

ISLAM
THE SUMMIT OF
RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A number of religions exist in the world today, each claiming its teachings to be the correct and last message from God. The followers of each religion tend to consider themselves as the chosen and blessed people; they generally regard the followers of other religions as misguided and cursed. A large majority of religious preachers have preached, and still continue to preach intolerance and hatred of the differing viewpoint. They discourage, and at times prohibit, an objective analysis of the universal view of religious teachings. This multitude of religions and their "conflicting" teachings have confused the common human mind, in their attempt to seek the true God. In addition to distancing the creation (humans) from the creator (God), such perverted concepts give rise to and help sustain religious intolerance and bigotry. Thus is the condition of the world around us. The same God can not send conflicting messages to mankind whom He created out of compassion. Yet human suffering in the name of God and religious beliefs continue to flourish around the world. Today, religion has been reduced to a mere tool for gaining political control and is exploited by opportunists to achieve personal goal.

As stated earlier these conflicting and, at times, contradictory religious beliefs have created a highly confused state in the human mind; it can only be resolved by an objective and unbiased analysis of the history, goal and the teachings of the various religions. In an attempt to resolve this extremely complex situation, one of the following assumptions will have to be accepted.

1. Either we must believe there are several Gods in the world, each guiding their chosen group of people in different directions.
- or**
2. *There is one God* Almighty who has revealed Himself to all people at different times, but His message has been misinterpreted.*

The first assumption is absurd and is unanimously rejected by the scriptures of all major religions. If however it is to be believed, then all humans are involved in a "War of Gods", the resolution of which is beyond human control. It is simply inconceivable to visualize a multitude of Gods controlling mankind.

The second assumption appears reasonable and logical and needs further investigation. To test this assumption, it is imperative that the overall religious picture around the world be analyzed using the following basic conditions:

* "God is used in the most general sense to refer to the ultimate supreme power to which followers of every major religion associate with.

1. God is Almighty, All-knowing, Just, Wise, Compassionate, Merciful, Forgiving, Loving, etc. In short He is the ultimate in everything.
2. The basic laws of nature are perfect, uniform and consistent. God need not break, bend or modify His basic laws to reveal His presence.

With this background, a review of the literature along with a study of the various scriptures can help unravel the "mysteries" of the various religions. A study of the various scriptures reveals that God's message was transmitted to humans through His chosen messengers whom He appointed as guides. These messengers appeared periodically in different parts of the world. This observation is also supported by the fact that the major world religions were founded in different parts of the world and at different times. A couple of striking similarities can be readily observed among the major world religions:

1. According to all ordinary standards, the founders of religions were men of slender means. They had no power yet they addressed themselves to the great and the weak alike. Their followers rose from humble to great positions in the world defying worldly odds. This strongly implies that they were sustained and supported by a great power.
2. All founders of religions have been persons highly honored and valued for the purity of their lives, even by those, who later, on announcement of their claim, became their worst enemies. It is inconceivable that those who did not lie about men began suddenly to lie about God. The universal acknowledgement of the purity of their lives before the announcement of their claim is ample proof of their truthfulness.

For the second assumption (regarding one God in the universe) to be valid, there must be a link between the major world religions. Hypothetically, if the scriptures are true and properly preserved without human interpolation, an evolutionary trend must appear after a chronological study of the various scripture. This would help in resolving any differences between the three faiths and in accepting that the scriptures as a tool for the eventual fulfillment of human spiritual needs. Scriptural boundaries will have to be crossed for such a study to gain a good understanding of God's teachings. Any emerging trend will support the validity of the basic assumption. The fulfillment of historical events, prophesied before their occurrence, will be the best confirmation of this hypothesis.

The comparison of all religious scriptures will be beyond the scope of this work. This study will primarily focus on the Semitic religions. The three Semitic religion i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam collectively claim their adherents to constitute a majority of the world population. Limiting the scope of this discussion to the Semitic religions simplifies the analysis and minimizes many basic questions because these three religions trace their origins to the Prophet Abraham. In principle, their concept of God's unity is consistent except a variation put forth by the Christians, but they still affirm the oneness of God. In this book, the basic claim of each of the three Semitic religions will be stated; their scriptures will be

reviewed in chronological order to identify any emerging trends that would then be followed up in subsequent scriptures. Historical records will also be used to determine the fulfillment of events prophesied in the scriptures. The comparison of prophesied events against historical records, to confirm their occurrence, will highlight the thoroughness of these prophecies, thus confirming their divine origin.

CHAPTER TWO

BASIC BELIEFS

The fundamental beliefs of the three Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are described below. It is appreciated that variations exist among certain sub-groups within each religious group. However, these variations will not alter their basic beliefs.

JUDAISM

Judaism is one of the oldest Semitic religions in the world and has a significant influence on the development of two other Semitic religions Christianity and Islam. The central doctrine of Judaism is the Unity of God and the belief that Jews are God's chosen people. The Jews believe that God wants them to be an example for all mankind. Judaism, therefore, is an ethnic religion and its history is the history of the Hebrew people. These people trace their ancestry to the great patriarch, Abraham, who lived in Chaldaeia around 2,000 BC. Chaldaeia is in the eastern part of the Fertile Crescent, which extends from the areas of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean.

The Chaldaeans used to worship idols and images, and Abraham revolted against this practice. Abraham received revelations from God and during one of these revelations God made a Covenant with his people. In this Covenant, God promised Abraham's descendents all the land of Canaan and God's protection in exchange for their homage and allegiance. The followers of Judaism still call themselves the sons of the Covenant or B'nai B'rith in Hebrew.

Abraham spoke the Hebrew language and his descendents, therefore, are called Hebrew people. According to the Old Testament Abraham's grandson, Jacob, was named Israel by God. Hence his descendents were known as the Israelites. Jacob had twelve sons from whom descended the Biblical Twelve Tribes of Israel.

One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, was appointed a governor of an Egyptian province by a benevolent king due to Divine intervention.^{1,2} During his time many Israelites migrated from their homeland in the Canaan-Babylonia area to Egypt. The later Egyptian kings, however, treated the Israelites badly who spent the next three hundred years in bondage and servitude under their Egyptian masters.^{3,4} Some five hundred years after Abraham, the great prophet Moses arose from among the Israelites living in Egypt and unified them. Moses eventually led them out of Egypt towards the land of Canaan.⁵

On the way to Canaan, Moses experienced a vision on Mount Sinai⁶ and received the famous Ten Commandments from God.⁷ These Ten Commandments later became the

foundation of the Mosaic Law. Although Judaism contains teachings going as far back as Noah and Abraham, Moses essentially established its present form and structure.

After Moses' death, the Jews wandered in the desert for nearly forty years as a Divine punishment for their disobedience of the Law of Moses. The Israelites finally settled down in the Canaan area and around the year 1043 BC, the first Israelite kingdom was established by King Saul. The two great prophet-kings of the Israelites, David and his son Solomon followed Saul. After Solomon's death, the united kingdom of Israel broke up into two separate kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel lasted until 722 BC when the Assyrians conquered its capital, Samaria. The Southern Kingdom of Judah lasted till 586 BC when the Babylonians captured its capital, Jerusalem. The Babylonians exiled the Jews from Jerusalem and destroyed their holy city. It was only when Cyrus of Persia defeated the Babylonians in 539 BC that the exiled Israelites were allowed to return to their homeland and rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

The six hundred year period, from the start of the United Kingdom to year 400 BC, is one of the most glorious periods in the Israelite history. It was during this period that most of the known prophets appeared such as Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, Ezekiel, Jo, Ezra and Malachi. It was also during this period that the founders of four other great religions, Mahavira, Buddha, Confucius and Lao-Tze, appeared in India and China. With the death of Malachi, the last of the Israelite prophets, the Old Testament comes to a close around 400 BC.

The Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible as the Jews prefer to call it, is the sacred book of Judaism. It contains not only the five books of Torah revealed to Moses, but many other books attributed to later prophets such as Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Job, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Zechariah and Malachi. Besides the Hebrew Bible, there are two other texts considered sacred by the Jews: the Mishnah and the Talmud. The Mishnah is a collection of religious laws arranged in six orders, which cover agricultural levies (tithes), festivals, marriage, civil laws, sacrifices and ritual purity. The Mishnah was codified around 200 A.D. under Rabbi Judah the Prince. The Talmuds are commentaries on the Mishnah and were written by the middle of the sixth century A.D. in Aramaic, the everyday language of the Jewish people of the time.

THE ESSENTIAL BELIEFS OF JUDAISM

Although there are many beliefs in Judaism, the following 13 articles of faith are considered essential:

1. God
2. There is only one God

3. The non-corporal nature of God
4. God is the First and Last
5. God is All-knowing, All-Seeing and the Lord
6. Prayers should only be directed to God
7. God rewards good and punishes bad deeds
8. The words of the prophets are true
9. Moses is the chief of all prophets
10. The present Torah is the same as revealed to Moses
11. The Law of Torah is the last Law from God
12. The coming of the Messiah
13. The belief in the Resurrection (life after death)

The central belief expressed in the Hebrew Bible concerns the Unity and love of God. This is evident from the Hebrew declaration of faith, the Shemah,⁸ which could be considered equivalent to the Islamic *kalima* (proclamation of faith):

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is One.
 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
 And with all your soul and with all your might
 And these words which I command you shall be upon your heart"

THE CODES FOR SOCIAL AND MORAL CONDUCT

The Hebrew Bible contains hundreds of codes and directives for the Israelites by which to conduct their spiritual and worldly affairs. Of these, the famous Ten Commandments⁷ are summarized below:

1. You shall have no other gods besides Me
2. You shall not make any image or likeness of anything in heaven above
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. You shall not commit murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness
10. You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's

Some additional directives, besides the Ten Commandments, are:

- You shall not oppress your neighbor
- You shall do no injustice in weight or in measure
- You shall seek no vengeance
- Open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor

- You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind
- You shall do no injustice in judgement; you shall not be partial toward the poor, nor favor the mighty
- You shall not wrong the stranger. The stranger among you shall be as the home-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself

WORSHIP IN JUDAISM

All acts of worship in Judaism are based on three principles, which are:

- (i) God should be praised and worshipped
- (ii) Humans should ask his Lord for all his needs
- (iii) Humans can commune with God through prayer

The various acts of worship in Judaism including prayer, singing of God's praise, fasting, observing Sabbath, offering sacrifices, are based on the three fundamental principles listed above. The various rituals of Jewish worship are:

THE PRAYER

There are three daily prayers, which include the Shemah and other passages from the Hebrew Bible and the post-biblical works. The prayer also includes meditation and asking of individual favors and blessings. The prayers are said in the morning, afternoon and evening, either at home or in the synagogue.

MEZUZAH

This is a small wooden case inscribed with the Shemah and another discourse from Deuteronomy. This case is fastened to the doorpost of one's home and each time, upon going out or coming in, the Mezuzah is touched with the tips of two fingers, which are then kissed. The entire ritual is symbolic of remembering God while entering and leaving home.

FEAST OF PASSOVER

The entire family participates in this annual ritual, which takes place during the Feast of Passover. The occasion marks the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. The ritual celebrations include the invoking of blessings, singing of the first chapter of Genesis and saying of prayers.

OBSERVING OF SABBATH

This is the Jewish weekly holy day and begins on Friday after sunset and ends at sunset on Saturday. This day is essentially devoted to services in the synagogue and prayers. No work of any kind is permitted on this day. The orthodox Jews do not travel on this day.

KOSHER FOODS

It is the duty of Jews to eat kosher food, food fit according to Jewish dietary laws. According to these laws, meat and dairy products must not be served in the same meal.

Only meat of certain animals is permitted; pork and shellfish are forbidden. Furthermore, the animals must be slaughtered in the proper Jewish way.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is the faith with the largest following in the world. The term 'Christian' was used for the first time after Jesus' crucifixion, for people who associated themselves with the teachings of Christos. Although other religions like Zoroastrians, Buddhism and Confucianism are also named after their respective founders, the attachment and the reverence, which the Christians display for Jesus is quite different. The person of Jesus is worshipped by his followers and is central to the teachings and philosophy of Christianity. Strangely, no other prophet has appeared in history whose birth, life, death and teachings has been the subject of greater controversy than Jesus Christ's.

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the province of Judaea, somewhere between 4-7 B.C. The Christians believe, and majority of the Muslims concurs, that Jesus was born to Mary without a biological father. Joseph, Mary's husband, is reported to have married her after the conception of Jesus.⁹ Jesus was born among the Israelites and the Gospels trace his ancestry to Prophet David, through his "father" Joseph. Jesus, therefore, was not only born a Jew but was also raised and educated according to the Judaic tradition.

Around the age of thirteen, John (the Baptist) baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, who was then heralding the coming of the Messiah. Early in his life, Jesus became a Jewish rabbi, but was opposed by the orthodox Jewish priests for preaching his radical teachings. When he claimed to be the Messiah promised in the Jewish scriptures, the Jews vehemently objected to his claim. Their objection to Jesus' claim was their belief that the Messiah's advent would occur after the reappearance of Prophet Elijah who according to Jewish scriptures had ascended to heaven. Jesus' response to their objection was that the requirement of Elijah's return had been fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist and hence his claim was valid.¹⁰

Jesus' ministry in the Palestine area lasted about three years. During this short period he is said to have performed a number of miracles and healed many a people of their illnesses. Jesus' teachings emphasized the gentler elements of the Mosaic teachings and condemned the rigid, often cruel, application of the Law. His open criticism of the Jewish priests and his rapidly increasing popularity among the masses made an enemy of both the Jews and the Romans. As a result, the Jewish religious authorities that found him guilty of blasphemy and falsehood and recommended to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, that he be crucified, first questioned Jesus. Pilate believed in Jesus' innocence but, at the demand of the Jewish people and the priests, condemned him to crucifixion.

Jesus was put on the cross on a Friday afternoon and was there for a period of two to three hours. Consistent with the Jewish practice of observing Sabbath at sunset, Jesus' body was removed from the cross. Two other thieves, who were also crucified at the same time as Jesus, were alive at that time. Again, in conformity with the prevalent practice, their legs were broken to ensure their death. Jesus' legs were not broken because he appeared dead to the Roman soldiers. According to the Bible, Pilate was surprised to hear of Jesus' death in that short time. Later, his "body" was handed over to his secret disciples who placed it in a cave and wrapped it in a linen cloth impregnated with herbs and spices. Later, Jesus was seen alive by a number of his disciples on their way to Emmaus. Jesus ate and rested with them and on a different occasion, told them that he was the real person and not a spirit. He even invited one of his disciples, Thomas, to feel his wounds that were inflicted as a result of his crucifixion. Later according to the Christian belief, Jesus ascended to heaven.

DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY AFTER JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

Although all religions change with time, the changes that occurred in Christianity after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, affected the fundamental beliefs and principles of this religion.

