

Themes for the Diligent

by

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INTRODUCTION

I have spent much time in the company of my Muslim brethren, most of whom are scholars. When we engaged in friendly and sincere discourses about religion we explored every avenue and knocked at every door; so, it occurred to me to summarise these discourses in the form of a book. As a result, this effort comes to all those who have sought fair-mindedness and made truth their goal, in the hope that it will benefit and guide them in the path of Truth. Then, if the truth is clear to them, hopefully they will embrace it, selling everything they have in order to buy it. Such folk will be blessed and they will prosper.

In my discussion I have followed a method suited to any reasonable Muslim, and no honourable seeker will disapprove of it. It is to furnish, whenever possible, proofs from the Qur'an and the Traditions, as well as from history, because these carry more weight with the Muslim and meet with no objections. Thus we shall arrive at the conclusion of the matter. Surely, truth is the daughter of investigation as scholars define it. The seeker after truth is not against roaming in the field of discussion in order to find it. The one who already possesses it will not refrain from discussion since it will only establish him more firmly. Therefore, my Muslim brother, do not be upset by my invitation to discuss in the spirit of piety, for in so doing, you will either benefit others or yourself; in both cases you will come out of the arena a winner. The fact that I quote from the Qur'an and Traditions does not commit me to acknowledging their veracity. The rules of logical debate and civil laws permit me this method. For the Muslim brother, in the first place, does not accept the infallibility of my Holy Book (the Torah and Gospel). Otherwise I would have quoted him numerous proofs from it of the veracity of each of the discourses in this publication, thus removing from his heart every doubt and exchanging certainty for suspicion.

My Muslim brethren, don't you and we have the same purpose in religion, to worship the Creator and enable us to secure eternal felicity after death? So you follow a certain path to this end while we follow another. How would it harm us if we discuss the subject thoroughly in a spirit of humility, piety and objectivity? Truth is one and indivisible, so let us walk together in amity, thereby gaining our Creator's favour, and at last enjoy an Eden-like immortal bliss. It was only genuine love which led us to compile this and other messages. We wish you to walk side by side with us, and share with us the Salvation which we have obtained in Christ, and to enjoy with us everlasting life. We cannot hate you if we wish you the happiness, joy and salvation we covet for ourselves, but rather we are sincere friends who love you. So do not mistrust us. May God guide you in the right path.

In discussion one should avoid shallow amiability, and so I shall beg my Muslim brother's indulgence if he finds some of my words hard to bear, for it is not my intention to denigrate his beliefs. At the same time, I would like to arrive at some truths, and this does not permit me to set aside my own convictions in order to please him. Likewise I do not expect him to set aside his. This is, after all, a debating opportunity. However, I shall promise my esteemed reader to avoid any

trace of provocation, ridicule or scorn. Let it be admitted that I have, in compiling this book, made use of previous publications. My prayer to God is that it will prove beneficial and a means of accord. He it is who answers the petitions of the sincere, and he is my sufficiency and the source of all my help.

FIRST DISCOURSE

Part One

The Authenticity of the Torah and Gospel

We believe that the Holy Bible (the Torah and Gospel) is the cornerstone of all Christian doctrine, its foundation and the arbiter used by Christians in solving problems. It is the fair judge who fears not censure but exposes truth and suppresses falsehood, the faithful witness in legal cases. I have therefore placed it first in my discussions so that, if I can prove its reliability by convincing argument and logical proof, we can together consult it in every case and refer to it in every dispute, yielding to its judgements and being enlightened by its guidance. Truly it is a light and a right guidance to all beings.

1) In the Qur'an, Al Imran 3:2, we read these words: "He sent down the Torah and the Gospel aforetime, as guidance to the people." God sent down the Torah and the Gospel for the guidance of mankind.

2) In al-Ma'ida 5:72: "Say: `People of the Book, you do not stand on anything, until you perform the Torah and the Gospel.'" This shows that the Torah and Gospel are reliable, otherwise Muhammad would not attest to them.

3) Also in al-Ma'ida 5:51: "So let the People of the Gospel judge according to what God has sent down therein," meaning that the Gospel is sent down from God and Muhammad recognised its authority.

4) In al-Nisa' 4:135: "O believers, believe in God and His Messenger and the Book He has sent down on His Messenger and the Book which He sent down before. Whoso disbelieves in God and His angels and His Books, and His Messengers, and the Last Day, has surely gone astray into far error." It judges the infidelity of the Muslim who does not believe in the Torah and Gospel in the same way that he believes in the Qur'an.

5) In Saba', 34:30: "The unbelievers say, `We will not believe in this Qur'an, nor in that before it.'" Thus the people of Mecca knew about the Torah and Gospel in the same way they knew the Qur'an.

6) In al-Qasas 28:49: "Say: `Bring a Book from God that gives better guidance than these (the Qur'an and the Bible), and follow it, if you speak truly.'" Clearly Muhammad attests to the accuracy of the Torah and Gospel and their equality with the Qur'an.

7) In al-Ma'ida 5:47: "Yet how will they make thee their judge seeing they have the Torah, wherein is God's judgement." Here we have a plain admission that the Torah is sound, contains God's decrees and whoever follows it will not need another arbitrator.

The meaning of the foregoing verses is very plain, and they do not require interpretation or explanation.

The gist of these texts is that the Holy Bible (the Torah and Gospel) was sent down by a wise and all-knowing God, as a light and guidance to the world. Its precepts are to be observed and should be followed. If any Muslim does not believe it his religion is lacking and he will stray far. Furthermore, the people of Mecca were as familiar with the Bible as they were with the Qur'an.

My Muslim brother, do you still hold back from believing in this Book, in spite of these explicit verses, and consider it as irrelevant? How will you excuse yourself on the day of reckoning for disobeying God's commands, when the books will be opened? I counsel you to read this book (the Torah and Gospel), believe it and obey its precepts. In so doing, you will discover the only way whereby God's justice and mercy are reconciled. You will find cleansing from sins and will attain eternal joy through Christ Jesus, the most important Person in this world and the next.

It may be that a Muslim brother would object: "The verses you have quoted are true and your conclusions right. However, the Torah and Gospel which you ask me to believe in and to which the Qur'an attested have been altered and distorted; a corrupting hand has been at work. What you today call the Torah and Gospel differ completely from the ones witnessed to by the Qur'an. It is for this reason that Muslims avoid them, rejecting their precepts. Surely, you don't blame them for that!" I ask the objector and others like him to pay attention and judge my reply fairly.

You have learnt from the aforementioned Qur'anic verses that the Book (Torah and Gospel) was quite perfect and reliable in Muhammad's day. Otherwise he would not have testified to it and commanded people to keep its precepts. You have to admit that at one time at least it was correct, free from alteration and forgery.

Also I would like you to read the following verses to see for yourself if such changes could take place, or if humans could alter it in such a manner:

"Recite what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord; no man can change His words" (al-Kahf 18:26).

"No man can change the words of God" (al-An`am 6:34).

"No man can change His words" (al-An`am 6:115).

"There is no changing the words of God" (Yunis 10:65).

"And thou shalt never find any changing the word of God" (al-Fath 48:23).

"A Book Sublime; falsehood comes not to it from before it nor from behind it" (Fussilat 41:42).

"It is We who have sent down the Remembrance, and We watch over it" (al-Hijr 15:9).

From these quotes you will see that no one can change the words of God, because God has sent down a Book and promised to protect it. Should you say that what is meant here by the "Remembrance" is the Qur'an, I would respond that it also means the Torah and Gospel. Witness, for instance, the Qur'anic statement: "Question the People of the Remembrance (the Torah and the Gospel), if you do not know" (Sura al-Anbiya' 21:7). In fact, the Torah itself is referred to as "Qur'an" in the verse: "We gave Moses and Aaron Salvation (al-Furkau) and a Radiance, and a Remembrance for the godfearing..." (Sura al-Anbiya' 21:49).

You say this applies only to the Qur'an; I say, all that applies to the Qur'an applies also to the Torah and the Gospel. For the Torah and Gospel are the words of God and the Qur'an, according to your belief, is the word of God. If you believe that God said in the Qur'an that there is no change, corruption, addition or deletion of his word (as Jalalayn has stated), then how can you say that the Torah and Gospel have been altered in view of all this?

If you allow this possibility, then it would also follow that the Qur'an could have been changed, because what is admissible for the Torah and Gospel is also admissible for the Qur'an. If men are able to alter God's words - the Torah and Gospel - it follows that they would inevitably have been able to alter the Qur'an, as al-Razi has stated. And you do not admit that the Qur'an has been changed. Therefore, you are obliged to agree that altering the Torah and Gospel is an impossibility. You must admit that they are genuine, observe their precepts and adopt them as your guide to Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. As for the alleged corruption referred to by the Qur'an in the Medina Suras, it was with reference to some of the Jews only. The Gospel is free from this accusation. The corruption intended here was in the meaning of certain verses, that is, in their interpretation, since the Jews used to interpret them contrary to Muhammad's wishes. This has been proven by al-Razi and al-Baidawi in their exposition of "corrupted texts". Otherwise, the words of the Qur'an in the Medina Suras would contradict the Meccan Suras.

Part Two

Intellectual Proof

Every intelligent being knows that the God who, by the fiat of his eternal power made the heavens, the worlds and all creatures, is Almighty. Furthermore, it is evident from the perfection of his handiwork, the precision of universal laws and

their constancy over thousands of years that God is wise. Since God is both able and wise, he had to establish a constitution or produce a canon for his intelligent human creatures to enable them to comprehend their relationship to their Creator, and their duties to one another. They needed to know the destiny of mankind: for the disobedient a punishment and for the believing and obedient a reward. Otherwise chaos would reign with no restraints or laws, like fish, the large eating the small. Ultimately, man would exterminate his kind, as savage tribes did that have disappeared. Virtue then would be the same as vice, in fact, no term or distinction of these terms would exist. Such a state of affairs is unacceptable to the Almighty, the Wise One.

If this constitution and canon are not the Torah and the Gospel, then tell me what are they? Is there an ancient holy book which meets such a need like the Torah and Gospel? Not at all!

Doubtless, God the Almighty and Wise, in sending down a book to be the constitution and guide for mankind would ensure its preservation from change, addition, deletion or deterioration. If that were not so, it would be the target of every attacker. There would be a multiplicity of books, a diversity of opinions and truth would be lost in perplexity and confusion. Far be it from God to do this! For he has preserved his books, the Torah and Gospel century after century, free from change and error. He has kept them as a beacon of light, guiding all who stray.

It is impossible to have unanimity for a plot to alter the Bible (the Torah and Gospel). For a start, the Christian religion and Judaism had already spread in the East and West, in Syria, Turkey, Egypt, Ethiopia, India and Europe. The Bible, especially the Gospel, was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek into the languages of all the nations, such as Arabic, Armenian, Amharic (Ethiopian), Coptic and Latin. Is it reasonable to suppose that all these multitudes should come together and agree on a scheme to alter their book, considering their differences of language and creed, especially as there were numerous denominations of Christians, each vying with the other for orthodoxy?

Doubtless, the Muslims' claim that the Bible has been changed is a charge without proof. Otherwise, where are the texts which have been altered. Which texts are they, what were they originally, and what was the purpose in changing them? If there is no answer to these questions, and it is clear that is so, I ask them: "How does someone dare to make such an allegation? The prudent scholar does not embark on such a scheme without first having something to support his allegation." The Gospel had been translated into Arabic before the appearance of Islam, for the benefit of those Arab tribes who were Christianised, such as: Himyar, Ghassan, Rabiya and the people of Nijran, Heera and others. How else would they have understood Christianity? These facts are corroborated in the book "al-Aghanee" (The Songs), for it relates that Waraka Bin Nawfal (the most famous Arab writer of Muhammad's time) wrote this book, copying in it whatever he desired of the Arabic Gospel. Now, if the Gospel had been

subsequently changed, Muslims would have kept the original, to substantiate their case.

As for the Jews, their zeal in preserving their book is proverbial. They know the exact number of words and letters it contains, as all who have associated with their leaders know. Thus, the Holy Bible in its entirety is free from alteration and change will never overtake it, as is witnessed by common sense and historic transmission.

