
- *“. . . Further, that He may warn those (also) who say, “God hath begotten a son”. No Knowledge have they of such a thing, nor had their fathers. It is a grievous thing that issues from their mouths as a saying. What they say is nothing but falsehood”(Qur’an 18: 4- 5)*

Reason and common sense are against this fabrication. *“To attribute procreation to God would be to deny the perfection of God”* said Beryson, in a book he called *‘The Creation in Evolution’* (Modern Library, page 16).

4.0 The Doctrine of Original Sin

The fourth Christian dogma is of the Original Sin. This amazing dogma has three legs or branches. It inputs that:

- i. the idea that the original Sin is inherited by every human being: Man, Woman and Child - even a baby that died without baptism;
- ii. the idea that God’s Justice requires the payment of a Penalty in blood for the remission of the inherited Sin; and
- iii. the belief that Jesus has paid the price for the sins of men by his death on the cross; but the salvation is only for those who believe in his vicarious sacrifice.

Basically stated, Christianity declares that by disobeying God's commandment not to eat of the forbidden fruit Adam (and Eve) sinned. The sin of Adam, is consequently inherited by all the children of Adam till the end of time, in other words, all human beings are therefore born sinful. All un-baptized infants are also doomed to burn eternally in hell-fire for something of which they know nothing. Till recently, the un-baptized infants were not buried in consecrated grounds in Christendom, because they were believed to have died in sin.

Chawkat Georges Moucarray (1984) relate to us about 'The First Promise'. He said: *"We read in the first two chapters of Genesis, in the Old Testament, that God, after creating Adam, made an agreement (covenant) with him. This agreement, expressed in figurative language, offered to mankind abundant life and the whole of God's creation to enjoy. But it also warned us that if we made ourselves the supreme judge of good and evil, robbing God of His exclusive right, then certain death awaited us. Yielding to Satan's tempting, the first man and woman broke this agreement and thus set themselves firmly on the road towards death. From then on, every aspect of human life had the shadow of death hanging over it. This fall of mankind related in the third chapter of Genesis, did not take God by surprise. Nor did it put an end to his love for the human race. Immediately after man's sin, God made a solemn promise: that one day a descendant born of the woman would win the final victory over Satan, to the benefit of all mankind. In making this first promise of salvation, the creator of mankind showed that He is also the Saviour of mankind."* (p. 23 – 24)

The Holy Quran attributes Adam's entanglement in the Devil's deception, not to deficiency in knowledge, but to his deficiency in will-power. Allah says in the Quran:

- *"And certainly, We made a covenant with Adam before now, but he forgot and We found in him no strong will."* (Q 20:115).
- *"Then Adam was taught some words by His Lord with which he repented; He (God) is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful."* (Q 20:116).

The Christian doctrine implies that for the sin of Adam to be wiped out, God required that a price must be paid for every sin in the form of atonement. This atonement they believe God's justice required it to be by the shedding of blood as St. Paul puts it:

- ❖ *"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Hebrew 9:22).

And of course, this remission cannot be borne by one human being, or else how can a man bear the sins of the whole humanity. So the solution or compromise is, the blood must be perfect, sinless and in-corruptible blood, said Paul: *"as the original sin, being directed against God was of infinite proportion, it demand infinite recompense."*

Christianity believes that God sent Jesus, 'his begotten son' who came from heaven (through the immaculate conception) to shed his holy, sinless blood as sacrifice and to suffer indescribable agony while dying on the cross, in paying the supreme penalty for the sins of men (Mankind). And because Jesus was infinitely divine, he alone could pay the infinite price of sin. No one could be saved unless he accepts Jesus Christ as his redeemer. Everyone is doomed to suffer eternally in Hell because of his sinful nature, unless he accepts the atonement made for his sins by Jesus Christ. (Ref: 'Gods Plan for Your Salvation,' Phoenix Arizona U.S.A, in Dr. Ojobi: 'Comparative Religion' P.37-38).

In his effort at justifying this dogma, St. Paul said:

❖ *"Therefore, as for the offence of one (Adam) unto all men condemnation; so also by the justice of one (Christ) unto all men the purification of life. For as by disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one man many shall be made just."* (Romans 5:18-19)

Rev J. F. De Groot believes that these words of Saint Paul made it plain that; blessed lady exempted, all men have inherited Adam's sin: (Rev. De Groot in 'Catholic Teaching' page 140).

Harold Sharman 1967 in his book, 'We Live After Death' has a different view altogether, he said:

"That Religion which tells man that he has been born in sin has done man a great disservice. It has placed an unholy stigma on the functioning of sex and the laws of creation. The person who is pictured as possessing the greatest spirituality is he or she who has remained a virgin and has kept himself or herself untainted by sex experience. (It is claimed that) most of the great spiritual leaders are men who have never married and who are not recorded as having consorted with women. . . The implication is clear that those who stoop to sex experience, even with the sanction of the religious institution, in lawful marriage, can never attain to the spiritual heights of a man or woman who denies these natural urges.

How damning and inconsistent is this point of view when you consider that without the sex act, as provided by God and Nature, man himself could not exist or continue his species. Had the sex act itself been unclean, it is unthinkable that God would have provided this function in the first place. . . . When sex has been debased, man himself, through wrong exercise of free will and free choice has debased it. But each child born into this world must be pure and innocent in the sight of God, whether or not it is judged by man to be legitimate or illegitimate, since the child had no choice or accountability in the matter and came into being as a result of the functioning of God's creative law."(Harold Sharman 1967)

Like many other Christian beliefs, the doctrine of the inherited sin also finds no support (or basis) in the words of Jesus. And the Bible itself declared that it is not by faith alone:

- ❖ *“The law is not based on faith on the contrary, the man who does these things will live by them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”(Galantians 3:12 – 13)*

All the Prophets mentioned in the Bible taught that every man was accountable for his own actions; they preached that the children will not be punished for the sins of the father. For instance in the book of Jeremiah (31:29-34) it is written:

- ❖ *“In those days thou shall say no more, the father has eaten a sour grape and the children teeth are set on the edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on the edge.” (Jeremiah 31 :29-34)*

From the Bible, we find that the Prophet Ezekiel also rejected the dogma of the original sin in almost the same words:

- ❖ *“The word of the lord came to me again saying, what mean ye that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge”. As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion anymore to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right and hath not eaten up the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor’s wife, neither hath come near to a menstrous (menstruating) woman, and has not oppressed any and hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with garment; he that had withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man; hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments to deal truly he is just, he shall sure live, saith the Lord God” (Ezekiel chapter 18: 1-9)*
- ❖ *... **the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he (soul) shall not die.**” (Ezekiel chapter 20 -21; 18:20)*

Sin is a willful transgression of the law of God. The responsibility or blame for it must lie only on the head of the person who committed it, and not on his children or progeny. God made this abundantly clear:

- *“Every soul has the consequence of its own action; no bearer of burden can bear the burden of another. . . .” (Quran 6:164)*

No Soul shall bear the Burden of Another

<p>BIBLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>“Everyman shall die for his own sin” (Deuteronomy 24:16)</i> ❖ <i>“Everyman will bear his own burden” (Galatians 6:3 - 5);</i> ❖ <i>“the father will not bear the sins of the son” (Ezekiel 18:20;</i> ❖ <i>“The father shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deuteronomy 24:16);</i> ❖ <i>“The soul that Sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him”. (Ezekiel 18:20)</i> ❖ <i>“But every one shall die for his own iniquity”. (Jeremiah 31:30)</i> 	<p>QURAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“. . . No Soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child; an heir shall be chargeable in the same way. . . .” (Quran 2:233)</i> • <i>“On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and suffers every ill that it earns. . . .” (Quran 2:286)</i> • <i>“. . . and each soul will be paid out just what it has earned, without (favour or) injustice.” (Quran 3:25)</i> • <i>“Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another’s burden. If one heavily laden should call another to (bear) his load, not the least portion of it can be carried (by the other), even though he be nearly related” (Quran 35:18)</i> • <i>“Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another nor shall intercession be accepted for her, nor shall compensation be taken from her, nor shall anyone be helped (from outside). (Quran 2:48)</i>
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If indeed the Bible is God’s word, how can it turn around after these dictums (as above) and preach that all are doomed to die for the sins of others? When we analyze this dogma of inherited sin objectively, it will be the height of injustice to condemn the entire human race for the sin committed by the first parents (Adam & Eve) - since the beginning of time. This dogma does not even consider the time of Prophet Noah, when all living creatures that did not get on

the Ark, were annihilated by no other than God, for man's disobedience. God is the God of Justice, and Cruelty is not one of His attributes.

When God annihilated all living creature during the flood in the time of Noah, and made Noah to raise a new set of creatures including those humans with whom He (God) was pleased (on earth), it should indicate to us that God has exacted His punishment and has set a new era or epoch for mankind. Anything other than that would be unlike God, Who is Just and Merciful. They have received expiation ('*Kaffara*' in Arabic) because punishment has been meted out on them. For example, the prescribed cutting of the hand of a guilty thief serves as expiation for him; also, an adulterer who has been punished in whatever way has received expiation, meaning he cannot be punished again for the same crime. Thus, a new set of humanity (as well as animals) was ushered in during the time of Noah. In fact, according to Islamic doctrine, the sins of Adam & Eve were forgiven by Allah. Islam does not believe that the sin of Adam was inherited or inheritable because setting them down on earth was part of their punishment. God forgave both Adam and Eve. So Islam asks, why then should the original sin surface again?

Mohandas K. Gandhi also had difficulty believing the doctrine too. He wrote in his auto-biography as follows: ". . . *My reason was not ready to believe literally that Jesus by his death and by his blood redeemed the sins of the world. . . It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honored by the humiliation of their fellow beings . . . Metaphorically there might be some truth in it . . . I could accept Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice, and a divine teacher, but not as the most perfect man ever born. His death on the cross was a great example to the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it my heart could not accept.*" (M. K. Gandhi: "Auto-biography" 1972, p. 126 & 143)

Furthermore, judging from the texts of both the Bible and Quran, Adam and Eve were responsible for their own sin, for which they had also been punished. Both were removed from paradise after the offence and set down on earth (the first punishment). We learn from the Quran God's parting words to Adam:

- *"We said: "Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from Me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."* (Q. 2:38)

And as we shall see later, Jesus who was a righteous Prophet prayed to God to spare him from death, and the Bible gave us other proofs that his prayers were heard and answered. This can also perhaps mean that by answering his prayers, God must have forgiven the sins of Adam (if he hadn't the first time) and that there was no need for the atonement after all. Which is why I repeat my question, why then should the original sin surface again?

That Jesus himself regarded all children as innocent and pure, and not as born in sin, is doubtlessly clear from his reported saying:

❖ *“Suffer the children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God; verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.”* (Mark 10:14-15)

By this, it is implied that the nature (or soul) of the child is sinless and he who aspire for the kingdom of God must come sinless (like the child). So every child is born without sin and all children belong to the kingdom of heaven guiltless, blameless, innocent, pure and sinless at birth, which is why the dogma of the original sin is baseless. Accordingly, Sin must be viewed for what it is, i.e. something which each person acquires for himself by doing what God has prohibited and failing to do what God has ordained.

One cannot help viewing this doctrine as an uncharitable view of God, and shows a complete ignorance of the nature of God. God is not prejudiced as human beings are. He is not only Just, but Merciful and Forgiving. He is as the Qur’an describes Him, the Master of the Day of Judgment. He is able to do all things and does not answer to anybody. Certainly, His Decrees are unquestionable, but His Compassion and Mercies are limitless and boundless. The God that we worship, the Creator and Sustainer of all the Worlds, is the God of Love and Mercy, Ever-forgiving.

From the words of Wordsworth in ‘*Tintern Abbey*’, we get an infinite scope of the nature of God. To him, God is He: *“whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, and the round ocean and the living air, and in the blue sky, and in the mind of man: A motion and a spirit that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thoughts, and rolls through all things.”*

Let’s consider the observations or arguments of some Christian Theologians on this Doctrine. They say:

- *“When the Christian faith teaches that we are born sinful, this does not mean that the way humans are created is evil. God’s creation is good. Sin was not created in humans by God but came from the evil source, Satan. Satan was not created by God as the slanderer and adversary. He was a good angel who led a rebellion against the Lord God of his own free will (1st John 3:8, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6).*
- *Also, “original sin is not the nature itself.” Rather, the human being has been so infected with the disease of sin and so corrupted that he or she is “full” of sin, or “sinful” with a natural inclination to sin. Thus, sin permeates a person’s being, and as Jesus said “out of the heart come evil thoughts.”*

- *If human beings were sin itself, they would be beyond redemption. A man who is sick with cancer is not cancer itself; he is infected with cancer. If he were cancer, there would be no hope of a cure. Humankind is sinful, but not sin itself. Human beings are redeemable in Christ.”* (F. Bente and W.H.T. Dau, eds, Concordia Triglotta (St. Louis Concordia Publishing House (1921) p. 877)

Islam believes that man is born with a free will, with the inclination to do both good and evil and also the capacity to fight against evil. It is only when as a grown up capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, makes a wrong use of his freedom and falls prey to temptation and acted against God’s commandment, can he thereby be said to have committed a sin. It is clear from the sacred records of all nations that many men and women have resisted and conquered evil and live their lives in harmony with the will of their Creator.

If God prescribes a Law and a Way and demands obedience, it is not for His own benefit but the benefit of mankind, and if God punishes a man for his faults and sins, it is not for His (God’s) satisfaction, and therefore will require no compensation, contrary to what the dogma of atonement proclaims. Rather, the object is to check evil and purify the sinner. So those who have persistent urge to do good and are sincerely repentant will find God ever ready to forgive their sins and overlook their failures without demanding anything in return.

One wonders if this is not what Jesus taught in his beautiful parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son. And where in the Bible can we trace the origin of the doctrine which says that unless every sin is compensated for and someone is punished for it, God’s Justice will be outraged? Why will Jesus teach us to pray to God **“to forgive us our trespass as we forgive those that trespass against us”** if he knew God to be unforgiving?

Forgiveness for a sinner after punishing him, or someone else in place of the sinner or sinners is not forgiveness at all. God can and does forgive the faults and sins of those in whom He perceive real goodness and those who repent and reformed themselves and this is not against God’s Justice. In fact, this is true forgiveness and in line with His Mercy and Benevolence. Thus, Islam teaches its followers, as God said in the Holy Qur’an, putting His Words into Prophet Muhammad’s mouth:

- *“Say: My people, who have acted extravagantly against your own souls despaired not of the mercies of God for He forgiveth the sin altogether. Lo He is All-forgiving, All-merciful. Some turn unto Him repentant and surrender unto Him, before there comes unto you the chastisement, when ye cannot be helped”* (Quran 39:53-54).

Again God said:

- *“Whoso doeth evil or wronged his own soul then seeketh pardon of God (and reform himself) will find Gods Forgiving, Merciful. Whoso committed sin it is only against himself. God is All-knowing, All-wise.” (Quran 4:110-111).*
- *“Nay, seek (God’s) help with patient perseverance and prayer: It is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit, - who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord. And that they are to return to Him.” (Q. 2:45-46)*

5.0 The Doctrine of Atonement

The Fifth dogma is the doctrine of Atonement. It states that Jesus paid the supreme penalty for the original sin and the other sins man committed, by his death on the cross of cavalry. He was then said to have resurrected on the third day and that no one is entitled to salvation without believing in the saving power of his blood. This is what we read in the Epistle of St. Paul:

❖ *“For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (1st Peter 1:18-19)*

And to further entrench this heresy, faithful Christians are given the following ‘fish-bait’ by some modern Christian apologists. For instance a Protestant theologians wrote:

*“We pass on now the doctrine of atonement which is that Christ death was in some sense a sacrifice for sin and thus reconciled God the father and sinful man. And **though not actually stated by the Creed, it is implied** in the words ‘was crucified also for us, and who suffered for our salvation’” (W. H. Turton in the ‘The Truth of Christianity’ page 289).*

And the Catholics made an even bolder attempt. Rev. De Groot says:

*“Since Christ, God and man has taken upon himself our sins (by his death on the cross) in order to atone for them by giving sacrifice to **God’s outrageous justice**. He is the mediator between God and man” (Rev. J. F. De Groot, ‘Catholic Teaching’, page 162).*

Such Christian theologians try to defend the atonement by blood by saying that Jesus Christ suffered death willingly to pay the price of the sin of men.

Chawkat Georges Moucarray, another Christian writer, gives us a perspective of what Jesus’ death meant to Christians. He said, *“Jesus’ death was certainly caused by his contemporaries’ refusal to have their traditions challenged. These traditions were originally meant to clarify and apply the Word of God; instead, they ended up by taking its place. But, over and above the historical circumstances, Jesus’ death fulfills God’s eternal plan of salvation for*

mankind. In fact, his death is the logical outcome of God's ongoing self-revelation."

In his view: "three distinct aspects of the Law of Moses can be seen in Jesus' death. Firstly, there is the ceremonial law, such as the sacrificial system which symbolizes the need for an expiatory sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. Secondly, there is the moral law, summed up in the Ten Commandments which spell out the kind of life which God intends mankind to follow. Thirdly, there is the spiritual law, which nourishes the believer's spiritual life and sustains him as he awaits the coming of the Messiah, and as he reads all the prophecies about him. This is where Jesus comes in: he is in fact the promised Messiah and his death is the sacrifice for sin which enables God to grant us His forgiveness. The resurrection of Jesus shows that God accepted this sacrifice and, because of it, God acquits us while still being a just Judge. The good news of the gospel is that, instead of condemning us according to his Justice, God acquits us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ." (Moucarry: 'Islam and Christianity at the Crossroads' p.63). In other words, God forgives after exacting his pound of flesh! If so then where is the Mercy? Where is the Justice?

6.0 Did Jesus die willingly?

But looking closely at the available records, it is historically incorrect to say that Jesus had come to die willingly and deliberately for the sins of men. As a matter of fact, over twenty reasons from the Bible text itself can be enumerated to disprove this dogma or at least cause people to question their stand on it. Paul said that Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice; if so . . .:

1. Firstly, why did Jesus identify himself as the Messiah whose coming was foretold by the prophets, but refuses to take on the kingship that the crowds want to give him. He publicly disclaims that he is a political Messiah (Matthew 22:41-45). This is obviously out of fear of incurring their wrath which may lead to his untimely death.
2. Secondly, when his disciples recognized that he is the Messiah, he commands them immediately not to tell anyone of it, lest people should credit him with political kingship, for this kingship would mean losing his life!
3. Thirdly, why did Jesus threaten the disciple who would betray him (Matthew 26:24) and in fact announced it to people that, ". . . man will betray the son of man". One would have expected that the person, who facilitated his arrest and crucifixion, would be commended (as a dependable ally), if indeed he meant to die.
4. Paul alleges that Jesus was crucified because he was weak and because he could not defend himself, which implies that Jesus was taken to the cross against his will. This came from Paul's striking statement in the second book of Corinthians to the effect that: "For though Jesus was

crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the Power of God." (2 Corinthians 13:4). In other words, Jesus was simply dragged to the cross forcibly because he could not help it, thus Paul contradicted himself as there was no intention for sacrifice, neither on Jesus' part nor on God's part. This statement of Paul's, (perhaps a pen slip?), undermines the whole New Testament theory that the crucifixion took place as a carefully-designed plan to grant salvation to humanity. The New Testament says that God offered His son to bear man's sins or that Jesus offered himself as a sacrificial lamb willingly because he loves people and wants to remit their sin.

5. Fifthly, Jesus could not have offered himself as sacrifice because when he was on the cross, he yelled in protest, asking God why He had forsaken him (Matthew 27:46). Recall his cry?: *"Eloi Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?"*(*My God, my God, why did You forsake me?*) (Mark 15:34).
6. Sixthly, Jesus was reluctant to die. The Bible gave us ample evidence that he worked out a strategy to remain alive. He prepared his disciples for a fight:

- ❖ *"He (Jesus) said to them, 'but now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one'"* (Luke 22: 36):

- ❖ *"The disciples said, "See, lord, here are two swords". 'That is enough, he (Jesus) replied."* (Luke 22: 38)

1. Seventhly, Jesus beseeched God for help. He prayed to God to save him from death:

- ❖ *"Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me. Going a little further, he fell (down) with his face to the ground and prayed, "My father, if it is possible may this cup he taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."* (Mathew 26: 38-39)

Jesus actually went away by himself to say the same prayer thrice (Mathew 26: 42, and 44).

2. Eighth, the Bible tells us that God heard Jesus' prayers (Hebrew 5:7):

- ❖ *"... he offered up prayers and petitions... to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard..."*(Hebrew 5:7)

- ❖ *"the Lord answers the prayers of the righteous" (Proverb 5:29).*

The question then is, was Jesus not righteous? If we agree that Jesus was righteous: for he lived a sinless life (John 8:46), we can also agree that his prayers were answered as stated in Hebrew 5:7. So, by that prayer, Jesus clearly did not want to die, and could not have offered himself for sacrifice.

The Bible yet gave us other proofs, at least four, to indicate that his prayers were heard (answered):

- i) An angel of God came to strengthen him (Luke 22: 43).

- ii) Pilate's wife was shown in a dream that *"no harm should come to this just man"* (Mathew 27: 19) i.e. he should stay alive. This is clearly God's handwork to set off Pilate's wife to prevail on her husband.
- iii) Pontius Pilate (as expected) finds Jesus not guilty (John 18:38) - good reason enough to keep him alive.
- iv) There was thunderstorm, earthquake and darkening of the sun, all within three hours. Here God is using natural causes (phenomena) to disperse the sadistic mob, in order to enable Jesus' disciples to help keep him alive.

These four secondary points alone are enough to convince us that God answered Jesus' prayer and spared him; and he did not die on the cross. Again, perhaps by answering his prayers, God forgave the sins of Adam, which should mean also that there was no need for the atonement after all. But you may ask, what proof is there that Jesus did not indeed die on the cross? Let us note the eight points raised above and consider additional proof that Jesus was ALIVE:

- 3. Jesus was supposed to be on the cross for only three (3) hours. According to the system in vogue then, no man could die in so short a time (Mark 15: 44), which means that when he was fastened on the cross he was ALIVE (not dead).
- 4. Pilate marvels to hear that Jesus was dead. He knew from experience of Roman crucifixion, that no one can die in so short a time (Mark 15: 44); he suspected that Jesus was ALIVE.
- 5. Jesus' legs were not broken as a fulfillment of prophecy. He kept all his bones, not one of them was broken, which implied that he was ALIVE! (John 19: 32-33):*"... But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs"*. And so we ask: Did the soldiers want to save Jesus or were they ordered by Pilate to spare him?
- 6. The other two people crucified along with Jesus, (his cross-mates) were alive. So Jesus, who received no mortal wound, was also ALIVE when he was brought down from the cross.
- 7. Encyclopedia Biblical under Article 'Cross', column 960, says when speared, Jesus was ALIVE (John 19:34): *"Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water."* (John 19:34) A Medical Doctor, Dr. Primrose (as revealed by Deedat), testifies that: *"the water and blood"* that came, when Jesus was lanced on the side was on account of an upset in the nervous vessels, because of scourging by slaves. This further confirms that Jesus was not dead but ALIVE.

8. There were big and roomy chambers close at hand; Big and airy for willing hands to come to the rescue. Providence was out to keep Jesus ALIVE.
9. Stone and 'winding sheets' had to be removed (John 20:1). This was only necessary if Jesus was ALIVE.
10. In a report by a German scientist who carried out experiments on the 'Shrouds of Turi', (on the 'winding sheets') said that the heart of Jesus had not stopped functioning – that he was ALIVE.
11. Jesus only took short trips; around the tomb, Emmaus, the upper room and back again eight days later, (perhaps due to his wounds) because he was no dead, not spiritualized – not resurrected, but ALIVE.
12. Jesus went into hiding. After the Jews planned to kill him, he no longer moved about openly among the Jews. He went around in Galilee purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews were there waiting to (kill him) take his life. He later left the city for a village near the desert with his followers.
13. Jesus never showed himself to his enemies, because he has escaped death by the 'skin of his teeth" (Deedat). He didn't want to risk being found out and be nailed to the cross again. He was even in disguise (John 21:4). Disguise is not necessary if Jesus had become a spirit (or was resurrected). It is required only if Jesus was ALIVE.
14. Angels testified to his beings ALIVE (Luke 24: 23) "...*angels who had said that he was ALIVE*" – not resurrected. Angels do not lie, because they are incapable of lying.
15. Testimony of men around the tomb also showed that he was ALIVE. (Luke 24: 4–5): "*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*" By this they mean that Jesus is still ALIVE. In other words: Why are you looking for him where (only the bodies of) the dead are buried?
16. Mary Magdalene also testified: "... *they heard that he was ALIVE and had been seen by her (Mary) – they believe not*" (Mark 16:11). What they could not believe was that the Master was ALIVE. You see, the disciples of Jesus were not eye witnesses to the actual happening of the previous three days, as vouched for by St. Mark who says that at the most critical juncture in the life of Jesus, "*they all forsook him and fled*" (Mark 14: 50). So, all the knowledge of the disciples regarding their Master was from hearsay.
17. Mary Magdalene was not afraid on recognizing Jesus (John 20:16), because she had obviously seen signs of life before, which was why she went looking for the body to resuscitate him. She was looking for a Jesus that was ALIVE.

18. In the book of Mark we are told that: *“When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene . . . She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.”*(Mark 16: 9 – 11). So when she saw him standing (perhaps in disguise, since she thought at first, that he was a Gardener), she was overjoyed and attempted to grab hold of him. But he forbade her to touch him (John 20:17), perhaps due to his wounds which have not yet healed. *“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the father”*. In the language of the Jew, he was saying that he was not dead yet, but ALIVE.
19. After Mary Magdalene testified to the disciples, *‘which they believed not’*. Jesus himself visited them in the upper room and told them that he was ALIVE (Luke 24:37) and not a ghost. But they were petrified on seeing him. All their knowledge of the crucifixion was second hand. They **heard** that he was hanged on the cross; they **heard** that he had given up the ghost (died); they **heard** that he was dead and buried for three days. If one is confronted by a person with such a reputation then the conclusion is inevitable; they had no option but to believe that they were seeing a ghost. Little wonder then that these brave men were petrified. They could not believe that Jesus was ALIVE. (Mark 14:50).
20. To prove to them that he was still ALIVE, Jesus showed them his wounds which has began to heal (Luke 24: 39-39): He said to them, *“why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see, a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have”*.(Luke 24: 39-39). What all this mean is, Jesus is telling them: if I am flesh and bones, then I am not a ghost neither am I a **Spirit!** Secondly, what the disciples were asked to “handle and see” was not a translated body, not a metamorphosed body and not a resurrected body, because a resurrected body is a **spiritualized** body. He is telling them in the clearest language humanly possible that he is NOT what they were thinking, that the information that came to them before was false. They were thinking that he was a Spirit, a resurrected body, having been brought back from the dead. He was most emphatic that He was NOT dead, neither a spirit nor a ghost, but a living being: ALIVE!
21. Jesus ate food again and again in his “post-crucifixion” appearance. (Luke 24:41 43): *“And while they still did not believe it..., he asked them, ‘do you have anything here to eat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, which he took and ate in their presence.”* It is abundantly

obvious that food is only necessary if a person is ALIVE. The dead don't eat food neither does a spirit need food. And finally;

22. There may be need here to remind us that Jesus himself foretold that his one miracle (of all the miracles he performed that will prove he will survive his ordeal) will be the miracle of Jonah (Mathew 12: 38 – 4). He prophesized that he was going to survive the ordeal and come out ALIVE just as Jonas did:

❖ *“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the Whale’s belly so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew12: 40)*

And no Christian, no matter his status will say that Prophet Jonas did not come out of the belly of the Fish (Whale) ALIVE unless he reads a different Bible.

But why did Christendom so easily forget that Jesus was the greatest miracle worker that ever lived? How hard is it for such a one, who has the power to bring the dead back to life, make the blind see, heal the leper, to substitute 'A' with 'B'? Even today we have witnessed Magicians and 'Prophets' (and supposed 'false prophets') do the same: that is, to change the places of two persons – himself and another and cheat death itself? Jesus had demonstrated his power to perform miracles, according to the Bible, even the *“wind and the waves”* obeyed him (Matthew 8:27); he fed thousands (Mark 6:44; 8:19); changed water into wine (John 2:11); raised three people from the dead (Luke7:11; 8:41; John 11:43); healed *“every disease and sickness”* (Matthews 9:35). Those who still find it hard to believe the possibility of Jesus transforming himself should check the book of Matthew chapter 17, verses 1- 2, it was reported that: *“After six days Jesus went up a high mountain with some of his disciples, Peter, James and John, and while they watched, “Jesus was transfigured (his appearance changed before their eyes) and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” (Matthew 17:1- 2).* If he can do it on himself , surely he can do it on others. It is based on these facts that Jesus pleaded with those who believed in him to *“. . . at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.”(John 14:11).*

As can be seen, it is with good reason that Muslims believes that Jesus was not crucified on the cross or killed as the Holy Qur'an revealed. The Quran says:

- *“He (Jesus) was neither killed nor crucified” (Qur'an 4: 157–158).*

Christians should do well to give a thought to this view presented by Islam, considering that the Bible has confirmed that none of the disciples of Jesus was at the crucifixion site, which gives ground that perhaps they did so because they knew it was not Jesus that was being crucified; though the ignorant ones later accused them of betrayal.

Emanuel Swedenborg, an 18th Century Scientist – Son of a Bishop born 1688, also rejected the notion that Jesus died on the cross to atone for the sin

of Adam, declaring that God is neither vindictive nor petty minded, and that since He is God, He doesn't need atonement. It is remarkable that this common sense view had never struck earlier theologians. God is Divine Goodness, and Jesus is Divine Wisdom, and Goodness has to be approached through Wisdom. (Emanuel Swedenborg quoted in Collin Wilson's *'The Occult'* 1971, p. 364).

Stainton Moses (the originator of Spirit Teaching), argues also that *"Man is not 'saved' by the death of Jesus on the cross; he (man) must save himself by his actions during his life. All thoughts and actions are registered on the 'spirit body', so that after death, a man is known for exactly what he is. One's actions are all important; a naturally good agnostic will achieve a higher status than an uninspired but punctilious Church-goer."* (in Collen Wilson's book *'The Occult'* (1971)

It is necessary to note that these doctrines and dogmas of the Trinity took shape as a result of pagan influence, long after Jesus left this world. Jesus (pbuh) certainly would not have used vague language to explain such vital and highly important and crucial matter, or leave it to the peoples' imagination, conjectures and interpretations. In fact, this matter of the nature of Jesus (pbuh) and his 'divinity' is the product of speculation and interpolation on the part of later "church fathers" and theologians (as discussed further on). Many religions of today, being identified by names ending with "ism" and "... ity" do not exist during biblical times. There was either the religion of obeying the One True and only God, or there was idolatry. People were either believers in the One God, or they were pagans, heathens, or atheists (most times disguised as true believers). It is pertinent therefore to conclude that Christianity has deviated considerably from the religion of Jesus (pbuh). Jesus did not teach any of these dogmas listed earlier; neither did he preach them, as later Christianity will have us believe.

7.0 The Dilemma of the Christian Church:

Before we proceed to look at the general nature of its doctrines, we need to consider the metaphysical construct of the Christian faith. This exercise will reveal to us that there are actually two versions of Christianity, two faces of Jesus – with two natures:

- i) One, the son of man: an Apostle, Messenger, Prophet and indeed a Servant of God.
- ii) The second nature is portrayed as Devine (i.e. 'God' or the incarnation of God: or one of the three essences of the Trinity).

These two natures have been so interwoven into a tapestry that is so difficult to unravel even by the Church itself. What Paul taught in the name of Jesus after his (Jesus') demise is so fantastically different from what Jesus

himself taught his followers while alive. The teaching of the historical Jesus has been left to fade away except his gentle humanity. Paul's teaching has completely taken over and the current doctrines of Christianity are mostly his creation. Differences between the teachings of Jesus (pbuh) and the teachings of the Church (as we know it today) have created problems for the common man to understand the true God-revealed religion, and this has resulted in confusion and conflict since the council of Nicea in 325 A.D. The Nicean Council marked the beginning of the influence of civil powers in purely theological matters. (A.S. Suleman, p.18).

The Metaphysics of Christian Church today is totally opposed to the metaphysics which Jesus taught. The physical aspect of what Jesus brought: his code of behavior is today irrecoverably lost. To live as Jesus lived is to understand his message; yet there is virtually no existing record of how Jesus behaved. And what little knowledge exists is often ignored. In his public life Jesus never hesitates to declare himself as a human being in the full sense of the word (John 8:40) like all human beings, he experiences tiredness, hunger and thirst (John 4: 6-8) and he weeps over the death of a friend (John 11: 35). Gentle and humble in heart (Matthew 11:29), he makes friends with very ordinary people and even with social outcasts. He does not lay claims to divine goodness (Mark 10:18), he states that God is greater than he is (John 14:28) and he willingly admits his own ignorance of some things which only God knows (Mark 13:32). He refers to himself most frequently as the son of man, a title which, more than any other, underlines his humanity is seen most clearly, when he begs God to save him, if possible, from the suffering he was about to undergo. The most fundamental act of Jesus was that of worship of the Creator, the whole purpose for which man was created. He spends whole nights praying – with forehead on the ground, in prostration. Yet it is evident that no Christian today makes the same acts of worship which Jesus made. The effective abandoning of the teaching of Jesus was largely due to a complete obscuring of his historical reality.

The Church made religion not only independent of the scriptures but also independent of Jesus, so that the man Jesus became confused with a Mythological Christ; whereas the immediate followers of Jesus had based their lives on the example set by Jesus. Pauline Christianity was based on a belief in Christ after his supposed crucifixion and the life and teaching of Jesus while alive was no longer important. It is a fact that even though Jesus is said to have preached the Gospel, the present New Testament (NT) did not come into being until the second century after his ministry and that was done in respect to Marcion and Gnostics, who were a threat to Christian faith (Harry Boer 1976 p.7). It was in the year 200 AD that most of the New Testament as we have it, was recognized by the early Church as a Canonical Scripture. Furthermore, it was in the year 367 that Athanasius first set forth the collection of the New

Testament as it presently exists (Harry Boer 1976 p.72). It is therefore clear that the gap between the end of Jesus' Ministry and the New Testament is considerably wide. This drastically affected the authenticity of Christ's message as related in the Bible today. None of the Gospel writers were disciples of Jesus. Little wonder that there are so many disagreeing points of view within the Christian world itself, each denomination claiming to be more authentic than the rest. (Syed R. Ali – p.19).

Michael Servetus (1511–1553) also stressed what he believed to be the true nature of Jesus:

“Some are scandalized at my calling Christ the prophet, because they happen not themselves to apply to him the epithet, they fancy that all who do so are chargeable with Judaism and Mohametism, regardless of the fact that the Scriptures and ancient writers call him the prophet.” (Michael Servetus in D.B. Parke: *'The Epic of Unitarianism'* – pp. 5-6)

Servetus was only twenty years old when he decided to tell the world the truth as he had found it, for it followed from this discovery that if the Christians accepted that there was only One God, then all cause for strife between the Christians and the Muslims would be ended, and both communities could live together in peace.

Paul was the first Christian or the first “anti-Christ”, because he did not only reshaped Jesus' teachings, he changed or replaced Jesus' message altogether. As a matter of fact, Paul established a new religion that is utterly different from Jesus' teaching. Michael H. Hart, in his book, *'A ranking of 100 most influential persons in History'* wrote that: *“Although Jesus was responsible for the main ethical and moral precepts of Christianity (in so far as these differed from Judaism). . . St. Paul was the main developer of Christian Theology, its principal proselytizer, and the author of a large portion of the New Testament. . . . Jesus formulated the basic ethical ideas of Christianity, as well as its basic spiritual outlook, and its main ideas concerning human conduct; Christian theology, however, was shaped principally by the work of St. Paul. Jesus presented a spiritual message; **Paul added to that the worship of Christ** (p. 47) . . . Christianity, . . . was not founded by a single person but by two people – Jesus and St. Paul and the principal credit for its development must therefore be apportioned between those two figures.* (Michael H. Hart 1971, pp. 39 & 47)

There is therefore, some justification for Heiriz Zahrnt calling Paul a *“corruptor of the Gospel of Jesus”* and Werde describing him as *“the second founder of Christianity”*. Werde says that due to Paul, *“... the discontinuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the church become so great that any unity between them is scarcely recognizable.”* Schonfield wrote: *“The*

Pauline heresy became the foundation of Christian orthodoxy and the legitimate church was disowned as heretical”.

An eminent scholar of Christian history admits that the present day Christianity is a “Mask” on the face of Jesus, but goes on to say that a Mask worn for a long time acquires a life of its own and it has to be accepted as such. The Muslim believes in the Jesus of History. The separation of the historical Jesus from the Mask (Mythological Jesus) has been the point of difference between Islam and the Church for the last fourteen hundred years. Even before the advent of Islam, the Arians, and the Goths, to mention only a few, accepted Jesus, but rejected the “Mask”.

In the Church’s metaphysical construct, the doctrine of atonement and redemption says that *“Christ who was of God took on human form and became Jesus, who then died for mankind to atone for all the sins of humanity”*. The Church guarantees forgiveness of sins and salvation on the Day of Judgment for any man who believes in “Christ” and who follows the guidance of the Church irrespective of his deeds. Further, it is believed that this contract is available to all people until the end of the world. The natural consequences of this belief implies that a man is not responsible for his actions and that he will not be held to account for them after his death, for whatever he does if he believes he will be redeemed by “Christ’s sacrifice,” he will attain salvation. However, this does not mean a life of joy on earth. His belief in the doctrine of original sin, which states that because of the fall of Adam, all men are born sinful, means that while he is alive it follows that his condition is one of unworthiness and incompleteness.

This tragic view of life is reflected in the following statement of Reverend J. G. Vos, a Christian Theologist, in which he compares Islam to Christianity.

“There is nothing in Islam to lead a man to say, ‘Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ or ‘I know that in me; that is, in my flesh, dwelt no good thing.’ A religion with reasonable attainment objectives... does not give the sinner the anguish of a guilty conscience nor the frustration of trying without success to attain in practical living. . . .”(Rev. J. G. Vos)

H. F. Fellowes, a former Officer of Her Majesty’s Royal Navy, made a perceptive remark relating to this. He said:

“I have often wondered why the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus made no immediate impression at the time on the residents of Palestine, Jews, Romans or others. As far as secular history is concerned Jesus life seems to have escaped notice. At school I was only taught the Bible version. It also took, against strong opposition, several centuries before

Christianity spread and become established. The History of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the triumph and the amazing speed with which Islam was spread was taught at school. However no reference was made to the spiritual side of Islam.” (p.94)

In the first century after the disappearance of Jesus, those who followed him continued to affirm the Divine unity. This is illustrated by the fact that the ‘Shepphard of Hermas’, written in about 90 A.D. was regarded as a book of Revelation by the Church. The first of the twelve commandments which it contains begins:

- ❖ *“first of all, believe that God is One and that He created all things and organized them and out of what did not exist made all things to be, and he contains all things but Alone is himself uncontained...”(ibid, p.9)*

8.0 Paul and the Mystic Christ

Let us examine the profile of St. Paul. He was a native of Tarsus (a city in modern day Turkey). Though a Jew by race and religion, he enjoyed the privilege of being a citizen of the Roman Empire and had influential connections with the ruling elite. Paul strongly opposed Jesus and his followers during Jesus’ life time. He had the reputation of being one of the greatest enemies of the Church. It is recorded that Paul, who was then called Saul, was responsible for “a great persecution against the Church” at the time, and tortured and killed many of Jesus’ followers (Acts 26: 9-11; Galatians 1; 13). He *“made a havoc of the Church, entering into every house and haling men and women and committed them to prison.”*(Acts 8 : 3). Paul himself admitted that:

- ❖ *“You have heard . . . how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it – and profited in the Jew’s religion above many of my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the tradition of my fathers.”* (Galatians 1 :13-15)

Paul watched over the stoning of St. Stephen, the first Christian Martyr (Acts 7: 58-60). Stephen had been “full of faith and the Holy Ghost” (Acts 6:5) and one of the growing number of people who had joined the followers of Jesus after his disappearance. When Paul’s own teacher, the famous Gamaliel, tried to protect Stephen, he too was stoned to death.

He was a very intelligent and educated person, with knowledge of Greek literature and non-Jewish culture. Although he was not one of the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus (pbuh), yet some say he was his contemporary (i.e. he existed around the time that Jesus was alive). However, he was responsible for teaching the resurrection. According to his own report, he was travelling to

Damascus to arrest the followers of Jesus (pbuh), when while on the way, he experienced a visionary encounter with Jesus (obviously in spirit), who Paul claimed commissioned him to be his apostle.

After his conversion, Paul stayed with the Disciples of Jesus who were in Damascus and the Bible said that:

❖ *“straight away, he preached Christ in the Synagogues, that he is the son of God.”* (Acts 9: 20).

As a result, he began to taste the persecution in which he himself had so recently visited on others. If he actually used the term “son of God” to describe Jesus, then it was probably this action which helped to anger the Jews. The idea of God having a child ascribed to Him was abhorrent to them, since they firmly believed in the Unity of God. (Muhd. Ata’uRahim, *‘Jesus a Prophet of Islam*, p. 57)

Thus, the new doctrine of the divinity of Jesus (or rather Christ) was born, which is a deviation from the true teaching of the original Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary – the Man, the Prophet. Paul made a distinction between Jesus and “Christ.” According to his reasoning, the law which had bound Jesus and his followers was no longer necessary, since Jesus had died. Now they were no longer “married” to Jesus, but to “Christ”, who had brought another law. It was therefore necessary to follow Christ and not Jesus. Thus, by implication, anyone who held to Jesus’ teaching had gone astray. It was with the use of this reasoning that he assembled his doctrine of redemption and atonement, a theory which Jesus had certainly never taught.

Again, we note that Jesus himself did not call his message *‘New Testament’*; neither did he call the Law of Moses the *‘Old Testament’*. These labels are Paul’s. We must observe that Paul’s Epistles are not Testament at all, because after abolishing the Old Testament, Paul corrupted the whole message of Jesus. We have seen Paul’s contradiction clearly, because he himself had emphasized abiding by *“the commandments of God”* (1 Corinthians 7: 19) and says that doers of the Law shall be justified (Romans 2: 13). Paul abolished Moses’ Law and then, step by step, destroyed Jesus’ teachings and turned Jesus into an unfortunate sacrificial Lamb for slaughter as a ransom for a sin inherited by all humanity (by Adam, which God *‘A’uzubillah!* is supposedly, unable to forgive despite being All-forgiving and All-Merciful!)

It is worth noting also that, even if Paul may not have actually preached the divinity of Jesus, or the doctrine of Trinity, (*“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.”* (1 Corinthians 3: 5-6); *“By the Grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it.”* (1 Corinthians 3:10); *“But to the rest I say – I not the Lord . . .”* (1 Corinthians 7:12); his manner of expression and the changes he introduced which opened the door

to both these misconceptions, and prepared the way for their becoming established doctrines in Europe. Paul's influence on Christian theology has been incalculable. His ideas include the following, that:

- Jesus (pbuh) was not merely an inspired human Prophet, but was actually divine.
- Christ died for the sins of humanity, and his suffering can redeem us.
- Man cannot achieve salvation by attempting to conform to biblical injunctions, but only by accepting Christ as his savior will his sins be forgiven.
- Paul also enunciated the doctrine of original sin (see Romans 5:12-19)
- Paul insisted that converts to Christianity need not accept Jewish dietary restrictions, or conform to the rules of the Mosaic code, since obedience to the law alone cannot provide salvation.

The point being argued by Paul was that the Law of Moses is void with the advent of Jesus. He in fact said that Moses and his followers had veils on their faces, thereby disallowing them from appreciating the abolition of the Law (A. S. Suleman).

According to Paul, the Old Testament is not only useless to his followers, *"whoever reads it today has darkness upon his heart"* says Paul. Thus Paul condemned the entire Old Testament and its laws, which Jesus (pbuh) vowed to uphold and fulfill. Nevertheless, to the faithful Christian, Paul's statements are divine verities, the very word of the Almighty God. It becomes clear therefore, that the faithful Christian is a follower of Paul (who never knew Jesus personally), rather than of Jesus (pbuh).

Paul's acts of disobedience are basically three:

- a. Firstly, Paul went against the teaching of Jesus which prohibited his disciples from getting involved with the Gentiles: *"Go not unto the way of the Gentiles."*
- b. Secondly, in order to sell the new faith, which they later named "Christianity" (which Paul himself referred to only as 'the Way' – Acts 24:13), to the Gentiles they had to abrogate some of the laws, starting with the law on circumcision which they said was not incumbent on the Gentiles i.e. that it was meant only for the Jews (Jew-specific).
- c. Thirdly, he adopted Greek philosophies and incorporated them to the Jewish faith and beliefs as taught by Jesus. Thus introducing the idea that Jesus is the son of God (divine-sonship of Jesus).

For deviating from the original teachings of Jesus (pbuh), Paul was rebuked by James, the younger brother of Jesus and who happens to be the head of the Church in Jerusalem. James considered Paul no better than a renegade and a polluted person, and hence prescribed for Paul to go and cleanse himself according to the Law (Acts 21: 22-24).