The developments in Christianity, from Jesus' crucifixion when there were only a handful of devoted followers to the time when it became a dominant force in much of Middle East and Europe, can be divided into two distinct phases: the Jewish Phase and the Greek-Roman Phase.

THE JEWISH PHASE (30-70 AD)

In the beginning, Christianity was totally limited to the Jewish people. The Christians God had the same attributes as the God of the Jews. The early Christians also followed the Jewish traditions of circumcision, offering animal sacrifices and observing the Sabbath. They did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God in the literal sense. Based on recent discoveries, the early Christians believed that Jesus had survived the ordeal of his crucifixion and, therefore, did not subscribe to the idea of his physical resurrection. The only difference between these early Christians and the Jews was that the former believed in Jesus as the Messiah and considered faith in God more important than the following of the rigid Mosaic Law or the rituals of the rabbis.

THE GREEK-ROMAN PHASE (70-500 AD)

Initially, in accordance with Jesus' teachings, his disciples preached only to the Hebrew peoples. After Jesus' crucifixion, Saul (later known as Paul), a Jewish rabbi, accepted Christianity. His conversion radically changed this practice. Amid strong protests from the apostles, he encouraged his followers to preach to the non-Jews (gentiles) as well. He traveled extensively throughout Asia Minor and Eastern Europe, preaching the new religion to the gentiles or non-Israelites. The Greek civilization was very receptive to the teachings of the new faith. Having no emotional or traditional attachments with the Judaic tenets, the

Greek converts quickly gave up many Jewish customs such as animal sacrifice, circumcision and the observing of the Sabbath and the Law.

The accession of Constantine the Great as the Roman Emperor in 313 AD was the turning point in the history of Christianity. Christianity became the official religion of the Eastern Roman Empire; this proclamation brought it great respect and prestige. Armed with this powerful political backing and supported by Greek intellectualism, Christianity started spreading rapidly among the tribes of northern and Western Europe. Consequently, the number and influence of the Greek Christians increased, and the fundamental beliefs and practices of this new faith started to undergo significant changes. The concept of God changed from the personal, loving God of the Israelites to an impersonal, supreme deity, palatable to the Greek philosophical rationalism. Similarly, while the Hebrew Christians were ingrained in the strong monotheism of the Old Testament and could only accept Jesus as the *Son* of God only in a metaphorical sense as their other prophets, the Greeks having no such reservation, took the words literally. The Greeks used to believe in many gods and deities and had no intellectual hurdle in transforming a prophet into a god.

It was during this Hellenistic period, therefore, that the divinity of Jesus Christ and his resurrection after crucifixion became popular Christian beliefs. It was also in the same period that the terminology of Trinity came into existence to explain the combination of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

THE ESSENTIAL BELIEFS OF CHRISTIANITY

Although there are over 250 sects of the Christians today, some essential beliefs are shared by all of them. These basic beliefs are:

1. Belief in God, Almighty, Creator of all things.
2. Belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and the (literal) Son of God.
3. Belief in Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
4. Belief in eternal sin (that man is born a sinner).
5. Belief that Jesus Christ came down to earth from heaven for the salvation of mankind.
6. Belief that the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is the only proper guidance for mankind.
7. Belief in baptism as a remission of sin.
8. Belief that sins can be forgiven through repentance.
9. Belief in life after death.
10. Belief that those who repent and follow Jesus Christ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Christians not only believe that Jesus Christ is alive and accessible, but also that he is directing the affairs of the Church from his seat in heaven and that one day he will return to this world to establish the Kingdom of God. Except for a small minority of Unitarians and Universalists, all Christians worship Jesus Christ in one form or another.

WORSHIP IN CHRISTIANITY

Worship in Christianity varies considerably with the sect and the geographic location in the world. Worship may be private and individual or congregational. Private worship generally takes the form of "silent prayer" invoking God's mercy and help usually through the person of Jesus Christ.

Congregational worship in the churches takes on the form of an elaborate pageant involving priests in their ornate robes and music sung by the choir. The congregation usually joins in the singing of hymns and psalms while the priest may deliver a sermon.

Many Christians fast during lent, a forty-day period before Easter. The fasting is in memory of the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry.

An important Christian rite involves baptism. In the early days of Christianity, baptism marked the initiation into the new faith. The practice of baptism was initiated before Jesus' ministry and John (the Baptist) baptized Jesus himself. Today, some churches still carry out this rite on the confession of personal faith by believers. Other churches perform baptism on newborn children on the promise that they will be "confirmed" in their faith later.

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

To properly understand the teachings of Jesus Christ one has to turn to the Gospels. The only place in the Gospels where an attempt has been made by the narrators to quote Jesus Christ word-for-word, is the account of the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon illustrates the emphasis of Jesus' teachings, which was directed towards an unpretentious, honest and altruistic life; excerpts from this sermon are reproduced below:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven...

You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgement.

You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after he has committed adultery with her already in his heart...

You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that you resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also...

Give to him that asks of thee, and from him that would borrow, turn not thou away.

You have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you...

Take heed that you not give your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise you have no reward.

ISLAMIC BELIEFS

Basically, Islamic teachings can be divided into two broad categories, namely belief (*Iman*) and practice (*Amal*). The former deals with the philosophy of Islam while the latter deals with its practical implementation. The beliefs in Islam are not based on superstition or irrational conviction. They are presented in the Holy Quran in a systematic way and are supported by logical arguments. In Islam a belief must make sense to the believer; otherwise it becomes a dogma or a superstition. There are many beliefs in Islam but the five important Articles of Faith are given below:

1. Belief in God
2. Belief in the Angels
3. Belief in the Prophets
4. Belief in the Revealed Books
5. Belief in the Day of Judgment

The above Articles of Faith are explained below:

BELIEF IN GOD

The concept of God is central in Islam and the teachings of the Holy Quran. God is the Supreme Being Who exists independently. He is the sole Creator of the universe, the Maker of heaven and earth. According to Islam, no event occurs in this universe without God's

knowledge and implicit consent. He is the ultimate source of every action and event. He is the Nourisher and Sustainer of all creation; He is their Lord.

For human beings, He is a very personal God. He listens to their supplications and prayers. He provides for all their needs. He overlooks their shortcomings and forgives their excesses. He is always very close to them whenever they need Him, in distress or prosperity. He deals with His creation directly, without any intermediary, with mercy, love and compassion.

The most highly emphasized aspect of God in Islam is His unqualified Unity. God is One. He has no associates. He is neither born of anyone nor gives birth to anyone. He does not share His supremacy with any one. To associate partners with God is a grave sin in Islam. The proper Arabic word for God is Allah. The concept of a Supreme Being also exists in other religions and in this respect the word "Allah" represents:

- EL of the Canaanites.
- ELOHIM or YAHWEH (JEHOVAH) of the Hebrews.
- ELAH in the Aramaic language of Jesus Christ.
- YAZDAN or KHUDA of the Persians.
- BRAHMAN in Sanskrit.
- DEUS in Latin.
- THEOS in Greek.
- DIEU in French.
- GOTT in German, and
- GOD in the English language.

Although the proper name of God is Allah, He is generally known by His various attributes that describe His various traits or manifestations. God's attributes are innumerable since human intellect cannot possibly comprehend every aspect of the Supreme Being. Some of these attributes, mentioned in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet, are given in Appendix I.

BELIEF IN THE ANGELS

Angels are spiritual beings who carry out the assigned duties in accordance with God's commands. Although angels are spoken of as beings, they do not have the power to choose between right or wrong. In this respect they are inferior to human beings. The literal meaning of the word "angel" points more to the function of such beings rather than to their nature. The various tasks assigned to the angels include:

- bringing of divine revelations to the prophets
- bringing punishment upon their enemies
- giving glad tidings to the believers
- glorifying God with His praise
- keeping records of people's deeds

The Islamic concept of angels is consistent with that of Judaism and Christianity. The names of some of the angels that the Muslims believe in are also mentioned in the Bible:

- Jibrail Gabriel in the Bible
- Mikau Michael in the Bible
- Israfeel Raphael in the Bible
- Izrail Israel in the Bible

BELIEF IN THE PROPHETS

Belief in all prophets is a fundamental article of Islamic faith. After Adam, the first known prophet, God continued to guide mankind through a number of prophets who appeared in all nations of the world for their guidance. In addition to believing in the prophets mentioned in the Quran, the Muslims also believe in the Israelite prophets mentioned in the Bible. They also believe in the prophets of other religions such as Zoroaster, Hinduism, Buddhism etc. The Quran mentions only twenty five prophets by name while the Bible mentions about fifty. Most of the Quranic prophets can be identified with their Biblical counterparts and are given in Appendix II.

The prophets are appointed by God and are His authorized spokesmen. They serve as a channel of communication between the divine and human worlds. The prophets have a mission and a mandate from God, which they carry out despite great opposition. The basic function of the prophets is to reform the people among whom they are raised and to bring them closer to God.

BELIEF IN THE REVEALED BOOKS

The Muslims not only believe in all the earlier prophets but also believe in the books revealed to them. The Quran mentions the following five revealed books:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| SUHAF | (Scrolls) of Abraham ¹¹ |
| TAURAT | (Torah) of Moses ^{12,13} |
| ZABUR | (Pslams) of David ¹⁴ |
| INJEEL | (Gospel) of Jesus Christ ¹⁵ |
| QURAN | of Prophet Muhammad ¹⁶ |

Except for the Quran, none of the other revealed books were authentically preserved during the lifetime of their respective prophets. The absolute accuracy and authenticity of these books, therefore, is questionable.

BELIEF IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

Belief in the Day of Judgment is the second most emphasized doctrine in the Quran. According to the Quran, the entire universe will come to an end on that day; the dead will be resurrected and judged; people with good deeds will be rewarded and sent to heaven while those with bad deeds will be punished in hell. The concept of hell in Quran is more of a reformatory, where people will spend a limited time before eventually entering heaven, which will last forever. The Quran gives many signs of this day but only God knows its exact time.

OTHER IMPORTANT MUSLIM BELIEFS

In addition to the five fundamental beliefs, there are many other beliefs, which are also important in Islam. Some of these are mentioned here:

- *Taqdir* or Divine Decree, controls the eventual outcome of all actions in this universe. However, Muslims are required to strive and pray for the desired outcome. God can, out of His infinite mercy and compassion, change the decreed outcome.
- Every person is born innocent and free from sin. Sin is a conscious breach of God's commandments.
- God always sends His guidance and warning through his prophets before inflicting His punishment on people.
- Faith is not meaningful if it is followed blindly, without reasoning or understanding. A person should use his powers of reasoning and reflect upon God's teachings.
- Every person is responsible for his own deeds and that no one carries the burden of another. On the Day of Judgment, no intercession will be accepted on behalf of another and each soul will be rewarded according to what it had earned.
- God sent all prophets and that no distinction should be made among them in this respect.

ISLAMIC ACTS OF WORSHIP

The purpose of worshipping God in Islam is to evoke His help and guidance in leading a purposeful life and to acquire His attributes. The five fundamental acts of worship in Islam are:

1. Declaration of Faith
2. Prayer
3. Fasting
4. Zakat
5. Pilgrimage

A brief description of the above fundamental acts of Islamic worship follows:

FAITH

The declaration of faith (*kalima*) is the first step towards the implementation of Islamic faith. This declaration consists of two small sentences, which are the essence of Islam, and marks the act of conversion to Islam:

There is none worthy of worship except God. Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

PRAYER

Saying the obligatory prayer is the most frequently repeated injunction in the Holy Quran. The Muslims are enjoined to offer five daily prayers facing Mecca.

FASTING

During the month of Ramadan all able, adult Muslims are required to fast from before sunrise to sunset. During this period, eating or drinking is totally prohibited and the individual is required to abstain from vulgar speech and acts. Travelers and sick people are temporarily exempted from fasting but must however make up for the lost fasts at another time or through charity if the person is incapable of fasting due to age or medical condition. The main purpose for fasting is as follows:

- to obeys God's commandment.
- fasting makes one feel humble and focuses attention towards prayer and almsgiving. It encourages a person to better relate to the condition of the poor and underprivileged.
- fasting is a mini sacrifice of one's physical needs. Prayers and other forms of worships and generosity are more beneficial and spiritually more rewarding during this time.
- being hungry, people remember and offer thanks to God for His Mercy and Grace in providing for them.
- fasting is an excellent activity and a good training for the human body and soul.

ZAKAT

Zakat is the obligatory levy on the savings of the rich and is based on the individual's wealth. The rate of contribution varies with the kind of property but, on average, is about 2.5% of the total value of the assets owned at the end of the year. The Zakat monies are intended for the following purposes:

- Relieving poverty and distress
- Helping poor in debt
- Providing comfort and convenience for travelers
- Providing stipends for scholarships
- Providing ransom for prisoners of war
- Propagation of Islam
- Meeting the expenses for the collection of Zakat
- Other things beneficial for the society

Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)

Hajj must be performed at least once in their lifetime, if economic and political conditions permit. The focal point of this pilgrimage is the remembrance of the great sacrifice of his son Ishmael that Prophet Abraham was prepared to make at God's command. The pilgrims visit Ka'ba, the house of God that Prophet Abraham repaired or built some 4000 years ago.

REFERENCES

1. Holy Quran 12:44-57
2. Genesis 41:1-57
3. Holy Quran 2:50
4. Exodus 1:8-22
5. Exodus 3:12-22
6. Exodus 3:2-3
7. Exodus 20:1-17
8. Deuteronomy 6:4-6
9. Matthew 1:18-21
10. Matthew 11:14
11. Matthew Chapter. 5
12. Holy Quran 87:20
13. Holy Quran 3:4
14. Holy Quran 5:45
15. Holy Quran 4:164
16. Holy Quran 5:47
17. Holy Quran 6:20

CHAPTER THREE

SCRIPTURE RELIABILITY

Before delving into the sensitive area of scripture reliability, it must be emphasized that the comments in this chapter are based on an objective literature search. All reference have been personally verified and properly referenced to direct the reader to its source. Moreover, only reputable references from the respective religions have been used. The intent is to analyze each scripture critically and objectively, so that their absolute accuracy could be established to enable a meaningful comparison.

