

# A Question That Demands an Answer

A Summary of an Actual Conversation  
by Abd al-Masih

(Translated from the Arabic)

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## INTRODUCTION

In our fast-paced age, the airlines have brought distant continents closer together. Many move freely among countries. We have become a "Global Village" - the daily output of books, television and radio programs has influenced the minds of all, sometimes causing confusion and frustration. The world is full of all kinds of problems. Despite incredible advances in technology, the old question remains: What is eternal truth? If we listen to one another we can broaden our horizons and find an answer to this baffling question.

### 1. A THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTION

A servant of the Lord was allowed to visit a prison frequently in an Arab country; here he declared the way of life to the imprisoned criminals. He had a legal permit to visit all who wanted to hear the peaceful message of Truth which can purify the heart and change the mind. That man of God would enter the prison rooms without a watchman, refusing to be guarded. He believed that the prisoners would open themselves freely in an honest discussion only if they were not watched. He entered into their rooms boldly and sat with them privately.

Once, he entered into a room packed with hardened criminals who were sentenced for longer terms. They knew him from his previous visits and were accustomed to hearing his messages. After his visits, they discussed his messages for days with great enthusiasm.

When he visited them this time, they closed the door behind him suddenly, saying, "We will not let you go until you honestly answer our question." He replied: "I came to you voluntarily, without the company of an armed guard. I am ready to answer your questions from the Word of God according to my knowledge. I cannot answer what I do not know." They said to him: "We do not ask you about the mysteries of the universe. We only ask you, as an upright man, to give us a clear answer to the comparison that has stirred us up: Who is greater, Muhammad or Christ?"

When the minister heard this question, he stopped a moment to take a breath, and said to himself: "If I say, 'Muhammad is greater,' the Christian prisoners may oppose or attack me. And if I say, 'Christ is greater,' the Muslim prisoners could attempt to kill me." He knew that an insult or a harsh word against Muhammad was considered an offence worthy of death. The man of God prayed in his heart, asking the Lord to grant him a wise and convincing answer to those prisoners. And the Holy Spirit guided this minister who stood alone among the prisoners, behind the closed doors, to humbly present a straight and clear answer.

When the servant of the Lord did not answer quickly, for he was praying silently, the prisoners urged him: "Do not dodge your responsibility. Do not be a coward.

Tell us the truth. We promise that no harm will come to you, no matter what you say. Do not lie to us, nor conceal your inner thoughts on this subject. Tell us the whole truth."

The servant of God replied: "I am ready to tell you the real facts. The question you are confronting me with is not the lecture I have prepared for you. However, if you have decided to listen to a comparison between Muhammad and Christ, I will not conceal the truth from you. Anyway you should understand that I am not responsible for any negative outcome that could result from our study today. You are the ones responsible, for you have demanded that I should answer a question I neither raised nor intended to mention."

The minister continued: "I myself will not say who the greatest is. I will leave this decision to the Qur'an and the Islamic Traditions. They have already given a decisive and convincing answer. You may ponder what the Qur'an has to say about the hidden truth, and the truth shall set you free."

## 2. THE BIRTHS OF MUHAMMAD AND CHRIST

It is common knowledge that the father of Muhammad was Abdallah; and his mother, Amina. Muhammad was a man born of an acknowledged father and a respected mother. Neither the Qur'an nor Muslim scholars claim that Muhammad was born in a supernatural way. His birth was not announced by an angel, nor was he born by the Word of God. He was born in a natural way as we all are, from a human father and a human mother.

As for Christ, the Qur'an states several times that He was not born in the normal way, as we are. His Father was not a human being. He was conceived in the Virgin Mary without the interference of a human father, for Allah breathed His spirit into her. This makes Christ - exclusively - the only one in the whole world who was born of the Word of God and His spirit.

"Truly, the Messiah, Isa, Son of Mariam, the ambassador of Allah, is His word that He bestowed upon Mariam; and He is Spirit of Him" (Sura al-Nisa' 4:171).

"We breathed in her of our Spirit" (Sura al-Anbiya' 21:91).

"We breathed in Him of our Spirit" (Sura al-Tahrim 66:12).

Christ is not a usual man, but the divine Spirit incarnated in human flesh. Thus He was born of the Spirit of God and the Virgin Mary. In contrast, Muhammad was born of a father and a mother, like all humans. He was not born of the Spirit of God.

## 3. THE DIVINE PROMISES ABOUT MUHAMMAD AND CHRIST

We will recite from the Qur'an the divine promises to Mary (Mariam) about Christ who was to be born to her:

"O Mariam, Allah gives you good tidings of 'a Word from Him' whose name shall be the Messiah, Isa, the son of Mariam, highly honoured in this world and the next; and he shall be one of those brought near 'to Allah' " (Sura Al Imran 3:45).

The Most High Himself evangelised Mary and informed her personally about the birth of Christ, calling Him "A Word from Him." All the prophets heard the Word of God and transcribed it sincerely. As for Christ, He not only heard the inspired Word, He Himself was the incarnation of the divine Word. In Him dwelt the full authority of the Word of God, with all its creative, healing, forgiving, comforting and renewing power. Regarding this unique fact, Allah foretold the birth of Christ to Mary personally, confirming to her the reality of that great miracle.