But there is more to Paul's influence: It appears that Paul rationalized his actions by holding that there was no link between the period in which Jesus had lived and the period in which he himself later lived. Times had changed and the conditions which later prevailed were such that the teaching of Jesus was considered out of date and could no longer be applied. It had therefore become necessary to find a new basis for ethics. Paul not only rejected both Moses and Jesus, but asserted that he was a law unto himself, as he said:

❖ *"All things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1st Corinthians 7:12)*

Paul took stock of the conditions which existed then and taught what they seemed to require him to believe. Many people obviously could not accept this. Paul responded by saying:

❖ *"For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His Glory, why yet I am also judged a sinner? (Romans 3:7-8).*

Paul's reasoning had two major consequences. It not only resulted in further changes being made to what Jesus had taught, but also prepared the way for completely changing people's ideas of who Jesus was. He was being transformed from a man to a conception in people's minds. This imaginary figure of Christ, who apparently had the power to annul what Jesus had previously taught, was clearly no ordinary mortal, and has inevitably become confused with God by many. Thus, this imaginary figure became an object of worship and was associated with God (A. S. Suleman). Notice the contradictory verses on the Judgment Day in the books of Mark and that of Matthew, where Jesus himself confessed that judgment is by the Father alone and no one else:

❖ *"No-one knows about the Day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the son, but only the Father."(Mark 13:32).*

Yet, Jesus Christ is contradicted in the book of Matthew (25: 31–32; 24:36). This is what was said of him:

❖ *"When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, **he will sit on his throne** in heavenly glory. All nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the People one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."*

If Jesus *"will sit on his throne"* in judgment, how come he said as well, that *". . . On that Day or that Hour, no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven nor the son, but only the Father"?*

In the Quran, we are told that the Day of Judgment will be:

- *"The Day that the Spirit and the angels will stand forth in ranks, none shall speak except any who is permitted by (God) Most Gracious, and he will say what is right." (Q. 78:38).*

- *“(It will be) the Day when no soul shall have Power (to do) aught for another: for the command that Day, will be (wholly) with God.”(Quran 82:19)*

9.0 The Law of Moses

One of the unfortunate confusion that came across to us is that while the Church insist on the claim that the entire Bible is the word of God, Paul confessed that he did not learn his ‘Gospel’ from any of Jesus’ disciples or followers:

- ❖ *“I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Christ.” (Galatians 1: 12).*

And Paul further maintains:

- that he did not write his epistles out of any inspiration from God, but out of personal volition (2nd Corinthians 11:17, 21, 23) (1st Corinthians 7:25)
- that he was under the full control of Satan (2nd Corinthians 12:7); and,
- that he was a liar, but that he lied in order to glorify God. (Romans 3:7)

It is on record that out of the twenty seven books of the New Testament, no fewer than fourteen are attributed to Paul. Even though modern scholars believe that four or five of those books were actually written by other people. It is clear, as declared by Michael Hart, that Paul is the important single author of the New Testament (Michael H. Hart - *“The 100 Most Influential Persons in History”* Citadel Press, Syracuse, New Jersey).

Paul yet gave himself absolute authority to abolish the law – i.e. the Law of Moses (the Old Testament), as he puts it, because of its weakness and unprofitableness (Hebrews 7:18). He also justifies this abolishment on the ground that Jesus made a better Testament (Hebrews 7: 22). Paul says that Jesus abolished the law of commandments. But which Jesus could he mean? That is an outright contradiction of what Jesus himself said. Jesus said he came to confirm (fulfill) the commandments not to abolish them. Jesus’ exact words from the Bible are:

- ❖ *“Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill it.”(Matthew 5:17).*

Jesus also urged people to abide by the commandments (Matthew 5: 27), which he enumerated one by one (Matthew 19:18).

Regarding Salvation, Paul, by his writings, comes through to us as a confused person. Paul did not only contradict himself but the scripture also. In his epistles, he swings between two theories: Salvation by Deeds and Salvation by Crucifixion. The *Deed theory* holds that you are saved by your good deeds, by obedience to God, by being virtuous and righteous. The *Crucifixion theory* holds that you are saved by Jesus’ death on the Cross. The latter theory requires nothing from you: everything is allowed: to wear, to eat, to drink, to do,

including sin because Jesus saved you and has born all your sins. In Colossians, Paul said:

- ❖ *“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done.”*(Colossians 3: 25);

And in the same book, Paul says of Jesus:

- ❖ *“. . . in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.”*(Colossians 1:14).

But in Ephesians he said salvation is by Grace alone:

- ❖ *“is by grace that you are saved”* (Ephesians 2: 5),

Then he changes his mind and says:

- ❖ *“You are saved by grace and faith”* (Ephesians 2: 8),

But in the Galatians he again changes his mind and says:

- ❖ *“by faith you live”* (Galatians 3: 11).

In the same book he gives yet another prescription and said:

- ❖ *“by faith and love”* (Galatians 5:6).

Does that not feel like Paul is shuffling a deck of cards? Clearly, this is not a person inspired by God.

Paul has always believed in the Jesus of his vision – the Mystic Christ, and was not interested in the person of (the real) Jesus (pbuh) who lived among his people and preached his Gospel:

- ❖ *“from now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view, even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.”*(2 Corinthians 5:16).

Accordingly, Paul preached his own revealed version of Christianity that was fundamentally different from what Jesus himself taught, and different from what Jesus’ chosen disciples believed.

Paul says that Jesus loved the Church and is the head of the Church (Ephesians 5; 24-26). Both claims cannot be true, because, in the first place, Jesus could not have loved the Church, if before that he means the physical church, as there were no Churches in his time. Jesus himself preached in the Synagogues, the Jewish Temples. The Church came into existence a long time after Jesus. Secondly, if by church he means the spiritual entity or embodiment of Jesus’ teaching, here also we find that there is a big difference between the teaching of Jesus and the teachings of the Church. In fact, it is Paul who is the founder of today’s Church and today’s Christianity and who should be addressed as the head of the Church (rather than Jesus).

Paul achieved tremendous success among the Gentiles as he used all means to win them over. He confessed:

- ❖ *“To the Jews I became a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the Law (though I myself am not under the Law) so that I might win those under the law. To those*

outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so that I might win those outside the law.”(1 Corinthians 9: 20-21)

From this passage, is it not strange that Paul portrays the law of a Mystic Christ and thus differing from God's law – the Law of Moses?

Paul convinces us that his preaching was of his founding:

- ❖ *“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” (1 Corinthians 3: 5-6)*
- ❖ *“By the Grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it.” (1 Corinthians 3:10)*

At times he was not even divinely inspired or guided, but spoke on his own authority:

- ❖ *“But to the rest I say – I not the Lord . . .” (1 Corinthians 7:12)*
- ❖ *“Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.” (1 Corinthians 7:25)*

We find Paul also admitting that he is sometimes foolish in his writings and behavior; said he:

- ❖ *“Would to God ye bear with me a little in my folly.” (2 Corinthians 11:1).*
- ❖ *“What I am saying in regard to this boastful confidence, I am saying not with the Lord's authority, but as a fool:” (2 Corinthians 11:17)*

How can a person who claims that he receives revelation from the Lord and whose word has been encapsulated in the New Testament as the word of God refer to his actions as foolishness? Is foolishness the attribute of God's apostle or God's messenger?

Paul actually preached that the mysterious doctrine of Jesus' resurrection in this world as his own 'Gospel':

- ❖ *“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my Gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal.” (2 Timothy 2:8-9)*

Paul presented a very simplistic formula for attaining salvation, which is in sharp contrast to the teaching of Jesus:

- ❖ *“That if you confess with your mouth “Jesus is Lord” and believe in your heart that God raised him from dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)*

Concerning the Law, Paul said

- ❖ *“But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the spirit.” (Romans 7:6)*
- ❖ *“You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourself off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.” (Galatians 5:4)*

- ❖ *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” (Romans 10:4)*
- ❖ *“. . . the Law was our disciplinarian (Schoolmaster – KJV), until Christ came, so that we might be justified by Faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian (Schoolmaster – KJV).” (Galatians 3: 24-25)*
- ❖ *“Therefore, let us go on towards perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ {of Christ}, and not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God;” (Hebrew 6:1)*
- ❖ *“For the Law brings wrath; but where there is no Law, neither is there violation.” (Romans 4:15)*

The implication of these statements (verses) is that while the law was binding on Jesus, it was not binding on Paul and his followers! Remember what Jesus said, almost as if he had anticipated Paul’s influence in the future. He said:

- ❖ *“For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew 5:18-19)*

10.0 What is the True Doctrine of Jesus (pbuh)?

Jesus was to be a sign to men; his wonderful birth and wonderful life were to turn an ungodly world back to God. His mission was to rescue men from their sins by his teaching and example of his godly life (as we learn from Gospel); He had come to bring solace and salvation to the repentant and not to die deliberately for them on the cross and offering his blood as a propitiation for their sins. We learn also that Salvation could be gained by believing in God, eschewing evil and doing good to all God’s creatures (as Jesus taught) and not by accepting Jesus as the redeemer and believing in his blood sacrifice.

The Bible tells us that when a young man came to Jesus saying:

- ❖ *“Good master what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*

In reply to this question, Jesus (pbuh) said nothing about sacrificing himself, neither atonement nor the redeeming power of his blood. His reply was the same as that of every other Jewish prophet. He said instead:

- ❖ *“Why callest thou me good, there is none good but One, that is God. But if thou wilt enter into life **keep the commandments.**” (Matthew 19:17).*

“Keep the commandments” that was Jesus’ reply. According to Jesus that was the way to eternal life. This very same commandment is one of the many that Paul rejected and said they no longer apply. But Jesus Christ had said:

- ❖ *“Eternal life means knowing You (God) as the Only true God and knowing **Jesus Your Messenger as Christ.**” (John 17:3 – an American translation)*

Jesus laid emphasis on obeying the Devine Law and submitting to God’s commandments – the same thing that had been taught by Moses and the earlier prophets. Jesus himself obeyed the law and taught others to uphold it. Consider his statement contained in the ‘Sermon on the Mount’:

- ❖ *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law, or the prophets; I have come not to abolish, but to fulfill it.” (Matthew 5:17)*

So what justifies Paul to push aside Jesus’ own teaching and establish his own contradictory theology in its place, which he manufactured, and which he yet marketed in ‘Jesus’ name! At least four questions are germane here:

- i) How can we believe that Jesus taught one thing to his chosen disciples during his life time, and ‘teach’ something totally different (in fact contradictory) to Paul after leaving this world, thus rendering his lifetime message null and void, or obsolete?
- ii) Are we to believe that Jesus’ own preaching to the disciples was useless, and his mission in life was in vain, since something totally different was to be preached later by his (so-called) ‘true’ followers, abandoning his own?
- iii) Are we to disbelieve Jesus who enjoins on his followers ‘to do the works’ which he himself was doing? (John 14:12): *“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do.”* (John 14:12)
- iv) Are we to disbelieve the fact that Jesus regarded obedience to his commands as a test of love for him and as friendship with him, as has been clearly stated in the Bible? (John 14:15; 14:21; and 15:14)?
 - ❖ *“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”* (John 14:15)
 - ❖ *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.”* (John 14:21)
 - ❖ *“You are my friends if you do what I command you.”* (John 15:14)

Why then should the Church (or whoever believes in the original Jesus) accept Paul’s Gospel, when Paul excluded himself from obeying Jesus’ commands and further, encourage others to disregard them?

However, it would seem that the minds of some truly faithful Christians are wide open to reason, such as Arthur Weigall, who made a significant observation on the doctrine of the Atonement, in his book titled *“Paganism in Our Christianity.”* He stated as follows:

“We can no longer accept the appalling theologies (of the) doctrine that for some mystic reasons a propitiatory sacrifice was necessary. It is an outrage to our conception of God Almighty or our conception of Him as All-loving. The famous Dr. Cruder believed that for the purpose of this

sacrifice 'Christ suffered dreadful pains inflicted by God and this of course, is a stand point which nauseates the modern mind and which may well be termed a hideous doctrine not unconnected with the sadistic tendencies of primitive human nature. Actually, it is of pagan origin which perhaps the most obvious re-live of heathendom in the faith.'(Arthur Weighall, in Dr.Dauda Ojobi, 'Comparative Religion' p.44).

Muslims have no problem believing in the miracles that Jesus performed and the possibility of his performing one last miracle to escape and cheat death (perhaps by exchanging places with one of his disciples) because we believe that he was able to do all things by God's leave (permission) as stated in the Qur'an:

- *"Then God will say: O Jesus son of Mary, remember My favour to you and to your mother. Behold! I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit so that you did speak to the people in childhood and in old age. Behold! I taught you the Book and Wisdom, the Torah and the Injil. And behold! You make out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird by My leave, and you breathe into it and it becomes a bird by My leave. And you heal those born blind and lepers by My leave. And behold! You bring forth the dead to life by My leave."* (Q 5:110).

This passage among others has strengthened the Muslim's belief that Jesus did not die but is alive and shall resume his interrupted life, which has been termed a 'second coming'. (*I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit so that you did speak to the people in childhood **and in old age***). By this it is believed that the world shall see Jesus (pbuh) in old age.

The dogma of Atonement is not only the denial of the Mercy of God but also of his Justice. To demand a sacrifice of human blood in other to forgive the sins of men is to show a complete lack of mercy. Even Abraham was not allowed to go through with the sacrifice of his son, which was revealed to him in a dream. At the last minute, the boy was rescued, and a ram was substituted in his place. Thus, to punish an innocent man who is not guilty of the sins of others, whether the former is willing or not, has no softer definition than injustice. So to summarize briefly:

1. Firstly, the mission of Jesus is announced in two ways.
 - i. He was to be a Sign to men; his wonderful birth and wonderful life were to turn an ungodly world back to God; and,
 - ii. He was to bring solace and salvation to the repentant.

This in some way is the case with all apostles of God, but the point here is that the Israelites, to whom Jesus was sent, were a hardened race, for whom the message of Jesus was truly a gospel of Mercy. Jesus gathered around him twelve men whom he sent out 'to the lost sheep of Israel' (Matthew 10:16). He

later told them, in stirring language, that they would be the twelve judges of the kingdom of God (Matt 19:28).

2. Secondly, we read in the bible that Jesus did not wish to die on the cross. For when he learnt that his enemies were plotting against his life, he declared that his soul was exceedingly sorrowful unto death, he asked his disciples to keep watch over him to protect him from the enemies. And he prayed to God, saying:

❖ *“Abba: father, all things are possible unto thee, take away this cup from me, nevertheless not what I will but what thou wilt.”* (St. Mark 14:36)

3. Thirdly, the idea of substitutionary or vicarious sacrifice is illogical, meaningless and unjust. We fail to see how the death of one man can wipe out the sins of others, more so the whole World. It sounds something like the physician breaking his own head to cure a patient’s headache. Paul says that Jesus has made the two (into) one, i.e. God and Jesus, joined in Jesus:

❖ *“He is our peace, who hath made both one . . . having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.”* (Ephesians 2: 14-15).

So, since according to Paul, the two became one: Jesus and God! Questions necessarily need to be asked:

- a). Does this mean that when Jesus was crucified, died, buried and resurrected,
God was also crucified, buried and resurrected with him?
- b). Who was crucified, Jesus alone, God alone, or both together in one body? If
Jesus and God died together and were buried as one piece, what then
happened to the World?
- c). Was the world without God for the three days that Jesus died and was buried?

Can anything be more blasphemous than this?

Certainly God would not put himself in such a degrading circumstance: bottled up in a human body for Him to be spat on, whipped like an animal, and be hung up on a piece of wood, like an accursed. Only Pauline mind will cook up something so vile and reprehensible.

4. Fourthly, the idea that the shedding of blood is necessary to appease the wrath of God is reminiscent of paganism which was married into Christianity from the primitive man’s image of God, as an all powerful demon. We see no connection at all between sin and blood. What is necessary to wash away sin is not blood but repentance, remorse, persistent struggle against evil inclinations of the spirit, development of

greater sympathy for mankind, and determination to carry the will of God as revealed to us through the Prophets (as recorded in the Bible and the Qur'an). The Quran says:

- *"It is neither the flesh nor the blood (of the animals they sacrifice) that reaches God: it is the piety that reaches him."* (Quran 22:37).

The shift of emphasis from Jesus as a man to the new image of Christ, who was divine, enabled the intellectuals in Greece and Rome to assimilate into their own philosophy what Paul and his followers preached. Their view of existence is a tripartite one, and with the Pauline Church's talk of "God the father" and the "Son of God", it only needed the inclusion of the "Holy Ghost" to have a Trinity which matched theirs. With the passage of time, these two pictures merged into one, and the doctrine of Trinity was born. This is what placed Mary in an impossible position of being worshipped as the mother of God by the Catholics.

Mary the mother of Jesus was unique in that she gave birth to a son by a special miracle without the intervention of the customary physical means. Mary gave birth, as a virgin to Jesus, but her people slandered and abused her as a disgrace to her lineage. Her story was related in the Quran thus:

- *"Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the east. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then we sent to her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man, in all respects. She said: "I seek refuge from thee to (God) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear God". He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son". She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me and I am not unchaste?" He said: "So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, 'that is easy for me: and (we wish) to appoint him as a sign unto men and a mercy form us'. It is a matter (so) decreed".* (Quran 19:16-21)

The Quran relates further that her son did defend her and was kind to her. This of course does not mean that she was more than human, or that her son was more than human. He was a servant of God, a true prophet, blessed in the gifts of prayer and charity, but no more than a man: to call him the son of God is to derogate from God's majesty, for God is High above all His creatures, the Judge of the Last Day.

These two versions of the person of Christ and his message (Gospel) lead us to ask whether Paul could have better comprehend the meaning of the Gospel than Jesus himself did! As to who is right or correct between Paul and Jesus, we only need to look closer to find the solution. Jesus himself has provided us with the solution, after all he was a foremost Messenger of God (John 7:16; 12:49) and a Prophet recognized by the people (Matthew 21:11), whose mission is the worship of God alone, which he made the ultimate aim of all his activities; said he:

❖ *“My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to complete His work.” (John 4:34)*

Jesus said that his job is *“to complete His work” (God’s work)*; this is to tell us that the “work” whatever it is, was not started by Jesus. It confirms that he is one of a string of Messengers who have come one after the other to establish God’s commandments.

The scenario that we have today is that, as the established Church distanced itself further and further from the teaching of the historical Jesus, so its leaders became more and more involved in the affairs of those in authority over the land. As the distinctions between what Jesus had taught and what those in position of authority desired became blurred and began to merge into each other, the Church, while asserting its separateness from the state, became more and more identified with it, and grew in power. (Muhammad ‘Ata’UrRahim).

Naturally, those who deviated from the teaching of Jesus were prepared to change the scriptures too, and even introduce false writings in order to support their opinions. John Toland, the Historian, in his book the *‘Nazarenes’*, records these words of Iranaeus (130 – 200 AD), who was one of the early Unitarian Martyrs:

“In order to amaze the simple and such as are ignorant of the scriptures of truth, they obtrude upon them an inexpressible multitude of apocryphal and spurious scriptures of their own devising”.

Toland said further:

“We know already to what degree imposture and credibility went hand in hand in the primitive times of the Christian Church, the last being as ready to receive as the first was to forge books . . . This evil grew afterwards not only greater when the Monks were the sole transcribers and the sole keepers of all books good or bad, but in process of time it became almost absolutely impossible to distinguish history from fable, or truth from error as to the beginning and original monument of Christianity...”

He continued by enquiring:

“How immediate successors of the Apostle could so grossly confound the genuine teaching of their Masters with such as were falsely attributed to them? Or since they were in the dark about these matters so early, how come such as followed them (could have done so) by a better light? And observing that such Apocryphal books were often put upon the same footing with the Canonical books by the fathers, and the first cited as Divine scriptures no less than the last, or sometimes when such as we reckon divine were disallowed by them. I propose these two other questions: why all the books cited as genuine by

Clement of Alexander, Origen, Tertullian and the rest of such writers should not be accounted equally authentic? And what stress should be laid on the testimony of those fathers who do not only contradict one another but are also often inconsistent with themselves in their relations of the very same fact?"

Finally, Toland asks the million dollar question:

"Since the Nazarenes or Ebionites are by all the Church historians unanimously acknowledged to have been the first Christians, or those who believed in Christ among the Jews with which, his own people, he lived and died, they having been witness of his actions, and of whom were all the Apostle, considering this, I say how was it possible for them to be the first of all others (for they were made to be the first heretics), who should form wrong conceptions of the doctrines and designs of Jesus? And how come the Gentiles who believed in him after his death by the preaching of persons that never knew him to have truer notions of these things, or whence they could have their information but from the believing Jews?"

One can't help agreeing with the conclusion that Christian 'Zealots' contributed much in doing great disservice to the Faith. In her Bible commentary, Mrs. Ellen G. White, a prophetess of the 7th Day Adventist movement wrote: *"Learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain"*.

In like manner, the Holy Qur'an (3:78-79) states that:

- *"There is among them (People of the Book) a section who distorts the book with their tongues: (as they read) you would think it is a part of the book, but it is no part of the book; and they say "that is from God", but it is not from God'. It is they who tell a lie against God, and (well) they know it!"(Q. 3:78-79*

Wilfred Cartwell-Smith was of the opinion that between the two poles of complete acceptance and complete rejection of the established Church's reliability as the guardian of the message of Jesus, there lay every shade of opinion as to what is to be a Christian. He writes:

"There is so much diversity and clash so much chaos, in the Christian Church today that the old ideal of a unified or systematic Christian truth has gone. For this, the ecumenical movement is too late. What has happened is that the Christian world has moved into that situation of open variety, of optional alternatives. It would seem no longer possible for anyone to be told or even to imagine that he can be told what it means or should mean formally and generically, to be a Christian. He must decide for himself and only for himself."

He further observes that:

“The total sickness of Christianity today is due to the inescapable fact that the Christians of today lack a science of social behavior and which lack has left them impoverished in this life and unprepared for what happens after death.” He laments this situation thus: *“To say that Christianity is true is to say nothing significant; the only question that concerns either God or me, or my neighbor is whether my Christianity is true, and whether yours is. And to that question, a truly cosmic one, in my case the only valid answer is a sorrowful “not very...”*

A graduate student at U.C.L.A asked: *“What is the point of a church if it’s always up to my own conscience?”* And a Social Worker from Canada, Thomas Irving, gave his view on the development in the Christian religion. He said:

“In my first year course in oriented literature, I had learned of the progression of human thought in its attempt to perfect its conception of God. Jesus had culminated the teaching of a loving God. This idea had been lost in a cloud of lethargically daggered and atavistic paganism; a Beneficent, Merciful Deity had been obscured by an implacable overlord who could only be reached through an intercessor.”(Abrahim Ahmad Bawany (1963):‘Islam Our Choice’)

This conclusion implies that there are as many versions of Christianity today as there are Christians and that the role of the Church, as an institution which is the guardian of Jesus’ message, has largely ceased to exist.

By believing that Jesus died on the cross, one wonders if Christians consider the possibility that they are virtually accusing Jesus of being a false prophet and therefore accursed of God, as proclaimed by the Bible? Indeed we have it on the authority of the Bible, that says:

❖ *“And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he is to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance”.* (Deuteronomy (21: 22 – 23)

To believe therefore, in the death of Jesus on the cross (contrary to his prophesy and the teaching of the Bible), is to discredit his prophethood and that was precisely what the Jews aimed to achieve when they concluded their plan to kill him, saying:

❖ *“And that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death...”*
(Deuteronomy (13:5):

The Jews maintained that they have killed Jesus on the cross and consequently portrayed him to be false in his claim to be the Messiah and

Prophet sent by God. That singular act proved to the Jewish nation that Jesus was an imposter and therefore irrelevant to their religion. Unfortunately, Christianity bought into the entrapment, by believing in the crucifixion of Jesus, which ironically served the Christian's purpose well, because it justifies the redemption of their sins. This belief however, without realizing it, has consequently put them in a difficult position of placing God's curse on Jesus' head, exactly where the Jews cleverly wished it to be. Lo and behold! We find Paul saying that, "Jesus saved man from the curse and bore the curse on man's behalf":

- ❖ *"Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."* (Galatians 3:13).

By this, Paul says Jesus became cursed since he was crucified. The pertinent Questions that we must now ask the Church or the followers of Paul are:

How can Jesus be cursed though sinless?

How could Paul receive revelations, as he claims, from a cursed person?

How could Jesus be God's son and be cursed at the same time?

How could Jesus be the Lord and be the accursed simultaneously?

This unwitting lack of logic cannot be God's message! The belief in Savior-ship or Atonement of sin as believed by the generality of Christians opposes the basic teaching of the Bible (for it is an interpolation by later Christians in the fourth century), see to Hosea 6:6 where God said:

- ❖ *"For I desire mercy not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings".*(Hosea 6:6)

The belief also opposes Jesus' own teaching as in Mathew 9:13:

- ❖ *"but go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'"*(Matt 9: 13)

Again Jesus reiterated in Mathew 12:7:

- ❖ *"If you had known what these words mean, I desire mercy not sacrifice; you would not have condemned the innocent"*(Mathew 12:7)

Why the Church would want desperately to condemn Jesus and believe that he was crucified and raised from the dead is anybody's guess. So, we are at liberty to hypothesize possible reasons to explain why the Church would want to believe as it does. These factors, we feel, are what obviously give Christianity its life, for without them there would be no Christianity:

- Firstly, the Church needed to believe that Jesus died on the cross in order to justify the ideology of original sin and its atonement by the blood of Jesus.

- Secondly, the Church also needed to believe in Jesus' resurrection and ascension, immediately after his supposed death on the cross, to justify the concept of his eternal life like the Phoenix (though the doctrine of the ascension has been expunged from the Bible).
- Thirdly, the Church needed Jesus to be both Man and God to justify his supreme sacrifice, as a loving God; or else how can one mortal man take away the sins of all mankind? And, He has to be man in order to receive the punishment, or else how can mortal men kill God?
- Fourthly, the Church needed Jesus to be "the son of God", as a first step towards his deification and consequently his placement on the Trinity, or else how could the doctrine be justified?
- Fifthly, the Church needed Jesus to be a separate being from 'the Almighty' God (the Father), in order to justify the doctrine of original sin, or else how can the one (the Father) who mates out punishment (or justice?), also turns around and suffer or punish himself (posing as the son)?
- Sixthly, the Church also required God (the father) to be a separate being from Jesus (the son) since it is believed that God will sit in judgment (though Paul had said that Jesus also sits at judgment); or else how can he who atoned for the sins of mankind also sit in judgment over them thereafter? What would he be judging since he has already atoned for all the sins?
- Seven, the Church again, needed Jesus to be the son of God, in order to show that God (the father) is also merciful and not just a 'wrathful' God, who condemned all mankind for the sin of one man (Adam). Therefore, in sacrificing 'His own *begotten son*' for his creation, He is thus, being portrayed as demonstrating his readiness to share the pains of his own punishment. In other words, Jesus is needed to be son of God, in order for God (the father) to punish himself (for his 'mistake or unjust act'? [*A'uzubillahi*'] of punishing all mankind for the sin of one man?). When all that was needed or required to show His compassion and mercy was to just off-handedly forgive 'poor Adam', (who was innocently deceived into committing the mistake, so early in his creation) instead of punishing someone else (Jesus), centuries later, for the sin committed by another (Adam).
- Eight, the Church also needed the Holy Spirit (Ghost) to be God in order to justify the unfortunate and repugnant belief that the virgin Mary was made pregnant through the 'direct activity' of the Holy Ghost (*A'uzubillahi*) – to further justify that Jesus is the begotten son of God and by implication a Deity, (a pagan ideology) apart from merely completing the tri-unity, (Trinity).

- Finally we ask, if all humanity is born in sin, does it mean that Jesus himself who Christianity believes to be “*God incarnate*” was ‘born’ in sin? How would God allow his incarnate self (forgetting what the Bible said that he who is born of a woman is unclean), to be born into something so despicable and revolting, something for which ‘He’ vowed to punish all humanity unless it be redeemed by blood? How foul and cruel?

One thing for sure, these doctrines of Paul have created serious dilemmas for the faithful Christian who believes himself to be a follower of Jesus:

- Firstly, despite their doubtful origin, these doctrines form an integral part of the conditioning of anyone who is given a “Church Education”. Although many have rejected some or all of them, the magic they exercise is such that those who give them credibility are led by their logic to believe in the notorious principle: “Outside the Church, No Salvation!”.
- Secondly, belief in the doctrine of atonement and redemption leads to confusion when a Christian attempts to reconcile the other teachings which God has revealed to man with his own belief. It implies that “Christ’s sacrifice” and “Message” are unique and final, and therefore the Christian cannot accept the teachings of other Prophets. At the same time, he cannot deny the truth he finds in them. Thus, a Christian rejects Judaism, yet accepts the Old Testament, which is derived from the teachings which Moses brought to the Jews and which Jesus said he came not to destroy but to complete. The Christian puts himself in the impossible position of having to accept two (sets) contradictory beliefs simultaneously.

11.0 Christian Behaviors Inconsistent with Teachings of the Bible

There are some practices prescribed in the Bible either as the teachings or practices of Jesus Christ (pbuh) or as prohibitions, and which should have been something that Christians and Muslims have in common. Alas! Christians today not only ignore but out-rightly abhor them. It is as described in the Holy Bible:

- ❖ *“And he said to them, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions . . . Thus you nullify the Word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.” (Mark 7:9;13)*

It goes without saying that many of the present devotional practices of Christianity today are contrary to the practices of Jesus Christ (of Nazareth) and earlier Prophets. These practices have instead become differences that further

separate the two faiths. And, this is mostly due to disobedience to the Law. Even the acts of worship of Christians nowadays go contrary to the teachings of the Holy Bible. Muslims are actually surprised that their practices conform more to some of the teachings of the Bible because it is equally ordained in the Quran and the practices of the Prophet. Again, some of the prohibitions in the Bible which the Church is expected to enforce are instead allowed to be practiced by Christians unchallenged, and it is the Muslims that observe them. Let us take a few instances:

i. Mode of Prayer and Worship:

In the book of Mathew chapter 4 verses 1-10; we are given the standard example that Jesus Christ gave where he showed his disciples how to pray with their faces on the ground, which is similar to the practices of earlier prophets of God, as we found in the Old Testament, and which is the manner of Muslim prayer. Proof of this manner of prayer and how to perform ablution are many in the Holy Bible itself; as follows:

- ❖ *When Jesus prays, he does so with his face on the ground: “Going a little further, he (Jesus) fell with his face to the ground and prayed” (Matthew 26:39). So Jesus (pbuh) prayed like the Muslim!*
- ❖ *In Psalms 113:3 we see that God is to be prayed to from dawn to evening, “From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised.” This is in tandem with the Qur’an (Surah 11:14): “And establish regular prayers, at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the Night. . . .”*
- ❖ *Peter and Paul offered prayers at specified times of day as did Peter and John, the disciples of Jesus (pbuh), (Acts 3:1): “One day peter and John were going to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three O’clock in the afternoon.” This is the equivalent of the Muslim’s afternoon (Asr) prayer.*
- ❖ *Prophet Abraham prayed with his face on the ground too! “. . . then Abram fell on his face (and prayed)” (Genesis 17:3).*
- ❖ *“When Abraham’s servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the Lord.”(Genesis 24:52). So Abraham and his servant prayed like the Muslims!*
- ❖ *“And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped” (Joshua 5:14). So Prophet Joshua (pbuh) prayed like the Muslim!*
- ❖ *“And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen” lifting up their hands and they bowed (‘ruku’u’ in Arabic) their heads and worshipped the lord with their faces to the ground (‘Sujud’)(Nehemiah 8:5-6). So Prophet Ezra and the people also prayed like the Muslims!*
- ❖ *“And Moses bowed to the ground and worshipped” (Exodus 34:8). So Prophet Moses (pbuh) prayed like the Muslim too!*

- ❖ *“Then Moses and Aaron went away from the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces ...”* (Numbers 20:6). So Moses and Aaron (pbut) prayed like the Muslims do!
- ❖ *“He (Solomon) rose from before the alter of the lord, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out towards heaven”* (1st Kings 8:54) So Solomon supplicated to God in the manner of the Muslim – not with folded palms – but open and raised towards heaven.

And the Quran says that the disbelievers have refused to obey:

- *“And where it is said to them: Bow down, they do not bow down.”* (Q. 77: 48)

Let’s look at a few instances of what they do instead:

- a. Today the Church has adopted singing, dancing and music making as the main form of worship instead of touching their foreheads on the ground to pray, (contrary to Mathews 26:39), as Jesus taught his disciples. Music, singing and merry making are further condemned in the book of Isaiah 5:12:
 - ❖ *“They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord, no respect for the work of his hands.”*(Isaiah 5: 12)
- b. They are required to bow down only to God. We note that in the Book of Revelation after John was given a prophecy he stooped to prostrate to the angel, but the angel stopped him and told him that he should prostrate only to his creator. The passage reads:
 - ❖ *“I, john, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow-servant with you and with your brothers and prophets and all who keep the words of this book. Worship God (Alone!)”*(Revelation 7: 9-17).
- c. Christians who thought themselves faithful, engage in shouting matches as prayer, contrary to Matthews 6: 7-13:
 - ❖ *“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”* (Matthew 6: 7-13).
- d. Christians have made the clapping of hands a part of worship, yet in the Bible clapping has been cursed by God. God said in the Bible:
 - ❖ *“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet, rejoicing with all the malice of your heart against the land. . . . I will cut you off from the nations and exterminate you from the countries. I will destroy you and you will know that I am the Lord.”* (Ezekiel 25: 6 – 7)

ii. Ritual Cleansing:

The Holy Bible tells us that Moses was ordained to place the washing basin between the Tent of meeting and the Alter, and filled it with water. Moses and Aaron and his sons used to wash their hands and feet with the water, whenever they entered the Tent of Meeting (congregation) or approached the Alter as the Lord commanded Moses. In the Book of John chapter 13, verse 5, Jesus himself washed the hands and feet of his disciples. Only Simon Peter refused to be washed, until Jesus told him the importance of so doing, before Simon agreed and asked Jesus to show him how to wash his hand, feet and head (in preparation for prayer).

Islam has always stressed on cleanliness and purification in all aspect of the Muslim life. This includes performing '*Dhahara*' (personal hygiene) before ablution. Ablution refers to the washing of certain parts of the body, i.e. face, hands, arms and feet, etc. before observing prayer. These parts of the body mentioned above constitute some of the compulsory parts that must be washed by the Muslim before prayer according to the Qur'an, chapter 5, verse 6.

- ❖ *"O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbow; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body . . ." (Quran 5:6)*

Christians are also required to observe ritual bath after having sexual union with their spouses (or after having a wet dream). The same is also compulsory for every woman after her monthly menstruation. Some Christians either knowingly or unknowingly omit or fail to observe this important religious ritual (bathing). Yet it is abundantly stated clearly in the Bible that:

- ❖ *"When a man lies with a woman and there is emission of semen both must bath with water" (Leviticus: 15:18, See also verse 19 through 23 on the subject)*

How many Christians respect this instruction today?

Muslims are as well mandatorily required to perform ritual bath after sexual intercourse (or after having a wet dream), this is also made compulsory for every woman after her monthly menstruation or bleeding after child birth. The Quran states:

- *". . . If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body. But if ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands (in the absence of water). God doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete His favor to you, that ye may be grateful." (Qur'an 5:6)*

iii. Dress Code, (Veil & head cover):

It has become the acquired habit among young Christian women to go in men's clothes and outfits such as very tight pants & blouses, trousers, shirts, and etc. which they consider as civilization. This is also condemned in the book of Deuteronomy 22 verse 5:

❖ *"Women are not to wear men's clothing. The Lord your God hates people who do such things."*

And Bare-headedness has become the vogue among Christian women because Christians want to believe that the practice of seclusion is not for them, consequently, they make fun of Muslim women who cover themselves. But according to the Bible, the women folk are ordained to cover their heads while praying and making prophecy. That is why Nuns dress themselves in a comely manner as Muslim women are required to do. The Bible also says that Rebecca, the wife of Prophet Isaac to be, also covered herself with a veil: ". . . So she took her veil and covered herself," (Genesis 24:65). A woman not covering her head in public worship is considered disgraceful, as written in the 1st Corinthian:

❖ *"For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her haircut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil." (1 Corinthians 11: 5-6)*

Prophet Muhammad was also ordered in the Holy Quran to tell believing women to cover and veil themselves in modesty, which also has an added value of serving as protection against molestation. The Quran commanded:

- *"O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (head and body covering) close around them (when they go abroad). That will be better, so that they may be recognized and not annoyed (molested). (Q 33:59a)*
- *"And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veil over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! Turn ye all together towards God that ye may attain Bliss."(Q 24:31)*

Men are not left out either; in fact men are the first to be commanded. The Quran says:

- *“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them” (Qur’an 24:30)*

Ibn Qayyim Al-Jaoziyyah in his book *‘Raodat ul Muhibeen’* captured this view most perfectly, when he said: “. . . Allah, may He be glorified, has made the eyes a mirror of the heart; whenever a servant (of Allah) lowers his gaze, the heart’s lustful desire is lowered; when it is used (for perceiving vices), lust is evoked in the Heart.”

iv. Use of Cosmetics:

Just as Muslim women are admonished against the use of cosmetic, trinkets and attachments, these are condemned in the Bible too; but Christian women (and sometimes men) in the name of modernity and fashion, remain the most users; the Bible says:

- ❖ *“Do not use outward aid to make yourselves beautiful through the way you do your hair or the jewellery you put on or the dresses you wear” (1st Peter 3:3-4) (P.75)*

Of course, Muslim women are also guilty of disobedience, because they have been admonished in the Quran against wearing heavy make-up and noisy trinkets that attract men’s attention to them. The Quran says that: *“they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; . . . and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments” (Q 24:31).*

v. Abstinence From Wine:

Drinking of Alcohol is proscribed in the Bible, but majority of Christian prefer to deny it, citing example of Jesus turning water to wine. Yet according to the commandments in the Bible, Christians are supposed to abstain from drinking alcohol. In the book of Proverbs, Chapter 20, verse 1, it is said that:

- ❖ *“Do not go near Alcohol” (Deuteronomy 3:11; Isaiah 5:11; Isaiah 7:21); Habakkuk 2: 15-16; Proverbs 30: 4-7; Proverbs 20:1)*
- ❖ *“Wine is a mocker, Beer is a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.” ((Proverbs 20:1)*

And in Isaiah Chapter 5 verse 11 the Bible says:

- ❖ *“Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine.” (Isaiah 5:11)*

Also in Habakkuk Chapter 2 verse 15 – 16 says:

- ❖ *“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbour, pouring it from the wine skin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies. You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn drink and be exposed! The cup from your lord’s right hand is coming round to you, and disgrace will cover your glory.”*

- ❖ *“And the Lord spoke to Aaron: Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting (i.e. Prayer place), that you may not die; it is a statute forever throughout your generation.”*(Leviticus 10: 8-9)
- ❖ *“Do not look at the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. At the last it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.”* (Proverb 23:31-32)

In the Quran, Muslims are also prohibited from drinking alcohol. Allah addressed Prophet Muhammad concerning drinking. The Quran states:

- *“When they asked thee concerning intoxicants and gambling, tell them in it is profit and loss. The loss is more than the profit.”*(Q. 2:219)
- *“Do not pray with your mind befogged unless you can understand (what you are doing).”*(Q. 4:43)

These verses show that Alcoholism was not abrogated outrightly. It was prohibited gradually because drinking has been an acquired habit of the Arabs and has graduated to the level of custom, thus the first step towards eradicating it was in connection with prayer. That means that while praying Muslims should not be in a state of intoxication so as to know what is being said and what one is doing. While the fore-going were meant to discourage the believer, the final prohibition came in Surat Al'Ma'ida, Chapter 5 verse 90, where God said:

- *“Oh ye who believe, most certainly intoxicants and gambling, dedication of stones, divination by arrows, these are Satan's handiwork, abstain from his handiwork so that you may prosper.”* (Q. 5:90)

Due to this verse, intoxicants were totally abolished. That some recalcitrant Muslims drink heavily does not mean that Islam condones it. It was 'Haram' for Muslims to engage in drinking of alcohol and other intoxicating substances. So based on this verse of the Qur'an the Muslims as a whole are expected to abstain from drinking alcohol.

vi. Adultery and Sexual Impropriety

Jesus prohibited his followers from looking with eyes of lust at the wives of others. The Bible prohibitions are as follows:

- ❖ *“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after, he hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”* (Mathew 5:27-28).
- ❖ *“Flee from sexual immorality... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy spirit, who is in you, whom you have received*

from God? You are not our own; you were bought with price. Therefore honour God with your body.” (1st Corinthians 6: 18 – 20).

- ❖ *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving (Ephesians 5:3-4).*
- ❖ *“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, or anything that is thy neighbour’s” (Exodus, 20:17)*
- ❖ *“If a man is found sleeping with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die... If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and she sleeps with him, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death... but if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her only the man who has done this shall die.(Deuteronomy 22: 22 – 25)*

On Adultery, the Quran has the following admonitions:

- *“And do not **go near** adultery (Illegitimate sex); for indeed, it is ever an immorality and evil way.” (Quran 17:32).*
- *“The adulterer and the adulteress, scourge ye each one of them (with) a hundred stripes. And let not pity for the twain withhold you from obedience to Allah, if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a party of believers witness their punishment. (Quran 2: 228(b)*
- *“The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication, flog each of them with a hundred stripes: let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by God, if ye believe in God and the last Day: and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment.” (Q 24:2).*
- *“Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry any but a woman similarly guilty, or an Unbeliever: nor let any but such a man or an Unbeliever marry such a woman: To the Believers such a thing is forbidden.” (Q 24:3)*

Saying of Muhammad on Adultery:

- *“Certainly Allah, the Most High, would write against the son of Adam, his share of the sin of fornication; the eyes’ fornication is (lustful) gaze; The tongue’s fornication is (obscene) utterance; the hand’s fornication is (unlawful) touch; the heart thinks and lustfully desires and the private organ shall either make it (the desire) real or not.” (Reported by MUSLIM)*

- *“Casting a gaze at a woman is one of the Satanic spears; whoever abstains from it in fear of Allah, shall be blessed with sound faith, which sweetness he will feel in his heart.” (Reported by MUSLIM).*

And the Quran had said: “. . . for indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are within the breasts.”

vii. Abhorrence of Homosexuality (Sodomy)

Homosexuality (sexual relations between people of the same gender) has been described in the Bible as a sinful desire of the heart and degradation of the body and a shameful act; because of it:

- ❖ *“God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.” (Romans 1: 26 – 27).*

For this, we are told that the people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorra were given to sinful desires:

- ❖ *“Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman that is detestable.” (Leviticus 18:22)*
- ❖ *“They (the men of the city of Sodom) called to lot, “where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.” (Genesis 19:5)*
- ❖ *“. . . Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another...” (Romans 1:24).*

Both Christians and Muslims are guilty of this shameful act. However, while among Muslims it has to be viewed as a social malaise; in Christianity it is prevalent in the Church, among Priests (custodians of the faith) who have sworn an oath of celibacy. Of very recent, the Pope was compelled to tender an apology on behalf of the priests who have been found guilty of abusing young children in the past.

In the Quran, homosexuality is described as “lewdness such as no creature did before mankind . . . and is practiced by folks who act senselessly.”

- *“If any of your women are guilty of lewdness, take the evidence of four (reliable) witnesses from amongst you against them; and if they testify, confine them to houses until death do claim them, or Allah ordain for them some (other) way.” (Quran 4:15).*
- *“If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone; for Allah is Oft-returning, Most Merciful.” (Quran 4:16)*

viii. Fake Prophets/ Hypocrites:

The Holy Bible tells us that Jesus warned his disciples that after him would come false prophets and false Christs who would claim to be genuine messengers sent by God. He even predicted that they would enjoy a measure of success, but that their deeds would in the end testify against them (Matthew 7: 15-20; 24:4-5; 24:23-24). These predictions, alas, soon proved astonishingly accurate as they came true within the lifetime of the apostles. Men who were well-informed about the Christian faith and who had even been members, for a time, of the apostolic communities, began spreading doctrines that were alien to the gospel. Jesus also spoke of those people who honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. That they worship him in vain because their teachings are but rules taught by men. That they have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men. (Mark 7: 6 – 8).

Prof A. Yusuf Ali explains that the Quran advises us to beware of treachery; because it would use the good and pious for its wicked ends. Its plots he says will but recoil on its own head. Of this kind, the Quran declared: *“Woe to those that deal in fraud . . . Do they not think that they will be called to account? – on a Mighty Day; a Day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds? The righteous have no cause for secrecy, except in doing good, that it is evil that misleads, deceives and even dares deface fair Nature, as created by God. ‘Shun all evil’ we are told, and be firm in righteousness and faith in God. (C. 66).*

BIBLE:	QURAN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ <i>“As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the Law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the market places, and have the most important seats in the Synagogues and the places of honour at banquets.” (Mark 12:38).</i>❖ <i>“He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men. You have let go of the commands of God</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“They may hide (their crimes) from men, but they cannot hide (them) from God, seeing that He is in their midst when they plot by night, in words that He cannot approve: and God doth compass round all they do.”(Quran 4:108)</i>• <i>“And We shall turn to whatever deeds they did (in this life), and We shall make such deeds as floating dust scattered about.” (Quran 25:23)</i>• <i>“And when the Word is fulfilled against them (the unjust), We shall produce from the earth a Beast to (face)</i>

<i>and are holding on to the traditions of men.”(Mark 7: 6 – 8)</i>	<i>them: He will speak to them, for that mankind did not behave with assurance in Our Signs.”(Quran 27:82)</i>
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ix. Women and Marriage:

We learn from the Bible that Marriage is to be contracted properly by the payment of dowry, betrothal and witnesses, just as observed in Islam. But this has been contradicted in the Bible: (Galatians 16:21). It says: “When you see a woman you just put your ring on her hand and she simply becomes yours!” On marriage, the Bible also says:

- ❖ *“Haven’t you read” (Jesus replied) “that at the beginning the creator ‘made them male and female’ and said ‘for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh... Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate.” (Matthew 19: 4 – 6)*
- ❖ *“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of Church. (Ephesians 5: 21 – 23).*
- ❖ *“The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. (1st Corinthians 7 :3 – 4)*
- ❖ *“No one born of a forbidden marriage or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation.”(Deuteronomy 23:2)*

It seems puzzling that in spite of what the bible says in 1st Corinthians about “the wife’s body not belonging to her alone but to the husband also,” and that “no one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of his descendant may enter the assembly of the Lord”(Deuteronomy), we find women having children out of wedlock and are proud of it, calling themselves “single parents” or hordes of children being given birth to before the marriage is contracted. And this is even being encouraged today by many societies that claim to be predominantly Christian, in violation of our societies’ cultural ethics.

