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ISLAM & CHRISTIANITY



Ulfat Aziz-us-Samad

ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

الإسلام والمسيحية

ULFAT `AZIZ-US-SAMAD

AL-FALAH FOUNDATION

For Translation, Publication & Distribution

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PREFACE

To investigate, compare, and analyze, through honest and clear means, with the aim of realizing the truth, is a Divine as well as a human approach. However, prejudice, pride and envy based on ignorance of the other is extremely uncultured and totally rejected conduct.

ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY is devoted for this very aim. Following this very method, namely, reaching the truth by means of thorough investigation, comparison and analysis.

As Divine religions, Islam and Christianity have much in common as they are revealed by the One and Same Sender; ALLAH, the Almighty.

As a matter of fact, both Muhammad and Jesus (pbut) are great Divine Prophets, each of them spoke honestly and friendly of the other. Jesus gave glad tidings of Muhammad's coming as he said:

> "... I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."
>
> (John 16:12,13)

Muhammad (pbuh), on his part, considered belief in Jesus' Prophethood a prerequisite for a full and perfect Faith. As the Glorious Qur'an says:

﴿...Say, ye: ...We believe in God, and the Revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between one and another of them and we bow to God (in Islam).﴾

(Qur'an II. 136)

As this is the stand of both prophets, Muslims and Christians alike should have been following in their exact footsteps. Unfortunately, most of them, due to great ignorance, misunderstanding and even envy have gone astray and lost their steps.

ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY clarifies the way for those who have the will to go on the Right Path, through intellectual as well as textual evidences. It sheds light on the different fundamentals of both religions; the Glorious Qur'an & the Gospels, Muhammad & Jesus (pbut), doctrines and moral teachings found in Islam and Christianity, etc.

AL-FALAH, for it has committed itself and devoted all its resources and efforts to remove and clarify all misconceptions and distortions aroused around Islam and Muslims all over the world, presents this new edition of the valuable book **ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY** for all those who beseech the truth.

General Supervisor

Sheikh Muhammad `Abdu

INTRODUCTION

The Muslim approach to Comparative Religion is quite different from the Christian one.

The Christian is brought up to believe that his religion is the only true one along with Judaism which is a preparation for Christianity, and that all other religions are false. He thinks that God has chosen and set apart the children of Israel for the purpose of revealing His Messages and sending His prophets. And so, he believes only in the prophets and religious teachers of Israel and considers all other Prophets as impostors. Christian missionaries have all along employed their energies at proving the holy founders of other religions to be false and wicked men, so that they might establish the unique claim of Jesus Christ. One has only to read their books about the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his Religion to find how their religious preconceptions and prejudices have made them incapable of seeing the truth of others. They have not hesitated even to mistranslate the Glorious Qur'an and spread many misstatements about the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to serve their own purpose. If they find anything in another religion resembling something in their own, instead of feeling happy, they feel discouraged and hasten to explain it away as due to Christian influence.

The Muslim, on the other hand, believes in the Divine Origion of all the Divine religions of the world. The Sacred Book of Islam declares that God has raised prophets in every nation to guide the people to the Path of Truth and Righteousness. Being the loving Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds, He cannot become partial and choose one nation to the exclusion of all others for revealing His Messages. A Muslim must believe in the prophets of all the Divine religions. He may feel sorry to see how Jews and Christians have in part forsaken and altered the true teachings of Moses and Jesus, but he can never speak against the prophets of their religions. For, he has been directed by the Glorious Qur'an to respect and believe in them as true and righteous prophets of God as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

It is, therefore, with a feeling of deep love and respect for both Jesus and Muhammad (pbut), and for the religions which they preached, that I embark upon a comparative study of Islam and Christianity. If at times I find myself disagreeing with the Christians, it is not over the religion of Jesus, but over the altered shape and features that they developed after his departure. In the words of Lord Headley, "Islam and Christianity, as taught by Christ himself, are sister religions, only held apart by dogmas and technicalities which might very well be dispensed with."[1]

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1. Lord Headley: *A Western Awakening to Islam,* p.15.

CHAPTER 1

THE GOSPELS AND THE QUR'AN

Both Christianity and Islam claim to be revealed religions. Jesus Christ (pbut) declared that the message he was delivering was not his but God's:

> "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 12:49)

He described himself as

> "A man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God"
>
> (John 8:40)

In the same way it is claimed in the Qur'an that the Revelation which came to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was from the Lord of the worlds:

> ﴿*And lo it (i.e., the Qur'an) is a Revelation of the Lord of the worlds, which the True Spirit hath brought down upon thy heart (O Muhammad), that thou mayest be one of the warners*﴾
>
> (Qur'an 26: 192-194)

From this it follows that the truth of either religions depends on the accuracy with which the inspired words of its Founder have been recorded and on the textual purity of its Scripture. If the message which was revealed by God to a prophet has not reached us exactly as it was delivered, but has been misreported and altered, then to that extent that religion may be regarded as having deviated from truth. In this chapter we shall see how far the inspired words and Revelations of Jesus and Muhammad (pbut) have been faithfully recorded in the Gospels and the Qur'an respectively, and how far these Scriptures have remained free from alteration or interpolation of any kind.

Composition & Character of the Gospels

There are four Gospels involved in the Bible - the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In these Gospels, we come across many sayings claimed to be by Jesus. They were composed between forty and eighty years after the departure of Jesus relying on some earlier documents which are now lost. Biblical scholars have identified some of these earlier documents as (1) 'Q' (German Quelle = 'Source'), a lost document in Aramaic, which reached the writers of the Gospels in a Greek translation, (2) ('Urmarcus' = Primitive Mark) an earlier draft of Mark's Gospel written on the basis of Peter's discourses about Jesus, and (3) 'L', a collection of reports about Jesus used only by Luke. A comparison of the Gospels will show that their authors used these lost documents in a somewhat free manner; they did not even hesitate to change some sayings contained in them to suit their own purpose.

The first Gospel to be written was that of Mark. It was written at Rome at least forty years after the so-called

crucifixion of Jesus. The Gospel as we have it today is an expanded version of Urmarcus, about which Papias, an early Christian writer, has the following to say:

> "The elder John used to say, Mark having become Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord not accompanied him, but subsequently as I said, attached himself to Peter who used to frame his teaching to meet the wants of his hearers, and not as making a connected narrative of the Lord's discourses."[1]

It is not possible to say whether Urmarcus was expanded and revised to give us the Gospel of Mark as we have it by Mark himself or by some other person. Dr C. J. Cadoux who was Mackennal Professor of Church History at Oxford, thus sums up the conclusions of eminent Biblical scholars regarding the nature and composition of this Gospel:

> "It was written after Peter's martyrdom (65 A. C.), and at a time when Mark, who had not himself been a disciple of Jesus apparently had none of the personal disciples of Jesus within reach by whose knowledge he could check his narrative. These circumstances of its composition account for the existence in it, side by side, of numerous signs of accuracy and a certain number of signs of ignorance and inaccuracy."[2]

---

1. Roberts and Donaldson (editors), *The Ante-Nicene Father,* Vol.I, pp. 154, 155.
2. C.J. Cadoux: *The Life of Jesus,* Penguin Books, p.13.

The Gospel of Matthew was written in Greek at Antioch about 90 C. E. The author made use of at least two lost documents; 'Q' and 'Urmarcus'. No independent scholar regards this Gospel as the work of Matthew the apostle of Jesus. If Matthew composed anything it must have been only 'Q'. Regarding the liberties taken by the unknown author of this Gospel with the original material, C.J. Cadoux writes:

> "But a close examination of the treatment he gives to his borrowings from Mark shows that he allowed himself great freedom in editing and embroidering his material in the interest of what he regarded as the rightful honouring of the great Master. The same tendencies are often visible elsewhere when he is producing 'Q' or providing matter peculiar to himself. Anything, therefore, strictly peculiar to 'Matthew' can be accepted as historical only with great caution."[1]

The third Gospel, the Gospel of Luke, was written somewhere in Greece about the year 80 A.C. for the benefit of "the most excellent" Theophilus, probably a high official in the Roman Empire. It was an apologetic addressed to non-Jews. The writer, who was the friend and travel-companion of St. Paul, made use of at least three lost documents, two of these were indentical with those used by the writer of Matthew's Gospel and the third was peculiar to himself. Luke, who wished to bring his Gospel in line with the Pauline point of view, took even greater liberties with his source than the writer of Matthew's Gospel had done.

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1. C.J. Cadoux: *The Life of Jesus,* Penguin Books, pp. 14,15.

The Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke are called "the Synoptic Gospels", because they proceed on the basis of the same lost documents and have much in common. But the Gospel of John is very different. The divinity and pre-existence of Jesus are affirmed in this Gospel alone, though never as a claim put forward by Jesus himself. In the opening lines of this Gospel, the writer claims that the Divine Logos, the Word or Reason of God, Who created the world, had become incarnate in Jesus. The Gospel of John was written at or near Ephesus between the years 110 and 115 of the Christian era by some unknown writer who was anti-semitically inclined: This is evident in his representation of Jews as the enemies of Jesus Christ (pbuh). No independent scholar regards it as the work of John the Son of Zebedee, who, according to R. H. Charles, Alfred Loisy, Robert Eisler, and other scholars, was beheaded by Agrippa I in the year 44 A.C., long before the Fourth Gospel was written. The modern Biblical scholars doubt the genuineness not only of the writer's own views expressed in this Gospel, but also of the words put by him in the mouth of Jesus Christ. C. J. Cadoux writes:

> "The speeches in the Fourth Gospel (even apart from the early messainic claim) are so different from those in the Synoptics, and so like the comments of the Fourth Evangelist himself, that both cannot be equally reliable as records of what Jesus said: Literary veracity in ancient times did not forbid, as it does now, the assignment of fictitious speeches to historical characters: the best ancient historians made a practice of composing and assigning such speeches in this way."(1)

1. C.J. Cadoux : *The Life of Jesus*, p. 16.

The Unreliability of the Gospels

The Gospels were composed after the early Christians had become divided into different factions. They were in fact composed to propagate the special teachings of the various schools. Thus, their authors showed no hesitation in tampering with the earlier documents and other traditional materials regarding the life and teaching of Jesus to bring them in line with the views of their schools. Rev. T. G. Tucker states:

> "Thus Gospels were produced which clearly reflected the conception of the practical needs of the community for which they were written. In them the traditional material was used, but these was no hesitation in altering it or making additions to it, or in leaving out what did not suit the writer's purpose."(1)

The four Gospels included in the Bible were not the only Gospels written in the early centuries of Christianity. There were many others, including the one called "The Gospels according to the Hebrews", an Aramaic work which was used by the Nazarenes (as the early disciples of Jesus were called), who denied the divinity of Jesus and regarded him only as a great prophet. Towards the end of the second century the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John were included in the Canon and the rest were declared to be heretical or apocryphal by the Church. Before they were canonized and accepted as scriptures, the Gospels did not have that sanctity which they have now and no one felt any compunction in altering them if anything contained in them did not suit his purpose or the purpose of his

---

1. T.G. Tuncker: *The History of the Christians in the Light of Modern Knowledge,* p.320.

sect. Even after they were included in the Canon and declared to be the Word of God, changes continued to be made in them, as is clear from the different early extant manuscripts. Referring to this, Professor Dummelow from Cambridge writes in his famous Commentary on the Holy Bible:

> "A copyist would sometimes put in not what was in the text, but what he thought ought to be in it. He would trust a fickle memory, or he would make the text accord with views of the school to which he belonged. In addition to the versions and quotations from the Christian Fathers, nearly four thousand Greek MSS of the Testament, were known to exist. As a result the variety of reading is considerable."[1]

In considering how far the four Canonical Gospels faithfully present the inspired message or Gospel of Jesus we must bear the following facts in mind: (1) that no written copy was made of the inspired sayings of Jesus in his life time; (2) that the earliest records of the sayings of Jesus, which were made shortly after his departure, when the glorification of Jesus had already begun, have all been irretrievably lost; (3) that in the Gospels, which were written between 70 and 115 C. E. on the basis of some lost documents, the material contained in them was handled rather freely; the Gospel-writers felt no hesitation in changing it for what they considered to be the greater glory of Christ or to bring it in line with the views of their sects; (4) that none of the Evangelists had known Jesus or heard him speaking; (5) that the Gospels were written in Greek, whereas the language spoken by Jesus was Aramaic;(6) that they were composed to

1. J.R. Dummelow: *Commentary on the Holy Bible,* p.16.

propagate the points of view of the different factions and chosen from many others which represented different view-points, (7) that for at least a century after they were written they had no canonical authority and were actually changed by the copyists of the different sects to serve their own purpose; (8) that the earliest extant manuscripts of the Gospels - Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Alexandrinus - belong to the fourth and fifth centuries, and no one knows to what extent the Gospels had been changed during the centuries of which no manuscript is available; (9) that there are considerable differences at many places among the various extant manuscripts of the fourth and fifth centuries; and (10) that the Gospels, taken as a whole, are full of contradictions.