Absolute and unqualified freedom from external interference is an essential prerequisite for books, which form the basis of our religious beliefs. A book revealed by God is superior to its human counterpart because God's book will **never** lead one astray. His book, therefore, will contain the absolute truth and NO error or contradiction. If our concept of God does not imply such a trust in His revelations then that concept has no value. Communication from God cannot be in error. If communications from God can err, then there is no ground for holding Divine teachings superior to human teachings. Thus, belief in a Divine book entails belief that the book is free from any error. It is possible, however, that a book originally revealed by God may come to suffer from human interference but that will occur only with His discretion. If the contents of a book have suffered additions and subtractions at human hands, then that book can no longer serve as an absolute guide.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Many versions of the Old Testament exist today. Due to the inconsistencies among the versions and the changes within the editions of the same version, it is impossible for such a study to accept them all as the original word of God. Conversely, it is equally difficult to single out any version as the absolute word of God. A study of the various versions or editions within the same versions highlights human interference to the Biblical text. At times, these changes are minor, and at times, gross. The very fact that the Biblical text has been tampered with, irrespective of its magnitude, makes it unsuitable for such a comparison. Moreover, no original manuscripts of the Old Testament had been available to Biblical editors; the absolute authority of any version can therefore never be established. Suffice it to say that the current text of the Old Testament cannot be regarded as the original word of God, preserved in its pristine purity. The Old Testament itself provides evidence to this effect:¹

*"How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'?
But, behold, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie".
The wise men shall be put to shame, they shall be dismayed and taken;
lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord,*

The Bible itself records evidence of interpolation in its text. One such example is to be found in the "Book of Ezra", which is also known as the "Greek Book of Ezra", "The Third Book of Ezra", or "the Second Book of Ezra," and was part of the earlier Bible. It was later dropped from the Bible on the recommendation of Jerome, a notable Christian priest who was entrusted by the then Pope with the task of editing the Bible (ca 370-420 A.D.). Jerome's recommendation was based on the ground that the book was unreliable as its Hebrew original was no longer available.² The very fact that a whole book could be excluded from the existing Bible is ample proof of human interpolation. The book of Ezra provides evidence that Ezra rewrote it from memory after the original Bible was destroyed.

Behold, Lord, I will go, as thou hast commanded me and reprove the people which are present: but they that shall be born afterward, who shall admonish them? thus the world is set in darkness, and they that dwell therein are without light. For thy law is burnt, therefore, no man knoweth the things that are done of thee, or the works that shall begin. But if I have found grace before thee, send the Holy Ghost into me, and I shall write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning, which were written in thy law, that men may find thy path, and that they which will live in the latter days may live. And he answered me, saying, Go thy way, gather the people together, and say unto them that they seek thee not for forty days. But look thou prepare thee many box trees, and take with thee Sarea, Dabria, Selemia, Ecanus, and Asiel, these five which are ready to write swiftly; And come hither, and I shall light a candle of understanding in thine heart, which shall not be put out, till the things be performed which thou shalt begin to write.³

In forty days they wrote two hundred and four books.⁴

From this it appears that Ezra and the five scribes worked hard for forty days in seclusion and with God's help composed 204 books. It can thus be concluded:

- (a) that in the time of Prophet Ezra, who lived about 450 years before Jesus, the Torah and the books of the other Prophets had become extinct.
- (b) that no reliable copy of these books was then in existence.
- (c) that Ezra rewrote the books from memory.

According to Jewish history, Ezra himself doubted parts of the restored text on the ground of unreliability of his memory, and left the final decision about them to Elijah. Evidence to this effect is provided in the Jewish Encyclopedia:⁵

He showed his doubts concerning the correctness of some words of the text by placing points over them. Should Elijah, said he, approve of the text, the points will be disregarded; should he disapprove, the doubtful words will be removed from the text.

The Jewish Encyclopedia also provides additional evidence of Ezra re-writing the Old Testament up to his time:

1. *It was forgotten but Ezra restored it.*⁶
2. *Ezra re-established the text of Pentateuch, introducing therein the Assyrian or square characters.*⁷

Of Ezra's memory, Christian scholars themselves express great doubts. Adam Clark, the well-known commentator of the Bible, says in his commentary that here Ezra mistakenly writes the names of grandsons instead of sons and attempts to reconcile such contradictions are useless:

*The sons of Benjamin; Bela and Becher, and Jediael, three;...*⁸

*Now Benjamin begat Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third, Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth.*⁹

Jewish scholars also take the view that Ezra did not quite know whether a given person was the son or grandson of another person.¹⁰ When Jewish and Christian scholars doubt Ezra's memory, how can ordinary people, whether Jews, Christians or anyone else be satisfied about the spiritual value of such a book. Such a book will have little or no authority over important matters. True, the books were revealed, but **revealed** only means that God helped in their composition. It does not mean that God revealed the text, word for word.

The Torah of today, therefore is not the Torah which was revealed to Moses. It is not even the Torah which Ezra recorded from his memory, parts of which he himself doubted, for Ezra wrote 204 books, and the current Old Testament does not contain 204 books. The followers of the Old Testament regard it as a revealed book. Christians also describe it as a Book of God, and Muslims also think that it was a revelation. Being a revealed book is the first criterion to believe in the message, but the most important criterion is the preservation of that message in its authentic form. No doubt, Jews, Christians and Muslims agree that God spoke to the Prophets of the Old Testament. However they no longer believe, and external and internal evidence no longer support the view, that the record of the current Old Testament wholly constitutes the absolute word of God as it was first revealed in its pristine purity.

In spite of the numerous revisions and updates, a number of internal inconsistencies are still evident in many books of the Old Testament. Deuteronomy, Genesis, Judges, etc. contain such inconsistencies, which reconfirm human interpolation. A detailed comparison of such inconsistencies is reported elsewhere.^{10, 11, 12, 13}

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament also exists in many versions. The books of the New Testament were not written by Jesus himself or by his principal disciples. The current New Testament consists of twenty-seven short Greek writings, commonly called *books*, the first five of which are historical in character. Four of these books, written by Matthew,

John, Luke and Mark, form the core of the New Testament and are regarded as Canonical. Strange as it may sound, they deal only with the last two or three years of Jesus' life and devote what might seem an excessive detail in the week immediately preceding his alleged death.¹⁴ They were written decades after his departure from Judea by people whom he may never have met. Although books were written by Jesus' main disciples and, according to Church records, were commonly used in the early Church, these books were not included in the current New Testament. Surprisingly, *obscure* authors' book form the main text of the New Testament. It becomes rather obvious that the books written much later and by less qualified authors have been given more credibility. Manuscripts of some books written by the apostles, namely Thomas, Barnabas, Hermas etc. have since been discovered. These books do not support the current Christian teachings regarding Jesus' crucifixion. This was most probably created through later interpolations in the original version of the New Testament. Again, no original manuscripts of any books in the New Testament exist and hence the absolute authenticity of the New Testament can never be established.¹³

The Bible itself accepts the fact that its text has been significantly altered over time. That acknowledgement is contained in the preface of the various Bibles in different words, which are reproduced in Appendices III, IV, V; excerpts from three versions are reproduced below (emphasis added by the author).

The Revised Standard Version (RSV) published by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of the Christ in the United States, edited by John Stirling and published in 1901 states:¹⁵

*The Revised Standard Version of the Bible is an authorized revision of the American Standard Version published in 1901, which was the revision of the King James Version published in 1611. The first English version of the Scriptures made by direct translation from the original Hebrew and Greek, and the first to be printed, was the work of William Tyndale. He met bitter opposition. **He was accused of willfully perverting the meaning of the Scriptures, and his New Testaments were ordered to be burned as 'untrue translations. He was finally betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and in October 1536, was publicly executed and burned at the stake.***

*Yet Tyndale's work became the **foundation** of subsequent English versions, notably those of Coverdale, 1535; Thomas Matthew (probably a pseudonym for John Rogers), 1537; the Great Bible, 1539; the Geneva Bible, 1560; and the Bishops's Bible, 1568. In 1582 a translation of the New Testament, made from the Latin Vulgate by Roman Catholic scholars, was published at Rheims.*

The translators who made the King James version took into account all of these preceding versions; and comparison shows that it owes something to each of them. It kept felicitous phrases and apt expressions from whatever source, which had stood the test of public usage. It owed most, especially in the New Testament, to Tyndale.

The King James version had to compete with the Geneva Bible in popular usage; but in the end it prevailed; and for more than two and a half centuries no other authorized translation of the Bible into English was made. The King James Version became the "Authorized Version" of the English-speaking peoples.

The King James Version has been with good reason been termed "the noblest monument of English prose". Its revisers in 1881 expressed admiration for "its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression...the music of its cadences, the felicities of its rhythm". It entered, as no other book has, into the making of the personal character and the public institutions of the English speaking peoples. We owe to it an incalculable debt.

*Yet the King James Version has **grave defects**. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of Biblical studies and the discovery of **many manuscripts more ancient than those upon which the King James Version was based, made it manifest that these defects are so many and so serious as to call for revision of the English translation**. The task was undertaken, by authority of the Church of England, in 1870. The English Revised Version of the Bible was published in 1881-1885; and the American Standard Version, its variant embodying the references of the American scholars associated in the work, was published in 1901.*

*Because of **unhappy experience with unauthorized publications in the two decades between 1881 and 1901, which tampered with the text** of the English Revised Version in the supposed interest of the American public, the American Standard Version was copyrighted, to protect the text from unauthorized changes. For more than two years the Committee worked upon the problem of whether or not revision should be undertaken; and if so, what should be its nature and extent. In **the end the decision was reached that there is need for a thorough revision** of the version of 1901, which will stay as close to the Tyndale-King James tradition as it can in the light of our present knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek texts and their meaning on the one hand, and our present understanding of English on the other.*

Each section has submitted its work to the scrutiny of the members of the other section; and the charter of the Committee requires that all changes be agreed upon by a two-thirds vote of the total membership of the Committee. The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published in 1946. The publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, was authorized by vote of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. in 1951.

*The problem of establishing the correct Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Old Testament is very different from the corresponding problem in the New Testament. For the New Testament we have a large number of Greek manuscripts, preserving **many variant forms of the text**. Some of them were made only two or three centuries later than **the original composition of the books**. **For the Old Testament only late manuscripts survive, all** (with the exception of the Dead Sea texts of Isaiah and Habakkuk and some fragments of other books) based on a standardized form of the text established many centuries after the books were written.*

*Sometimes it is evident that the text **has suffered** in transmission, but none of the versions provides a satisfactory restoration. Here we can only follow the best judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text. **Sometimes the present translation will be found to render a Hebrew word in a sense quite different from that of the traditional interpretation**. It has not been felt necessary in such cases to attach a footnote, because no change in the text is involved and it may be assumed that the new rendering was not adopted without convincing evidence. The analysis of*

*religious texts from the ancient Near East has made clearer the significance of ideas and practices recorded in the Old Testament. Many difficulties and obscurities, of course, remain. Where the choice between two meanings is particularly difficult or doubtful, we have given an alternative rendering in a footnote. **If in the judgement of the Committee the meaning of a passage is quite uncertain or obscure, either because of corruption in the text or because of the inadequacy of our present knowledge of the language, that fact is indicated by a note. It should not be assumed, however, that the Committee was entirely sure or unanimous concerning every rendering not so indicated. To record all minority views was obviously out of the question***"

*The King James Version of the New Testament was based upon a Greek text that was **marred by mistakes, containing the accumulated errors of fourteen centuries of manuscript copying.** It was essentially the Greek text of the New Testament as edited by Beza, 1589, who closely followed that published by Erasmus, 1516-1535, which was based upon a few medieval manuscripts. **The earliest and best of the eight manuscripts which Erasmus consulted was from the tenth century, and he made the least use of it because it differed most from the commonly received text; Beza had access to two manuscripts of great value, dating from the fifth and sixth centuries, but he made very little use of them because they differed from the text published by Erasmus.***

We now possess many more ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, and are far better equipped to seek to recover the original wording of the Greek text.

The revisers in the 1870's had most of the evidence that we now have for the Greek text, though the most ancient of all extant manuscripts of the Greek New Testament were not discovered until 1931. But they lacked the resources which discoveries within the past eighty years have afforded for understanding the vocabulary, grammar and idioms of the Greek New Testament.

The Revised Standard Version (RSV), Catholic Edition, prepared by the Catholic Biblical Association of Great Britain and published by the London Catholic Truth Society also affirms the above fact, though in different words and states:¹⁶

*For four hundred years, following upon the great upheaval of the Reformation, Catholics and Protestants have gone their separate ways and **suspected each other's translations of the Bible of having in some way manipulated in the interests of doctrinal presuppositions.** It must be admitted that these suspicions were not always without foundation.*

*In the present edition the aim has not been to improve the translation as such. **No doubt there are many places where a different rendering might have been chosen on critical grounds.** This has been avoided. But there are other places where, the **critical evidence being overly balanced, considerations of Catholic tradition have favored a particular rendering or the inclusion of a passage omitted by the RSV translators.***

*In the Old Testament it has not been thought necessary to make any changes in the text. There is, however, the very important difference in the number of books. **Catholic Bibles include seven extra books and parts of two others.** These are known to Catholics as "deuterocanoical" and are regarded as an integral part of the Canon of the Old Testament.*

A word must be said here about the origin of these books. In the days of Jesus Christ, the Jews had no precisely defined (in the sense of officially closed) Canon of the Scriptures. Besides the books of the Hebrew Canon as we now know it, there were others of more recent origin (mostly of the first and second centuries B.C.) which were held in great esteem but whose exact status had not been finally determined. Though many of them had been written in Hebrew or Aramaic they seem to have circulated mainly outside Palestine, in a Greek translation or text, among the Greek-speaking Jews of the Dispersion, especially in Egypt. The books were less acceptable to the Jews of the Pharisaic tradition in Jerusalem, but many fragments of them in Hebrew and Aramaic have been found at Qumran where there was a religious community distinct from the Pharisees.

The first Christians were Aramaic-speaking Jews of Palestine and they used the Hebrew Scriptures. Very soon the Greek-speaking Jewish and Gentile converts outnumbered those of Aramaic speech; and consequently the Bible they used, namely the Greek Septuagint translation which included the books referred to above, came into general use.

The Bible published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (Jehovah's witness) published in 1961 also affirm the above views (Appendix 3) but in different words:¹⁷

An effort was put forth to bring about even greater consistency in the renderings of the related parts of the Holy Scriptures, such as in harmonizing with the original Hebrew readings the reading of quotations made in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Since the one-volume edition of the Holy Scriptures was to contain no footnotes, many footnote readings that had appeared in the earlier translation in six distinct volumes were lifted and put in the main text of the one-volume edition. This does not mean that the earlier rendering that was now replaced was rejected. Rather, the purpose was to attain to closer conformity to the literal reading in the original languages. All this process has resulted in revisions in the main text of the translation.

It is obvious from the above that none of the Biblical texts available today can be considered as originals. It can only be considered as the best human effort to reconstruct the originals. The text have been agreed to by a 2/3rd majority vote and is **based on the best judgement of competent scholars** who were humans. That "recreated original" has itself been revised several times for various reasons. Hence, the current Bible, by its own admission, cannot be considered as God's original word. This important point has to be remembered in any critical analysis of the scriptures. An objective analysis of the variations among the versions highlights gross differences with certain verses and even books missing among them.

The use of different words in the various biblical texts is widespread. Contrary to the position taken by Christians, the choice of different words in the various versions and editions do significantly change the meaning, especially when critically analyzed.