If books proliferate, do not allow truth to become clouded; investigate, search and compare. Thus you will arrive at the facts. For the book which condemns lusts and selfish inclinations, which transforms men's evil hearts, conforms to God's pure attributes, sustains a civilised life, commands love of one's enemies, frowns on repaying evil and regards all sons of Adam as brethren, is most indeed The Book, given by the Creator of all to be observed by his creatures everywhere.

Part Three

Historical Evidence

The timelessness of the Bible (Torah and Gospel) and its authenticity is indisputable. No other book in the universe is so well-attested. Since history is the fairest witness and the truest proof, I have decided to use it in our discussion to uncover and reveal the truth indubitably.

It is obvious that the Bible contains a large number of prophecies, most of which have been fulfilled. The remainder will come to pass in their time. God, through his noble prophets, foretold the occurrence of numerous events such as the rise of certain kings and the fall of others, the destruction of great cities and the extinction of glorious and haughty nations which never dreamed of their coming destruction.

For instance, the prophet Nahum prophesied clearly the destruction of Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrians. This was a great metropolis whose walls were 100 feet high, with a perimeter of 60 miles, having 1500 towers, which, at the height of its grandeur, rose to 200 feet. This prophecy was literally fulfilled.

Isaiah and Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Babylon, the capital of the Chaldeans, at the height of its splendour, and prosperity. In less than 160 years from the date of the prophecy the great Babylon had fallen according to the word of the prophets. The details of its downfall as described by the historians Herodotus and Xenophon agree remarkably with what the prophets described.

Among the other biblical prophecies is the one by Ezekiel about the city of Tyre, where we see the following facts which history witnessed and recorded for us:

In Ezekiel 26:8 we read that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city of Tyre. In verse 3, the prophet says that many nations would rise against it, in verse 4, that it would become a barren rock and in verse 5, that fishermen would cast their

nets on its site. In verse 12, it is prophesied that its remains would be cast into the sea, in verse 14, that it would never rise again and verse 21 says that its disappearance is determined and certain.

Three years after Ezekiel's prophecy the King of Babylon besieged Tyre for 13 years until it surrendered on his terms (585-573 BC). When he finally stormed it, he discovered that its inhabitants had fled by sea to a new island half a mile from the city. He then razed it to the ground, as the prophet Ezekiel foretold in chapter 26, verse 8.

Then came Alexander the Great, who surrounded the rebellious new city, employing the ruins of the old city to create a 60 meter wide causeway. He conquered it as Ezekiel had prophesied in chapter 26:3,12, and it became a barren rock again as the prophecy describes it in verses 4 and 5.

Although the history of Tyre did not finally end after Alexander's horrendous campaign, the successive attacks by Antigones (314 BC) followed by Ptolemais Philadelphus (285-247 BC) extinguished its trade and its importance as a maritime power. Later, in the year 1321 AD, the Muslims occupied and completely destroyed it. It became, in the words of the Arab traveller Ibn Batuta, "a byword...now a complete ruin," exactly as the prophecy had stated in chapter 26, verse 14.

In his day, Ezekiel looked at Tyre and saw a great city, at the height of its splendour, so that to those who heard the words of his prophecy and beheld the wealth and glory of the powerful city, it sounded like hallucinations. According to human wisdom, the likelihood of his prophecies coming true within seven years on the basis of pure chance were one in 750 million. And yet all his prophecies came to pass in detail!

"Therefore thus says the Lord God: `Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock.'" (Ezekiel 26:3,4).

Part Four

Archaeological Evidence

If history encounters a challenge to its witness, the evidence of archaeology (antiquities) cannot be challenged.

The Scriptures have been, and still are, the target of critics and the object of the attacks of atheists and infidels. It is contrary to their sensuous desires, their naive views and their destructive philosophies. Hence, many of them have turned to the remains of antiquity in Palestine, Babylon, Assyria and Egypt, in the hope of finding, if possible, something to discredit inspired Scriptures. They want to prove

to the world that the Bible is a mixture of distorted sayings and traditions. However, God has thwarted their intentions; their arrows have missed the mark and their hopes have been dashed. For the testimony of these archaeological finds was in complete harmony with the inspired books, even though the writers of these inscriptions themselves were pagans.

When our Muslim brethren found that the books of the Torah and Gospel were contrary to the fundamental Qur'anic teachings, they levelled at them the charge of corruption, claiming they were erroneous. But their charge lacked proper evidence. Since the witness of archaeology has convinced many atheistic enquirers, I decided to refer to some of these antiquities in the hope that it would help our Muslim brethren as it helped others before.

The criticism of infidels and their disbelief of the Bible can be traced to two factors. Firstly, to the idea that writing was either unknown or else little used in Palestine until just before the Babylonian Exile (around 540 BC). Consequently, they think it is unlikely that Moses or others used writing at the time. Secondly, to the belief that the Torah highly exaggerated the level of civilisation in the ancient Near East in contrast with the contemporary historians. But recent discoveries have come out in favour of the biblical accounts, depicting clearly the advanced civilisations of Egypt, Babylon and Assyria. Sennacherib, Tiglath Pileser and Nebuchadnezzar are portrayed to us through their chronicles, their culture and the battles they engaged in. We can now see for ourselves the form of the letters used by Isaiah, Jeremiah and even Moses in their writings. Thus the stones have spoken out in support of God's declarations. These antiquities have established the fact that the art of writing had been perfected in the days of Ezekiel, Moses and Abraham, in fact since 2234 BC, to a level similar to what we have today.

I shall now proceed to mention the important subjects and great events mentioned in the Torah which have been corroborated, as you will see, by ancient antiquities.

The original Assyrian tablets exhibited today in the British Museum confirm the creation story (mentioned at the beginning of the Torah) in detail, in an amazing way. If not for the need for brevity I would have translated it to the reader. While this account has elements of legend in it, the truth shows through. It confirms the existence of a single human pair, for it states, "that there be two, created by the Lord of the noble face." In the same museum one can see a picture on an ancient Babylonian column, depicting our first parents, with the tree between them and the snake behind Eve. This agrees exactly with the account of the Fall in the first chapter of the Torah.

Formerly, unbelieving scholars have regarded the biblical story of the Flood as mere myth, one of the ancients' legends. They supposed it could not bear the scholar's scrutiny; rigorous enquiry would prove it to be a forgery. However, after lengthy investigations, they ended by losing their case when later archaeological finds exposed their glaring errors. They confessed that the Flood was a fact, and acknowledged the truth. Notable among them were the geologists, for among the

finds in Assyria were tablets, now in the British Museum, bearing an inscription of how an ark was built, how men and all kinds of animals were preserved, how rains covered the face of the earth (inhabited by living beings) destroying men and beasts, with all the details of the Flood story.

In every continent of the world large quantities of sea fossils have been discovered, either concentrated or scattered in solid layers, on mountains and in deep valleys. Some of them are specific to certain seas. There are remains of fish and marine plants in fossil form embedded in mountain strata. Anyone interested can inspect these since they are on display in most museums. All this proves the truth of the Biblical account of the Flood. Otherwise, how could those shells and fossils of fish and plants have reached these remote places where they are not native?

A certain Mr. Smith came across a tablet in the ruins of Nineveh, which is now in the British Museum. On it there is an account of the confusion of tongues and the building of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). The same man found a tablet in the ruins of Assyria relating the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone as the Bible mentions in Genesis 19:24. These finds corroborate the account of the raid on Canaan by Chedorlaomer King of Elam and his allies. Among them was Amrafel King of Shinar and Southern Babylon, referred to in Genesis chapter 14.

The historians Plutarch and Herodotus denied the existence and use of wine in Egypt in the time of the prophet Moses' writings. However, we now know from the discoveries of Egyptian archaeology that these historians were wrong in their assumption and that Moses, the lawgiver, was right. In some Egyptian tombs there are pictures showing the process of wine-making, from the culture of the vine, to crushing the grapes, to extracting the juice and storing it in vessels. Some bottles were found with the word ERB which means wine. The ruins also give proof of the famine in Joseph's day, mentioned in the Torah (Genesis 41:30).

Egyptian inscriptions have shown that Ramses the Great employed foreigners in the construction of the two towns of Pithom and Ramses. This is in agreement with Exodus 1:11, and archaeologists discovered in a tomb in Thebes mention of the Israelites and their slavery and conscription in public works.

Among the silent witnesses to the truth of the Bible is a piece of marble, known among the antiquarians as the Moabite Stone. A priest by the name of Augustus Klein found it. He was of German origin and lived in Palestine for a long time, serving 20 years in Cairo as Secretary for the English Church Mission. He was a famous scholar and knew several languages. The discovery was made in Transjordan, in what was ancient Moab, and dates back to 890 BC. At present it is in the Louvre Museum in Paris. The stone bears an inscription, consisting of 30 lines of Phoenician writing which tells of the wars between Misha, King of Moab, and Omri, King of Israel, and the Edomites as we find it in the book of 2 Kings 3:4-27. It also mentions other precise details which are in accord with the Bible, but space prevents us from giving them.

Furthermore, the discovery of the Siloam inscriptions in Jerusalem confirm the accuracy of what we read in 2 Kings 20:20, 2 Chronicles 32:30 and Isaiah 22:9,11, to the effect that Hezekiah stopped the higher source of the Gihon Spring, running it underground to the western flank of the City of David.

In the ruins of Nineveh a cylinder was found bearing a record of the war between Sargon, King of Assyria in 722 BC and Ashuri, King of Ashdod, in the reign of Hezekiah (Isaiah 2:1). This cylinder is now in London.

Another hexagonal column was found with an account of the siege of Jerusalem. It is also in London. Sennacherib, King of Assyria, besieged it in 705 BC, as related in 2 Kings 18:13-16.

We have, in the numerous ancient manuscripts of the Bible, irrefutable testimony to the veracity of the Book. These are to be found in the foremost libraries and museums in Europe. They are written on leather parchment in the original Greek language of the Gospel as well as other languages. Some of them consist of the Torah and the Gospel in their entirety. Others are of certain books of the Bible. The following are some of these manuscripts:

I. "Codex Vaticanus" (Vatican Manuscript) - You will find this in the Vatican in Rome. It was written approximately 250 years before the Hijra.

II. "Codex Sinaiticus" (Sinaitic Manuscript) - Named after Mount Sinai where it was found. It is now in the British Museum in London and consists of the Torah and the Gospel. It was penned approximately 200 years before the Hijra.

III. "Codex Alexandrinus" (Alexandria Manuscript) - This document is in the Treasure Room of the British Museum in London. It was also written approximately 200 years before the Hijra, and contains the Torah and the Gospel.

IV. "Codex Ephraemi" (Ephraim Manuscript) - It is now in Paris and was written approximately 150 years before the Hijra and contains the Gospel.

Furthermore, the following story made headlines in the year 1948 and was considered among the most momentous of historical events. A certain Muhammad al-Deeb Badawi of the Taamirahs was shepherding his flock near the Dead Sea. When one sheep climbed the mountain side he threw a stone at it. Hearing the sound of smashed pottery he threw another stone. Then he climbed the mountain and stepped cautiously through a hole into a cave, thinking he would find treasure. In fact he found it; however, it was not just for himself and his tribe but for the world at large!

This discovery consists of a collection of bundles of the Holy Scriptures, among them the Book of the prophet Isaiah, one of the biblical books which dates back 700 years before Christ. It came as an eloquent testimony to the accuracy of the Bible since it agreed with the copies in circulation today. Thus, it refuted the

charges that the Book has been corrupted, and challenged and exposed the false accusations. These scrolls are now known as "Qumran" or the "Dead Sea Scrolls."

Since the discovery of this precious storehouse, it has become abundantly clear that the copying and transmission of God's Holy Book is living proof of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church of Christ - the repository of God's mysteries. Christians possess numerous other manuscripts, some written before Islam, others contemporary to it. We have not listed these for the sake of brevity. If we compare the copies of the Scriptures in more than 300 languages in the hands of Jews and Christians today with those ancient manuscripts, we shall find a great degree of harmony between them. They are there for everyone to examine!

SECOND DISCOURSE

Has the Qur'an Abrogated the Torah and Gospel?

When the Muslim steed fails in the arena of discussion, lacking proof and evidence, having to accept the proposition that the Torah and Gospel are free from corruption and change, as well as being sent down from an All-wise God, to be guidance and light to all men, he resorts to the charge that the Qur'an has abrogated the Torah and Gospel. However, this is an unsupported charge and a grave slander, because the Qur'an itself does not claim this. On the contrary, it proclaimed over every head, in clear Arabic, that it was sent down confirming the Torah and Gospel and keeping watch over them, as you will see from the following verses:

"And believe in that I have sent down, confirming that which is with you" (al-Baqara 2:38).