These facts disclosed by distinguished Western scholars go to show that the Gospel of Jesus, by which we mean the Message which Jesus had received from God, has not reached us in its original form. The four Gospels included in the Bible cannot be considered identical with the inspired Gospel of Jesus. The manner of their composition and the circumstances through which they have passed are such that they cannot be relied upon to give us the exact knowledge of what Jesus had said and taught. C. J. Cadoux sums up the position in these words in his book Life of Jesus.

> "In the four Gospels, therefore, the main documents to which we must go if we are to fill-out at all that bare sketch which we can put together from other sources, we find material of widely-differing quality as regards credibility. So far-reaching is the element of uncertainty that it is tempting to 'down tools' at once, and to declare

the task hopeless. The historical inconsistencies and improbabilities in parts of the Gospels form some of arguments advanced in favour of the Christ-myth theory. These are, however, entirely outweighed - as we have shown - by other considerations. Still, the discrepancies and uncertainties that remain are serious and consequently many moderns, who have no doubt whatever of Jesus' real existence, regard as hopeless any attempt to dissolve out the historically-true from the legendary or mythical matter which the Gospels contain, and to reconstruct the story of Jesus' mission out of the more historical residue."[1]

The Authenticity of the Qur'an

On the other hand, there is no such doubt about the Glorious Qur'an. It contains nothing but the Revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The Revelations came to him in fragments, from time to time. As soon as he received any, he used to communicate it to his Companions and ask them not only to commit it to memory, but also to write it down. Muhammad (pbuh) used to indicate in a precise manner the place to which the Revelation belonged. Thus the complete Qur'an was committed to writing and also preserved in the hearts of hundreds of Muslims in the life time of the Prophet.

After the demise of the Prophet, Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, charged Zaid ibn Thabit with the task of preparing an authentic copy of the entire Text in the form of a book. The Companions of the Prophet wrote the Revelations that had come to the

1. C. J. Cadoux: *op. cit.*, pp. 16,17.

Prophet on parchments or pieces of leather. Zaid ibn Thabit collected all these and, after comparing them with what the followers of the Prophet had learnt by heart, compiled a copy, called *Mushaf* (bound leaves), about the genuineness or correctness of which there was absolutely no doubt.

At the order of 'Uthman, the third Caliph, seven copies of the *Mushaf* edition of the Glorious Qur'an, again confined by the memory of those who had learnt it by heart (*hafiz*), were prepared and sent to the different centers of the vast Islamic world. One of these seven copies is still in existence in Tashkent. The Czarist government of Russia had published it with a facsimile reproduction; and we see that there is a complete identity between this copy and the text otherwise in use all over the world. The same is true of the other extant MSS of the Qur'an, complete or fragmentary, dating from the first century of the Muslim era.

From the time of the Prophet to our own time the practice of learning the whole of the Qur'an by heart has continued unbroken, and the number of *huffaz* can now be counted by hundreds of thousands all over the world. The result is that no scholar, Eastern or Western, Muslim or non-Muslim, has ever cast any doubt on the purity of the text of the Glorious Qur'an. Even such an unfriendly critic as Sir William Muir writes about the Qur'an:

> "There is probably in the world no other book which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text."[1]

1. Sir William Muir, *The Life of Mohamet*, Introduction, p.18.

CHAPTER 2

JESUS AND MUHAMMAD

Nothing brings out the contrast between Islam and Christianity so much as a comparison between the Islamic attitude towards Jesus (pbuh) and the Christian attitude towards Muhammad (pbuh). For, while Muslims believe in Jesus as a great prophet of God and love and respect him as the Prophet Muhammad, the Christians not only reject Muhammad, but are never tired of speaking of him in the most disparaging manner.

An impartial study of their lives will, however, show that the prophets of Islam and Christianity were both godly men, completely dedicated to the task of preaching God's Religion, of delivering men from error and sin and making the Will of God prevail in the world.

The Life and Mission of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ (pbuh) was born about 7-5 B.C. in a humble home in Palestine. Very little is known about the early years of his life. All we can say, in the words of Luke, is that he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men". When he was between thirty-three and thirty-five years of age, a prophet appeared in Palestine preaching "the baptism of

repentance for the remission of sin." The name of this prophet was John the Baptist, and Jesus went to him and was baptized by him. At that moment, it was revealed to Jesus that he had been chosen by God as the Messiah of the Jews to revive the true Religion and complete the long line of Israelite prophets.

The Religion of God was not unknown to the children of Israel, but at the time when Jesus began his ministry, the spirit of true Religion had been stifled by the worldliness of the Sadducees and the formalism and trivial legalism of the Pharisees. They declared, in the words of the Talmud, "He who lightly esteems hand washing will perish from the earth". And Jesus rebuked them, saying "Full well ye reject the Commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." They had absurd rules about the Sabbath. For instance, a man might walk two thousand cubits on the Sabbath, but no more. Vinegar, if swallowed, could be used to relieve a sore throat but it could not be gargled. In case death threatened, a physician could be summoned, but a fracture should not be attended to on the Sabbath. Jesus impatiently brushed aside all such elaborate and artificial regulations. He told them that the Sabbath was for man and not man for the Sabbath, and he warned them:

> "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith ... Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel"

The essence of his religion was the Love of God and the love of His fellow-men, which he tried to instill into the hearts of his people by means of his inspired sermons and beautiful parables.

The Sadducees and Pharisees, instead of acknowledging him as the Messiah about whose coming the earlier Israelite prophets had given glad tidings, turned to be his mortal enemies and pressed the Roman Procurator to pass the sentence of crucifixion on him.

This man who was treated as a common malefactor by his blind people was one of the most inspiring characters of history. He led a pure, noble and godly life. He showed a rare combination of mildness and courage in doing the Will of God and in dealing with his misguided compatriots. He was all gentleness, selflessness and humility; serving his friends and praying for his enemies. He worked many wonders, yet never took pride over them, ascribing them always to the "Finger of God" and even admitting others' ability to do the same. His compassion for the sinners and sufferers was truly admirable. About him it may well be said that he had conquered the Devil.

The Prophecies of Jesus About Muhammad

The crime of Jews against Jesus (pbuh) deprived them of God's Blessings and Favors. Jesus told them that after him no prophet would appear among them and that the Kingdom of God would be taken away from them and given to a nation more worthy of it. Moreover, he announced that the stone which the builders had rejected, the same had been chosen by God to become the corner-stone. Meaning there-by that the children of Ishmael, whom the children of Israel had rejected and disowned, were chosen by God for His greatest Blessings... the World-Prophet would appear from among the Ishmaelites. Jesus (pbuh) gave the prophecy of his coming in no uncertain terms:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

(John 16 : 12,13)

In a non-canonical Gospel, the Gospel of St. Barnabas, Jesus mentioned the Spirit of truth or the Comforter - the Prophet who was to come after him to guide the world "into all truth" - by name thus:

"Then said the Priest, 'How shall the Comforter be called, and what signs shall reveal his coming? " Jesus answered, ' The name of the Comforter is admirable, for God gave him the name when he had created his soul, and placed it in Celestial Splendour. God said: 'Wait Muhammad, for thy sake I will create paradise, the world, and a great multitude of creatures, whereof I make thee a present, in so much that whoso shall bless thee shall be blessed, and whoso shall curse thee shall be cursed. When I shall send thee into the world, I shall send thee as My Messenger of salvation, and thy word shall be true, in so much that heaven and earth shall fail, but thy faith shall never fail.' Muhammad is his blessed name. Then the crowd lifted up their voice saying: O God, send us thy Messenger. O Muhammad, come quickly for the salvation of the world."[1]

The Prophet Muhammad

The Comforter, the Spirit of truth, the Messenger of God, about whose coming Jesus (pbuh) had given the good news, was

1. *The Gospel of St. Barnabas*, edited and translated from a Manuscript in the Imperial Library at Vienna by Lousdale and Laura Ragg, Oxford.

born in Arabia in the year 571 A.C. At the time of his birth the true Religion had been forgotten or distorted all over the world. The people among whom he was born, the Ishmaelite Arabs, were polytheists and idolaters. They were sunk in vice and superstitions of every kind. There was no law among them except the law of the jungle and, perchance, a few primitive tribal mores.

Among these people who had drifted far from God's Way, Prophet Muhammad grew up to be a Man of God. He was conspicuous among them by his pure and spotless character, his love of truth and compassion towards the poor and the downtrodden. They called him Al-'Amin the trustworthy, the faithful.

As he grew older the superstitions and evil ways of the people caused greater and greater sorrow to his heart. He spent many hours in communion with his Creator and in meditation on the end or object of man's life. He longed to bring people to the Straight Path, to "render God unto man and man unto God." When he was forty years of age Gabriel, the Messenger of God, shone the Divine light in its full resplendence in Muhammad's heart.

He preached to them One and Only God, the Loving Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds. He exhorted them to shun all kinds of evil and cruelty and to love one another. He told them that real Religion was the removal of the want and suffering of others and the selfless service of fellow-men, that the religious ceremonies were entirely useless if they did not train and discipline man to become more righteous and to work for the good of others:

﴿Hast thou observed him who belieth religion? That is he who repelleth the orphan, and urgeth not the feeding of the needy. Ah, woe unto worshipers who are heedless of their Prayers; who would be seen at worship, yet refrain from works of mercy!﴾

(The Qur'an 107)

He struck at the root of the false superiority based on color, caste, race or nationality, declaring that all human beings were equal brothers.

The treatment meted out to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by his people was not different from that meted out to the earlier prophets. He was rejected by people with vested interests and subjected to all kinds of cruelties. Many of those that believed in him were badly tortured. A combined attempt was made by all the tribes of Mecca to put an end to his life. After bearing these tortures and cruelties for thirteen long years with almost superhuman patience and forbearance, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) at last migrated to Medina, where a large number of people had already embraced Islam and become his followers. This was the turning point in his life. The people of Medina not only believed in him and his message but also made him the head of their new Islamic state. Here Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), in addition to his moving appeals for individual change of heart and transformation of character, worked out the social implications of his message. The many revolutionary changes that he introduced included the raising of women to a position of equality with men, taking steps to abolish slavery, total prohibition of all kinds of intoxicating drinks and of gambling, putting an end to exploitation of every kind, doing away with

priesthood and granting religious freedom to all individuals and communities, bringing into force the most enlightened code of laws ever known to man and the establishment of a welfare state and a form of administration which was an ideal blend of justice and mercy. He brought into being a universal brotherhood in which there was no distinction whatsoever on the basis of race, color, language, wealth or sex. The distinguishing feature of those who joined this fold was zeal for the Worship of One God and of humanity. After accomplishing his mission, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) the last prophet of God, departed from this world in the year 632 A.C., leaving behind the Glorious Qur'an which was revealed to him by God, and his own sayings, to guide people for all times to come.