The Muslim’s view on marriage as ordained by Allah is as written in the Quran, that men may:

- *“Marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many) then (marry) one (only) or (the captives) that your right hand posses. Thus, it is more likely that ye will not do injustice.” (Q 4:31)*

The Quran has also specified the relationship and inter dependence between a wife and the husband, thus:

- *“Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded.” (Qur’an 4:34a)*
- *“Your women are a tilt (field) for you (to cultivate) so go to your tilts as ye will, and send (good deeds) before you for your souls, and fear Allah.” (Qur’an 2:223a)*
- *“... And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in kindness, and men are a degree above them. Allah is Mighty, Wise. (Quran 65: 1 - 2).*

And in his Farewell Sermon to the congregation in Medina, the Prophet said: *“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your wives but they also have certain rights. Treat them with kindness and love, for you have taken them in trust. Keep always faithful to the trust placed in you and do not sin.”*

X. Divorce:

We are faced with yet another contradiction in the Bible with regards to divorce. The Church says there is no divorce as far as it is concerned, because the book of Mark says whoever divorces his wife and marries another has committed adultery against her and vice versa:

- ❖ *He (Jesus) answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.” (Mark 10:11)*

Yet the same book of Mark 10: 2 - 4, Jesus teaches his followers the Law of Moses, to the effect that a man is permitted to divorce his wife:

- ❖ *“Some Pharisees came and tested him (Jesus) by asking “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” “What did Moses command you?” he (Jesus) replied. They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” (Mark 10:2 – 4).*

In fact, the Bible gave us to believe that the matter can be worse for a woman should she fall out of favor from her husband. It is given that a woman who after marriage, is disliked by the husband and slandered can be stoned by the men of the town, at her fathers’ door, for not being a virgin. Deuteronomy 22 reads:

- ❖ *“If a man takes a wife, and after lying with her, dislikes her and slanders her and gives her a bad name, saying “I married this woman, but when I approached her, I did not find proof of virginity, ... if however, the charge is true and no proof of the girls’ virginity can be found, she shall be bought to the door of her*

father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has done a disgraceful thing... by being promiscuous while still in her father's house...(Deuteronomy 22: 13 – 14, 20 – 21)

The Quran advocated a different treatment in a situation like this. For the man who defames or slanders his wife or vice versa, it says:

- *“And for those who launch a charge against their spouses, and have (in support), no evidence but their own, their solitary evidence (can be received) if they bear witness four times (with an Oath) by God that they are solemnly telling the truth; and the fifth (Oath, should be) that they solemnly invoke the curse of God on themselves if they tell a lie.” (Q. 24:6-7)*

No hash treatment accompanies this oath-taking, the divorce is allowed to take place. However, slandering a chaste (innocent) woman attracts Allah's curse in this world and in the hereafter says the Holy Quran:

- *“Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing (in Islam), are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter: for them is a grievous Penalty, - on the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions. (Q.24:23-24)*

xi. Sacredness of Life: Murder/Suicide/Abortion

In Christianity, as in Islam, the concept of a life not worthy of living does not exist. One person's life is inseparably linked with the lives of all humankind. Whatever applies to the crime of murder likewise applies to committing suicide. Only God gives life; and only He can take life. Which is why the Bible says :

- ❖ *“Thou shall not murder” [The Lord God's commandment] (Exodus 20:13)*

And Quran says:

- *“Slay not the life which Allah hath made sacred, save in the course of Justice.”(Q. 6:151)*
- *“Nor take life – which God has made sacred – except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, We have given his heir authority (to demand ‘Qisas’ – reparation, or to forgive): but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped (by the Law). (Q. 17: 33).*

Also the Quran forbids Muslims to kill one another (Quran 4:29). This may include mutually assisted suicide, since one of the translators (Rodwell) translated the verse to read, *“And commit not Suicide”*. Islam does not recognize suicide as a right, but rather considers it a violation. Thus, whoever takes his life by whatsoever means has unjustly taken a life which Allah has made sacred. Since a person did not create himself, not even so much as a single cell of his or her hair, the life of an individual does not belong to him; it is

a trust given to him by Allah. He is not allowed to diminish it (even as much as by smoking of cigarette (Q. 2:195), let alone to harm or destroy it. The Quran states:

- *“For that cause We decreed for the children of Israel that whosoever killeth a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind.”* (Quran 5: 32a)
- *“O you who believe!. . . Kill not one another. Lo! Allah is ever Merciful unto you.”* (Quran 4: 29b).
- *“Do not make your own hands the cause of your own destruction.”* (Q. 2:195)

According to Shari’a Law, soul-life of the human being begins within “four months in the womb” as such all Islamic Scholars agree that abortion is forbidden after the first four months of pregnancy, since by this time the soul has entered the embryo. There are those in Islam who oppose all abortions at whatever stage. They say that for any abortion to be permissible, the life of the mother must be threatened:

- *...Slay not your children, fearing a fall to poverty. We shall provide for them and for you. Lo! The slaying of them is great sin... And come not near onto adultery. Lo! It is an abomination and an evil way... And slay not the life which Allah hath forbidden save with right... come not near the wealth of the orphan....”(Quran 17: 31-35)*

xii. Manner of Greeting:

Surprisingly or perhaps not so surprising, the Holy Bible gives us evidence that the Muslim greeting: “Assalam Alaikum” that is, ‘Peace be upon you’ which Muslims use to greet each other, was also taught and practiced by Jesus (pbuh):

- ❖ *“ . . . Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace with you’”(John 20:19; 21& 26; Luke 24: 36)*

In fact, Jesus instructed his disciples, when he was sending them on a mission, that they should use this form of greeting when they enter someone’s house:

- ❖ *“As you enter a house, greet it [say: ‘Peace be with you’ – in TEV]. If the house is worthy let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.”* (Matthew 10: 12-13)

xiii. The Lord’s Will:

Lastly, the Bible instruct Christians, when making statements concerning a matter which one has no certainty or no control over, to say “if it is the Lord’s Will”:

- ❖ “. . . Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say: **‘If it is the Lord’s Will we will live and do this or that.’**” (James 4: 14-15)

This Biblical injunction is observed by Muslims, and they are known to frequently use the phrase “*Insha-Allah*”, which means ‘*God willing*’ or ‘*if God wills,*’ as a manner of speech.

12.0 Conclusion:

As we have seen, the established Church is founded on the doctrine of Original sin, of Atonement and Redemption, of the Divinity of Jesus, of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost and of the Trinity. They were the fruits of Paul’s innovations and the influence of Greek culture and philosophy. None of these doctrines are to be found within the Gospels relayed by Jesus’ disciples. They were not taught by Jesus. Paul never experienced the company of Jesus neither did he receive a direct transmission of knowledge from Jesus, man-to-man. The figure of “Christ” whom he claimed taught him his new doctrine was an imagination (perhaps a hallucination created by no other than Satan). His teaching is based on an event which never took place, the supposed death and resurrection of Jesus. What is more perplexing about the whole thing is that those who knowingly accepted the doctrine preached by Paul and agreed to set aside that of Jesus (and Moses) believed that they are worshipping Jesus who never taught anybody to worship him. We are compelled to conclude unfortunately, that Paul is like a computer virus let loose into the ‘Hard Disc’ of Jesus’ Message!

It is obvious that unlike Jesus, Paul came to abolish (destroy) the Law of Moses. He did and said the opposite of what Jesus did and said. Paul made a new religion completely different from Jesus’ teachings, but managed to latch his doctrine to that of Jesus and camouflaged it with the name of ‘Christ’, thereby adopting the term ‘Christianity’ – a term quite unknown to Jesus. Paul changed almost every sentence said by Jesus and founded the Pauline Church, which was welcomed by the Gentiles (the Westerners) for its easiness. Nothing is required from one for his salvation, everything is allowed. No duties are imposed, all drinks and all foods are allowed; all deeds and misdeeds are licit, just believe that Jesus died for you – very simple! What a Way-out?

Apart from the questionable and doubtful nature of these schemes of salvation, as offered by the Church, it also has no support of the words of Jesus Christ, around whom the intricate drama has been woven. We can also conclude that the dogma of the atonement is unsound for the following reasons:

- Man is not born in sin. Adam, after the act of disobedience repented and submitted himself completely to God, he and his partner (Eve) got thrown out of Paradise as punishment and their sin was forgiven.

During Noah's flood, all the sinners were wiped out by the flood save Noah and the few pious few that were left to start a new epoch or generation, an indication that a new slate has been set and a new beginning had commenced.

- God does not require any Tax or Toll to forgive any of his creatures. Forgiveness is a part of His Love and Mercy.
- The idea of substitutionary or vicarious sacrifice is a cruel and unjust legacy inherited from paganism.
- By sinning we do not harm God but ourselves, neither do we benefit God by doing good, but ourselves.
- The stain of sin on our souls can be removed by our own repentance and turning away from evil and doing good, not by suffering or through our death or that of other innocent person, whether willingly or unwillingly.
- The doctrine of original sin is a denial of the Justice and Mercy of God. He is Kind, Merciful, Just, and Forgiving.

Ahmed Deedat observed that the Church remains today an integral part of western culture and he said the relationship between the two is an interesting one. What he means is that the Church has greatly accommodated itself to new trends in the culture of the West. The laws which exist in the "Christian" countries of the West, the laws governing Birth and Death, the formation and dissolution of marriage, the rights over property within and outside marriage or in the event of divorce or death, adoption and guardianship, commerce and industry, are not to be found in the Gospels. They are not laws which have been revealed to man by God. They are the fruits of deductive knowledge. They are either inherited from the Roman system of law or are based on the common practice of people over a long period of time, or are statutes erected and amended in accordance with the democratic method, which is the bequest of the ancient Greeks and Romans. No one in today's courts of law can refer to the Gospels as a building authority in his dealings with another man, and have it accepted. (M. Ata'ur Rahim, in *"Jesus a Prophet of Islam"* p.205)

In their attempt to keep the Churches full, some priests have resorted to Music, Pop-groups and Discotheques into their routines to attract young people. The Musical instruments have moved from the Club Houses and Hotels into the Church. Concerts, Exhibitions and Jumble-Sales (Bazaars) cater for the more conservative tasks. Charitable concerns help establish a sense of purpose for those who indulge in them. These attempts to "modernize" the Church and keep it "up to date" are in keeping with the Pauline Church's longstanding tradition of compromise by all means. If it cannot pass on the message of the new 'Jesus Christ' (or is it Paul Christ?) it must at least provide a "useful social function". (M. Ata'ur Rahim).

Chapter FIVE

28 MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM

"Truth cannot be dimmed by being frequently stated, but only gains in clarity and convincingness at every repetition . . . "

This chapter is approached by way of Questions and statements which are reflective of the usually voiced misconceptions about Islam; and in each case a response is given with the hope of clearing the misconceptions.

1. The First Major Misconception about Islam is the belief that it is spread by the Sword and therefore cannot be a religion of peace."

One of the best reply to this misconception that Islam was spread by the sword, is given by a very famous historian by the name De lacy O'leary in the book: **'Islam at the Crossroad'** (London 1923, page 8), where he said that *"History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslim sweeping through the world, forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races, is the most fantastical absurd myths that historians have ever repeated."* Edward Gibbon, also records in his Book, 'Christianity' (1930), that *"A pernicious tenet has been imputed to the Mohammadans the duty of extirpating all the religions by the sword. This charge of ignorance and bigotry",* says the eminent historian, *"of Musulman conquerors and by their public and legal toleration of Christian worship. The greatest success of Muhammad's life was affected by sheer moral force without the stroke of a sword."*

The term 'Islam', is derived from the root-word 'Salaam', which means 'Peace' or 'submission to the Will of Allah' *"Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala"* (SWT). In short, Islam means peace acquired by submitting our will to God. Peace, which Islam literally means, merely symbolizes the conception and contention generally of the religion. Islam is a name given by Allah the Creator Himself, as mentioned in the Qur'an, (Chapter 5:3):

- *"This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor on you, and chosen for you as the way of life, Al-Islam as your religion."* (Qur'an 5:3)

And again Allah said:

- *"Verily the religion acceptable to Allah is Al-Islam"* (Qur'an 2:256).

But to answer the question directly, Islam is a religion which wants to spread peace throughout the world. But there are some people who, for their own benefit, do not want peace to prevail in the world; a satisfaction of their

material desires. To prevent such people, and we know there are such people, we may even need to use force. That is the reason why the police many a times use force on criminals. In short, to ensure that peace prevail in the world, sometimes it may be necessary to use force. Similarly, though Islam is the religion of peace, it sometimes says that when we confront some people who want to prevent the spreading of peace, you can use force to put them in place, so that peace will prevail. As such if Muslims are attacked they have the right as anybody else to resist, and if necessary to fight and overthrow tyranny and oppression so that people can live in freedom and liberty. Of course those who are deliberately trying to wrong or injure others will have to be treated firmly, as we are guardians of each other. With them there is little question of finding common ground or exercising patience, until the injury is prevented or stopped. (Prof. A.Y. Ali – N.3473 - p. 1044).

As such, the Non-Muslim researcher will find instances in the holy Qur'an where the Muslim faithful are directed to take a strong stand, to even fight against those who oppress them. Islam does not exclude the use of force by which to curb evil, if there is no viable alternative. For instance, few years into his ministry, when after repeated efforts at conciliation had utterly failed; circumstances arose that dragged our beloved Prophet Muhammad into the battlefield purely in self-defense. God had to prod him and his followers into taking a stand against oppression thus:

- *“Will ye not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the apostle, and took the aggressive by being the first (to assault) you? Do ye fear them? Nay, it is God Whom ye should more justly fear, if ye believe!” (Q. 9:13)*
- *“O ye who believe! Fight the Unbelievers who gird you about, and let them find firmness in you: and know that God is with those who fear Him” (Q. 9:123).*
- *“Fight them, and God will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you (to victory) over them, and heal the breast of Believers.” (Q.9:14).*

This I believe should be understandable to the fair-minded Christian researcher, in that similar passages can be found in the holy Bible where Jesus (pbuh) was said to have given the command to his followers to take up arms. In the Holy Bible, the book of Luke chapter 22, verse 36, for instance, Jesus must have taken a stand to defend himself and his followers:

- ❖ *“. . . but now he that hath a purse, let him take it and likewise his scimitar, and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garments and buy one.” (Luke 22:36).*

But to input that Jesus came to spread anarchy is something so unbelievable even to the Muslim. Yet we find in the Bible, the Books of Matthew 10:34 &35;

Luke 12:44-52; Luke 22:36-38, that Jesus did not come to spread peace but the “sword”! Hard as it is for the Muslim to believe, Jesus is quoted as saying that:

- ❖ *“Do you suppose that I came to establish peace on earth? I have not come to establish peace but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a young wife against her mother-in-law, and a man shall find his enemies under his own roof.” (Matthew 10:34, 35) (Luke 12:44-52) (Luke 22:36-38).*
- ❖ *“Those enemies, who did not want me to be their king bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.” (Luke 19:27).*

The fact that this is written in the Holy Bible leaves readers very difficult choice.

History hardly bears out the prejudice still common in the West that Islam is to be dismissed as a religion of Scimitar-waving fanatics; rather, it is Europe, the land of the inquisition, the Crusades and the rape of the Americas, which emerges with the more sanguinary record, said Abdul-Wadud Shalabi, (2006, P.19). Muslims ruled Spain for about eight hundred years, but the historical records did not show that the (metal) sword was used to maintain such long rule. However, later on when the Crusaders came to Spain and wiped out all the Muslims, there was not a single Muslim left alive who could open the gate to the city, reported one the chroniclers of the event.

Muslims were the Masters of Arabia for the past 1400 years excepting for the few years the British and the French occupied the area, they have to date continued to rule Arabia for the past 1400 years and still ruling. God be praised! And do you know that today there are 40 million Arabs Coptic Christians? Coptic Christians are Christians who are Arabs at birth for generations. Their fathers and the fore fathers were Christians. In short 40 million Coptic Christians in existence today are Arabs. The Muslims pointed out that if the allegation were true, they would have converted each and every Arab at the point of the sword. These 40 million Coptic Christians or Arabs bear witness that Islam was not spread by the sword.

Prophet Muhammad, they said directed his followers to take the sword in order to spread Islam. Which sword was he talking about? Even if he had wanted, he could not use the metal sword, because he was ordered against it in the Qur’an, in Sura Baqara, Chapter 2 Verse 256; Allah said: *“La iqra fi Deen”*:

- *“Let there be no compulsion in religion; Truth stands out clear from error: . . .” (Q. 2:256a)*

So which sword would that be? The sword which the prophet (pbuh) is talking about is obviously the sword of intellect. As the Glorious Qur’an said in Surat Nahal (the Bee) chapter 16, verse 125:

- *“Invite (all) to the way of the lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path and who receive guidance ”(Q. 16:125)*

It is the sword of wisdom, the sword of ‘*Hikma*’, the sword of intellect.

Mahatma Gandhi, a Hindu, in one of his writings, in the Young India Newspaper wrote to say he was convinced that it was not the ordinary type of sword. He wrote: *“I become more and more convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers and his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle.”* (‘The Young India’; – reproduced in a publication by Yousuf Islam 1995).

His own treatment of his bitterest enemies was the noblest example for his followers. At the conquest of Mecca, he stood at the zenith of his power. The city which had refused to listen to his mission, which had tortured him and his followers, which had driven him and his people into exile and which had unrelentingly persecuted and boycotted him even when he had taken refuge in a place more than 200 miles away, that city now lay at his feet. Similarly, the Quran forbids the Muslims from persecuting the non-Muslim or compelling them to change their religion, allowing them thus the right to freedom of conscience (Q.2:256). Also, the Quran emphasizes that Muslims should not abstain from doing good to non-Muslims, unless they are in a state of active enmity (Q.60:8, 9).

Consequently, alliance with non-Muslims for a just cause is acceptable and actually advocated. An example is the prophet’s treaty with the (practicing) Jews of Medina to defend that city jointly from the disbelievers. This is because Alliance to stop aggression is expressed in the Qur’anic verse:

- *“If two parties among the believers fall into a fight, make peace between them, but if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. But if it complies, then make peace with justice and be fair, for God loves those who are fair.”* (Qur’an 49:9)

Today, the country with largest population of Muslims is Indonesia. So we should perhaps ask those making the accusation, which Muslim army went to Indonesia to convert them with the Sword? India, was ruled by Muslims for 1000 years, if Muslims had wanted they could have converted each and every Hindu at the point of the Sword, but they did not do it. And today, India the second most populated country in the world has more than 80% non-Muslims. These 80 percent non-Muslim Indians, bear witness that Islam was not spread

by the Sword. And I ask further: which Muslim army went to the east coast of Africa to carry out conversion with any sword? Which sword or What sword?

There was a reproduction of an article in the Reader's Digest of 1996 and it gave the statistics of the growth and expansion of the major world religions between 1934 and 1984, the span of 50 years. It gave the names of 3 of the world religions. Islam is number one with 52%, Christianity is one of them. So we ask, which war took place between 1934 and 1984 that converted millions of people to Islam? Which war? Today, the fastest growing religion in Europe and America is Islam. I am asking you, which sword is making these westerners to convert to Islam? Who is forcing them today? Dr. Adam Pierson gave a very good reply; he said: *"The people who worry that one day nuclear weaponry will fall in the hands of the Arabs have failed to realize that the Islamic bomb has already been dropped."* It fell since the day of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

2. The second Misconception implied that the periodic violence involving Muslims is a reflection on some Islamic teachings such as 'Jihad' which they translate as 'Holy War'.

The term 'Jihad' has been enshrouded by a misconception which western propaganda has woven around it. Jihad has been frequently used by the western press over the past few decades to explain directly or subtly to mean "holy war", equating it with the term "Crusade". Muslims are portrayed to be always on Jihad which in propaganda terms simply means 'death to all non-Muslims'. However, this is not the case in Islam. 'Jihad' in Islam means "striving." The Quran has made Jihad one of the highest and the most unavoidable virtues of a Muslim (Q.22: 78; etc.). In its primary sense, Jihad is relentless effort through hard labour to ones utmost capacity. It is an inner struggle within the self, to rid it from debased actions or inclinations and to exercise constancy and perseverance in achieving a higher moral standard. The sanctity of human life is a basic value in Islam. This is as decreed by God even before the times of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. The Qur'an also says:

- *"Take not life, which Allah made sacred, otherwise than in the course of justice."* (Qur'an 6:151 and 17:33). (p. 130)

Commenting on the slaying of Abel, by his brother Cain (the two sons of Adam), God says in the Qur'an:

- *"On that account We ordained for the children of Israel that if anyone slay a person – unless it be for murder or spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people. And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people."* (Qur'an 5:32).

Jihad to the Western world means killing and War. It would seem that those who harbour this misconception confuse the word 'Jihad' with the word

'Crusade'. The term Crusade (both as a verb and noun) has settled in the English language as a noble word, with deeply-entrenched emotive overtones. The truth is that the Crusade, unlike Jihad, was armed campaign, which was waged by the Christian West at the behest of the Pope to win over Palestine from the hands of Muslims (during the period 1096 to 1291 AD). James Joyce wrote thus: *"The crusades were an attempt to directly invade the Muslim heartland. At the time, the justification was to free the Christian sacred places in Jerusalem from the Muslims. For almost three centuries the Christian leaders of Europe sent armies, called Crusaders, to force the Moslems out of the Holy Land in Palestine. And for these centuries the crusades evoked a religious furor that still lingers over the western mind and shapes western cultures in some ways. This continues even though contemporary mainstream Christianity has condemned the crusades and branded it as having been no more than colonialist driven wars that donned the cloak of Christianity while committing such atrocities, so as to be an affront on Christianity itself. . . . (However) After hundreds of years of fighting and destroying, the Christian and Moslems agreed to let each live in his different manner."* (James Avery Joyce: *'The Story of International Cooperation'*, p. 37-38).

Undoubtedly, the Crusade was the most well-known and most devastating religious war in history that was waged by Christianity on the Islamic world. According to a report, countless Muslims not only lost their faith but equally their lives. The Crusades were waged in stages, the first pronounced by Pope Urban II on 26 November, 1096 AD. The second, third and fourth took place in the years 1147 AD, 1188 AD and 1204 AD respectively, while the fifth, sixth and seventh were in 1217 AD, 1228 AD and 1291 AD accordingly. In the name of the Cross, women were raped, content of their womb removed and murdered, children were put to the sword and it is said that blood ran in the streets knee high to the horses. Bambar Gascoigne (1977), quoting from another writer reported that:

"With drawn swords our people ran through the city; nor did they spare anyone, not even those pleading for mercy. If you had been there, your feet would have been stained up to the ankles with blood. What more shall I tell? Not one of them was allowed to live. They did not spare the women or children. The horses waded in blood up to their knees, nay, up to the bridle. It was a just and wonderful judgment of God."(Cohn, Norman *"The Pursuit of the Millennium"* quoted in Bambar Gascoigne: *"The Christians"* (London, Jonathan Cape 1977 - page 113).

As an eloquent proof that this ignominious act had been perpetrated in truth by the Christian West, Pope John Paul II, in March 2000, apologized to the world in general and the Muslims in particular for the years of violence, persecution and blunders perpetrated by the Church in the name of Christ. He

thus sought forgiveness for the sins committed against the non-Christians. (p. VIII).

The Quranic laws relating to international relations between Muslims and non-Muslims and the Quranic ethics of War are based on absolute justice and regard for humanity. The prophet of Islam changed the whole strategy of how wars were fought. The total number of casualties in all the wars that took place during his lifetime, when the whole Arabian Peninsula came under his banner, did not exceed a few hundred in all. In an age of barbarism, the battlefield itself was humanized and strict instructions were issued not to embezzle, not to cheat, not to break trust, not to mutilate, not to kill a minor child or a woman or an old man, not to hew down date palm trees nor burn it, not to cut down a fruit tree, not to molest monks (of whatever religion) and persons engaged in worship. A fore runner of the collective security principle and collective intervention to stop aggression, at least in theory, as manifested in the United Nations charter, is the Quranic reference:

- *“... make peace between them (two fighting groups), but if one of the two persists in aggression against the other, fight the aggressors until they revert to God’s commandment” (Qur’an 49:9).*

3. The third Misconception is that Muslims keep their women in Purdah, and forced them to wear Higab and the Veil to subjugate them.

Non-Muslims assume that keeping the woman in veil and in Purdah is a way of subjugating Muslim women. It is unfortunate that even Muslims don’t know the rights given to women in Islam. The fact of the matter is, Islam is the first religion which gave rights to the woman. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the benefactor that uplifted the status of the woman. This is as confirmed by Gibbs in his book, Mohammedanism. He said *“That his (Muhammad’s) reforms enhanced the status of women in general is universally admitted.”* (H. A. R. Gibbs: 1953, p. 33). And if you analyze the history of how women were treated in the previous civilizations before Islam you will agree.

For example, we learn from the history of Babylonian civilization that if a man murders a woman, the man doesn’t get punished, instead the wife of the man who was murdered gets punished. If you read the history of Greek civilization; the Greeks referred to the woman as the PANDORA – a sign of misfortune. In the Roman civilization, there was an order of nudity and promiscuity among the women; and the women were ill-treated. The women were predominantly used for sex and pleasure. In the Egyptian civilization, the women were regarded as the sign of the devil. In the Arab civilization, before the revelation of the Qur’an, they killed their female children. The moment a female child is born, she is very often put to death. They were actually buried

alive. After the revelation of the Glorious Qur'an, this evil was stopped. Allah said:

- *“When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned – for what crime she was killed; (Q. 81:8-9)*
- *“Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin.” (Q. 17:31)*

God be praised! Allahu Akbar!

After Islam has given equal rights to women, Islam feels it is the duty of the woman to maintain her level of modesty. It is only reasonable for the woman to be expected to make it her duty to maintain her modesty. Normally, if you read books, you find orators and scholars talking about how Islam imposes Higab for the woman. And people ignorantly talk of 'Higab', about the veil as a restrictive force. They always talk about keeping the women in seclusion or Purdah and the veil or Higab etc. "Hear them" they say: "women must wear Higab and Veil they say!" Not knowing that Allah (SWT) in the Holy Quran, first speaks about Higab for the man before the same is ordained for the woman. The Qur'an says in Sura "Nur" Chapter 24 Verse 30:

- *“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them.” (Qur'an 24:30)*

Whenever a man looks at a woman, if any unnatural thought comes to him, he is required to lower his gaze. The prophet, in explaining this verse, said if you unintentionally look at a woman, don't look at her again to feast on her beauty. Another place the Glorious Qur'an speaks about the Higab is Sura 'Nur' Chapter 24 Verse 31,. It says:

- *“And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! Turn ye all together towards God that ye may attain Bliss.”(Q 24:31).*

The practice of seclusion (Purdah) is thought to be observed by Muslim women only and not by Christian women. Yet, according to the Holy Bible, Christian women are to cover their heads while praying or making prophecy, (ref. 1st Corinthians 11: 5-6). Bare-headedness among women has been institutionalized by Christians against the teaching of the Bible.

The reason for Higab for the women in Islam has been discussed in the Glorious Qur'an. The Qur'an says Higab has been prescribed for women so that they can be recognized and it will prevent them from being molested. In Sura 'Ahzab', chapter 33 verse 59, the Quran says:

- *“O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (Jilbab) close around them (when they go abroad). That will be better, so that they may be recognized and not be annoyed (molested). (Q 33:59a)*

Here, Allah is saying that when they go abroad they should put on the ‘Jilbab’ (the cloak), so that they should be recognized and not be molested.

To illustrate the truth of this statement; suppose there are two sisters, who are twins and both equally beautiful; and as they walk down the street, one is wearing the Islamic Higab - complete body covered except the face and the hands up to the wrist (as prescribed) - and the second sister is wearing the western clothe: the skimpy dress (the skirt or the mini). And as they were walking along the street, round the corner, there is a hooligan, a ruffian, who is waiting to make a catch, (ready to tease a girl). Which of the girls do you think the hoodlum is likely to tease? Will he tease the girl who covered herself well (i.e. the Islamic Higab) or will he tease the girl who exposed herself by wearing the mini-skirt; which girl will he tease first? The one wearing the skimpy dress of course! Why? Obviously because she is the one that is enticing him with her semi-nudity and arousing his desires: the one challenging his animal instinct or arousing his sex craving. It is to reduce the occurrences of molestation against women that the use of cosmetic and attachments are also condemned in the Bible, but Christians remain the most users; see 1st. Peter 3:3 – 4, it says:

- ❖ *“Do not use outward aid to make yourselves beautiful through the way you do your hair or the jewellery you put on or the dresses you wear” (1st Peter 3:3-4)*

So the Qur’an is right, the Higab can prevent women from being molested.” To underscore the sanctity of womanhood, Allah had placed a curse on the man that slanders a chaste woman:

- *“Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing, are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter: for them is a grievous Penalty, - on the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions. (Q.24:23-24)*

There are certain categories of people in the presence of whom the Muslim lady can relax the Higab; otherwise, amongst any other people she should maintain the Higab. These are also mentioned in Quran, chapter 24, verse 31. It says:

- *“And say to the believing women . . . that they should draw their veil over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband’s sons, their brothers or their brothers’ sons, or their sisters’ sons, or their women, or their slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they*

should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! Turn ye all together towards God that ye may attain Bliss.”(Q 24:31)

And the criteria for the Higab are given in the Glorious Qur’an, as well as in some Hadith. Basically, the criteria are six in number. The first is the extent that the man’s dress differs from that of the woman. For the man it is from the navel to the knee, while for the woman, the complete body should be covered. The only parts allowable to be seen of a woman are the face and the hand up to the wrist. Some scholars actually say that even that part should be covered. But the bottom line is, the complete body should be covered except the face and the hand up to the wrist. The remaining five criteria are the same for the man and the woman. The second is, the clothe they wear should not be so tight that it reveals the figure. Thirdly, it should not be transparent for others to see through it. Fourthly, it should not be so glamorous as to attract the opposite sex. The fifth is that the clothes should not resemble that identified for other faiths. You cannot wear clothes that have signs which bear the identity of the non-Muslims. And the last is that a Muslim should not wear clothes that will resemble the opposite sex. We find that today people, particularly men, wear ear-rings usually on one ear (which has certain implied meaning) or gold chains and beads on their necks in the name of fashion or modernity.

The western world talks of women liberation. This is nothing but a disguised form of exploitation of the woman’s soul and body. The western society’s claim of uplifting the woman had actually degraded her to the status of a concubine or mistress, or of society butterfly which are mere tools in the hands of sex marketers and pleasure seekers, hidden behind the colorful screen of Art and culture. Islam has uplifted women and had said that it is their duty to maintain the status. In short, Higab was prescribed to maintain the modesty of women not to degrade or subjugate her. Annie Besant (an Indian Writer) in her book: *‘The Life and Teaching of Muhammad’* (Madrass 1932, pp. 25 - 26), has this to say: *“I often think that woman is more free in Islam than in Christianity. Woman is more protected by Islam than by the faith which preaches monogamy. In Al-Quran, the law about woman is more just and liberal. It is only in the last twenty years that Christian England has recognized the right of women to property, while Islam has allowed this right from all times . . . It is a slander to say that Islam preaches that women have no souls.”* (Annie Besant: 1932).

In his Farewell Sermon, Prophet Muhammad said to the congregation: *“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your wives but they also have certain rights. Treat them with kindness and love for you have taken them in trust. Keep always faithful to the trust placed in you and do not sin.”*

4. Non-Muslims ask if Islam is the only Religion recognized by Allah and if Prophet Muhammad's message is universal for all humanity; what happens to the structures of other religions that came before Islam. Do their structures cease to exist?

There is a misunderstanding in this question. Muslims do not consider Islam as a new religion per se. Islam is there since time immemorial, it is there since man set foot on the earth (i.e. Adam, the first man to surrender unto the Will of God – i.e., 'Islam'). And in the view of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad is the last of a procession of messengers; a continuation and not the 'beginner' of Islam. The Muslim in his belief sees the mission of Muhammad as no different from that of Jesus (pbuh). The fundamental beliefs of both Islam and Christianity are the same. God revealed His messages through His chosen servants and envoys to indicate to man the true path of guidance. Jesus and Muhammad (pbut) were both sent to confirm the scriptures that came before them (i.e. the religion). That is, like Moses before them, they were both touch bearers on the same path, albeit at different points in time.

The Message of Islam is for the entire human race. God, in Islam, is the God of all the worlds (*Al-Qur'an, 1:1*) and the Prophet is a Messenger for the whole of mankind. In the words of the Qur'an:

- *"We have not sent thee but as a mercy for all the nations"* (Quran 21:102)

And to . . .

- *"Say: O people! I am sent unto you all, as the messenger of God..."* (Quran 7:158)

And God tells us in the Qur'an, that Muhammad is. . . .

- *"A Warner to all the nations"* (Quran 27:1),

All Prophets from Adam to Muhammad (pbut) were sent with the same message: the total submission of mankind and Jinns to the Will of Allah (SWT). For God said, He did not create man and Jinn except to worship Him. Islam is the true religion of Jesus and all the other Prophets before him, revived by a fresh revelation and perfected to cover all aspects of human actions and relations. It gives fresh guidance to the people of all times and all nations. The Muslim does not speak ill of any of them because he is commanded to believe in all prophets of God. He has the same respect for them as he has for Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). What Prophet Muhammad tried to teach us is that he is a brother to Jesus and Moses, as well as all the other Prophets; and that Abraham is a father to them all. All the apostles and prophets are servants of the One God.

Just as Jesus came to refine and uphold the teaching of Moses, so did Muhammad 600 years after Jesus, not only to refine and uphold but to expand and make it universal. Jesus was a national prophet sent to the nation of Israel

to reaffirm the teachings of Moses. The fact that he gathered around him twelve disciples, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, whom he sent out to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10: 16) and ordered them "not to go unto the way of the Gentiles", is proof enough; otherwise, why would he declare that "Salvation belong to the Jews" (Job 4:22). Muhammad on the other hand, was sent as a universal Messenger and a Warner to all nations of the world (Q. 21:102; Q. 21:107; Q. 7:158; Q. 27:1) But his message is a reaffirmation of the teachings of both Moses and Jesus (the son of Mary) not the Christ created by St. Paul's imaginations.

Following from this therefore, we believe that Islam and Christianity as taught by Christ himself are but one religion only held apart now by dogmas and technicalities which might very well be dispensed with. Furthermore, that the Muslim feels sorry to see how Jews and Christians have in part forsaken and altered the true teaching of Moses and Jesus should not be construed as bigotry. After all, it is not Islam's claim that the religions which pre-dated it lost their immediate appropriateness to their culture when these decayed or were mutated by outside influences (interpolations). (Abdul Wadud Shalabi (2006).

So before all the ancient religions like Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, etc. came into existence Islam was there in essence. Indeed, Islam was the bone marrow of Judaism as well as Christianity. As far as Muslims are concerned, Islam is the religion of all the prophets before Abraham and after. And Allah clearly said in the Glorious Qur'an, Sura Ali-imran, chapter 3, verse 19.

- *"The only religion acceptable in the sight of Allah is Islam."* (Q. 3:19)

And again in verse 85 of the same Sura, the Quran repeated:

- *"that if anyone takes any other religion beside Islam it will never be accepted of him, he'll be among the losers."* (Q. 3:85)

Meaning that essentially, there is only one Monotheistic religion and that is Islam.

The first prophet was Adam (pbuh). After Adam, came Abraham, and Noah. Many other prophets came after them; Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (pbut) are among them. All the messengers that came before Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), were sent only to those people of their times. The message was time-bound. And because Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the last messenger, his message was meant not only for the Arabs alone, it is meant for the whole of humanity (*Al'Alamin*). That is why the Qur'an said in Sura 'Ambiya' chapter 21 verse 107:

- *"We have sent you not, but as mercy to all creatures."*(Q. 21:107)

He was sent as a mercy to all the world, as a mercy to all humanity.

Similarly, all the scriptures that came before now, only four were mentioned by name: the *Torah*, the *Zabur*, the *Injil* (Gospel) and the Qur'an. But in one Sura chapter 13 verse 38, Allah informed us that:

- *"In every age, I have sent revelations."*(Q. 13:38)

From this we can deduce that many books were sent, how many, we do not know nor do we know them all by name, but these four are outstanding.

Research has revealed that all the scriptures that came before the Qur'an have, with the passage of time, been manipulated. There have been corruptions and interpolations. As such, if you apply the rule of logic and science, no scripture will pass the test except the Qur'an. But the beauty of all this is that even though the scriptures of the other religions have been changed, what we realize is that even in the changed form and corrupted state, there are some Jewels. There are many verses which speak about 'Tauhid' - the oneness of Allah (SWT). Also, in their corrupted form, there are parts which say that Prophet Muhammad is the last and final messenger prophesized by Jesus to come after him. Just as Jesus said when parting with his disciples:

- ❖ *"There are many things that I want to tell you, but you cannot bear them now for he who is the spirit of truth shall come, he shall guide you to all truth. He shall not speak of himself, all that he hears shall he say. He shall guide you to truth, he shall glorify me."* (John 16: 12 – 14)

So Jesus Christ (pbuh) was telling his followers that there is a Messenger to come (a human obviously, since he is coming after Jesus, certainly not the Holy Ghost, which is a spirit and had been with Jesus then). He said further,

- ❖ *"If I give you the message now you will not be able to grasp it. But when he (the man who will be the spirit of truth) comes, he should guide you to all truth."* (Isaiah 42:.....)

In short, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had come to complete not to destroy the work of earlier Prophets. So if our Christian brothers really want to be good Christians, they should do an extensive research and meditate on what Jesus Christ (pbuh) said, in the Gospel of John chapter 16 verse 12 – 14 and follow the teaching of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the last of the line of prophethood. For till date, there is no other great prophet the likes of him. And all the giants of Christendom and other world religions (writers, historians and philosophers etc.) have recognized and acknowledged his greatness.

All the scriptures that came before the Qur'an were meant for those people of that time, but because Qur'an is the last and final revelation, it was not sent only for the Arabs alone. The Qur'an in Sura '*Ibrahim*', chapter 14 verse 1, and verse 52, Sura '*Zumur*' 39 verse 41, that it was sent for the whole of humanity. So at this point, the Christian might want to ask: **"Granted that**

Muslims recognize the authenticity of their predecessors' messages, why then is there the need for a new religious dispensation at all?"

In his book '*Islam Religion of Life*' Abdul Wadod Shalabi gave a suitable response to the effect that *"The answer lies in humanity's development as this has taken place through history. The religious system given to the wandering tribes at the time of Abraham was tailored to its age and to a certain set of cultural circumstances. With the advent of classical civilization, this system stood in need of re-articulation in a language intelligible in the Greco-Roman world. And when this world declined and was replaced by new civilizations, the revelation of Islam was inaugurated. In this sense, there is no such thing as a new religion. Eternal truth, in order that it may be fully understood, must present itself differently to different worlds. Thus Islam, despite certain real but superficial differences, is also the faith of Jesus, Abraham, and Moses."*(A. W. Shalabi, '*Islam Religion of Life*', edited by A. H. Murad (2006) p. 8-9).

The Holy Bible itself reveal that 'Christianity', in the sense of the original teaching of Jesus (pbuh) **is not a fresh teaching of a new faith**. The teaching of Jesus (pbuh) was really not new; it arose out of the message of the earlier Prophets therefore it is not new but a clarification of the old message (Mark 1:14, 15). (A.S. Suleman). Thus, it is clear that what Muslims do, is not something new either or strange, as it may seem to the uninformed Christian, but is actually Biblical. It is also clear that 'Islam' was the religion of all the Prophets of God. Not only this, the continuity of the Abrahamic faith till Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is also seen in the Bible, as we find prophecies in both the Old and the New Testaments about the coming of a prophet who we believe to be Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) though this has been refuted by Christian theologians. (Syed R. Ali).

So Islam is the return to a fresh beginning, just as Judaism and Christianity were once, when the Lord makes Himself known to Abram (later renamed Abraham – see Genesis 17:5 of the Bible). He calls him out of idolatry, the worship of the Moon-god, to a new beginning, to a new land (Acts 7: 2-3; Hebrew 11:8). The Quran teaches that Islam is a return to the belief held by Abraham. Muslims trace their religion back to Abraham, to his supreme example of belief in one God, Allah. He is the Lord of the worlds, the God of Abraham, Ishmael, Jacob, the tribes, and the Prophets. In Sura 2:135 of the Quran, the call of Allah and the call through Muhammad is to return to *"the religion of Abraham"*. So on the face of it, therefore, the changing times and human actions may have toyed with facts of history, yet the fact remains that both Christians and Muslims believe they worship the God of Abraham.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) came with the divine message - the Al-Qur'an, - as a light, a guidance and admonition to mankind.

- *“Say (O Muhammad), O Mankind, Lo! I am the messenger of God to you all, the messenger of Him to whom belongeth the Sovereignty of the Heavens and Earth. There is no God save Him.” (Qur’an7:158)*
- *Say: “I am no bringer of new-fangled doctrine among the apostles, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow but that which is revealed to me by inspiration; I am but a Warner open and clear.”(Quran 46:9)*
- *“Say:”It is not for me, of my own accord, to change it: I follow naught but what is revealed unto me: If I were to disobey my Lord, I should myself fear the Penalty of a Great Day (to come)”. (Quran 10:15-16)*

According to the Holy Qur’an, God is the Lord and Cherisher of all the Worlds. He has made no discrimination between nations in sending His revelations. He has raised Prophets among all the nations of the world.

- *“Verily, we sent Messengers before thee, among them are those of whom we told thee and some of whom we have not told thee.”(Qur’an 40:8).*

The same religion was revealed to all Prophets. The Holy Qur’an says:

- *“There is not a nation but a Warner hath passed among them” (Qur’an 35:24).*
- *“And for every nation there is a Messenger” (Qur’an 10:48).*

Thus, Islam is the consummation of all the religions. By teaching Muslims to accept the Prophets of all nations and their scriptures, Islam affirms the unity and universal providence of God and the universality of religious experience. It also seeks to bring together people of all races and creeds into a single all-embracing Faith and Brotherhood. If God had wished He would have created all humanity the same (into one nation) says the Quran. Muhammad amalgamated the religious traditions of the different nations into a single universal faith and culture and united the peoples of all nations and lands into a single world-wide brotherhood. He gave the world a complete code of life for the entire humanity. Similarly, it is credible to assert that Islamic vision, with its legal system and social norms, is truly universal, that it is workable in every land under the sun. This is what makes Islam a universal religion; hence the fastest growing and having the largest following in the world today.

5. Non-Muslims ask if by the pronouncement of the *Kalimatul Shahada*, Muslims are saying that God did not exist before Islam, and does that mean that the God or gods worshipped by other religions preceding Islam no longer exist?

The *Kalimatul Shahada*, is the declaration of allegiance to Allah, which says: “I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.” This

pronouncement, sincerely stated, admits one into the fold of Islam. It is also regarded as the first Pillar of Islam.

Islam is a call to Monotheism, the worship of one God, and the return to belief in Allah. Muslims have “surrendered unto Him.”(Quran 2:136). According to the Quran, Islam is the religion “which is revealed unto us”, that is, to Believers through the revelations given to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and it is the religion “which was revealed unto Abraham.” In its origin, Islam is the belief of Abraham in the unity and oneness of God. This belief in the God of Abraham was handed down from Abraham through Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes. It is also the religion that Moses and all the prophets “received from their Lord.” (Quran 2:136).

When Moses said to his people: *“I stood between the lord and you to declare to you the word of the Lord...”* (Deuteronomy 5:5), the people responded to Moses (pbuh):

❖ *“Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey”* (Deuteronomy 5:27).

So Moses was the Messenger of God, or the mediator of God’s Will. From the above statements in the Bible, we get a creed similar to the ‘Islamic’ creed:

“There is no deity except the One true God, and Moses is Messenger of God.”

We have another fact from Prophet Elijah in the Bible. We read that:

❖ *“... the Prophet Elijah came near and said ‘O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your command’.* (I kings 18:36).

We can paraphrase this also to:

“There is no deity except the one True God, and Elijah is Messenger of God.”

Jesus (pbuh) stated the complete ‘Islamic’ Creed in a single sentence:

❖ *“And this is eternal life, that they may know **you, the Only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent**”.* (John 17:3).

Jesus also confirmed in the Bible that:

❖ *“There is no eternal life for anyone who does not believe in God as the only true God (to be worshipped) and also believe in him (Jesus) as God’s sent (Messenger)”* (John 17:3)

This verse (John 17:3) can also be paraphrased in a way parallel to the present Islamic Creed to read:

‘There is no deity except the One True God, and Jesus Christ is Messenger of God’.

We see then that the proclamation of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) when he announced the '*Kalimat Shahada*' is a repeat of the same old Creed which is:

"There is no deity except Allah (God); Muhammad is Messenger of Allah (God)."

The Message revealed to the prophets of various nations was the same; however, in the course of time it had been misinterpreted and mixed up with superstitions and myths. Later, the religion degenerated into magical practices and meaningless rituals. That is why Dr. Laura Veccia Vaglieri appreciated the positive effect of the advent of Islam. She said: *"Thanks to Islam, Paganism in its various forms was defeated. The concept of the universe, the practice of religion and the customs of social life were each liberated from all the monstrosities which had degraded them, and human minds were made free of prejudice."* (Dr. Laura Veccia Vaglieri).

The Prophet presented a monotheistic religion and purged it of all superstitious errors and meaningless ceremonies. He widened its scope to make it a source of inspiration and guidance to the entire human race and united the people of all races, colours, and nations into one universal brotherhood. Muhammad, the seal of prophethood, appeared as the synthesis of all that came before him, combining human 'littleness' with the divine mystery. He came at a time when almost the entire globe had forsaken the path of piety and goodness, and instead reveled in hedonic cults, superstitions and multiplicity of conflicting creeds and conceptions.