"Confirming what was before it" (al-Baqara 2:91).

"Then there shall come to you a Messenger confirming what is with you" (Al Imran 3:75).

"He has sent down upon thee the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it" (Al Imran 3:2).

"You who have been given the Book, believe in what We have sent down, confirming what is with you" (al-Nisa' 4:50).

"This Qur'an could not have been forged apart from God; but it is a confirmation of what is before it, and a distinguishing of the Book" (Yunis 10:38).

"And We have sent down to thee the Book with the truth, confirming the Book that was before it, and assuring it" (al-Ma'ida 5:52).

"Say: People of the Book, you do not stand on anything, until you perform the Torah and the Gospel" (al-Ma'ida 5:72).

The prudent will not embark on a charge, unless he is confident that he is able to prove it by a thousand proofs. Some of our Muslim brethren approach this matter without thought. If we tell them: "Produce your evidence if you are truthful," they bring us empty and feeble reasons such as: "The later abrogates the earlier." In other words, the Qur'an came after the Torah and Gospel, therefore it abrogates them! Others say that, since the Qur'an contains the Torah and Gospel, we no longer need them. I don't think, with due respect to the reader's intelligence, that I need to challenge such feeble "evidences," especially since the Qur'an itself has spared me this effort. The previous seven verses, like tens of others, demonstrate unequivocally that the Qur'an came attesting to the veracity of the Torah and Gospel, confirming them and watching over them as a guardian and preserver. It never claimed that it was sent to abrogate their precepts and there is no trace in the Qur'an of such a claim; indeed, one understands the opposite, for, in addition to confirming and attesting them, it exhorts the Jews and Christians openly, saying: "People of the Book, you do not stand on anything until you perform the Torah and the Gospel."

Had the idea of abrogation been true, we would not have seen Muhammad urging the Jews and Christians to keep the commandments of the Torah and Gospel. Also, we would not have seen him asking the Muslims to believe in them. Nowhere does the Qur'an state that it contains the Torah and Gospel, so that the Muslim could say that he has no need of them. In fact, the Qur'an does state the contrary, as one can see in al-Shu'ara' 26:193-196:

"Brought down by the Faithful Spirit upon thy heart, that thou mayest be one of the warners, in a clear, Arabic tongue. Truly it is in the Scriptures of the ancients (the Torah and Gospel)."

So, the last quotation confirms that the Torah and Gospel contain the Qur'an, "truly it is in the Scriptures of the ancients." How strange it is that our Muslim friends allege that the Qur'an encompasses them, without giving proof.

Even assuming that the Qur'an failed to affirm the Torah and Gospel, one cannot argue from silence that it has abrogated them and that they are no longer needed. God be thanked, it did no such thing, but instead, sought to establish its own words on their authority and placed itself alongside the Torah and Gospel, "Say: `Bring a Book from God that gives better guidance than these (the Qur'an and the Bible), and follow it, if you speak truly'" (al-Qasas 28:49). And many a time the Qur'an tried to convince the Arabs of the truthfulness of the Bible's message and how badly they needed it, by mentioning that the Torah and Gospel came down in foreign languages to a foreign nation, "and a guide to every people" (al-Ra'd 13:8). And since the Arabs could not understand those languages, the Qur'an says that God sent down the Qur'an, in the same way (as the Torah and Gospel) in your own language, in a clear Arabic tongue: "Yet before it was the Book of Moses for a model and a mercy; and this is a Book

confirming, in Arabic tongue, to warn the evildoers, and good tidings to the good-doers" (al-Ahqaf 46:11).

THIRD DISCOURSE

All Have Sinned; Even the Prophets!

God created man pure, and made for him a happy home in the Garden of Eden. There was nothing there to distract him from worship. However, he disobeyed the word of his Lord, eating of the forbidden fruit. Thus he lost everything. Adam was a representative of his descendants, and by his rebellion he broke the covenant that God made with him. His descendants have ever since regretted this representation because of its consequence. Adam responded to the temptation and fell into sin. Since we humans are his offspring, we have inherited this weakness and are born with the same inclinations, according to the laws of heredity. However, we are not punished for his sin; for we too have been disobedient, even though we know of God's disapproval. We have committed actual sins just as he did. The following statement confirms this: "Adam fell, and so his offspring fell; Adam forgot and ate of the tree, and his offspring forgot; Adam sinned and his offspring sinned." It is attributed to Tarmathi and others and is a fair and truthful statement. In short, Adam's representation of his descendants is an indubitable reality among Muslim scholars. The Sheikh Muhyi Ed Din Ibn El Araby has written an article on this subject in chapter 305 of his book.

If Adam, whom God created pure, disobeyed his Lord's commands, how much more can be said of his weak descendants? Then we find that all have sinned and come short of God's glory and mercy.

Both history and experience teach us that man's heart is wicked and these hearts of ours tell us that: "Surely the soul of man incites to evil" (Yusuf 12:53). Whenever it finds a way to satisfy its lusts, it follows it, unless it has a deterrent from its Creator. Although we know that sin and wickedness are forbidden, we violate our conscience, submit to our corrupt natures and commit what is forbidden. Have you not noticed that the drunkard, though he knows what harm his habit does to his health, livelihood and religion, still does it? He is drawn by forces within him; likewise the fornicator, thief and slanderer.

Our personal experience teaches us that we have leanings and passions within us which are reprehensible. These are the result of the corruption of human nature, and they fight our consciences and oppose our good intentions. Thus we find ourselves captives, doing that which is contrary to the will of our Creator God.

We do not know anyone who has no faults. No human has ever claimed to be absolutely pure except Jesus. We will discuss this later on in this book.

The following verse points to the fact that all men are corrupt when it says, "Surely the soul of man incites to evil" (Yusuf 12:53). Al-Razi has commented, "The soul of man incites to evil: in other words, it leans to wickedness, is desirous of rebellion and has a nature which craves pleasures. Since attraction to the material world is predominant, and desire to rise to the higher world rare, it was judged to have incited us to evil" (al-Razi's words). What is also clear is that the definite article "the" refers here to the species, mankind. Therefore, we are permitted to say that every soul incites to evil. The form (la-ammara in Arabic) rendered "surely" is a form of emphasis or exaggeration by the use of "lam". It is certain then, that every man's soul incites him to wickedness and has a strong desire to commit disobedience.

Another proof that all have sinned is the following verse: "Not one of you there is, but he shall go down to it; that for thy Lord is a thing decreed, determined. Then We shall deliver those that were godfearing; and the evildoers We shall leave there, hobbling on their knees" (Maryam 19:72,73). Al-Razi said, "One cannot say, 'then we shall deliver etc.,' unless all were destined to go down to it (the fire)." Information on this subject points in the same direction. When Jaber was asked about this verse he said, "I heard God's Prophet... saying that 'al-worood', going down to it means entering, and everyone, without exception, whether he is good or evil, will enter it." Jalal Ed Din interprets the word "wariduha" (shall go down to it) by entering and being burnt. al-Razi confirms this in his exposition of the verse "he whose scales are heavy" (al-A`raf 7:7), "But the sins of the believer will be forgiven."

Does not this clearly show that everyone commits sins, and some will be punished for a while, whereas others will stay in the fire eternally? Another proof of the fact that all have sinned is the verse, "Whoso blinds himself to the Remembrance of the All-merciful, to him We assign a Satan for comrade" (al-Zukhruf 43:35). Since the remembrance of God's name is perpetually beyond man's power, it is not surprising that Satan is in continuous battle with every man. When Muhammad was asked which fight (jihad) is the better he replied, "Your struggle with your passions." This fight has been named the "supreme struggle". It has also been said, "Your worst enemy is yourself, which is within you." From this one sees the corruption of nature and the evil which lurks in the heart and the inclination to sin in ways both great and small.

The truth of the matter is that mankind is corrupt and sinful; and but for the grace of God and his mercy not one would be justified. Muslims have regarded it a grave sin to consider oneself safe from God's wrath. We have thus concluded with irrefutable proofs that everyone has sinned. Therefore they are in need of Christ's sacrifice to atone for their sins. Otherwise they are sent to hell to satisfy God's justice. Since they have this inherited weakness and leaning to sin, inherited from their father Adam, they also need the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit, to purify their souls. This is needed to remove evil inclinations bit by bit and to transform twisted thoughts and corrupt emotions. This is what the Bible calls the New Birth or the Second Birth.

Christians believe that according to the Bible all have sinned, and corruption has overtaken the whole human race. Since the prophets are human they too are sinners. They also believe that these prophets and apostles, whom God chose to warn men and deliver his message, were preserved from error in their task, whether the message was spoken or written. Thus God kept them from forgetting or erring, guiding their efforts by his Holy Spirit and inspiring them in what they should say to men. However, they (prophets and apostles) were not immune to sin in their actions and normal behaviour, thus indicating the inherent weakness of human nature and establishing the fact that sinlessness and perfection are God's alone, the Almighty and Glorious One.

Moreover, sin deserves God's wrath and the fires of hell, whether that sin is great or small. So, although murder is different from stealing or cursing, all merit the same punishment from God, because they each constitute an offence and a disobedience. This fact is supported by many verses in the Torah and Gospel, for example, "They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one" (Romans 3:12), and, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). In the Hadith (Tradition) we find this confirmed; here is its text: "If anyone extorts another's due with his right hand, God must consign him to the fire and deny him paradise." A man said, "Oh Prophet of God, even if it is a small matter?" He replied, "Even if it is a rod of arak wood."

Let us now come to the sins of the prophets. Muslims have disagreed among themselves as to the sinlessness of the prophets. Some have said that they were absolutely sinless. Others have said that they sinned as children but when they attained adulthood they became sinless. Yet others have restricted their sinlessness to their role in delivering their messages, but admitted that they could sin in other respects. This last view is the one espoused by the late Sheikh Mohammad Ado, although the Qur'an clearly indicates that most of the prophets have committed transgressions, not just minor but also major sins, according to their admissions, as you will see presently.

Muslim theologians have differentiated between two kinds of sins, major and minor. God forgives the minor ones but not the major. In their opinion there are 17 major sins:

- 1) infidelity
- 2) persistence in committing minor sins
- 3) despairing of God's mercy
- 4) considering oneself safe from God's wrath
- 5) false witness (perjury)
- 6) defaming a Muslim
- 7) swearing falsely
- 8) magic
- 9) drinking alcohol
- 10) extorting the money of orphans
- 11) usury

- 12) adultery or fornication
- 13) sodomy or the like
- 14) stealing
- 15) murder
- 16) fleeing in battle from infidels
- 17) disobedience to parents.

Thus, in their judgement, every believer who has committed any of these offences and has not repented will be punished in the fires of hell. Anything else is considered minor.

Adam sinned, as one can conclude from Sura Ta Ha 20:119: "Adam disobeyed his Lord, and so he erred." Expositors have said that he disobeyed his Lord by eating of the tree, "...but draw not nigh this tree, lest you be evildoers" (al-Baqara 2:33). Baidawi said, "He strayed from what was required and went wrong in seeking immortality by eating of the tree; or in what he was commanded or from the right course by being deceived by the enemy." Al-Razi admitted that Adam sinned, but he claimed that it happened before his prophethood. He went on to say that he disobeyed and erred but only in respect to eating from the tree. Since he repented of it, this transgression will not be counted against him. However, al-Razi has not confirmed to us that sin occurred before the call, but only that he was forgiven, since he repented. We agree with him in this last phrase, but this does not deny that he disobeyed and erred from the path.

Furthermore, disobedience is among the grave sins, as we find expressed in this verse, "And whoso rebels against God and His Messenger, for him there awaits the Fire of Gehenna" (al-Jinn 72:24). And by saying, "...and turned again unto him, and He guided him" (Ta Ha 20:120), it shows that Adam disobeyed and then repented. Repentance is being sorry for one's sin, confessing it and determining not to repeat it. And repentance can only be for disobedience, for Adam himself repented of his disobedience in his words, "They said, 'Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if Thou dost not forgive us, and have mercy upon us, we shall surely be among the lost'" (al-A`raf 7:22).