The Ideal Character

The Prophet of Islam lived a life which can only be described as godly. He was the model par excellence for men in various situations and walks of life, as the Glorious Qur'an says:

> *﴿Verily in the Messenger of God ye have a perfect example for him who looketh unto God and the Last Day and remembreth God much.﴾*
>
> (33:21)

> *﴿O Prophet! Lo! We have sent thee as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner, and as a summoner unto God by His Permission, and as a lamp that giveth light.﴾*
>
> (33:45,46)

He lived up to the highest ideals of the Glorious Qur'an and exemplified in his life the virtues mentioned in the Book of God. When his wife, 'Aishah, was questioned about his morals, her reply was, "His morals are the Qur'an." Conversely, when she asked to explain certain ethical injunctions in the Qur'an she did so by illustrating them from the Prophet's life and behavior.

To say that he was sinless would be only a negative description of the Man of God who had conquered all temptations and passions and lived only for the Sake of God and in complete accord with the Will of God:

> ﴿*Say: Lo! my worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for God, Lord of the worlds.*﴾
>
> (Qur'an 6:162)

He was, as the Qur'an describes him, a "mercy to all nations". His compassion extended to friends and foes alike. "Do you love your Creator? Love your fellow creatures first", was his advice to his followers. He felt extremely concerned at the depraved and corrupt state of the people around him. It grieved his heart very much when as the head of the state, he had to pass an order of punishment on any one for the sake of justice or for the security of the young republic. But for his own sake he never even lifted his finger against any one. When at a critical moment some one asked him to curse his enemies and persecutors, he replied:

> *"I have not been sent to curse but as a mercy to mankind. O Lord, guide my people for they know not."*[1]

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1. As-Suyuti, *Aj-Jami` As-Saghir.*

At the conquest of Mecca (to give just one instance out of many) he freely forgave all his enemies, who had spared no effort to annihilate him, his Religion and his followers, and were guilty of murder and persecution. He told them. *"This day there is no reproof against you."* Here is a practical example of the maxim "Love your enemies." He had come to reclaim and reform the fallen humanity and he won the hearts of the anti-social elements of his time by love and kindness. His charity and readiness to help the people in all possible ways were proverbial. He was the greatest friend of the poor and the downtrodden.

He strove all his life to lead mankind to the One True God, to make them godly, to rescue them from error, superstitions and sins, but in inviting them to the truth he faithfully observed the Qur'anic injunction,

﴿ *There is no compulsion in religion* ﴾

(2:256)

He had imbued himself with Divine qualities and caused his fellow-men to take the greatest step towards the Divine . Yet he remained humble and modest, conscious always of his nothingness before God, and from the highest peak of moral and spiritual perfection to which he had attained, he cried out to the people,

﴿ *I am only a mortal like you.* ﴾

(Qur'an 41:6)

Non Muslims' Tributes to the Prophet

With the passing of Oriental Studies from the hands of Christian missionaries and divines into those of independent

scholars the appreciation of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his message is growing in the West.

Here are two extracts about Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from a recent book by a learned American professor:

> "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 the weak. His sense of honour, duty and fidelity won him as he grew older the high and enviable title of "The True', 'The Upright', 'The Trustworthy One'. Yet despite his concern for others he remained removed from them in outlook and ways, isolated in the midst of an effetic and chaotic society. As he grew from childhood to youth and from youth to manhood the lawless strife of his contemporaries, the repeated outbursts of pointless quarrels among the tribes frequenting the Meccan fairs, and the general immorality and cynicism of the day combined to produce in the prophet-to-be sustained reaction of horror and disgust. Silently, brooding, his thoughts turned inward".[1] "In an age charged with a supernaturalism, when miracles were accepted as the stock-in-trade of the most ordinary saint, Muhammad refused to traffic with human weakness and credulity. To miracle-hungry idolators seeking signs and portents he cut the issue clean: 'God has not sent me to work wonders; He has sent me to preach to you. My Lord be praised! Am I more than a man sent as an apostle?' From

1. Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, Mentor Books, p.203.

first to last he resisted every impulse to glamorize his *own* person. '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 Muhammad'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 stone? What fools to cry for signs when creation harbuors nothing else! In an age of credulity, Muhammad taught respect for the world's incontrovertible order which was to awaken Muslim science before Christian."(1)

And this is how the well-known historian, Lane-Poole, sums up the character of Prophet Muhammad:

"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 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 truth their very life-spring. He was the messenger of the One God; and never to his life's end did he forget who he was, or the

1. Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, Mentor Books. pp. 205, 206.

message which was the marrow of his being. He brought his tiding to his people with a grand dignity sprung from the consciousness of his high office together with a most sweet humility whose roots lay in the knowledge of his own weakness."(1)

Major A.G. Leonard refers to the sincerity of the Prophet and the truth of his message in these words in his book Islam, Her Moral and Spiritual Value.

"He must at the outset recognise that Mohammed was no mere spiritual pedlar, 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 - i.e., truest-men that humanity has ever produced. Great i.e., not simply as a prophet but as a patriot and a statesman: a material 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. Recognising this, he will thus acknowledge that Islam is a profound and true cult, which strives to uplift its votaries from the depths of human darkness into the higher realms of Light and Truth."(2)

Finally, this is what Lamartine, one of the greatest poets of France, writes about the greatness of Muhammad (pbuh):

"Never has a man set himself, voluntarily or

1. Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Speeches and Table Talk of the Prophet Muhammad*, Introduction, p. 29.
2. Maj A.G. Leonard, *Islam , Her Moral and Spiritual Value*, pp. 20-21.

involuntarily, a more sublime aim, since this aim was superhuman: to subvert superstitions which had been interposed between man and his Creator, to render God unto man and man unto God; to restore the rational and sacred idea of divinity amidst the chaos for the material and disfigured gods of idolatry then existing. Never has a man undertaken a 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. 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, Transoxania, Western India, Syria, Abyssinia, all the known continent of Northern Africa, numerous Islands of the Mediterranean, Spain, and a part of Gaul."

"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great men in modern history to Muhammad? The most famous men created arm, 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, empires, peoples, and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls. On the

basis 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 of false gods and the passion for the One and Immaterial God. This avenging patriotism against the profanation of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Muhammad: 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 heroic revilings against the superstitions, of his country, and his boldness in defying the furies of idolatry; his firmness in endurring them for fifteen years at Mecca, 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 his success and his superhuman security in misfortune, his forbearance in victory, his ambition which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayer, his mystic conversations with God, his death and 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. This dogma was two-fold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is; the

latter telling what God is not. 'Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, 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?"[1]

Historicity

Comparisons are sometimes odious, but even if one was so inclined one would soon find that the Jesus of the Gospels and Prophet Muhammad offer no comparison at all. For, while Prophet Muhammad is a thoroughly historical character, every detail of his life is preserved in critically tested books of *Hadith* and history, the life and character of Jesus are shrouded in mystery. There are scholars who totally dismiss the historical existence of Jesus and regard him as a character of mythology. But even if we consider this to be an extreme view and grant, as do the Muslims, that a person called Jesus was eventually born in Palestine a few years before the beginning of the Christian era and claimed to be the expected Messiah of the Jews, our information about him is so fragmentary and uncertain that no clear picture of his life and personality emerges in our minds. There are doubts about the date, place and manner of his birth; there is nothing known about the first thirty years of his life; there are differences on the question of his death. The Gospels tell us only of no more than two years of his life in a manner that can gradually pass that test of historical criticism. In an earlier

1. Lamartine, *Historie do la Turquie*, Vol. II, pp. 276, 277; Quoted by Dr. Zaki Ali in his book Islam in the World.

chapter, Dr. C. J. Cadoux, who was Mackennal Professor of Church History at Oxford, was quoted as having written that many modern scholars and critics regard as hopeless any attempt to separate the historically true from the legendary or mythical matter which the Gospels contain and to reconstruct the story of Jesus out of the more historical residue. As we find him in the Gospels, Jesus seems a shadowy and glorified figure.

Complete Model

Although on the basis of the Glorious Qur'an I regard the characters of Jesus and Prophet Muhammad to be equally godly, pure, noble and inspiring, yet Jesus did not get the opportunity to become a perfect model for men in all walks of life as Prophet Muhammad did. We have no doubt that if Jesus had got the chance, he would have behaved exactly as Prophet Muhammad did; for both of them were prophets of the same God.

Jesus never married and so he could not become an ideal husband and father. He did not triumph over his enemies and so had no chance of showing how a victor should behave towards his vanquished foes who have spared no pains to annihilate him and his followers. He did not have his persecutors at his mercy and so had no occasion to show real forbearance and forgiveness. Jesus did not rise to power to become the model of a benevolent and just ruler and judge.

We must turn to Prophet Muhammad, and not Jesus, if we want to see the picture of an ideally happy and pious married life and of a wise, just and benevolent ruler whom nothing could corrupt or divert from working for the material and moral amelioration of his people. Prophet Muhammad witnessed the

phases of both persecution and success. He showed rare patience, fortitude, courage and love for his foes as a persecuted preacher of religion and in the hours of deepest gloom, and unparalleled self-control and mercy when his bitterest foes were helpless before him.

Jesus did not get the chance to put into practice many of his precepts and teachings. For instance, he advised his followers to sell their garments and purchase swords (Luke 22:36), but he could not demonstrate to them the right use of the sword. To resist violence and aggression sometimes becomes our highest duty - for instance, when helpless men, women and children are being slaughtered and the freedom to believe and practice the religion of their own choice is denied by fanatics and tyrants. It was Prophet Muhammad who showed how a true soldier of God, the protector of the victims of intolerance and cruel violence, should behave on the battlefield and in moments of defeat and triumph.

The life of Jesus runs parallel to the early life of Prophet Muhammad, but Jesus did not live long enough to give a practical shape to his teachings and work out the social implications of his message. He did not have the chance to enlarge his teachings to cover all the situations of life and to bring about the tremendous social reforms that Prophet Muhammad did. The modern man, who has to lead a life as a son, a husband, a father, a poor worker, a citizen. a neighbor, a despised advocate of new ideas and ways, a victim of religious and political bigotry, a man with authority, a successful leader, a soldier, a business-man, a judge, and a ruler, will find Prophet Muhammad as a perfect model for him in all situations and walks of life.

CHAPTER 3

THE DOCTRINES OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Christianity, as understood and believed by christians of both Roman Catholic and Protestant persuasions, means the Three Creeds, namely, the Apostles, the Nicene and the Athanasian. The cardinal doctrines of Christianity are (1) the Trinity, (2) the Divinity of Jesus Christ, (3) the divine sonship of Jesus, (4) the Original Sin , and (5) the Atonement.

The religion of Islam has no place in it for any of these dogmas. Muslims believe in the Oneness of God as against the Triune God of Christianity. Islam considers the Christian deification of Jesus to be a reversion to paganism. According to the Glorious Qur'an, Jesus was not an incarnation of God but a Prophet or Messenger of God, and, like all other prophets (including the Prophet Muhammad); he was every bit a human being. Islam also rejects the Divine-sonship of Jesus. He may be called a son of God in the sense in which all righteous human beings may be called the children of God, but not in any literal or special sense. In the same way Islam rejects the dogmas of the Oriental Sin, the Vicarious Sacrifice and the Atonement.

The fundamental doctrines of Islam are (1) the Unity of God, (2) the Belief in the prophets raised by God among all nations of the world, (3) the belief in the Revelations sent by God to the prophets to guide human beings to truth and righteousness, (4) the inherent sinlessness of human nature and man's capacity for unlimited moral and spiritual progress (through belief in God and faithful adherence to the inspired teachings of the prophets), (5) personal accountability for one's actions, (6) the life after death, and (7) the equality and universal brotherhood of mankind.

The Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is that there are three separate and distinct Divine Persons in Godhead - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Athanasian Creed states:

> "There is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal ... The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God... For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there be three Gods, or three Lords."