We cannot read in the Qur'an that Muhammad was the incarnate Word of God. He only heard the Word of God from an angel and recited it to his listeners. God did not announce the birth of Muhammad to his mother; neither was the spirit of God breathed into her. On the other hand, Mary personally faced the Angel Gabriel, who was sent of God to kindly explain to her the work of the Holy Spirit in her. She is the only one chosen among all women, as the Qur'an states:

"O Mariam, God has chosen you and purified you; He has chosen you above all women" (Sura Al Imran 3:42).

The name of Mary (Mariam) is repeated 34 times in the Qur'an; in contrast, the name of Muhammad's mother is never mentioned in the Qur'an - not even once. When Muhammad requested forgiveness for her after she had died, Allah stopped him; this made him weep bitterly.

#### 4. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MUHAMMAD AND CHRIST

It is said that when Muhammad was a child, two angels came and purified his heart. Muslim scholars support this story following the Qur'anic verse:

"Did we not open (expand) your breast and take out from you your burden (wizr), that weighed down your back?" (Sura al-Sharh 94:1-3).

From that time on, Muhammad assumed the honourable title al-Mustafa, "The Chosen One." He was not pure and righteous in himself, for the two angels had to lift up the burden from his heart to purify him. Muhammad needed "heart surgery" to be purified and to become a prophet and messenger of Allah.

On the other hand, we read in the Qur'an that the Son of Mary would be "most pure" from the moment of His birth; the angel said to her:

"I am but a messenger from your Lord, to give you a boy most pure" (Sura Maryam 19:19).

The Muslim scholars al-Tabari, al-Baidawi, and al-Zamakhshari agreed that the expression "most pure" means blameless, guiltless and sinless. Before Christ

was born, divine inspiration declared that the one who was to be born out of the spirit of God would always live pure, without a single sin. There was no need to purify His heart, for He was holy in Himself. The Son of Mary did not hear the Word of God only; He was it. There was no difference between His actions and His words. He remained blameless and without sin.

The Qur'an testifies several times that certain prophets committed specific sins - except Christ, who lived always blameless and pure. The Spirit of God kept Him, from His birth, in perfect holiness, despite the fact that He was human. He did not fall into temptation because He was the Spirit of God incarnate.

Muhammad confesses openly three times in the Qur'an that he had to ask for the forgiveness of Allah:

"Ask forgiveness for your sin and praise your Lord at evening and at dawn" (Sura Ghafir 40:55).

"Ask forgiveness for your sin, and for the believers, men and women. God knows your goings to and fro, and your lodging" (Sura Muhammad 47:19).

"We granted you a clear victory, to forgive your sins from the past and in the future" (Sura al-Fath 48:1-2).

Some Muslims refuse to accept these verses which the Qur'an clearly reveals in its pages. Others try to explain the truth away.

Muhammad was a normal man, born of two parents. He lived a natural life and sinned as we sin. He asked Allah for the forgiveness of his sins. Christ, however, was born of the Spirit of God; He was the Word of God incarnate, living purely and in holiness from His birth.

## 5. THE INSPIRATION OF MUHAMMAD AND CHRIST

Muhammad claimed to have received his inspiration through the Angel Gabriel, the faithful spirit. It is mentioned in many Traditions that whenever the inspiration came upon him, Muhammad went into a semi-coma. In the book *al-Rewayah*, it is mentioned that he changed from his normal state and looked like a drunkard, almost passing out. Some Muslim scholars said that he was taken out of this world. Abu Huraira said, "When inspiration came down on Muhammad, he was stricken with dread." In the book *al-Rewayah*, it is written: "Depression showed on his face, and his eyes sank. Sometimes he fell into a deep sleep." Omar b. al-Khattab said, "When the inspiration came upon him, a noise like the humming of bees could be heard around his face." Muhammad was asked how he received the inspiration; he answered: "Sometimes it comes upon me like the ringing of bells, which is the hardest form of inspiration for me; and when I come through, I remember what was said."

Muslim scholars agreed that Muhammad "felt heavy every time the inspiration came upon him; his forehead dripped with cold sweat; sometimes he fell into a deep sleep, with his eyes turning red." Zaid b. Thabit said: "When the inspiration came down upon Muhammad, he himself became heavier. One time, his thigh fell against my thigh, and I swear to God, I have never found anything that was heavier than the thigh of Muhammad. Whenever the inspiration came upon him, while he was on his camel, it limped, and its leg was thought to be broken; and sometimes it squatted" (Mastery in the Qur'anic Sciences, by al-Suyuti; 1:45-46). According to Muslim scholars and their testimonies, Allah did not speak to Muhammad directly but dealt with him only through the Angel Gabriel. Allah remained far away from him, even at the time of the inspiration.