And based on the words of the Qur'an, Muslims tell those who will listen what is written in Sura Al-imran, chapter 3 verse 64,:

- *"Say: "O people of the book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God". If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's will)". (Q. 3:64)*

What this implies is, when we recognize what we have in common we should agree to follow it, what is different we discuss it with a view to understand one another. Let us agree to follow what is mentioned in the Christian Bible, in the Jewish scriptures and the Quran that God is one. He has no partners, no images; idol worship is a deviation, it is like a football kicked off target, and misses the net: a corner kick. All the scriptures mention about the last and final messenger. Then why don't the people of these faiths want to follow the teachings of their scriptures, and believe only in one God and stop the worship of idols. And why don't you believe in the last and final messenger?

6. Another Misconception is implied in the question: Why does Islam believe it is the consummation of all the religions inspite of prevalence of hedonic cults, superstitions and multiplicity of conflicting creeds and conceptions?

The Quranic view of life is grounded in the purest monotheism – the doctrine of the Unity of God. God is one and is indivisible. He has no partner in the godhead. He is the Reality. He is all-in-all. Belief in God demands indivisible loyalty and devotion to Him. This emancipates the human being from all cosmic and earthly bondage and elevates them to the highest pinnacle of glory.

As an extension of its doctrine of the unity of God, Islam believes in the unity of mankind. All mankind was created one, and God’s message to mankind is in essence one: the message of Unity and Truth. But as selfishness and egotism got hold of man, certain differences sprang up between individuals, races, and nations, and in His infinite Mercy, God sent them Messengers with messages to suit their varying mentality. This is to test them by His gifts, and stir them up to emulation in virtue and piety. (Prof. A.Y.Ali, N.1407, p.488). The Quran states:

- *“Mankind was one single nation, and God sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed;” (Q. 2: 213a).*

The Holy Quran teaches that God being one and humanity being one, Divine Guidance in terms of Religion has not been confined to any particular chosen race. Nor could it be different for different communities. Rather, the entire humanity has been blessed with it during the course of human history (Q. 13:7; etc.). This gives the principle of unity in respect of Divine Revelation. Also, this teaching provides the avenue to appeal to the religions of the world for casting off the shells of later accretions, perversions and distortions brought into existence by human ignorance, ingenuity, or vested interests, and returning to the original Message in the light of reason and with the assistance of the Quranic Revelation - finally bringing about the unification of religions in the Divine Truth and paving the way to the unity of mankind.

Taking ‘Life’ in the universe as a whole or ‘life’ as such, all ‘life’ forms a unity. In other words, because the Holy Quran projects the universe as an organic whole which has come into existence through the unitary action of the Divine Will, all the projections and manifestations of ‘life’ exist within a single unitary evolutionary principle. The human life has been distinguished as unique and over-powering because it functions within the framework of Personality. And because the Universe is a unity, knowledge should be pursued in terms of ‘unity’ in the sense that it should form a complete ‘whole’. The different branches of knowledge should be viewed in the relationship of inter-dependence. This leaves no ground in the Quranic view of knowledge for the time-honoured division in terms of ‘religion’ and ‘secular’.

Coming to human beings: God, the One, has originated the existence of the human species on the earth through one original pair of man and woman. Although a man and a woman are different in respect of some of their functions, and consequently and in some of their organs, they have emerged, according to the Holy Quran, from a single primeval self. As such, Man's life before his birth on the earth, in his earthly life, and his life after death – all these three phases form a unity. Indeed, life is tied to a continuous evolutionary process.

This gives us the Quranic principle of unity of mankind, in which all prejudices of race, colour, caste and sex (gender) are obliterated and the only principle of distinction in respect of status is achievement in terms of spiritual and moral character and knowledge. As regards respect for human dignity, it is in the Quranic view, the birth right of every human being. In their basic human nature and status, therefore, they are united in the bond of humanity: They are one and the same, and even in their functions they stand out as complementaries and not as the negation of one another. This statement implies that all the individuals constituting humanity in the past, present and the future possess among themselves such an intimate bond of unity that the benefits and the sufferings of one individual should be conceived morally to be the benefits and sufferings of every other individual. In other words, Man is a social creature in his origin, purpose and destiny. . . . Consequently, both possess equal human dignity. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972, p. 161-163). Just as Allah ordained in the Qur'an, that whoever kills a man, it is as if he has killed the entire mankind; and whoever saves a life, it will be as if he has saved the entire humanity. The Quran states:

- *“For that cause We decreed for the children of Israel that whosoever killth a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind.”* (Quran 5: 32a)

In Islam all men are equal before God whatever their colour, language, race or nationality. It addresses to the conscience of humanity and banishes all false barriers of race, status and wealth. As written in the Quran:

- *“O Humankind! Fear your Lord (in your dealings with one another), Who created you from a single primeval self, created, of like nature, the spouse thereof, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women: - Fear Allah, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and be careful of your duty to Allah and (in respect of) the wombs (i.e. the ties of family relationship); verily Allah ever watches over you.”* (Q. 4:1) (p. 333)

There can be no denying the fact that such barriers have always existed, and still exist today in this so-called enlightened age. When men began to diverge from one another, God made their very differences to subserve the

higher ends by increasing their emulation in virtue and piety, and thus pointing back to the ultimate Unity and Reality.

- *“Mankind was but one Nation, but differed (later). Had it not been for a Word that went forth before from thy lord, their differences would have been settled between them.” (Q. 10:19)*

Islam removed all these impediments and gave the idea of the entire humanity being the one family of God. The Holy Prophet said:

- *“All creatures of God form the family of God and he is the best loved of God who loveth best His creatures”.*
- *“O Lord! Lord of my life and of everything in the universe! I affirm that all human beings are brothers unto one another”.*
- *“Respect the ways of God and be affectionate to the family of God”.*

Islam unites all human beings in love and sympathy as brothers. The brotherhood of Islam transcends all geographical and political barriers. Islam gives the revolutionary concept of the unity of mankind. The Prophet came to unite humanity on the Word of God and make the ‘dead’ live again. Allah, in the Holy Qur’an says:

- *“And hold fast all of you together to the rope of Allah and be not disunited. And remember Allah’s favour unto you; how you were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that you become as brothers by His Grace; and how you were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it. Thus God makes clear His revelations unto you that haply you will be guided.” (Qur’an 3:63) p.70*

The self-same God is the Creator and the Nourisher of creatures, man, woman and child, of all nation, all races, all colours and all cultures. Consequently, the entire mankind is viewed as God’s big family, as given in the Qur’an:

- *“Mankind are one community, and so God sent (unto all sections of them). Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as Warners; and revealed therewith the scripture with truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed.” (Qur’an 2:213)*
- *“All God’s creatures are His family and he is the most beloved of God, who tries to do the greatest good to God’s creatures” (Al Hadith).*

Peace has been established by the constitution of Islam on a basis of fraternity, through the suppression of whatever social, racial or national consideration may be likely to hinder this fraternity. Islam has proclaimed the equality of all men, as in the words of the Prophet: *“An Arab does not rank*

higher than a non-Arab, neither does a white (man) than a black (man) except through piety. The Holy prophet further said:

- *All mankind is a fold, every member of which shall be a keeper or shepherd unto every other, and be accountable for the welfare of the entire fold*”.
- *“Live together, do not turn against each other, make things easy for others and do not put obstacles in each others’ way”.*
- *“The believer in God is he who is not a danger to life and property of any other”.*
- *“He is not a believer who takes his fill while his neighbor starves”.*

On another occasion the prophet said:

- *“These three things also enter faith (a) to help others, even when one is himself economically hard pressed; (b) to pray ardently for the peace of all mankind; and (c) to administer justice to one’s ownself.”*

In short, Islam neither neglects the individual nor the Society; it establishes a harmony and a balance between the two and assigns to each its proper due.

Mahatma K. Gandhi sums up this concept thus: *“For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.”* . . . *“In the face of a common danger, all became one. All forget their differences and began to think of the one and only God. ... With the disappearance of danger disappears also the name of God from their lips.* (Mahatma K. Gandhi – ‘An Autobiography’ 1972, p. 172 & 254)

Abu Hurayrah (in the Sahih of Muslim) reported that Allah’s Messenger said: *“Whoever relieves a believer of one of the tragedies of this life, Allah will relieve him of one of the calamities of the Day of Resurrection. And whoever goes easy on one in Allah will go easy on him in both this life and the next. Furthermore, whoever conceals (the fault of) a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this life and the next. Allah will help His servant as long as the servant helps his brother.”*

7. Non-Muslims have a misconception about the name ‘Allah’ which is why they ask if Allah is the same God they worship and why can’t everybody call Him God instead of Allah?

Muslims prefer to say ‘Allah’ because it is the term used in the Quran; but when Muslims speak to non-Muslims they sometimes use the word ‘God’ knowing very well that the term is not the appropriate or adequate translation of the word ‘Allah’. In the translation of the ‘Kalimatul Shahada’ (*La’ilaha illa*

Allah Muahammadu Rasulallah) also, we use the word God knowing very well that it is not the correct translation.

The word 'Allah' is the Arabic name for God, but it is so unique in that it is not given to being corrupted as the English word 'God'. The word 'God' can be played around with. If you add the letter - 's' - to God it become Gods (plural). There is nothing like plural Allah in Arabic. The Quran tells us in Sura 'Ikhlas' chapter 112 verse 1-2, '*Kulfuwal Lahu Ahad*': "*Say Allah is One and only.*" If the letters: d-e-s-s is added to God it becomes Goddess i.e. female God. And there is nothing like female Allah. You cannot play mischief with the Arabic word 'Allah' but you can play mischief with the English word 'God'. If I add father to God, it becomes Godfather – meaning a guardian-angel. There is nothing like father-Allah, or Abba-Allah in Islam or Arabic. If you add mother to God, it becomes Godmother, there is nothing like Allah-Amami or Allah-Mother in Islam. Allah is a pure Arabic word, you cannot play mischief with it.

8. The question is also asked: Why follow Islam alone if all the religions teach good things? What is the necessity of leaving ones faith?

The answer to the question, why should anyone else choose Islam or why not maintain the religion in which one happens to be born is contained in the question itself. When people decide to embrace a religion other than that in which the circumstances of their birth had placed them, their motives, usually have an emotional, philosophical or social foundation. Just an English Social Reformer, Hussain Rofe, in answer to similar question said: "*My temperament demanded a creed which could meet the demands of the last two of these categories (i.e. philosophical and social foundation), and I did nothing less than decide to examine minutely the claims, scriptures and results produced by all the world's chief religions*".

While I agree that most of the religions teach good things basically, i.e. they teach us to do good e.g., not to steal, not to cheat, not rape or commit adultery etc., Islam of course says the same, except that Islam shows us a way to achieve a state of goodness. What is meant here is that all the religions say we should not rob (steal). Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and others, all say the same thing. If so, then what is the difference between Islam and the other religions? The difference is that Islam shows you a way to achieve a state in which people will not need to steal or rob. On the economic front, Islam has a system of 'Zakat' (charity or poor-due) which requires every rich person who has a saving, the value of which is more than 80 grams of gold, to give two and a half percent (2.5% or one fortieth) of the excess wealth (i.e. whatever remains above the 80 grams) in charity every lunar year. If every rich person (male & female) religiously gives out zakat, the number of poor people who are

desperately in need will reduce greatly and poverty will be eradicated from this society. There will not be a single human being who lives within the society that will die of hunger.

Subsequently, as a follow up, i.e. after establishing this economic system, if any person should willfully steal or rob, he should be punished. The glorious Qur'an says, in Sura Al-Ma'ida, chapter 5 verse 38, *"As to the thief, be it a man or woman, chop up his or her hands as a punishment from Allah."* The Westerner sees chopping of the hands in this age of science and technology (in this 21st century) as barbaric. We know that America today happens to be one of the most advanced countries in the world, yet a country which has one of the highest rates of theft and robbery in the world. So we ask the Westerner, if today America should implement the fiscal regime of the Islamic Shariah Law, requiring that every rich person who has a saving of more than (the value of) 80 grams of gold, to pay 2.5 percent after saving it for one whole year, every year, in charity. After which the Law will require that if any man or woman robs, he or she gets his wrist chopped off, within the legal provision, as a punishment. So based on this, do you think the rate of robbery and theft in America will increase or remain the same or decrease? Which of the three? It will decrease of course! It is a practical law. You implement the Shariah you get results. You implement the law, you don't have to be a Muslim country, you implement it in USA, Europe or anywhere else, you will also get result.

This is the reason why we say besides teaching good things Islam shows you the way to achieve goodness. And many people think that if you go to Saudi Arabia where this law is in practice, every second person you come across will have a chopped hand. There may be some people whose hands have been chopped off, but it is not as common as you would think. The law is strict enough to restrain a would-be thief, such that a person will think ten thousand times before robbing. And if Saudi Arabia relaxes or stop this law, you will find that robbery and theft will immediately be on the increase. The soundness of the security in the country is not as a result of the police being so intelligent, but the strictness of the law and its application. It is the law of Allah (SWT). If you relax this law, even in that country, theft and robbery will go on the increase. It is a practical law, you implement the Shariah (sincerely) you get results.

Let me give you one more example. Most of the religions agree that molesting a girl is wrong, raping a girl is wrong, Hinduism says so, Judaism says so, and Christianity as well as Islam say the same. So what is the difference between Islam and the other religions? The difference is that Islam shows you a way of how to achieve a state in which people will not have to molest or rape any woman. The Islamic Sharia which is based on the Quran, made it compulsory that women should wear Higab and veil themselves to prevent them from being molested. It also requires any man who looks at a woman, to lower his gaze. Women are placed strictly under the custody of their male

relatives until they marry. Men are given the option of marrying two or three or four wives if they can do justice to them all, but if they can't, should marry only one. This is obviously a means of reducing the incidence of female molestation. The Shariah provides that if a (married) man rapes a woman he should be given capital punishment – death penalty. But non-Muslims again say: What capital punishment? In this age of science and technology! Islam is a barbaric religion; it is a merciless way of life.

So, the non-Muslim is asked, suppose (God forbid!) someone rapes your mother or your sister and supposed the rapist is brought before you, what punishment will you give him? And believe me, all of them, hundred percent, said they will kill him. So I then asked them, if someone rapes your mother you want to kill him, when somebody rapes someone else's mother and Islam declares death penalty on him, you say it is a barbaric law. And I ask why the double standard?

America has been looked upon as the most advanced country in the world today. Do you know that according to the statistics of America, it is the one country that has the highest rape cases in the world? In 1990 according to FBI report, everyday 1750 cases of rape took place. In 1996, six years later, US department of justice say that everyday 2713 cases of rape took place. This is obviously an indication that the American male has become bolder. And why is this? Let's look closely at the statistics. The statistics say, every 30 seconds, one rape is taking place in the USA. Of the rapes that took place in 1990 only 16% were reported. But the report continues to say, out of the 16% that was reported only 10% were arrested. That means 1.6% of the rapists were arrested, and out of that, 50% were let free. That again means, only 0.8% (zero point 8) underwent the trial. Fifty percent were left to go free before the trial. This also means that if one commits 125 rapes, the chances of his undergoing trial is only once. This seems like a very good gamble for a would-be rapist. If he rapes 125 girls the possibility of his getting punished is once. And the statistics tell us that the Judge said, those who commit rape for the first time (first time offenders), will be given a one-year sentence. More than 50% get one year imprisonment, though the law says seven years rigorous imprisonment. But the judge is lenient, you know first time offence are virtually patted on the head as it were.

So let me put this question again, if the Islamic Shariah as it concerns the social code is implemented in the USA which requires any man who looks at a woman, to lower his gaze, while the woman should be properly covered, complete body covering except the face and hand up the wrist. After which if any man rapes a woman he should be given capital punishment – death penalty. So I ask you the question will the rate of rape in USA increase? Will it remain the same? or will it decrease? I presume that you will agree that it will decrease. It is a practical law. You implement the Shariah you get results. That is the reason why one country that has recorded the least crime is the Saudi Arabia. This

clearly illustrate why it is said that Islam, besides teaching good things, it shows you a way to achieve the goodness. The other religions are more theoretical, while Islam is a practical religion. If you care for humanity, and want evil to be destroyed in this world, you have to accept Islam.

9. Another misconception has to do with freewill. They ask: Where is Freewill if everything is the will of Allah?

This question is asked not only by non-Muslim, but by Muslims alike. It is talking about 'Qadar' (destiny). In his argument the non-Muslim asks: "Where is man's Freewill if it is mentioned in his destiny that he is going to rob, and he robs, who then is to blame?" The apparent answer obviously, will be placed at 'God's door'! Or he asks, if it is mentioned in my destiny that I am going to commit murder, and I commit murder, who should be blamed? Obviously such a person will say God is to blame. So he asks: Why do I get to be punished for it, if it is the will of Allah or if it is mentioned in the destiny and joining good together, then where is the freewill?

Perhaps we should do well to ask what is Free-Will?

Freewill or Freedom of Will consists in the independence of the will of the moral agent (Man) from all internal restraint and external constraint in the choice of motive in the situation of moral conflict. Freedom of Will is a fact, and is known to us intuitively. Indeed, it is deeply ingrained in our consciousness, on account of which we insist on moral responsibility and believe in the validity of moral approval and condemnation. Although affirmation of the Freedom of Will, taken by itself, may render morality possible, the realization of the moral ideal remains inconceivable without, among other verities such as belief in the creation of the world essentially as moral order, belief in the existence of God, and belief in life-after-Death or Life-Hereafter. But does the Holy Quran affirm Freedom of will or not?

Yes! It may be observed at the very outset the Holy Quran affirms the human Freedom of Will in clear terms. Its basic statement in this connection is:

- *"We (God) did indeed offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but Man undertook it, - he is indeed very unjust (to himself in not fulfilling his responsibility), - (with the result) that Allah has to punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Unbelievers (literarily: 'Polytheists'), men and women: for Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful."* (Q. 30:72 – 73).

Speaking of the acceptance of this Trust by Man, Sir Muhammad Iqbal observes: "In the case of Man in whom individuality deepens into personality, opening up possibilities of wrong doing, the sense of the tragedy of life becomes much more acute. But the acceptance of selfhood as a form of life involves the

acceptance of all the imperfections that flow from the finitude of selfhood. The Quran represents man as having accepted, at his peril, the trust of personality which the heavens, the earth, and the mountains refused to bear.” (*Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, London 1934, pp. 121 – 122). (p. 339).

What we can understand from the Holy Quran is that, the human Free-will is *sustained* by the Divine Will and the Divine Will assists the human being in the light of the motive chosen by the human will, whether the motive is for good or for evil. (Dr. Ansari 1972, p. 432). The Quran says:

- “*Verily, this (i.e. the Quran) is no less than a Message to (all) the Worlds (i.e. it is universal) – unto whomsoever among you wills (himself) to go straight: but ye shall not will except as Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds Wills.*” (Q. 81:29)

According to Maulan AbdulMajid Daryabadi, this verse repudiates the doctrine of Karma and determinism, in all its forms and varieties. (Maulan AbdulMajid Daryabadi – p.938, n.167)

Man is however, a created being as such he cannot be independent of his Creator in anything. Even Free-will is not possessed by him of his own right, unlike his Creator, Who owns it in His Own right. Man’s free-will has been conferred as an element of his personality by his Creator. Hence, the human-will functions as a ‘state within a state’. In other words, Man’s limited freedom functions within the *absolute* Freedom of the Creator’s Will. The Creator’s Will is not, and can never be capricious, irrational, arbitrary and unjust, and never interferes in the freedom of human will. How the human free-will functions as free-will while remaining within the Will of God is a question that relates to an ultimate fact which is beyond the powers of human reason to comprehend.

However essentially good though human nature is, man has been created to pursue moral struggle and, therefore, while he is capable of scaling the loftiest height of perfection adequate to his nature, he can also sink to the lowest of the low in creation, as it has been said:

- “*Thereafter (i.e. in consequence of Man’s wrong use of his opportunities and misuse of his freewill) We (as the Author of the Universal Scheme) abase him (to be) the lowest of the low (- he himself having destroyed his original purity and goodness), - save those who believe and practice righteousness. Theirs shall be a reward unfailing.*” (Q. 95: 5-6)

This double capacity – for moral success and for moral failure – is grounded in the conflict with which human nature has been endowed, as the Holy Quran says:

“ . . . *By the Soul and Him Who gave it proportion and order, and inspired it with the wickedness thereof (which comes through the Devil and is*

developed to a responsible human act, by man's own freewill); And the Piety thereof (which comes through the Angels and is developed to a responsible human act by Man's own freewill), truly he succeeds that keeps it pure and he fails that corrupts it." (Q. 91: 1- 10) (p. 334)

The Quran holds that Allah determines human's path for both good and evil. Sura 14 verse 4 states: *"Then Allah sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will."* This strong statement is repeated in Surah 16: 93 and Surah 74:31 and throughout the Qur'an. It is perhaps unfortunate that some (non-Arabic) translators of the Holy Quran have wrongly translated the word "straying" as "leads astray." Commenting on this verse (Q.16:93), Sheikh Abdullah Yusuf Ali says: God's Will and Plan, in allowing limited free-will to man is not to force man's will, but to give all guidance, and leave alone those who reject the guidance, in case they should repent and come back into grace. Incidentally, we see in the Bible that: *"God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy and He hardens whom He wants to harden (Romans 9:18).*

In understanding this verse, some people fall into the error of believing that human beings adopt the right and wrong paths, not on the basis of their free-will but because it is so willed for them by God. This means pure determinism. But when we read the above verse (Q. 16:93), or any other verse, we find that to deduce determinism from such verses is absolutely unfounded (baseless). Allah determines the present and eternal destiny for good or ill of human beings. This is His immutable will. There are, however, certain verses in the Holy Quran which, if read unintelligently and without full reference to other connected verses, might give the wrong impression to the superficial reader that God guides and leads astray; and that He rewards and punishes human beings arbitrarily, and that, therefore, the human will enjoy no freedom whatsoever. If we understand the meanings and implications of all such verses properly, we find that they nowhere negate the freedom of human will in the manner and in the measure that it has been conferred on Man by God. Below are some such typical verses, along with their proper connotations and explanations.

Here we may take notice of a verse wherein Divine Will has been mentioned with reference to the existence of evil. The verse is: *"If Allah had willed (i.e. if it had been God's Plan), they would not have taken false gods" (Q. 6:107).* But this verse does not say that God assists evil. It only says that, on the one hand, He has the power to eliminate evil, and that, on the other hand, He does not interfere when the wrong-doers adopt evil through their freewill. This point has been made emphatically clear in another verse which reads:

- *“And they say: if it had been the Will of (God) Most Gracious, we would not have worshipped these (idols). They have no knowledge thereof: they are only guessing.”* (Q. 43:20) (p.342 – footnote).

With regard to these two verses, it may be noted that the Holy Quran refers all actions to God, because according to it, nothing can occur outside His knowledge and Power. It is also important to note that the sealing of the hearts by God is *not the cause* of disbelief *but follows* (i.e. the result of) the deliberate rejection of faith (p. 344). At another place, we have been told; that:

- *“If Allah so willed (i.e., if it had been the Divine Plan), He could make you all one People. But He leaves straying* whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases: and ye shall certainly be called to account for all your actions.”* (Q. 16: 93).

The question to ask at this point is: Does God leave straying anyone for no fault of his, and does He guide anyone for no merit on his part? The Quranic answer to this question is No! It says clearly enough:

- *“Allah will leave to stray the wrong-doers (in consequence of their misuse of free-will); and Allah does what He wills (i.e. His Will is not in subjection to the will of anybody).”* (Q. 14:27).

It means that, inspite of being All-Powerful, God leaves straying only those who earn it through their transgression, which is based on their free-will. And we are told:

- *“And He (i.e. Allah) guides unto Himself (i.e. to the Right Path) those who turn to Him in penitence.”* (Q.13:27)

But in all cases, in so far as we are given the choice, we shall be called to account for all our actions. ‘Leaving to stray’ does not mean that we can do what we please. Our personal responsibility remains.” (Dr. Ansari p.345 – footnote 2 - (op. sit. P.682, n. 2133)). Orthodox Islam teaches the absolute predestination of both good and evil, that all our thoughts, words and deeds, whether good or evil, were foreseen, foreordained, determined and decreed for all eternity, and that everything that happens takes place according to what has been written for it. This is because “God ‘is the irresistible’ (Q. 6:18). The Quran therefore warns:

- *“Do what ye will (i.e. act as you choose in accordance with your free-will). Verily, He (God) sees (clearly) all that ye do.”* (Q. 41:40)
- *“Say: The Truth is from your Lord; let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject it.”* (Q. 18:29)
- *“... a warning to humankind, - to any of you that chooses (through his will) to go forward (towards Good) or to lag behind. . . .”* (Q. 74: 36-37)
- *“That is the Day of Certainty. Whosoever therefore wills, let him betake unto his Lord a resort.”* (Q. 78:39)

However, God says in the very early part of the Holy Quran:

- *“As to those who reject faith (deliberately), it is all the same to them. Whether thou warn them or does not warn them, they will not believe (because they have no will to believe). Allah has set a seal on their hearts (by their being inured to disobedience and disbelief), and on their hearing and on their eyes is a veil; and unto them shall be a torment mighty (as a just retribution for the misuse of the freewill conferred on them by God).” (Q. 2: 6-7)*

What you should understand here is, if Allah wants he can really change things. For example, if in a Mathematics examination the teacher gives a paper which states $2 + 2$ is equal to what? Now while he is supervising the examination, some students write $2 + 2 = 5$. The teacher will not correct it, because it is not for him to correct it. But if the teacher went ahead to correct it, you will say the teacher is unjust. However, the teacher went ahead to correct it and says: “Don’t write five, write four.” Wouldn’t the other students raise objection or call the teacher’s attention that this is an examination or ask why he is interfering? So if Allah wants He can change your destiny, but because He has given you freewill, he is letting you take your decision. That is why Allah said this life is a test for the hereafter. As the Quran says in Sura ‘Al Mulk’ chapter 65 verse 2.

- *“Allah created death and life to test who is good in deeds.”*

So this life is a test for the hereafter. Allah is giving you and showing you the rules: what is good and what is bad. Then He has given you Freewill, it is your choice. Allah does not interfere in your freewill, but He can if he wants. The Qur’an says:

- *“... even a leaf cannot fall without the permission of Allah.”*

Thus, whatever happen, happens with Allah’s knowledge, but the decision is ours. And based on that, you will be rewarded or punished accordingly. The Will of Allah determines one’s final destiny, for Allah said:

- *“And if We had so willed, We could have given every soul its guidance, but the word from Me concerning evil-doers took effect: that I will fill hell with the jinn and mankind together.” (Quran 32:13).*

Man is hence free to either climb the heights of spirituality or on the other hand remain at the bottom of the ladder of spiritual immorality by becoming a greedy slave of his own passion who indulges in vices. The Quran condemns ‘love of this world’s life’ (Q.79:38-39; etc.), invites repeated attention to the emptiness of the pleasures of worldly life (Q. 3: 185; etc.), forbids all vain spending and waste (Q.7:31; etc.) which is the basis of luxurious living, castigates the infidels for ‘loving wealth’ (Q. 89:20), commands the Muslims not to follow the behests of their animal self (Q. 4:135; etc.),and finally invites them

to a life dedicated to the love for God (Q. 2:165), which should manifest itself in the love for fellow-beings (Q. 2:177; etc.). This makes moderation the ideal in respect of Islamic life, as exemplified at its highest in the life of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), and practiced by all those who have walked in his footsteps (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972). The Quran has laid down the 'limits prescribed by Allah' and has commanded the members of the Islamic society to adhere to the requirements of those 'Limits' (Q. 2:187; etc). It has thus channalised human life, and thereby subjected it to discipline. Again: it has emphasized consequential activity (Q. 59:18). But a truly consequential activity is not possible without proper planning, which, in its turn, necessitates disciplined undertaking. Moreover, the principle of 'discipline' forms the very soul of Islamic conduct. (Q. 24:51; etc.).

Hence, we are led to believe that Man is morally free; and he must therefore be ever conscious of this fact. And The Prophet was inspired to say:

- *“And say: “the truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills, can either believe, and whoever wills can disbelieve . . . “ (Quran 18:29).*
- *“Who receiveth guidance, receiveth it for his own benefit: who goeth astray doth so to his own loss: No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another: nor would We visit (any) with Our Wrath until We had sent an apostle (to give warning). (Q. 17:15).*

10. Did Allah create us for His sport i.e. using us as puppets and watching us from up there like a Master-puppeteer? Why is Allah testing (us) human beings?

According to the Holy Quran, all the creatures of Allah, Human, Animals, Mountains, Trees, etc., are all submitters to the will of God. And the Quran says that human beings are the best creation of the Almighty God. We are the best creation because He has given us freewill. Freewill here means the ability or capability to either obey or disobey Him.

It is thus apparent that man in the Quranic view is neither a slave to inexorable fate, nor completely self-determined because every sentiment, idea and desire of a human being is thus conceived as being pre-destined. It is his inherent capability to obey the immutable Law and choose to tread **either the path** of rectitude or sin that makes him a free human being. For God asks:

- *“Does he (Man) think nobody sees him? Haven't We made for him a pair of eyes? And a tongue, and a pair of lips? And then shown him the two paths (of Good and Evil)? (Quran 90:7 - 10)*

It is therefore provable that man is created with free-will which he can always employ positively or negatively. The free-will is a trust from God; and equipped with it, man can indeed modify the condition in which certain behaviors take place. Personality and behavior are not solely determined by

forces and influences beyond the control of the individual. Consequently, man is held responsible for his willful actions.

- *“Every soul has the consequence of its own action; no bearer of burden can bear the burden of another. Your goal as the ultimate is Allah. He shall tell the truth of what you disagree upon.” (Quran 6:164)*

And the Bible said:

- ❖ *“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done.” (Colossians 3:25)*

Angels are also creation of the almighty, but they were not given freewill, they always obey God. And because freewill has been given to Man, we have a choice to obey and follow the path of righteousness or disobey and follow evil: Good or bad, it will be our choice. If we obey God, we become higher than the angels. And if we disobey God, we become lower than the angels. We become like Satan.

It was related in the Quran that when God decided to put some of His creatures to the test, He offered it to different kinds of His creatures to register which of them will volunteer. We have seen in Sura ‘Hashar’ chapter 59 verses 20-24, the Quran says, God Almighty offered all other creations: the heaven, the earth, the mountains, etc. to undergo the test and all declined and they were allowed to be. The Quran said, human being the fools that they are said, “We accept, we will undergo the test.”

Perhaps tempted by the promise God made to humans led Man to accept the test. The promise being that when we succeed and pass the test, we can be superior to the angels. And being human, we forgot the consequence of falling below the angels, like Satan, if we fail. We human being are the ones who said we don’t want to just pass over the chance, we want to get good marks, and we offered to undergo the test. Being a new creation of Almighty, God gave us the free will, and accepted to give us a chance to get distinction. We were fools of course not to just let the chance pass. So now it is on you and I to obey the commandments of Almighty God or not. It is left to us whether we choose the right path or the wrong path; whether we choose good or evil. Those who choose well get distinction and it is they that will be deserving of reward with paradise; those who fail, get perdition and be thrown into Hell.

We have also been told in the Quran:

- *“And He it is Who has made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth and has raised some of you over others in degrees, that he may try you in the gifts ye receive. Verily, thy Lord is Swift in punishing: yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Q. 6:165)*

This verse indicates that the very structure of human society, built up as it is, on human inequality in respect of talents and functions, has been made by God. In its very nature, as to form the ground for moral struggle by the individuals, in whatever degree they may have received the different Divine Gifts. Morality and social life have been affirmed thus, by the Holy Quran, to be interdependent. And because Man is a moral being in his very creation, he is also a social being by that creation. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972)

11. What is the justification for some people being born with handicaps (congenital defects), while others are born rich and healthy etc. Wouldn't be an indication that God is not just?

Now you ask what explanations does Islam have, why some people are born healthy, others with congenital defects and disease; some rich, and others poor? From the study of the Quran, we find in several places, e.g. in Surah An'am chapter 8 and Sura Baqara chapter 2 verse 155, it says that:

- *"Allah (SWT) has made your children and your wealth as a test for you".(Q. 2:155)*

For Allah (SWT) in His infinite Wisdom test different people in different ways. For example, in a school situation, depending upon the test, if the examination paper is difficult, it is justified by making the marking lenient; and if the examination paper is easy, the marking is strict. Similarly, God Almighty tests different people in different ways.

- *"Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves; and ye shall certainly hear much that will grieve you, . . ." (Q. 3:186)*

Normally, the test goes on every year and keeps on changing; you don't have the same questions all the time. If you have the same questions over and over again, then where is the test?

So, depending on the test you undergo, for example, one of the pillars of Islam is for anyone who is rich and has accumulated enough wealth, more than 85grams of gold, he/she has to give out zakat of 2.5 percent of the excess in charity. We now look at two situations; one is a rich man who has to give out Zakat to the poor. The second is a person who is poor, because of which he is not obliged to give Zakat. As such, in the zakat category of the test, the poor gets a hundred out of a hundred. The rich man on the other hand, may say: "Fine, I am a rich man, I may have one million dollars, I will give zakat of only a hundred dollars." May be he gets ten marks out of a hundred, maybe he gets 50 marks, and perhaps he gets zero mark. But the poor man gets a hundred out of hundred marks because due to his economic status he is exempted to pay Zakat. So for the Poor, there is no test of wealth but for the lack of it. In other

words, how much patience he has been able to bear. That is what will pass or fail him. Some go to the extent of killing themselves due to poverty, and that is a grievous sin.

But for the Rich man there is test of wealth. You may think, God has blessed the rich man. But the thing is that according to what our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: *"It is more difficult for the rich man to go to Jannat (Paradise) than a Camel to pass through the eye of a Needle."* We may think it is a blessing (to be wealthy), but it is actually a test. For the rich man who has got a big mansion with many rooms, it is easy for him to observe 'Hijab' (seclusion) i.e. have some privacy between him and other members of his family (which will give him freedom to worship Allah in solitude and peace). But this is difficult for the poor who, on the one hand, stays in one room with his family and therefore difficult for him to observe Hijab. So depending on the situation and conditions, it is sometimes difficult, sometimes easy. The suffering that comes our way has a purpose, so also the abundance or happiness that we enjoy, they all have their purpose.

That Man is a being, created for struggle has been directly emphasized in the following verses:

- *"Verily We have created Man into toil and struggle."* (Q. 90:4)
- *"Allah intends to lighten your (difficulties): For man has been created weak (i.e. weak in flesh, weak in judgment and weak in respect of overpowering desire)." (Q. 4:28)*

This means that even if man is supreme in creation, he is a finite being – an imperfect being – and his powers cannot be unlimited. The Holy Quran says: *"Man is weak and susceptible to error"* as such he must suffer from definite shortcomings and weakness. Man's need for God arises in his weakness and shortcomings, which are found in him as definite facts of his life. Moreover, he is a created being and as such, dependent on his Creator: he needs help from the Creator. In this respect, Man needs Divine Grace. The Quran says:

- *"That the People of the Book may know that they have no power whatever over the Grace of God; that (His) Grace is (entirely) in His Hands, to bestow it on whomever He wills. For God is the Lord of Grace abounding."* (Q. 57:29)

To obtain this Divine Help and Grace and to save himself from pessimism, despair and frustration, man should by nature be a worshipping being – namely, faith in God and quest for God should be ingrained in his nature.

This is so, because common experience suggests that during the short period of human life on earth, virtue is not adequately rewarded. Nay, quite often the virtuous actually suffer. Further, it is observed that in many cases the evil-minded persons appear not to suffer the consequences of their evil acts.

The moral consciousness demands that, to meet the consummation of the moral struggle, and to realize the reciprocity of virtue and success, and of vice and punishment, man must survive after his death.

Virtue might give the appearance of being frustrated in this life, and vice might appear in certain circumstances to gain the upper hand, and this may cause suffering to the virtuous; but on the Day of final Accountability in the Life-hereafter, the virtuous shall be more than fully rewarded for their righteous life, and they shall have the upper hand. So says the holy Quran:

- *“Those who are god-fearing (i.e. cultivate and practice righteousness out of respect for Divine Pleasure) shall be (triumphant) above them (i.e. the Unbelievers or the unrighteous) on the Day of Resurrection.”* (Q. 2: 212).

12. How can Islam logically justify Life-After-Death or prove that there is the Hereafter?

We may start by noting that belief in the life-hereafter forms an article of Islamic Creed in the Holy Quran. Without active belief in Life-After-Death it is impossible for anyone to be a Muslim. Indeed, the Quranic Guidance can benefit only him who, among other religious verities, believes in the life-hereafter, as for instance, the following verse:

- *“Your creation (in the past) and your resurrection (in the future) are only as though of one soul.”* (Q. 31:28)
- *“Verily, We shall give life to the dead (on the Day of Resurrection), and We record that which they send before (i.e., their own deeds, good or bad), and of all things have We taken account in a clear Book (of evidence)”* (Q. 36:12)

Another verse in the very early part of the holy Book, clearly proclaims:

- *“This Book, whereof there is no doubt, is a guidance unto the god-fearing (or, Pursuers of Righteousness with Faith in God – namely those) who believe in the Unseen (Reality), and establish prayer, and out of what We have provided for them spend (for the well-being of others); and who believe in the Revelation sent to thee (O Muhammad!) and (sent) before thy time, of the (Life) Hereafter they have firm conviction. These are on the right path guided by their lord, and these are the successful (in this life as well as in the next).”* (Q. 2: 2-5) (p.252)

Again Allah says also, in Sura Ali-Imran, chapter 3 verse 185:

- *“Every soul shall have a taste of death and the final recompense will be on the Day of Judgment. Whosoever is saved from the hellfire, and enters the garden: Paradise, he has achieved the objective of the world. For this world is goods (material) and chattels of deception.”*

- *“Every Soul shall have a taste of death: And We test you by evil and by good, by way of trial. To Us must ye return.” (Quran 21:35).*

It may be observed here that Life-after-death is not the condition of the realization of the moral ideal but of all spiritual ideals, as affirmed by the Holy Quran. Moreover, utmost effort for the realization of the moral ideal cannot be invited from the human beings without faith in Life-after-death. With belief in survival after death, it will be easier not only to preserve the morals but also to lay down one’s life for the sake of the ideal. Indeed, belief in the Life-Hereafter is so important in the estimation of the Holy Quran that it has been mentioned therein at many places conjoined with belief in God (e.g. in chapter 2:228; 2:264; 3:114; 4:59; 9:29; 9:45; 9:99; 65:2; etc.), which indicates that, according to the Quranic evaluation, it stands immediately next to belief in God in importance. For human success depends in its turn on proper approach to life. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972; p. 352).

Now we look at human societies and the people who live their full lives in what we call wrong doing. They engage in evil or sin, and seem to thoroughly enjoy it, but at the end they die. Others, by contrast, spend their lives struggling for truth, fighting for justice and suffering in the cause of their ideals, and finally they die. Can that be all? Can death be the ultimate end to both kinds of life? Something in our innermost being refuses to accept it. If death were the end of the story, then human life would be in conflict with that delicate balance that pervades the whole universe. Where then is man’s accountability? The only conclusion, therefore, is that death cannot be the end. The Glorious Quran states, in Sura Al’Mulk, chapter 67 verse 2 that:

- *“Allah created death and life to test which of you is good in Deeds.”(Q. 67:2)*

If that is the case, then Death cannot be followed by void, but by another life in which balance is restored and accountability fulfilled. This is the hereafter that genuine religions tell us about, when people will be judged by God, the Ultimate Judge, on the Day of Judgment.

Belief in the ‘Hereafter’ relates to the following basic Quranic concepts:

- a) God is the Moral Sovereign of the Cosmos;
- b) The Cosmos is a Moral Order;
- c) Man has to function on the earth as a moral being with a spiritual base;
- d) Man has to submit his credentials to the Moral Sovereign, Who is actually the Over-All Sovereign, in order to pass to higher level of existence;
- e) Hence, he has to face Final Accountability on the Day of Judgment, which will occur when the ‘heavens and the earth’ have passed through the portal of ‘death’ into new dimensions of existence (Q.14:48)

And Belief in Resurrection after death has its basis in the following:

- a) It lifts up the human vision beyond earthly existence and thus crushes the attitude of earth-rootedness which is the mother of all moral ills;
- b) It bestows on human values absoluteness, as opposed to expediency, and renders the moral struggle worth-while, meaningful and genuinely consequential;
- c) Hence, it provides the enthusiasm for moral struggle, in the face of all obstructions and frustrating situations;
- d) It supplies the basis for the construction of the reward of moral struggle;
- e) It establishes the rational ground for the highest sacrifice in the service of all that is good - including the sacrifice of life, which for a genuine believers in God and Resurrection is an aspiration of life. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972; p.130-131).

Every human action, whether virtuous or vicious, is recorded and preserved by Divine Arrangement. We are told:

- *“He (i.e. Allah) knoweth the unseen and that which is open; He is the Great, the Most High. It is the same (to Him) whether any of you conceal his speech or declare it openly; whether he lie hid by night or walk forth freely by day. For each (one) there are angels in succession, before and behind them: they guard him with Allah’s command.”* (Q. 13: 9-11)
- *“And assuredly We have created Man and We know whatever his soul whispers unto him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein,”* (Q. 50: 16)

That every action must reach its reward or punishment is the immutable Law of God, ingrained, so to say, in the very constitution of the universe and in the very destiny of Man. The recording and preservation of human words and deeds is done by the angels appointed by God for this purpose. Thus says the Quran:

- *“By no means! Aye, ye belie the Requital. But verily, over you are appointed (angels) to protect you, - kind and honorable – writing down (your deeds). They know whatsoever ye do.”* (Q. 82: 9-12)
- *“Behold, two (Guardian angels) appointed to learn (human doings and note them), one sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him ready (to note it).”* (Q. 50: 17-18)

The error (referred to above), whose evil consequences are far-reaching in so far as it deprives human beings of genuine success in this life and brings them grievous failure in the Hereafter, is rooted in a wrong philosophy which has been referred to in the Holy Quran thus:

- *“And they (i.e. the deniers of life-Hereafter) say: there is naught (i.e., no other life) but our life of the world; we die and we live (of ourselves, with no reference to the Creator); and naught destroys us save time. And they have no knowledge thereof: they do but guess (i.e. their denial is not based on any sound logical argument or any rational fact; but on mere superstition). And when Our Clear Signs (which affirm life-Hereafter) are rehearsed to them, their argument is nothing but this: they say: ‘Bring (back) our forefathers, if what ye say is true.’” (Q. 45: 24- 25)*

Man’s deeds, good or evil, are not only recorded by the angels, but they shall also be hung round the neck (literarily) of each one of us. Thus “are one’s actions inseparable from him; and it is they that make or mar a man’s fortune.” The Quran says:

- *“Every man’s deeds We have fastened on his neck: and on the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll (containing the record of all his thoughts and actions), which he will see spread open. And it will be said (to him) “Read thine (own) record. Sufficient is thy soul this day to make out an account against thee.” (Q. 17: 13-14) (p. 357)*

Verse 14 of chapter 17 points out that the recording of actions is done in order to produce evidence before every human being on the Day of Final Accountability, the Day on which God will pronounce the Judgment in order that every human action, having matured, reaches its full reward or punishment:

- *“Every soul shall have a taste of death: And only on the Day of judgment shall you be paid your full recompense . . . ” (Q. 3: 185a)*
- *“Verily the Hour (of Final Accountability) is coming – My design is to keep it hidden – in order that everyone may be requited according to that which he has endeavored.” (Q. 17:14)*
- *“Then, when there comes the great, overwhelming Event, - the Day when man shall remember (all) that he strove for, and Hell-fire shall be placed in view for (all) to see, - then, for such as had transgressed all bounds (in rebellion against Truth and Goodness) and had preferred the life of this world (in respect of indulgence in the satisfaction of their lower Desires), his abode shall be Hell-fire. And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord’s (tribunal) and had restrained (their) soul from (the sway of) lower Desires, their abode will be the Garden (Paradise).” (Q. 79: 34-41)*

There are two important points which must be kept in view while considering the Quranic conception of Heaven, or Rebirth or life-after-death; these are:

- i) Before the Day of Judgment the world will be destroyed and re-created in a new form, says the Quran:

- *“One day the earth will be changed into a different earth, and so will be the heavens”* (Q. 14: 48)

ii) As for the human beings, they also will be re-created in a new form. The Quran says:

- *“We have decreed death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated from changing your forms and creating you (again) in (forms) that ye know not. And ye certainly know already the first form of (your) creation. Why then heed ye not?”* (Q. 56: 60-62)

Thus, the condition of life and nature of experience in the next world will be so different from what we know and experience now in the phenomenal world that presently we can only imagine and must find it impossible to truly comprehend:

- *“Now no person knows what delights of the eyes are kept hidden (in reserve) for them (in heaven) – as a reward for their (good) Deeds.”* (Q. 32:17)

The phrase *“delight of the eyes”* is an idiom for that which gives the supreme satisfaction to a person. It should not be taken to mean sensuous pleasure.

Re-stating this fact in other words, the form of human personality – its constitution – will be changed in the next world. It will exist in a different dimension – on a different plane, - with all the grossness and carnality of its earthly physical existence removed. Thus, the individual will enjoy all that he desires here in respect of physical happiness, but he will enjoy it in a sublimated form, i.e. without the grossness and other limitations of the physical existence. He will also enjoy the aesthetic pleasure, but those pleasures shall be free of all morbidity and grossness, experienced as they will be on the non-physical plane. *It will not be physical happiness but beautitude, i.e. heavenly happiness – happiness of the highest kind, all spiritual delights having been figured forth from parallel experiences in our present life.* (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972)

The entire Quranic description of Heaven and Hell is symbolical, and it would be the greatest intellectual dishonesty on the part of anyone to try to understand it in the literal sense. As the Quran had pointed this out when it says:

- *“(Here is) a parable of the Garden which the Righteous are promised.”* (Q. 47: 15)

Thus, the ideals of physical happiness and aesthetic enjoyment will be realized in Heaven to the full but on a higher level – the level of *holiness* – and all that as a reward for moral effort and the maintenance of true relationship with God in this earthly life. The Holy Quran stated this fact clearly and beautifully in Chapter 3 verse 14-17. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972).