This is obviously self-contradictory. It is like saying, one plus one plus one is three, yet it is one. If there are three separate and distinct Divine Persons and each is God, then there must be three Gods. The Christian Church recognizes the impossibility of harmonizing the belief in three Divine Persons with the

Oneness of God, and hence declares the doctrine of the Trinity to be a mystery, in which a person must have blind faith. This is what the Rev. J. F. De Groot writes in his book Catholic Teaching:

> 'The Most Holy Trinity is a mystery in the strictest sense of the word. For reason alone cannot prove the existence of a Triune God, Revelation teaches it. And even after the existence of the mystery has been revealed to us, it remains impossible for the human intellect to grasp how the Three Persons have but one Divine Nature."[1]

Strangely enough, Jesus Christ himself never even mentioned the Trinity. He knew or said nothing at all about there being three Divine Persons in Godhead. His conception of God was in no way different from that of the earlier Israelite prophets, who had always preached the Unity of God and never the Trinity. Jesus merely echoed the earlier prophets when he said:

> "The first of all the commandments is: Hear O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; and that thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."
>
> (Mark 12:29,30)

He believed in One Divine God, as is evident from the following saying:

> "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve."
>
> (Mathew 4:10)

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1. Rev J. F. De Groot, *Catholic Teaching*, p. 101.

The doctrine of the Trinity was coined by the Christians about three hundred years after Jesus. The four Canonical Gospels, written between 70 and 115 A.C., contain no reference to the Trinity. Even St. Paul, who imported many foreign ideas into Christianity, knew nothing of the Triune God. The New Catholic Encyclopaedia (bearing the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur, indicating official approval) admits that the doctrine of the Trinity was unknown to the early Christians and that it was formulated in the last quarter of the fourth century:

> "It is difficult, in the second half of the 20th century to offer a clear, objective, and straightforward account of the revelation, doctrinal evolution, and theological elaboration of the mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian discussion, Roman Catholic as well as other, presents a somewhat unsteady silhouette. Two things have been happened. There is the recognition on the part of exegetes and Biblical theologians, including a constantly growing number of Roman Catholics, that one should not speak of Trinitarianism in the new Testament without serious qualification. There is also the closely parallel recognition on the part of historians of dogma and systematic theologians that when one does speak of an unqualified Trinitarianism, one has moved from the period of Christian origins to, say, the last quarter of the fourth century. It was only then that what might be called the definitive Trinitarian dogma 'one God in three persons' became thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought."(1)

1. *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia* (1967), art. "The Holy Trinity" Volume 14, p. 295.

A little later the same Encyclopaedia says even more emphatically:

> "The formulation one God in three persons was not solidly established into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title the Trinitarian dogma. Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective."(1)

So the doctrine of the Trinity was not taught by Jesus Christ. It is nowhere found in the Bible (both the Old and the New Testaments), it was completely foreign to the mentality and perspective of the early Christians; it has become a part of the Christian faith towards the end of the fourth century.

Rationally considered also the dogma of the Trinity is untenable. It is not just beyond reason, it is repugnant to reason. As we said earlier, the belief in three Divine Persons is incompatible with the Oneness of God. If there are three distinct and separate persons, then there must be three distinct and separate substances, for every person is inseparable from its own substance. Now if the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, then unless the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Northings, they must be three distinct substances, and consequently three distinct Gods. Furthermore the three Divine Persons are either infinite or finite. If infinite, then there are three distinct Infinites, three Omnipotents, three Eternals, and so three Gods. If they are finite, then we are led to the absurdity of conceiving of an Infinite Being having three

1. *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia* (1967) , art." The Holy Trinity", Volume 14, p. 299.

finite modes of subsisting or of three persons who are separately finite making up an infinite conjunctly. The fact is that if the Three Persons are finite, then neither the Father, nor the Son, nor yet the Holy Spirit is God.

The doctrine of the Trinity was developed as a consequence of the deification of two creatures, Jesus Christ and the mysterious Holy Spirit, and their association with God as partners in His Godhead. As explained in Christian literature it amounts to the separate personification of three attributes of God. Whether considered from historical view point or otherwise, it is a regression from rational theology to mythology. For, at the root of all mythologies lies the irrational tendency of the human mind to deify great men and personify non-personal forces and attributes and to present them as Divine Persons.

Islam preaches the plain and simple Unity of God. It presents a conception of God that is free from anthropomorphic of mythological fancies. It affirms the uniqueness of God and says that He has no partner in His Godhead. He is One in person and One in substance, the two being indistinguishable. He is the Self-Sufficient One, on Whom all depend and Who depends not on any one. He is the Creator and Nourisher of all, the All-Good, the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Loving, the All-Merciful, the Eternal and the Infinite. He neither begets nor is begotten. Nothing can come out of Him and become His equal and partner in Godhead:

> ﴿*Say: He is God, the One; God, the eternally Besought of all. He begetteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him*﴾
>
> (Qur'an 112: 1-4)

﴿*Your God is One God; there is no god save Him, the All-Loving, the All-Merciful. Lo! in the creation of heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which God sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and in the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth, are signs (of God's Unity and Sovereignty) for people who have sense.*﴾

(2:163,164)

﴿*God, there is no god save Him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him, belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His Leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His Knowledge save what He will, and His Throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving them, He is the Sublime, the Absolute.*﴾

(2:255)

The Divinity of Jesus

The second Christian dogma is that of the Godhood of Jesus. The Athanasian Creed states:

"Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Christians (both Roman Catholics and Protestants) believe that Jesus Christ is God from all eternity, the Second Person of the Divine Trinity; that nearly two thousand years ago he chose to appear in a human body and was born of the Virgin Mary.

The author of Catholic Teaching asserts the Godhood of Jesus in these words:

> "This teaching about Christ's divinity which is to be found in so many places of scripture, has always been proclaimed by the Church as one of the most important truths of Catholic Faith. The Council of Nicaea, which was the first General Council after the persecutions, solemnly condemned Arius who contended that Christ was not God but a creature."(1)

The Protestant author of The Truth of Christianity expresses himself on this subject as follows:

> "Evidently then this expression, the Son of God, meant to him (i.e., John), and therefore presumably to other New Testament writers, who use it frequently, that Christ was truely God - God the Son - in the fullest and most complete sense."(2)

This dogma also has no support of the words of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels. The truth is that Jesus strongly disclaimed Godhood or divinity. Here are his own words:

> "Why callest thou me Good? There is none good but One, that is, God"
>
> (Mark 10:18)

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1. Rev. J. F. De Groot, *Catholic Teaching*, p. 149.
2. W.H. Turton , *The Truth of Christianity*, p. 507.

He spoke of God as "My Father and your Father, and my God and your God."[1] These words of Jesus reported in the Bible show that Jesus stood in the same relation to God as any other man. He was a creature of God.

In his agony on Cross, Jesus cried out:

> "Eloi, Eloi, Lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, my God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?"
>
> (Mark 15:34)

Can any one imagine these words coming out of the mouth of God? Here we have the cry of a helpless man in agony addressed to his Creator and Lord.

God is the object of our worship, the Supreme Being to Whom we, creatures, address our prayers. We cannot imagine God praying to anyone. Yet about Jesus it is written in the Gospels:

> "And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a 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 there prayed."
>
> (Mark 1 :35)
>
> "And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed."
>
> (Luke 5:16)

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1. *The Gospel of St. John,* 20:17.

The fact is that Jesus never claimed to be God, but only a Prophet or Messenger of God. He was a man to whom God had revealed His Message for the guidance of other men. To give his own words:

> "Jesus saith unto them, if ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard from God."
>
> (John 8:39,40)

> "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."
>
> (John 17:3)

These words of Jesus prove, firstly, that there is only one Divine God and that Jesus knew nothing of the Trinity ("Thee, the only true God"); secondly, that Jesus laid no claim to Godhood, for he referred to a Being other than himself "Thee") as the only God; thirdly, that Jesus only claimed to be a Messenger of God ("Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent").

Like the Trinity, the doctrine of the Incarnation was also developed long after Jesus. In fact, one can trace the stages through which Jesus was gradually deified. In 'Q' he was regarded as a Prophet of God, as a human being and nothing more, in 'Urmarcus; there was an attempt to glamorize his person and attribute many miracles to him; in works of the first and second centuries he was presented as a mighty angel, the first born of all creatures, but still a creature; and finally in the preface to John's Gospel and other works of the third and fourth centuries he was made into a God. In the Nicene Creeds (325

A.C.) it is affirmed against those Christians who still denied the divinity of Jesus:

> "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 of one substance with the Father."

Reason refuses to accept a man who was born of a woman, suffered from human wants, ignorance and limitations, and gradually grew in stature, power and wisdom, like all other human beings, as God. To put human limitations upon God and to believe in His Incarnation in a human body is to deny the Perfection of God.

The dogma of the Incarnation was taken into Christianity, like many other Christian nations, from paganism. In pre-Christian mythologies we often read of the hero being regarded as a God. The Hindus of India even today worship their ancient heroes, Rama and Krishna, as incarnations of Vishnu, the second person of the Hindu Trinity.

Islam has liberated its followers from the bondage of such superstitions by rejecting the dogma of the Incarnation.

The Glorious Qur'an rejects the divinity of Jesus in these words:

> *﴿They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! God is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah himself said: O children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord.﴾*
>
> (5:72)

﴿The likeness of Jesus with God is truly as the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then he said unto him: Be! and he was.﴾

(3:59)

According to the Sacred Book of Islam, Jesus was a Prophet of God - sinless, pure and godly, like all other prophets - but every bit a human being:

﴿He (Jesus) said: Lo! I am a servant of God. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a prophet.﴾

(19:30)

The Islamic view is that the prophets, one and all, were human beings, who by virtue of their devotion to truth and sinless life became worthy of being chosen by God as His Messengers. They had made themselves so completely one with God that in everything they said or did they carried out His Will. The Message which they gave to men was not their's but God's. God conveyed His Word to them, so that they might shape their own lives according to it and become models for their fellow-men. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) declared:

﴿I am only a mortal like you. It is inspired in me that your God is One God, therefore take the straight path unto Him, and seek Forgiveness of Him.﴾

(Qur'an, 41:6)

The Divine Sonship

The third Christian dogma is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in a special and exclusive sense. This dogma also is not in conformity with the sayings and teachings of Jesus. In the Bible this expression has been used for many earlier prophets. For

instance, Israel was called the "Son of God" in one of the books of Moses:

> "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My Son, even My first born. "
>
> (Exodus 4:22)

In the Psalms the same title was given to David.

> "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee."
>
> (Psalms 2:7)

A little later in the Bible Solomon also was called the Son of God:

> "He shall build an house for My Name: and he shall be My Son, and I will be his Father and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever."
>
> (I Chronicles, 22:10)

This phrase meant nothing more than nearness to God in love. The founder of Christianity himself said that every man who did the Will of the Father in Heaven was a Son of God. It was devout life and kind and merciful behavior that made a man worthy of being called the Son of God. Is this not what Jesus says in the following sayings:

> "Love your enemies... that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven. "
>
> (Matthew 5: 44,45)

> "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the Sons of God."
>
> (Matthew 5:9)

These sayings leave no doubt in our minds as to what this phrase meant for Jesus. In view of this, there is no justification for regarding Jesus as the Son of God, in an exclusive or unique sense. Jesus mostly called himself a "son of man", but when he referred to himself as a "Son of God", it was no doubt in the same sense in which Adam, Israel, David and Solomon before him had been called the Sons of God and in which he himself had spoken of those who had love in their hearts and lived in peace with their fellow-men as "Sons of God." The following remarks of Jesus will further show that it was only in a metaphorical sense that he called himself a Son of God:

> "Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest; because I said I am the son of God."
>
> (John 10:34-36)

Jesus was obviously referring to Psalms 82: verses 6 and 7:

> "I have 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 princess."

As the Judges and prophets of old were called "god" only in a metaphorical sense, so Jesus called himself a "Son of God" in the same sense. It is clear that for Jesus the term "Son of God" carried no particular import other than the idiom of the Bible permitted. There is no case for singling Jesus out as the Son of God in a special or literal sense, as the Christians have done.