In contrast, God never sent the Angel Gabriel to Christ, and Christ never received inspiration through a third party. He Himself was the Truth incarnate (Sura Maryam 19:34), the eternal Word of God, and a Spirit from Him, from within God, full of knowledge of His will. If anyone wants to study the will of God in depth, he should study the life of Christ carefully, for He is the incarnate will of the Almighty. The Qur'an tells us further that Allah Himself taught Christ the Book, wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel, before His incarnation:

"And He will teach Him the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel" (Sura Al Imran 3:48).

Christ knows all the secrets of heaven and earth, because Allah told Him all that had been written in the Heavenly Book (al-Lauh al-Mahfudh), including the whole Torah, The Wisdom of Solomon and the Gospel. So Christ was full with the Word of God. He did not speak anything but the words of God. According to the Qur'an, He uttered words of comfort and guidance to His mother, immediately after His birth, like an adult:

"But the one that was below her called to her, 'Do not be sorrowful; see, your Lord has set below you a great person. Shake the palm-trunk, and there shall come tumbling around you dates fresh and ripe. Eat therefore, and drink, and be comforted; and if you see anyone, say: 'I have vowed to the All-Merciful a fast. Today I will not speak to any man' " (Suras Maryam 19:24-26).

According to the Qur'an, Christ spoke the words of God when He was still an infant. He did not need an angel or middle-man, because He is the Word of God and His Spirit. For this reason, the power of God worked in the Son of Mary, creating, healing, forgiving, comforting and regenerating.

The conclusion of the inspiration to Muhammad in the Qur'an and the Traditions was summed up in the Sharia (Islamic Law), which contains all the divine commands and prohibitions. The final form of the inspiration to Muhammad took shape as "books": the Qur'an and the Traditions, which are summarised in the Sharia.

The inspiration of Christ is "His own self." His Gospel is not a law but the revelation of His life, the description of His Person. Moreover, Christ granted His followers the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they can fulfil His commandments. His disciples do not believe in a book or a religion primarily, neither do they live under a law; much more, they believe in a person. They hang on to Christ tightly, personally and follow Him. Christ is the very inspiration of God.

## 6. THE SIGNS OF MUHAMMAD AND CHRIST

Muslim scholars claim that the miracles Allah granted to Muhammad were the verses of the Qur'an in the Suras. Therefore, the wonders of Muhammad were not deeds but words.

The Qur'an testifies on behalf of Jesus, describing His unique works and supreme acts of healing. Christ did not curse His enemies, nor did He behave as a tyrant. He revealed Himself as the fountain of kindness and the source of love and mercy. The power of God emanated from Him by the many wonderful signs that He performed.

### The Blessed, Greatest Physician

The Qur'an confirms that Christ healed blind men without surgical procedures or medicine. He healed them by uttering powerful words. His word proved to have healing power - then as well as now. Christ says according to the Qur'an:

"He made me blessed wherever I shall be," (Suras Maryam 19:31).

"He is the true fountain of blessing to all people in all ages" (Suras Al Imran 3:49; al-Ma'ida 5:110).

The Son of Mary did not fear those afflicted with leprosy, but touched their ailing skin and healed them with His purifying Word. Christ is the greatest Physician of all times. He loved the poor and received the sick. He created hope and faith in them. He healed every sick person that was presented to Him.

### He Raised the Dead

One of the greatest wonders of Christ was that He raised the dead; this is confirmed in the Qur'an as well as in the Gospel. He raised a young girl, a young man, and an adult from the dead. Who can raise the dead but God alone! It is of utmost importance for us to grasp the depth of the meaning in several Qur'anic verses that declare the undeniable fact that Christ raised the dead repeatedly (Suras Al Imran 3:49; al-Ma'ida 5:110).

Some superficial critics say that the Son of Mary was not able to perform miracles on His own, but that it was God who strengthened Him through the Spirit of the Holy, enabling Him to accomplish the different wonders. They base their claim on the following Qur'anic verses:

"We gave Isa the son of Mariam the clear signs, and strengthened Him with the Spirit of the Holy" (Sura al-Baqara 2:87).

"Those Messengers, we have preferred some above others; some there are to whom Allah spoke, and some He raised in rank, and we gave Isa, the Son of Mariam, clear signs and strengthened Him with the Spirit of the Holy" (Sura al-Baqara 2:253).

"When God said, 'Jesus Son of Mary, remember My blessing upon thee and upon thy mother, when I confirmed thee with the Holy Spirit, to speak to men in the cradle, and of age; and when I taught thee the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah, the Gospel; and when thou createst out of clay, by My leave, as the likeness of a bird, and thou breathest into it, and it is a bird, by My leave; and thou healest the blind and the leper by My leave, and thou bringest the dead forth by My leave; and when restrained from thee the Children of Israel when thou camest unto them with the clear signs, and the unbelievers among them said, "This is nothing but sorcery manifest." ' ' " (Sura al-Ma'ida 5:110).

"And when the Apostles said, 'O Jesus son of Mary, is thy Lord able to send down on us a Table out of heaven?' He said, 'Fear you God, if you are believers. They said, 'We desire that we should eat of it and our hearts be at rest; and that we may know that thou hast spoken true to us, and that we may be among its witnesses.' Said Jesus son of Mary, 'O God, our Lord, send down upon us a Table out of heaven, that shall be for us a festival, the first and last of us, and a sign from Thee. And provide for us; Thou art the best of providers' " (Sura al-Ma'ida 5:112-114).