Here we have Adam, one of the foremost prophets, obeying Satan, listening to him, doubting his sublime Lord and coveting immortality. In so doing, he sinned and this sin is considered among the grave ones.

Noah sinned, as one can see from Sura Nuh 71:24-29, "Increase Thou not the evildoers save in error!" And Noah said, "My Lord, leave not upon the earth of the unbelievers even one." When it was clear he had sinned, he said: "My Lord, forgive me." It follows that the plea to be forgiven comes from a sense of having committed a major sin. However, commentators try to soften this verse. The meaning, though, can only be as we have stated.

Abraham sinned as we find written in Sura al-An`am 6:76, "When night outspread over him he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set he said, 'I love not the setters.' When he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord.' But

when it set he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people who have gone astray.'" This happened to him when he saw the sun. If he said this because he believed it, then he was an idolater; otherwise, he was lying. In either case, these are grave sins.

So we find in Sura Ibrahim 14:42, "Our Lord, forgive Thou me and my parents, and the believers, upon the day when the reckoning shall come to pass." Here Abraham plainly asks forgiveness for himself, his parents and the believers. Also in al-Baqara 2:266, "And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how Thou wilt give life to the dead,' He said, 'Why, dost thou not believe?' 'Yes,' he said, 'but that my heart may be at rest.'"

Here we find Abraham doubting the power of God, and this constitutes a grave sin. In the Hadith we read, "We are more inclined to doubt than Abraham."

In al-Anbiya' 21:64, we read that Abraham said, "No; it was this great one of them that did it." Abraham had broken the idols, and when asked, he lied, saying that the large idol had smashed the small ones. According to Abi Huraira, the Prophet of God stated that Abraham only lied three times, two lies of which concerned the person of God. When he said: "I am ill," "this great one (the idol) did it," and "Sarah is my sister," when the giant wanted to approach her (quoted by Bukhari and Muslim).

Moses sinned as we find in al-Qasas 28:14,15: "And he entered the city, at a time when its people were unheeding, and found there two men fighting; the one was of his own party, and the other was of his enemies. Then the one that was of his party cried to him to aid him against the other that was of his enemies; so Moses struck him, dispatched him, and said, 'This is Satan's doing; he is surely an enemy misleading, manifest.' He said, 'My Lord I have wronged myself. Forgive me!' So God forgave him, for He is the All-forgiving, the All-compassionate." Also in al-Shu'ara' 26:19, "...Said he, 'Indeed I did it then, being one of those that stray.' And when Moses returned to his people, angry and sorrowful, he said, 'Vilely have you done in my place, after me; what, have you outstripped your Lord's commandment?' And he cast down the Tablets, and laid hold of his brother's head (Aaron) dragging him to him. He said, 'O my Lord, forgive me and my brother and enter us into Thy mercy; Thou art the most merciful of the merciful.'"

It is evident from these verses that Moses committed murder and felt that this was a grave sin. So he confessed it and pleaded forgiveness. Likewise, he sinned when he was angry and threw the stone tablets and insulted his brother. When he became aware of his sin, he asked forgiveness for himself and his brother. As for Aaron's sin, it was that he made the golden calf for the Israelites to worship.

Joseph sinned as we read in Sura Yusuf 12:24, because of his affair with the wife of Potiphar, the head of Pharaoh's army, "For she desired him; and he would

have taken her, but that he saw the proof of his Lord. So was it, that We might turn away from him evil and abomination; he was one of Our devoted servants."

David sinned, as we find in Sura Sad 38:23,24, "And David thought that We had only tried him; therefore he sought forgiveness of his Lord, and he fell down, bowing, and he repented. Accordingly We forgave him that, and he has a near place in Our presence and a fair resort." He sinned by committing a murder and adultery as described in detail in the Torah in 2 Samuel 11,12. However, when he felt that he had committed a crime he asked forgiveness of God and was forgiven. All this is clearly stated in the Torah, which would spare you the lengthy and conflicting sayings of the commentators. Recurring stories prove that David fell into sin and reveal his penitence and great sorrow and the forgiveness he obtained, as was mentioned by Ibn Malek, Ibn Abbas, Wahb Ibn Munabbih and others.

Solomon sinned as we see from Sura Sad 38:30-32: "When in the evening were presented to him the standing steeds, he said, 'Lo, I have loved the love of good things better than the remembrance of my Lord, until the sun was hidden behind the veil. Return them to me!' And he began to stroke their shanks and necks. Certainly We tried Solomon, and We cast upon his throne a mere body; then he repented. He said, 'My Lord, forgive me, and give me a kingdom such as may not fall to another's lot after me.'" Expositors such as the al-Kashaf, al-Razi and others have interpreted these verses in quite divergent ways, quoting numerous accounts to prove their case. However, the upshot is that horses diverted him from the remembrance of God and Prayer. They even said that he finally slaughtered them.

Verses 33 and 34 of Sura Sad reveal that Solomon actually sinned. Otherwise why would he ask forgiveness, unless he felt his guilt?

Jonah (Yunis) sinned, as we find in al-Saffat 37:139-144, "Jonah too was one of the Envoys; when he ran away to the laden ship and cast lots, and was of the rebutted, then the whale swallowed him down, and he was blameworthy. Now had he not been of those that glorify God, he would have tarried in its belly until the day they shall be raised." The verb "tarried" indicates that Jonah disobeyed his Lord and the strange thing is that he disobeyed in spite of being "one of the Envoys." What proves this is his saying, "he is blameworthy." Further confirmation comes in the words, that for this disobedience he deserved to remain in the whale's belly "until the day they shall be raised," except that he was of "those that glorify God" (that is, of those who ask forgiveness). Otherwise what would be the significance of "glorify" in this context?

Muhammad sinned, as can be inferred from al-Fath 48:2, "that God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sins, and complete His blessing upon thee, and guide thee on a straight path," and from Sura Muhammad 47:21, "and ask forgiveness for thy sin, and for the believers, men and women," and from al-Mu'minun 23:57, "And ask forgiveness for thy sin," and from al-Nisa' 4:106, "Surely We have sent down to thee the Book with the truth, so that thou mayest judge between the people by that God has shown thee. So be not advocate for

the traitors; and pray forgiveness of God; surely God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate."

The first verse shows that Muhammad sinned even before this saying and that he would sin thereafter. If, like al-Razi, al-Kashaf and others, one says that he is seeking forgiveness for his people, the second verse refutes this and demonstrates that what is required of him is to ask forgiveness for his sin first, then for the sins of believers both male and female.

Some Muslim scholars have said that the merits of the pious are the evils of God's "near ones" (muqarrabin). If the pious man disobeys God in small matters God will reckon it to him among the grave sins. Often, what he does not regard as sin is counted against him as such until he asks forgiveness for it. They say that this is what happened to Muhammad. What they forget is that God is the speaker in this verse, according to their belief, when he says, "and ask forgiveness (Muhammad) for thy sin, and for the believers, men and women." Does God imagine to be sin what in fact is not, and require him to ask forgiveness for it?

From al-Ahzab 33:37, "When thou saidst to him whom God had blessed and thou hadst favoured, 'Keep thy wife to thyself, and fear God, and thou wast concealing within thyself what God should reveal, fearing other men; and God has better right for thee to fear Him. So when Zaid had accomplished what he would of her, then We gave her in marriage to thee, so that there should not be any fault in the believers, touching the wives of their adopted sons, when they have accomplished what they would of them; and God's commandment must be performed.'"

The story is that Muhammad freed his slave Zaid and adopted him as son after he believed, and married him to a noble woman called Zaina. But sometime later he indicated to her his attachment with the remark, "Praise be to the one who changes the hearts." Zainab then mentioned this to her husband. He understood Muhammad's intentions. Approaching him, as though by his own accord he said, "I wish to leave my woman companion." Muhammad appeared to ignore him and said, "What's the matter with you? Do you suspect her?" He replied, "No, except that owing to her nobility she lords it over me." He then told him, "Keep thy wife to thyself." (See what al-Kashaf said in commenting on this verse; page 213, second volume, and what Baidawi has said).

Here he is seen as concealing in himself what God was revealing. He tried to make it appear to men that he did not marry Zaid's wife except in obedience to God's command. You can see from the texts that Muhammad did wrong in concealing his affection for Zainab and by pretending something that was not in his heart. Therefore he was rebuked in the words, "concealing within thyself what God should reveal."

In his exposition of this verse al-Razi says, "In that you wanted to marry Zainab." But al-Razi retracts by saying, "He feared God and was afraid of men, and so God rebuked him," for he said, "God has a better right for thee to fear Him."

Therefore Muhammad sinned in this manner also, and feared what he should not have feared.

We read in al-Isra' 17:76, "And had We not confirmed thee surely thou wert near in inclining unto them a very little." Al-Razi writes, after al-Zajjaj: "Had We not confirmed thee, meaning in the truth, by our protection, you were "near to inclining" to them, that is to lean towards them "a very little," that is a little inclination. Qatada remarked that when this verse descended, the Prophet said, "Oh God, do not leave me to myself (even a moment or `for the twinkling of an eye')." Does this verse not show that Muhammad sinned, or at least that he was not immune from sin, for he said "do not leave me to myself for the twinkling of an eye."

In the sayings of Muslim and Bukhari they attribute to Muhammad this statement, "None of you will enter heaven except by God's mercy." One said, "not even you, Oh Prophet of God," he said, "Not even me, except that God encompass me with His grace." Of Abu Huraira he stated that he heard the Prophet say, "Surely I'll ask God's forgiveness and repent seventy times daily," and in some accounts more than seventy. It is said of Ibnat Khaled and Abu Huraira - "The Prophet of God would say, `Oh God, I take refuge in you from the torment of the grave and the torment of the fire'" (Bukhari, Part One).

It is absolutely clear from the foregoing passages to those who are honest that our Father Adam fell into disobedience, and the thoughts of his heart became corrupt, and he started to incline to evil. Also, we his descendants have naturally inherited from him this corruption and tendency to sin. This has also been confirmed to us from personal experience.

We have seen that the great prophets have committed transgressions, even Muhammad the Prophet of the Muslims. So all men everywhere are in need of a Saviour from the torment prepared for all who transgress God's laws and commit sins. They need a spotless redemption in order to redeem their souls and demonstrate God's justice and mercy. This thing can be fulfilled only by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, his death as a sacrifice for mankind, so that whoever believes in him will have his sins forgiven by God and made clean by his Holy Spirit. Thus he will receive eternal life and everlasting bliss.

I do not understand why our Muslim brethren try to exonerate the prophets from the stain of sin, contrary to the declarations of every book considered to be revealed (munzal). This is especially so, since none of the prophets ever claimed this sinlessness but admitted that they were weak and sinful. Truly God has sent down the books and recorded the creeds according to his supreme wisdom. He is all-wise in his works, and all-knowing of the needs of mankind.

FOURTH DISCOURSE

Introduction

Both Islamic and civil law prescribe that the punishment for transgression or crime shall be severe or mild in proportion to the one sinned against. For instance, if a student at school insults his fellow pupil, he is punished lightly, whereas if he insults his teacher he would be expelled from school. In legislative terms, if someone reviles his equal it is considered an offence, but if he insults the judge his punishment would be greater. However, if he insults the king his sentence would be greater still. But if he should sin against God, who is unsurpassed in greatness and holiness, how much more would be his punishment! Doubtless he would be condemned to painful endless torment.

God is just, so he cannot overlook the slightest offence. Therefore we have to admit that those who sin against God, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) will have to stay forever in the fire as a punishment for them. Therefore when this takes place, where is the mercy of God? And if Allah has mercy on those sinners, forgives them and does not punish them, then where is his righteousness? For this reason he arranged a means of reconciling his righteousness and his mercy.

Part One

God's Purpose in the Crucifixion:

How This Reconciliation was Accomplished

Adam disobeyed his Lord (that is, he sinned) and was expelled from Eden (Genesis 3). This is echoed in al-Baqara 2:34, "Then Satan caused them to slip therefrom and brought them out of that they were in." He thus deserved eternal death. Evil desires grew in him, and the tendency to commit sin took root in his heart. His descendants also inherited these tendencies and so they followed in their father's footsteps. The earth became full of evil, and men's destruction became inevitable so as to satisfy God's justice, since they could not find a way to reform and return to their original state: the state of purity and holiness which befits heaven, where only the pure can enter. Furthermore, God cannot deviate from his own laws, because his justice demands that the sinner pay with his life and that justice run its course. "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezekiel 18:20). If the legislator does not enforce his own laws, then there is no such thing as justice left!