The denial of Life-after-death is also ingrained in human nature from four other angles:

- i. Firstly, the love of life and the yearning for self-preservation, (which are ingrained in human nature), refuse to admit the cessation of life in death. This love may have roots in what is called the unconscious and may be representative of the urge of human ego to survive to witness the transformation of the world as moral order.
- ii. Secondly, denial of life after death engenders nihilistic attitude, and nihilism is wedded to despair.
- iii. Thirdly, confirming the reward or punishment of actions to immediate execution in this life amounts to a negation of the world being a moral order, because the individual is deprived of the chance of exhausting the possibilities of improving himself. And if the world is not accepted as a perfect moral order, moral struggle becomes a meaningless idea; and,
- iv. Fourthly, no human action – good or evil - can mature as regards its consequences until the present human world endures, because every action gives rise to an endless chain-reaction. This renders the fulfillment of the principle of just and adequate reward and

And today, Psychologists tell us that usually, a child who cannot identify its parents – the father and mother – such a child usually suffers mental trauma during childhood. This often is the problem that children of prostitutes mostly have. They have a very bad childhood due to mental trauma. So Islam lays a great deal of importance on the identification of the parents. In America today, due to scientific advancement, in the field of Genetic and DNA testing, it is possible many a times to identify who is the father and the mother of a child. But Islam is a religion for all times. This technological test just came in recently, it wasn't there before, and it is expensive – it is not possibly available for everyone – though it may become cheap in the future. However, this argument, that you cannot identify the parents of a Polyandry marriage is at least applicable till today. This is not however the only reason why Islam has not allowed the woman to have more than one husband. It is just one of the reasons which though applicable today, but with time, the DNA test may become easily available in the future.

The second reason is Man's polygamous nature. Compared to the woman for instance, man is by nature more polygamous. Thirdly, it is much easier for a man to perform his duty, biologically and physically, of being the husband of multiple wives than a woman to perform her duty biologically and physically of multiple husbands. In Islam, the man and woman are equal but equality does not mean being identical. Physically and biologically they are different but equal in certain aspects depending on the biological and physical nature. There are certain rules in respect to these natures that are different for men and others different for women. So though in the overall, we can say that both male and females are equal, but they are not identical.

For example, a woman undergoes menstrual cycle which induces certain hormonal changes in her system. These are changes that affect both mental and attitudinal behaviors, which is the reason (if you know the procedure of divorce in Islam), why Islam says that during the menstrual cycle, a man cannot divorce his wife, etc. So before the menstrual cycle and during the cycle, there are hormonal changes. Women suffer disturbances which makes it difficult for her to maintain her mental balance. Even as the wife of a single person, it is not so easy for her to manage things sometimes. But if she has to be the wife of multiple husbands, it will be quite a stressful situation. The mental and biological changes associated with menstrual cycle are not found in the case of the man. Therefore, biologically and physically, it is possible for a man to be husband of more than one wife than for a woman to be the wife of more than one husband.

Furthermore, Medical science today, tells us that if a woman has more than one sexual partner or more than one husband, and even if all of these people are faithful to each other, in other words, they don't have extra-marital sex, there can be certain sexually transmitted diseases – or disease of the 'Cervix' (cervical cancer) which can originate as a result of the woman having multiple life partners, even if they are faithful to each other. This is not the case with the man. And when the disease originates with the woman, it can be transmitted to the other husbands. In the case of a man who has multiple sexual partners, two or three, if all of them are faithful to each other, and not engaged in extra-marital sex, this disease does not originate. These are few of the dangers, which Allah (SWT) in His divine wisdom wished to prevent, and explains why *Polyandry* was not allowed

13. Why will Islam be against non-Muslim marrying Muslim Women, while at the same time allow a Muslim man to marry Christian and Jewish women?

There are different levels to this question. We do not even need the support of the scriptures to know that a marriage between two people of different background, nature or beliefs will obviously have many levels that will require agreement and understanding for it to succeed, as love alone will not be enough. To this day, marriages between tribes in African and Asian countries are strongly discouraged due to differences in socio-cultural beliefs. Such intending couples are faced with differences in the creed of their different faiths, their sacred beliefs, and other socio-cultural values to contend with.

Non-Muslim view the prohibition of marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man as a restriction and a violation of the woman's human right. This is a misconception, because from the Islamic point of view, the restriction is aimed at safeguarding the Muslim woman, the institution of

marriage and the Muslim Ummah as a whole. It is not designed to prevent the exercise of her freedom of association. However, the non-Muslim may perhaps see in this prohibition a shrouded bigotry, or a one sidedness affair. But, let us look closely at the reasons behind the restrictions.

Firstly, Islam does not encourage any living arrangement that is lacking in peace and harmony. Secondly, Islam considers divorce as the most hateful thing in the sight of Allah, as such it is not encouraged; and any situation that will bring it about is anticipated and steps are taken to prevent it from occurring. Therefore, a marriage that contains within it the seed of discord at the on-set had to be forbidden. This is why Islam is careful about ensuring that any marriage that will eventually end in disruption of peace and harmony, ending in divorce is voided before it even begun.

The marriage of a non-Muslim man (whether Christian or Jew) to a Muslim woman is prohibited because it will bring about friction between the couple. A Jewish or Christian husband does not believe in the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad, and the sanctity of his message. As a matter of fact, they consider the prophet as a liar and an imposter. Consequently, this posture of the Christian or Jewish husband will estrange the Muslim wife from the husband. When misunderstanding arises, the non-Muslim husband can throw insults at the wife's religion, including the prophet, because he does not respect him nor the religion. This act can thereby expose the family to conflicts and disruptions. For this reason, such perilous marriage is forbidden by Islam before it happens.

The marriage between a Muslim man and a Christian woman is permitted by Islam because Islam respects and glorifies Jesus (pbuh), who it believes to be a great prophet of God. Islam also glorifies his mother, believing her to be chaste and absolves her of the charges leveled against by the Jews. Islam also glorifies Moses (as well as all Jewish Prophets) and considers him a prophet sent by God to the people of Israel. Furthermore, Islam has no objection to a marriage between a Muslim man and a Jewess because Allah has made whatever is Lawful to them also lawful to the Muslim. The Quran says:

❖ *“This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them” (Q. 5: 5 [a])*

The Muslim man is allowed to marry a Christian, also because Allah has said in the Quran that:

- *“ . . . nearest among them in love to the Believers wilt thou find those who say: “We are Christians” – because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant. (Q. 5:82)*

The Muslim may also marry a Jewess, though he is not permitted to marry an Atheist or a Pagan. The Muslim woman on the other hand, is not permitted

to marry any of these four (Christian, Jew, Pagan and Atheist), because such a husband may not respect the sacred beliefs of his wife due to their different beliefs and ideology. The Quran says:

- *“Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; . . . ”*(Q.5:82).

He is further warned by the Quran of the state of the latter’s uncleanness.

- *“O you who believe! The Idolaters are nothing but unclean, . . . ”* (Q. 9:28 a)

A closer look at the Quran will show that Islam advises Muslims to marry faithful and chaste Muslim women of their creed as the preferred option firstly, before others; the Quran says:

- ❖ *“. . . (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the people of the Book, revealed before your time (i.e. Christians and Jews), - when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues . . . ”* (Q. 5: 5 [b])

Marriage between a Muslim man or woman to a Muslim slave man or woman is preferable to a Pagan woman or to an Atheist who does not believe in God at all. Such a marriage is forbidden in the Quran:

- ❖ *“Do not marry Unbelieving women (Idolaters) until they believe: a slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Nor marry (your girls) to Unbelievers until they believe: A man slave who believes is better than an Unbeliever, even though he allure you.”* (Q. 2:221)

This prohibition is because a Muslim husband will never respect the practices and beliefs of such a wife. And it is very likely that the disrespect will be mutual. The Muslim has been warned by Allah in the Quran, as to the attitude of the Idolaters or Pagans. It says:

- ❖ *“They do not pay regard to ties of relationship nor those of covenant in the case of a believer; and these are they who go beyond the limits.”* (Q.9:10)

This attitude sets the couple at daggers drawn right from the on-set. It will thus expose the family to continuous disputes which will result in disruptions of peace, with the children being at the receiving end.

14. Non-Muslims could not understand why Islam prohibit the drinking of Alcohol by Muslims?

There are many things that are abolished by Islam which include those prohibited for the Muslim. Some were abolished on the spot, some in stages. The prohibition for the drinking of Alcohol came in stages in the Quran. The first time Qur'an spoke of alcohol with a view to discourage it was in Surat 'Baqara' chapter 2, verse 219, which reads:

- *"When they asked thee concerning intoxicants and gambling, tell them in it is profit and loss. The loss is more than the profit."(Q. 2:219)*

Initially, it was regarding intoxicants first, that "in it there is more loss and less profit." It didn't ban it completely. Next was Alcohol, it was discouraged in Surat Al-Nisa'i chapter 4 verse 43; that:

- *"Do not pray with your mind befogged unless you can understand (what you are doing)."(Q. 4:43)*

That means while praying a Muslim must not be in a state of intoxication so as to know what he is saying and doing. After this, more restrictions followed. And the final prohibition came in Surat Al'Ma'ida, Chapter 5 verse 90. It says:

- *"Oh ye who believe, most certainly intoxicants and gambling, dedication of stones, divination by arrows, these are Satan's handiwork, abstain from his handiwork so that you may prosper."*

Due to this verse, intoxicants were totally abolished. It was 'Haram' for Muslims to engage in drinking of alcohol and other intoxicating substances. So based on this verse of the Qur'an the Muslim Ummah as a whole, are ordained to abstain from drinking alcohol. The same message is also repeated in the Bible. If you read and believe in the Bible, even the Christians, according to the commandments of the Bible, are supposed to abstain from drinking alcohol. It says:

- ❖ *"Do not go near Alcohol"(Deuteronomy 3:11)*

In the book of Proverbs, Chapter 20, verse 1, it is said that:

- ❖ *"Wine is a mocker, Beer is a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise."(Proverbs 20:1)*

And in the Book of Isaiah Chapter 5 verse 11 the Bible says:

- ❖ *"Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine."(Isaiah 5:11)*

Also in Habakkuk Chapter 2 verse 15 – 16, the Bible says:

- ❖ *"Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbour, pouring it from the wine skin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies. You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn drink and*

be exposed! The cup from your lord's right hand is coming round to you, and disgrace will cover your glory.”(Habakkuk 2:15-16)

- ❖ *“And the Lord spoke to Aaron: Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting (i.e. Prayer place), that you may not die; it is a statute forever throughout your generation.”(Leviticus 10: 8-9)*
- ❖ *“Do not look at the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. At the last it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.” (Proverb 23:31-32)*

Alcohol has been prohibited in the Hindu scriptures as well. Dr. Zakir Naik (an Indian) reports that similar prohibitions are also mentioned repeatedly in the Hindu scriptures in several places. Based on its prohibitions, Mahatma Gandhi has nothing but disgust for those who loved the bottle. He wrote: *“Drinking in a man indicates a decided lack of character;”* and that, *“A drinking man is but half a man”*.

An ancient Mongol Poet once wrote thus:

*“Water flows downhill, and men prefer to do what is easy.
The easiest thing to do is drink. It makes life seem
interesting.
Now we drink from sleep to sleep.
We poison ourselves by the hundreds and thousands.”*

Today we come to know that the first and the biggest cause of death in the world is alcoholism. Several millions of people die every year. It is the single largest cause of death; more than terrorism, more than war. Every year millions of people die. The second largest cause of death is tobacco in any form either by smoking or chewing including ‘Marijuana’ (Indian Hemp) etc. According to world health organization, every year more than four million people die only because of tobacco. Now, based on this, there are words of the Qur’an in Sura Baqara, chapter 2; verse 195, which says:

- *“Do not make your own hands the cause of your own destruction.”
(Q. 2:195)*

That means committing suicide, or causing self loss is prohibited. And we have come to learn from medical reports that smoking is nothing but slow poisoning. So based on the words of the Qur’an (chapter 2 verse 195), today we have more than four hundred *‘fatwahs’* from different parts of the world by Islamic scholars who declared smoking as haram; this means that as far as Islam is concerned, the use of tobacco is haram.

Let us try to understand the logical reason why Allah (SWT), our Creator has prohibited Muslims to drink alcohol? Today, science tells us that every

human being has an inhibiting centre, which inhibits a human being from doing things that are (morally) wrong. For example: the human being knows that using abusive language is wrong (improper), especially when you speak to elders, or to parents. If we have to go for the call of nature we will not do it in public, we go to a place designated for it. Our inhibiting centre prevents us from doing it in public because we know it is wrong. But when a person is intoxicated his inhibiting centre is 'corrupted' (compromised); that is the reason why we see that the person who is intoxicated, uses abusive language, he even abuses the elders and many a times even his parents, because his inhibiting centre has been compromised. We find also many a time that those who are intoxicated urinate or even defecate in their own clothes; they can do it even in public. Once their inhibiting centre becomes inhibited they can't behave properly. Furthermore, we learn from scientific research that when a person is intoxicated, he does many things which a person in his right senses would not do.

According to an FBI statistics on criminal victimization contained in a 1990 report of the Department of Justice (a survey bureau of USA); every year on average, 1766 rapes takes place. And the report says that in the majority of the cases, more than 50 of the rapes that took place were committed when the persons (rapists) were intoxicated. Today, research tells us that in the United States approximately 80% of the Americans are involved in incest. Incest means having sexual relationship with those we are biologically related; mother with son, daughter with father, and brother with sister etc.. Eighty percent means every twelfth or thirteenth American you meet, according to the statistics, has committed incest. And the survey says majority of them or both of the partners were in the state of intoxication when it happened.

Perhaps this is not so surprising as the Bible contain some accounts of incest, attributed to prophets of God. In the Book of Genesis chapter 19 verse 31–36; we are told how the daughters of Lot got their father drunk in order to have sex with him. In Genesis 38: 16–18, we learn that Judah slept with his daughter-in-law. In 2nd Samuel 13:10–14, we read how 'Ammon' raped his sister Tamar; and in 2nd Samuel chapter 16:22, we read that Absalom lay with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel; etc.

Normally when one confronts many people who drink alcohol they are quick to say: "No! I am only a social drinker or my father is only a social drinker." Social drinker here means that the person consumes one or two pegs or shots or bottles of beer. You hear them say, I can control myself, I don't get intoxicated. No alcoholic has ever started drinking alcohol to become an alcoholic. When you meet any alcoholic and you asked about his background, you will learn that he started as a social drinker, and later on addiction sets in and he becomes an alcoholic. Actually, you cannot find a social drinker who has been drinking for seven years and has never got intoxicated, at least once within

that period. The issue is, even if a person has been intoxicated only once in his life time and as a result commits a crime of rape, or incest, the damage cannot be undone after regaining his consciousness. Neither can the damage done to the victim be reversed. It is an irreparable loss.

Imagine the anguish of one who has committed rape or incest, in a state of intoxication; such a person may not forgive himself. That is the reason why, as narrated in an authentic (Sahih) Hadith, (the Sunnah of Ibn Majja, vol. 3, in the book of intoxication, chapter 30, hadith No. 3872), our beloved Prophet (pbuh) said that, *“Alcohol is the mother of all evils. It is the most shameless evil.”* Again (in the Sunnah of Ibn Majja, vol. 3 in the book of intoxication, chapter 30, Hadith no. 3391), our beloved prophet (Pbuh) said that *“anything which intoxicates you in large quantity, is even prohibited in small quantity”*. No excuse for (sniff or a cup). The Prophet also said, (Sunnah Ibn Maja vol. 3, in the book of intoxication, chapter 30, Hadith 3380 that, *“All ten categories of people who deal with alcohol are cursed by Allah (SWT)”*. The person who distils alcohol, the person who has it distilled for him; the person who drinks it; the person who transports it; the person for whom it is transported; the person who sells it; the person who serves it; the person who utilizes the money from the sale of alcohol; the person who buys it; the person who buys it for another: all these ten categories of people who deal with alcohol have the curse of Allah placed upon them said the Prophet.

Today however, the medical doctors have a different approach to the problem of drinking. They claim that medically speaking, alcoholism is not an addiction; they say rather, alcoholism is a disease. And they say that we have to be sympathetic towards the alcoholics. As such we have to pray for him; that we have to be sympathetic towards him. And Dr. Zaki Naik’s reply to them, in one of his messages that appear on Peace TV, is that, *“if alcoholism is a disease, then it is the only disease that is sold in bottles. It is the only disease that is advertised in the newspapers, in magazines, on the radio broadcast stations, on the TV channels. It is the only disease that has a license requirement for sale. It is the only disease that gets revenue for many Governments of the world. It is the only disease that necessitates warning texts on the highway. It is the only disease that destroys families. It is the only disease that has no virus or germs as its cause.* Yet, scientific research today says that alcoholism is one of the major causes associated with the most dreaded disease in recent times, the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome i.e. AIDS.

Allah (SWT) who created us says and gave a reply to those who said that alcoholism is not an addiction but a disease, in Sura Al-Ma’ida, Chapter 5 verse 90, He said:

- *“. . . It is Satan’s handiwork; abstain from it so that you may prosper.”*

Here, Allah is warning us that it may not be a disease, but it certainly is Satan’s handiwork. That we can only prosper by abstaining from it. That is the reason

why, in most religious scriptures, besides the Qur'an and the Hadith, alcohol has been prohibited.

15. Non-Muslims also raise question as to why Islam did not abolish slavery outrightly.

As earlier observed, Islam abolished many practices of the Jahiliya period (age of ignorance). But while some were abolished on the spot, some were abolished in stages. Likewise slavery was an inherited practice that thrives before the advent of Islam. It was not abolished outrightly because it was very much ingrained in the culture of the Arabs at that time. So, the abolishing of slavery came in stages as well. Initially, Allah (SWT) says slaves are human beings, give them rights. If you have to marry them, give them freedom etc. But there are various words that say help them, give them charity etc.

Certain chapters of the Glorious Quran (9:60; 24:33; 58:4-5; and 90:12-17) have referred to "the freeing of the Slave" as one of the highest virtues, as we shall see later on. It states in chapter 90 for instance:

- *"And what will make thee comprehend what the uphill road (of virtue) is: (It is) the setting free of a slave; or the giving of food in a day of privation to the orphan with claims of relationship, or to the indigent (down) in the dust; and to be of those who believe and enjoin patience (constancy and self-restraint), and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion."* (Quran 90:12 -17)

The emphasis here is on the abolition of slavery, on service to fellow-beings, and on the cultivation of a serene personality. These verses give indication to understanding the approach of Islam to human problems and its system of priorities in respect of the role of religion. Slavery had been one of the greatest curses of the pre-Islamic civilization. Syed Amir Ali in his book *"The Spirit of Islam"* (p.262) had pointed out that it is indeed an 'abuse of words' to apply the word 'Slavery' in the English sense to any status known to the legislation of Islam.

This seems to be a summary of what Dr. G. W. Leitner had revealed in his book: *"Mohammadanism"* (pp. 17) that *"According to the Koran, no person can be made a slave except after the conclusion of a sanguinary battle fought in the conduct of a religious war (Jihad) in the country of infidels who try to suppress the true religion. Indeed, whatever the word Slave occurs in Koran it is 'he whom your right hand possesses', or a special equivalent for neck – 'he whose neck has been spared', thus clearly indicating 'a prisoner of war' made by the action of not one man only, but of many the Arabian prophet recommended: 'When the war has ended, restore them (the slaves or prisoners) to liberty or give them up for ransom.' (Sura XLCII: 57)"*

Some scholars say that the reason why slavery was not abolished earlier during the time of the prophet was because it was supposed to be abolished at a later date. Many things took place towards abolishing slavery while he was alive. Islam set the ball rolling and saw to it that it was completed if not during the life time of the prophet, then as soon after that. The final outcome was supposed to take place maybe a few decades or a few years after the death of our beloved prophet. Some of the steps taken were mentioned in the Quran and the Hadith. For example, Dr. G. W. Leitner revealed to us the following facts from the Quran: “. . . ‘Alms (which procure righteousness) are destined . . . to the redemption of slaves’ (Sura 9: 60) . . . Further (Sura 24:33): “If any of your slaves asks for his manumission in writing, give it to him, if you find him worthy of it, and give him also some of the wealth which God has given you” “. . . The reconciliation of a separated married couple should be preceded by the ransom of a slave, and, if none can be found, the husband should feed sixty poor, or else fast for two months (Sura LVIII: 4, 5). Wherever the sense of happiness, including that of conjugal felicity, predisposes the heart to gratitude towards the Creator, or whenever fear of God or a punishment, or the desire of a blessing, affect, as such motives can and do affect the daily life of a Mohammadan, the emancipation of a slave, as a most proper act of charity is recommended. In short, the ‘Cliff’, or narrow path to salvation, is charity: ‘What is a Cliff? It is to free the captive (or slave). (Sura 90:12, 13).

Descending to the second source of the Mohammadan Law, the authenticated traditions of Hadis (Hadith), we find Mohammad stating that ‘the worst of men is he who sells men’; slaves who displeased their masters were to be forgiven ‘seventy times a day’; no believer can be made a slave; and ‘in proportion to the number of redeemed slaves will members of the body of the releasing person be rescued from the (eternal) fire.’ (Dr. G.W. Leitner: ‘Mohammadanism’).

16. Non-Muslims assume that Islam degrade women by requiring the witness of two women to be equal to one man’s witness; and see injustice in giving a woman 50% share of an inheritance i.e. only half of what their male counterparts get?

Careful analysis will reveal that the Qur’an, in no less than five places talks about witnesses without specifying their gender; whether male or female, except in one place. This is where the Qur’an specifically state that two women witness is to be taken for the witness of one man (i.e. two women witnesses to be equal to one man’s witness) and that is in Sura Baqara, Chapter 2, verse 282 which is the longest (Ayat) verse of the Qur’an. And Allah (SWT) said:

- *“Oh you who believe when you are involved in any financial transaction, involving future obligation for a fixed period of time, put it down in writing and get two men as witness amongst yourselves.”*

(It further goes on to say), *“if you can’t find two men, then one man and two women.”* (And it continues to say), *“if one of them erred or makes a mistake, the second will remind her.”*(Q.2: 282)

Note that this verse of the Qur’an is exclusively talking about financial transactions and nothing else. Let’s take an example for better understanding. For example, Medical doctors will tell you that if someone wants to undergo a surgery, maybe a major operation, the best for him will be to take the advice of two qualified surgeons. For reasons of safety, the best option will be two qualified surgeons (Masters of surgery). If you can’t find two qualified surgeons, at least you get one master of surgery and two bachelors of surgery (MBBS).

In Islam likewise, in financial transactions, the financial burden is placed on the shoulders of the man. The woman is spared the burden of looking after financial matters. Before a woman is married, Islam places a duty on the father and brothers to provide for her, and after she is married it is the duty of the husband and the son to look after her lodging, boarding, clothing and all financial aspects of life. So because of this ethics in the Islamic society, a man is more financially responsible (in most cases) compared to a woman. Similarly, as in the example above, in financial transaction, the Quran says, when you take witness, take two men, if you can’t find two men, then one man and two women. This is because, if one of them errs or makes a mistake (some of the transmitters said if one forgets; but it is not a question of forgetting. It is, if one of them should make a mistake) the second one will correct her.

As mentioned earlier, there are several verses in the Qur’an which talk about witnesses without mentioning the gender e.g. Qur’an says in Surah Al-Ma’ida (chapter 5 verses 106-108) that:

- *“if death approaches you, put the will on the inheritance in writing and take two witnesses,”*(Q. 5: 106-108)

The gender of the witness is not mentioned here. Qur’an also says in Sura Talaq (chapter 50 verse 2) that when someone gives Talaq (divorce), take two witnesses, again the gender is not mentioned. They should be honest and Just; but the gender is not specified. And in Sura Nur (chapter 24 verse 4), Qur’an says that:

- *“if someone lays an allegation against the modesty of a woman, produce four witnesses otherwise give 80 lashes (to the accuser).”*(Q. 24: 4)

What the Quran is saying here is, if you make allegation against the modesty of a woman and cannot produce four witnesses to support your allegation, you get eighty (80) lashes of the cane. Four witnesses it says and no gender of the witnesses is specified. And one verse of the Qur’an which clearly equates one male and one female is in Surat Nur (chapter 24 verse 6-7). It says:

- *“if someone lays an allegation against the spouse, or the husband lays allegation against the wife, and he does not have any evidence, no witnesses, his solitary evidence is sufficient but he has to take an oath four times, in the Name of Allah and the fifth time (he is to)pronounce a curse on himself if he is lying.”*

Immediately the next verse (after 6 & 7 of the sura), i.e. verse 8-9 says:

- *“But if the wife also does not have any witnesses, hers too can be a solitary evidence by taking an oath four times and the fifth one, being a curse on herself if she is lying.”*

So here in these instances, it is clearly mentioned in the Qur’an that one female is equal to one male as witness.

Based on this, most of the Jurists have agreed that only in cases of financial transaction would two women be equal to one man. But in all other cases, one woman is equal to one man witness. For example, in the starting of the month of Ramadan, regarding the sighting of the moon, only one witness is required. In the ending of Ramadan, you require two witnesses. It does not make a difference that it is a male or female. Only in some countries, is the standard set that it has to be a man, who should also have a beard etc.

Furthermore, there is the evidence given by Aisha (RA: may Allah be pleased with her), the beloved wife of Muhammad (pbuh) who was able to narrate no less than 2210 Hadith, and she was the only witness. This stands as an incontrovertible proof of Islam’s acceptance of the witness of women. When a total of two thousand, two hundred and ten authentic (sahih) Hadith which form the basis of the Shari’ah in Islam, have been accepted based on the witness of only one woman, it clearly indicates that one witness of woman is equal to one witness of man. There are certain cases in which women witnesses are taken while a man’s witness is not taken. For example, while giving the burial bath of a female Muslima, the witness should be a woman. A man cannot be a witness in this case unless certain conditions prevail. Otherwise generally, for the burial bath: the ‘Janaza Gusul’ (ritual bath), the witness is expected to be a woman not a man.

As far as inheritance is concerned, Islam recognizes the rights of women, by ensuring for her the right of inheritance, which was non-existent before Islam. The Qur’an speaks about inheritance in several places. In Sura Baqara, chapter 2 verse 180, and verse 240; Sura Al-Nisa’i, Chapter 4 verse 79, verse 19, verse 33; Sura Al-Ma’ida Chapter 5 verse 105–108, these are all places where Allah speaks in the Qur’an about inheritance. But the exact shares is mentioned in Sura Al-Nisa’i Chapter 4 verse 11 and 12 and sura Al-Nisa’i, Chapter 4 verse 176. Allah said in the Quran that:

- *“As for the inheritance of your children, the male will get double the share of the female. If only daughters, two or more, they share in two-thirds. If only one daughter, she gets half. In what you leave for*

your parents if there are children, the parents each take one-sixth share. If no children, the mother gets one-third. If there are brothers and sisters, the mother gets one-sixth.” (Q. 4:11)

Verse 12 of this chapter says:

- *“In what your wives leave for you after death, the husband get half if there are no children, he gets one fourth if there are children. In what you leave for your wife, the wife get one-fourth if there are no children, and one-eighth if there are children.”(Q. 4:12)*

It is generally agreed that in majority of the cases, the female inherit half of the share given to the male counterpart. But there are cases in which female and male inherit exactly the same. As mentioned in the text above, if the person that died has children, the mother and father both get one-sixth or if the person who has died has no children but leaves a brother and sister, both get one-sixth. There are cases in which sometimes the female inherit double. If a woman died, leaving no children, but has a husband, a mother and father, the husband gets half, mother gets one-third, and the father get one-sixth. The Mother (a female) gets double than the father (a male). But there are rare cases where as a general rule the female inherit half of that of the male counterpart. If a daughter and a son; the son inherits double than the daughter. If husband and wife, husband inherit double of that of the wife (and this is based on good reason).

So what is the logical reason why a female gets half of her male counterpart? The reason is that Islam as mentioned earlier, places the financial burden of running a family on the shoulders of the man. The Quran says:

- *“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husbands) absence what God would have them guard. . .” (Q. 4:34a)*

What this implies is that, as far as the woman is concerned she is the responsibility of the men in her life. It is due to the responsibility borne by the male relatives that Allah (SWT) in His justice and infinite Mercy made the provision as it is. She need not work for a living; she is made financially secure, based on this injunction. It is Allah (SWT) who has decided the shares. If He had given both of them equal shares, then we would have been discussing men’s right in Islam instead. For then the men will have objected and say: “what kind of religion is this, which required us to shoulder the responsibility of looking after the family (our women folk) and when it comes to inheritance, we are made to inherit equally?”

Let me give you an example, suppose there is a person who died, and leaves behind an inheritance and he has one son and one daughter. After giving

the shares of the wives (usually one-eighth) and other relatives, if \$150,000 dollars is remaining from the inheritance, the son will inherit \$100,000 and the daughter will inherit \$50,000. If you ask the woman, whether she would prefer changing places with her brother, who inherits a hundred thousand (dollars) and may be end up spending eighty to ninety percent of his own inheritance on the extended family because he is the bread winner, or would she prefer inheriting the \$50,000 and keep everything to herself, i.e., without even spending a single dollar on anyone else? Which do you think she will prefer?

So Allah (SWT) sees to it that His Justice touches everyone, as the Quran said in Sura Al-Nisa'i, chapter 4, verse 40:

- *“Allah is never unjust in the least degree.”*(Q. 4:40)

On the whole, Islam had championed the cause of women since its inception; she has also been given the right to dowry which used to be devoured by the parents until Islam made it mandatory that the bride is the sole beneficiary of her dowry. The Holy Quran reveals that Allah has placed a curse on those who slander chaste women:

- *“Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing, are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter: for them is a grievous Penalty, - on the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions. (Q.24:23-24)*

17. Muslims are asked whether they are the only candidates or in-mates of Heaven ('Jannah') and whether non-Muslims are denied access go to Heaven.

To begin with, we need to know what is meant by Heaven. The Holy Quran describes *Heaven as the reward of righteous life, Peace, Security, Eternal Life – nay, the realization of all positive human yearnings and ideals (as earlier mentioned) and more.* To Dr. M.F.R. Ansari (1972), Heaven is seen as the realization of the ideals of Religion which among others include the acquisition of direct and intimate experience of religious verities, including the vision of God, the Really Real and the source of all Grace; and acquiring perfect holiness in accordance with human status. So in reply to the question of who will go to heaven (Jannah); we learn from the Quran what Allah (SWT) said:

- *“(As for) those who believe and do good, surely they are the best of men. Their reward with their Lord is gardens of perpetuity beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein for ever, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him, that is for him who fears his Lord.”* (Q. 98:7-8)

There are categories of the inmates of Heaven which are given in various verses of the Quran,:

- *“Allah has promised to the believing men and the believing women Gardens, beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual abode, and best of all is Allah’s goodly pleasure; that is the grand achievement.”* (Quran 9:72)

Some of the verses say:

- *“As to the god-fearing righteous, they will be in Gardens and in happiness, - enjoying the (Bliss) which their lord has bestowed on them and their Lord shall deliver them from the torment of the Fire. . . .”* (Q. 52: 17-18)
- *“But for such as fear the time when they will stand before (the) Judgment Seat (of) their Lord, there will be two Gardens . . . containing all kinds (of trees and delights) . . . In them (each) will be two Springs flowing (free) . . . in them will be fruits of every kind, two and two, . . . They will recline on Carpets, whose inner linings will be of rich brocades: the Fruits of the Gardens will be near (and easy to reach), . . . In them will be (Maidens), chaste, restraining their glances, whom no man or Jinn before them has touched - like unto rubies and corals, . . . Is there any reward for Good – other than Good?”* (Q. 55:46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58).

The following verses of the Holy Quran further inform us as to whom the Companions of Heaven are? The Quran identifies them thus:

- *“For **the righteous** are gardens in nearness to their Lord.”* (Q. 3:15)
- *“As to **those who believe and work righteousness**; verily We shall not suffer to perish the reward of any who do a (single) **righteous deed**.”* (Q. 18:30).
- *“For **those who believe and work righteousness**, are Gardens as hospitable homes (where they will be entertained as honorable guests), for their good deeds.”* (Q. 32:19).
- *“And **those who believe and work righteousness**, - no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear, - they will be companions of the Garden, therein to dwell (forever).”*(Q. 7:42)
- *“And We shall remove from their (**righteous**) hearts whatsoever lurking sense of disappointment and injury there may have been, rivers flowing beneath them; and they will say: ‘All praise unto Allah Who has guided us to this (felicity)’. . .”* (Q. 7:43)
- *“And **those who were careful of duty to their Lord** will be led to the Garden in troops till, when they arrive there, and the portals thereof will be opened, the keepers thereof will say unto them: ‘Peace be unto you! Well have ye done! Enter ye here to dwell therein forever. They will say: ‘Praise be unto Allah, Who has truly fulfilled His promise to us, and has given us (this) land in heritage for (eternity),*

so that we may dwell in the Garden wherever we will: how excellent a reward for those who work (**Righteousness**)” (Q. 39: 73-74) (p. 372)

- *“Those who believe and work righteousness, - their Lord will guide them because of their faith: beneath them will flow rivers in Gardens of bliss, their cry of (adoration to God, i.e. their loud chanting of hymn of prayer) therein will be ‘Glory to thee, o Allah!’ and ‘Peace’ will be their greeting therein! And the close of their cry will be: ‘Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds.’” (Q. 10: 9-10).*
- *“But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow. Everytime they are fed with fruits therefrom, they say: “why, this is what we were fed with before’. For they are given things in similitude: and they have therein companions pure (and holy) and they abide therein (for ever).” (Q. 2:25).*
- *“And the garden will be brought nigh to the righteous, - no more a thing distant (and they will be told): This is what was promised for you, - for everyone who turned (to Allah) in sincere repentance, who kept (His Law), who learned (The Displeasure of Allah) Most Gracious unseen, and brought a heart turned in devotion (to Him) - : Enter ye therein in Peace and Security. This is the Day of Eternal Life!’ There will be for him therein all that they yearn for – and more besides in Our Presence.” (Q. 50: 31-35) (p. 368)*
- *“And those (O Prophet!) will see the angels surrounding the Throne (Divine) on all sides, singing Glory and Praise to their Lord. The Decision between them (at Judgment) will be in (perfect) justice, and the cry (on all sides) will be: ‘Praise be to Allah, Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds.’ “ (Q. 39: 75).*

(see also Chapters 4:72; 18:31; 35: 33-35; 37:40-49; 43; 70-73; 44:51-57; 47:15; 19: 61-62).

So we see that those who will go to heaven or enter heaven are described variously, as: the god-fearing righteous; such as fear the time when they will stand before (the) Judgment Seat (of) their Lord; those who believe (in the Quran); any who believe in God and the last Day, and work righteousness; to include those (certainly, among the People of the Book [*Quran 3:199*]), who believe in God, in the revelation to the Prophet (of Islam), and in the revelation to them, bowing in humility to God: who will not sell the Signs of God for a miserable gain!; and those (among the people of the book [*Quran 5:114*]) who believe in God and the last day; who enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works.

We can summarize what we read from these verses above, that those who deserve Paradise or Heaven are . . . **“those who were careful of duty to**

their Lord” and “those who believe and work righteousness . . . these will be led to the Garden in troops”. But what is meant by ‘Righteousness’?

The Islamic view of Righteousness is built up on the concept of simplicity – nay, even austerity, in life. Thus, it has self-control and self-sacrifice as its watch-words; and the path of righteousness cannot be travelled, according to the Holy Quran, without avoiding indulgence in luxuries (Q. 79: 40-41). As such, to Islam, ‘Peace’ is viewed in the sense of ‘eternal quietness, confidence, trust and assurance, i.e. salvation. And according to the Bible, ‘Righteousness’ is the result of keeping the commandments (Deuteronomy 6:25); and Peace is the result of righteousness.

Heavenly ideal consists in the attainment of perfection adequate to human personality in respect of the national, moral and spiritual values. The luxuries which the righteous ones denied themselves in this earthly life will, however be compensated for *in a transcendental and hallowed form*, in keeping with the holiness of Heaven; as a further reward implying the perfection also of the sentient dimension of human personality which it lived in its earthly life. (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972; p. 376, footnote 1). This fact is thoroughly exemplified in the personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and of many other prophets of God: Jesus, Moses, Abraham, etc., and in the personalities of all the exemplary followers of Islam, like the Righteous Caliphs, the Saints, the illustrious Imams, and the great Sufis.

Imam Al-Bukhari, in his Hadith narration said that Ubadah Ibn Samit (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (Pbuh) said: *If anyone testify to ‘La ilaha illallah’ (that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah alone) who has no partners and that Muhammad (pbuh) is His messenger, and that Isa (Jesus) (pbuh) is Allah’s slave and messenger and His word which he bestowed on Mary and a spirit created by Him (God), and that Paradise is true and Hell is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he had done even if those deeds were few and such a person can enter Paradise through any of its gates he likes”.* (Sahih Al-Bukhari Vol. 4, Hadith No. 644).

Another four criteria is given in a Hadith of the Holy Prophet, which he said will lead a man to Paradise. These are:

- i) to spread Peace;
- ii) to feed the people (the poor and indigent);
- iii) to settle family disputes; and
- iv) Get up at night for offering prayers (while others are asleep).

Allah, in His infinite Mercy and compassion still gave us more categories of those who He shall grant or shall be deserving entry to Heaven, and these are:

- *“Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in*

God and the last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.” ((Quran 2: 62)

- *“And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book, those who believe in God, in the revelation to you, and in the revelation to them, bowing in humility to God: They will not sell the Signs of God for a miserable gain! For them is a reward with their Lord, and God is Swift in account.”(Quran 3:199).*
- *They (the people of the book) believe in God and the last day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works: they are in the ranks of the righteous. (Q. 5:114)*

This last verse is further supported in Sura Al’Maida: chapter 5 verses 82-85 viz:

- *“ . . . and nearest among them in love to the Believers wilt thou find those who say: “We are Christians” – because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant (v. 82). And when they listen to the revelation received by the Apostle, thou wilt see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognize the truth: they pray: “our Lord! We believe; write us down among the witnesses (v. 83). What cause can we have not to believe in God and the truth in which has come to us, seeing that we long for our Lord to admit us to the company of the righteous? (v. 84). And for this their Prayer hath God rewarded them with Gardens, with rivers flowing underneath – their eternal home. Such is the recompense of those who do good (v.85).” (Q. 5: 82-85)*

However, Dr. Zakir Naik, the President of an Islamic Research Foundation based in Mumbai India, said that in his view, the minimum criteria required for any human being to go to Jannah, are four:

- i) Have Faith (Imaan - Belief),
- ii) Be involved in Righteous Deeds,
- iii) Exhort people to Truth (Da’awa in Islam), and,
- iv) Exhort people to Patience and Constancy.

He said further that, in his view, all the four criteria must be present in a person for him to be eligible. If any of these four criteria is missing, accordingly, one may not enter Paradise (Jannah). But we must note that he arrived at this conclusion based on only one Sura of the Quran: Al’Asar, Chapter 103 verse 1-3, which says:

- *“By the token of time, man is verily in a state of loss, except those who have faith, those who have righteous deeds, those who exhort people to truth, and those who exhort people to patience and constancy.” (Q. 103:1-3)*

According to him, you may be a very good Muslim, you may have performed Hajj, you may have been offering Sallah ('Prayer'), you may have kept fast during the month of Ramadan, but if you don't do Da'awa, you shall not enter Jannah. All four criteria must necessarily be observed fully: Imaan (faith), righteous deeds, exhorting people to truth through Da'awa in Islam, and exhorting people to patience and constancy. So to him, any human being wishing to go to Jannah should fulfill all the four criteria.

18. Non-Muslims ask: "If Allah is merciful why did He create Hell and promises to punish Mankind with Hell-fire?"

Allah (SWT) is the Most Merciful, but besides being merciful, the Glorious Qur'an says that Allah (SWT) is never unjust to His creation in the least degree (Sura Al-Nisa'i, 4:40). Consider that every chapter of the Glorious Qur'an, began with the beautiful formula, "*Bismillah Rahmanil Rahim*" meaning "In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful" (excepting one Sura: 'Touba', Chapter 9, which has been compensated for with an additional '*Bismillah . . .*' in another chapter).

The implication of the above statement is that Allah's Mercy goes along with His Justice. If you analyze both these concepts i.e. Mercy and Justice, you will find that in being merciful and just, God sometimes may also have to punish some people in order for His justice to prevail. For example, someone rapes my sister, and he (the rapist) says: "God is so merciful, He has forgiven me." But what will my sister say, will she praise God? And, through my sister's pain, I am pained too. What will I do get justice for her? If God has to be merciful to me, or my sister: who has been raped, what would He have to do to demonstrate that mercy? He will have to give her justice for the wrong done to her as mercy for her. One will expect that He should punish the rapist. However, whether he punishes him in this world or in the hereafter will be up to God. Qur'an says in Sura Ali-Imran, Chapter 3 verse 185 that: "*Final recompense has to be paid on the Day of Judgment.*" If He has to be Just and Merciful, God will also have to punish certain people. So yes! Allah is Merciful at the same time He is Just.

We should recognize also that in punishing the sinner, God is also being just to the person. In other words, punishment is also an aspect of His Justice. For example, if an examination is taking place and the teacher catches someone copying, then the student says: "Teacher; I know you are also merciful"; and the Teacher says it is alright, you can continue copying, I am merciful. What will the other students think? Will they say, "Oh this Teacher is so good, he is allowing that chap to copy?" No. They will say: "See how we have studied day and night, and this student (our mate) is allowed to copy." They will hardly praise the teacher. And if they come to know that the Teacher will always allow copying, what will happen next? Most certainly everyone will start copying. And in the next examination no one will study. So if for instance Allah (SWT) says "Whether

you commit sin or not, I will put you in heaven. This means there will be neither punishment nor Hell in the hereafter; but this will surely mean that this world will become a living Hell for us all, won't it?

So Allah (SWT) is Merciful at the same time Just, and because He is Merciful and Just, He also has to give punishment to certain people. But that does not mean that you have to lose hope. What humanity needs to do is to repent and seek Allah's (SWT) forgiveness. If you commit a sin, Allah will punish you, so long as you don't repent. But if you repent, Allah (SWT) will surely forgive. And Allah shows you the way to repent. There are four steps:

- i. First you have to agree that what you are doing is wrong. Suppose you did something wrong, e.g. committing adultery, - accept that it is wrong.
- ii. Stop whatever wrong you are committing immediately.
- iii. Refrain from the wrong doing in the future, ever.
- iv. If your act has caused harm to someone, see to it that you give restitution to that person. If you have lost something belonging to someone, then give them a substitute of it in kind.

If you repent Allah (SWT) will forgive you, for Allah loves those who repent, as stated in the Quran:

- *“ . . . Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly in repentance . . . ”* (Q. 2:22a).

“A clean confession, combined with a promise never to commit the sin again, when offered before One who has the right to receive it, is the purest type of repentance.” Said M.K. Gandhi.

Allah is the Most Merciful and Just and can be severe in giving punishment if any of His human creatures require it. He has created Heaven for the righteous and Hell as the end for the ungodly respectively. But initially, we learn from the Quran that God created life and death to test us, in order to sort us out, as it were, the good (righteous) from the evil ones (wrong-doers). And that each group shall have their appropriate recompense in the Hereafter. This is reflected in Sura 'Al-Mulk', Chapter 67 verse 2, of the Quran. It is written:

- *“That Allah created death and life to test which of you is good in deed. This life is a test for the hereafter.”*(Q. 67:2)

Allah is saying here that this world you are living in “is a test for the hereafter”. If you pass this test, you go to heaven, and if you fail the test, you go to hell.

- *“Surely those who disbelieve from among the followers of the Book and the Polytheists shall be in the Fire of Hell, abiding therein, they are the worst of men.”* (Q. 98:6)

And as written in the Bible:

- ❖ “. . . He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction . . .” (2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9)

Therefore, when you ask why should there be Hell, it is like you are asking a teacher why he should included a category for those who will fail his test. In other words: why doesn't the teacher give only first class to everybody? Why create any categorizations: Pass or Fail? But we should also ask ourselves, if the teacher has only one level i.e. pass, then where is the test? What is the need for the test? i.e., if everyone is going to get a pass mark, where is the test that will differentiate between those who succeed and those who did not?

Hell has been described as a contrast to Heaven, and Heaven has been mentioned as a reward for the righteous. Hell has been mentioned in the Holy Quran as punishment for the rejecters of Truth (Q. 2:24 etc.) and the wrong-doers (Q. 50:25 etc.). The symbol of Hell is the Fire (Q. 2:24; etc.), in contrast to the Garden (paradise), which is the symbol of Heaven. Hell, on the other hand, bears reference to Evil Will, ugliness, deprivation of communion with God, and torture of different types, in consequence of the denial of the Source of Grace and of the conditions necessary for the realization of the heavenly ideals. In the Bible, Hell has been described as a place where sinners are punished with fire: *“They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power . . .”* (2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9). The Quran says:

- *“It is the Fire kindled by Allah, which rises above the Hearts.”* (Q. 104:6)
- *“(It is) the Fire of God (namely, having come into existence under the command of God); kindled (to a blaze), which rises above the hearts: It shall be made into a vault over them, in columns outstretched”* (Q. 104: 7-9).