Scholars have discussed from all angles the quantity and quality of the food provided on that table in the desert, rather than examining the Person who provided it. According to the Gospel, Christ used five loaves of bread and two fish, gave thanks, and with these articles fed five thousand men, besides the women and children. In this He demonstrated His unlimited authority as Creator in a practical way. Christ never uttered empty words; He did what He taught and manifested His will and love through great and mighty miracles.

#### The Revealer of Secrets

In the Qur'an, Muhammad declares:

"I do not say to you that I possess the treasures of God. I know not the unseen" (Sura al-An'am 6:50).

But with Christ, the case is different. Muhammad pointed at Jesus Christ and said that He is the one who knows the secrets of men and sees the unseen; these abilities are reserved for God alone. Muhammad quotes Christ in the Qur'an:

"I will inform you of what you eat, and what you treasure up in your houses. Surely in that is a sign for you, if you are believers" (Sura Al Imran 3:49).

Muhammad described the capacity of Christ as the All-knowing, in order to reproach and to warn some of his egotistic followers. He was disgusted with

some of his Muslims from Medina because they had hidden food and treasures in their homes, refusing to share all their fortune with the immigrants from Mecca. So he warned them that Christ would come back soon as a Judge, to rule on the Day of Judgement. Muhammad confessed that Christ would know all that they had done in the privacy of their homes. He would know not only what they had eaten, but also what they had hidden. There would be no escape from His eyes on the Judgement Day. There is hardly a greater proof or better admission on the part of Muhammad for the deity of Christ than this one. He confessed that Christ knows the hidden truth and can read the secrets in the hearts of men. He knows all your secrets in detail. He will manifest your deeds whether good or evil, for He is the All-knowing. No one can hide anything from Him.

#### The Wise Legislator

We read in the Qur'an that Christ permitted His followers what was forbidden under the Law of Moses. Christ did not force them to fulfil all the orders of Moses. In the Gospel, Christ made it clear that all the food which enters the stomach does not defile us; it is the thoughts that come out of our hearts that make us unclean: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, blasphemy" (Matthew 15:19). Christ revealed a legislative revolution, for He was the divine Lawgiver and Legislator who assumed the right and authority to perfect and complete the Law. The Qur'an confirms this unique privilege of Christ; that He was not subject to the Law, but rules above it and perfects it. Moses, all the prophets, and everyone else in the Old Testament lived under the Law. They were expected to fulfil the Law, but Christ had the authority and the power to perfect and complete it. For this reason, He declares in the Qur'an:

"I came confirming what is in my hands from the Torah, and to permit you some of what had been forbidden to you" (Sura Al Imran 3:50).

In the Gospel, Christ says: "You have heard that it has been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth...' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that spitefully use you, and persecute you..." (Matthew 5:38-44).

#### The Renewer of Hearts and Minds

Blessed is he who realises that Christ is not merely an ordinary human or a mere prophet but the divine Legislator with the authority of God. Muhammad, however, was commanded by the angel to seek the counsel of the people of the Book, so that he could understand the meaning of the revelation given to him:

"If you are in doubt concerning that which we have sent down to you, ask those who have been reading the Book before you" (Sura Yunis 10:94).

Christ did not need to ask the teachers of the Old Testament about the mysteries of the Law of Moses, neither did He require details of its message, for He Himself was the Word of God and the Legislator of the Law. Christ was actually the Law

incarnate. He has the right that obedience be paid to Him. The Qur'an quotes Christ as having said:

"Fear God, and obey me" (Sura Al Imran 3:50).

All men, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and Christians, should study the Gospel carefully, keep it by heart, and follow Christ in all aspects of their lives. Christ has the right and authority to demand obedience from every individual!

Christ did not lead His disciples to God only, He called them to follow Him and to apply His teachings. For this reason, the Qur'an portrays the followers of Christ with the best of descriptions, such as: Helpers of God, believers, Muslims, His followers and martyrs (Sura Al Imran 3:52-53). We read of His followers in the Qur'an:

"We sent finally Isa, the Son of Mariam, and entrusted to Him the Gospel. And We inserted into the hearts of those who follow Him compassion and mercy" (Sura al-Hadid 57:27).

In the Qur'an, Allah says:

"O Isa I will cause you to die, and will raise you up to Me, and will purify you of those who believe not. I will set your followers above the unbelievers till the Resurrection Day. Then to Me shall you return" (Sura Al Imran 3:55).

These Qur'anic verses state that the true followers of Jesus are a higher, special, and distinct class of people. They are humble, not wanting to boast or become big. Muhammad declared:

"You will surely find the nearest of them in sympathy to the believers are those who say, 'We are Christians,' because some of them are priests and monks, and they do not want to become proud" (Sura al-Ma'ida 5:82).

The Qur'anic testimonies point to the greatest miracle of Christ, showing His ability to silently cause political and social changes without war or deception. He renews and converts disobedient sinners, changing them from egoists to loving people, from boasting chiefs to humble servants of God. Christ Himself confessed that He did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).