The Glorious Qur'an in a very forceful language rejects the dogma that Jesus was the Son of God in a literal or unique sense. It says:

> ﴿*And they say: God hath taken unto Himself a son. Be He Glorified! Nay, but whatsoever is in the heaven and the earth is His. All are subservient unto Him.*﴾
>
> (2:116)

> ﴿*It befitteth 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.*﴾
>
> (19:35)

Reason and common sense are again on the side of Islam. Philosophy tells us that no being from whom another being can come out and exist as a separate individual and become his equal and partner can be regarded as perfect. To attribute a son to God would be to deny the Perfection of God.[1]

The Original Sin

The fourth Christian dogma is that of the Atonement. Christianity declares that by disobeying God's Order not to eat of the forbidden fruit of knowledge, Adam sinned. The sin of Adam is inherited by all the children of Adam: all human beings are born sinful. The requirement of God's Justice is that a price must be paid for every sin. God cannot and will not allow a single sin to go unpunished. Now the only thing which can wipe out sin is the shedding of blood. As St. Paul Puts it,

> "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission"
>
> (Hebrews 9:22)

1. Cf. Bergson, *The Creative Evolution*, Modern Library, p.16.

But this blood must be perfect, sinless, and incorruptible blood.

> "As the original sin, being directed against God, was of infinite proportion, it demanded infinite recompense."

So Jesus Christ, the Son of God who had come from heaven, shed his holy, sinless blood, suffered indescribable agony, and died to pay the penalty for the sins of men. Because Jesus was infinite God, he alone could pay the infinite price of sin. No one can be saved unless he accepts Jesus Christ as his redeemer. Every one is doomed to suffer eternally in Hell because of his sinful nature, unless he accepts atonement made for his sins by Jesus Christ by his blood.[1]

This dogma is divided into three parts: (i) the Original Sin, (ii) the belief that God's Justice requires that the penalty of blood must be paid for sin, and (iii) the belief that Jesus has paid the price for the sins of men by his death on the cross and that salvation is only for those who believe in his vicarious sacrifice.

As to the first part, the Rev. De Groot writes:

> "Scripture teaches us that Adam's sin passed unto all men (our Blessed Lady excepted). For in the words of St. Paul: Therefore as by the offence of one (Adam) unto all men to condemnation; so also by the justice of one (Christ) unto all men to justification of life. For, as by the disobedience of one man (Adam) many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one (Christ) many shall be made just. (Rom. 5:18,19). These words make it plain that all men have inherited Adam's sin."[2]

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1. Cf. God's Plan For Your Salvation, Phoenix Arizona, U.S.A.
2. Rev. J. F. De Groot, Catholic Teaching, p.140.

Like many other Christian beliefs, the doctrine of the Inherited Sin also finds no support in the words of Jesus or of the prophets who had come before him. They taught that every man was accountable for his own actions; the children will not be punished for the sin of their father. For instance, it is written in the Book of prophet Jeremiah:

> "In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity, every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge."[1]

The prophet Ezekiel also rejected the dogma of the Original Sin in almost the same words:

> "The word of the Lord came unto 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 any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also 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 upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, and hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with

1. *The Bible, Jeremiah*, 31:29-30.

garment, he that hath not given forth on usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgement between man and man, hath walked in My Statutes, and hath kept My Judgements, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God... 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. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die."[1]

That Jesus himself regarded children as innocent and pure, and not as born in sin, is clear in his reported saying:

"Suffer the little 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)

Islam condemns the dogma of the Original Sin and regards the children as pure and sinless at birth. Sin, it says, is not inherited, but it is something which each one acquires for himself by doing what he should not do and not doing what he should do .

Rationally considered also, it would be the height of injustice to condemn the entire human race for the sin committed thousands of years ago by the first parents. Sin is a wilful

1. *The Bible, Ezekiel*, 18:1-9, 20-21 .

transgression of the Law of God or the law of right and wrong. The responsibility or blame for it must lie only on the person who has committed it, and not on his children.

Man is born with a free will, with the inclination and the capacity both to do evil and also to fight against it and do good. It is only when, as a grown-up man, capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, he makes a wrong use of his freedom and falls a prey to temptation, that sin is born in him. That many men and women have resisted and conquered evil inclinations and lived their lives in harmony with the Will of God is clear from the sacred records of all nations. The Bible itself mentions Enoch, Noah, Jacob, John the Baptist, and many others as being perfect and upright and among those who feared God and eschewed evil.

It is the height of misanthropy and cynicism to consider children to be sinful at birth. How unreasonable and hardhearted a man can become by believing in the dogma of the Inherent Sin shown by the theological dictum of St. Augustine that all unbaptised infants are doomed to burn eternally in the fire of Hell. Till recently, the unbaptised infants were not buried in consecrated grounds in Christendom, because they were believed to have died in the Original Sin.

The very basis of the doctrine of the Atonement, that is the belief in the Original Sin, having been found to be wrong on the authority of Jesus Christ as well as reason, the superstructure of dogma built on it must also be false. But let us consider the Christian scheme of salvation a little further.

God's Justice.

The second part of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement is that God's Justice requires that a price must be paid for the original and other sins of man. If God were to pardon a sinner without punishing him would be a denial of His Justice. The Rev. W. Goldsack writes in this connection:

> "It should be clear as day light to anyone that God cannot break His own Law: He cannot forgive a sinner without first giving him an appropriate punishment. For if He did so, who would call Him Just and Equitable."[1]

This view shows complete ignorance God. God is not a mere judge or king. He is, as the Qur'an describes Him, "Master of the Day of Judgment". He is not only Just but also Merciful and Forgiving. If He finds some real good in a man or sees that he is sincerely repentant, having a real urge to conquer the evil within him, then He may forgive his failings and sins altogether. And this stretch of imagination can be called a violation of His Justice. After all, the only proper motive for punishment is to check evil and reform the offender. To punish a person for his past sins, even after he has repented and reformed himself, is a sign of vengeance and not of justice. A God, Whose 'Justice' requires compensation for every fall and sin of man is no better than Shylock. The God that we worship - the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds - is the God of Love and Mercy. If He prescribes a law and a way and demands obedience, it is not for His own benefit, but for the benefit of mankind. And if He punishes a man for his faults and sins it is not for His own satisfaction or compensation, as the Christian dogma proclaims,

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1. Rev. W. Goldsack, *The Atonement*, p. 5.

but to check evil and purify the sinner. Hell itself is like a hospital, where the spiritually ill - those afflicted with the diseases of malice, hatred, selfishness, callousness, falsehood, dishonesty, greed, impurity, arrogance, etc. - are cured through the fire of suffering and remorse. But those who have the persistent urge to do good and the sincerely repentant will find God Ever-Ready to forgive their failures and sins without demanding any compensation from them, or from any one else. Is this not what the prophet Ezekiel proclaimed in the verses of the Bible that we have quoted above? And is this not what Jesus taught in his beautiful parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son? Can we trace the origin of the doctrine that unless every sin is compensated for and someone punished, God's Justice would be outraged to the man who taught us to pray to God in these words "Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors"? Forgiveness of a sinner after punishing him, or someone else on his behalf, is no forgiveness at all. God can and does forgive the faults and sins of those in whom He sees real goodness and those who have turned away from their sins and reformed themselves without punishing them or any other person on their behalf, and this is not against God's Justice. In fact this alone is true forgiveness. Thus we read in the Glorious Qur'an:

> ﴿*Say: O My people, who have acted extravagantly against your own souls, despair not of the Mercy of God, for He forgiveth the sins altogether. Lo! He is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful. So turn unto Him repentant, and surrender unto Him, before there come unto you the chastisement, when ye cannot be helped.*﴾
>
> (39:53.54)

﴿Whoso doeth evil or wrongeth his own soul, then seeketh Pardon of God (and reformeth himself), will find God Forgiving, Merciful. Whoso committeth sin, committeth it only against himself. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.﴾

(4:110-111)

The Blood Atonement.

The third part of the Christian dogma of the Atonement is that Jesus paid the penalty for the original and other sins of men by his death on the cross of Calvary, and that salvation cannot be obtained without belief in the saving power of his blood. This is what we read in the First Epistle of St. Peter:

> "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."(1)

And this is what two modern Christian apologists (a Protestant and a Roman Catholic) have written,:

> "We pass on now to the doctrine of the Atonement, which is that Christ's death was in some sense a sacrifice for sin, and thus reconciled (or made 'at - one') God the Father and sinful man. And though not actually stated in the Creeds, it is implied in the words, was crucified also for us, and who suffered for our salvation"(2)

> "Since Christ, God and man, had taken upon Himself our sins (by His death on the cross) in order to atone for them

1. The Bible, 1 Peter, 1:18,19.
2. W.H. Turton, *The Truth of Christianity*, P. 289.

by giving satisfaction to God's outraged justice, he is the mediator between God and man. "[1]

This dogma is not only a denial of the Mercy of God but also of His Justice. To demand the price of blood in order to forgive the sins of men is to show a complete lack of mercy, and to punish a man who is not guilty for the sins of others, whether the former is willing or not, is the height of injustice.

Christian apologists try to defend this by saying that Jesus Christ willingly suffered death to pay the price for the sins of men. To this our reply is:

Firstly, it is not historically correct to say that Jesus had come to die willingly and deliberately for the sins of men. We read in the Bible that he did not wish to die on the cross. For, when he knew 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 his enemies and he prayed to God,

> "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt."
>
> (Mark 14:36)

Secondly, we fail to see how the suffering and death of one man can wipe out the sins of others. It sounds something like the physician breaking his own head to cure the headache of his patients. The idea of substitutionary or vicarious sacrifice is illogical, meaningless and unjust.

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1. J.F. De Grool, *Catholic Teaching*, p. 162.

Thirdly, the idea that shedding of blood is necessary to appease the Wrath of God has come 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, development of greater sympathy for mankind and determination to carry out the Will of God as revealed to us through the prophets. The Qur'an says:

> ﴿*To God does not reach the flesh or the blood (of animals they sacrifice), but unto Him is acceptable righteousness on your part.*﴾
>
> (22:37)

The doctrine of the Atonement makes the First Person of Godhead into a blood-thirsty tyrant in order to demonstrate the self-sacrificing love of the Second Person. To a dispassionate critic, the sacrifice of the Second Person appears as much misplaced and meaningless as the demand of the First Person is cruel and sadistic.

Arthur Weigall makes the following significant comment on the doctrine of the Atonement:

> "We can no longer accept the appalling theological doctrine that for some mystic reason a propitiatory sacrifice was necessary. It outrages either our conception of God as Almighty or else our conception of Him as All-Loving. The famous Dr. Cruden believed that for the purpose of this sacrifice 'Christ suffered dreadful pains inflicted by God', and this of course, is a standpoint 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, being, indeed, perhaps the most obvious relic of heathendom in the Faith."[1]

The Christian scheme of salvation is not only morally and rationally unsound, but also has no support of the words of Jesus. Jesus may be said to have suffered for the sins of men in the sense that, in order to take them out of darkness into light, he incurred the wrath of the evildoers and was tortured by them; but that does not mean that his death was an atonement for the sins of others and that only those who believe in his blood would be forgiven. Jesus had come to rescue men from sin by his teaching and the example of his godly life, and not by deliberately dying for them on the cross and offering his blood as a propitiation for their sins. When a young man came and asked him "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" he mentioned nothing about his atoning sacrifice and the redeeming power of his blood. His reply was the same as that of every other prophet. For he said:

> "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, according to Jesus, was the way to eternal life. Salvation could be gained by believing in God, eschewing evil and doing good, and not by accepting Jesus as the redeemer and believing in his blood atonement.

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1. Arthur Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity.*

The dogma of the Atonement is unsound, for (1) man is not born in sin, (2) God does not require a price to forgive the sinners, and (3) the idea of substitutionary or vicarious sacrifice is unjust and cruel. By sinning we do not harm God, but ourselves. The stain of sin on our souls can be removed, not by the suffering or death of any other person, whether the latter be willing or unwilling, but by our own repentance, turning away from evil and doing good. And so, when Adam, after the act of disobedience, repented and submitted himself completely to God, his sin was forgiven. Neither is the sin of Adam inherited by the children of Adam, nor did it require the suffering and death of Jesus Christ to be forgiven. The truth is that Jesus did not die on the cross at all. The doctrine of the Atonement is a denial of the Justice and Mercy of God.