In other words, the hell-fire originates within the hearts of those who reject the Source of Goodness, namely: God, and the pattern of Goodness, namely: the Prophet(s) of God, and instead nurture evil in their breasts. They will be those, according to the Quran, *“to whom God will not speak, nor will He look at them on the Day of Judgment: nor will He purify them (on that Day)”* (Q. 2:77), because on the hearts of those who earn Hell in this life *“is the stain of the (evil) which they do. Verily, from (the light of) their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled”* (Q. 83:14-15), becoming thus deprived of all the Blessings which will flow to the inmates of Heaven from the Bounties of God. The Quran says:

- *“On the Day that the enemies of God will be gathered together to the Fire, they will be marched in ranks. At length, when they reach the (Fire), their hearing, their sight, and their skins will bear witness against them, as to (all) their deeds.”* (Q. 41:19-20)

The life of the inmates of Hell will, indeed, be a life of roasting in agony (Q. 4: 56; 14:17; 25:13-14; 25:55; 32:20). They will be held in bondage to the punishment brought on them by their evil beliefs and evil deeds (Q. 32:19-22; 69:30-37). Their faces will be covered with humiliation (Q. 88:23-26), and their surroundings will be pervaded by ugliness and darkness *“in the shades of black smoke: nothing will be there to refresh, or to please: for that they were wont to be indulged, before that, in wealth (and luxury), and persisted obstinately in wickedness supreme!”* (Q. 56:43-46). The life will be a life of horrible misery, even in respect of their “foods” and “drinks” which will be of the most slimy and noxious type (Q. 14:17; 14:49-50; 37:62-67; 44:43-48; 55:43-44; 56:52-55; 78:21-25). (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972);

In short, the conditions of life in Hell shall be the exact opposite of those described in detail in connection with Heaven. While the Life in Heaven being the life of fulfillment; Life in Hell will reflect the agony attendant on frustration, in the onward march towards the realization of Human Destiny. The nature and the measure of punishment will vary in respect of the denizens of Hell, even as reward will vary in the case of the inmates of Heaven. (Q. 4:132)

Three kinds of spiritual Hell are identified by Al Ghazali:

- i. One kind of Spiritual Hell is the forcible separation from worldly things to which the heart cleaves too fondly. Many carry about within them the germs of such a hell without being aware of it; hereafter they will feel like some king who, after living in a luxury, has been dethroned and made a laughing-stock.
- ii. The second kind of spiritual hell is that of shame, when a man wakes up to see the nature of the actions he committed in their naked reality. Thus he who slandered will see himself in the guise of a cannibal eating his dead brother's flesh, and he who envied as one who cast stones against a wall, which stones rebounding, put out the eyes of his own children. (p. 36)
- iii. The third spiritual hell is that of disappointment and failure to reach the real objects of existence. Man was intended to mirror forth the light of the knowledge of God, but if he arrives in the next world with his soul thickly coated with the rust of sensual indulgence, he will entirely fail of the objects for which he was created.

Both Christianity and Islam said there is no other Deity worthy of worship except the one God. And He has commanded us not to make idols or images for worship beside God, which is Idolatry ('Shirk'). Shirk means the worship of other Deities or associating others with God. But Islam goes a step further. It says: "God will forgive any other sin, except this sin of 'shirk' (Idolatry) (Sura Al-Nisa'i, chapter 4 verses 48, & 115). On the other hand, nowhere in Christianity does it say specifically, that if you do 'shirk' God will not forgive you. Also nowhere does it specifically say if you commit murder God will not forgive you. But would

this omission mean that one will go and commit murder? No!. As far as Islam is concerned, Shirk is number one among the major sins. After shirk, Murder is the second largest sin in Islam, i.e., killing of innocent human beings. Yet nowhere did the Qur'an say, if you commit murder Allah will **not** forgive you. Does this mean that one will go ahead and commit murder because it is not so stated? Of course not! Muslims have been instructed by the Qur'an in Sura Al'Maida, chapter 5 verse 32, that:

- *“If anyone slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.” (Q. 5: 32)*

Thus, just as the teacher tell an undergraduate: “Your aim is to get a degree, once you understand, if you fail you won't get the degree.” So, God Almighty speaks with logic to different people, though He knows that for some people, logic doesn't make any difference. To such people, whether Heaven is there or Hell fire is there it won't make a difference. But other people have to be told: you do this you get reward. Like when you speak to your child, sometimes you speak logically, sometimes you say, I will give you a chocolate if you do as I say. Sometime, you say I will give you a slap if you disobey me. I believe majority of parents would. So a father is cruel to be kind. Is the intention of the father to disfigure the child? No. His intention is to hurt him a little so as to prevent him from the bigger hurt. Likewise, God convinces people in different ways. So God, who is our creator, knows the psychology of the human beings. Sometimes He uses logic, sometimes reasoning, sometimes reward, sometimes punishment. Once He says something He has to follow through. That is how He tries to convince us. If you are a logical person, He convinces you with logic. For those who crave fear, they are given something to fear (Hell Fire); some people want punishment, so they are threatened (with chastisement); some people want reward, and they are promised reward (Heaven).

Coming to the imputation that Allah is not being large-hearted, there are some who say: When God is far superior to His creatures, why then does He feel bad that mankind is disobedient? I agree with you that it is human nature to think that God ought to forgive the sinner. The Qur'an says Allah (SWT) does not need you; you are the one in need of Him. Let us simplify the question or make it easier. Why does Allah ask us to say 'Allahu Akbar', 'Allahu Akbar'? i.e. Allah is the Greatest? Let's consider this: tomorrow if you don't say Allah is the Greatest, do you think Allah will be less than He is? No; of course not. Whether you say it or not, Allah is already the Greatest. So it makes no difference whether you say it or not. He will remain the Greatest.

Thus, in the same way, Allah is large hearted. By punishing us do you think He derives any benefit? No. By punishing the sinner He will not benefit but

He is giving us a fear. He said: If you take alcohol He will punish you, if you take drugs, He will punish you. But whether you take drugs or not, what difference does it make to Him? However, if a Doctor says don't take drugs but if you go ahead and take the drugs I will not punish you. Is it likely that you will take the drugs or not? Probably! It may even be very likely. The same way, God tells you this is good, this is bad, this is reward, and this is punishment. And once He says something it is so.

So, as far as Islam is concerned, God is the Most Kind. He is far kinder than our conception of Him. His is much kinder than we can ever imagine. He wants mankind to improve. It is different with belief in other Faiths. There object of worship is like a teacher who condones wrong doings. For instance, you have such a teacher, and there is a student studying with you in the same class, you stayed awake all night to study, this person plays snooker, enjoys watching films, and come examination time he writes wrong answers, and the teacher says both of you (and the delinquent student) get first class, will you be happy with the teacher? No. you will consider him a very unkind person, very cruel, and not a good human being. So besides being kind and Merciful, God is also Just. He must punish those who deserve it. And because God is the creator, He knows no one else is the creator. Not someone else who tries to behave like your creator when God knows that no one else can create you. Believing so (in idolatry) becomes very dangerous for you, because Allah is the Truth and any other that you associate with is falsehood. As such God said: take my advice, don't Worship another as the creator. Doing so is going against My commandment (Almighty God) which can only result in your down fall and lead you to perdition.

19. Non-Muslims ask why is it that Allah cursed the Jews in the Quran, while nowhere in the Bible can one find where God cursed the Arabs.

The Question is why are there verses in the Quran where Allah (SWT) cursed Jews, while the Holy Bible does not contain any such curses on the Arabs. The explanation is simply that when the Bible (the Injeel) was being revealed, the Jews were the chosen people of God and the Arabs were not even in the picture. The Gospel or Injeel was the revelation ('*Wahy*') given to Prophet (Isa) Jesus (pbuh) and the Torah which we believe was the revelation given to Prophet Moses (pbuh), at that time of their revelation, they were revealed to the Jews who were God's chosen people. God did not direct any of His messages to the Arabs at the time. Of the promises God made to Abraham (to bless both his offspring), He chose to grant that of the Israelites first, for reasons best known to Him. His promise to bless the progeny of Ishmael (the Arabs) was kept in abeyance, when the Israelites were in glory. As such, the Arabs were not the chosen people then.

Islam is a revival and reinstatement of the religion of Jesus and of all other Prophets. God, being the loving Creator and Sustainer of all (the) worlds, cannot become partial and choose one nation to the exclusion of all others for revealing His messages. The Muslim, unlike the Christian believes in all the Prophets and all the revealed books. Islam declares that God raised Prophets in every nation to guide the people to the truth and righteousness.

If you analyze and review the Glorious Qur'an you will find, in several places, that it gave examples of the Jews. Of the Twenty five prophets that were mentioned by name in the Quran, majority of them were Jewish prophets. You will find very few that were non-Jews. So Jews were the chosen people of Allah (SWT). But Allah said to them that inspite of the fact that He has chosen them, they have disobeyed the commandment He had set for them. Consequently, they failed in their assigned duties. Let's try to illustrate: Suppose in a classroom, someone makes a mistake, it is the duty of the teacher to correct that person, and if you are at fault, then he scold or punish you. So Allah gave the answer, in Sura 'Muhammad' chap 47 verse 38, Allah says:

- *“. . . If ye turn back (from the Path), He (Allah) will substitute in your stead another people: then they would not be like you!”(Q. 47: 38)*

In this verse, Allah said since the Jews have refused to do that for which they were created so: 'out with you' He virtually said. Consequently, He chose and brought in another people, this time: the Arabs. And when the mantle passed on to the Arabs, the Jews looked down upon them. This is what the Jews said about the Arabs: "these people, these ignorant people, what can they possibly tell us? What is the use of telling us about the religion?" So Allah said: "those people that you look down upon, I have made them to sit down on your 'heads'." And the Arabs who were ignorant people were by the revelation of the Qur'an made the touch-bearers.

Before the advent of Muhammad (God's peace and blessing be upon him), the seventh-century Arabs of Makkah (Mecca) were not capable of establishing a civilization of which the hallmark was knowledge for they were generally ignorant and illiterate. This was confirmed by the Quran:

- *"It is He Who has sent amongst the unlettered, an apostle from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, - although they had been, before, in manifest error. As well as (to confer all these benefits upon) others of them, who have not already joined them: And He (God) is Exalted in Might, Wise.”(Quran 62:2-3)*

It was the Prophet Muhammad's call that shook them to their foundations and turned their social structure upside down. They were transformed by that call and that divine message, and set off in every direction of the then-known world, changing the course of history as they went along. And in the Quran, Allah referred to those who do not follow the instruction and says: 'don't be like them'. But it was not only the Jews that Allah cursed; Allah cursed all peoples who are wrong. Like for example, Sura "Humuza" Chapter 104 verse one, Allah said:

- *"Woe to every kind of scandal-monger and backbiter,"* (Q. 104: 1)

This is to say, irrespective of whichever religion he follows, even if he is a so-called Muslim, if he backbites, Allah says woe to him. Curse on them! As such, anyone who doesn't follow Allah's commandments, preferring to abstain and go against Allah's commandment, Allah doesn't like them.

So when the Arabs were not the chosen people, why would God curse them? For example, a teacher has a hundred students, all of them are Girls and they are in class 5. If they don't know their subject well and failed their test, it is obvious that the teacher will have to flunk them. But then what justification is there for him to include a group of Boys in class four in the list of those that must fail when they are not those people who are attending his class?

Similarly, at that time when Allah single out the Jews as His chosen people the Arabs were not being considered. So when He cursed the Jews, the question of cursing the Arabs does not arise, otherwise in the Quran, God cursed many people, all other people who have done wrong (which would include the Arabs). Secondly, the Bible could not have contained any curse on the Jews because that was the time they were committing the offence, though they were in their glory. The curse appeared in the Quran because it came later after God had proclaimed them guilty of wrong doing. And it is the time when Allah is revealing what had transpired a long time ago (before the Quranic revelation), to the Arabs which is centuries later.

20. Non-Muslims state that, "Muslims say that idol worship is Haram; that it is not allowed, but are yet worshipping the 'Kaaba' at Mecca."

In response to this misconception let us first look at Idol worship. Those who worship Idols consider it to be an image of God or see it as an intercessor between them and God Almighty. So the Idol is perhaps a demi-god (a Deity) or that it houses the spirit of a Deity, i.e. not God Himself. These false gods are not real; they are only the figments of the imaginations of those who indulge in the false worship. But the prophets or great men (good men) whose names were vainly taken in competition with the name of God, and the personified ideas or idols treated in the same way would themselves protest against the use of their names in that way one day. They will deny and reject the veneration directed at

them as the act of ignorance or superstition or selfish lusts of those who worship them on the Day of Judgment.” (Prof. A.Y.Ali, N.1418)

When we shut our eyes to God’s glory and goodness, and go after false gods, we give some plausible excuse to ourselves that they will intercede for us. But how can stock (animals) and stones intercede for us? And how can men (or Jinns) intercede for us, when they themselves have need of God’s Mercy? None can intercede for us except by His express permission (ref: Mark 13:32; and Mathew 24:36, also *Quran 82:19; and Chapter 29:57*). Even the best and noblest cannot intercede as of right, but only with God’s permission. And in Quran chapter 10:18 Allah says:

- *“They serve besides God, things that hurt them not, nor profit them and they say: “these are our intercessors with God.” Say: “Do ye indeed inform God of something He knows not, in the heavens or on the earth? – Glory to Him! And far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!” (Q. 10:18)*

Consequently, to pretend that there are other powers than God is to invent lies and to presume to teach God. The Quran says:

- *“One day shall We gather them all together. Then shall We say to those who joined gods (with Us): “to your place! Ye and those ye joined as ‘partners’.” We shall separate them, and their ‘partners’ shall say: “It was not us that ye worshipped!” (Q. 10:28)*

There is nothing in heaven or earth that He does not know, and there is no other like unto Him. In Quran chapter 10, verse 3, Allah said:

- *“Verily your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority), regulating and governing all things. No intercessor (can plead with Him) except after His leave (hath been obtained). This is God your lord; Him therefore serve ye; will ye not receive admonition?” (Q. 10:3).*
- *“One Day He will say, “Call on those ye thought to be My partners,” and they will call on them, but they will not listen to them; and We shall make for them a place of common perdition.” (Q. 18:52)*

Christianity also frowned at Idolatry. The Bible, in the book of Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 18 – 19, it says:

- ❖ *“Of what value is an Idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes Idols that cannot speak. Woe to him who says to wood, ‘come to life!’ or to lifeless stone, ‘Wake up!’ Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it.”*

Coming to the issue of the Kaaba; the truth of the matter is that no Muslim ever worships the Kaaba. No Muslim, no matter how ignorant, would say that he or she has gone to worship the Kaaba. We worship Allah *Subhanahu Wa Ta'allah* (SWT). And no Muslim believes that Allah resides in the Kaaba either, let alone worship it for that reason. The Kaaba is the '*kiblah*' (i.e. direction) of the Muslim. Because we Muslims believe in unity, it serves as our centre of focus. For unity (of purpose) every Muslim faces the Kaaba. If one is living in the North of the Kaaba, he faces the south towards it; if she is living in the East of the Kaaba, she faces the West etc., whichever part of the world the Muslim is, he or she faces towards the Kaaba. It is treated as the centre of world for Muslims. It is a point of focus or a rallying point. And, when Muslims go for Hajj and Umra (lesser hajj) they circumbulate around the Kaaba.

The Muslims were the first people to draw the Map of the world. They placed the South Pole at the top and the North Pole at the bottom of the Map, and the Kaaba was placed at the centre, to mark it as the centre of the world. Consequently, whenever Muslims pray, they pray towards the centre. During the Renaissance, the European Geographers turned the map upside down and placed the North Pole on top and South Pole at the bottom. Alhamdulillah! (Glory be to God), that action did not however remove the Kaaba from its original position; the Kaaba remained in the centre. When we circumbulate round the Kaaba we testify that there is only one God: There is only one Allah (SWT). The best answer was given by the second Caliph of Islam Umar bin Khattab (may God be pleased with him). Umar said, *"I am kissing the black stone because my Prophet kissed it, otherwise it can neither benefit me nor cause me harm; I am only touching it because of my beloved prophet."* This statement of the second Caliph of Islam is sufficient to prove that we do not worship the Kaaba. (Reference: The Sahih of Bukhari, part No. 2, in the book on Hajj, chapter 56, Hadith number 605).

Secondly, another point that the non-Muslims need to realize is that during the time of the Prophet (pbuh), the 'Sahabas' (Disciples) used to stand on the Kaaba and give the call to prayer ('Azzan'). Let me ask you, which idol worshiper will ever stand on the idol he worshipped in order to venerate it? An idol worshiper to stand on the idol being worshipped is unheard of. This alone is sufficient proof that Muslims do not worship the Kaaba.

21. Non-Muslims countered that if Islam is a universal religion, why are non-Muslims not allowed to enter Mecca and Medina?"

Every country has certain area – known in the military language as 'cantonment', where only those people involved with the defense of the country are allowed. Even as a citizen of your country, you are not allowed to go into the cantonment area without authority, because only those people involved with the defense of the country are allowed there – or any person who

has business there - no one else. Similarly, the 'Haramain' (i.e. Makkah and Medina) are considered the cantonment area of Islam, because Allah gave the ordinance in the Glorious Qur'an, in Surah Tauba, Chapter 9 Verse 28.

- *"From this day, do not allow the non-believers to enter Makkah and Madina – the Haramain. (Q. 9:28)*

Islam is a free-world, but only those people who are involved in protecting and defending it are allowed in the cantonment area – Makkah (Mecca) and Medina. Furthermore, there is the matter of Visa consideration. When you visit any country, you require a visa; any country you want to go, you have to apply for visa – without visa you cannot enter. USA happens to be the country which is the most difficult to get a visa – especially for the citizen of the third-world countries. And when you apply for the visa they ask you several questions relating to your business in their country. Similarly, for entering Makkah and Madina everybody requires a visa. The visa for entering Makkah and Madina must ascertain that you are a Muslim and you can say with your lips *"LA'ILAHA ILLA ALLAH, MUHAMMAD RASULALLAH – "There is no God but Allah and Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."* If you say this, then no one can deny you entry visa into Makka and Madina. There is nothing more that will prevent you entry which does not apply to other countries of the world.

22. Non-Muslims believe that Muslims are fundamentalists and Terrorists.

How does one respond to such a question? Perhaps we should first define what Fundamentalism is or who is a fundamentalist? When you look up the meaning of the word fundamentalism in the Webster Dictionary, it will tell you that fundamentalism is a movement which started in the early part of the 20th century by a group of protestant Christians, who carried out a civil protest to insist that the teaching of the Bible is the word of God. However, their protest was meant to establish that, not only the teaching but every letter, and every word of the Bible is the word of God. What this protest meant to underscore is that if anyone can prove that the Bible is the Word of God, it will be acceptable to them. If on the other hand, anyone can prove that the Bible is not the word of God; it will be rejected (not be recognized).

Secondly, a fundamentalist is a person who follows the fundamentals of a certain profession, trade or calling. For example, for a person to be a good Engineer he should know or follow and practice the fundamentals of Engineering. So to be a fundamentalist in the field of Engineering is to be a good Engineer. Again, for a person to be a good scientist he should follow, know and practice the fundamentals of science. He should be a fundamentalist in the field of science to be a good scientist. For a person to be a good Doctor he should know, follow and practice the fundamentals of medicine. He should be a

fundamentalist in the field of medicine to be a good doctor, just as every Christian, to be a good Christian has to be a fundamentalist Christian.

You cannot think of any fundamentalist as good or bad. Yet you have to analyze in which field is he fundamentalist. For example, you may have a fundamentalist robber, who is expert in robbing. He has made a lifetime of robbing; is he good or bad? For the society, it is harmful – which is why he is a bad person. On the other hand, you have a fundamentalist doctor, who knows medicine very well; he treats the people, and cures hundreds of people and prevents many people from dying. He is a fundamentalist doctor. But is he good or bad for society? We know that it is beneficial for the society; as such he is a good fundamentalist. You can think all fundamentalists are the same; that all of them are good or all of them are bad, depending on which field they are fundamentalist in. We have seen that Fundamentalism is a word used, first time to describe the movement started by a group of protestant American Christians, who said that every word in the Bible is the word of God, and must be accepted as such.

However, as far as Religion is concerned, when you look up the meaning of the word fundamentalist in the Oxford Dictionary, it says that “a fundamentalist is a person, who strictly adheres to ancient teaching of a doctrine – especially Islam” (Note the isolation or highlighting of Islam in the definition). This seemingly innocent action by the Authors of the Oxford Dictionary, is the reason why the moment people hear the word ‘fundamentalists’, they think of Islam. This singling out of Islam by Oxford Dictionary, in giving an example (*especially Islam* it says), has been the greatest disservice to the faith. The whole world has therefore been indoctrinated to the effect that the moment they hear the word fundamentalist, what stand at the back of peoples’ mind is Islam. Thanks to the Oxford Dictionary, a fundamentalist can be no other but a Muslim.

And along with the word fundamentalist, the word terrorist is also attached. Immediately they start thinking the word: Oh! Fundamentalist! – Terrorist! Consequently, if one is a Muslim, he has to be a fundamentalist; he has to be a terrorist. But do you know, Dr. Zakir Naik believes that it is the duty of every Muslim to be a terrorist? What does that exactly mean? That every Muslim should be a terrorist? This needs some explaining; but first, what is the meaning of the word terrorist? A terrorist is a person who causes terror. Whenever a robber sees a policeman he is terrified. The policeman is a terrorist for the robber – right or wrong?

Aware that the word terrorist is commonly used for causing terror to the innocent people; in that context, no Muslim should be a terrorist because Islam is a religion of peace. A Muslim should not at all terrify any innocent person. If

at all, he should be like the Police, he should be a selective terrorist – a terrorist only to the anti-social elements.

Many a times, the activity of one particular individual is given two different labels – same person, same activity, but two different labels are given by two different groups of people. Let me give an example: Where you have a people who are being oppressed by a colonial power, those among the oppressed who fight to liberate their people are called terrorist by the oppressive regime; but to their people, these 'fighters' are called 'Patriots'. Same people, same activity, two different labels. One group calls them terrorists another group calls them patriots – as freedom fighters.

Before you give a label to any particular individual, you first need to analyze the background. If you agree for example, to the views of the British Government (oppressive regime) that Britain had a right to rule countries like Nigeria, India, Kenya, China, including America (when it did) then, you will call the freedom fighters terrorists. But if you agree with the views of the peoples of these countries that the British people were in those countries only for business and then ended up colonizing (ruling) these countries for hundreds of years, and have no legitimate right to rule them, then you must call the people – the same individuals as freedom fighters. Same people, same activity, two different labels. That is why before you label any individual, try to analyze the background and then give your view. In this context, in the current context every good Muslim should be seen as a fundamentalist Muslim and should be a terrorist to the anti-social elements.

Why would I want to suggest that? It is Simple. The fact remains that each and every Doctrine of Islam is beneficial for the whole of human kind. There is not a single teaching of Islam which any human being on the face of the earth can place his finger on, which is detrimental to the human race as a whole. Some people, because of their misconception of Islam may think (or say) this particular aspect of Islam is not correct because they do not have in-depth knowledge of the religion. But anyone who is unbiased and has correct knowledge cannot show a single doctrine of Islam which is against my view, therefore Alhamdulillah! Every Muslim should be a fundamentalist, only then will he be a good Muslim. Just as every Christian, to be a good Christian has to be a fundamentalist Christian. What is happening with Muslims today, perhaps due to ignorance, is the moment anyone call us a fundamentalist Muslim we says: No, No, we are not fundamentalists. If you are not a fundamentalist Muslim you are not a good Muslim at all. There is no Pseudo-Muslim – many people are apologetic. The moment they are attacked they go into defense! No! No! – I am not a fundamentalists – I am a good Muslim. But how can you be a good Muslim without following the fundamentals doctrines and practices of the Faith? You have to be a fundamentalist to be a good Muslim - Fundamentalist in the field of Islam.

23. Non-Muslims say that though Islam is such a beautiful religion, yet its followers are known to be bad and dishonest; they cheat and do illegal activities. Does that have anything to do with its teaching?

Though the non-Muslims admit that Islam is such a good religion, they however see the Muslims as the worse people due to the behaviors and activities of a few. This unfortunate view that all Muslims are useless, bad and dishonest, arise due to the active propaganda of the Media. Doubtlessly, there are black sheep even in the Muslim communities. There are Muslims that are dishonest. There are Muslims who cheat. There are Muslims who can drink the non-Muslim 'under the table' i.e. they can have much more alcohol, (more pegs, more bottles) than some non-Muslims. This is a fact that cannot be denied, but the (western) media picks up these Muslim black sheep and project them as exemplary Muslims. They pick up these bad examples and generalize, imputing that all Muslims are like that.

That the westerners are afraid of Islam is not in doubt. And because they are afraid of Islam they create propaganda in order to rubbish Islam. Why? The reason is really simple. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world today, and it threatens to overtake Europe. Consequently, the western media has been so programmed to the effect that nowadays, whenever any bomb blast takes place anywhere in the world, the first suspect is the Muslim. For example, in 1966, the Oklahoma bombing, at that time was the biggest attack on the American soil. More than a hundred people were killed, 106 to be exact. It became a headliner; and they shouted: **“Middle-East conspiracy”; “Muslims are to blame”**. The headlines scream for days, later on they came to know that it was two American soldiers; citizens of America. Hate comes once and vanishes. When they don't know the culprit, the headlines go on for days. When they come to know the culprit, after one or two days the news goes out. Why?

When in India, a fifty-year old Muslim man marries a 15 year old girl, it becomes a Headline News: front page: **“fifty-year-old Muslim marries a fifteen-year-old girl”**, even if this is something that happened with the consent of the girl and the permission of the parents; it will still attracts front page headline. When a 50 year old non-Muslim man rapes a 6 year old girl, it is news alright, but it is placed in a small corner of the inside page, a tiny paragraph. This is how the media controls issues and you know the West control the media. The western media is programmed to project Islam negatively. Whenever they get information that concerns a Muslim, they malign Islam. That is how it picks up a bad case that involves a Muslim and projects it as an example of Muslim behavior. Many a time the media quote something of the Qur'an out of context, deliberately.

On the whole, non-Muslims will find that the challenges faced by other Faiths are equally faced by Islam. Yet it is only Islam that is identified by the

negative behaviors and attitudes of a few of its extremists. By this, it is meant that all religions, whether Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism etc. including Idolatry, have bad adherents or those that can be characterized as extremists: Extremists not Fundamentalists. Extremists are like an infestation in the religion. Is it not ironic that in all these faiths, the extremist behaviors of all the other adherents, which can be described as excesses are never used to describe these other faiths except Islam? We should of course not forget that as part of the propaganda, non-Muslims have been used to carry out these dastardly acts in the name of Islam; all they needed to do is to shout "Allahu Akbar" and they will be tagged "Muslims".

As with many other religions therefore, Islam is not to be judged by what some so-called Muslims do, when it is clear that they are going against the teaching of Islam. Islam is totally against aggression. The true teaching of Islam provides that aggression is forbidden in all cases. It is not allowable to oppress anyone, even a disbeliever. A dictum of the prophet had been "*Oppress not and do not be oppressed*". Muslims are taught not to commit aggression nor initiate violence; "*for God does not love the aggressors*" says the Qur'an (2:190). In this regard the Almighty God has said further;

- ". . . Do not let your dislike for a people cause you to be unjust. Be just, for it is closer to being God-fearing..." (Qur'an 5:8).

Therefore, we should be fair in judging a religion by its teaching and not by the behaviors of humans being whose actions are sometimes in defiance or bespeak of ignorance of the religion they claim to follow. The way of life or religion is not to be judged by its followers who may disobey or be ignorant of its teachings. It should be judged rather, by the actual teaching of its scriptures. It is therefore more objective to assess Islam by the teaching of the Quran and the Sunnah (Tradition) of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) rather than the behavior of some deviants. Otherwise the basis of this kind of judgment will be totally unfair, whether applied to Islam or Christianity or any other.

It is imperative that the same principle of viewing the precept of a religion be based on the teaching of its scriptures and laid down practices, otherwise if the atrocities committed by Christians all over the world are used to judge the religion of Christianity, there will be a terrible verdict. And if it comes to actual track record of operation and violence committed by so-called Christians and so-called Muslims, the action of so-called Christians in the past 1000 years indicates a far worse record of aggression and unjustified killings of both Christians and Muslims than anything done by the so-called Muslims.

For example, Christians fought each other in First World War, about 18 million lives perished. And in the Second World War about 32 million lives were lost. The Americans who were Christians carried out the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan (not a Christian country then) killing thousands of innocent civilians, men, women, young and old, including babies and the

unborn. For centuries Christians organized Crusades, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade from Africa to America; the colonization and exploitation of Africa and Asian countries in the name of religion and trade (or what they called friendship). Add to that the genocide of Native Americans and Australian Aborigines, the Spanish Inquisition, the killing of defenseless Indians in Amritsar and other Indian cities by the British who are Christians, in the name of Administration (or keeping the peace?).

In our time, we have witnessed bombings and killings between Catholic and Protestants in Northern Ireland and the ethnic cleansing, massacre and rape of Bosnian Muslims. Consider also the genocide of blacks in the Apartheid Regime of South Africa. Would we therefore be right to conclude that this is the teaching of Christianity? Would this violence be a reflection of the teaching of Jesus Christ? Such an assessment will surely be outrageously unfair, even if the perpetrators of some of these atrocities would claim to act in the name of Christ or in the spirit of Christianity.

Islam is the only religion I know in which the negative activities of a very few of its adherents who have become militant due to circumstances arising perhaps from ethno-political and historical origins and which does not have any bases in the teachings of the faith or its creed; yet have been used to describe the religion of Islam especially by westerners. For instance Islam, like other faiths, abhors murder, suicide, abortion, robbery, usury, fraud, gambling, alcoholism, adultery & fornication, and homosexuality, etc. It is clearly a case of, "give a dog a bad name to hang it". Each time a Muslim takes an action, irrespective of his motivation, the propaganda machines would roll; "BEHOLD ISLAM!". This has never been the case with other known religions of the world and certainly not the case with Christianity; so why Islam?

When the 'Lords Army' which is operated on the basis of the 'Ten Commandments' take irrational actions, no one blames Christianity. In spite of the atrocities of Ariel Sharon, no one has blamed Judaism. This is not the case with Islam, every action and inaction of a Muslim, especially when negative, it is blamed on Islam. But when it is a positive action, no one reports it. On page 279 of his book 'Silent No More' Paul Findley has this to add:

*"Today, Muslims are the primary targets of intolerance, and to an embarrassing degree, Muslim stereotypes are **made-in-America**. I am probably like millions of other Americans. I always thought Muslims were strange, off-the-wall people. I got this impression from snippets of television news and newspaper headlines. Now I know better, but I am afraid most people don't."* (p.83)

On page 280, he says further,

"American attitudes on terrorism and the other false image of Islam are heavily influenced by few minutes of evening news provided on network television. These reports specialize in outside coverage of a few shocking,

violent events and rarely present more than two or three breathless sentences about any of them. This means that the words "Muslim" and "Islam" are usually brought to the attention of the American television audience only in relation to violence and other harsh, unpleasant events." (p. 83)

Unfortunately, no other group of people is treated this way. This much Paul Findley refers to in page 286,

"Terrorism perpetrated by certain fringe groups of the Irish Republican Army has never been characterized as 'Catholic terrorism'. Orthodox Christian Serbs who committed pogroms against Bosnian and Kosovan Muslims have never been identified as 'Christian' murderers; - and religious extremists settlers in the West Bank who randomly kill and maim Palestinian are almost never called 'Jewish terrorists'. In this context, the media is urged to apply the same standard when reporting about Muslims." (p. 83 – 84).

And on page 171, he appealed to the American people even though it is a message for the West generally.

"Every religious movement has radical elements but the Muslims with whom I have dealt are kind, respectful, hospitable and considerate of others. I have chanced upon Muslims at prayer in office, on farms and, of course, nor do Christians and Jews always behave as they should. . . My plea is not for Islam but for understanding; Christians and Jews should get acquainted with Islam and see Muslims as human beings, not in ugly, false stereotypes. For our own sake as we strive to live happily on this ever-shrinking globe, we should demolish the false images that flaw our vision and sometime misdirect our government's policies." (p. 84)

Consequently, if you want to judge Islam don't judge it by those who are not practicing by the dictates of the Faith. Judge the Faith by its authentic source. If you really want to know about Islam, don't look at the everyday Muslim, look at the scriptures: the Glorious Qur'an and the Sahih Hadith. We need to understand a religion by looking at its scriptures. And when you read the scripture - the authentic sources - of the Islamic Faith: the Qur'an and the Hadith, you will really appreciate Islam and you will come to know that there is no religion better than Islam.

And, if you want to judge Islam by any follower, don't look at me; the best example of a Muslim that you can find is the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Study the Qur'an and the Hadith and you will find that Muhammad is the best example of a Muslim and the best example of the human being you can find. Many non-Muslims have paid glowing tribute to him. You may not have read the book *"The 100 Most Influential People in History"* by Michael Hart. His selection cut across all known religions of the world, from ancient times to the present time. He gave number one position to our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh),

though himself a non-Muslim; he was that sincere and impartial. Check how aptly Thomas Carlyle criticizes his Christian brethren over a hundred and fifty years ago, about the negative propaganda poured on the prophet of Islam! He said: *"The lies which well meaning zeal has heaped round this Man (Muhammad) are disgraceful to ourselves only."* So, if you want to judge Islam, by the followers, the best example of a Muslim is our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

However, Muslims cannot totally blame the Christian faithful for their skepticism, as they have been so programmed for centuries. They were trained to think the worst of the man Muhammad (pbuh) and his religion. It is just as Ahmed Deedat said: *"We Muslims are partly responsible for this staggering ignorance of the Christians"*. But there are sincere writers, biographers, and historians in the past century or so, in spite of scarcity of books on Islam and Islamic scriptures, who took time to research on Islam generally. Rev. Bosworth Smith (1889) in his writing observes that: *"During the first few centuries of Mohammadanism, Christendom could not afford to criticize or explain; it could only tremble and obey. But when the Saracens had received their first check in the heart of France, the nations which had been flying before them faced round as a herd of cows will sometimes do when the single dog that has put them to flight is called off; and though they did not yet venture to fight, they could at least calumniate their retreating foes. Dances-like, they could manufacture calumnies and victories at pleasure."* ('Mohammad and Mohammadanism' 3rd ed., London, 1889, p.63).

24. Muslims are accused of bigotry for claiming that Islam is the most perfect religion, hence the fastest growing religion in the world?

Islam is the religion of God. Islam is a complete way of life, it is not a religion in the common, distorted meaning of the word, confining its scope to the private life of man, rather it caters for all the field of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all walks of life – individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international. It is the embodiment of the code of life which God, the Creator and the Lord of the universe, has revealed to his procession of Prophets for the guidance of mankind. Islam's tolerance springs in fact from the pluralistic vision of the Qur'an. The Qur'an enjoins man to enter the fold of Islam without any reservation and to follow God's guidance in all fields of life. It is a comprehensive approach to all aspects of human life.

Muslims believe in all Divine Scriptures and in all Prophets of God, which God had sent to each nation as warners, some of whom He sent with a Scripture as guidance for that particular nation. To Abraham was given a set of guidance; the Qur'an called it the 'Suhuf'. The Torah (the Old Testament) to Moses, the Psalms (Zabur) was given to David, and the New Testament (Injeel) to Jesus. It is

contended though, that none of these Scriptures mentioned remained in their original pristine form now. As part of Allah's original plan, He finally sent Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the Seal of prophethood with the Holy Qur'an as guidance for all mankind, everywhere and for all times. Jesus (pbuh) in his teachings, as the evangelic records made clear, said that he did not come to destroy the earlier Prophets nor their laws but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 16: 17).

As we have seen, informed Muslims recognize the genuineness of the messages given to Moses and Jesus, and allow them to live in accordance with their own beliefs. The Qur'an says:

- *"The same religion has He established for you (O'Muhammad) as that which He enjoined on Noah, - that which We have sent by inspiration to thee, and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus: namely, that ye should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no division therein;" (Al-Qur'an 42:13).*

Muslims are enjoined to:

- *"Say: we believe in God, and in that which has been sent down to us, and sent down unto Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes. We believe in all that was given unto Moses, Jesus and other Apostle of their lord. No distinction do we make between them, and unto Him we surrender". (Qur'an 3:84).*

And to Prophet Muhammad, it is said:

- ❖ *"In truth hath He sent down to thee the Book which confirmed those which preceded it."(Al-Qur'an 3:2)*

Consequently, the Muslim in his belief sees the Mission of Muhammad as no different from that of Jesus (pbut). The fundamental beliefs of both Islam and Christianity are the same. Jesus and Muhammad (pbut) were both sent to confirm the Scriptures (i.e. the religion) that came before them. That is, they were both touch bearers on the same 'Path', albeit at different points in time, like Moses before them. All Prophets from Adam to Muhammad (pbut) were sent with the same message that is, the total submission of mankind (and Jinns) to the Will of Allah (SWT).

The Qur'an remains in the original form that was revealed, word for word and letter for letter. The Qur'an is the divine word of God. Any translation or rendition in any language, cannot be called Qur'an. The moralities and the immoralities specified in the Qur'an will remain so forever, and cannot be diluted, manipulated, or rationalized. There are no clergy or scholars who can claim to be endowed with the right or ability of special interpretation. This does not mean that all Muslims are therefore virtuous people who do not sin. Of course, some Muslims violate their own religion by committing sins and abominations, but at least they know it is sin, and it will remain on their conscience until they desist and repent to God. Learned Muslims do not have

any confusion or vagueness about what is lawful in the religion and what is unlawful.

In its Basic Teachings, Islam is a religion without complicated methodology. Its teachings are simple and intelligible; free from superstitions and irrational beliefs. Its articles of faith are based on reason and sound logic. All the teachings of Islam follow from these basic beliefs and are simple and straight forward. There is no hierarchy of priests, no far-fetched abstractions, no complicated rites and rituals. Everybody is to approach the book of God and translate its dictates into practice. Islam awakens in man the faculty of reasons and exhorts him to use his intellect. It brings man out of the world of superstition and darkness and initiates him into that of knowledge and light. It enjoins him to see things in the yellow light or reality. Islam states clearly that its objectives are purification of the soul and the reform and reconstruction of the society. The Qur'an says:

- ❖ *"We verily sent our messengers with clear proofs and revealed with them the scripture and the balance (i.e. the authority to establish justice), that mankind may observe the right measure; and He revealed iron (i.e. coercive power) wherein is mighty power and many uses for mankind and that Allah may see who helpeth Him and His messenger though unseen" (Qur'an 57:25).*

And that,

- ❖ *"The command is from none but Allah: he hath commanded that ye obey none but Him: that is the right path (Quran 12:40)*

And Allah had said: "Wakafa billah shaheedan" that: "And enough is Allah as a witness" because, according to Allah, He has given the religion of truth, and sent the messenger with guidance, so that it will prevail over all other religion. Islam is the only religion and Quran is the only religious scripture which has a solution to the problem of mankind.

It is not surprising that George Bernard Shaw after an in-depth study of Islam was moved to eloquence, thus: *"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality... it is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him – the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the saviour of humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness. I have prophesized about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today". (G. B. Shaw, [1936], 'the Genuine Islam', Singapore, Vol. I. No. 8)*

Also in a statement regarding Islam, Napoleon Bonaparte spoke in the same vein. He said: *“Moses has revealed the existence of God to his nation. Jesus Christ to the Roman world, Muhammad to the old continent... I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of the Qur’an which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness”.* (Bonaparte et l’Islam by Cherfils, Paris, France pp105-125).

The reason why Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world is because it is the only religion which is based on complete truth. And Allah gave the promise in the Qur’an thrice, in Sura Toubah chapter 9 verse 33, in chapter 60 verse 9, as well as chapter 48 verse 28 Allah says:

- *“Allah sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, so that it will prevail over all other ways of life, over all other religions, over all the other ‘isms’. Islam is destined to supersede all, master them all, overcome them all, however, the Mushrikeen (idolaters) dislike it.”(Q. 9:33; 60:9; 48:28)*

Islam is a religion that caters for all spiritual needs of man. Islam is power and politics because it enunciates how to run the state. Islam is economy since it explains how to manage the resources of this world. Islam is science because it provokes investigations that always lead to scientific discoveries. Before the coming of Islam, the world was in the Dark Age. Humanity was busy with merriments until Muhammad (pbuh) “rescued the control of the Train-bus from its captains and reoriented man’s direction, attention and energy.” If you analyze sociologically and scientifically, Islam is the best way of life, therefore the spread is natural. And Allah (SWT) says in the Glorious Qur’an in sura ‘Ali-Imran’, chapter 4 verse 19:

- *“The only religion acceptable in the sight of Allah (SWT) is Islam.”(Q. 4: 19)*

And the Quran described those who believe in this as Muslims, and identified them as follows:

- ❖ *“(Muslims are) those who, if we give them power in the land, establish the systems of Salat (prayers and worship) and ‘Zakat’ (poor– due) and enjoin virtue and forbid vice and evil”. (Quran 17:41).*

People recognize this, and are embracing the truth and uncomplicated simplicity in its doctrine; that is the reason for its fast growth in the world today. And the numbers are there to show that it is today the most populated religion.

25. Non-Muslims accuse Muslims of being abusive because they call them 'Kafirs'?

The answer to this question is short. Kafir (singular) is an Arabic word which comes from the root word Kufur, meaning to reject, (to deny). In the Islamic perspective, Kafir means a person who rejects the truth of Islam, or the Faith of Islam. If you want to translate it to English, it means non-Muslim (or non-believer). And even in Christianity you will find that non-Christians are called non-believers. The only difference is that Muslims prefer to use the Arabic term 'Kafir' (a rejecter of Faith).

Commenting on this, Prof. Abdullah Yusuf Ali says: "*Kafara, Kufr, Kafir*, and other derivative forms of the word, imply a deliberate rejection of Faith as opposed to a mistaken idea of God or Faith, which is not inconsistent with an earnest desire to see the truth. Where there is such desire, the grace and mercy of God gives the guidance. But that guidance is not efficacious when it is deliberately rejected, and the possibility of rejection follows from the grant of free-will. The consequence of rejection is that the spiritual faculties become dead or impervious to better influences. (Sheikh Abdullah Yusuf Ali, op. cit. p.18, n.30).

At any rate, as far as the Muslim is concerned, if the non-Muslim really feels bad about being called Kafir, all he has to do is to accept Islam and they will stop calling him a Kafir, because once he believes, he will no longer be one.

Chapter SIX

THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT, CREED AND DOCTRINE

Basic Postulates of Islam

The basic Islamic concept is that the entire universe was created by God, whom Islam calls 'Allah' and who is the Lord and Sovereign of the universe. He is One; Alone; and has no associate with Him in divinity. He is the Ruler of the universe, its Sustainer and Maintainer. He created man and appointed for each human being a fixed period which he is to spend upon the earth. Allah has prescribed a certain code of life as the correct one for him, but has at the same time conferred on man freedom of choice. It is up to man whether or not he adopts this code as the code of his life. One who chooses to follow the code revealed by God becomes a believer in Allah's Message (a Muslim) and one who refuses to follow it becomes a non-believer (a 'Kafir').

According to the Holy Qur'an (& the Bible), God is the Lord and Cherisher of all the worlds. He has made no discrimination between nations in sending His revelations. He has raised Prophets among all the nations of the globe. The same religion was revealed to all Prophets, as we are told in the Holy Qur'an, which says:

- *"Mankind is one community, and so God sent (unto all sections of them). Prophets are bearers of good tidings and as Warners; and revealed therewith the scripture with truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed."* (Qur'an 2:213)
- *"There is not a nation but a Warner hath passed among them"* (Qur'an 35:24)
- *"And for every nation there is a Messenger"* (Qur'an 10:48)
- *"Verily, we sent Messengers before thee, among them are those of whom we told thee and some of whom we have not told thee."* (Qur'an 40:8)

Hence, Islam believes in the Prophets of all nations.

Prophet Muhammad towards the end of his life, on the occasion of largest gathering of Muslims for pilgrimage (referred to as his farewell sermon) made a plea to his followers. He said: *"Do not revert to apostasy, where you slaughter one another."*

Christian Scholars who have researched Islam thoroughly like (C.G. Moucarry) suggest that Islam is an easier religion to practice than both Judaism and Christianity. He wrote that *"Islam sees itself as avoiding extremes. Half-way*

between the Jewish and Christian Communities, it carries on their monotheistic tradition. This Quranic idea of the 'middle ground' is shown in several ways according to Muslim thinkers." He compares Islam, Christianity and Judaism as follows:

- a) *"On the one side there are the Jews, who refused to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. On the other, there are the Christians, who claim that Jesus is the Son of God. In between are the Muslims, who recognize that Jesus is one of God's great prophets.*
- b) *The Jewish Law has hardly any concern for afterlife. Christian teaching, by contrast makes earthly sacrifices for the sake of heavenly blessings. The Muslim Law keeps necessary balance between life on earth and the afterlife.*
- c) *The Jewish Community follows a code of criminal Law which is too strict and a moral code which is not strict enough. The Christian community, on the other hand, follows a criminal code which is too lenient and a moral code which is too strict (This has changed significantly due to western influence). The Muslim community keeps to the middle way: Muslims follow a code of law which is neither too hard nor too easy for them (Q. 22:78). So Muslim law is the most perfect expression of God's will". (C. G, Moucarry)*

Moucarry seem to place his categorization of Islam as he did based on chapter 22, verse 78 of the Holy Quran which states:

- *"And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulty on you in religion; it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); that the Apostle may be a witness for you, and ye be witness for mankind! So establish regular Prayer, give regular Charity, and hold fast to God! He is your Protector - the Best to protect and the Best to help!" (Q. 22: 78)*

According to a Hadith (the prophet's tradition), Prophet Muhammad said: *"the religion (of Islam) is easy, and whoever makes the religion a rigour, it will overpower him. So, follow a middle course (in worship)"* (Reported by Al-Bukhari). In another Hadith, Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet said: *"Ruined are those who insist on hardship in matters of the Faith." He repeated this three times.*" (recorded by Muslim).