Linguistically, justice is the opposite of injustice and means fairness, correction, requital. Mercy, linguistically, signifies tenderness of heart, graciousness, benevolence and forgiveness. Others have said it is to forgo punishing one who deserves it. Since God is merciful, he wanted to show mercy to man and save him from the fires of punishment (albeit, without ignoring justice). Therefore he has ordained the work of redemption from eternity. At first it started with blood sacrifices, which are pivotal to the Mosaic Law. The sons of Adam offered

sacrifices even before the written Law was sent down. Those coming after them did the same until the Law was given to Moses, God's spokesman, where the subject is given in detail. In it we see how God, to impress on men the ugliness of sin and its painful consequences, proceeded to teach them as children. He divided the animals into "clean" and "unclean" and taught them the principle, "And according to the law almost all things are purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Thus he instructed the sinner to offer as a sacrifice for his sin a clean animal, in whom was no blemish. He was to slay it and place it on the fire to remind him that the sinner deserved to be put to death. However, by means of the substitute sacrifice he could obtain forgiveness. All these sacrifices pointed to Christ's great sacrifice, since they could never in themselves redeem one man because of their inferior value.

When the time came, God sent his Word, Christ, who took on him human form and became man like us. He shared many things with us, but he never committed sin, neither was there any deceit in his mouth. (See a discussion of Christ's sinlessness in the fifth discourse of this book). This "Word," that is, Christ, offered himself up on a cross as a victim and substitute for the souls of men. In this way Divine justice was satisfied because God accepted this offering in exchange for all souls. He also reconciled God's justice with his mercy, fulfilling the Prophet David's saying, "Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10). All who believe in Christ's death on the cross obtain this salvation. Also all who will have this same faith will obtain salvation, on the condition they go on to live according to God's commands, as recorded in the Torah and Gospel. Thus, Christ was crucified as a man and not as God, as some of our Muslim brethren imagine, raising great objections before they understand the Christian's real belief in this matter.

I don't think I need to show in detail the place given in Islam to sacrifices as do other religions. Namely, that it is a way to obtain forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God. All Muslims know that the slaying of sheep in the al-Adha feast is not for food, but is regarded as a redemption to obtain God's bounty and beneficence. Likewise, the ram which Abraham offered was a substitute for his son, "And We ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice" (al-Saffat 37:107). Thus, every sacrifice is regarded as a substitute for the offerer and a means to obtain pardon. Even Muhammad himself considered the blood of sacrifices a means to atone for sins and to obtain pardon, as we know from the following hadith:

He told his daughter Fatima, "Be present, Oh Fatima at the head of the victim for as soon as the first drop of his blood falls to the ground your sins will be forgiven." And on the basis of another hadith attributed to Muhammad, Muslims believe that on the Day of Reckoning they will mount the sacrifices which they offered during their lifetime, and cross the straight and narrow path to paradise. These sacrifices are not equal to the souls for whom they were offered; in fact all the animals offered are not worth one rational being. They are not adequate to atone for sin, but are only a symbol of the greatest sacrifice of Christ about whose institution we hear in the Torah, and we read the account of its fulfilment on the cross in the Gospel. This is the sacrifice which God considered equal to the souls of all

mankind, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Part Two

Only Christ Was Fit For This Task.

Yes, only Christ was fit for this enterprise for the following reasons:

1. The sacrifice had to be pure and without blemish.
2. The sacrifice was to be of such value to equal the number of souls to be redeemed.
3. It had to be of the same kind as man.
4. It had to have the necessary standing before God to serve as a connecting link between God and man.

If one were to search among all mankind one would not find any who would meet these conditions except Christ. The reason is that all have sinned, even the prophets, and need someone to redeem them. No one possesses the necessary worth in God's sight. No one has the intrinsic standing, except the Word of God.

For my soul, O my healer is in misery and decay,
Grant it healing at your hands through the Cross.
O mediator of peace I seek refuge in the Cross,
For me present this plea, to your Father who will heed.

Part Three

Did Christ Willingly Accept Crucifixion?

If you were to ask the Muslim why he does not believe that Christ was actually crucified he would reply: Because he was one of the foremost prophets and it would have been impossible for God to deliver his worthy servant to vile Jews to put him to death on the cross in such a horrible fashion. The Muslim has forgotten a verse in his Qur'an about God permitting something like this to happen, as we see in al-Nisa' 4:154, "So for their breaking the compact, and disbelieving in the signs of God, and slaying the Prophets without right."

In al-Baqara 2:82, "And whensoever there came to you a Messenger with that your souls had not desire for, did you become arrogant, and some cry lies to, and some slay?" Even Muhammad himself confessed that he died of poisoning by the treachery of a Jewish woman (as we see in the history of Almaghazi, and the biographies by Mohammad Ibn Ishaq, and the hadiths). In addition, the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel have declared that Christ's crucifixion was voluntary, as God had ordained from the beginning. Christ himself said plainly that the purpose of his coming was to complete the work of redemption; that is, to offer himself up as a sacrifice on the Cross. When one of his disciples told him, "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you," Jesus rebuked him saying, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an offence to me, for you are not mindful of the things

of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23). Also when one of his disciples wanted to defend him from the Jews who came to arrest him Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

Some of our Muslim brethren say, "How can God punish Christ by crucifixion for the sins of others, since it says in 2 Kings 14:6: `Yet He did not put the sons of the assassins to death, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses where the Lord commanded: "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sins."'" I would reply that God did not condemn Christ to death for the sins of mankind, but rather Christ, out of love for us, volunteered to offer himself in our place. This is the ultimate expression of love and deserves glorification. However, if I volunteer to pay that debt, what can he say but commend and praise such action?

When the Jews seized Christ to crucify him he said, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him and fled" (Matthew 26:55,56). Christ was not crucified because he had committed an offence. The Jews could find no fault in either his character or his actions, but he was crucified to be our sacrifice, taking our place in judgement and standing in our stead. Therefore, he was made a curse for us, not because he deserved it but, because he willingly agreed to lay down his life in place of the guilty sinner who deserved the curse. So you see from the foregoing that God permits the killing of his prophets for noble purposes and that Christ died willingly, out of love for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law, satisfy divine justice and grant us salvation and eternal life. Therefore, apart from Christ Jesus, God does not forgive the believer, or have mercy on him.

This is the only way which God ordained for the salvation of believers whereby he demonstrates his justice and mercy simultaneously. As for Islamic Law it does not harmonise God's justice and his mercy and neither in the Qur'an nor the Traditions (Hadith) do we find an effective way to deal with judgement, reckoning and forgiveness. The verses which our Muslim brethren quote on the subject of judgement are, "Whether you publish what is in your hearts or hide it, God shall make reckoning with you for it. He will forgive whom he will, and chastise whom he will" (al-Baqara 2:284).

If God settled accounts with men on the basis of this verse there would be no indication either of his justice or his mercy. While it is true he can do as he pleases, yet he would not will what denies his original attributes and his divine law. Supposing the judge pardoned your brother's murderer after his crime was proved, then went on to forgive him. Would you regard him as being just? Not at all! You would regard him as unjust because he violated the law. This is

unthinkable with God for it does not reflect his decrees. Furthermore, it contradicts sound thinking.

"The weighing that day is true; he whose scales are heavy -they are the prosperous, and he whose scales are light - they have lost their souls" (al-A`raf 7:7,8). This verse shows the reckoning system to be simple, and it is the one used by the ancient Egyptians and the Magi, whereby God places a man's good deeds on one side of the scales and his sins on the other. If the side of good is the heavier he will be delivered and prosper, but if the evil deeds tip the scales he will be among the losers who will spend eternity in hell. This cannot be true because heaven or paradise, which men aspire to enter, is a pure spot where only the purified and those made righteous can enter. Thus he who commits one sin has transgressed and become unclean. In that condition it is impossible for him to enter paradise. I shall give an example to make the matter clearer.

Suppose a Muslim is dressed in a white robe and while on his way to prayer a speck of dirt fell on his robe or person. Wouldn't he be considered unclean? If that was his state wouldn't he have to return and purify himself to be able to start prayer? This is the state of man towards God in respect to purity and impurity. Therefore it is impossible for the believer to enter paradise before complete purification and renewal of heart. For if he were cleansed from sins and forgiven his transgressions, yet the germ of evil remained entrenched in his heart, he would remain wicked and unfit for heaven. Also, if the Muslim believes he can atone for his sins in the fire, "Not one of you there is, but he shall go down to it; that for thy Lord is a thing decreed, determined. Then we shall deliver those that were godfearing; and the evildoers We shall leave there, hobbling on their knees" (Maryam 19:72,73). Without a man's corrupt heart and inclinations being changed, he too would not be fit for heaven nor heaven for him. Likewise, neither punishing the thief by imprisonment nor cutting his hand nor flogging the adulterer changes the inclination of the first to theft or the second to adultery. Rather, the punishment might aggravate them and make them worse as Yusuf 12:53 says, "Surely the soul of man incites to evil." The Christian faith or more accurately the Holy Bible (the Torah and Gospel), has ordained a way which cannot be objected to because it is God's provision. By it the believer can attain purity and forgiveness by means of Christ's sacrifice and obtain renewal or a change of heart through the Holy Spirit. In that way the believer becomes fit to enter paradise and happy to do so.

"Surely God shall not wrong so much as the weight of an ant; and if it be a good deed He will double it" (al-Nisa' 4:44). This verse presumes on God's favour, because it indicates that he will double a man's good deeds, and you yourself know that doubling these is not fair.

"And every man - We have fastened to him his book of omen upon his neck; and We shall bring forth for him, on the Day of Resurrection, as book he shall find spread wide open" (al-Isra' 17:14,15). This verse shows that for every man there is a book to be opened at the Resurrection. He will read it and judge himself.

However, it is not clear what the method of writing this book is, nor how man will judge himself and what rule he will follow.

"...surely the good deeds will drive away the evil deeds. That is a remembrance unto the mindful" (Hud 11:116). This verse shows that one good deed cancels an evil deed. If the good ones exceed the evil, the person will be saved; otherwise perdition is inevitable. Muslim scholars have said, "No one can complain that God did not reward him for his good deeds; because the wicked whose bad deeds overweigh are rewarded on earth for their good deeds." It is said if the account is reckoned and every man's deeds are weighed justly, all creatures will start exacting their wrongs, that is, giving their adversary his deserts. Thus every oppressed person will obtain redress from his oppressor. This is what Muslims call "disputing and requiting injustices." Accordingly, angels will take from the merits of the oppressor a portion equal to his injustice and add them to the merits of the oppressed. If the merits of anyone outweighs his demerits even by a grain, God will double them out of mercy, so he would enter paradise. If one's merits are cancelled and he is left with the unrequited sins, God will add to him an equal amount of the burdens of those he wronged. He will cast him in hell to be punished for his sins and theirs. All this is not justice.

Don't you see that all these things do not achieve the required end, namely to purify the heart from the pollution of sin and uproot the germ of evil desires from it to make it fit for God's pure presence in a spotless heaven?

There is no doubt that the way God provided and appointed in the Torah and Gospel for man's salvation is the ideal way. We have to follow it in order to receive pardon and heart cleansing and enter paradise to live there eternally.

Part Four

The Crucifixion of Christ in the Qur'an

The Muslim believes that the crucifixion took place, but that it was not Christ but another on whom his likeness fell, as al-Nisa' 4:156 indicates, "Yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them...and they slew him not of a certainty - no indeed; God raised him up to him." The statement in the Qur'an is confused and ambiguous and no conclusion can be based on it. To me, it is as though the Qur'an, not wishing to deny the crucifixion categorically, stated "I did not see!"

It is permissible to expound this Qur'anic verse in this way, "they slew him not of a certainty," meaning, they could not hurt his real person because the Jews thought that by crucifying Jesus they would eradicate his memory and make his name ridiculed among men. The verse shows the Jews that they failed to do this. For his death became a means of spreading his name and glorifying his cause. Further, that the cross did not extinguish him, because physical death is not extinction nor perdition. Though Christ died, yet God raised him up and this death was the prelude of his raising. To clarify this let me give you an example.