Everyone who compares the wonders of Muhammad with the wonders of Christ discovers that the signs of Muhammad were only words, whereas the signs of Christ were miracles manifested in His works of love and deeds of mercy.

## 7. THE DEATHS OF MUHAMMAD AND CHRIST

Ibn Hisham reported in his biography about the Prophet that Muhammad died after suffering from a high fever. Prior to his death, Muhammad claimed that the poison of the Jews had broken his heart. When a Jewish slave-woman laced his food with poison, a guest who was eating with him died! Muhammad himself

sensed the poisoned food and spat out what was in his mouth before swallowing it. However, his body absorbed some of the poison, and that is what eventually caused his death.

The death of Christ, however, was clearly prophesied in the Qur'an, fulfilling the plan of God as a blessing for all men. In the Qur'an, the Almighty speaks directly to Jesus:

"I will cause you to die, and raise you up to Me" (Sura Al Imran 3:55).

Even though this quotation is not written in the Gospel, it proves that Christ, according to the Qur'an, was not killed accidentally, but died in accordance with the will of God, in peace.

The Qur'an does not deny the historical death of Christ as some unbelievers claim, for we read the prophecy which Christ uttered about His own death, in Sura Maryam 19:33:

"Peace be upon me, the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I am raised up alive."

This great confession of the Qur'an confirms that Christ was born, died and rose from the grave. With this declaration, Muhammad supported the teachings of the Gospel. Everyone who believes in the sequence of this historical event shall live with Him who is alive now and for ever!

When Christ returns to this earth, He will never die again. He did not indicate in Sura Maryam that He would die in the distant future but in a near future, after His birth and lifetime. The Qur'an testifies that Christ was born, that He died, and that He rose again in a sequential chain of events. Christians are certain about the historicity of the death and resurrection of the Son of Mary.

Christ died voluntarily and in perfect peace. We read this in the Gospel and in the Qur'an. Christ knew how He would die beforehand. He even appointed the day and the hour of His own death to coincide with the festivities of the Passover, according to the Law of Moses. He revealed that He would die as an atonement, saving all who believe in Him from their sins and the everlasting fire. All people die because they have sinned, but Christ never sinned. The Qur'an affirms this several times. Christ did not die for His own sins but took our sins upon Himself and died instead of us. There is a divine peace and a significance that surrounds His death, according to Sura Maryam, for He, the Lamb of God, carried the sins of the world away in His great love.

## 8. MUHAMMAD AND CHRIST, AFTER THEIR DEATHS

Muhammad was buried in Medina, and his grave is still there to this day. Muslims believe that his soul is in an intermediate place for the dead (Barzakh), awaiting the Day of Judgement.

We read in the Qur'an that God raised Christ to Himself, promising Him:  
"O Isa, I will cause you to die, and will raise you up to Me" (Sura Al Imran 3:55).

This promise is confirmed in the Qur'an as a fulfilled fact:  
"Allah raised Him up to Himself" (Sura al-Nisa' 4:158).

In other words, God called the Son of Mary out of the grave and raised Him up to Himself. He now lives near God, being honoured highly on earth and in eternity. The Qur'an testifies:

"O Mariam, God gives you good tidings of a Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, Isa, the Son of Mary; highly honoured, in this world and the next, and brought near to Allah" (Sura Al Imran 3:45).

The grave of Christ is empty, for He indeed has risen, as He proclaimed beforehand. But the remains of Muhammad are still in his grave. Christ lives. Muhammad is dead; he has never been resurrected from the grave, neither has he risen up to heaven. There is an unbridgeable difference between life and death. As life is greater than death, so Jesus is greater than Muhammad. Jesus is eternal life in person. The Qur'an itself clearly portrays the living Christ for all who search after eternal life.

## 9. THE PEACE OF MUHAMMAD AND CHRIST

All Muslims pray every time they mention the name Muhammad:  
"May Allah pray over him and grant him peace."

Their prayer indicates that the peace of Allah has not yet come to Muhammad, even though his followers have prayed for him all these centuries! Muhammad is the prophet who constantly needs the intercession of his people, instead of the other way around. The Qur'an testifies that Allah Himself, all angels and all Muslims, should pray fervently for Muhammad, in order to save him on the Day of Judgement:

"Truly Allah and his angels pray for the Prophet. O you who believe pray for him and greet him with the greeting of peace" (Sura al-Ahzab 33:56).

In Sura Maryam, Christ testifies: "Peace be upon me, the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I am raised from the dead." The Son of Mary is the Prince of Peace who lived His earthly life at peace with God from beginning to end. Nothing separated Him from His eternal blessing.

The birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary happened according to the will and the power of God. He was born without sin. The real peace of God rested upon Him from the beginning of His life. In evidence of this fact, the heavens opened and the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests" (Luke 2:14).