An excellent account of the oldest Biblical documents, on which the Bible is based is contained in a book titled "Gospel Parallels" published by Thomas Nelson & Sons. It classifies the origins and dates of all surviving Biblical manuscripts based on their texts or families. It states:

None of the original manuscripts of the New Testament have survived, nor, presumably any direct copies of the original manuscripts. "What we have are copies of copies. Into these copies crept errors; moreover additions and "corrections" were sometimes made by the copyists, for the Bible of the early church was the Old Testament, and it was not imperative to copy gospels and epistles - still uncannonized- exactly word for word.....No manuscript can be better than that from which it was copied..."¹⁸

How did these families, or types of text, arise? It is quite obvious that errors, corrections and additions made in Rome would be perpetuated in manuscripts copied at Rome, and not at Alexandria or Antioch or Caesarea. Each religious center in the Church would preserve and add to its own peculiar readings and gradually the texts in and around the various leading communities took on their own characteristics. Moreover, when the bishops and scholars edited New Testament texts for local use by copying from the various manuscripts in their own communities, the character of the text in these communities became fixed..."¹⁹

It is also clear from the above evidence that the New Testament texts have been through numerous human interpolations and as such can, in no sense, be regarded as God's original word.

One final observation on this subject: Due to human *improvements* and *refinements* to Biblical text, it is now riddled with internal inconsistencies and scientific and historic errors. Science itself is the art of understanding and rationalizing natural laws. This basic understanding of laws enables the understanding of natural phenomenon. It is thus impossible for God to reveal or inspire a message for mankind, which contradicts His own laws. There is inconsistency even in Jesus' genealogy in the gospels according to Matthew and Luke. On these two subjects, M. Beaucalli in *The Bible, The Quran and Science* states:

Today, it is impossible not to admit the existence of scientific errors in the Bible. In view of all that the Biblical exegetes have taught us concerning the way in which the Judeo-Christian books were composed, how is it possible for these not to contain errors? We may therefore agree with Jean Guitto when he says: "The scientific errors in the Bible are the errors of mankind, for long ago man was like a child, as yet ignorant of science."²⁰

The two genealogies contained in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels give rise to problems of verisimilitude, and conformity with scientific data, and hence to authenticity. These problems are a source of great embarrassment to Christian commentators because the latter refuse to see in them what is very obviously the product of human imagination. The authors of the Sacerdotal text of Genesis, Sixth century B.C., had already been inspired by imagination for their genealogies of the first men. It again inspired Matthew and Luke for the data they did not take from the Old Testament."²¹

One must straight away note that the male genealogies have absolutely no relevance to Jesus. Were one to give a genealogy to Mary's only son, who was without a biological father, it would have to be the genealogy of his mother Mary."²²

The books of the New Testament are shrouded by controversy because their original texts are not available. What remains today are fragments of Greek and Latin translations which

have been used as a basis for translations to other languages. Christian theologians concede that they cannot determine if the fragments of Greek and Latin translations, that form the basis of the current New Testament, were literal or paraphrase translations from the original Hebrew (Aramaic) text, the language of Judea which Jesus and his disciples spoke.²³ This is borne out by the fact that Jesus uttered the Hebrew words *Eli lama sabachthani*²⁴ under extreme duress on the cross.

The date of actual writing and authorship of the four gospels of the New Testament are also disputed⁽²⁵⁾. The best that Christian historians can claim is that the Gospels were originally written between 65-90 A.D. i.e. about 35-60 years after Christ's departure from Judea.²⁶ As indicated above, this date is considered extremely conservative by other scholars. In any case, the fact remains that the books were written after Jesus' departure from Judea; thus Jesus never approved of their text. The books only contained the authors' view of events that were conveyed to them decades later by word of mouth. Similarly, doubts have been raised about the authenticity of the gospel authors and whether or not if any of them had actually spent any time with Jesus.²⁷

Based on their latest research, the best that Christian theologians claim is that only two of the four gospel authors had seen Jesus.²⁸ Going by their best evidence, half of the New Testament is based on hearsay or second or third hand accounts narrated to the authors. The personal inclinations of the narrators and authors must have had some effect on the recording of these events. Moreover, the New Testament was compiled in its present form in 325 A.D. by the Council of Niece which was organized by the Romans up to which time the Gospels were not canonized.²⁹ Of the hundreds of gospels (by conservative estimate) presented to the Council, only four were accepted by some dubious criterion. All remaining gospels were publicly destroyed by the Romans and their possession was declared illegal.³⁰ Why these four gospels were accepted while some others written by the apostles were ignored is an open question. Notable among the gospels written by Jesus' immediate disciples which were held in high esteem by the early Christians, but rejected by the Council were those of Barnabas, Thomas, James and Hermas. These Gospels are mentioned in many church writings and hence their existence cannot be denied. Copies of such gospels have since been discovered at Nag Hamadi in Egypt and are becoming available to the general public. These gospels deny the current Christian concept of Jesus' death on the cross and his supposed resurrection and ascension. A detailed review of the compilation of the current New Testament is reported elsewhere.^{31, 32, 33}

The compilation of the New Testament by the Romans was a political move and was totally devoid of any religious considerations for the Christians of that time. The massive proliferation of pagan customs in modern day Christianity is ample proof of the fact that the original Christian teachings have been modified.

Another point to consider is that Jesus was allegedly crucified at the age of around 32 years.³⁴ For the sake of discussion, if Jesus is considered as God's son from the Christian perspective, it is extremely strange that the New Testament does not continually record his teachings and actions from his birth till his supposed crucifixion. If Jesus were God's son,

according to Christian interpretation, and such belief existed during his stay in Judea, it was imperative that his every word and action would have been recorded and preserved to properly document this unique period in the history of mankind.

In spite of the fact that the New Testament was compiled by the Romans for political purposes, amid great protests from impartial Church leaders, it is still regarded as scripture by the Church. Without dwelling on this subject any longer, suffice it to say that the current New Testament is not 100% reliable, especially in view of the new discoveries, which are now coming to light. These discoveries predate the oldest writings that form the basis of the current Biblical to at least 1,000 years.³⁵

An objective analysis of the situation, especially keeping our basic assumptions in view, indicates the process through which the Biblical documents have gone through were by Divine design. They cannot be considered otherwise. Another interesting observation in this realm is that Aramic (old Hebrew), the language that Jesus spoke, is not in common use now.

In spite of its shortcomings, it must be admitted, however, that a continuous narrative, in which the story of one Prophet is linked with that of another, is to be found only in the Bible. In reconstructing the stories of the Prophets, the help derived from the Bible is invaluable. No other book revealed before the Quran can provide this help. To answer the question whether earlier teachings and earlier Prophets did or did not foretell the coming of a perfect Teaching and a perfect Prophet after them, one has to turn to the Bible.

THE QURAN

Unlike the Old and the New Testaments, the Quran has been preserved in its entirety. The Quranic revelations were memorized and recorded immediately and simultaneously upon their revelation. God revealed the Quran to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) over a period of about 23 years. The revelations were conveyed to the Prophet in small segments by the angel Gabriel who made the Prophet recite the revealed verses in his presence.

From the very outset, the Prophet employed two independent but mutually complementary methods for preserving the revelations. The two methods used for this purpose were memorization and inscription. In addition to independently ensuring the transmission of the revelation, the two methods also served as internal checks, thus ensuring its accurate preservation.

Islamic traditions record that the Prophet employed four principal teachers whom he personally instructed in memorizing the revelation. By this method, even the correct pronunciation of the message was preserved. These teachers would then help others in their memorization. Moreover, as the revelations were received, they were also recited in the five daily prayers. In effect, the main mode of preservation and transmission of the Quranic

revelations was through memorization. Interestingly, Quran was literally preserved by "it being written on the hearts of people" in accordance with the Biblical prophecies:

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.³⁶

Thus, the memorization process proved to be the single, most effective method for preserving Quranic revelation. Moreover, the style in which the Quran was revealed is also in total conformity with Isaiah's prophecy about the new law being revealed as:

*For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line,
here a little, there a little,
Nay, but by men of strange lips and with an alien tongue,
the Lord will speak to his people to whom He has said,^{37**} .*

Alternately, the revelation was also recorded in written form, soon after its receipt. Islamic traditions record fifteen scribes who were employed by the Prophet for preserving the revelation in writing from the Prophet's dictation. This method of preservation was to serve as a backup.

Once a month during the month of Ramadan (the Muslim month of fasting), the angel Gabriel would recite the entire revelation revealed up to that time with the Prophet. During the last Ramadan, after the revelations had been completed, the angel recited the entire Quranic revelation to the Prophet twice.³⁸ This regular annual recitation was also meant to arrange the revelations in their present order.

At the time of the Prophet's death, the number of people who had memorized the entire Quran exceeded one hundred thousand.³⁹ The process of new converts accepting Islam continued as did the process of memorizing the entire Quran. It propagated through the process of memorization, which ensured its survival in pristine purity. During the Caliphate of Abu Bakr (the first Caliph after the Prophet's death), over 500 people who knew the entire Quran by heart, were killed in a battle. This tragic event served as the catalyst to accelerate the process of preserving the written Quranic revelation as an alternate means of safeguarding God's message. Thereupon, the Caliph Abu Bakr appointed a commission and charged it with the task of compiling the Quranic revelations into one volume. The commission assembled the scribes employed by the Prophet for recording the revelations and compiled the recorded texts into one volume. The Prophet's disciples who had committed the entire Quran to their memory and also from the written scripts checked the accuracy of this text. This one volume compilation was completed within two years of the Prophet's death.

** This verse is found in the older editions of the Revised Standard Version. It has been significantly altered in recent editions.

The third Caliph Usman had the same commission prepare seven additional copies of the Quran, and after being thoroughly checked for accuracy were distributed throughout the Muslim world. Some of these copies still survive. One such copy is preserved in a Turkish Museum which has been used by leading authorities to compare the current Quranic text. After additional copies of the Quran were compiled and distributed throughout the Muslim world, the third Caliph Usman considered it essential that the original recording be destroyed, due to the following reasons:

1. Because of their uniqueness, they could be revered by people to the point of worship, thus potentially defeating the essence of Islam.
2. The inscriptions could be damaged due to natural degradation of the material even in safe custody. Moreover, they could be damaged by natural disasters, thus preventing their use as a standard manuscript.
3. They could be desecrated and also serve as a tool for blackmail if they fell into enemy hands.

Contrasting the compilation of the Old and New Testaments with that of the Quran, Divine designs become more evident. Muslims can boast that the Quran around the world is uniform, even in its minutest detail. It is exactly the same as was originally revealed to the Holy Prophet and which was assembled in one volume by the first Caliph Abu Bakr. Encyclopedia Britannica, among other independent sources, testify to this fact and concede this point to the Muslims.³⁹ The authenticity of the Quran is beyond the slightest shadow of doubt. It had to be so because God Himself had claimed to safeguard the integrity of His word:

*Surely, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and We will, most surely, safeguard it.*⁴⁰

The Quran has the additional distinction among all other scriptures of being an entirely verbal revelation. That itself, was as a guarantee that it would not be perverted or twisted. All non-Muslim scholars who have made a research into the integrity of the Quranic text are agreed that it is an exact and accurate version of the verbal revelation that Muhammad (pbuh), the Prophet of Islam, claimed God had vouchsafed to him. This divine guarantee of safeguarding the Quran is not confined to preserving the integrity of the text alone. It extends to all factors that bear upon the preservation of the Quran as the perfect source of divine guidance for the whole of mankind for all times. For instance, it is guaranteed that the language in which it was revealed, namely Arabic, would always continue to be a living language in current use all the times, so that no difficulty might be encountered in determining and comprehending the meaning of the Quran. Arabic is today spoken and written over a much greater area of the earth and by many hundred times the number of people than was the case when the Quran was revealed. Besides, the Holy Prophet predicted that at the beginning of every century God Almighty would raise someone from among his followers who would set forth from the Quran the guidance that may be needed

by mankind from time to time. In the case of no other scriptures has the integrity of its text, its language and its guidance been maintained.

That Divine Challenge put forth almost 1400 years ago is still valid today. The very fact that no other versions of the Quran exist is overwhelming evidence of its Divine protection. M. Becaulli in his book "The Bible, The Quran and Science" testifies to the above facts (emphasis added):

*If we now examine the teachings of Muslim exegetes, we shall see that they present the Qur'an in quite a different manner. About fourteen centuries ago at a meditation retreat near Mecca, Muhammad received a first message through the Archangel Gabriel. After a long period of silence, the first message was followed by successive **revelations** spanning a period of some twenty years. **They were not only transcribed while the Prophet was still alive, but also recited by heart by his early followers and later by the many believers who had gathered around him.** After his death (in 632 A.D.), the various elements were brought together in a book, henceforth known as **The Qur'an**. It contains the Word of God **to the exclusion of any human addition.** The manuscripts we possess from the first century of Islam authenticate today's text.⁴¹*

Islam has its equivalent of the Gospels in the Hadiths. These are the collected sayings of Muhammad and the story of his deeds. The Gospels are nothing other than this for Jesus. The first collections of Hadiths were written decades after the death of Muhammad, just as the Gospels were written decades after Jesus. In both cases they bear human witness to events in the past.⁴²

There are no scientific errors in the Quran.⁴³

In conclusion then, the Pentateuch (Torah), as we know it today, is not exactly the same as it was revealed to Moses. Subsequent books of the Old Testament have also undergone many revisions and modifications to the extent that many words and phrases found in the older versions have been changed in the subsequent revisions. It may be coincidental that many of the changed words or sections are those, which the Muslims have used to support their viewpoint. In spite of the inconsistencies among the various versions, the Old Testament still foretells the promulgation of a new law from God to guide future generations.

The **absolute accuracy** of the Bible can best be described by this quote from the preface of the RSV as “**the most probable reconstruction of events based on the best judgement of competent scholars**”.⁴⁴

The Quran on the other hand, stands alone in its absolute authenticity. Its accuracy is beyond the slightest shadow of doubt. This fact has been corroborated by many independent researchers and can also be verified today as the first written copies of the Quran still exist.

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CHAPTER IV

PROPHECIES FOR THE FUTURE

GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

As stated earlier, for our basic assumptions (in Chapter 1) to be valid, a chronological study of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scriptures should exhibit an evolutionary trend, consistent with the advancement of human spiritual needs. A critical study of the three scriptures aimed at identifying such trends, indicates a kind of spiritual progression which was due to culminate in a universal teaching for the guidance of all mankind. Unless otherwise stated, the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible is used for this comparison. At certain places, references from older editions of the Revised Standard Version (RSV) are used because they have been significantly modified in newer versions.