Suppose I insult, curse and belittle you. But you are noble-minded and do not recompense me in kind. Could you not rightly say to me, "You did not insult or degrade me but raised and honoured me in people's eyes, because of my forbearance and degraded yourself by reason of your vulgarity?" The truth is that the crucifixion was attributed to the Roman Governor Pilate, who ordered it, and not to the Jews!

As for the words, "a likeness...was shown to them," who does this refer to? It could not be to Christ, since he is the one likened to not the likeness. If you say it refers to the victim, no victim has been mentioned. Thus you see that the verse is vague. If God had intended to rescue Christ from dying on the cross he would have done it with a crystal-clear miracle demonstrating to the Jews their inability to harm his prophet and messenger. However, the miracle which the Muslims devise in order to save Christ did not achieve the desired result, in spite of the deception involved which ill befits the Lord, as it did not demonstrate to the Jews God's power and their impotence. Had God regarded crucifixion as demeaning to his holiness, would it have been reasonable for him to perform a miracle which actually shows his disdain? But he raised up Christ to himself in order to save himself that scorn, according to the belief of most Muslims.

We have found verses in the Qur'an which hint, if not declare, that Christ actually died. It serves to clarify the obscure portions of the former verse as you will see from Al Imran 3:48, "When God said, `Jesus I will take thee to Me and will raise thee to Me, and I will purify thee of those who believe not.'" Some commentators have said that the word "mutawaffeeka" (will take thee to Me) means to put you to sleep. One cannot see at all the wisdom of putting someone to sleep before raising them. I wish the learned successors can enlighten us where the predecessors have failed!

The truth is "will take thee to Me" means death, and this is according to Ibn Abbas and Mohammad Ibn Ishaq. They differed regarding the duration of death. Wahb said that Christ remained dead for three hours, then was raised. Mohammad Ibn Ishaq said that he was dead seven hours, then God raised him. Ibn Anas said that God caused him to die when he raised him up to heaven. As for the Imam al-Baidawi he believed that Christ actually died for three hours. In the language dictionary it says of the verb `tawaffa' "God made him die, that is, he took his soul, of so and so, that he died, meaning his soul was taken and he died."

The word `mutawaffeeka' and the derivatives of this verb (tawaffa) in this sense occur 23 times in the Qur'an. In all but two cases it means absolute death. In these two exceptions the context refers to figurative death during sleep, "It is He who recalls you by night, and He knows what you work by day" (al-An`am 6:60); and in al-Zumar 39:43, "God takes the souls at the time of their death, and that which has not died, in its sleep."

Some commentators have said that the `waw' (and) in the phrase `mutawaffeeka' is a play on words to mystify the reader. In their opinion the real meaning is that

Christ will come again and die. Oh God! Save us from the evil of deception! Would it hurt if they considered these words in their real sense? If the Qur'an intended what they desire, it would surely not have couched it in an ambiguous statement!

As you see in Maryam 19:15, "Peace be upon him, (refers to John) the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he is raised up alive!" And in Maryam 19:34, "Peace be upon me (Jesus) the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised up alive!"

There is no disputing that all Muslims believe that (Yahya) John was born and died according to the first verse. Then why not believe the same of Isa the Christ according to the second verse? Because the order of the two verses is the same and the words are practically the same. The context in the second can only mean one thing.

As we find in Maryam 19:32, "...and He has enjoined me to pray, and to give the alms, so long as I live." Legally, alms (Zakat) is a certain sum of money given by the Muslim, in the way of God, to the non-Hashimite Muslim, not being his slave, etc. According to authorities wherever `Zakat' is found in the Qur'an it means money except its saying, "and a tenderness from Us, and purity," (Maryam 19:14) where purity is intended.

Now if Christ went up to heaven without dying as most of our Muslim brethren believe, it was his duty to pay alms according to the commandment. Are there, I wonder, poor Muslims in heaven to whom his alms would be given? If, on the other hand, Christ is still alive on earth, where is he and who are the recipients of his alms (Zakat)?

When we learn that he is not on earth and that he is not giving alms, we know of a certainty that he died and therefore his obligation to pay alms has been removed!

As we read in al-Ma'ida 5:117, "I was a witness over them, while I remained among them; but when you let me die (fall asleep or take me to you) you were yourself the watcher over them!" Of this al-Razi and al-Jalalayn said: "This verse will be said by Christ Isa to God most likely on the day of reckoning." And while al-Razi explained the words "to let me die" by ascension, he had forgotten that he had previously explained it with "making him fall asleep" where it occurs in Al Imran 3:55 "Oh Isa, truly I let you fall asleep and will lift you up to me." Therefore if we go with Razi and other translators, agreeing that "falling asleep" means only "lifting up," these words will come into existence on the last day of judgement and mean that Christ never will die. This is contradicting the text of the Qur'an that "All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid" (al-Rahman 55:26,27) "All things perish, except His Face" (al-Qasas 28:88).

This also contradicts the belief of many Muslim scholars who believe that Christ in fact died, contrary to those among them who believe that Christ has to die in this world before the Day of Resurrection. What harm would it do if they believed that 'take me to Thyself' (mutawaffeeka) here does mean death and that this saying occurred before the Qur'an as the introduction to the verse indicates, "when he said" which indicates past tense and not future. In that case this Qur'anic text falls into line with the Torah and the Gospel and the belief of the Christians about the crucifixion and death of Christ.

Oh God, I beseech you reveal the Truth to those who seek it and grant Light to those who need it, you are the best to be invoked, Oh most Bountiful of Givers!

Part Five

The Crucifixion in History

The event of the cross is not of man's invention. Otherwise Christians would not have been content to attribute to their leader, prophet and Saviour, yea their Lord this great ignominy. The Law of Moses says, "...because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse" (Deuteronomy 21:23). The Gospel says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'" (Galatians 3:13). Not only have Christians confessed the fact of the Crucifixion but they have proudly regarded it the source of their bounties and heavenly blessings and the fountain of all Salvation; for themselves as well as for all who believe in the Crucified Christ and the redemption he accomplished by his memorable death. It seems to me, in discussions with my Muslim brothers, that the subject of Christ's crucifixion is an historical event in some respects. Therefore I have chosen now to discuss it historically.

The prophets of old, David, Isaiah, Daniel and others prophesied on every aspect of the life of Christ, especially his death and resurrection, starting more than 1050 years before it happened. In fact some had fixed the place of the crucifixion and the time, citing signs, some of which were natural such as the eclipse of the sun and earthquake. Others were historical such as the final cessation of the sacrifice, because it had pointed to Christ's great sacrifice; also of the end of the monarchy among the Jews.

When Jesus came, he announced to the Jews plainly that what was written in their Law concerning his death had to come to pass and that he had to be crucified to atone for the sins of mankind. The apostles after him gloried in this Crucifixion, leading one of them to say, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). A few days after the crucifixion one of them stood up before a great crowd of Jews and declared, "You have taken by lawless hands and crucified him" (Acts 2:23). The result of his speech was that 3000 of those present believed in the Crucified One.

The crucifixion became the theme of the disciples and of apostolic preaching, the pivot of all their sermons, and the only way to obtain forgiveness of sins. They used to say, "God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," in spite of being followers of the Crucified. The Christian Church, in every century since has regarded the crucifixion of Christ as the original disciples did. The reason is that nothing in the Torah and Gospel is clearer than this fact.

The famous Jewish historian Josephus mentioned the crucifixion of Christ, saying, "Pilate sentenced Christ to be crucified to satisfy the clamour of the chief priests among us, and those who loved Christ at first did not leave him but continue with us to this day. They are called Christians after him." Even Jews today admit that Christ was crucified and the Qur'an itself witnesses that the Jews admit that they killed Christ, as you can see in al-Nisa' 4:156, "...and for their saying, We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God." The Rabbi Yohanan Bin Zakka, disciple of the famous Hillel wrote a book in Hebrew a long time ago, mentioning the Jews sentencing Christ to be crucified because he claimed to be God's Son and that they hanged him on a tree outside Jerusalem, in accordance with the order of the king and the Jewish rulers.

The Talmud incidentally mentions the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the pagan historian Tacitus mentioned in chapter 15 of his work, written nearly 40 years after Christ, that he was killed by order of Pontius Pilate, the local governor during the reign of Tiberius.

This historian wrote to people who lived at the time of Christ and in all likelihood some had been eye witnesses at his death. He had access to Roman records, where the official chronicles of the various governors were kept. Among them were the chronicles of the governors of Palestine, where Christ was crucified. Consequently this author's writings were held in high esteem since they related to official events and public information.

The important fact is that Pilate sent a report to Rome about the crucifixion and death of Christ which has been preserved among the records of Rome as was customary with civilised empires of the day. From this legal inscription Tacitus was able to obtain his information in addition to other public sources. Reference to this inscription was made by the philosopher Flavius Justinus in writing to the Emperor Antonius Pius in the year 139 AD Also by the scholar Tertullian, writing from Carthage in the year 199 AD

Thus you see that the incident of the crucifixion of Christ was a thing predetermined and a notable event known among pagans, Jews and Christians; not only among the common people but also among the elite for 600 years. Until the Qur'an came and denied it, not openly, but by means of ambiguous statements and various texts which have caused much uncertainty for Muslims, causing some to deny it emphatically and others to believe it, as you noted from the previous section.

Now thoughtful reader, assume that 50 honest men witnessed clearly that Zaid killed Amr, and that the eyewitnesses knew perfectly both the killer and victim. Then assume that the killer confessed publicly to his ugly deed. For about 600 years it is the general belief and an undisputed fact that Zaid killed Amr. But then, after this long period a contradictory witness presented himself before the judge, obviously not an eye witness. Let us assume that he was an impartial witness and said, "I testify that the killing did occur but that the one killed was not Amr but Bakr." How do you think the judge would decide the case? Would he confirm that Amr had been killed or would he judge that the one killed was Bakr, basing his decision on this latest isolated testimony? There is no doubt that a fair-minded judge would confirm the decision that it was Amr who was killed on the basis of numerous witnesses and the confession of the killer. Anyone who judges otherwise would demonstrate his ignorance of civil and canonical laws and only confirms to others that he is totally devoid of justice!

I do not have to warn you that this example concerns the case of Christ's crucifixion and applies to it in every way.

What will you say after this, oh Muslim brother, you who are looking for the truth? I counsel you to leave your credal bias and judge in this matter as a free man, according to justice and your intellectual honesty. You will find that the case is simple, and does not require all this troublesome pursuit. You will then know that Christ (Isa) was killed and crucified to redeem the world. But he arose from the grave and ascended up to heaven victorious. Henceforth, death will not have dominion over him.

FIFTH DISCOURSE

Christ's Sinlessness, Divinity and Sonship

According to what God has revealed in his Precious Book, we Christians believe that Jesus Christ is infallible since he is not in the genetic line of corrupt human nature, as the inspired books have confirmed. We have in the Qur'an and the Hadith a basis for the inspiration of the Holy Bible.

We also believe Christ to be God and man at the same time in the light of the divine inspiration in the Gospel. As an expression of this truth and by way of illustration we say: The one God appeared in the man Jesus Christ and indwelt him with the fullness of his deity, a limitless indwelling, "For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Hebrews 1:1-3). Therefore it is correct to say that Christ is God and man at the same time. For the man is not a God but God is God, and man is man. He is not two gods as the Muslims imagine Christ to be. Christ, by his divine

power performed miracles and superhuman acts, unlike the prophets - for they performed the miracles by the power of God and not by their own strength. As man he ate and drank and slept like any other human. He would at times speak of himself as God and sometimes as man. As we have said, this was only because he was both God and man. Our Muslim brethren and some Christians have had doubts regarding the divinity of Christ, since they have seen many passages in the Book which show him to be man. However, if they review the numerous texts which point to his divinity and do it meticulously and with care, the clouds of doubt which obscure their vision would disappear. Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (John 14:9).

Moreover, Christ as man lived for a while on earth, was crucified, died and rose again, but the crucifixion and death fell on his physical nature.

As for Christ's divinity, it is very clear in the Torah and Gospel, from the prophecies, the words of Christ himself and in the teachings of the apostles. Also from the following verse from Al Imran 3:40, "Mary, God gives thee good tidings of a Word from Him whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary; high honoured shall he be in this world and the next, near stationed to God." If the expositors claim that what is meant by 'Word' is the verb 'be' (kun) or speech in other texts there is no way they can claim this meaning in this instance. The words, "a Word from him whose name is Messiah" shows that the Word here is a person and not an utterance or command as will be clear upon the slightest reflection. It is almost like saying, "A being from him." Notice that the pronoun in the Arabic 'Ismihi' (whose name) is masculine referring to 'Kalima' (Word) which in Arabic is feminine phonetically but masculine in meaning; otherwise, linguistically it would not be permissible.