The Islamic Creed:

Islam teaches pure monotheism. The most fundamental belief in Islam is the Oneness of God with no 'partner' in His Divinity and Lordship. Without

this belief there is no Islam. According to the Hadith narrated by Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) who related that Allah's Messenger Prophet Muhammad said: *"Islam is based on the following five principles (pillars)":*

1. **Testimony:** To testify that there is none worthy to be worshipped save Allah (God) alone; and Muhammad (pbuh) is the Messenger of Allah.
2. **Prayers:** To perform the five daily prayers (at their appointed times).
3. **Zakat:** To pay (give out) yearly *Zakat* (poor-due or 'Tithe') to the needy.
4. **Fasting:** To observe 30 day's fasting (annually) during the Islamic Month Of Ramadan; and,
5. **Hajj Pilgrimage:** To perform the holy pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once in the lifetime the believer (who can afford it).

One's faith in the first pillar of Islam will not be complete without observing the other four. However, in the case of Zakat and Pilgrimage, it is restricted to those who have the means (which includes the financial resources and the physical ability). One's faith must of course include the belief in all Prophets of God, all Scriptures of God, the Angels, the Hereafter, Paradise and Hell-fire, Predestination and other Mysteries of God. In other words, acknowledging and believing in all the above must go hand in hand with the observance of the five pillars of Islam as will be discussed briefly below.

i) **The First Pillar: TESTIMONY**

The starting point of Islam is the '*Tawheed*' – **Belief in the unity of God.** This is the first part, and it concerns the Divinity, Authority and Sovereignty of the One and only God. That He alone is the Creator, the Sustainer, Saviour, Redeemer, and Deity; and there is none else. There is only One God, worthy of worship, alone without partners or associates in whatever sense. This *Tawheed* is stated categorically in the Quran, thus:

- *"... therefore, exalted be God, the King, the Reality: There is no god but He, the Lord of the Throne of Honour!" (Quran 23:116).*
- *"(He is) Lord of the East and the West: There is no god but He: Take Him therefore for (thy) Disposer of Affairs." (Q. 73:9)*
- *"Verily, verily, your God is One! Lord of the heavens and of the earth and all between them, and Lord of every point at the rising of the Sun!" (Q. 37:4 – 5).*

- *“Say:”Praise be to God, Who begets no son, and has no partners in (His) dominion: nor (needs) He any to protect Him from humiliation: Yea, magnify Him for His greatness and glory!” (Q. 17: 111).*
- *“He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him.”(Qur’an 112:3-4).*
- *“God! There is no God but He; The Living; The Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep. . . “(Quran 2:255).*
- *“There is no god but He: that is the witness of God, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on Justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, The Wise” (Quran 3:18).*

So the first Testimony of the Islamic faith is this: ***“There is no deity save God...”***
This is pure monotheism.

Abdul Wadod Shalabi (2006), in *‘Islam Religion of Life’*, expressed the implication of this testimony thus: There is no object of worship save God, no conditioner of meaning apart from Him. This is *an affirmation of complete transcendence; the most perfect articulation of what lies forever beyond the reach of language. This first testimony declares the unity of the metaphysical. (This Testimony) . . . is thus the foundation of every human personality. Upon this foundation are heaped the accretion of years of neglect and foolishness; yet religious knowledge is still a possibility for all human beings. Fundamental goodness, in this sense, negates the Christian doctrine of Original sin. Evil is from one’s world, not from one’s soul, which is of God.”*(Abdul Wadod Shalabi, edited by A.H. Murad, [2006], p.14-15).

Faith in a God who takes total interest in the affairs of His creatures leads us intellectually to ask certain questions relating to our relationship with Him. How may we approach Him and come to know Him more fully? What is the true nature of the human soul? What was its nature before our birth, and what, if any, will be its fate after death? These and other questions are addressed by the second Testimony of Islam: “. . . ***Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”***:

- i)* This second part of the Testimony: *‘Kalimatul Shahada’* (the article of Islamic faith), firstly signifies that God has not left man without any guidance for the conduct of his life. He has revealed guidance for the conduct of his life. He has revealed His guidance through His Prophets (pbut) and Muhammad (Pbuh) being the last Prophet, as stated in the Quran:

- *“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Apostle of God, and the Seal of the Prophets and God has full knowledge of all things.”* (Quran 33:40)
- ii) Secondly, he carries with him a message. He confirms what was taught by every Prophet before him, *“This is a Warner, of the (series of) Warners of Old!”* (Q 53: 56) and clarifies much that was previously unknown. At the forefront of his teachings comes the reminder that the universe has a Cause, and that this Cause is ‘One’.
- iii) Thirdly, he (the prophet) reminds us that we must affirm this realization in our lives. In order to make this easier, he has been given a set of devotional practices, the most important of which are known as the “Pillars of Islam,” which constitute the ideal and most simple means of approaching God.
- iv) Fourthly, the prophet tells us of God’s Will regarding the most successful organization of human society along lines that will create a suitable environment for the religious project. This system is known in Arabic as the *Shari’a*, the Legislature (the Way).
 - *“(This was Our) Way with the Apostles We sent before thee: Thou wilt find no change in Our Way.”* (Qur’an - 17: 77);
- v) And, in addition to all this, the prophet tells us of the spiritual world, of the angels, the other worlds, and of the end of time: the Apocalypse foretold by every religion (as well as Science), when the world will end and all mankind shall be judged.

Therefore, belief in the Apostleship of Muhammad (Pbuh) and in the guidance he brought concerns the channel of communication between the Creator and Mankind – known as ‘Prophethood’. A Muslim has to believe in the Messenger of God and follow his teachings, because he points to the only ‘Way’ to God. *“(This was Our) Way with the Apostles We sent before thee: Thou wilt find no change in Our Way.”* (Qur’an - 17: 77). And to believe in a Prophet means to believe in his message; to accept the Law which he gave and to follow the code of conduct which he taught.

Thus, the second basic postulate of Islam is to accept the religion which Prophet Muhammad presented and to follow his guidance which is from God. A man joins the fold of Islam by honestly believing in and professing faith in the unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad (Pbuh). Both these beliefs are epitomized in the ‘*Kalimatul Shahada*’ (the article of Islamic faith): ***“There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”***. This declaration, this simple statement: *“I bear witness there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad*

is His messenger” is the password into Islam. Uttering it with sincerity before two witnesses is all the formality required from new converts to Islam. The person who professes that Muhammad is God’s messenger in fact pledges to abide by the instructions and teachings of Muhammad, and to acknowledge their divine source. Thus, any person who has a firm belief in this statement is a ‘Muslim’ at heart (even if he or she knows it not).

However, as Abdul Wadod Shalabi (2006) observes, *“The full membership of the world community of Islam, consist in the uttering of these two statements. There is no rite of initiation, no sacrament of belief. It is a faith of the individual, which transforms societies. And it is a faith without intermediaries, without the special brokerage of a priestly class. The experience of the Light of Muhammad (pbuh) which is the line between the Absolute and the contingent, is not monopolized by a formal hierarchy of clergymen; rather it cascades historically from the prophets to the generations of mankind through men and women who by their own spiritual strivings, rather than through any formal liturgical function, are inwardly invested as Saints.”*(Abdul Wadod Shalabi edited by A.H. Murad,,2006, p.11-12)

Another author, A. Kuenen, wrote in similar vein. He said: *“Couched in such short and simple language, his creed (i.e. Muhammad’s) makes but little demand upon the intellect, and the definiteness, positiveness, and minuteness of the ritual leave the believer in no doubt as to what he has to do and these duties performed, he has the satisfaction of feeling that he has fulfilled all the precepts of the law. In this union of rationalism and ritualism, we may find, to a great extent, the secret of the power that Islam has exercised over the minds of men. ‘If you would win the great masses give them the truth in rounded form, neat and clear, in visible and tangible guise’.”* (A. Kuenen: ‘National Religions and Universal Religions’ p. 35- London 1882).

Imam Al-Bukhari, in his *Sahih* Hadith reported that Ubadah Ibn Samit (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (Pbuh) said: *If anyone testify to ‘La ilaha illallah’ (that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah alone) who has no partners and that Muhammad (pbuh) is His messenger, and that Isa (Jesus) (pbuh) is Allah’s slave and messenger and His Word which he bestowed on Mary and a spirit created by Him (God), and that Paradise is true and Hell is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he had done even if those deeds were few and such a person can enter Paradise through any of its gates he likes”.* (Sahih Al-Bukhari Vol. 4, Hadith No. 644).

Bishop Lefroy in his book ‘*Mankind and the Church*’, observes that the *“Secret of the extraordinary power for conquest and advance which Islam has in its best ages evinced . . . “is to be found in its recognition of the existence of God*

rather than the Unity of God.” He went further to say: “. . . Not so much that God is one as the God IS – that His existence is the ultimate fact of the universe that His will is supreme – His sovereignty absolute – His power limitless... the conviction that, amidst all the chaos and confusion and disorders of the worlds which so fearfully obscure it, there is nevertheless, an ultimate will, resistless, supreme, and that man is called to be a minister of that Will, to promulgate it, to compel – if necessary by very simple and elementary means indeed – obedience to that Will – this it was which welded the Mohammadan hosts into such invincible an engine of conquest, which inspired them with a spirit of military subordination and discipline, as well as with a contempt of death, such as has probably never been surpassed in any system – that is which, so far as it is still in any true sense operative amongst Mohammadans, give at once that backbone of character, that firmness of determination and strength of will, and also that uncomplaining patience and submission in the presence of the bitterest misfortune, which characterize and adorn the best adherent of the creed.” (Bishop Lefroy, ‘Mankind and the Church’, London 1907, p.283-4).

Bishop Lefroy wrote further in admiration: *“Bound up with these and other ritual observances, but not encumbered or obscured by them, the article of the Muslim creed are incessantly finding outward manifestation in the life of the believer, and thus, becoming inextricably interwoven with the routine of his daily life, make the individual Musulman an exponent and teacher of his creed for more than is the case with the adherents of most other religious.”* (Bishop Lefroy in: *Mankind and the Church* P. 289).

Belief in the Hereafter:

Belief in the Hereafter takes a third place, as a postulate. The world, according to Islam, is a place of trial and man is being judged in it. He will have to give an account of all that he does herein. Life on earth will one day, come to an end, and after that a new world will be resurrected. It will be in this life-after-death that man will be rewarded or punished for his deeds or misdeeds. Those who live in the present world, in a life of obedience to the lord, will enjoy eternal bliss in the hereafter and those who disobey His commands will have to garner the bitter fruits of their disobedience. Thus, the basic articles of Islamic faith are three, the third being the **Belief in the life-after-death and in man’s accountability before God on the Day of Judgment**. Whoever professes these beliefs is a Muslim. And all these concepts are epitomized in the ‘*Kalimatul Shahada*’ (the article of Islamic faith). According to the Qur’an:

- ❖ *“Verily We shall give life to the dead, and We record that which they send before and that which they leave behind, and of all things have We taken account in a clear Book (of evidence).(Quran 36:12)*

ii) **The Second Pillar: PRAYERS (SALAAT):**

Prophet Muhammad was directed by God to enjoin on Muslims to pray to God five times a day. Prophetic tradition recounted that one night, during the twelfth year of his mission, the Prophet was transported bodily from the sacred place of worship at Mecca to the temple mount of Jerusalem. He was then taken further, in the company of angels, into the presence of Allah. The account has it that during the celebrated ascent, known as (*Isra'i wa'l Mi'raj* in Arabic), the Prophet met with many of the Prophets who had preceded him, including Moses and Jesus. And when Angel Gabriel, who was leading the ascent, came finally with him to a point closer to (the presence of) the Almighty than had been attained by any previous being (God's creation), the mighty angel stopped, and told him that it is not his place to proceed beyond that point. (Hadith).

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) however, uniquely honoured by his Lord, continued to that point described in the Qur'anic account as the "Lote Tree of the Boundary," *"a vivid symbol of the point where the multiplicity of existence branches out from the level of complete Unity"*(Abdul Wadod Shalabi). This experience constituted in many ways the culmination of prophethood. And while in the presence of his Lord, the Prophet was given to instruct his companions to observe the five daily prayers, which themselves are symbols of the experience given to the Prophet at Jerusalem. As the Prophet said; *"The Prayer is the Ascension (Mi'raji) of the believer."* Allah says in the Qur'an:

- ❖ *"And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship God, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith); To establish regular Prayer; And to practice regular charity; And that is the Religion Right and Straight."* (Quran 98:5).

Muslims are further directed in the Quran thus:

- ❖ *"O ye who believe! Bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord; And do good; that ye may prosper."* (Q.22: 77)
- ❖ *"And be steadfast in Prayer; Practice regular charity; and bow down your heads with those who bow down (in worship)."* (Quran 2: 43).
- *"Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee and establish Regular Prayer; for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; And remembrance of God is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And God knows the (deeds) that ye do."* (Quran 29: 45).

The Qur'an gave further details on the nature of the prayer:

- *“And establish regular prayers, at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the Night: for those things that are good remove those that are evil: But that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord).”(Qur'an 11:14)*
- *“Establish regular prayers at the Sun's decline till the darkness of the Night; and the Morning prayer and reading: for the prayer and reading (of the Qur'an) in the Morning carry their testimony.”(Qur'an -17:78)*
- *“And pray in the small watches of the Morning: (it would be): An additional prayer (or spiritual profit) for thee: Soon will thy Lord raise thee to a station of Praise and Glory. (Q-17:79)*
- *“Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the middle prayer; and stand before God in a devout (frame of mind)” (Qur'an 2:238)*

Even non-Muslims praised this act of worship. One said that Prayer is pulling the switch that operates the powerhouse of Heaven. Mathew Henry advised us to *“Let Prayer be the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening.”* To illustrate this last point, here is a testimony by an American, by name Thomas Clayton. He recounted his first encounter with Islam, and how the experience left a lasting impression on him:

“The sun had just passed the meridian. As we walked along the hot, dusty road, we heard or rather felt a monotonous but strangely beautiful chant fill the air about us. Passing through a group of trees, a strange and wondrous sight befell our unbelieving eyes. There, on a recently improved high wooden tower, a blind Arab, clad in spotless raiment and white turban, seemed to harangue the very heavens with his fascinating intonation. We sat down with no conscious effort, hypnotized by his weird, spirit-like refrain. The words we did not understand fell fascinatingly upon our ears, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar: La ilaha illa'l-lah; God is the Greatest, God is the greatest; there is no god but God!

Before that, we had been aware of nothing going on about us, but now we noticed that a great number of people were beginning to assemble. People of all ages, of all manners of dress, of all walks of life, were approaching with a taciturnity which betokened reverence. They spread long mats upon the ground which produced an interesting colour contrast between the green of the grass and, the tan of the mats. More and more people came, and indeed, we had begun to wonder whether the assembly would ever be complete. The people

took off their shoes and sandals and formed long lines, one line falling in behind the other. We were amazed, even on our silent passive observation, that no distinctions of any kind were to be found in this congregation. Here were white men, yellow men, black men, poor men, wealthy men, beggars, and merchants, all standing side by side with no thought of race or social station in life. Not one single person in that whole gathering looked away from the mat immediately in front of him.

The fraternal spirit displayed by that heterogeneous group is an impression which was indelible. Almost three years have now passed since that event, two of which I have been a Muslim and I find myself even now awakening in the middle of the night to hear once more that beautiful and plaintive chant, and to see again those men who displayed the true attributes of men who sincerely seek their God.” (Thomas (Muhammad) Clayton, in Ebrahim Ahmed Bawany, ‘Islam Our Choice’ Cairo (1960), p.102)

The Prayer Ritual (Salaat)

The Prayer rite called ‘Al-Salaat’ in Islam is a distinct formal procedure, somewhat different from prayer in its wider sense (i.e. other than the communication of one’s feelings to God at anytime in any place and asking for His guidance, help and forgiveness). Al-Salaat is a practice that is ordained by God in the Qur’an. Ritual Islamic prayer takes a special form and content, in which both body and soul are harmoniously involved. The prayers may be performed at any clean place (home, mosque, park, the workplace, etc.) by an individual or in group.

The Prayer worship (Al-Salaat) in Islam is a blend of verbal supplication and physical movements, including the recitation of parts from any Chapter of the Qur’an, the purpose of which is to confirm and emphasize the spiritual essence. All these are done facing the direction (Qibla) of the House of God: the Ka’aba at Mecca. The prayers comprise several bodily movements, of these, the ‘Ruku’u’ (the bowing position from the waist, with eyes fixed on the ground) depicts the Muslim’s humility before the greatness of his or her Lord as he or she repeats the words prescribed for this position ‘Glorified is my Lord the Great’. Likewise, the ‘Sujud’ or position of prostration in prayer, with the forehead to the ground, depicts the trifling existence of the human being before the infinite majesty of the divine, and in words, ‘Glorified is my Lord the Exalted.’ These postures and movements signify a Muslim’s willingness to serve his Lord and Creator, reposing his trust and faith in His mercy and grace. (In the ‘Sujud’ position, seven parts of the body are expected to make contact with the ground; the forehead with the nose as one, the two palms, the two knees, and

toes of the two feet). Bowing and prostrations are expressive of the Muslim's extreme humility, which is reserved for God alone and no one else. Muslims are taught by the Qur'an to say:

- *"Thee alone do we worship and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid."*(Q. 1:5).

The prayer begins, after making the necessary intention, by expressing the words "Allahu Akbar" i.e. "God is great(er)" (than all else). With this, the worshipper practically turns his or her back on everything else in this world and face God alone.

In the congregational setting, the prayer may be held from a minimum of two people to multitudes, and is usually led by an Imam (prayer leader). The Imam is not a priest (but an Islamic Scholar), neither does the same person have to lead each prayer, unless he is so appointed by the community (or a group), but considerations of scholarship and knowledge of the Qur'an and the religious practices are exercised in choosing him. Having an Imam leading the congregational prayer is a standing lesson taught by the prophet, for all times to Muslims, such that it reminds them that, wherever there are two or more of them they should assign one among them (usually the most learned) to be their leader in whatever collective activities they are involved in, even if it is travelling. Women usually form rows behind the men's rows (during a congregational prayer), as required by Sharia, since women would feel uncomfortable with men behind them during the movements of bowing and prostration. There is also the consideration of removing any source of distraction for the worshippers, should there be a mixing of the sexes, or if the women folk be allowed to stand in front of the men during the prayer. However, a separate space, not necessarily a requirement of religion but an aesthetic preference, may be provided; this could be an upstairs space or basement of the Mosque or adjacent room. The aim is always to safeguard morality.

One mandatory component of every Salaat prayer is the opening chapter of the Qur'an (Al-Fatiha) what could be called the Lord's Prayer for Muslims. Compare this with what Jesus (pbuh) is reported to have taught Christians in the Book of Mathew chapter 6: verses 9-13.

CHRISTIANITY:	ISLAM:
<p><u>Part 1: Praising the Lord by His Attributes</u></p> <p><i>Our father thou art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.</i></p> <p><u>Part 2: Seeking His Help</u></p> <p><i>Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.</i></p> <p><u>Part 3: Supplicating for His Guidance</u></p> <p><i>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the Kingdom and the power and the Glory are Yours for ever. Amen. (Mathew 6: 9-13)</i></p>	<p><u>Part 1: Praising Allah by His Attributes</u></p> <p><i>“In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.</i></p> <p><i>Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. The Compassionate, the Merciful. Master of the Day of Judgment.</i></p> <p><u>Part 2: Seeking His Help</u></p> <p><i>“You alone do we worship and You alone we ask for help.”</i></p> <p><u>Part 3: Supplicating for His Guidance</u></p> <p><i>“Guide us to the straight path. The path of those on whom you have bestowed your grace; Not of those who are deserving of your wrath, and who go astray.” Aameen! (Qur’an 1:1-7).</i></p>

The fundamental question that needed to be asked here is: Why was it necessary for God to specify to Muhammad (and Jesus, as well as other prophets too) how He (God) should be prayed to?

The obvious answer to this, as Abdul Wadod Shalabi stated is because: *“However strong the motivation behind it may be, it is hard for us to express ourselves in a manner worthy of addressing God. Just as when an ordinary man addresses an aristocrat, he expresses his respect most fully by using a certain protocol, so when we turn to God, we must find some way of presenting what we feel in a way befitting the presence of the Lord of creation, who has given us all we possess. . . . “This protocol we call “**Worship**”. While we may find many ways of worship which afford us some satisfaction, the finest and most devotional forms cannot be dreamed up by man, and are best granted directly by God. Worship is a complex and subtle activity, relying heavily on symbolism; a complete science, in fact, involving not only a profound understanding of the human mind, but also a direct knowledge of the kingdom of God. (Abdul Wadod Shalabi p.50).* It would certainly seem illogical that God would have us sing to

him, as a mother sings a lullaby to a babe, by way of worship. No prophet had taught anyone to sing to God as a form of worship. Jesus (pbuh) certainly did not!

Through Prayers, the believer constantly pulls himself back to the remembrance of God and acquires the ability to see the hand of the Lord in everything which befalls him. Very effective also, both in winning and retaining, is the ordinance of the Muslim five daily prayers. Rev. Motesquieu has well said, *“The religion of the Muslim is continually present with him and in the daily prayer manifests itself in a solemn and impressive ritual, which cannot leave either the worshipper or the spectator unaffected.”* (Rev. Motesquieu (in ‘De Esprid das Lois Livre’ XXV, Chapter 2, p. 417).

And Abdul Wadod Shalabi adds that, *“Prayer (salaat in Arabic) is very much in evidence to the visitor to a Muslim community. Not just in the overflowing Mosques but seemingly in each corner and crevice of every building, men and women stand and bow in the direction of Mecca. . . . Hearing the call to Prayer from a distant Mosque, farm workers lay down their tools and humbly face Mecca on pieces of cardboard or rush matting. . . . The taxi driver halts during a slack hour, unrolls a small intricate carpet, and prays by the busy roadside. The employees in some provincial town hall leave their desks during their lunch break to eat and also to pray.”* (Abdul Wadod Shalabi p.51)

Prof. Abdullahi Yusuf Ali in a commentary (Ref: 3521), said that: “The special times for God’s remembrance are so described as to include all our activities in life; when we rise early in the morning, and when we go to rest in the evening; when we are in the midst of our work; at the decline of the sun and in the late afternoon. It may be noted that these are all striking stages in the passage of the sun through our terrestrial day; as well as stages in our daily working lives. On this are based the hours of the five canonical prayers which were prescribed to the prophet afterwards in Medina.

The five daily prayers are at Dawn (fajr), Noon (Zuhr) and late Afternoon (Asr); while the “hours of the night” prayers referred to the Maghrib (after sunset) and ‘Isha’ (late evening)”. In his translation and commentary on the Quran, Abdullahi Yusuf Ali (C-1616), explains that the two ends of the day prayers (Morning and Afternoon) are:

- The Dawn or Morning Prayer is the **‘Fajr’**, after the first light is up, but before sunrise; Two Raka’ats are performed – at least 30 minutes before the sun rises. (as in the Bible: Psalms 113:3). We thus get up from bed and begin the day with the remembrance of God and of our duty to Him,

“just as an ambassador might start on his journey after saluting his king and receiving his blessings.”

- The early afternoon prayer **‘Zuhr’**, is immediately after the noon hour. When we are in the midst of our daily life, and again we remember God. Four **‘Raka’as’** are performed at this time. (see what Acts 3:1 says of prayer at this time).

And in his commentary (No.1617) on ‘Approaches of the Night’ Abdullahi Yusuf Ali states: Three ‘approaches of the night’ are meant.

- The late afternoon prayer **‘Asr’** consisting of four ‘Raka’as is also the middle prayer. In the Quran it is referred to as **Salatul-wasdta**. Authorities differ as to the exact meaning of this phrase, some translate it as the best or the most excellent prayer. However, the weight of authorities seems to be in favour of interpreting this simply as the **‘Asr’** prayer in the middle of the afternoon (around 4.00 pm). This is apt to be the most neglected and yet this is the most necessary devotion to remind us of God in the midst of our worldly affairs.”
- The evening prayer **‘Magrib’** just after sunset, at Dusk i.e. after sunset ‘Magrib’ – three ‘Raka’as’ are prescribed). This can be the second of the approaches to the night.
- The early night prayer **‘Isha’**, at supper time (i.e. before or after supper) would be the third of the ‘approaches...’ which takes place after the glow of sunset has disappeared and full darkness of the night has set in - when we commit ourselves to God before sleep (four ‘Raka’as’ are prescribed).

These are the five obligatory (compulsory) prayers prescribed for the Muslim. Prof. Abdullahi Yusuf Ali’s comment (2275) on Chapter 17 verse 78, reads: The commentators understand here the command for the five daily canonical prayers, which are the four from the declination of the sun from its zenith to the fullest darkness of the night, and the early Morning Prayer ‘Fajr’. The Prophet was directed in the Qur’an thus:

- *“Therefore be patient with what they say, and celebrate (constantly) the praises of thy lord, before the rising of the sun and before its settings; Yea, celebrate them for part of the hours of the night, and at the sides of the day: that thou mayest have (spiritual) joy”*(Qur’an, 20:130)
- *“So give glory to God, when ye reach eventide and when ye rise in the morning; Yea, to Him be praise, in the heavens and on earth; and in the late afternoon and when the day begins to decline”*(Quran, 30:17-18)

The Qur'an further informs us that humans are not the only ones that Pray (Prostrate) to God:

- *“Whatever beings there are in the heavens and the earth do prostrate themselves to God (acknowledging subjection) – with goodwill; or in spite of themselves so do their shadows in the morning and evenings”.*(Qur'an 13:15)

Prof. Abdullahi Yusuf Ali commented (Ref: 1825) on this verse thus: *“Prostrate themselves*: the posture means that they recognize their subjection to God's will and law, whether they wish it or not. Prostration is an act of humility. We prostrate to humble ourselves before Allah, by bringing the highest part of the body i.e. the head, to the ground in humility. In fact some ethnic groups in Africa, (as in ancient China, the Far East and elsewhere) do prostrate or even lie down flat on their bellies to demonstrate their subjection to their elders and sovereigns as a demonstration of humility and subjection. As a matter of fact, almost all babies come into the world in this posture, head first (and face down) from their mothers' womb, in a posture of prostration. Prophet Muhammad, when he prostrate usually says:

- *“My face fell prostrate before He who created it and brought forth its faculties of hearing and seeing by His Might and Power. So blessed is Allah, the best of Creators.”*

But we ask yet again: Why should prayers be observed at fixed times rather than for people to chose whenever the moment seems appropriate for them? It hardly needs saying that whenever one wishes to pray one should just go ahead and do so, exploiting the opportunity and the inclination to the fullest. Yet, it would seem equally clear that to pray only when one is in the right mood is far from sufficient because some might go for days on end without observing prayers. In fact, the time when we least feel like praying is often when we need it most. To obey God by observing the five Prayers that He has laid down for us (Muslims) ensures that we will remember Him in times both of ease and of difficulty, and that there will never be a period of more than a few hours in which we do not turn to God. Obedience and submission are a far stronger basis for spiritual growth than part-time or random religiosity. Consequently, five times every day (including Fridays), the Muslim turns his back on whatever has been preoccupying him and bows and prostrates in submission before his Creator. In ten minutes' time, he will be back at work, but with an evident burden lifted and a new expression on his face. For the regular act of *Salaat* is a powerful aid to the constant, unceasing remembrance of the eternal presence of God.

(This roughly ten minutes comes to about fifty minutes in a 24 hours day. And of the 24 hours, the five compulsory prayers are done between 5.00 am to 8.00 pm. approximately: roughly 15 hours of the day (an average of 5 to 10 minutes out of every 3 hours).

These five daily acts of devotion - are best prayed in the company of others, as prescribed by the Prophet. But the Qur'an teaches that for those who wish, other prayers are particularly effective when observed at other times also. The Prophet used to spend long hours, late in the night before dawn, in prayer and prostrations before his Creator, so much so that, as reported, his wife A'isha once complained to him about this, asking why he should spend so much time in prayer when creation is asleep, especially when God has already forgiven him all his transgressions – past and future. The prophet responded simply with a poser, thus: *"O A'isha, am I not to be a grateful servant?"*

In a parable, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) compared Prayer to washing oneself in a Stream running by a house. He said; *"if a person were to wash in the Stream five times a day, would any dirt remain on his body?"* His companions answered *"None"*. And he remarked, *"So it is with the five prayers, with which God wipes away all faults."* Prayer is the food of the Soul, just as the body is given nourishment through food, so does the soul gets its nourishment from Prayer.

Prayer is communion with God. Professor Dauda Ojobi once in an example asked a man, "if you as a Father who have three sons, the eldest son never bothered to visit and greet you but goes about his business as he wills, the second son however visits you once a week, say, every Sunday to greet you, while the third son visits you five times a day to greet you," he asked the aged father, "Tell me who among the three will you love most?" The man replied, "The one that comes to visit me five times a day of course!"

In the vision of the Qur'an, Prayer has a social impact. As God says, *"Prayer distances you from evil, corruption, and aggressiveness"*. The mechanism of this is complex, but it is nevertheless clear that as the inward voyage progresses, the worshipper finds himself simultaneously drawn both into and away from the society which surrounds him. In chapter 27 of the Quran, God assures us that:

- *"Those who establish Regular Prayers and give in regular Charity, and also have (full) assurance of the Hereafter. As to those who believe not in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds pleasing in their eyes; and so they wander about in distraction."* (Quran 27: 3 – 4)

It was related in the Quran that when the inhabitants of Paradise saw the inhabitants of Hell, they asked them what led them into Hell. They replied in part that “We were not of those who prayed!” The passage reads:

- *“And (ask) of the Sinners: What led you unto Hell-fire?’ They will say “We were not of those who prayed; nor were we of those who fed the indigent; but we used to talk vanities with vain talkers; and we used to deny the Day of Judgment.”(Quran 74:4 –46)*

The Muslim ordinance lays major stress on the remembrance of Allah. The Quran gives the characteristics of those who are devoted to their prayers; it says:

- *“Not so those devoted to prayers: - Those who remain steadfast to their prayer; and those in whose wealth is a recognized right, for the (needy) who asks and him who is prevented (for some reason from asking); and those who hold to the truth of the Day of Judgment; and those who fear the displeasure of their Lord, - for their lord’s displeasure is the opposite of Peace and Tranquility; - and those who guard their chastity, except with their wives and the (captives) whom their right hand possess, - for (then) they are not to be blamed, but those who trespass beyond this are transgressors; - and those who respect their trusts and covenants; and those who stand firm in their testimonies.” (Quran 70:22 – 35)*

It further warns those pretenders among the Muslims Ummah, that:

- *“It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West, but it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book and the Messengers; To spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in Prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing.” (Quran 2:177).*

Weekly congregational prayer in Quran:

A weekly congregational prayer is also ordained on Fridays (*‘Jumma’at’*) for Muslims, primarily as ‘the Muslim Special Day’ of assembly, what the Bible would call a Sabbath. The Quran (in Chapter 62 verses 9 and 10), instruct that when the time for *Jumma’t* Prayer comes, Muslims are to close their businesses and answer the summons loyally and earnestly. They are to meet earnestly, pray, consult and learn by social contact; and when the meeting is over, they may scatter and go about their businesses again. The verses state as follows:

- *“O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of the Assembly), hasten earnestly to the remembrance of God, and leave off business (and traffic): that is best for you if ye but knew!” (Quran 62:9)*
- *“And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of God: and celebrate the Praise of God often (and without stint): that ye may prosper.” (Quran 62:10)*

The Friday is the day of assembly, the weekly meeting of the congregation, when Muslims show unity by sharing in common public worship, preceded by a ‘*Khutba*’- (Sermon) by the Imam (or prayer Leader), immediately after a call for prayer is made; in which he reviews the week’s spiritual life of the community and offers advice and exhortation on holy living. The Imam’s sermon is followed by two-phased (Raka’a) prayer.

Weekly Congregational Prayer in the Bible

We have argued that ‘Islam’ is not a new religion and that all the Prophets of God, including Jesus (pbuh), and their true followers were ‘Muslims’ at heart, this posture rises a question as to whether Islamic beliefs and practices can also be traced in the Bible. Examples of this have been given in the previous chapters.

We have found, described in the Bible, the book of Nehemiah chapter 9:1-37 a similar process of the weekly congregational prayer given above, which has been performed by the Prophet Ezra. In chapter 9, verse 5 and 6 of the book, it is stated that eight men who were Levites made a call to worship (prayer) saying: *“Stand up and praise the Lord your God, Praise ye him forever and ever”*. This is in tandem with what the Muslims do before each of the five daily prayers to invite all Muslims (within earshot) to attend prayer whether in the Mosque or in an open space.

The detail description of a weekly congregational prayer in the Bible is given as follows:

- ❖ *“Many people assembled; Ezra, the highest priest, stood on wooden platform;*
(A structure quite similar to what all Imams leading the Friday congregational prayers use, to stand on while giving a sermon after the example of Prophet Muhammad).

- ❖ *“Thirteen people lined up beside Ezra, the first six to his right and the remaining seven lined up to his left (in a single row).”*
(This agrees with how the Muslims are required to do for any congregational prayer, a little behind the Imam. A minimum of 13 people are required for a Muslim Friday congregation prayer). Then,
- ❖ *“Ezra glorified the God saying:”the Great God” and all the people said ‘Amen’.*
(This is in tune with what Muslims say while praying. They glorify God by saying “*Allahu Akbar*” meaning, ‘*God is Great*’. At the end of the prayer they say ‘*Aamen*’).
- ❖ *”Ezra and the people who lined up beside him lifted their hands and later bowed their heads. They worshipped the Lord with their faces on the ground.”* (Nehemiah 9: 5&6).
(This is also in line with what Muslims do in the congregational prayer and their five daily prayers).

The Call to prayer:

Each of the prayers is announced vocally in the call to Prayer, (*Adhan* in Arabic), not by the use of a bell or horn as done by Christians and Jews. The person who calls people to Prayer (the *Muezzin*), may be anyone from the local community. He normally stands in an elevated place, usually a tall graceful Tower known as a Minaret and sings melodiously forth the following declarations (nowadays electronic amplifiers are used):

God is Most Great, God is Most Great!
I testify that there is no deity (worthy of worship) save Allah (twice);
I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God (twice);
Come to Prayer! Come to prayer!
Come to Success! Come to Success!(or good reward or benefit)
God is Most Great; God is Most Great;
There is no deity save Allah (God).”

And as the Dawn prayer call sent forth, just as light begins to show on the horizon, the Muezzin (After saying “Come to Success”) adds:

“Prayer is better than Sleep! Prayer is better than Sleep!”

Aiming to arouse the faithful from their heavy slumber, to get up and prostrate before the Creator at that blessed hour, thanking Him for gift of life and the

good things which He provides and asking him for fuller participation in His light and for forgiveness and joy on the Day of Judgment.

In its directness and stark simplicity, the call evokes an instant response in those that hear it. To them it serves as a reminder that through their daily existence, with its hopes and its disappointments, there runs a thread of divine remembrance which calls them to make their very act affirm the unity and Omnipresence of God.

Concerning the meaning of those exclamations so often on the lips of Muslim faithfuls particularly “ALLAHU AKBAR” meaning “GOD IS GREAT”, Al Ghazali explains thus:

“We may say that it does not mean God is greater than creation, for creation is His manifestation as light manifests the sun, and it would not be correct to say that the sun is greater than its own light, it rather means that God’s greatness immeasurably transcends our cognitive faculties, and that we can only form a very dim and imperfect idea of it... Thus, the exclamation “God is great” means that His greatness far exceeds all our powers of comprehension.” (Al Ghazali: “The Alchemy of Happiness” p. 20)

Ablution (and Ritual Cleansing) before Prayer

In order to perform the prayer, one has to be clean, having performed an ablution (‘Al-Wudu’e). Ablution entailing cleansing by water of certain parts of the body, i.e. the hands up to the wrists, the mouth, nostrils, face, forearms to the elbows, and feet, and wiping the head and ears with wet hands before observing prayer. These parts of the body mentioned above constitute some of the compulsory parts that must be washed by Muslims before every prayer according to the Qur’an, chapter 5, verse 6.

❖ *“O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbow; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body . . . ” (Quran 5:6)*

The ablution is not simply a ritual of washing the parts mentioned, but has both a physical and spiritual implication to it too. While physically, the parts involved are usually the parts that easily get contaminated by impurities such as dirt (the hands and the feet, and dust (the face, nostril, ears and the hair on the head); Spiritual contamination come from those parts that are also involved in adultery of the mind. This refers to adultery of sight, of hearing, of smelling, of speaking, and touching things a believer should not get involved with or allow himself go to (using his legs). In other words, an ablution involves also spiritual

cleansing. It is related that Prophet Muhammad said that in the Hereafter, Believers shall come on the Day of Judgment with their faces, hands and feet shining brightly because of the constant ablution. That is why Ablution is identified by the holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a significant source of spiritual light, - *'Light upon light'* - such that if a Muslim is consistent with the habit of renewing his ablution at regular intervals, he stands a greater chance of climbing higher on the spiritual ascent. An ablution may take one through several prayers, but must be repeated if one falls asleep or passes urine, stools or flatus.

Islam has stressed on cleanliness and sanitation in all aspect of the Muslim life. This includes performing personal hygiene (*'Dhahara'*) before ablution. But generally, all Muslims are enjoined to keep their garments clean of any impurity as their worship will be invalidated otherwise. As such, the prophet has been very meticulous on personal hygiene. Indeed, he was inspired by the Quran, to always keep his garment clean when he prays. Chapter 74 of the Quran reads:

❖ *"O thou wrapped up (in a mantle)!
Arise and deliver thy warning!
And thy Lord do thou magnify!
And thy garments keep free from stain!
And all abomination shun!" (Quran 74: 1 - 5)*

We note in the holy Bible, that this is the case also for Christians; the Bible says:

❖ *"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practiced falsehood." (Revelation 22:14-15).*

Ritual Bath in Islam:

Apart from the ordinance prohibiting Muslims from performing prayer in a state of intoxication, they are further instructed in the Quran chapter 4, verse 42 to maintain a state of personal cleanliness thus:

❖ *"O ye who believe! Approach not prayer with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say, - nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (except when travelling on the road). Until after washing your whole body. If ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women . . . " (Quran 4:42)*

This means that a full ritual bath will however be mandatory if sexual intercourse is engaged in between prayers, (i.e. after one prayer and before the next). Women are exempted from the ritual prayers during their menstrual flow, but at its cessation, a ritual bath is necessary, as it is for men after ejaculation. However, anyone may recite a word of pray to God at anytime, in personal supplication. It is also compulsory for every woman to observe ritual bath after her monthly menstruation or bleeding after child delivery. The Quran instructed further:

- ❖ *“ . . . If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body. But if ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, (in the absence of water) then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. God doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete His favor to you, that ye may be grateful.” (Qur’an 5:6)*

Christians are required also to perform ritual bath after sexual intercourse (or after having a wet dream), (Leviticus: 15:18). Some Christians either knowingly or unknowingly fail to observe this important religious ritual (bathing). Yet it is abundantly stated clearly in the Bible that:

- ❖ *“When a man lies with a woman and there is emission of semen both must bath with water” (Leviticus: 15:18, See also verse 19 through 23 on the subject)*

The Third Pillar: ‘ZAKAT’ (Poor-Due)

‘Zakat’ is another of the characteristic forms of the Muslim life. The Biblical term for Zakat is ‘Tithe’. It is the payment of the obligatory ‘Tithe’ on wealth. The Qur’an contains frequent and repeated exhortations to Muslims to spend their wealth for the welfare of others:

- ❖ *“Believe in God and His Apostle, and spend (in charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you Heirs. For, those of you who believe and spend (in charity), - for them is a great Reward.” (Quran 57:7)*
- ❖ *“For those who give in Charity, men and women, and loan to God a beautiful loan, it shall be increased manifold (to their credit), and they shall have (besides) a liberal reward.”(Quran 57:18)*

Zakah is the ‘right’ of the poor in the wealth of the rich, and is neither optional nor considered a philanthropy. Every Muslim who has the means is therefore enjoined to pay ‘Zakat’ (poor-due). In an Islamic state, it is collected by the government and is a primary source of budget, to be complemented as

necessary by other legislated taxation. It may be given directly to the needy or to voluntary Islamic institutions, which are then responsible for its distribution, in locations where Islamic law does not operate (as in the case of Muslims living as minorities) in secular countries all over the world. Needy non-Muslims may be included as beneficiaries.

Zakah represents the unbreakable bond between members of the community, which Prophet Muhammad described as *“like the organs of the body, if one suffers then all others rally in response.”* Literally, the word ‘Zakah’ means ‘purification’ in Arabic, meaning that one purifies one’s wealth or money by giving the needy their just portion out of it. As Muslims pay the zakah, they have the genuine feeling that it is an investment and not a debt.

In a sense ‘Zakah’ forms the natural consequence and complement of prayer, the most visible and fixed of the prayer’s social implications. Open the Qur’an to almost any page, wherever God tells His servant to pray, He also enjoins upon them the practice of charity as has been laid down in the Qur’an that:

- ❖ *“And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship God, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith); to establish regular Prayer; **And to practice regular charity; And that is the Religion Right and Straight.**”* (Quran 98:5)

In the Bible, Jesus (pbuh) reminded his followers of the spirit behind the giving of alms, which is exactly the teaching of Islam:

- ❖ *“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven but when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”* (Matthew 6: 1, 3)

In general terms, the payment of Zakkah applies on whatever remains over and above the meeting of one’s needs and expenses after retaining same for the full span of one year. Two and one-half percent of that left over is what must be purified by zakkah. Idle money is, in effect, thereby penalized by complete depletion over a period of about forty years, which is an incentive to put money to work and thus serve the public interest. In addition to money, other forms of gain and profit have their respective formulas, including the proceeds from industry, agriculture and animal husbandry, real estate, etcetera, as is thoroughly detailed in specialized references.

By its judicious laws of inheritance, Islam makes the concentration of wealth in few hands impossible. In order to reduce inequality and make sure that everyone gets the basic necessities and has equal opportunities in life,

Islam impresses a tax on capital of the rich for the benefit of the poor. This tax called 'Zakat' is different from and is in addition to 'Khairat' or voluntary charity. Islam distinguishes between two categories of charity: the optional form, generally termed 'sadaqa' and the mandatory one, the 'zakat'. The latter constitutes the necessary revenue for the state, which distributes it into those areas which might have been neglected by the 'free market' system of Islamic welfare economics.

In the social order of Islam, the possibility of exploitation of man is minimized through the institution of Zakat, without the total abolition of private property or enterprise by the prohibition of monopoly, black-marketing, hoarding and interest ('*Riba*') which is fixed extra-return on money expended (interest), but for any purpose says the Holy Qur'an:

- *"Those who devour usury will not stand except as stand one whom the Evil One by his touch hath driven to madness. That is because they say: "Trade is like usury (riba)," But God hath permitted trade and forbidden Usury" (Qur'an 2:275)*

The provision of basic needs to all in the Islamic state has fundamentally to be on the basis of full employment. Thus, through 'Zakat', Islam has provided a social welfare tax for ensuring basic needs to the disabled and the unemployed. Then, because all that belongs to a Muslim is held by him as 'Trust' from God (Q. 9:111). Islam has also commended generosity in terms of voluntary economic well-being to those in need, to the utmost of one's capacity and considered one's action as a fulfillment of the *right* of the other person – and not merely as ritualistic religious 'charity to a beggar.' Allah said in the Quran:

- ❖ *"In their wealth the beggar and the destitute have their due-right". (Al-Qur'an, 51:19)*

Yet, begging as a profession is hateful to Islam. And it teaches that charity should be given secretly, for as the Qur'an tell us, *"if you give your charity openly then it is well but should you hide it, then that is better for you, and will obliterate some of your wrong actions."* Similarly, we should be gentle and never patronizing when we give. God says in the Qur'an, *"Do not make your almsgiving valueless by reproach and injury."*

The genuinely poor are with us always, even in the most technically advanced industrial countries, and it is our duty to render help whenever we can. However, Muslim almsgiving does not consist primarily in the handing out of banknotes to derelicts in railway stations, although this can be part of it. The Prophet says that the profession of faith and the religious devotion of a man who is not actively engaged in works of mercy are vain and not acceptable

before God. He further said, by way of illustration, that: “The *upper hand is better than the lower.*”(that is, the giver is better than the one at the receiving end).

Dr. M.F.R. Ansari (1972) believes that, “*The Holy Quran does not confine itself to emphasis merely on voluntary charity, as other religions do, but adopts a methodical approach to the problem of the economic sufferings of humanity and its solution, for the achievement of its goal of ensuring economic welfare for all. These sufferings emerge, in its view, when wealth becomes concentrated in a few hands, bringing in its wake insatiable lust for luxuries, creating the cult of ‘wealth, wine and women’, and giving rise to the need for greater and greater exploitation of the weaker members of society. The lust for exploitation, grounded as it always is in a spiritually-hardened heart, is directed to the enjoyment of vulgar pleasures and to exercise in megalomania. When it continues unchecked in a society, moral, economic and political corruption attains progressively such virulence as to act as a dynamite for blowing up the entire spiritual and moral fabric of the community, finally bringing about its destruction.* (Dr. M.F.R. Ansari 1972). The pithy warning has gone forth in the Quran in chapter 28:

❖ “*And how many a community have We (God) destroyed that become reckless in respect of (its structure of) livelihood! . . .*”(Q. 28; 58)

iv). The Fourth Pillar: FASTING

Muslims are also required to observe an annual month-long fast, during a specific month - the month of Ramadan, the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. In the Quran, Allah directs as follows:

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint. (Fasting) for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later . . . Ramadan is the month in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his house) during the month should spend it in fasting . . . and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.” (Quran 2:183 – 185)

The significance of the fasting is however, not always so apparent to most people. Of course, fasting has been observed by men through history, because it is known to have beneficial effects on one’s health. But in a religious context, it is primarily a technique of seeking proximity to God. In a sense, it is a counterpart of prayer: Prayer constitutes an addition to our lives, while fasting,

visibly at any rate, is a subtraction, for by it, we are advised to avoid certain things which we love to do, during a certain period. The relation between the two is subtle and only becomes clear with time.