Christ died a real death. He did not die for His own sin, but as a substitute for our sins. Even in His death, Christ experienced peace with God. People die because of their loathsome sins, "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). But God was highly pleased when Christ died, because His substitutionary death has reconciled Him with mankind. Therefore the peace of God presided over the death of Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the greatest proof of His holiness. If Christ had committed only a single sin during His whole lifetime, death would have found legitimate power over Him and would have kept Him in its grip, as has happened with Muhammad. But Christ never committed a single sin, big or small! For this reason, He has overcome death and has arisen as a victor from the dark power. Christ is alive - Muhammad is dead! All the Muslims confess this reality when they mention the name of Christ, saying:

"Peace is upon Him."

They know well and testify that He lives in full peace with God.

Muhammad experienced bitter persecution in Mecca, but when he became politically and socially powerful, he launched severe attacks and bloody wars against his enemies. He sometimes became intolerant and unforgiving. In the Qur'an, he commands more than sixteen times that his enemies, all unbelievers, and those who have slipped away from Islam should be killed:

"Kill them wherever you come upon them. Expel them from where they expelled you; sedition is more grievous than slaying. Fight them not by the Holy Mosque until they should fight you there; then, if they fight you, kill them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers" (Sura al-Baqara 2:191).

"Take not to yourselves friends of them, until they emigrate in the way of God; then if they turn away seize them and kill them wherever you find them and take no friend nor helper from among them" (Sura al-Nisa' 4:89).

"Fight them, till there is no persecution, and the religion is Allah's entirely" (Sura al-Anfal 8:39).

"When the sacred months are drawn away, slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush" (Sura al-Tawba 9:5).

Muhammad did not bring peace to the world, but many wars. He sent his followers into raids and holy wars more than thirty times. He himself participated in such attacks and expeditions twenty-nine times. He commanded his people to shed the blood of his enemies. He was the example of the believers and the political leader of the Arabian peninsula.

As for the gentle and humble Christ, the Jews persecuted Him violently, but He did not defend Himself with the sword. He forbade His followers to shed the blood

of His enemies, commanding Peter: "Put your sword into its place, for all who take the sword shall perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Any Christian who fights for the spread of Christianity with deadly weapons, shedding the blood of other people, is violating the will of God; he will be judged as disobedient of the commands of the Prince of Peace. Muslims, however, are promised that whoever shall die in a holy war will ascend immediately to paradise. Christ is the only one who has established real peace without fighting and killing. Muhammad made it the duty of every Muslim to fight against his enemies. (See also Suras al-Nisa' 4:95,96; al-Furqan 25:52.) Christ preferred to shed His own precious blood in order to save His enemies, that they may not perish. He even prayed for them: "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Jesus was the only true Muslim, if we consider the definition of the word "Muslim" to be a derivation of the Arabic word Salaam, meaning "peace." A true Muslim is a peace-maker who has surrendered himself to the God of Love, serving Him alone.

## 10. THE UNIQUE SIGN OF GOD

Islamic inspiration appoints Jesus as a "Sign of Allah" (Ayatollah). According to Islam, God has made Jesus and His mother a sign unto men:

"We have appointed Him a sign unto men" (Sura Maryam 19:21).

"We breathed into her of Our spirit, and appointed her and her son to be a sign for all men" (Sura al-Anbiya' 21:91).

Christ did not receive this unique title from men, but from God directly. He did not receive the title, "The Sign of God," for having succeeded in higher education in a university, but has carried this distinguished title from the very day He was born into this earth. In contrast, the highest ranks of the Shiite Muslims are reserved for outstanding scholars who have earned the title of Ayatollah, which means "the sign of Allah." Many Muslims overemphasised their honouring of Khomeini, because they called him not only "Ayatollah" (the Sign of God) but also Ruhullah ("The Spirit of Allah"). Christians have had their "Sign of God" for 1990 years, in Jesus Christ! The Shiites had their famous Ayatollah in recent years. What is the difference between Khomeini and Christ? The gap between these two men is unbridgeable. Christ healed the sick, purified the lepers, raised the dead, fed the hungry, comforted the afflicted, blessed His enemies, established peace between men and God, and saved millions from doom on the Day of Judgement. Khomeini, on the other hand, led his people into two disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where millions of Muslims were killed, maimed, bereft, having lost their homes and livelihoods. He cursed everyone whom he considered to be the enemy of Islam, especially the United States. What an unspeakable difference between the Ayatollah of the Christians and that of the Shiites!

Sunni Muslim scholars felt offended by Ayatollah Khomeini when he allowed his followers to call him "The Spirit of Allah" (Ruhu-Allah) or "The Spirit of the Holy" (Ruhul-Qudsi). Even Muhammad did not accept such titles for himself. Sunni

scholars from different Arab countries met in Casablanca (Morocco) and agreed to condemn this practice. The King of Morocco, Hassan II, announced publicly that if Khomeini would not stop his followers from calling him Ruhullah or Ruhul-Qudsi, he (Ayatollah Khomeini) should be expelled from Islam and should no longer be regarded as a Muslim. The King based his declaration on the Qur'anic evidence that there is only one man in world history who has the right to call himself "The Spirit of the Holy": Isa, the Son of Mary, because He was born of the Holy Spirit. To condemn the Shiites, the Sunnites plainly confessed the truth that Jesus is the only person ever born by the Spirit of God.