For such an analysis, it is best to start with prophet Abraham who is unanimously accepted as a great prophet by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. Abraham is one of the most honored personalities of the world. The Jews, the Christians and the Muslims hold him in high esteem and believe that he was a great prophet through whom God had promised great blessings for mankind. Unfortunately this unity of faith between these three great nations of the world does not go very far and a sharp disagreement emerges between the Muslims on the one hand and the Jews and Christians on the other, regarding the status of Ishmael, the eldest son of Abraham. A detailed analysis of this basic question is beyond the scope of this book. This subject is discussed in detail elsewhere.¹

The Old Testament confirms that God made many promises to the Patriarch Abraham. He was born in Ur of the Chaldees. From there he migrated with his father to Canaan, his Father stopped on the way at Haran and died there. On his father's death Abraham was commanded by God to leave Haran and go to Canaan and had the following revelation:²

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you: I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Genesis 15 verses 1-4 show Abraham's sadness and desperation for not having an heir (a son); his desperation does not however affect his obedience of God. This is demonstrated by his willingness to consider the son born to Eliezer, the steward of his house in Damascus, as his heir. That is when God tells Abraham that the steward's son can not be his heir. Impressed by his piety, God makes the first promise of an heir (son) to Abraham: "...but he [his heir] will come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir". Sarah is convinced that she is incapable of bearing a child so she offers Hager, her maid, as a wife to Abraham. (This is discussed later in this Chapter).

Later in Genesis 17 verse 16, after Ishmael's birth, God promises another son to Abraham, but this time from his first wife Sarah: "And I will bless her [Sarah] and give thee a son also of her: I will bless her, and ...".

The word "**also**" in the above verse, is extremely significant in this discussion; it signifies that in addition to the first son of promise, (born earlier to Abraham and his wife Hager), another promised son would be born to Abraham and his wife Sarah. This understanding also helps explain Abraham's utter surprise and disbelief of having another son at their advanced ages when he already had an heir.

The Bible describes the background against which Abraham married Hagar:³

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

*So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his **wife**.*

He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

The Bible continues to record God's revelations to Abraham and Hagar and also records Ishmael's birth:⁴

The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."

The angel of the LORD also said to her (Hager): You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery.

He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility towards all his brothers."

She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.

Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Thus Genesis establishes that his first **wife** Sarah gave Hagar as a wife to Abraham. Before the birth of Abraham's first son, Ishmael, God through his angel, foretold the good news to Hagar and ordered that her son be named Ishmael. Hence it is obvious that God spoke to Hagar and revealed to her that her yet to be born child would be a son, who was to be named Ishmael and that he and his descendants will be blessed.

God's promise to Abraham is confirmed and detailed elsewhere in Genesis:⁵

I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.

Abram fell face down, and God said to him

As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.

No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.

Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come.

This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner - those who are not your offspring.

Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.

Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.

I will bless her and will surely also give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

Abraham fell face down; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"

And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing! then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.

But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year."

When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him.

Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, and his son Ishmael was thirteen;

Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that same day.

The above passages reiterate God's promise to Abraham that He will make him the father of *many great* nations. God had also established an everlasting covenant with Abraham that the land of Canaan (the Promised Land), will be given as an everlasting possession to Abraham's descendants.

God had also asked Abraham and his descendants to honor their part of the deal, which was that *every* male among them had to be circumcised. This practice had to be continued forever. God also indicated that any uncircumcised males would be cut off from His covenant because they would have broken their part of the deal.

The above verses also establishes that Ishmael was the first son born to Abraham from his wife Hagar and that he was about 14 years older than his second son Isaac, born from his wife Sarah. It is also established from this passage that Ishmael was one of the first male child, if not the first, to be circumcised along with Abraham himself. At that point, Abraham was 99 years old. It also highlights Abraham's love for Ishmael and concern for his future well being, and that God had also promised to bless Ishmael, as a result of Abraham's prayers. According to God's promise, Ishmael would be the father of twelve rulers and that he will be made into a great nation. God also promised that He will bless Isaac; he would also be given twelve sons and great kings will come from his descendants. The twelve sons of Ishmael and Isaac are also named in the Bible (Figure 1). The twelve sons of Isaac later became known as the twelve tribes of Israel. God also made it clear to Abraham that at that time He was establishing an *everlasting* covenant with Isaac. The word *everlasting* in this passage has been grossly misrepresented to mean that God's covenant with Isaac will last till the day of judgement. Both the Old and New Testaments provide evidence to the contrary. This point is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Also Genesis records God's gift of the promised land to Abraham:⁶

All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.

Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.

The boundaries of the Promised Land, as given in the Bible are shown in Figure 2.⁷

God's promise to Abraham was to let his descendant inhabit the Promised Land forever. This promise was, however, conditional. In addition to the condition about circumcision of all males,⁸ another condition is stated in Psalm:^{9*}

*Turn from evil and do good;
then you will dwell in the land forever.*

*For the LORD loves the just
and will not forsake his faithful ones.*

*They will be protected forever,
but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off;*

*the righteous will inherit the land
and dwell in it forever.*

The Bible continues to record God's promises about Ishmael:¹⁰

I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.

Another version of the Bible records the promise in slightly different words:¹¹

"And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed."

The above verse is reproduced from two editions of the Bible, the NIV and the RSV, to demonstrate how a slight variation of words can alter its meaning. Although the expressed message in both versions appears to be similar, the implications in them are significantly different. As stated earlier, such inconsistencies in Biblical text cause great problems for a critical study of this nature where the absolute meaning of the word is required. This delicate change of words to obliterate its meaning may be aimed at preventing such meaningful comparisons by Biblical scholars. The practice of referring to differing Biblical texts will be maintained in this book.

The Bible continues to record God's promises to Hagar about Ishmael's well being and prosperity and also records his whereabouts after their departure from Abraham's house.¹²

Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beer-Sheba .

When the water in the skin was gone. She put the boy under one of the bushes. 'Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought "I cannot watch the boy die.' And as she sat there nearby. shed began to sob.

* Newer versions contain different wording

God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her. "What is the matter, Hagar"? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.

Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."

Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.*

The above Biblical passages indicate the following:

1. Abraham had two sons of promise, Ishmael and Isaac, Ishmael being the elder and Isaac the younger.
2. God promised Abraham that He would multiply and bless his progeny. The promise applies to both Isaac and Ishmael.
3. Ishmael lived in the wilderness of Paran.
4. Land of Canaan was given over to the sons of Abraham.
5. The external sign of the covenant, which God made with Abraham, was circumcision of all males and had to be kept for all times.

All these promises were completely fulfilled. The progeny of Isaac multiplied exceedingly; from among them arose the Prophets, Moses, David, Ezekiel, Daniel and Jesus. For two thousand years they ruled over Canaan. Their hold on it was never really abolished, though for a short time it became weak. After the seventh century A.D., however, the sons of Isaac, and those who observed the letter of the Law of Moses, had to withdraw from Canaan. The sons of Ishmael, instead, became its political as well as its spiritual leaders. The fact that the sons of Israel had to surrender the land of Canaan shows that they had become unworthy of the promise that God had made to them through Abraham. This promise was that Israel would remain in possession of this land until the Last Day, and the promise was true. The Last Day in the divine promise, therefore, cannot mean the day that is to mark the end of the world, but the day on which the Law of Moses was to be superseded by the promulgation of a new Law for the guidance of the world. In the language of Divine revelation the advent of a new Law is often described as the birth of a new heaven and a new earth. Just as a new heaven and a new earth cannot be created without a large-scale upheaval, usually associated with the Last Day, so the establishment of a new Law must entail a *large-scale upheaval* of the people who receive that Law. Therefore, when the prophecy said that the sons of Israel would retain their hold over Canaan until the Last Day, it meant that their hold would continue until the advent of a new Law-giving Prophet. This issue is discussed later in the Chapter. In the utterances of David there is a hint of this meaning of the prophecy. The promise contained in Genesis that Israel would retain possession of Canaan until the Last Day is expressed differently elsewhere in the Bible:¹³

"The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever."

* Ishmael's Egyptian wife hailed from the Royal family of the Pharos and hence the biblical prophecy about him getting twelve princes was literally fulfilled.

The promise of eternal possession is not for Israel as such but for the righteous sons of Abraham. The descendents of Isaac failed to live up to the promise that Abraham had made with God. Consequently, God withdrew His favors from them and awarded them to the descendents of Ishmael. The Promised Land (Palestine) was meant for those who keep the covenant, which Abraham made with God. Christians, no doubt, claim that they fulfil the covenant, but they forget that the covenant lays down an important external sign. That sign is circumcision of the male population. Only Ishmaelites have kept the sign both before and since the revelation of the Quran.

In short, God's promise to Abraham was that both Isaac and Ishmael would be blessed. According to this promise, the sons of Isaac were established over Canaan and the sons of Ishmael over Arabia. The sons of Isaac maintained control over the Promised Land till the Last Day of the Biblical prophecy when after the promulgation of the new law (Islam) the control of the Promised Land was passed over to the sons of Ishmael. In accordance with the original prophecy, the control of the Promised Land remained with the descendents of Abraham.

The Bible also prophecies about the future advent of a new prophet and a new law. A detail sequential study of the Biblical prophecies follows.

BIBLICAL PROPHECIES ABOUT A UNIVERSAL TEACHER

The coming of a universal teacher after Moses has been prophesied in both the Old and the New Testaments. The major prophecies from each Testament will be analyzed independently and supporting evidence will be sought from the subsequent scriptures and events.

OLD TESTAMENT

The advent of a universal teacher with a new Law, after Moses, is foretold in the following books of the Old Testament.

1. Deuteronomy
2. Habakkuk
3. Songs of Solomon
4. Isaiah
5. Jeremiah
6. Daniel

THE PROPHECIES IN DEUTERONOMY

When Moses went to Mount Horeb under God's command, he addressed the Israelites saying:¹⁴

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken".

The same message is repeated in the same book. God says to Moses:¹⁵

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die".

From these passages it is evident that Moses prophesied the advent of a Law-giving Prophet who was to appear after him, and who was to be from among the brethren of Israel.

That he was to be a Law-giver, and not an ordinary Prophet is obvious from the words *like unto Moses*. As Moses brought a new Law for his people, the Prophet who was to be like Moses must also bring a Law for his people. The Promised Prophet is described as one who shall *speak unto them all that I [God} shall command him*. It is thus obvious that the Promised Prophet was to be a Law-giving Prophet. The promulgation of a *new Law* means the initiation of a new movement, a new nation. A Prophet who promulgates a new Law, therefore, is no ordinary teacher or reformer. He has to present a comprehensive teaching, incorporating fundamental principles as well as detailed rules. Without such comprehensive details, a new nation cannot be raised. It is important to note that this promised prophet would reveal *all that I should commanded him*. However, if the Prophet is only required to explain and annotate an existing Law, it is not necessary for him to present all that he receives from God to his people. It is possible that some of his revelations may be meant only for his personal edification, which he is under no obligation to pass on to his people. The above prophecy also lays down that the Promised Prophet will *speak in my name*, and those who will not listen to him, God will *require it* of them; that is, those who turn a deaf ear will incur Divine punishment. It is also stated that a false claimant to this prophecy will suffer an accursed death.

If all the terms of the prophecy are considered and applied to prophets who appeared after Moses and before Jesus, none appear to fulfill the description of the Promised Prophet. All the Prophets who appeared between Moses and Jesus, therefore, could be ignored in the search for the Prophet of this prophecy. These intervening prophets have left no following and no people who could espouse their claims. Only Jesus remains with a large following and whom his followers regard as the last Divine Teacher for this world. However when each condition of this prophecy is applied to Jesus, it becomes obvious that not one of them applies to him. A detailed discussion of this Biblical prophecy follows.

First, the Promised Prophet was to be a Law-giving Prophet. Jesus was not a Law-giving prophet by his own admission:¹⁶

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

The followers of Jesus went so far as to declare:¹⁷

And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.....

Thus Jesus laid no claim to giving a new Law, and his disciples regard the Law as a curse. Hence by their own admission, Jesus and his followers deny the fact that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in Deuteronomy.

Secondly, the Promised Prophet was to be raised not from among Israel but from among their brethren and Jesus was an Israelite. Christian exponents, confronted with this fact, are wont to say that Jesus had no earthly father, so he can be said to be one of the brethren of Israel. But such a construction would be untenable. The prophecy speaks of brethren, which means that they were to constitute a race or a people from among whom the Promised Prophet was to rise. According to Christian belief, Jesus stands alone as God's Son. If there were other Sons of God, then one could argue that Jesus may fit the description of the prophecy. To the contrary, the Bible specifies that Christ was to be of the seed of David.^{18,19} Jesus may shed his Israelite origin because he had no earthly father, but he will not then remain a son of David, so the Biblical prophecy will not apply to him. Either way, Jesus does not comply with the requirements set forth in this prophecy.

Thirdly, the prophecy says *I will put my words in his mouth*. To the contrary, the Gospels do not consist of words, which God may have put in Jesus' mouth. They only narrate stories about Jesus and what he may have said or done on different occasions covering a period of no more than three years.

Fourthly, the Promised One was to be a Prophet, while the Christian view is that Jesus was not a Prophet, but the Son of God. Again, Jesus fails to comply with the description of the prophecy.

Fifthly, the prophecy states: *Words which he shall speak in my name*. Strange as it may seem, the Gospels do not contain a single example of words that Jesus may be said to have received from God with the command to pass them on to his followers.

Sixthly, the prophecy stipulates: *He shall speak unto them all that I shall command*. The Promised Prophet thus, was to give to the world complete and comprehensive teachings. Jesus himself denied that this was his mission. He regarded himself as the forerunner of a greater Teacher yet to come; thus the Biblical confirmation.²⁰

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

From these verses it appears that the prophecy in Deuteronomy was not fulfilled in Jesus. The obvious conclusion then is that both the Old and the New Testaments foretold the coming of a Prophet after Jesus who was to guide the world *unto all truth*, and who was to establish the name of God on earth for all time. If the search for the promised Prophet is continued beyond Jesus' era

using the same criteria, the advent of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and the Quran mark the fulfillment of the prophecy in Deuteronomy. The following facts bear this out:

- (i) The Holy Prophet Muhammad was a descendant of Ishmael. The descendants of Ishmael were the brethren of the descendants of Isaac, the Israelites.
- (ii) The Holy Prophet is the only one claiming to be a Prophet like Moses. The Holy Quran also verifies this claim as follows:²¹

Verily We have sent to you a Messenger, who is a witness over you, even as We sent a Messenger to Pharaoh.

There are many unique similarities between the Prophets Moses and Muhammad (peace be on him), which do not exist between Moses and any other prophet. The three main similarities are:

- a. Both had to migrate from their homeland to foreign lands along with their followers.
- b. Both were law-bearing prophets.
- c. Both had to fight defensive battles to protect God's message.

Apart from the main similarities listed above, a number of additional similarities exist between these two personalities and are listed in Appendix VI.