Islam rejects this dogma. It declares that the forgiveness of sins cannot be obtained by the suffering and sacrifice of any other person, human or divine, but by the Grace of God and our own sincere and persistent efforts to fight against evil and do good:

> *﴿That no laden one shall bear another's load, and that man hath only that for which he maketh effort, and that his effort will be seen.﴾*
>
> (The Glorious Qur'an 53:38,40)

> *﴿Whosoever goeth right, it is only for the good of his own soul that he goeth right, and whosoever erreth, erreth only to its hurt. No laden soul can bear another's load.﴾*
>
> (17:15)

Islam promises salvation (which in the religion of the Qur'an means the achievement of nearness to God and the development

of all the goodness in man) to all those who believe in God and do good deeds:

> *﴿Nay, but whosoever surrendereth his purpose to God while doing good, his reward is with his Lord; and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.﴾*
>
> (2:112)

Islam: A Rational Religion

We have inquired into some of the most important doctrines of Christianity, which form parts of both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic creeds. Our examination has led us to the conclusion that the doctrines of the Trinity, the Divinity of Jesus, the Divine-Sonship of Jesus, the Original Sin and the Atonement are neither rational nor in conformity with the teachings of Jesus. These dogmas took shape long after Jesus, as a result of pagan influence. These dogmas show that Christianity has deviated considerably from the religion of Jesus.

Islam is a revival and restatement of the religion of Jesus and of all other prophets. The religion revealed to the Prophets of various nations was the same, but in the course of time it had been misinterpreted and become mixed up with superstitions and degenerated into magical practices and meaningless rituals. The conception of God, the very core of religion, had become debased by (a) the anthropomorphic tendency of making God into a being with a human shape and human passions, (b) the association of other persons with the One and only God in His Godhead (as in Hinduism and Christianity), (c) by the deification of the angels (e.g., the Devas in Hinduism, the Yazatas in Zoroastrianism and, perhaps, also, the Holy Spirit in

Christianity), (d) by making the prophets into avatars or incarnations of God (e.g., Jesus Christ in Christianity, the Buddha in Mahayana Buddism, Krishna and Rama in Hinduism), and (e) by the personification of the attributes of God into separated Divine Persons (e.g., the Christian Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Hindu Trimurti of Brahma, Vishnu and shiva, and the Amesha Spentas of Zoroastrianism). The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) criticized all these irrational theological trends and restored to their pristine purity the conception of God as the One Eternal Reality (As-Samad), the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds (Rabb-ul-'Alamin), the Loving-King (Ar-Rahman), the All-Merciful (Ar-Rahim) the All-Forgiving (Al-Ghaffar), the All-Mighty (Al-`Aziz), the All-Knowing (Al-`Alim), the Holy (Al-Quddus), the All-Embracing (Al-Wasi`). He purged religion of all superstitions, errors and meaningless ceremonies, widened its scope to make it a source of inspiration and guidance to the whole human race, and united the peoples of all races, colors and nations into one universal brotherhood.

Islam is a Religion without a mythology. Its teachings are simple and rational. Its appeal is to human reason and conscience. The truth of the Islamic doctrine of the Unity and Goodness of God is brought home to us by the study and contemplation of the cosmos, where we find the all-pervading unity behind the manifest diversity, by the teachings of all the prophets, by the experiences of the mystics of all religions and nations, and finally by the apologies of the Trinitarians, who, despite their belief in three Divine Persons, declare that there is but one God. The truth of the other Islamic principles follows logically from the belief in the Unity and Goodness of God. If

God is One, all human beings are the creatures of the same God and are equal in His Sight - and hence the Islamic belief in the equality and brotherhood of all men and women. If God is the Creator and Nourisher of all the worlds, He must provide not only for the physical needs of man, but also for the moral and spiritual needs by revealing to man the path of truth and righteousness - and hence the Islamic belief in Divine Revelation. Moreover, the Divine Revelation must come wherever and whenever needed, and for revealing His Message, God must choose men who are completely devoted to truth, are leading godly and sinless life and can inspire others to follow the True Path - and hence the Islamic belief in the prophets of all nations. And finally, if 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 the life-after-death, where men 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.

The famous Italian Orientalist, Dr. Laura Veccia Vaglieri, writes the following about the rational and universal spirit of Islam in her book *An Interpretation of Islam*:

> "The Arabian Prophet, with a voice which was inspired by a deep communion with his Marker, preached the purest monotheism to the worshippers of fetish and the followers of a corrupted Christianity and Judaism. He put himself in open conflict with those regressive tendencies of mankind which lead to the association of other beings with the Creator."

"In order to lead men to a belief in one God, he did not delude them with happenings which deviate from the normal course of nature - the so-called miracles; nor did he compel them to keep quiet by using celestial threats which only undermine man's ability to think. Rather, he simply invited them, without asking them to leave the realm of reality, to consider the universe and its laws. Being confident of the resultant belief in the one and indispensable God, he simply let men read in the book of life. Muhammad Abduh and Ameer Ali both state that Muhammad was content to appeal to the intimate conscience of the individual and to the intuitive judgment of man."[1]

After quoting some relevant verses of the Glorious Qur'an, the learned author continues:

"Thanks to Islam, paganism in its various forms was defeated. The concept of the universe, the practices 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. Man finally realized his dignity. He humbled himself before the Creator, the Master of all mankind."

"The spirit was liberated from prejudice, man's will was set free from the ties which had kept it bound to the will of other men, or other so-called hidden powers, priests, false guardians of mysteries, brokers of salvation, all those who pretended to be mediators between God and

1. Laura Veccia Vaglieri, *Apologia dell Islamismo*, translated into English as An Interpretation of Islam by Dr. Caselli, pp. 30,31

man and consequently believed that they had authority over other people's wills, fell from their pedestals. Man became the servant of God alone and towards other men he had only the obligations of one free man towards other free men. While previously men had suffered from the injustices of social differences. Islam proclaimed equality among human beings. Each Muslim was distinguished from other Muslims not by reason of birth or any other factor not connected with his personality, but only by his greater fear of God, his good, deeds, his moral and intellectual qualities."[1]

Islam is the universal message of Unity - the Unity of God, the unity of all religions, the unity of the prophets of all the nations, and the unity of all mankind.

1. Laura Veccia Vaglieri, *Apologia dell Islamismo*, pp. 33,34.

CHAPTER 4

THE MORAL TEACHINGS OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Both Islam and Christianity exhort men to virtuous deeds and pious life. They condemn falsehood, dishonesty, hypocrisy, injustice, cruelty, pride, ungratefulness, treachery, intemperance, lust, sloth, jealously, selfishness, apathy, hurtful speech, anger and violence. Both enjoin upon their followers faith and trust in God, repentance, truth, purity, courage, justice, charity, benevolence, sympathy, mercy, self-control, and uprightness. The chief virtues enjoined by Islam and Christianity alike may be grouped under two headings. Firstly, those that prevent a man from injuring the life, property and honor of others, such as chastity, honesty, peacefulness, and politeness. Secondly, those that prompt a man to do good to others, such as mercy, forgiveness, truthfulness, courage, patience, sympathy, kindness, and love.

Now I shall give a brief summary of the moral teachings of Islam and Christianity in the words of the Scriptures of the two religions.

CHRISTIANITY

ISLAM

Chastity

"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". (Matthew 5:27,28)

﴿*And come not near unto adultery (totally abstain from its preliminaries and everything that is likely to lead unto it). Lo! it is an abomination and an evil way*﴾ (The Qur'an 17:32)

﴿*Draw not nigh to lewd things, whether open or concealed*﴾ (6:152)

"The adultery of the eye is to look with an eye of desire on the wife of another; and the adultery of the tongue is to utter what is forbidden". (Sayings of Muhammad)

Peacefulness

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: by ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves". (Matthew 5:5)

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God". (Matthew 5:9)

﴿*Whosoever killeth a human being ... it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and who so saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind*﴾. (Qur'an 5:32)

"A Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands people are safe, and a Muhagir is he who forsakes what God has forbidden". (Sayings of Muhammad)

"Shall I inform you of a better act than Fasting, Alms and Prayers? Making peace between one another: enmity and malice tear up heavenly rewards by the roots". (Sayings of Muhammad).

Politeness

"But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire." (Matthew 5:22)

﴿*Turn not your cheek in scorn and anger towards folk nor walk with pertness in the land. Lo! God loveth not each braggar braggart boaster. Be modest in your bearing and subdue your voices. Lo! the harshest of all voices is the voice of an ass.*﴾ (Qur'an 31:18,19)

﴿*O ye who believe! Let not folk deride a folk who may be better than they are, nor let women deride women who may be better than they are; neither defame one another nor insult one another by nicknames. It is evil to call by a bad name after Faith. And who so turneth not in repentance, such are evildoers. O ye who believe! Shun much suspicion; for lo! some suspicion is a sin. And spy not, neither backbite one another.*﴾ (Qur'an 49:11,12)

"A man cannot be a Muslim till his heart and tongue are so". (Sayings of Muhammad)

Honesty

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's." (Exodus 20:17)

﴿*And covet not the things in which God hath made some of you excell others. Unto men a fortune from that which they have earned, and unto women a fortune from that which they have earned*﴾ (Qur'an 4:32)

﴿*And eat not up your property among yourselves in vanity, nor seek by it to gain the hearing of the judges that ye may knowingly devour a portion of the property of others wrongfully*﴾ (Qur'an 2:188)

﴿*Give full measure, and be not of those who give less than the due. And weigh with the true balance. Wrong not mankind in their goods, and do not evil, making mischief in the earth*﴾ (Qur'an 26: 181-183)

"On the Day of Resurrection I shall be the adversary in dispute of a person ... who employs a servant and receives fully the labor due from him, then does not pay his full remuneration." (Sayings of Muhammad)

Truth and Justice

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour". (Exodus 20:16) "Thou shalt not wrest judgement; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which altogether just shalt follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land which the Lord thy God givest thee". (Deuteronomy 16:19,20)

﴿*O ye who believe! Be steadfast witnesses for God in equity, and let not hatred of any people for you seduce you that ye deal not justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to God. Lo! God is informed of what ye do*﴾ (Qur'an 5:8)

﴿*O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice, witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves or your parents or your kindred, whether the case be of a rich man or a poor man, for God is nearer unto both than ye are. So follow not passion lest ye lapse from truth and if ye lapse or fall away, then Lo! God is Ever-Informed of what ye do*﴾ (Qur'an 4:135)

"No man is true in the truest sense of the word but he who is true in word, in deed and in thought" (Sayings of Muhammad)

Courage and Patience

"And brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the son of man be come ... Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach, ye upon the housetops. And fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell" (Matthew 10:21 -28)

﴿*Observe your duty to God. Lo! God is informed of what ye do*﴾ (Qur'an 5:8)

﴿*O ye who believe! Seek help in patience and Prayer. Lo! God is with the patient*﴾ (Qur'an 2:153)

﴿*And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops: but give glad tidings to the patient and the steadfast, who say when a misfortune striketh them: Lo! we are God's and lo! unto Him we are returning*﴾ (Qur'an 2:155,156)

﴿*Those unto whom men said: Lo! the people have gathered against you, therefore fear them. The threat of danger but increased the Faith of them and they cried: God is Sufficient for us! Most Excellent is He in Whom we trust!*﴾ (Qur'an 3:173).