Khomeini was appointed by men as a sign of God to the Shiites who live primarily in Iran. Christ however was the real "Sign of God" to all men. He was not only the "Sign of God" to the Christians or the Jews, but also to Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, Muslims and all others. Whoever studies the life of Christ in depth will find that He is the perfect Ayatollah, the true "Sign of God."

## 11. THE MERCY OF GOD

We read in the Qur'an that Allah called Jesus:  
"A sign unto men and a Mercy from Us" (Sura Maryam 19:21).

Muhammad is also called a "mercy" in the Qur'an:  
"We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds" (Sura al-Anbiya' 21:107).

We have recognised that the inspiration of Muhammad differs essentially from that of Christ; likewise, the meaning and content of mercy in those two men differ fundamentally.

The Angel Gabriel is supposed to have dictated the Qur'an to Muhammad. Christ did not need the agency of an angel, for He Himself was the incarnation of the eternal Word of God. Just as the difference between the inspiration of the Gospel and that of the Qur'an is vast, so too is the difference between the mercy of Christ and Muhammad unbridgeable. The inspiration to Muhammad can be found in the verses of the Qur'an, in his tens of thousands of declarations in the Hadith (Islamic Traditions), and in the practical ways of his daily conduct (al-Sunna). These sources were united and compiled into Islamic law (Sharia), consisting of commands and prohibitions. This Law organises all facets of the life of a Muslim, including the daily prayer, with the obligatory washing beforehand, fasting in Ramadan, religious taxes, pilgrimage and even circumcision and burial. The Sharia covers also the family order, inheritance, contracts, holy war and severe punishments. The life of a Muslim is governed by Islamic Law which, according to Islamic theology, is the final manifestation of the mercy of God to the Muslims.

The Gospel warns us that no man can be justified by observing the Law, for not a single person can fulfil all its demands precisely. Even Islamic Law is constantly violated by the Muslims. Millions have neglected the command to pray five times each day; other millions did not consistently practise fasting during Ramadan; others did not give the total amount of the religious tax they were obligated to

pay; and most do not complete their pilgrimage without mistakes. Moreover, how many times does a man sin against his wife and children, and how many times has a business contract been broken by fraud or coercion; how often have the lips of a person uttered lies? There has not been one single man that has not been stained and polluted with pride, grudges, hatred, and inner filth. The Law of God condemns everyone in his deeds, words and intentions. The final aim of the Law is the judgement of every sinful man for his failures, his guilt and his corruption. Yes, the law of Muhammad organised the Islamic people, as the Law of Moses centred the lives of the children of Abraham on God and His Word. The Law demands full surrender and complete submission to the Creator. But no law can justify the sinner, nor can it set the guilty free. The Law was given to judge the transgressor and destroy him. Because of the Law, the destination of everyone is hell. The Law is the just judge. No human is able to satisfy it.

Every religious-minded person hopes and aspires to receive the forgiveness of God. The Muslim thinks that:

"The good deeds will drive away the evil deeds" (Suras Hud 11:114; al-Fatir 35:29-30).

But according to Islam, no Muslim can be sure of the forgiveness of his sins until Judgement Day. Their law does not offer a substitute sacrifice, nor does it present free salvation to them. Every Muslim will receive his exact wages on Judgement Day, when all his iniquities and complete failure is then uncovered. The Law shall finally condemn its followers. Muhammad admitted that all his followers will definitely enter hell:

"We shall gather them, and the devils, then we shall bring them around hell (Gehenna) on their knees...there is not one of you, but he shall come into it; that was upon your Lord a determined decree" (Sura Maryam 19:68,71).

"To that end He created them. And the word of your Lord will be executed: 'I shall surely fill Gehenna with spirits (jinn) and men all together' " (Sura Hud 11:119, 120).

We admit that all Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims are real sinners by nature. No human is good, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Christ alone lived according to the Law and demanded that we should fulfil the commandment of His love, too. However, His ultimate goal was not to establish a law that will condemn mankind but to declare the grace of God to all sinners and to justify them freely. Christ lived what He taught, and He Himself completed the Law, proving that He was worthy to be the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Seven hundred years before Christ, Isaiah the Prophet prophesied that one would come as our substitute, suffering under the judgement of God in our place:

"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;

yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.  
But He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities;  
the chastisement of our peace was upon Him,  
and by His stripes we are healed.  
All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned, every one, to his own way;  
and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."  
Isaiah 53:4-6

Christ saves His followers from the curse of the Law and frees them from the judgement of the Last Day. He justifies those who receive Him and believe in Him. Surely He has reconciled God with men and granted them eternal peace. The Apostle Paul urged us to accept this spiritual privilege, writing:

"Be reconciled with God, for He made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:20, 21).

## 12. WHO IS THE GREATEST?

This serious question cannot be appropriately directed at Christ and Muhammad. According to a human scale, both have reached a standard of acceptance that no other founder of a religion has reached. Islam has reached 1.2 billion people, 1,370 years after the death of its founder. Those who claim to follow to Christ have surpassed the 1.8 billion mark. No political party, no philosophy, no ideology, ever gathered as many adherents as have Christ and Muhammad in the past centuries.