- (iii) According to the prophecy, the Promised one was to be a prophet. The Holy Prophet claimed to be a Prophet only. Jesus, according to Christian belief, did not claim to be a Prophet; rather, he claimed to be the Christ. The prophecy described the Promised One as a Prophet.²²

He asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? and they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias, and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him. Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

That is to say, Jesus denies being either John the Baptist, or Elias, or one of the Prophets. But the prophecy in Deuteronomy speaks of the Promised One as a Prophet like Moses. The prophecy, therefore, applies to the Prophet of Islam and not to Jesus.

- (iv) The prophecy speaks of *words I will put in his mouth*. The Gospels do not contain any such words. To the contrary, the Quran that the Holy Prophet of Islam brought to the world is an entirely verbal revelation revealed to him by God Almighty. It is as though *God put His words into his mouth* in complete fulfillment of the Biblical prophecy. The Quran describes itself as the word of God.²³
- (v) The prophecy said that the Promised One would speak all that was commanded to him by God. In contrast to this Old Testament prophecy, the Gospels affirm that Jesus did not pass on everything he received from God, and that there was to be another entity after him, who was to do so.²⁰ The Holy Prophet of Islam fully fits this description. Thus the Quran affirms:²⁴

"O Messenger! convey to the people what has been revealed to thee from thy Lord".

The verse seems to say, *O Prophet, there is an ancient prophecy about you which said that when you come into the world you would give to it all the truths you received from your God. Therefore preach to the world whatever is revealed to you, whether it likes it or not.* Similarly, the verse revealed on the completion of the revelation of the Quran says:²⁵

This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion.

That is to say: *Through the revelation of the Quran the faith has been made perfect and the gift of guidance made complete for you, and peace and tranquility have been appointed for you as your religion.* It was the Holy Prophet of Islam, therefore, who taught everything and kept back nothing. In the time of Jesus, people were not ready to receive and to believe in everything that was worthwhile. But in the time of the Holy Prophet of Islam humans had traversed many stages of spiritual evolution and the time had come for all the truths to be revealed to the world.

(vi) The prophecy speaks of *words which he shall speak in My name.* This part of the prophecy also was fulfilled in the Holy Prophet of Islam. He is the only one who spoke in the name of God, because every Chapter of the revealed Book brought by him begins with the words: *In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.* This great sign, duly incorporated in the Quran, also proves that the last stride in the spiritual advance of humanity, foretold by Moses, was registered with the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

(vii) The prophecy also lays down an important criterion:²⁶

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other odds, even that prophet shall die.

In this verse, a method of differentiation between a true claimant and an imposter to the post of the Promised One of this prophecy has been outlined. It was necessary that a clear criterion be established for this purpose to help righteous followers to recognize the true claimant. The Promised One had to be charged with the important mission of initiating the last stage of human spiritual advancement. If pretenders to this office should arise, the world would run a great risk. To ward off these risks, God laid down the criterion that a pretender would incur divine punishment and die a cursed death. The Holy Prophet of Islam laid claim to this office very early in his career, and in the clearest terms. When he announced his claim, he was friendless and weak. His enemies far outnumbered him, were much stronger and left no stone unturned to prevent the spread of Islam and in that context, tried their utmost to end the Holy Prophet's life. Mighty rulers also set themselves up against him but it was they, not the Prophet who suffered discomfiture and disgrace. The Holy Prophet led a full and successful life. When he died, the whole of Arabia had declared faith in him. Within a few years after his death, his successors spread Islam throughout the whole of the then known world.

The Jews, Christians and the Muslims unanimously believe that Moses was a true Prophet and that the prophecy in Deuteronomy was a revelation from God. The question arises whether the unpredictable successes and the improbable failures of his much stronger enemies were mere coincidences. The answer to this question is an absolute and unqualified No. Neither the Holy Prophet's successes nor his enemies' miserable failures were coincidental. On the other hand, it seems that the Quran had the terms of this prophecy in view when it unequivocally guaranteed the safety of the Holy Prophet's life very early in his career:²⁷

"And Allah will protect thee from men".

Similarly, addressing the enemies of the Prophet, the Quran declared:²⁸

He is the Knower of the unseen, and He reveals not His secrets to any one, except him whom He chooses, namely a Messenger of His. And then He causes an escort of guarding angels to go before him and behind him.

That is to say, the Prophet, having been charged with an important mission, would not be left unprotected. Enemies would never be able to kill him.

These verses prove that the successes that the Holy Prophet attained were not an accident of good fortune. He declared early, through revelations received by him from God and recorded to this day in the Quran, that God would protect him from the murderous attacks of his enemies. He foretold the world that because he was the Prophet promised in the prophecy in Deuteronomy, he would be successful in his mission.

In short, one thousand nine hundred years before the advent of the Prophet of Islam, Moses declared that his own Law was, in the divine scheme, not the last Law; that the world was to have a fuller Law in the latter days. To accomplish this mission, God would send another messenger. This Messenger was to teach all truths to the world; it was he who was to mark the last stage in the spiritual advancement of mankind. The world had to wait for another book and another Prophet. If, therefore, the Quran and the Holy Prophet have come after the Bible and after the Prophets Moses and Jesus, and if they claim to have come from God as guidance for mankind, their claim must be treated seriously and verified through the conditions specified in the earlier scriptures. If they fulfilled the stipulated requirements their claim must be accepted. If, however, they fail to meet the requirements, then the search should continue. The revelation of the Quran was not a gratuitous revelation, a redundancy in the presence of earlier revelations. It attested to the authenticity of all earlier scriptures and presented a Law that appeared to be significantly different from all its predecessors. In reality the Quran updated the earlier Laws and corrected the human interpolations that had corrupted them. Indeed, if the Quran had not been revealed, promises made by God through His Messengers would have gone unfulfilled, and the world would have become afflicted with doubt and disbelief.

The promise of another Prophet after Moses is again reconfirmed in Deuteronomy:²⁹

And he said, the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them, he shined forth from mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

In this verse Moses is promised three manifestations of the glory of God. The first of these appeared from Sinai, to which a reference is made in Exodus:³⁰

And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

This manifestation of Divine glory appeared in the time of Moses. The world witnessed the blessings that came with it. The second manifestation promised in the prophecy was to take place from Seir. Seir is that part of the world where the miracles of Jesus took place. *Rising up from Seir*, therefore, points to the advent of Jesus. Christian exponents of the Gospels identify Seir with Sinai but this is not correct. Seir is a part of Palestine. The name has many corrupt forms. One of them serves as the name of a people who are descendants of the Prophet Jacob and are known as Banu Asher. Another serves as a name for the northwestern part of Palestine. Seir, therefore, stands for the second manifestation of Divine glory, the one especially associated with Palestine. To identify Seir with Sinai and to attribute both manifestations to Moses, is wrong because Moses never crossed into Canaan. He died at a spot from where he could only see its borders. After Moses and before Jesus, no manifestation of Divine glory took place that could rank with that of Sinai. *Rising up from Seir*, therefore, means the advent of Jesus, which occurred in Canaan, and through which, as it were, God showed His face for a second time. The third manifestation of Divine glory was to take its rise from Paran. It is worth mentioning here that according to the Old Testament, Ishmael lived in Pharan, which is also the name of the hills that lie between Mecca and Medina. Arab geographers have always referred to this territory as Faran.

THE PROPHECY IN HABAKKUK

Habakkuk also prophesied the advent of another Prophet almost six hundred and twenty-seven years before Jesus' birth:³¹

God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hands: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

The evolutionary trend becomes evident even in the earlier books of the Old Testament. While Deuteronomy mentioned three manifestations of Divine glory at Sinai, Seir, and Pharan as described above. The Habakkuk prophecy however mentions only two manifestations at Teman and Pharan respectively. Teman is located near Jerusalem, the area where Jesus preached. Since Habakkuk was written after Moses' death, its prophecies relate to events after his demise. Moses himself fulfilled the first manifestation of the prophecy in Deuteronomy.

As stated above, this prophecy mentions the locations of the two remaining Divine manifestations to occur at Teman and Pharan. From the prophecies of Deuteronomy and Habakkuk, it is evident that the advent of Jesus at Seir was not to mark the last stage in the process of human spiritual development. It was to be followed by the advent of another Prophet, at Pharan, to mark the third manifestation of Divine glory. This prophet was to manifest both the Beauty and the Majesty of God and bring a fiery Law into the world, not merely a message of forgiveness.

Detailed analyses of this prophesy, in the light of the criterion established above, reveals that the Holy One to appear from the land of Teman and Mount Pharan were Jesus and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) respectively. The fiery Law was the Quran, which has the virtue of annihilating sins and satanic machinations. Moses truly said in Deuteronomy that ten thousand saints would accompany the Promised One, rising from Pharan. History unequivocally records that it was the Holy Prophet of Islam who rose from Pharan and marched into Mecca with ten thousand followers. Neither Moses nor David nor Jesus could have fulfilled this great prophecy. None of them rose from Pharan and none of them marched to victory with ten thousand saintly followers. According to the New Testament, Jesus had only twelve disciples, one of whom betrayed him to the Romans. Another cursed him for fear of being maltreated. According Biblical accounts, even the ten remaining disciples deserted him when he was put on the Cross.

Another sign in this prophecy describes is that the Promised One was to be bestowed with immense praise:³²

... and the earth was full of his praise.

It is not merely an accident that the Holy Prophet of Islam was named Muhammad (which literally means the Praised One).

Further, this prophecy continues to describe more conditions:³³

Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.

This sign of the Promised One was also fulfilled in the Prophet of Islam. True, the prophecy speaks of pestilence, that is, a disease in epidemic form, which causes extreme destruction. In that context, the enemies of the Holy Prophet suffered large-scale death and destruction in their aggressions against him. Thus even this part of the prophecy may have been fulfilled in his person.

The prophecy continues to state other signs of the Promised Prophet:³⁴

He stood and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations.

This part of the prophecy, like the others, can apply neither to Moses nor to Jesus. Moses died while he was still fighting his enemies, while Jesus was put on the Cross. The Prophet who *beheld and drove asunder the nations* was the Prophet of Islam. Truly did he say of himself, *my presence is awe-inspiring, and I have been helped not a little by it. People fear me from a distance of one month's journey.*³⁵

The prophecy gives additional signs for the Promised One:³⁶

"The everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow".

This part of the prophecy also applies to the Holy Prophet of Islam. His stronger and well-equipped enemies (Roman and Persian empires), who are referred to as mountains and hills, were completely routed.

This prophecy thus concludes with one final sign:³⁴

I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

This part of the prophecy clearly shows that the Promised Prophet was to belong from somewhere outside Syria because those afflicted and frightened by the armies of the Promised One are to be in Cushan and Midian. The description cannot apply to Moses or Jesus. It applies only to the Prophet of Islam. During the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, the first successor of the Holy Prophet, a small and ill-equipped Muslim army captured Palestine after defeating the far superior Roman army of Kaiser. Notwithstanding the fact that Canaan was then under the Roman Kaiser, master of half the known world at the time, the superior forces of the Kaiser were crushed by the inferior Muslim forces. It was thus that *the tents of Cushan were in affliction and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble*. The people of these lands found their salvation in laying down their arms before the servants of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

THE PROPHECIES IN SONGS OF SOLOMON

The Songs of Solomon describe the Promised Prophet, whose advent has been foretold in earlier books of the Old Testament, in five places.

I. The first description is:^{37*}

My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of dove by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon socks of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

This prophecy promises a Prophet who would be superior to others, and would possess a rank higher than others. This is because the rapturous description in the Song of Solomon comes in reply to the question:³⁸

"What is thy beloved more than another beloved ?"

* The word "MOHAMMAD-IM" is contained in the Hebrew version of Songs of Solomon 5:10-16

It is said that this beloved would stand out like a flag among ten thousand men. As a flag symbolizes an army, the description, therefore, applies to some great occasion on which this beloved would command a following of ten thousand.

The description of the beloved thus continues:³⁹

"His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh".

Now myrrh is a kind of gum, with a bitter taste but a sweet smell. It is extremely useful as a disinfectant and a cicatrizer. It is mainly used in the treatment of wounds and in the preparation of disinfectants and perfumes.

It is also stated *he is altogether lovely* (mark the Hebrew Muhammaddim). It means that his inspiring personality and character will demand love and admiration.

This prophecy clearly applies to the Holy Prophet of Islam. It was he who headed ten thousand saints and marched victoriously from the heights of Paran into the valley of Mecca, exactly as had been foretold by Moses. It was he whose teaching proved like myrrh for the world, bitter in taste but beautiful in its effects. It contained principles and rules all of which were calculated to promote human well being but tasted bitter to some nations who failed to accept it. Finally it was him who was rightly named Muhammad (peace be on him).

II. The Songs of Solomon contain another prophecy about the Holy Prophet of Islam.³⁹

You have stolen my heart, my sister my bride. You have stolen my heart with one glance of my eyeslet my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.

In these verses, Solomon addresses his beloved as both a *sister* and *spouse*.⁴⁰ The simultaneous use of the two forms of address, sister and spouse, is extremely significant. "Sister" indicates that the Promised Prophet would be an Ishmaelite, one of the brethren of the Israelites; "spouse" indicates that the Message of the Promised Prophet will not be confined to his own people, as were the messages of all the Israelite Prophets. It would be open to other nations as well. The feminine form of address used here should be analyzed with extreme care. The passage is couched in poetical language and is full of metaphors. The last line of the chapter uses the masculine form, which appears to be contradictory but is very significant.⁴¹

Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

The prophecy,⁴⁰ therefore, applies only to the Holy Prophet of Islam. Jesus was not one of the brethren of Israel, nor was his teaching addressed to all mankind. According to the Bible, his message was restricted to the Israelites.

III. The Songs of Solomon continue to prophesize the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam.⁴²

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black.

It appears from this description that Solomon foretold the advent of a Prophet who would come from the south, and he (or his people) would be of darker complexion as compared with the descendants of Isaac. Syrian and Palestinians are known for their fairer complexion compared to the Arabians. The Prophet of Islam was an Arab and hence had a darker complexion.

IV. Another sign of the Promised One is given in the same verse:⁴³

My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

This is a description of the people to which the Promised One was to belong. Before the advent of the Prophet of Islam, the Arabs were not ambitious or hardworking people. They accepted employment under the Romans and the Iranians, but did not care for their own country and their personal well-being. The advent of the Holy Prophet jolted Arabia out of her slumber. The result was an Arab-led world movement embracing every conceivable side of human progress, from spiritual to intellectual to political. The Arabs became the keepers not only of their own vineyard but also of the vineyards of the whole world.

V The Song of Solomon also contains a warning for Israel that they are told not to meddle with the Promised Prophet.⁴⁴

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

This theme is also continued elsewhere in the Song.^{45,46} These passages only mean that when the Promised Prophet appears, Jews and Christians, the two branches of Israel, would oppose and oppress him. Since God would appoint the Promised Prophet, his opponents would not succeed, but would instead, suffer an ignominious defeat. Solomon, accordingly, warned his people saying:

I charge you, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

The Israelites, both Jews and Christians, were advised not to oppose the Promised Prophet; rather, they should accept his message. It would be against their interest to try to stem the tide of his influence. Opposition would spell the opponents' own destruction. Failure to follow his advice would make them liable to Divine punishment. The warning proved true because, contrary to this advice, the Jews and Christians refused to accept the message and brought Divine punishment upon themselves. Had they remained passive and non-hostile to the Prophet, they would have been saved from the wrath of God.