Numerous examples of “*those before you*” spring to mind. In fact it seems that every religious dispensation before Islam know the practice of fasting in one form or another. Fasting was also known to the Ancient Egyptians and Greeks. Similarly, the ancient scriptures of Persia advocate fasting and affirm its values as a means of spiritual purification. The Jews of the Old Testament were known to observe fasts on days of danger and misfortunes and on several fixed days in their calendar, of which the best known to non-Jews is the fast of ‘*Yom Kippur*’. Jesus was said to have fasted forty days and night before his final entry into Jerusalem. The early Christians, most of whom observed the Mosaic Law, also fasted on the Day of Atonement. But as history rolled on, less emphasis was placed on exact adherence to the practices observed by Jesus, and the Lenten fast assumed a largely symbolic role, involving an abstention from certain types of food only.

Fasting then is as old as religion itself. The archaic practices of Hinduism conserves for us an interesting picture of fasting in ancient times. There were certain days of the year set aside for fasting by women, and others for men. In our day, the Brahmin caste in India still observe a complete abstinence from food and drink on the eleventh and twelfth days of every Hindu month.

The Qur’an taught the early Muslims to fast on any day, but stated that as a minimum they were to observe the mandatory month-long fast of Ramadan. To grasp the true meaning of hunger, it is necessary to go without food for longer time. By the end of a day’s fast, the Muslim usually feels hungry, but not unbearably so. Thus, through fasting, the Muslim comes to know hunger. We read so often that one-quarter of the world’s population is in a state of constant hunger, yet how many of us realize the true nature of this sensation? Thus we are awakened in the most real and direct way to the plight of millions of our fellow human beings and will be more willing and ready to extend to them our assistance.

The basic mandatory elements of the Muslim fast as the Qur’an and the Hadith of the Prophet expound, it consists in:

- i. Firstly, the simple abstention from food, drink and sexual relations during the hours of daylight. Just before the call for the Dawn prayer is given, the Muslims gather to share the meal called ‘*Suhur*’ usually a light meal. Then, after the (early morning) prayer, the fast begin and continue through the day until sunset, when they take another meal

ending the day's fast. This is considered the 'outward fast' which religious Scholars considered as the first grade of fasting.

- ii. The second grade of fasting is 'the Fast of the senses and the tongue', whereby one is to avoid looking at or hearing anything which might turn his attention to material things. The person who is fasting is to keep from backbiting, hostile and pornographic language.
- iii. The third and highest grade of fasting is 'the fast of the soul,' where the above practices are perfected by an abstinence from any thought which might impair one's awareness of God's presence. Pathways to this awareness will include recitation of the holy Quran and meditation on the beautiful names of Allah and other forms of worship.

The Month of Ramadan is revered as 'the time of grace and spiritual energy', where the acts of worship practiced throughout the year suddenly takes on new and urgent meaning. Towards the close of this month comes the Night of Power, '*Laylat al-Qadr*' which as the Qur'an relates, is '*better than a thousand months*' (which is equivalent to Eighty-three years). Preceded by almost an entire month of fasting and supererogatory prayer, this night is spent in prayers and recitation of the Qur'an... for it is the month in which the Qur'an was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), God's last prophet on earth. The Prophet stressed that it is a time for spiritual effort and breakthrough. And according to the Muslim tradition, the night of Power is when God proclaimed man's status as His deputy on the earth, thereby raising him above all other creatures. It is the moment when man can most easily become himself i.e. recover his wellbeing.

It is essential to understand the effects of fasting on the human spirit. Fasting has also a far more transformative effect: it engenders a sense of detachment from the world. Physical separation, as a powerful symbol, brings about in the mind and the heart that appreciation of distance, a state most cherished by spiritual seekers everywhere. Many of those who fast regularly say that when they fast they feel that a barrier has been erected between them and the world. One of the effects of this on Muslims is to compel them to realize their strong dependence upon food and drink, so that they fervently thank their creator for His unfailing provision of their daily needs. When fasting, the Muslim acts with a new sense of confidence, able more fully to concentrate his attention on his material as well as his spiritual life. Temporarily despairing of food and drink, he is able to devote himself more fully to the one who is the source of all his sustenance.

Ramadan is thus traditionally the time of reconciliation of love and forgiveness, as well as of spiritual ascent. It purifies the soul and whole

communities of the misdeeds and misunderstandings of the past year, and acts as a powerful energy for reform, so that when the month is over, the season of festivals begins, the Muslim may face the future with new determination and vigor, repentant for his former bad habits and resolute that he will never again return to them. Thus, men, women, and whole communities purify themselves during this month that becomes the turning point of the year; and for many people, it is the turning point of their lives.

One more point need be made, for the fast during the month of Ramadan, which stands out as a piece of evidence against the theory that Islam is a religious system that attracts by pandering to the self-indulgence of men. Thomas Carlyle (a Christian) in defense of Islam had said: *“His (Muhammad’s) religion is not an easy one: with rigorous fasts, lavations, strict complex formulas, prayers five times a day, and abstinence from wine, it did not succeed by being an easy religion.”* (Rev. Bosworth-smith in: *‘Missionary activities of Islam’*, p. 418).

The Fifth Pillar: PILGRIMAGE

The Hajj Pilgrimage to Mecca is the fifth cardinal pillars of Islam. It is ordained on every Muslim adult who has no mental defect and has the wherewithal to visit the Holy place, at least once in his life time. The Quran says:

- *“The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at ‘Bakka’: Full of blessing and guidance for all kinds of beings: In it are Signs manifest; (for example), the Station of Abraham, whoever enters it attains security; Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to God, - (for) those who can afford the journey, but if any deny faith, God stands not in need of any of His creatures.”* (Quran 3:96 – 97)
- *“(That time is worth remembering) when we showed Ibraheem the location of the House (the ka’bah) saying: “Do not ascribe any as partner to Myself and cleanse My House for those who make Tawaaf, those who stand (in Salaah), those who bow (in Ruku’u) and those who prostrate.”* (Quran 22:26).
- *“And announce the Hajj among the people, (in response to your announcement) they will come to you (walking) on foot and on every lean camel (in every condition), travelling from every distant road...”* (Qur’an, 22:27).
- *“They will come from near and far to witness the things of benefit to them (which includes material benefits from trade and the meat of sacrificed animals, as well as spiritual benefits such as spiritual*

enlightenment and rewards in the hereafter) and, during the stipulated days (of Hajj), to take Allah's name on every animal that Allah has provided for them (before they slaughter it). So eat from it.” (Quran 22:28)

- *“Allah knows whatever good deed you do. Take your provisions along with you for the journey but (always remember that) the best of provisions is Taqwa (the fear of Allah which includes refraining from begging). So fear Me, O people of intelligence!”* (Qur'an 2:197).

Hajj Rituals

The Hajj, which is the journey to the sacred places in and around Mecca, is an act of recollection and worship, but it is also a symbolic act representing the spirit's return to its homeland – one of the central elements of the Muslim life. According to the Qur'an, as a test for Abraham and as a fulfillment of God's plan, God ordered Abraham to take his wife and only son, Ishmael, to the place that, centuries later, became the city of Makkah, where Prophet Muhammad would eventually be born. (This is commemorated by the annual pilgrimage to the holy land). The commemoration of this trying test of Abraham, his submission to God, and his willingness to slay his only son (Ishmael), is annually commemorated by Muslims as one of the rituals of hajj (pilgrimage).

During the pilgrimage, Muslims ritually drink from a well called 'Zamzam', also a commemoration of Hagar's tribulation. This was the well from which Hagar (or Agar) had collected water, when searching for water for her thirsty son Ishmael. The Bible story said:

- ❖ *“And she went and sat down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of Heaven, and said unto her, what aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up of the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin of water and gave the boy a drink.”* (Genesis 21: 16-19).

In the Quran, we are told that Hagar made frantic runs between the Mounts of 'Safa' and 'Marwa' (Genesis: *“a good way off, as it were a bowshot”*) in desperate search for water, running seven times to and fro, before an angel appeared to her. The angel instructed her to dig in the ground with her heel (other versions said it was the heel of the child that scratched the earth as he laid on the ground), and immediately water gushed out and the place became a

well. Since then, people have drawn water from it for generations. This Well is located at Mecca (Saudi Arabia) and has been producing water ever since. The unexpected eruption of the well of 'Zam-zam' is commemorated annually by Muslims amongst the rituals of hajj (pilgrimage). The 'Kaaba', is the first Mosque erected by Abraham and Ishmael, built for the worship of the One God. "*blessed by God, where Prophet Abraham (pbuh) built a house of prayer or a 'House of God',*" : 'Baitullah' in Arabic, and 'Bethlehem' in Hebrew (Genesis 35: 15). Hajj pilgrimage to the House of God is a duty that people who are able to find their way there, owe to Allah. Therefore, Muslims who can afford to go to Mecca to perform Hajj are obliged to do so to show love for their Creator. Whoever rejects this obligation should bear in mind that surely Allah is independent of the entire universe. Allah does not need man's worship. Man benefits only himself by worshipping Allah.

One of the early Christian missionaries who commented on the Muslim pilgrimage made the following observation. He said: "*The observance of this last duty (pilgrimage to Mecca) has often been objected to by non-Muslims as a strange survival of idolatry in the midst of monotheism of the Prophet's teaching, but it must be borne in mind that to him it connected itself with Abraham, whose religion was his mission to restore (Qur'an 11:118-126). But above all – and herein is its supreme importance in the missionary history of Islam – it ordains a yearly gathering of believers of all nations and languages, brought together from all parts of the world, to pray in that sacred place towards which their faces are set in every hour of private worship in their distance homes. No fetch of religious genius could have conceived a better expedient for impressing on the minds of the youthful a sense of their common life and of their brotherhood in the bounds of faith. Here, in a supreme act of common worship, the Negro of the west coast of Africa meets the Chinaman from the distant east; the courtly and polished Ottoman recognizes his brother Muslim in the wild Islander from the farthest end of the Malayan sea. Their visit to the sacred city has been to many Muslims the experience that has stored them up to "strive in the path of God."* (Rev. Bosworth-smith in: '*Missionary activities of Islam*', p. 415-416).

The influence of the Hajj cannot be exaggerated. To be a member of that huge congregation gathered together from the four corners of the earth, on this sacred occasion and on one sacred spot, and to join with this mass of humanity, in all humility, (see Micah 4:1-2; Isaiah 66:18; Genesis 21; and Genesis 35: 15; Deuteronomy 12: 5-7) to glorify God is to have one's consciousness impressed by the full significance of the Islamic ideal; it would be a privilege to

participate in one of the most soul-inspiring experiences that have ever been granted to humanity.

To visit the birth place of Islam, to tread the sacred ground of the prophet's struggle to call erring humanity back to God, is to re-live those hallowed by the memories of Muhammad's long toil and suffering in glorious years of sacrifice and martyrdom; is to have one's soul kindled by that celestial fire which lighted up the whole earth. But this is not all, the Hajj, above everything else, makes for unity among Muslims. If there is anything that unified the scattered forces of Islam and imbues them with mutual sympathy it is the pilgrimage. It provides them with a central point to which they rally from all corners of the earth. It creates for them an occasion to meet annually and know one another, to exchange views and compare experiences and unite their various efforts to the common good. Distances are annihilated; differences of sect are set aside; and divergences of race and colour cease to exist in this fraternity of faith that unites all Muslims in one great brotherhood and makes them conscious of the glorious heritage that is theirs.

The season of the great pilgrimage to Mecca, comes in the 12th month of the Islamic calendar, and third months after the end of the annual Ramadan fasting. Towards that city and its sacred precincts, an ever-increasing number of men and women converge each year, from every possible corner of the earth, to don two simple white cloths (resembling the shroud used for the dead, signifying that the world is dead to the pilgrim). They follow one set of rites for a few days in an impressive display of Islam's disregard for racial or national divisions. Each year, nearly three to five million people make the pilgrimage, making it the largest temporary gathering of humanity on Earth.

A plain, twelve miles from Mecca, called Arafat, is where pilgrims performing Hajj gather on the 9th day of *Dhul-Hijjah* (the 12th month of the lunar calendar), to perform the mid-day (*Dhuhr*), the afternoon (*Asr*) prayers, and listen to the *Kutbah* (sermon). Here the pilgrims devote the time in supplications (*du'aa*) i.e. personal prayers and it is here that the essence of Hajj lies. The Prophet (pbuh) said; '*Hajj is Arafat.*' He also added that '*Hujjaaj*' (pilgrims) are allowed to stay anywhere on Arafat. The Qur'an also mentions Arafat in the verse: "*When you leave Arafat...*" (Qur'an 2:198). According to a narration of the second Caliph Umar (may God bless him), it was on the plain of Arafat that Allah revealed to the prophet, the verse:

- "*Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you and chosen Islam as your religion.*" (Qur'an 3, sura Ma'ida)

Pilgrimage in the Bible

Pilgrimage in early Christianity followed the same pattern. However, as the faith expanded, pilgrimage was also instituted to the Holy Seat at Rome, and to the regional tomb of Saints. In the Holy Bible, God has prophesized about the pilgrimage, by indicating a place, chosen by God where people will converge and Glorify His Name:

- ❖ *“But you are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put His Name there for His dwelling. To that place you must go there; bring your burnt offerings and sacrifice . . . There, in the presence of the Lord God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hands to, because the Lord your God has blessed you.”* (Deuteronomy 12: 5-7)

In the book of Micah chapter 4, verse 1-2, Pilgrimage has been prophesized thus:

- ❖ *“In the last days (end of time) the Mountain of the Lord’s Temple will be established as chief among the Mountains, it will be raised above the hills, and peoples (of different nations) will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, ‘Come let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his path. **The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.**”*(Micah4:1-2)

In the book of Isaiah chapter 66:18, the Prophecy went forth:

- ❖ *“ . . . it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see My Glory.”* (Isaiah 66:18)

And in the Holy Quran it is written:

- *“They will come from near and far to witness the things of benefit to them (which includes material benefits from trade and the meat of sacrificed animals, as well as spiritual benefits such as spiritual enlightenment and rewards in the hereafter) and, during the stipulated days (of Hajj), to take Allah’s name on every animal that Allah has provided for them (before they slaughter it). So eat from it.”* (Quran 22:28)

When Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) came, he carried out this instruction.

- *“And announce the Hajj among the people, (in response to your announcement) they will come to you (walking) on foot and on every lean camel (in every condition), travelling from every distant road...”* (Qur’an, 22:27).

So Muslims go to Mecca – a place in the wilderness of ‘Paran’ as the Bible calls it, (Genesis 21) *“blessed by God, where Prophet Abraham (pbuh) built a house of prayer or a ‘House of God’,”* (‘Baitullah’ in Arabic, and ‘Bethlehem’ in Hebrew (Genesis 35: 15; 28:18). Abraham and his family later died and were buried in Mecca.

We note that Hagar or ‘Agar’ (‘Hagar’ in Arabic – translates as ‘Stone’) was Ishmael’s mother and second wife of Abraham. Abraham left to the Promised Land (‘Bacca’ – now referred to as Makkah or Mecca) with Hagar where he left her with her son Ishmael (Isma’il) initially, as God instructed him to. Recall the Parable of the Vineyard when Jesus asked:

- ❖ *“Have you never read in the Scriptures? ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore, I tell you that the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruits. ‘He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.’”* (Matthew 21:33 – 44)

In the book of Galatians chapter 4 verse 25, it is stated that:

- ❖ *“Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem”* (?) (Galatians 4:25). Or is it Makkah?

Why the question mark (?) you may ask. My hypothesis is that Hagar, whose name means ‘Stone’ is the rejected stone mentioned in the Bible, or her son (who by implication also stands rejected along with his mother). But I leave the reader to do the mathematics. (The part about *“the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people. . .”* has been discussed elsewhere in this book.)

In instituting a system of pilgrimage, Islam does not differ from other religions God revealed for earlier ages. According to the Torah, every male adult Jew, physically fit must complete the pilgrimage to the holy city, bringing with him an offering. The rites of pilgrimage were set for certain specific days in the year. In this spirit, Judaism knows the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, city of the Patriarchs and Prophets, and blessed site of revelation and worship. In the context of the oriental religions, we meet with much the same picture. In India, on the banks of the sacred river Ganges, hundreds of thousands of Indians go on pilgrimage to bathe and purify themselves of vice and evil.

In Conclusion:

Islam teaches the inherent sinless-ness of man. It teaches that man and woman come from the same essence, possess the same soul, and have been equipped with equal capabilities for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainment.

To Islam, faith without action is a dead letter; for in itself it is insufficient unless we live up to it. We believe in our own personal accountability for our actions in this life and the hereafter. "We must carry our own burden" and none can atone for another's sin. Islam promises salvation to all those who believe in God and do good deeds. Salvation here means achievement of nearness to God and the development of all the goodness in man. God spoke to us in the Quran:

- *"Whosoever goes right, it is only for the good of his own soul that he goes right and whosoever erred, does so only to his hurt. No laden soul can bear another's load."* (Quran 17:15).

The Quran also says:

- *"Nay, but whosoever surrenders his purpose to God, while doing good, his reward is with his Lord and no fear shall come upon them neither shall they grieve."* (Quran 2:112).

CONCLUSION:

We have established that Islam and Christianity have two things in common, a common origin and heritage; albeit at different starting point. This is known to both faiths. Secondly, they have similar aspirations. As sisters of the monotheistic faith, both of which believe in One God, in His Messengers, His Scriptures sent through His prophets, in His Angels, in Life after death on this earth and in the Hereafter, in the Day of Judgment, in Heaven for the good and Hell for the evil doer, in the return of Jesus Christ to earth etc., so they both believe in heaven and hell as a final destination. They hope to have a good death and then go to heaven; and be spared the agony of hell fire. But they have a common enemy: Satan, though they both seem not to realize the danger he represents.

Due to the subtlety inherent in its activities, it has been quite difficult to see the underhanded activities of the enemy of God and the threats that has been posed for all religions especially Christianity and Islam. It would have been difficult to be against each other if not for a 'third' element or third factor acting as a catalyst to forment the crisis. It is imperative that to avert the threat confronting them they have first to recognize and accept where they each stood and be prepared to embrace each other, or determine to stand together to face the common threat as one. It is my view that within each faith there exists an inherent threat. In other words, the enemy is an intrinsic (evil) seeded and lodged deep within each one of us. Only the knowledge of God and of self, coupled with spiritual enlightenment can we withstand it and be assured of a favorable end. There are ingenerate evil men who plot and scheme against the beneficent purpose of God. But their plots will be of no avail, as God's purpose will prevail. It had happened before, in the time of Jesus Christ, with the Jews – his people and in the time of Prophet Muhammad, with the Quraish people (his tribesmen) who wanted to thwart the growth of Islam. It will be so in all ages, for Allah said in the Quran:

- *“And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned, and God too planned, and the best of planners is God.”(Quran 3:54)*

The enemies of God are constantly making intricate plans to carry out some secret purpose; but God (in whose hands are all good) has His plans also, against which the evil ones will have no chance whatsoever to succeed. For He had said:

- *“As for them, they are but plotting a scheme, and I am planning a scheme. Therefore, grant a delay to the unbelievers: Give respite to them gently (for awhile). (Quran 86: 15 – 17)*

- *“ . . . Those that lay plots of evil, - for them is a Penalty terrible; and the plotting of such will be void (of result).” (Quran 35: 10)*

These evil whispers of the enemy are what spur us to look elsewhere for the culprit. And, when something happens unexpectedly while our attention is diverted away from ourselves and what we ought to be doing, then it is so easy to want to believe that the member of the other faith – the visible party – is at it again. This of course can only be the result of our refusal to learn about the other faith, or our refusal to recognize the similarities and the differences in the doctrines, metaphysics, concepts and teachings of the two faiths with a view to finding what can unite rather than divide us.

A kind of mutation must have developed within the original belief of the one God of Abraham which must have consequently convinced the faithfuls of the two faiths that the ‘sister’ religion has become heinous or devious; and therefore to be suppressed or discredited. Recall the period of the successive Crusades. And recall the Imperialist drive of the British Empire in its conquest of the Continents. Recall also the rise of the German Empire under Hitler and the rise of communism in Russia and China. This must have made the Devil mightily happy of the success of his master stroke. These all have the religious zeal (or the hate of another) in the background as the driving force. Again God beckons us to reflect:

- *“Is he then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it as good (equal to one who is rightly guided)? For God leaves to stray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills. So let not thy soul go out in (vainly) sighing after them: for God knows well all that they do!” (Quran 35: 8)*
- *“On account of their arrogance in the Land and their plotting of Evil; But the plotting of Evil will hem in only the authors thereof. Now are they but looking for the way the ancients were dealt with? But no change wilt thou find in God’s way (of dealing): no turning off wilt thou find in God’s way (of dealing). (Quran 35: 43)*
- *“ . . . And We are not to be defeated (in Our Plan). So leave them to plunge in vain talk and play about, until they encounter that Day of theirs which they have been promised! - The Day whereon they will issue from their sepulchers in sudden haste as if they were rushing to a goal-post (fixed for them), - Their eyes lowered in dejection, - ignominy covering them (all over)! Such is the Day that which they are promised!” (Quran 70: 41 - 44)*

In my view, the third element or party has only one concern: Materialism and the survival of its opulent way of life alone. But it assumes a veiled non-challance towards one faith, while it wears the garb of this faith and hoodwink it into believing that they are on the same side (or track) and have a common purpose, - the eradication of the other faith (especially the one most dreaded). But this is only a ploy, because it knows that it has so far succeeded in infiltrating all religions of the world, through an ingenious super-structure long ago. Divisions have erupted within each of the two faiths and in-fighting is the order of the day. The medium used by the Devil sometimes, for this evil plot is the ancient mystical knowledge and practices which has been acquired and used side by side with the religious belief. Though the mystical practices have been introduced stealthily as a non-religious practice, it is yet the source of the mysterious power used as weapon of infiltration and domination, and also used by the false prophets to bait the unsuspecting faithful. On this, the Quran says:

- *“They follow what the evil ones gave out (falsely) against the power of Solomon: the blasphemers were, not Solomon, but the evil ones, teaching men Magic, and such things as came down at Babylon to the angels Haaruut and Maaruut . . .”* (Quran 2:102)

The members of these societies who come from all walks of life can be manipulated virtually, as by remote control, using the *“practical application of natural Laws,”* (as they term it) consciously or unconsciously to engage in certain actions which would seem good to them and therefore not contradictory to their religious beliefs. This assumption is only a mask (only at face value), but their actions offends other people and succeed in getting them enraged enough to respond instinctively like animals, in self defense. For the moment the fraternity is happy to stand aside and pull the strings at leisure. Imagine thousands of people spread all over the world, from all walks of life and faiths, being directed to focus their thoughts and meditate on the minds of select individuals or group with a view to influencing their actions towards a desired end. A piece of literature produced by one of such organizations tells us that:

*“The . . . Order, existing in all civilized lands, is a non-sectarian, fraternal body of men and women devoted to the investigation, study, and **practical application of natural laws.**”*

These fraternities have long ago carried out researches and investigations into human behaviors which have been well-documented. With the result of these researches, they have been able to unleash their terror attacks on the minds of innocent people who later knew not what hit them or what is going on with their lives.

These 'elements' control and use the superpowers as they will, through lobbyists and other hand-twisting ploys. They somehow get them to roll out their armies and heavy weapons of mass destruction, including remote controlled drones, the moment they have their eyes on a particular geographical location or whatever that caught their fancy. Of course, they afterwards say that they are fighting "Terror". But before that, they first have to set the two prominent religions or ethnic groups in the area against each other, thereby setting the stage to invite themselves in, and of course, the United Nation is there at their beck and call, to support or give them the necessary go ahead to occupy, overtake or takeover any such desired prize. And the rest of the world stand to watch, impotent and powerless to do anything about it, even when they sense that something is amiss.

Islamic Resurgence:

The potency of Islam and the inevitable reality of an Islamic resurgence have made the West not to be at ease. The West's fear of Islam is real and not in doubt and their attempt to ensure that 'the Giant that has slept for too long' continues to sleep has no restriction. History however, has shown the West that unlike Christianity, Islam cannot remain perpetually subdued; it must eventually rise again and challenge the West. This much Samuel P. Huntington had said in his book: '*Clash of Civilization*'.

"Islam is in fact the only civilization that ever put the survival of the West in doubt... The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam."(Samuel P. Huntington: '*Clash of Civilization*', page 216)

This invariably reveals the nature of Islam, the inevitability of its resurgence and the impossibility of permanently incapacitating it. More importantly, it shows the dynamism with which Islam converts the weapon fashioned against it into its own weapon or its own use. The West would invariably submit to Islam, the religion of the future. The nature and manners of this submission is another issue. What is certain is that Islam would overcome. The effort of the West however always proves in many cases to be the indirect way of helping Islam to spread and grow especially on its own territory. To mitigate the conflict, there has been the hope for an ideological convergence; but this hope is in itself empty. The Muslims have nothing to copy from the West, if there is anything that is good in the (western) civilization, it must have been borrowed from Islam since the days of the Crusades.

The Muslim history is replete with the facts which make a Muslim proud of his past, not so with the West, and this is one reason why Islamophobia become a reality. Professor T.B. Irving observed in his book '*Islam Resurgent*' page 1, that:

"The world worries about Islam because it has a system of values, and these are dangerous if taken seriously since they act as a basis for conduct. It is a coherent civilization or culture. Traditional Islam has been accused of endemic instability. Right now it is swayed by population pressures, and the world is afraid of Islamic political and economic activity whenever this is expressed because the colonial powers can never control it... The French never won Algeria and they had to leave it." (p. 113 – 114)

During events like the Gulf war and the September 11 bombings, Westerners reportedly flooded bookshops in search of books that would explain Islam to them. They wanted to know the driving force behind the Muslims. They wanted to know why a Muslim would 'agree to die just like that'. Their researches naturally led them to Islam. The British journalist who was arrested by the Taliban in the Afghan war is another example to this story of Westerners contact with Islam. When she found herself in the care of the Muslims who are portrayed as uncivilized and barbaric, without doubt, her fears would know no bounds. Her experience however showed that the Islam on the pages of Western media and consequently in the mind of Westerners is a fictional fabrication of the propagandists. The journalist returned home to read more about Islam from various sources and having satisfied herself with her researches decided to embrace Islam. Thanks to the internet and the evolution of the communication media too, many sites today exist that are devoted to information about Islam and Muslims. These sites are mostly specialized on different areas of information and this has also revealed what Islam is, thereby exposing the propagandists. As Bernard Shaw remarked:

"I have always hold the religion of Mohammed in high esteem because of its wonderful vitality. To me it seems the only faith able to adapt to life under different conditions in a way which makes it attractive to every people and every age" (Bernard Shaw)

Abdul Wadud Shalabi (2006) in his book, '*Islam Religion of life*' argues that "God spared Islam the agonies of fossilization and diminishing meaning, ensuring its universal applicability in a changing world. Earlier faiths fell victim to clergy, whose representative sanctified tyranny and iniquity. Islam was forbidden to create a priestly class. Rather, it developed a tradition of religious scholars (Ulama) who, although they were possessed of no special sacramental

function, never the less provide the intellectual re-articulation of eternal truth to a world in constant flux. It was the religious scholars who assessed new legal situations, new doctrinal challenges, and who suggested ways in which an adaptation to circumstances could be effected while remaining loyal to the revelation of the Qur'an and the teaching of the prophet. Thus Islam today is still practiced as it was in the time of the prophet, constituting a living chain of transmission with the past; thereby retaining its original freshness and simplicity, but able to face challenges and complexities of the age with new yet authentically Islamic rulings regarding modern technological marvels as nuclear weapons and surrogate motherhood. This capacity, not for change, but for expansion, undoubtedly constitutes a key factor in Islam's continuing dynamism." (Abdul Wadud Shalabi)

Christian Change of Heart towards Islam.

In 1095 AD, Pope Urban II (also known as Urban the Blessed), was the first to call for the crusades and characterized Muslims as "*Godless people, idolaters, Anti-Christ, Dogs, Chaff destined for eternal fire*" etcetera. However, the encyclical "*Nostra Aetate*" of 1965 under Pope Paul VI views Muslims in an entirely different light. The document says: "Upon Muslims, too, the church looks with esteem", and proceeds to expound that Muslims adore the One God, the God of Abraham with whom the Islamic faith is happy to associate itself; worship, pray and give alms; revere Jesus and his virgin mother, and consider him a prophet and messenger of God. (Maurice Bucaille, '*The Quran, Bible and Science*', p. 39-40)

The office for non-Christian affairs at the Vatican has produced a document resulting from the second Vatican council under the French title "*Orientations pour un dialogue entre Chrétiens et Musulmans*" (Orientation for a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims; third French edition dated 1970), bears witness to the profound change in official attitudes once the document has invited the reader to clear away the "*outdated image, inherited from the past, or distorted by prejudice and slander*" that Christians have of Islam, the Vatican document proceeds to "*recognize the past injustice towards the Muslims for which the West, with its Christian education, is to blame.*" It also criticizes the misconceptions Christians have been under, concerning Muslim fatalism, Islamic legalism, fanaticism, etc. it stresses belief in unity of God and reminds us how surprised the audience was at the Muslim University of Al Azhar, Cairo, when cardinal Koenig proclaimed this unity at the Great Mosque during an official conference in March 1969. It reminds us also that the Vatican office in 1967 invited Christians to offer their best wishes to Muslims at the end

of the fast of Ramadan with 'genuine religious worth.' United States of America and other countries of the World have since followed suit in this gesture of goodwill.

An official visit was paid by Cardinal Pignedoli, the president of the Vatican office of Non-Christian Affairs, on 24th April, 1974, to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. The cardinal conveyed to the Sovereign a message from Pope Paul VI expressing *"the regards of His Holiness, moved by a profound belief in the unification of Islamic and Christian worlds in the worship of a single God, to His majesty King Faisal as Supreme head of Islamic world."* And in October 1974, the Pope received the official visit to the Vatican of the Grand Ulema of Saudi Arabia. It occasioned a dialogue between Christians and Muslims on the "Cultural rights of man in Islam." The Vatican newspaper, *'Observatore Romano'*, of 26th October 1974, reported this historic event. The Grand Ulema of Saudi Arabia were afterwards received by the Ecumenical Council of Churches of Geneva and by the Lord Bishop of Strasbourg, His Grace Elchinger. The Bishop invited them to join in Midday Prayer before him in his cathedral. (Maurice Bucaille, 'The Quran, Bible and Science', – Non-Muslim's view of the Qur'anic Muhammad [pbuh] page 44 – 47).

The New Alternative:

For many Muslims today Islam offers a new alternative to a new dilemma. Some Muslim countries, since achieving independence, have organized their political and economic life on capitalist lines, whereas others have adopted the socialist system. The capitalist system, generally associated with Western countries with a Christian tradition has led to materialism at the expense of human values. Capitalist societies have rushed headlong into industrial progress at the expense of individual human dignity, and into immorality and violence. The socialist system, generally associated with Communist, atheistic regimes, has often led to dictatorship, economic stagnation and religious oppression . . . The Political regimes which have chosen these types of social organization have not kept all their promises, and so Islam appears once again as the alternative way, which can build a society of justice and progress on the religious heritage of the Islamic nations. So today, as yesterday, Islam is put forward as a healthy alternative to other political systems in Muslim countries. (C. Georges Moucarry).

Appendix 1

NON-MUSLIM VERDICT ON MUHAMMAD (PBUH)

1. *“Muhammad is the most successful of all prophets and religious personalities.”*
(Encyclopedia Britannica)

But this success was not the result of mere accident. It was not a windfall. It was in recognition of the fact that he was found to be of true mettle by his contemporaries. It was the result of his admirable and all-compelling personality.

(Prof. K.S. Rama Krishna Rao)

2. *“Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D 569, was born at Mecca, in Arabia the man who, of all men exercised the greatest influence upon the human race...Mohammed...”*

John William Draper, MD, LID, “A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe, London 1875, vol. 1, pp. 329-330.

3. *“In little more than a year he was actually the spiritual, nominal and temporal ruler of medina, with his hands on the lever that was to shake the world.”*

John Austin, in “Muhammad the prophet of Allah” in T.P’s and Cassel’s weekly for 24th September 1927.

4. *“Muhammad was the soul of kindness, and his influence was felt and never forgotten by those around him”*

Diwan Chand Sharma “the Prophets of the East” Calcutta 1935)

5. *“By a fortune absolutely unique in history, Mohammed is a threefold founder of a nation, of an empire, and of a religion.*

“ Rev. R. Bosworth-Smith in “Mohammed and Mohammedanism” 1946.

6. *“I have studied him –the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ he must be called the saviour of humanity.*

(George Bernard Shaw in The Genuine Islam)

7. *"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new way of reverence for that might Arabian teacher."*

Annie Besant, *the Life and Teaching of Muhammad*,
Madras 1932, p. 4.

8. *"Philosopher, Orator Apostle, Legislator, Warrior, Conqueror of ideas, Restorer of rational beliefs, of a cult without images, the Founder of twenty-terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"*

Lamartine, *"Historic dela Turquie"*, Paris 1854,
vol. II pp. 276-277.

9. *"Head of the State as well as the Church (Islam), he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesars, without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed revenue. If ever a man had the right to say that he ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad, for he held all the powers without their supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life."*

(Rev. R. Bosworth-Smith)

10. *"People like Pasteur and Salk are leaders in the first sense. People like Gandhi and Confucius, on one hand and Alexander, Caesar and Hitler on the other, are leaders in the second and perhaps the third sense. Jesus and Buddha belong in the third category alone perhaps the greatest leader of all times was Mohammed, who combined all three functions. To a lesser degree, Moses did the same."*

(Professor Jules Masserman)

11. *"If a man like Muhammad were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness."*

(George Bernard Shaw)

12. *"Pure hearted and beloved in his circle, he was, it is said, of sweet and gentle disposition. His bereavements having made him sensitive to human suffering in every form, he was always ready to help others, especially the poor and weak. His sense of honour, duty and fidelity won him, as he grew older, the high and enviable title of "the true," "the upright" etc yet, despite his concern for others he remained removed from them in outlook and ways, isolated in the midst of an effete and chaotic society. As he grew from childhood to youth and to manhood the lawless strife of his contemporaries, the repeated outburst of pointless quarrels among the tribes frequenting the Meccan at fairs and general immorality and cynicism of the day combined to produce in the prophet-to-be a sustained reaction of horror and disgust, silently, brooding, his thoughts turned inward"*

(Professor Hilston Smith, "The religion of man,"
Mentor books (USA) page 203)

13. *"In an age charged with supernaturalism, when miracles were accepted as the stock-in-trade of most ordinary saints, Mohammed refused to traffic with human weakness and credulity. To miracle hungry idolators seeking signs and portents he cut the issue clean: (saying) "God has not sent me to work wonders! Am I more than a man sent and an Apostle?" From first to last he resisted every impulse to glamorize his own people. "I never said that Allah's treasures are in my hand, that I knew the hidden things, or that I was an angel.... I am only a preacher of God's words the bringer of God's message to mankind." If signs be sought let them be not of Mohammed's greatness, but of God's, and for these, one need only open one's eyes. The heavenly bodies holding their swift silent course in the vault of heaven, the incredible order of the universe, the rain that falls to relieve the parched earth, palms bending with golden fruit, ships that glide across the seas laden with goodness for man can these be the handiwork of gods of stones? What fool to cry for signs when creation harbours nothing else! In an age of credulity,*

Mohammed taught respect for the worlds incontrovertible order which was to awaken Muslim science before Christians."

(Professor Hillston smith in "The Religion of Man"
Mentor Books (USA) pages 205-206)

14. *"He who standing alone braved for years the hatred of his people, is the same who was never the first to withdraw his hand from another's clasp; the beloved of children, who never passed a group of little ones without a smile from his wonderful eyes and a kind word for them, sounding all the kinder in that sweet toned voice. He was one of those happy few who have attained the supreme joy of making one great through their life spring. He was the messenger of one only God; and never to his life's time did he forget who he was, or the message which was the marrow of his being. He brought his tiding to his people with a grand dignity spring from sweet humility whose roots lay in the knowledge of his own weakness."*

(Professor Lane Poole, (professor of history).
in a book introduction page 29)

15. *"We must at the outset recognize that Mohammed was no mere spiritual peddler, no vulgar time serving vagrant, but one of the most profoundly sincere and earnest spirits of any age or epoch. A man not only great but one of the greatest that is trusted by men, that humanity has ever produced, Great, i.e not simply as a prophet but as a patriot and a statesman as well as a spiritual builder who constructed a great nation; a great empire, and more even than all these, a still greater faith. True, moreover, because he was true to himself, to his people and above all to his God. Recognizing this, we will thus acknowledge that Islam is profound and a true cult, which strive to uplift its votaries from the depths of human darkness into the higher realms of light and truth."*

(Major A.G Leonard in book, "Islam, Her Moral
and Spiritual Value" page 20-21)

16. *"Never has a man set himself, voluntarily or involuntarily a more sublime aim, since this aim was super human; to subvert superstition which had been interposed between man unto God; to restore the rational and scared idea of divinity amidst the chaos of the materials*

and disfigured gods of adulatory that is existing. Never has a man undertaken work so far beyond human power with so feeble means, for he had in the conception as well as in the execution of such a great design no other instrument than himself, and no other aid except a handful of men living in a corner of the desert."

(Lamartine in "Historic de Targuie, Vol. II,
in Dr. Zaki Ali (Islam in the World)

17. *"Finally, never has a man accomplished such a huge and lasting revolution in the world, because in less than two centuries after its appearance, Islam in faith and arms, reigned over the whole of Arabia and conquered in God's name Persia, Khorasan, Transoxannia, Western India, Syria, Abyssinia, all the known continent of North Africa, numerous Islands of the Mediterranean, Spain and a part of Gaul."*

(Lamartine in "Historic de Targuie, Vol. II,
in Dr. Zaki Ali (Islam in the World)

18. *"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history to Mohammed? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislation, empire, people and dynasties, but millions of men in one third of the then inhabited world, and more than that, he moved the alters, the gods, the religious, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls. On the basin of a Book, every letter of which has become law, he created a spiritual nationality, which has blended together peoples of every tongue and of every race. He has left to us as the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality, the hatred (disdain) of false gods and the passion for the one immaterial God. This avenging patriotism against the profanation of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Mohammed; the conquest of one third of the earth to his dogma was his miracle; or rather it was not the miracle of a man but that of reason. The idea of the unity of God proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of fabulous theogenies, was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient temples of*

idols and set on fire one-third of the world. His life, his meditations, his firmness in enduring then for fifteen years of Mecca, his heroic reviling against the superstitions of his country, and his boldness in defying the furies of idolatry, his acceptance of the role of public scorn and almost of being a victim of his fellow countrymen: all these, and finally his incessant preaching, his wars against odds, his faith in this success and his super human security in misfortune, for forbearance in victory, his ambition which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayer, his triumph after death; all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction. It was his conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. The dogma was twofold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is; the later telling what God is not."

(Lamartine in "Historic de Targuie, Vol. II, page 276 – 277, quoted by Dr. Zaki Ali in his book, "Islam in the World").

19 "*His (Muhammad's) religion is not an easy one: with rigorous fasts, lavations, strict complex formulas, prayers five times a day, and abstinence from wine, it did not succeed by being an easy religion."*

(Rev. Bosworth-smith: 'Missionary activities of Islam', p. 418).

20 "*Someone has said that Europeans in South Africa dread the advent of Islam. Islam that civilized Spain; Islam that took the torch of light to Morocco and preached to the world of the Gospel of Brotherhood. The Europeans of South Africa dread the advent of Islam, as they may claim equality with the white races. They may well dread it. If brotherhood is a sin, if it is equality of the coloured races that they dread, then their dread is well founded."*

(Mahatma Gandhi, in his inimitable style)

21. "*It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for in the mosque, when the minaret (muezzin – call to prayer) sounded and the worshippers are gathered together the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and king kneel side by side and proclaim "God alone is great." I have been struck over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes a man instinctively a brother."*

(Sarojini Naidi, the great poetess of India,

speaking about Islam and democracy)

22. *“In an age of barbarism, the battlefield itself was humanized and strict instructions were issued not to embezzle, not to cheat, not to break trust, not to mutilate, not to kill a minor child or a woman or an old man, not to hew down date palm nor burn it, not to cut down a fruit tree, not to molest monks and persons engaged in worship.”*

(Prof. K.S. Rama Krishna Rao on War/Jihad)

23. *“The theory of Islam and Sword for instance is not frequently heard now in any quarter worth the name, while the principle of Islam, of “No compulsion in religion” is well known.”*

(Prof. K.S. Rama Krishna Rao on Islam and the Sword)

24. *“The Accounts of Mohammad and Islam which were published in Europe before the beginning of the 19th century are now to be regarded as literary curiosities.”*

(Prof. Bevan writes in Cambridge Medieval History)

25. *“Gambling is illegal: The highest acts of virtue are contributions to schools, to places of worship, hospitals, digging of wells, opening of orphanages. Orphanages have sprung for the first time, it is said, under the teaching of the Prophet of Islam. The world owes its orphanages to this Prophet who was himself born an orphan.”*

(Prof. K.S. Rama Krishna Rao on Islam)

26. *“The Prophet of Islam brought the reign of democracy in its best form. Caliph Umar, Caliph Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, Caliph Mansur Abbas, the son of the Caliph Mamun, and many other caliphs and kings had to appear before the Judge as ordinary men in Islamic courts.”*

(Prof. K.S. Rama Krishna Rao on Democracy in Islam)

27. *“The League of Nation founded by the Prophet of Islam put the principle of international unity and human brotherhood on such universal foundations as to show candle to other nations.” He continues, “the fact is that no nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done towards the realization of the idea of League of Nations.”*

(Professor Hurgonje on Democracy/brotherhood of Islam)

28. *"This book will go on exercising through all ages, a most potent influence."*

(Goethe, the greatest of German poets,
speaking about the Holy Qur'an)

29. *"if any religion has a chance of ruling over England, nay, Europe, within the next 100 years, it is Islam."*

(George Bernard Shaw on Islam)

30. *"Historical records show that all contemporaries of Muhammad, both friends and foes, acknowledged the sterling qualities, the spotless honesty, the noble virtues, the absolute sincerity and the absolute trustworthiness of the apostle of Islam in all walks of life and in every sphere of human activity. Even the Jews and those who did not believe in his message accepted him as arbiter in their personal disputes on account of his scrupulous impartiality."*

(Prof. K.S. Rama Krishna Rao)

31. *"It is a notable feature in the history of the Prophet of Islam that his nearest relations his beloved cousin and his bosom friends, who knew him most intimately, were thoroughly imbued with the truth of his mission and convinced of the genuineness of his divine inspiration. If these men and women, noble, intelligent, educated and intimately acquainted with his private life had perceived in him the slightest signs of deception, fraud, earthliness (materialism) or had lack of faith in him, Muhammad's moral hopes of regeneration, spiritual awakening and social reform would all have been foredoomed and the whole edifice would have crumbled to pieces in a moment. On the contrary, we find that the devotion of his followers was such that he was voluntarily acknowledged leader of their lives. They braved odds: persecution and danger. They believed, trusted, obeyed and honoured him, even in the most excruciating torture and severest mental agony caused by excommunication, even into death. Would this have been so, or had they noticed the slightest backsliding in their leader?"*

(Prof. K.S. Rama Krishna Rao)

32. "Looking at the circumstances of the time and the unbounded reverence of his followers" says a western writer, "the most

miraculous thing about Muhammad is that he never claimed the power of working miracles." Miracles were performed but not to propagate his faith and were attributed entirely to God and his inscrutable ways. He would plainly say that he was a man like others. He had no treasures of earth or heaven, nor did he claim to know the secrets that lie in the womb of the future. All this was in an age when miracles were supposed to be ordinary occurrences.

33. *What were the titles he assumed?* Only two, the servant of God, and His Messenger; servant first and then a messenger. A messenger and prophet like many other prophets in every part of the world, some known to us and many not known.

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34. Thomas Carlyle, struck by this philosophy of life writes:

"And then also Islam – that we must submit to God; that our whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him, whatsoever He does to us, the thing He sends to us, even if death, shall be good, shall be best, we resign ourselves to God. If this be Islam, according to Goethe, "do we not all live in Islam?" to which Carlyle answered "Yes, all of us that have any moral life, we all live so. This is yet highest wisdom that heaven has revealed to our earth."

35. *"Circumstances changed, but the Prophet of God did not. In victory or defeat, in power or in adversity, in affluence or in indigency, he was the same man, disclosed the same character. He was Lord of Arabia, had more than one million square miles of land lay at his feet after the fall of Mecca. He mended his own shoes and coarse woolen garments, milked the goats, swept the hearth, kindled the fire and attended to other menial offices of the family. The entire town of Medina, where he lived grew wealthy in the later days of his life. Everywhere there was gold and silver in plenty and yet in those days of prosperity, many weeks would elapse without a fire being kindled in the hearth of the king of Arabia, his food being dates and water. His family would go hungry many nights successively because they could not get anything to eat in the evening. He slept on no soft bed but on a palm mat after a long busy day, to spend most of his nights in prayer, often bursting with tears before his creator to grant him strength to discharge his duties.*

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36. *“On the day he died, his only assets were a few coins, a part of which went to satisfy a debt and the rest was given to a needy person who came to his house for charity. The clothes in which he breathed his last had many patches. The house from where light had spread to the world was in darkness because there was no oil in the lamp.”*

(Prof. K.S. Rama Krishna Rao)

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