Forgiveness

"Peter said unto him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven". (Matthew 18:22)

﴿*And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord, and for Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who ward off evil; those who spend of that which God hath given them on others, in ease and adversity, those who control their wrath and are forgiving toward mankind; God loveth the doers of good to others*﴾ (Qur'an 3:134)

﴿*Many of the people of the Scripture (i.e., followers of the other revealed religions) long to make you disbelievers after your belief, through envy on their own account, after the truth hath become manifest unto them. Forgive and be indulgent toward them until God give command. Lo! God is Able to do all things*﴾ (Qur'an 2:109)

﴿*So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them upon the conduct of affairs*﴾ (Qur'an 3:159)

Doing Good to Others

"And Jesus answered and said a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place came, looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave

﴿*Hast thou observed him who belieeth religion? That is he who repelleth the orphan and urgeth not the feeding of the needy. Ah, woe unto worshipers who are heedless of their Prayer; who would be seen at worship, yet refuse small kindnesses!*﴾ (Qur'an 107: 1-7)

﴿*Those who spend their wealth in the Way of God, and afterward make not reproach and injury to follow that which they have spent; their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve. A kind word with forgiveness is better than almsgiving followed by injury. God is Absolute, Clement: O ye who believe! Render not vain your almsgiving by reproach and injury, like him who spendeth his wealth only to be seen of men and believeth not in God and the Last Day.*﴾ (Qur'an 2:262-264)

them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, go, and do thou likewise." (Luke 10:30-37)

"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". (Sayings of Muhammad)

"What actions are the most excellent? To gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, and to remove the wrongs of the injured" (Sayings of Muhammad)

Love and Sympathy

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark 12:31).

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34,35).

"Do you love your Creator? Love your fellow-creatures first." (Sayings of Muhammad)

"No man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." (Sayings of Muhammad)

"Thou wilt see the faithful in their having mercy for one another and their kindness towards one another like the body; when one member of it ails, the entire body ails, one part calling out the other with sleeplessness and fever." (Sayings of Muhammad).

Non-resistance to Evil

In some of its teachings, however, Christianity is apt to be too one-sided and unpracticable. For instance, Jesus is reported to have said:

> "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."
>
> (Matthew 5:39,41)

This was perhaps a necessary corrective to the hardheartedness and vindictive spirit produced by the literal observance of the teaching of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" But can this teaching of "turn the other cheek also" be regarded as universal? Can it be practised as a wholesome moral precept in all cases and on all occasions? Non resistance to evil when the target of evil is not one's self but someone else is the sign of cowardice and apathy. Submission to bullies and tyrants can bring no good, it will only increase evil and human woe. It will encourage them to exploit and subdue others and increase disorder and injustice. Islam declare that evil in all cases must be repelled. If the evil doer can be reformed and prevented from doing violence and injury by kindness and mercy, then there can be nothing better than this. But if kindness makes it bolder in doing harm to others, then chastisement in proportion to the crime must be meted out to him. The teachings of the Qur'an in this respect also are universal and applicable to all cases. It says:

﴿The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is good, then lo! he, between whom and thee there was enmity will become as though he was a bosom friend.﴾

(Qur'an 41:43)

﴿The guerdon of an ill-deed is an ill the like thereof. But whosoever pardoneth and amendeth (the evil doer by kindness and love), his wage is the Affair of God. Lo! He loveth not wrongdoing.﴾

(Qur'an 42:39)

Monasticism and Celibacy

Christianity is too other-worldly. Jesus Christ is reported to have told the people,

"If a man comes to me, and hates not his father and his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

(Luke 14:26)

And again:

"Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

(Luke 14:33)

When a man told him that he would follow him but he should be allowed to go and bury his dead father, Jesus is reported to have said,

"Follow me; and let the dead bury the dead."

(Matthew 8:22)

He even told the people to

"Make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

(Matthew 19:12)

The outcome of such a teaching can only be the production of stunted and contorted hypocrites instead of full grown human beings.

Islam keeps a healthy balance between this world and the next. It says that the spirit cannot grow by crushing the body. Human instincts are not intrinsically bad. They must not be killed, but wisely controlled, channelized and purposefully used to make the life of man richer and better. This world has a meaning and a purpose, and it is only by leading a normal and fruitful life in the world and by appreciating and enjoying the beautiful Gifts of God that man can come near to God, be of service to others, and prepare himself for the other world. Islam favors the middle path. The Prophet declared that there was no monkery in Islam.

Wine, Sex, Gambling

While, on the one hand, Christianity favors monasticism, on the other hand, it nowhere seems to have prohibited the three gateways to most crimes and sin - wine, gambling and the improper display of physical attractions. Wine, in fact, forms a necessary element of the Holy Communion, and the first miracle of Jesus, as reported in John's Gospel, was the converting of water into wine. It is in the Glorious Qur'an, which contains complete moral guidance, that these evils are prohibited and condemned. Regarding wine and gambling, the Glorious Qur'an says:

﴿O ye who believe! Strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed. Satan seekth only to cast among you enmity and hatred by means of strong drink and games of chance, and to turn you from Remembrance of God and from Prayer. Will ye then done?﴾

(Qur'an 5:90-91)

Jesus prohibited his followers from looking with eyes of lust at the wives of others, but Islam goes further. It prevents men and women from unnecessarily staring at each other, whether with lust or without lust, and wants them to be decently dressed. It condemns the shameful display of physical charms in the following words:

﴿Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! God is Aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their head-coverings over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment.﴾

(Qur'an 24:30-31)

CHAPTER 5

ISLAM: A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

The Christianity of Jesus Christ is not meant to be a universal religion. Though as far as its fundamental message and teaching are concerned, the religion of Jesus is not different from Islam, yet it does not contain complete guidance for all aspects of human life and for all nations and ages. During the countless centuries of human history, when the different races of mankind were living in more or less complete isolation and there was no quick means of communication between one nation and another, God has sent different prophets to different peoples. Jesus was one of these national prophets. He was the Messiah of the Israelites. This is what Dr. C.J. Cadoux, an author whom we have already quoted several times in this book, writes with regard to the limited (national) scope of Jesus' mission:

> "The office of Messiahship with which Jesus believed himself to be invested, marked him out for a distinctly national role: and accordingly we find him more or less confining his preaching and healing ministry and that of his disciples to Jewish territory, and feeling hesitant when on one occasion he was asked to heal a Gentile girl. Jesus, obvious veneration for Jerusalem, the Temple, and

the Scriptures indicate the special place which he accorded to Israel in his thinking: and several features of his teaching illustrate the same attitude. Thus, in calling his hearers 'brothers' of one another (i.e., fellow Jews) and frequently contrasting their ways with those of 'the Gentiles', in defending his cure of a woman on the Sabbath with the plea that she was a 'daughter of Abraham and befriending the tax-collector Zacchaeus 'because he too is a son of Abraham,' and in fixing the number of his special disciples at twelve to match the number of the tribes of Israel - in all this Jesus shows how strongly Jewish a stamp he wished to impress upon his mission."[1]

Each nation having been separately guided to the truth by the national prophets, the time was ultimately ripe in the Plan of God to raise the World - Prophet and reveal the Universal Religion. And so, when the world was on the eve of becoming one. God raised the Prophet Muhammad to represent the essential message of all prophets, shorn of all that was of temporary and limited nature and purged of all the later adulterations and misinterpretations. He 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.

To establish the truth of his Religion. the Prophet Muhammad did not resort to miracles, which may win over the few who witness them but fail to carry conviction to those of the

1. C. J. Cadoux, *The life of Jesus*, pp. 81,82.

subsequent generations. The appeal of his Religion is to the reason and the conscience of man. To carry the truth home to us, he draws our attention to the phenomena of nature, the lessons of history and the teachings and experiences of the prophets of various nations. There is nothing in Islam which is of interest or benefit only to the people of a particular region or age. The Glorious Qur'an enjoins nothing which is not uniformly inspiring, edifying and practicable for peoples of all nations and times. The religious and moral teachings of Islam are of universal nature.

In considering the proposition that Islam and not Christianity is the universal Religion, the reader must bear in mind the following facts:

1. The mission of Jesus was only for the children of Israel, but the Prophet Muhammad came with a message for all nations of the earth. Jesus clearly stated:

> "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
>
> (Matthew 15:24)

He chose twelve special disciples to match the number of the tribes of Israel and he clearly told them:

> "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
>
> (Matthew10:5,6)

On the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad from the very beginning of his ministry addressed himself to the entire humanity. It was revealed to him:

﴿ *We have not sent thee (Muhammad) but as a mercy to all the nations.* ﴾

(Qur'an 21:107)

﴿ *Say (O Muhammad): O mankind! Lo! I am the Messenger of God to you all - the Messenger of Him unto Whom belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. There is no god save Him.* ﴾

(Qur'an 7:158)

2. Christianity believes that the Israelites are a chosen people. God had sent His Revelations and prophets to them alone. The Christians acknowledge only the prophets of Israel. They regard all others as impostors. But Islam says that it would be a denial of the universal Providence of God to assert that prophets were raised only in one nation. According to the Glorious 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 nations of the globe. The same religion was revealed to all prophets. The Glorious Qur'an says:

﴿ *There is not a nation but a warner hath passed among them.* ﴾

(35:24)

﴿ *And for every nation there is a Messenger.* ﴾

(10:48)

﴿ *Verily We sent messengers before thee (Muhammad), among them are those of whom We have told thee, and some of whom We have not told thee.* ﴾

(Qur'an 40:78)

﴿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 the truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed.﴾

(Qur'an 2:213)

The Prophet Muhammad had come to complete, not to destroy, the work of the earlier prophets. He told his followers to have faith in the prophets of all the nations:

﴿Say (O Muslims): We believe in God and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the prophets (of each and every nation) received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.﴾

(Qur'an 2:136)

Islam is the consummation of all the religions. By accepting the prophets and scriptures of all nations, Islam affirms the Unity and universal Providence of God and the universality of religious experience, and also seeks to bring together people of all races and creeds in a single all-embracing Faith and Brotherhood.

3. Islam, and not Christianity, gives complete guidance for all aspects and conditions of life, individual as well as social, national as well as international. Jesus Christ himself admitted that he had not come with the final or complete Divine message for mankind, for the time was not yet ripe for it:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

(John 16:12-13)

Five centuries after him the Spirit of truth appeared in the person of the Prophet Muhammad to convey the whole truth to mankind. God revealed to him:

﴿This day have I perfected your Religion for you and completed My favor unto you, and have chosen for you as Religion Al-Islam .﴾

(Qur'an:5-3)

The Prophet Muhammad is thus the seal Prophet and the Message which he brought from God is the final and complete message. Let us compare certain aspects of the religions of Islam and Christianity to see why we regard Islam and not Christianity as the complete message.

The Status of Women in Islam and Christianity

Jesus was the seal prophet to appear among the Beni-Israel. Allah sent him to make reforms in the teachings of the earlier Israelite prophets. He reinterpreted some of the religious precepts of Moses to bring them in line with the needs of his age; but others he left as they were. The so-called Old Testament of the Bible advocates massacre, condones polygamy, accepts slavery and orders the burning of witches. Jesus, who had come "not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil", apparently saw nothing wrong with these or, at any rate, had no time to remedy them. For, he said or did nothing to humanize the

Mosaic laws of war or to abolish slavery or to raise the status of women. He said not a word against polygamy.