These prophecies cannot possibly apply to Jesus, as he did not appear from the south of Palestine. He was not from among the brethren of Israel nor did he have the means to resist and to destroy the opposition of Israel. The prophecies apply only to the Prophet of Islam. He is the beloved of the Song of Solomon. The Song is, in fact, a rapturous description of the Prophet.

THE PROPHECIES IN ISAIAH

The book of Isaiah contains many prophecies about the Holy Prophet of Islam. It foretells the advent of another great Prophet, the harbinger of peace and contentment for the whole world. In accordance with the Divine way, the prophecies contain a symbolic element, which has to be interpreted before their meaning can be unraveled. The use of names such as Jerusalem, Zion, etc. in this prophecy is only symbolic. However, Christian writers have been misled by these symbols into thinking that the prophecies relate to Jesus. Names by themselves do not constitute any part of the prophecies. If the general content of the prophecies does not apply to Jesus, the names Jerusalem or Israel or Zion will not justify the application. True, the names could also imply a meaning, but the proper meaning is the one that fits into the main content of the prophecies. As such the names Jerusalem and Israel will only mean *My holy places* or *My select people*, not Jerusalem or Israel *per se*.

I. The first such prophecy from Isaiah states:⁴⁷

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach. In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem.

Once it is agreed that Zion and Jerusalem in this prophecy are but symbols, the entire content of the prophecy is seen to apply to the Holy Prophet of Islam and to no one else. The prophecy says that the Promised Prophet will bring with him wealth and splendor, that he will have treasures of the earth laid at his feet, that his people will be called holy and that polygamous marriages will be the rule at the time. Clearly, these signs do not apply to Jesus and his disciples. They never brought with them a period of wealth and splendor. The treasures of the earth were never laid at their feet and polygamy was never in vogue in their society. These signs apply only to the Holy Prophet of Islam, his followers and his time. Jesus is supposed to have disapproved of polygamous marriages. By contrast, the Holy Prophet of Islam sanctioned and even commanded polygamous marriages under certain conditions. It was in his time that wars had to be fought in defense of religion and the youth of the nation had to lay down their lives. The number of widows increased and young women had difficulty finding husbands. The Holy Prophet, accordingly, ordered polygamous marriages to prevent immorality in the society.

II. Further, Isaiah states:⁴⁸

And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly: None shall be weary nor stumble among them; nor shall slumber nor sleep, neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall

roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it. And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

A time was to come, according to this prophecy, when somewhere outside Palestine, a man would raise a flag. This man would call the nations of the world who would swiftly answer his call and gather around him. Those who responded to him would shun sloth and indolence and make great sacrifices for their cause. They would take part in wars and their horses' hoofs would emit fire like flint stone. Their attacks on their enemy would resemble a whirlwind. They would completely overpower their enemy whom no one would be able to save. And why should they do all this? Because they would see that the world was full of darkness and a big change called for.

This prophecy applies in its entirety to the Holy Prophet of Islam. There is also a reference to it in the Quran. In accordance with it, the Holy Prophet appeared away from Palestine in Mecca, and raised his flag in Medina; it was he who announced to the world.⁴⁹

"Say, 'O mankind, truly I am a Messenger to you all"

It was his voice to which men and women from the ends of the earth responded with great alacrity. In Jesus' life not one convert came from outside Israel because Jesus' message was only meant for the house of Israel. All his disciples came from within a radius of forty to fifty miles. By contrast believers in the Prophet of Islam came from Yemen and Najd and Iran, and among them were idol-worshippers and Jews and Christians. They made such great sacrifices at the Prophet's call and exerted themselves for it so ungrudgingly that the worst enemies of Islam feel constrained to pay a tribute to their spirit of devotion and sacrifice. God Himself pays a tribute to them in the Quran thus:

*Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him.*⁵⁰

*There are some of them who have fulfilled their vow, and some who still wait.*⁵¹

The Prophet's followers had to take part in wars and to make use of bows and arrows. Their horses' hoofs were like flint and their wheels like the whirlwind. To this also there is a clear reference in the Quran.⁵²

"By the panting chargers of the warriors, striking sparks of fire, making raids at dawn, and raising clouds of dust therewith, and penetrating thereby into the center of the enemy forces".

This is a description of the defensive warriors of early Islam and does truly correspond to the prophecy of Isaiah. The last part of the prophecy states:⁵³

And if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow. and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

The Quran also refers to the above situation.⁵⁴

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea".

That is, both human wisdom and divine teaching have become dark and both point to the need of a new Teacher, bearer of a new Message from God.

The same message is repeated elsewhere in the Quran:⁵⁵

Allah has indeed sent down to you an admonition, a Messenger who recites unto you the clear Signs of Allah, that he may bring those who believe and do good deeds out of darkness into light.

III. Isaiah continues to foretell the advent of another Law-Bearing prophet:⁵⁶

Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

The prophecy clearly foretells the appearance of a Holy One whose coming will prove a trial for the two Houses of Israel, a snare and a gin for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who will be defeated and disgraced if they choose to oppose him. The New Law will supersede the Mosaic Law and God will turn His face away from the House of Jacob.

Christian writers are silent on this point. Maybe they take the two Houses of Israel to mean the two factions, one of which supported and the other opposed the son of Solomon and set up a rival rule. But this will not do, because the prophecy speaks of a holy man and of events which will take place in his time. This holy man can either be Jesus or some one coming after Jesus, because there has been no outstanding religious personality between Isaiah and Jesus who may have confronted Israel with a crucial Message. But did Jesus confront Israel with any such Message? And did Israel suffer defeat and disgrace on opposing this Message? And did Jesus seal the Law for his disciples and announce its suppression by another Law? To the contrary, Jesus stated:⁵⁷

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled".

Jesus settled the point not for his own time only but also for the future:⁵⁸

"Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days".

The above declarations make it obvious that, according to Jesus, even after his death, the Mosaic Law was to remain binding upon his disciples. Were this not so, he could have said that the days of fasting were over. Instead of this he not only fasted himself, but he also prophesied that his disciples

would begin to fast after him. Sealing the Law, therefore, does not mean abolition of the Law as such or repudiation of the very idea of determinate religious duties. It means that in the time of the Promised Holy Man, the Mosaic Law would become superseded and a new Law would become established in its place. If this interpretation is not true then why would God turn His face away from the House of Jacob? Did not Jesus belong to the House of Jacob? If he did not so belong, he could not be a descendant of David. And if he was not a descendant of David, he could not be the Christ of the prophecy. For Christ was to be a descendant of David.

IV. Isaiah continues to record the prophecy for another prophet.⁵⁹

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this".

The prophecy promises the advent of a king who will have five names or titles: (i) Wonderful. (ii) Counselor. (iii) The mighty God. (iv) The everlasting Father. (v) The Prince of Peace. The prosperity and peace in his empire will know no bounds; he will sit on the throne of David forever and perpetuate its good name by judgment and justice.

Annotators of the Gospels claim that this prophecy relates to the birth of Jesus. But none of the signs mentioned in this prophecy, applies to Jesus. Did he for instance, ever become king? None of the names enumerated in the prophecy i.e., wonderful, counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, apply to him. He could be called 'wonderful', because of his peculiar birth but this description does not seem to have been proposed. His deniers regarded his birth as illegitimate, so they could not describe him as 'wonderful'. His supporters, on the other hand, were in doubt about his ancestry. According to some he was a son of David. After being put on the cross the Jews ridiculed him and challenged him to show his might.⁶⁰

If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Jesus gave no exhibition of his "might", nor was he ever described as *mighty* by anybody. Both friend and foe denied this of him. Were this not the case, his disciples would not have deserted him and fled:⁶¹

Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

The fourth name is everlasting Father, and this also does not apply to Jesus. As has already been established, Jesus foretold the coming of another prophet after him.

The fifth name is Prince of Peace and even this cannot apply to Jesus. He never became king, so he never could bring peace to the world. Instead, he remained oppressed by the Jews and was ultimately crucified.

The prophecy identifies another sign: *Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end.* Jesus never attained to any government and, therefore, could never witness its increase.

Another sign is: *Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever,* and even this does not apply to Jesus.

These signs apply to the Holy Prophet of Islam. It was he who had to shoulder the responsibilities of State and who, quite against his will, found himself a king. It is an irony of fate that Jesus, who never became king, constantly dreamed of being one.^{62, 63, 64} The Holy Prophet was a king; yet he hated being one, and constantly warned his followers against imitating the ways of Kaiser and Chosroes.

One name of the Promised One is Wonderful. Jesus admits that the bearer of this name was to come after him. This admission is contained in the parable of the vineyard.⁶⁵ *A householder planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen. He then sent his servants to collect the fruit, but the husbandmen beat or killed or stoned the servants one by one. He sent more servants, but they also were maltreated like the others. He then sent his son, but the husbandmen killed the son.* Having said so much, Jesus asked:

"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen"?

And those who heard answered:

"He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons".

But Jesus said again:

"Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder".

That is to say, after the son had been slain, there would be another one sent by God, the one who would prove *the head of the corner*, and who would seem *marvelous* in the eyes of Jesus and of all others. The Marvelous One, therefore, would come after the son is slain. It can only be the Holy Prophet of Islam who appeared after Jesus who was put on the Cross.

The third name of the Promised One is Counselor. The name applies pre-eminently to the Holy Prophet. A nation turned to him for advice. He, in turn, held regular consultation with his people, and made it obligatory on the State to consult people in all matters of importance. That the Prophet was a much-consulted person is evident from the Quran:⁶⁶

O ye who believe, when you consult the Messenger, give alms before your consultation. That is better for you and purer. But if you find not anything to give, then know that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

The rule about giving in charity before consulting makes it clear that consulting the Prophet had become a regular institution, and a voluntary fee had been introduced to raise money for the poor. The rule was meant for those who could afford it. The Prophet had come to have so many calls on his time that it seemed possible and desirable to make a suitable charge on individual applicants. The charge was justified because the Prophet's time had to be devoted to the benefit of mankind at large; if individuals applied for the use of his time, it was appropriate they should pay something into the public treasury. Consulting the Prophet, therefore, had become a regular institution. The Prophet more than anybody else deserves to be called the Counselor. In accordance with Quranic teachings, the Prophet also instituted the system of consultation as an essential condition of good government.⁶⁷

"And whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation".

General measures and administrative rules are not to be initiated until the people's representatives have been consulted. Following this injunction, the Holy Prophet laid down consultation as an important duty of the Caliph, or elected head of Muslim state. He is reported to have said, *There is no Khilafat [caliphate] without consultation.*⁶⁸ Hence consultation with the people in the affairs of the Government is an Islamic practice. In contrast to this Islamic practice, Jesus never preached consultation or counseling. He never consulted on any considerable scale nor did he encourage counseling as an institution. Thus the Holy Prophet was the Counselor of the Biblical prophecy.

The third name in the prophecy is mighty God. The Old Testament points to a resemblance between God and Moses.⁶⁹

And the Lord said unto Moses, 'See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh.'

And again in Exodus:⁷⁰

And thou shalt be to him (Aaron) instead of God.

In the Bible Jesus is called son of God and Moses a *like of God*. Whenever, therefore, a human being is spoken of as a *like of God*, it would mean Moses or some one like Moses. As explained earlier, Moses had foretold the advent of another prophet like himself.^{13, 14} It has also been explained earlier that only the Holy Prophet of Islam fits the description of the promised Prophet of the Bible. It is the Prophet of Islam, therefore, who can most legitimately be called God or, better, a Manifestation of God. The Quran also draws this similarity. During the Battle of *Badr*, the Prophet took a handful of gravel and threw it at the enemy. This proved a signal for a dust storm, which discomfited the enemy and contributed to their defeat. The Quran thus likens the Holy Prophet to God:⁷¹

And thou threwest not when thou didst throw, but it was Allah Who threw.

Similarly at the time of entering Islam, new believers used to take the oath of allegiance to the Prophet. Referring to this God says in the Quran:⁷²

Verily those who swear allegiance to thee indeed swear allegiance to Allah.

The Prophet does service for God. The term *God* of the prophecy, therefore, applies to the Prophet of Islam rather than to anybody else. So does the expression *mighty* for he was able to subjugate all his enemies in his lifetime and to smash all opposition.

The fourth name in the prophecy is everlasting Father. This also applies exclusively to the Prophet of Islam. It was he who unambiguously claimed a lasting character for his teaching. For he foretold the second coming of Christ, but the second coming of Christ was to be from among the Prophet's own followers, not one whose coming could violate his spiritual dominion; thus the Quranic affirmation:⁷³

And We have not sent thee save as a bringer together of all mankind, a bearer of glad tidings and a warner, but most men know not. And they say, 'When will this promise be fulfilled, if you speak the truth?' Say, 'For you is an appointed day from which you cannot remain behind a single moment nor can you get ahead of it.'

All mankind refers to the universal and everlasting character of the Message of Islam. It is addressed to all nations in all ages. Disbelievers taunt the Prophet about the day promised here and ask him when it will be i.e., when will the universal and everlasting character of Islam be demonstrated to the world? God's response is that the day will come as appointed.

The day is also referred to elsewhere in the Quran:⁷⁴

He would plan the divine ordinance from the heaven unto the earth, then shall it go up to Him in a day the duration of which is a thousand years according to what you reckon.

The Divine plan prophesied here is Islam. In the course of time, its influence will begin to decline. In a thousand years it will have ascended back to heavens. The special Divine support, which it enjoyed in the beginning, will disappear and its fortunes will be at the mercy of worldly forces. Thus the Quran foretells the initial decline and ultimate rise of Islam in the latter days. The same message is further detailed in the Hadith (tradition of the Holy Prophet), which state that the expansion of Islam was to go on for the first three hundred years after, which was to set in a period of decline. The decline was to go on for a period of one thousand years. Reading the two passages^{73, 74} together, it becomes obvious that initially people will not believe in the universal and ever-lasting character of the Message of Islam. After one thousand three hundred years, new facts and conditions would emerge which would force the world to accept the universal character of Islam. The passages read together point to the second coming of the Messiah, whose advent has been promised in both the Bible and the Quran. The Holy Prophet's traditions further explain this fact, which remind us that the second coming will take place in the person who will be a follower of the Prophet of Islam. As other earlier Prophets has also prophesied the advent of the Promised Messiah, his rise from among the followers of the Holy Prophet would prove conclusively that the spiritual dominion of the Prophet of Islam was everlasting and that there were to be no heavenly

Teachers now except from among his followers. Any other Law would not supersede the Law and Teaching of the Holy Prophet. Besides, in the Promised Messiah's time preaching of Islam would be greatly emphasized which would ultimately result in the spread of Islam around the world. When this happens, the universal and everlasting character of Islam will be established beyond doubt. Thus the everlasting Father of the prophecy of Isaiah, therefore, is the Prophet of Islam.