Muslim scholars have stated that all God's creatures can be termed God's words since they were created by a word. I would say that this is false, for otherwise one can call a cause effect, and a book a pen because the pen is the means or the tool which wrote the book but not the book itself. If God created Isa, the Christ, by a word of command (kun, in Arabic) as they allege, he could not be called (kalima) word, because he is not the word but the effect of the word (the command). If I write a book with my mind, that book is not called a mind (or my mind) but the object of the mind. Otherwise, truth will be mixed with error, and essentials will be confused with accidentals.

What is clear from other verses is that Christ is the Spirit of God. You know that whatever is of God is God. Therefore the Word of God is God eternal, and Spirit of God is God, eternal, everlasting. This exactly corresponds with what we have at the beginning of John's Gospel:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:1-5).

As to Christ being the Son of God, that is possible and not an infidelity. The Hadith, speaking on God's behalf says, "The poor are my family." This is not impossible, as shown in the saying in al-Zumar 39:6, "Had God desired to take to Him a son, He would have chosen whatever He willed of that He has created." No wonder then that the Book has announced that Christ is the Son of God, not by way of reproduction as some Muslims think because 'Son' is an expression not exclusive to the male child by procreation but is also used figuratively, as in, "sons of the word," or "son of the sea," or "son of the desert" and so on. We also use the expression "so and so is the son (or child) of so and so" by way of adoption, metaphorically or analogically. God has called the believers his children. However he declared that Christ is "his only begotten Son." In other words the latter is a different sonship from the former.

We do not comprehend this sonship fully because it is beyond human comprehension. And as Christ was called Son of God so as to elevate him above men for his deity, he was called 'Son of Man' to indicate his humanity. This is what is intended in Daniel's prophecy chapter 7:13,14, which points to Christ being God and man in one.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled - concerning the Word of Life. (1 John 1:1)

The sins of the prophets are mentioned in the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel one by one (and the Qur'an supports their evidence). The corruption of the whole human race is also mentioned as you have seen. However, none of these books mentions any sin of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, they all testify to his holiness and purity beyond any other human, and his infallibility with respect to sin. He stands out unique among men in this regard, as you will see from the coming discussion of the excellence of Christ.

No prophet or apostle, however great, has dared to claim infallibility for himself, because sinlessness in human creatures is impossible. Only God possesses infallibility and perfection. As to Christ who excelled all others by virtue of his joint divinity and humanity; he had such utter confidence in his perfection and purity that he could boldly ask, "Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?" (John 8:46). "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in me" (John 14:30).

Numerous other testimonials in the Book testify to Christ's infallibility. Even his foes could not find any fault in his behaviour.

When the governor Pilate examined the charges of the Jews, he declared that he could not find any fault in Christ which deserved death (John 18:38 and 19:4,6). Pilate's wife also sent a message during the trial advising her husband, "Have nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19). After that Pilate washed his hands, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person. You see to it!" (Matthew 27:24).

So the Jews said, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" It was then that Christ was delivered to be crucified. Christ's whole life and walk speaks eloquently of his absolute purity, integrity and infallibility, in contrast with the conduct of the rest of humanity, including the prophets and apostles, which are full of faults, inconsistencies, injustice and corruption of heart.

This purity of Christ and his sinlessness were essential so that he would be fit to offer himself an atonement and a pure and unblemished sacrifice for the souls of sinful humanity.

SIXTH DISCOURSE

The Superiority of Christ in the Qur'an Over Others

Prophets and Apostles have been given different titles and participated in many deeds, but Christ excelled them all. Let us now mention what the Qur'an has to say on this subject.

1. That he was the Word of God and his Spirit as we find in al-Nisa' 4:169, "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that he committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him." In Al Imran 3:40, "Mary, God gives thee good tidings of a Word from Him whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary; high honoured shall he be in this world and the next, near stationed to God."

Tell me my friend, of whom, whether prophets or men, did the Qur'an state they were: God's Word or Spirit?

God has called some people Apostles, some prophets, some "warners," some Preachers. But all these names are less than "Word of God" and "Spirit of God" which Jesus Christ was called. He is thus undoubtedly greater than all, particularly as the spirit is greater than the apostle because "Spirit of God" means God himself whereas "His apostle" is another individual.

Commentators such as al-Razi, al-Jalalayn and others have said that Christ was called the "Word of God" because he was called into being by a word without a father; therefore he is referred to as the Word. However, we would ask them, "If

that is so, why was not Adam, who was created by a word of command, also called Word of God and of his Spirit?"

Does not this designation require the learned Muslim to look into the words "word" and "spirit" in the foregoing texts, which suggest, if not declare, Christ's pre-eminence and divinity?

2. He creates, as we find in Al Imran 3:43: "I will create for you out of clay as the likeness of a bird; then I will breathe into it, and it will be a bird, by the leave of God."

God has permitted his creatures to share with him in several attributes such as generosity, justice, mercy and charity. He also bestowed on his prophets the power to perform supernatural miracles and to foretell future events before they happened. This was for man's benefit and to authenticate their heavenly message. But he has left for himself some things which he will not share with anyone.

First, omnipresence, being present in every place (an imperceptible presence without limit), in order to be in total control and hear the call of every living soul world-wide, even simultaneously. But the creature cannot be present in every place at the same time. In summary, no person or king can be omnipresent, otherwise he would become God.

Second, omnipotence as an original not derived power. The prophets have performed amazing deeds and compelling miracles which no human can equal, but these were by God's enabling power and not intrinsic. For God alone is the cause of all causes and the fountain of all power. If anyone should acquire intrinsic power he would become like God and that is obviously absurd.

Third, creating and bringing a soul into being. This word signifies making or bringing into being something out of nothing and the dictionary definition is "to bring into being or fashioning something like nothing before."

God Almighty has endowed prophets and apostles with power to raise the dead, heal the dumb, cure a variety of diseases and foretell events (before they happen). But he did not permit anyone to create or give the spirit except Jesus Christ. Why? Only because Christ is greater than the prophets and apostles and occupies a different position. Of whom was it said in the Qur'an that he created, even by his Lord's permission? This was not said of anyone, as anybody who is familiar with the Qur'an will confirm.

From the preceding verse you will see that the Qur'an asserts that Christ used to create birds in the same way that God created Adam, since he fashioned man from the soil of the ground and breathed on him the breath of life, and he became a living soul.

3. His miraculous birth as we read in al-Nisa' 4:169, "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary,

and a Spirit from Him." Meaning that Christ was born without a father by the Holy Spirit in a supernatural manner. It is true, Adam had no father, but that was of necessity, since there were no human beings before him. As for Christ's birth it was not of necessity but purposed of God, a miracle to the world: "...and appointed her and her son to be a sign unto all beings" (al-Anbiya' 21:91). "...and that We may appoint him a sign unto men and a mercy from Us" (Maryam 19:21).

Does not Christ's unusual birth capture the attention of the honest Muslim and bring him to a belief that Christ (Isa) had no equal among men, and that he occupies the highest station?

4. Eminence in this world and the next as we find in Al Imran 3:40, "Mary, God gives thee good tidings of a Word from him whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary; high honoured shall he be in this world and the next, near stationed to God."

Al-Kashaf has said, "Eminence in this world means prophecy and precedence over men and in the next intercession and exaltation of position in paradise." Al-Razi and Jalal Ed Din al-Suyuti has expounded this verse in exactly the same way.

Regarding the eminence of Moses in al-Ahzab 33:69, "...and he was high honoured with God." Al-Razi has expounded it as being knowledge. He has also said, in explaining the phrase 'high honoured with God' as follows: "Not every eminent one is high-honoured because the people of Paradise are in ranks and degrees, therefore did God say, 'and you shall be three bands,' going on to, '...the outstrippers those are brought nigh the Throne'" (al-Waqi`a 56:7,10,11).

From a study of the Qur'an one learns that no one has been described as being eminent in this world and the next other than Christ (Isa), and none of the prophets and apostles enjoyed this distinction except him. Search and see, and afterwards please tell me why. Enquire after the reason, you will be amazed!

5. The absence of any mention of sin laid to his account (review the Fifth Discourse).

6. He raised him to heaven as we find in Al Imran 3:48: "When God said, 'Jesus, I will take thee to Me and will raise thee to Me, and I will purify thee of those who believe not.'"

Earlier we discussed the question of what "taking thee to me" (mutawaffeeka) means, so there is no need to repeat it, but we desire to clarify the meaning of "raise." Al-Razi has said, "what is intended by raise, is to raise to the level of God's honour; he has used the form "to Me" for purposes of exaltation and magnification. By using purify thee, he means, removing you from among the infidels. As he has exalted him by the term "raise" he has indicated the sense of deliverance by the word "purify". All this points to a desire to exaggerate in honouring him and magnifying his position with God Almighty.

In explaining the phrase "taking thee to Me," al-Kashaf said, "taking thee to my heaven and the place of my angels." Raising Christ in the Qur'an signifies exaltation (of the high honoured). The Gospel informs us of the reason for the exaltation of Christ, saying:

Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:6-11)

Does not this subject call upon us to enquire into the reason? If you, the esteemed reader, want the reason from me I shall answer you with a verse from the Gospel which has expressed this in the clearest terms:

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

SEVENTH DISCOURSE

Trinity in Unity

For the reader to be well-informed about the Christian doctrine of the Unity of God and the Trinity, I shall now present in detail the first doctrine of the Christian Faith.

"There is no god but God the One; Living, True, Eternal, Everlasting, without body, parts or emotions. Whose might and wisdom and goodness know no limits, Creator of all things visible and invisible. In this One God are three Persons of the same substance, the same might and the same eternal existence, they are The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit."

This creed is well supported by verses in the Torah and Gospel. Therefore it is not an invention of the Christians. However, whether it was first realised, or arrived at by logical discussion, will be answered from what follows.

It is not fully understood because it is beyond the perception of the sons of Adam. However, it is a reality and an accepted fact even though the majority of Muslim enquirers have failed to comprehend it, in accordance with the Islamic doctrine which says, "Investigation regarding the essence of God is infidelity" (Hadith).

I shall not, at present, attempt to explain a doctrine which the ancients failed to explain, and whose essence the moderns cannot grasp, because it is an enquiry

into the nature of God, the Creator of all beings. Since scholars cannot comprehend the secret of any of these beings, how then can they comprehend the nature of the First Cause, the Creator? I want to demonstrate firstly that we have to accept this concept by faith, with our heart, even though our minds do not comprehend it. The reason is that we have it given in detail in God's inspired Book which is for mankind's guidance; I mean by it the Torah and Gospel. Secondly, I would like to point out to my Muslim brethren that they themselves have many basic fundamental beliefs which are not logical. Of these and foremost among them is the belief in God. Why then do they require us to prove what they themselves cannot prove?

First of all, all believers in God whether Jews, Christians or Muslims know nothing about God except what he has revealed about himself. Anything beyond that is the imagination or speculation of scholars. It cannot be relied on by the God-fearing nor used to convince the sceptics.

Our own perceptions are incapable of comprehending their creator. If we could, he would cease to be God. Only God can understand God. Although God is the ultimate being yet, unlike other beings he fills the heavens and the worlds, without having length, breadth, height, depth or origin. Because he is boundless and incomprehensible, he has soared way above analogy and representation. Whatever your mind can conceive, God is something other. Therefore we should not overreach ourselves in trying to fathom what our minds are incapable of fathoming. Let us instead accept what God has revealed to us of himself without probing or debate. That is closer to godliness.

The important thing is to find out: Does the Book (the Torah and Gospel) come from God or not? If we answer in the affirmative (and thank God it is so), we have to believe all that we read in it whether it agrees or disagrees with our own opinion. For we are not permitted to believe some of the Book which we understand and disbelieve other parts due to lack of understanding. In the Qur'an such folk are blamed as we see from al-Baqara 2:79, "What, do you believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in part? What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but degradation in the present life, and on the Day of Resurrection to be returned unto the most terrible of chastisement?"