Muhammad warned his people in Mecca and endured severe persecution for twelve years. But after he emigrated to Medina in AD 622, everything changed. He turned into a leader experienced in politics, legislation and war. In the eyes of his followers, he is the head (Imam) of all believers, and the Ambassador of Allah for the Muslim nation (al-Umma).

Christ Himself was not ready to accept the question, Who is the greatest? He humbled Himself and declared that He did not come to be served but to serve and to give up his life as a ransom for many. He said to His followers, "Whoever wants to be first, must ultimately be last, and whoever intends to be a ruler, should be the slave of all" (Matthew 10:42). He promised that only the meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). Christ did not only preach but also lived out His teachings. Despite His tremendous power, He chose to live humbly, to be rejected by men, and finally to be crushed by evil hands (Isaiah 53:1-3). When Peter tried to defend Him, He rebuked him, commanding him to return his sword to its sheath and not to interfere in the decreed plan of God that demanded His substitutionary death for the salvation of mankind (John 18:11).

Christ also proved His authority when He assured faithful seekers: "Your sins are forgiven." Christ says even today to every repentant sinner: "God loves you; I have reconciled you to Him. The door to Him is wide open for you."

God did not send Christ to declare another unbearable law to man. Christ was the incarnate Mercy of God. In Him, the love of the Holy One was revealed. Therefore, He loved sinners, blessed His enemies and encouraged the despairing. Jesus is the mercy of the All-Merciful, the Compassionate. He proved Himself to be of the same essence as God. In Christ the Spirit of God became flesh (Sura al-Nisa' 4:171). There is no difference between His mercy and the mercy of God. His atonement is the free offer of God to every lost sinner. Whoever receives His grace and accepts His justification is forever reconciled to God. Those who believe in Him will finally recognise and see the real position of Christ, seated at the right hand of the Almighty. The mercy of Christ will never stop, condemn, or destroy us, since He has justified and redeemed us.

The followers of Christ are not obliged to suffer neither under the Law of Moses nor under the Sharia of Muhammad. They abide in the grace of God as revealed in the Gospel of Christ. Even the Qur'an confirms this unique privilege to the followers of Christ:

"The people of the Gospel must judge according to what God has sent down to them. Whoever judges not according to what God has sent down - these are the ungodly" (Sura al-Ma'ida 5:47).

The Qur'an legally frees Christians from the Sharia and confirms them in the grace of the Gospel. The mercy of Christ grants them perfect peace in heart and mind. Their spiritual vigour from the assurance of salvation leads them to services of love, based on an everlasting hope.

Christ humbled Himself more and glorified His Father in heaven, saying: "Truly, truly, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever things He does, these also the Son does likewise" (John 5:19). "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works" (John 14:10). Thus, Christ denied Himself and gave all homage to God His Father. He even confessed: "The Father is greater than I. I and the Father are one" (John 14:8, 10:30).

Therefore, anyone desiring to understand Christ should humble himself and ask the question, Who is the most humble? Christ humbled Himself to the point that He made Himself a curse for us that we may become the righteousness of God in Him. He gave Himself as an atonement for every evil man and woman - even for murderers - that they shall be set free from the condemnation of God, being transformed into believers filled with His eternal love.

## CONCLUSION

The prisoners listened silently to the words of the minister. Some of them became angry and stared at him with hatred. Others were interested and amazed. A few of them rejoiced silently as they heard this clear answer. They found new hope in this message.

The speaker for the prisoners answered the minister: "We acknowledge that you have spoken clearly with us. You have boldly told us what you really believe. We will think about your words and discuss the points you have raised, comparing them carefully with the Qur'anic verses and the Traditions. Some of us do not agree with you right now, but we have promised to let you go in peace. We will continue to study this subject diligently.

1. What did the prisoners ask the minister?
2. What was the difficulty in answering that question?
3. What is the difference between the birth of Christ and that of Muhammad?
4. How does the Qur'an confirm the righteousness of Christ and the sinfulness of Muhammad?
5. How many times does the Qur'an mention Mary (Mariam) by name? Why was Muhammad's mother not mentioned?
6. Why does the Qur'an call Christ "The Word of God" six times, and what does this title mean?
7. What is the difference between the signs of Muhammad and those of Christ?
8. What are the ten miracles of Christ mentioned in the Qur'an?
9. What are the titles of Christ's disciples, mentioned in the Sura Al Imran?
10. What is the difference between the death of Muhammad and the death of Christ, according to the Qur'an and the Traditions (Hadith)?
11. Where is Christ today, according to the Qur'an? Why do all Muslims intercede for Muhammad?
12. What is meant by "Muslim Peace", and what is the "Peace of Christ"?
13. Can the Law save its followers? Why must Allah send all the followers of the Law to hell?
14. Who is the real "Sign of God," and why does He deserve that title?
15. How did you understand the words, "Christ is the mercy of God"?

16. Who appeared to be the most humble and why?

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