St. Paul, who was the real founder of Christianity as it is understood and believed by Christians, regarded woman as temptress. He laid the entire blame for the fall of man and the genesis of sin on woman. This is what we read in the New Testament of the Bible:

> "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels"
>
> (I Corinthians 11:8,10)

And this is what some of the canonized saints of Christianity have said about woman:

> "Woman is a daughter of Falsehood, a sentinel of Hell, the enemy of peace; through her Adam lost Paradise."
>
> (St. John Damascene)

> "Woman is the instrument which the Devil uses to gain possession of our souls."
>
> (St. Cyprian)

> "Woman is the fountain of the arm of the Devil, her voice is the hissing of the serpent"
>
> (St. Anthony)

> "Women has the poison of an asp, the malice of a dragon."
>
> (St. gregory the Great)

The Glorious Qur'an clears woman of the responsibility for the fall of Adam and vindicated her honor and dignity. It raises the status of woman to make her man's equal. For the first time in history woman is given the same rights as those of man by Islam:

﴿And they (women) have rights similar to those of men over them in a just manner.﴾

(Qur'an 2:228)

The modern man recognizes that there can be no true freedom and dignity without economic rights. Fourteen hundred years ago, Islam has given woman the right to inherit the property and wealth of her father and husband and to acquire, own and dispose of wealth as she likes. The Glorious Qur'an says:

﴿Unto men a fortune from that which they have earned, and unto women a fortune from that which they have earned.﴾

(Qur'an 4:32)

﴿Unto men (of a family) belongeth a share of that which parents or near kindred leave, and unto women share of that which parents or near kindred whether it be little or much - a legal share.﴾

(Qur'an 4:7)

In marriage a woman is considered by Islam to be an equal and free partner. Marriage in Islam is a sacred contract between a man and a woman and the consent of both parties has to be taken before marriage can take place. The Glorious Qur'an describes woman as a companion of her husband - an object of love and a source of peace and solace to him:

﴿And of His Signs is this: He created for you helpmates from among yourselves that ye may find rest in them and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, here indeed are portents for folk who reflect.﴾

(Qur'an 30:21)

To impress upon his followers the exalted position and sacredness of womanhood, the Prophet declared:

"Paradise lies at the feet of mothers."

He said that "women are the twin-halves of men," and that men and women come from the essence. Islam makes no distinction between them as regards their moral and spiritual capabilities and rewards:

﴿The believers, men and women, are protecting friends of one another, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and they perform Prayer and they pay Zakah, and they obey God and His Messenger. As for these, will have mercy on them. Lo! God is All-Mighty, All-Wise.﴾

(Qur'an 9:71)

﴿Whoever doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him (or her) 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.﴾

(Qur'an 16:97)

﴿Lo! men who surrender unto God, and women who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth, and men who are persevere in righteousness and women who are

persevere, and men who are humble, and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast and men who guard their modesty and women who guard their modesty, and men who remember God much and women who remember - God hath prepared for them forgiveness and vast reward. ﴾

(Qur'an 33:35)

Elimination of Slavery

Islam is the first Religion to improve the condition of slaves and to take steps for the total abolition of slavery. As the first step, the Glorious Prophet made kind and brotherly treatment of slaves, a duty of Muslims. They were to be considered as members of the family:

"Your slaves are your brethren. So if any one of you happens to have a slave, let him give him the same food that he himself eats, and the same clothing that he himself wears. And do not give them such work as is beyond their power to perform, and if you ever happen to give them such work, you should help them in doing it."

(Bukhari, *Kitab Al-'Itq*)

The following are just two of the many verses of the Glorious Qur'an exhorting men to emancipate the slaves:

﴿ *Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Ascent is! It is to free the slaves and to feed in the day of hunger an orphan near of kin, or some poor wretch in misery, and to be of those who believe and exhort one another to perseverance and exhort one another to pity.* ﴾

(90:12-17)

﴿It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in God and the Last Day... and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free...﴾

(2:177)

The institution of slavery being opposed to the Islamic teaching of the equality and dignity of man, the Prophet prohibited the taking of fresh slaves in very strong words:

"God has spoken to me, saying, there are three classes of men whose adversary I shall be on the Day of Judgment. Firstly, the man who makes a covenant with someone in My Name and then breaks it. Secondly, the man who enslaves a free man, sells him and eats his price. Thirdly, the man who employs a man to do a work and exacts full work from him but does not pay him his full wages"

(Bukhari, *Kitab Al-Bai'*)

Finally, came the categorical Command of God not only to give freedom to the slaves but also a part of one's wealth to rehabilitate them:

﴿And such of your slaves as seek a writing of emancipation, write it for them, if you are aware of aught of good in them, and bestowed upon them of the wealth of God which He hath bestowed upon you.﴾

(Qur'an 24:33)

On the other hand, Jesus was not related to say anything to emancipate the slaves or to improve the lot of these miserable creatures.

Political Constitution

Christianity does give some guidance with regard to what Aristotle described as private virtues, but is absolutely silent on the question of political virtues. The result of the separation of religion and politics in Christianity has been the growth of Machiavellism in the West. Islam, on the other hand, being the last revealed Religion, and foreseeing the eventual evolution of humanity, has to formulate a basic code of comprehensive guidance for mankind in all their activities and relations, whether they fall within the public or the private sector. Islam ensures social justice and international peace by bringing political, economic and international relations and affairs under the control of religion and ethics and by defining the basic duties of the individual towards the state and of the state towards the individual and of one state toward another. It lays down some basic principles which every community is enjoined to adopt and then gives each the liberty to develop its structure according to the needs of the age, provided this superstructure observes the basic principles and remains within their scope.

The first basic principle of the Islamic political system is that the sovereignty of the state rests with God and no legislature or parliament has the right to pass a law or act which is contrary to the spirit and letter of the Commands of God as contained in the Glorious Qur'an and the precepts of the Prophet. Thus Islam ensures uniform justice and saves the state and the destinies of people from being swayed by the whims, shortsighted decisions of the legislators, and the minority group from the brute will of the majority, and the interests of the people as a whole from those of the dominating economic class in the parliament.

The Glorious Qur'an says:

﴿Say: O God, Owner of Sovereignty! Thou givest sovereignty unto whom Thou wilt and Thou withdrawest sovereignty from whom Thou wilt. Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt. In Thy Hand is the good. Lo! Thou art Able to do all things.﴾

(3:26)

The second basic principle is that all men are equal before Law and in the Sight of God. They have equal political rights. The same Law applies to all. In an Islamic State no one, not even the head of the state, is above Law for the breach of any law, even the Caliph can be summoned in the court and punished, if found guilty.

The third basic principle is that all public offices, including that of the chief executive, are trusts from God, and the trustee must exercise the authority given to them as per the Command of God and for the benefit of the people. As the head of the state is appointed by them, he can also be removed by people, if they find that he is not carrying on the administration according to the Commands of God and in best interests of the people.

The fourth basic principle is that all public matters are to be decided by consultation and after taking into consideration the views of the citizens or the Islamic State:

﴿So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs. And when thou art resolved, then put thy trust in God. Lo! God loveth those who put their trust in Him.﴾

(Qur'an 3:159)

﴿And those who answer the Call of their Lord and perform Prayer and whose affair is by consent among themselves and who spend on others out of what we have bestowed on them.﴾

(42:38)

Islam brings into existence the first true democracy in which there is no distinction of free-born and slave, citizen and serf, and no discrimination on the basis of race or color, or sex or creed. All are equal before Law and enjoy the same rights.

The Economics of Islam

In the economic field, Islam considers all unearned income to be unjust and unlawful. It upholds the dignity of labor. The Prophet said:

"No one eats better food than that which he eats out of the work of his own hands."

(Bukhari, 35:15)

In the social order of Islam the possibility of exploitation of man by man is minimized, without the total abolition of private property or enterprise, by the prohibition of monopoly, blackmarketing, hoarding and interest (riba), that is, a fixed extra return for money lent for any purpose. Says the Qur'an:

﴿Those who live on interest cannot rise up save as he ariseth whom the Devil hath prostrated by his touch. That is because they say: Trade is just like interest; whereas God permitteth trading and forbiddeth interest.﴾

(2:275)

In order to reduce inequality and make sure that every one gets the basic necessities and has equal opportunities in life, Islam imposes a tax on the capital of the rich for the benefit of the poor. This tax, called Zakah, is different from and in addition to Khairat or voluntary charity. Moreover, the Qur'an contains frequent and repeated exhortations to the people to spend their wealth for the welfare of others. It says that the profession of Faith and the religious devotions of a man who is not actively engaged in works of mercy are vain and not acceptable before God. And, finally, by its judicious laws of inheritance, Islam makes the concentration of wealth in few hands impossible.

While not ignoring the importance of economic activities in human life, Islam strongly condemns the tendency to judge people by their financial and social status. The mark of a man's worth is not his wealth but higher morals and greater participation in the works of mercy. Wealth is not an end, but "a means of support" to the people. The wealth that a man earns is not absolutely his. It is a trust with him from God. He has acquired it by employing the God-given faculties and by the aid and the facilities provided by the society. He must repay his debt to the society and spend as much as possible, out of what he has earned, in the Way of God. Above all, in the pursuit of wealth a man must not lose sight of the higher values of life.

Religious Freedom

Just as Islam has made the state subject to the same ethical principles as govern individuals and has brought international relations within the scope of morality, making the subjugation and exploitation of one nation by another as reprehensible as the

subjugation and exploitation of one man by another, in the same way Islam has ordained justice, equality and mutual respect in inter-religious affairs and relations. In the Islamic social order all individuals and religious communities are free to follow the religion of their own choice. No individual or religious community has the right to impose his own beliefs on others or to restrict in any way the profession, preaching and practice by others of the religion which appeals to them. Says the Glorious Qur'an:

﴿ *There is no compulsion in religion.* ﴾

(2:256)

The Islamic attitude towards inter-religious relations is much more than that of mere toleration. Islam enjoins equal faith in the prophets of all Divine religions of the world. It invites people of other religions to join the Muslims in forming a League of Faiths to uphold the principles of the Unity of God and righteous conduct.

In Muslim countries Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and Hindus have enjoyed the freedom, which, till recently, was totally denied to the non-Christians in Christendom.

The Universal Brotherhood of Islam

The Islamic belief in the unity of mankind is the corollary of the doctrine of the Unity of God. The self-same God is the Creator and Nourisher of the men and women of all nations, races, colors, creeds and cultures. And hence all mankind may be regarded as God's big family:

﴿ *Mankind are one community.* ﴾

(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."

(Saying of Muhammad)

Islam rejects all false criteria of superiority based on race, nationality, color or language. It makes righteousness and good conduct the only mark of superiority in the Sight of God:

﴿O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female and made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the Sight of God is the best in conduct. Lo! God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.﴾

(Qur'an 49:13)

The Prophet of Islam, commenting on the above verse on the occasion of the Last Pilgrimage, observed:

"No Arab has superiority over any non-Arab, and no non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; no black person has any superiority over a white person and no white person has any superiority over a black person. The criterion of honor in the Sight of God is righteousness and honest living."

(Saying of Muhammad)

Islam unites all human beings in love and sympathy as brothers. The brotherhood of Islam transcends all geographical and political barriers. Even the strictly religious obligations of Islam, like the congregational Prayers, Fasting, Zakah and Pilgrimage to Mecca have the additional function of creating brotherly feelings and equality among all sections of humanity. The Glorious Qur'an says:

﴿And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of God, and be not disunited. And remember God's Favor unto you: how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His Grace; and how ye were upon the brink of an abyss of Fire, and He did save you from it. Thus God maketh clear His Revelations unto you, that haply ye may be guided.﴾

(3:103)

Thus it will be seen that Islam gives guidance on many matters and aspects of human relations on which Christianity is silent. The Prophet Muhammad completed what was left incomplete by Jesus. Islam is the true Religion of Jesus, revived by a fresh Revelation and perfected to cover all aspects of human actions and relations and to give guidance to the people of all times and nations. It is, in short, a Universal Religion. It does not only respond to man's devotional urges but to human life as a whole. It does not only give us an infallible metaphysics, but also a comprehensive and sublime code of individual and social ethics, a sound economic system, a just political ideology, and many other things besides. It is not a solitary star, but a whole solar system, encompassing the whole and illuminating the whole.

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Islam and Christianity asserts the fact that Christianity, as taught by Christ himself (pbuh), and Islam are sister religions. Islam is the true religion of Jesus (pbuh), revived by a fresh Revelation and perfected to cover all aspects of human life and to give guidance to the nations of all times.

Islam is, in short, the universal religion. In this comparative study between Islam and Christianity, the reader will notice the tolerant approach of Islam toward other revealed religions.





Al-Falah is an institution devoted to developing a better understanding of Islam among all people of the world, Muslim and non-Muslim. Of all religions, Islam is the most maligned and misunderstood in the West. Though Oriental Studies have long been established in European and American universities, real Islam has seldom been presented to the world. Our aim is to clear the way for a fair appraisal of the fastest-growing religion in the world.