Quite often our Muslim brethren attack the Torah and Gospel for mentioning that God spoke, heard, wrote with his finger, was sad, sorry and other human-like expressions.

In order to remove any doubts in their hearts we would remind them that the Qur'an too uses similar statements. Here are some of them:

"Hast thou received the story of Moses? When he saw a fire, and said to his family, 'Tarry you here; I observe a fire. Perhaps I shall bring you a brand from it, or I shall find at the fire guidance.' When he came to it, a voice cried, 'Moses, I am thy Lord; put off thy shoes'" (Ta Ha 20:8-12).

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein is a lamp (the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star)..." (al-Nur 24:35).

"God's hand is over their hands" (al-Fath 48:10).

"He said, (Abraham) I am going to my Lord" (al-Saffat 37:97).

"Whoso emigrates in the way of God..." (al-Nisa' 4:101).

"...and for their saying, `We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God...'" (al-Nisa' 4:156).

"...and unto God all matters are returned" (al-Baqara 2:206).

"...then sat Himself upon the Throne" (al-A`raf 7:52).

"...then He lifted Himself to heaven..." (al-Baqara 2:27).

"When God said, Jesus I will take thee to Me and will raise thee to Me, and I will purify thee of those who believe not" (Al Imran 3:48).

"All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid" (al-Rahman 55:27).

"All things perish, except His Face" (al-Qasas 28:88).

In the Qur'an we have sayings which attribute to God love, anger and pleasure which are emotional reactions; also regret and forgetfulness: "Therefore today We forget them..." (al-A`raf 7:49).

If you accept the foregoing verses at face value you would have to admit that God was represented by fire or was inside it. But if you say he wasn't fire nor was he in it but it was in order to direct Moses to something, I would reply that the end of the verse, "put off thy shoes; thou art in the Holy Valley, Towa," contradicts you and proves me right. If you admit God is light and that this light is, "as a niche, wherein is a lamp," etc., this is what is known as `yes and no' (hulul and hasr) - a dilemma. Then you are bound to admit that God has a place and a face, and so on. And this, no Muslim would accept.

Secondly, you say, my Muslim brother, that you do not believe the doctrine of the Trinity (i.e. that God is one in three Persons), because you are unable to understand it and no one can prove it to you. What you forget is that you as a Muslim believe many things in common with the Jew and the Christian. However, if disbelievers in inspiration ask you to prove one of these beliefs you and the ablest scholars could not do so nor respond with an answer supported by proof.

Every believer in God believes that he has created the heavens and all that is in them of suns and moons and planets and stars. He fashioned the world and all that is therein of plant and animal life in six days and created living rational man

with a word from his mouth. Now every believer believes that the noble prophets and the good apostles performed miracles such as raising the dead, healing the dumb and paralytic, and so on. Every believer believes in the Resurrection, namely that every being from Adam to the last person on earth will be resurrected, those who have died natural deaths as well as those whom the fish have eaten. Also those eaten by beasts of the field shall have their spirits return to their bodies which have decomposed into various forms of earth, plant, animal and matter; and this for the purpose of reckoning and judgement.

Supposing an infidel challenged you regarding these truths and denied them. Would you be able to defend your beliefs by logical reasoning, sound proof and intellectual arguments without the inspired books? You know better than I do that you would not be able to furnish proofs establishing the foregoing beliefs.

You believe in God and trust him. But if I ask you: what is God, and where is he? You would fail to give a convincing answer. You also know you have a spirit and believe in that. However, you are ignorant of what the spirit is or of where it exists. Furthermore, you know and believe you have a mind and intellectual capacities but you do not understand their nature. You do not even understand much of intangible things. Learned men have stated that we do not understand the essence of material things, but only know their properties and characteristics. How much more can this be said of intangible things!

I know and you know, and the Jews, Christians and Muslims all know that we and they believe statements about creation, miracles, the resurrection, the judgement and immortality of the soul. We also believe in God, not because we are capable of proving these doctrines but because they are mentioned in books we regard as sent down from God and infallible. Thus the Jew believes in obedience to his Book, the Torah, the Christian on the authority of the Torah and Gospel, and the Muslim in submission to the Qur'an.

If it is valid to deny the Trinity because we have no way to prove it, we must deny all other doctrines, in fact denying all revelations which we cannot prove; such as God's self-existence and eternal nature, his being the first cause of everything, omnipresent and omniscient, knowing all that has happened from eternity to eternity at every moment in time, and that his knowledge does not allow any additions or omissions.

God is one in essence, three in person. Since he is unique in the universe in his nature and attributes it is no wonder that he is superior to all else in the mode of his being, even as he excels in his supreme attributes. It is said that one essence having three hypostases is impossible. We would say this is an unsupported claim and that our finite minds cannot measure of what is possible and what is not beyond its limits of comprehension. The persons of the Trinity are in essence one, not in generic or qualitative essence. Therefore plurality in trinity does not affect the essence, and does not involve essential dichotomy since God's essence is not material but spiritual. Spirit does not, under any circumstances, permit division. Thus the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in respect to their

hypostasis of the same essence. Each of them enjoys the essence of one deity without division or separation. In our language there is no equivalent to the meaning of hypostasis in order to be able to describe the Holy Trinity more easily.

After what I have said, do you still insist that the Christian's belief in the Trinity belies ignorance? Do you insist, after all these examples that you do not accept the Trinity, because you do not find an intellectual proof for it? Don't you know that to every matter there is proof of a certain kind? For instance, in the historic realm, you cannot prove Alexander of Macedon and all his campaigns in Egypt, Syria, Persia, India and others by means of a chemical, geometrical or a logical proof. No, because these events pertain to history and nothing else! Or can you demonstrate to me that the whole is greater than its part by chemical means? If this principle is true, we conclude that everything has a demonstration of its own kind. Thus religious things are demonstrated from revealed (or inspired) books, mathematical problems by mathematical proofs such as in arithmetic, algebra and geometry, astronomical matters from the science of astronomy, and so on and so forth. Therefore, my Muslim brother, do not try to prove religious doctrines by means of scientific proofs, lest you go far astray. And why do you disagree with me on the question of Trinity? It may be that we are basically in agreement. For you say: God and his Word and his Spirit, that makes three. And I say: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. "So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not, 'Three,' Refrain; better is it for you. God is only One God. Glory be to Him" (al-Nisa' 4:169). We believe that God has a Word and Spirit and he is one with his Word and Spirit. Everything which is in God is God according to you. Therefore God's Word is God having all his attributes such as being and infinity and much else. Also God's Spirit is God, and is partner with him in being from eternity to eternity.

In closing I would beseech God, who is one in substance and triune in number, to grant you his Holy Spirit and convince you in your heart of the truth of this doctrine. In this way, you will believe in it even as you have believed that he is able to do all things and is worthy of your response.

EIGHTH DISCOURSE

The Paraclete and Muhammad

Our Muslim brethren claim that the name of their prophet Muhammad is mentioned in the Gospel, based on the words in the Qur'an in al-Saffat 37:6, "And when Jesus Son of Mary said, 'Children of Israel, I am indeed the Messenger of God to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.'" "

It was said that the meaning of the Greek Paraclete in the Gospel is the same as Ahmad, the praised one, and that Ahmad and Muhammad are the same. Some allege that the Gospel has been altered because this announcement is no longer in it, even though it is still recorded there as it was in Muhammad's day in the Greek.

However, what the Qur'an understood by the intended word was misconstrued because the word in the Greek is this: HAPAKAHTOE not HEIPIKAHOTE.

In the Latin spelling thus, PARACLETOS and not PERICLUTOS is its correct form. The first means the comforter while the second is the famous or praised one.

This verse is still in the Gospel, proving that it has not undergone change. Let us now return to study the verses containing the word Paraclete in order to understand its meaning in the Qur'an, and see if it is right to attribute it to Muhammad as our Muslim brethren claim.

1. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; but you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:16,17)

2. But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify of me... (John 15:26)

3. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you. And when he has come, he will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement... (John 16:7,8)

4. And being assembled together with them, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, "which," he said, "you have heard from me; for John truly baptised with water, but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now". (Acts 1:4,5)

5. Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

It is clear that Christ was the disciples' teacher while he was among them. He was a guide and a comforter to them, defending them, so that they became attached to him. With his foreknowledge he knew that his departure from them through death would break their hearts. He was convinced that they were in need of heavenly help to strengthen, guide and comfort them after his departure. For this reason he promised to send them the Holy Spirit to be their Comforter, as you have seen from the previous verses.

After close examination of these texts it becomes clear to us that the Person who was promised could not possibly be Muhammad the Prophet of Islam, for reasons that we see in the same verses.

First, the one promised was not corporeal (Spirit of Truth), therefore the world could not receive him because they could not see him. This description does not fit Muhammad because he had a body and the world saw him, both believers and infidels.

Second, the Promised One came to stay with the disciples forever. This too cannot be said of Muhammad because he did not come at the time of the disciples and did not remain in the world forever.

Third, the Promised One was at that time with the disciples, "because he is with you." This also cannot apply to Muhammad because he was not with the disciples.

Fourth, Christ instructed the disciples "not to leave Jerusalem but wait..." for that Comforter, the Holy Spirit. In obedience to their Master (and Muslims believe that disciples are obedient) they waited ten days in Jerusalem until that Comforter came and "everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit." This, too, cannot apply to Muhammad. Otherwise it would have been necessary for the disciples to wait in Jerusalem 600 years until Muhammad's arrival. How long could they live, especially as Christ promised them to send the Spirit Comforter quickly?! Otherwise it was no use comforting them after death. Therefore to encourage them he said, "For John truly baptised with water, but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).

I do not think that the Muslim brother wants to believe that Christ is the one who sent Muhammad, because the verses above show that Christ was the one who sent the Comforter Spirit. If that was so, it would be another matter, for he would have to agree to the divinity of the one who sent (Christ), because Muhammad claimed to be God's Apostle. Imagine! I ask God to give my Muslim brother this Holy Spirit as he gave to those disciples, so that he would guide him to the truth and guide him to the right path and enlighten his mind so that he may distinguish between the worthless and the worthwhile!

CONCLUSION

You have seen from the above that there is no way to obtain pardon for sins and cleansing of heart except in Christ, and no book which shows the way to this salvation except the Bible, the Torah and Gospel. There is no religion which reconciles the justice of God and his mercy, showing us God's love to man save the Christian religion. Seize the opportunity, my brother, because the time is a time of salvation and today is a day of grace and acceptance.

The purpose of these discourses and the study of them is to reach the truth and obtain happiness by following this truth. In closing I ask God to grant you, my Muslim brother, his Holy Spirit and to enlighten your mind in your search after truth. May God guide you in the straight path when you pray daily to obtain salvation in Christ and everlasting life in heaven forever.

QUIZ

1. What position does the Bible occupy in the Christian religion?
2. How does the Qur'an regard those Muslims who do not believe in the Bible?
3. Mention one Qur'anic verse that testifies to the truth of the Torah and Gospel in Muhammad's day and after?
4. How is the veracity of the Torah and Gospel proved intellectually?
5. Are those who speak of the Book as being altered or corrupted able to point to the altered texts and give the purpose for doing so?
6. What did Nahum the prophet prophesy about? Were his prophecies and others of the prophets fulfilled?
7. Give one archaeological proof which testifies to the accuracy of the Torah and Gospel?
8. What did the scholar Smith find in the ruins of Nineveh?
9. Give the names of the ancient manuscripts of the Bible.
10. Give one Qur'anic verse which refutes the theory of "abrogation".
11. In what state did God create Adam and Eve? Did they stay in that condition?
12. Mention a text from the Bible supported by a reference in the Qur'an which speaks of the corruption and straying of all mankind?
13. Is there evidence that the prophets fell into sin?
14. According to divine justice what do all sinners deserve?
15. To whom did the sacrifices point?
16. How do you confirm the death of Christ from the Qur'an?
17. Is there a historical proof of Christ's crucifixion?
18. How is Christ superior to the rest of the prophets and the rest of mankind?
19. What does the Book of Acts 4:13 say about Jesus Christ?
20. How can you explain the doctrine of Trinity if you are asked?
21. Summarise your understanding of this book in two lines.

If you have benefited from this literature, please write to us. Send us your name and address, written clearly and completely, with the answers to the above questions, and we will send you additional literature to help you.

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