The fifth name in the prophecy is Prince of Peace. Prince also means a potential king. This expression can only apply to the Prophet of Islam because the religion that he founded i.e. Islam literally means *peace*.

In no sense of the word can Jesus can be regarded as Prince of Peace. At least one meaning of this expression would be that the person so called has an abundance of the quality called peace. Prince of Peace would, therefore, be a person who has peace in his natural gifts and is able to pass it on to others. There is no evidence of this in the case of Jesus. He never had the power to administer forgiveness to his enemies. True, he preached forgiveness and taught his followers to turn the other cheek.

There is however a world of difference between profession and practice. What really matters is practice, not profession. The concept of turning the other cheek⁷⁵ is impractical in our daily lives and is inconsistent with human nature. This teaching may have been appropriate in the early days of Christianity to counter excessive brutality among the early converts. Likewise, the Old Testament teaching of *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*⁷⁶ was also applicable in the early days of Judaism to instill self-confidence in the Jews to enable them to protect their faith, which, at that time, was the prevalent Divine Law. The apparent contradictions in the teachings of the Old and New Testaments are thus consistent if viewed in the chronological context but none is applicable in today's world due to their impracticality. These apparently changing Biblical teachings when analyzed in this manner also confirm the evolutionary trend in human spiritual development.

On the other hand, the Holy Prophet of Islam has left an unparalleled legacy of forgiveness and peace. He and his early followers were subjected to every conceivable brutality. Many among his closest relations and friends were murdered mercilessly. The Prophet's own person was a witness to these barbarities. He was their target on many different occasions and in many different ways. He had to leave his hometown and seek shelter elsewhere, as had his friends and followers. Almost all of them had to suffer the pangs of separation from their near and dear ones. Some were torn asunder while tied to two camels running in opposite directions. Spears thrust in their private parts killed women. Slaves who believed in him were stripped and dragged on hot sand and gravel in the hot Arabian Desert. They were persecuted and asked to renounce their faith. The bodies of Muslims killed in battle were mutilated. In short, all early Muslims, irrespective of age, sex or physical condition, had to suffer to the utmost and in a variety of ways. At last, according His promise, God made them triumphant. The Holy Prophet reentered Mecca as a victor with ten thousand followers in accordance with Biblical prophecies. The cruel enemy was at his feet, thinking that no punishment was too much for the excesses that they had perpetrated against the Muslims. Yet all that the Prophet said to them was, *This day, I forgive you all.*⁷⁷ The Prophet had the power to avenge the brutalities committed against him and his followers but he chose to forgive

them and to desist even from hurting their sentiments. When the Muslims were advancing towards Mecca, a Muslim general was reported to have said that he would repay the Meccans in their own coin.⁷⁸ The Prophet deposed the general, saying that such remarks were calculated to hurt the Meccan's feelings.

Thus the Prophet of Islam set an unparalleled example of forgiveness and peace in the history of mankind. A similar example does not exist anywhere in the world. There is no doubt that Christians also suffered much persecution and hardship and were a weak people. However, on their gaining power, they treated their enemies with equal brutality. How then can Jesus be called the Prince of Peace? He himself could not afford peace to others. When his followers were in power, they did not bring peace to others; instead, they brought death and destruction. As head of a triumphant army, the Prophet of Islam had the power to punish his enemies for much more savage acts of brutality than those perpetrated by the Jews against Jesus. He still he chose to forgive them. The Prophet of Islam was, therefore, the Prince of Peace of Isaiah's prophecy.

The seventh sign of the Promised One, according to Isaiah's prophecy, was:⁵⁸

Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end.

The sign clearly applies to the Prophet of Islam and not to Jesus. According to the Bible, Jesus did not attain any political power. The Prophet of Islam did and his followers ruled over large empires with peace and prosperity; these became centers of excellence where significant scientific development occurred.

The eighth sign of Isaiah's prophecy was:

Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

Jesus never ascended the throne of David. It could be argued that he did so three hundred years later, when the Roman Emperor accepted Christianity. The prophecy states that the throne is to be retained forever. The hold of Jesus, in that context, lasted for about three hundred years and ended with the rise of Islam. Since then Palestine (the throne of David) has been in the possession of Muslims for the last 1400 years. Even today, after the creation of the state of Israel, the majority of its population is Muslims. In either case, Palestine is not under Christian control and hence this prophecy cannot apply to Jesus. The rule which the Prophet of Islam had established in the world through his followers was full of "judgment and justice", to use the words of the prophecy. History records that during the time of Umar, the Second Caliph of Islam, a Muslim army had to withdraw temporarily from Jerusalem under the pressure of superior Roman forces. Before withdrawing, they told the Christian population that they could no longer protect their lives and property and hence were returning the money they had realized from them as tax for this purpose. The Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem were extremely impressed by this singular act of good judgment and justice that they came out in support of the Muslim army and prayed for their speedy return.⁷⁹ Little wonder Isaiah says of the Promised One:

"Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice".

V. Again, Isaiah continues to reiterates the advent of a new law:⁸⁰

So the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the Lord and keep them. The Lord will strike Egypt with a plague; and he will strike them and heal them. They will respond to the Lord, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them. In that day there shall be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day, Israel will be the third along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying 'Blessed be Egypt, my people, Assyria my handiwork and Israel my inheritance.'

This prophecy speaks of a time when God would manifest Himself to the people of Egypt who would, therefore, come to know Him and would make sacrifices and offerings to Him; Egypt and Syria would unite, the inhabitants of each would visit the other and both would join in a common form of worship. This prophecy also was fulfilled in the Holy Prophet of Islam. The people of Egypt did become Christian, but only for a short time. Now for the last 1400 years Egyptians have been Muslims. In the words of Isaiah, God says to the Egyptians: "Blessed be Egypt, my people". Let the Egyptians speak for themselves. Do they owe allegiance to Jesus or to the Prophet of Islam?

The prophecy further states:

"And Assyria the work of my hands".

Similarly let the Assyrians speak for themselves. Do they attribute themselves to Jesus or the Prophet of Islam?

Further, it says:

"And Israel mine inheritance".

Who holds Palestine, the land of Israel? As already explained, the majority of the people living in Palestine, the land of Israel, are Muslims. The state of Israel was created in this land but Jews are not the followers of Jesus and Christians are small minority of the population. In any case, Jesus can have no claim on the prophecy.

The prophecy speaks of *a highway out of Egypt into Assyria*, i.e., a sign of active contact between the two countries. The prophecy pictures the inhabitants of the two countries visiting and befriending each other and joining in a common mode of worship. Who brought about this change? Christians ruled both Egypt and Assyria at one time, and a majority of the inhabitants of these countries were Christian. During that time however, the conditions of the prophecy were not fulfilled. According to the prophecy the two countries were to develop such intimate contact that for all practical purposes they were to become one people, with one language and one faith. Some contact between two neighboring countries is normal but the contacts between Egypt and Assyria were to be different. It was to result in the welding of two peoples into one, and to give them a

common nationality. Such a fusion between these two people never occurred during the Christian rule. Under Rome, Egypt and Syria were parts of the same empire, but the mode of administration in the two countries remained different. Egypt was a semi-independent kingdom and Assyria was under a Roman Governor. The Egyptian Church was also different from the Assyrian Church. In Egypt, under the influence of the Alexandrian Church, Christianity had assumed a form that differed from that of the Palestinian or Syrian Church. The Egyptians worshipped in their local language, Coptic, and Syrians in a corrupt mixture of Hebrew and Greek. The situation changed drastically after the advent of Islam. Subsequently, Egypt and Syria remained under one rule for centuries and both countries began to speak and still speak one language. Both adopted and still practice a common mode of worship. Both developed a common consciousness; Syrian scholars went to Egypt and were honored by the Egyptians. Similarly, Egyptian scholars went to Syria and were honored by their Egyptians peers. Even today, while the Muslim world is politically fragmented, the Arab League is a united body of Egyptians, Syrians and Palestinians. The three seem to share and are proud of a common nationality. This prophecy of Isaiah, therefore, was fulfilled in and through the Holy Prophet of Islam and his followers. To apply this to Jesus and the Christian Church seems utter extravagance.

VI. Again, Isaiah describes the naming of a new nation:⁸¹

And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

Quite evidently, the prophecy foretells of a new movement, with a new name; the new name will not be one assumed by human action, but would be proposed by God in His revealed word. Annotators of the Bible apply this prophecy to the Christian Church, notwithstanding the common knowledge that the names Christian and Christianity, or the many names by which Christian sects are known, were never proposed by God in His revealed word but were assumed by the people. Muslims are thus the only people named by Divine revelation in fulfillment of this prophecy. Thus the Quran says:⁸²

He named you Muslims both before and in this Book.

This is a clear reference to the prophecies of Isaiah. The verse of the Quran seems to say, "We foretold that your name will not be one of your choice but one of Our choice". Accordingly, today, We give you the name "Muslim". The name is derived from salam which means peace, and this is in keeping with one of the titles of the Promised Prophet, "Prince of Peace". The prophecy was simply marvelous. Equally marvelous is the fact that only Muslims claim to have received their name from God in His own revealed word. Isaiah foretold that a Prophet would come, the name of whose followers would be chosen by God and announced in His revealed word. The Holy Prophet of Islam is that Prophet whose message was named Islam and, his followers, Muslims by God.

VII. Isaiah further states God's promise to create New heavens and a new earth and also states that the former things will not be remembered:⁸³

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in which that I create;

for behold I create a Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people;

The same promise is repeated later⁸⁴ (emphasis added):

*For as the new **heavens** and the new **earth** which I will make shall remain before me, says the Lord; so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord.*

In the above verses, God promises the creation of new heavens (plural) and a new earth (singular). A little consideration of the words indicate that God's promise is not for the creation of additional physical or material heavens but for new spiritual heavens or world order (or law) for the earth. Reading the above in conjunction with prophecies about a new law in Deuteronomy, Habakkuk and Isaiah, one can see the same promise being repeated. Interestingly, Jesus also used the same description during his famous Sermon On the Mount. Thus Jesus is quoted as saying⁸⁵ (emphasis added):

*"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you **till heaven and earth pass away**, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of the commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Thus Jesus described his mission at the Sermon on the Mount and stated that his goal is to fulfill and **not** abrogate the Law of Moses. He further said that till this heaven (singular) and earth (meaning the current world order or God's law) does not pass away, not a tittle or iota of the law (of Moses) will be changed. Jesus in fact accomplished his mission for he revived the Law of Moses and preached to the tribes of Israel.

Later, in accordance with Biblical prophecies, the advent of Islam superseded the Law of Moses and thus, in Biblical terms, a new heaven was created. Consequently, according to Biblical teaching, the old law should not be remembered and/or practiced. God affirms in the Quran that Islam is the final law and is applicable to all mankind.⁸⁶

VIII. Isaiah describes the new law as:^{87*}

*For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line,
here a little, there a little.
Nay, but by men of strange lips*

* This verse has since been altered in newer editions of the Bible. It now reads:

For it is: Do and do, do and do; rule and rule, rule and rule; a little here, a little there; Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues, God will speak to his people.

(The verse has been drastically modified in the NIV; its original meaning has been totally obliterated.)

*and with an alien tongue
the Lord will speak to his people,
to whom he has said,*

This prophecy clearly describes how God's new law would be revealed. It is no coincidence that each and every word of this prophecy describes the exact way in which the Quran was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). The Quran was revealed to the Prophet in bits and pieces, line by line, over a period of about 23 years. The Quranic revelations contain layers upon layers of interpretations that will only be revealed by God at the appropriate time to those who seek the truth. Part of the Quran was revealed to the Prophet in Mecca and part in Medina. The Quran was revealed in the Arabic language, which was an alien tongue to the Jews who spoke Aramaic.

Another prophecy from Isaiah has been similarly altered as shown below. Thus, according to the Knox Version.⁸⁷

Yes the Lord's word has come to me, Go and bid the watchman stand at his post, to give tidings of all he sees. A chariot he saw, with two out-riders, one that rode on an ass, and one that rode on a camel;

The New International Version records this verse in completely different words as follows:

This is what the Lord says to me: Go, post a lookout and have him report what he sees. When he sees chariots with teams of horses, riders on donkeys or riders on camels, let him be alert, fully alert.

The original verse from the earlier version clearly foretells the advent of two great prophets. The sequence of their advent is also clearly prophesied. It is well known that Jesus usually traveled on an ass or a donkey, whereas Muhammad, the prophet of Islam employed a camel as his means of transportation. Thus, according to this prophecy, a chariot with two out riders would imply the advent of two leaders in the future. The first leader would be associated with an ass while the second leader would be distinguished by his use of a camel. History testifies to the exact fulfillment of this prophecy; Jesus and Muhammad appeared as two great leaders and their advent marked the progressive stages for mankind's advancement to the next higher spiritual level in this evolutionary process.

Again, this verse has undergone a drastic change in the New International Version. The clear message from the earlier version has been drastically changed and again, its original meaning has been lost. The mention of riders on donkeys or camels has totally obliterated its original meaning.

The above comparison of verses from the older Revised Standard and the Knox Versions, with that from the NIV demonstrates the severe alterations in Biblical texts. In the above examples, both the original verses unequivocally foretold the advent of the Quran and the Holy Prophet of Islam whereas their changed text in the later editions have completely obliterated their original meaning. Biblical scholars may claim that the change is insignificant and the expressed message in both versions is similar. However, as demonstrated above, this is absolutely incorrect because the implications in them are significantly different. If, however, it is claimed that the revision was

necessary based on additional discoveries of earlier manuscripts or the better understanding of earlier Biblical texts, then the Bible may be in for a major overhaul because of the recent discoveries in the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. This inconsistency in Biblical text causes great problems for a critical study of this nature where the absolute meaning of the word is required. It is strongly speculated that these changes in the text are deliberate attempts to destroy their actual meaning and may be aimed at preventing such objective comparisons.

THE PROPHECY IN JEREMIAH

Again Jeremiah tells of God's plan to preserve his yet to be revealed law and to protect it against human interpolations:⁸⁸

I will put my Law within them and I will write it upon their hearts.

This prophecy is fulfilled in its entirety in the way the Quranic revelations were preserved. These revelations were memorized soon after their receipt by the Prophet and were literally "put within the people and written on their hearts". Even today, millions of Muslims remember the entire Quran by heart and this practice has continued unabated ever since its institution by the Holy Prophet after he received the first revelation. This is again God's way to show how the prophecies made by His messengers are fulfilled.

PROPHECIES OF DANIEL

The book of Daniel describes the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian King, which he nor his advisors could interpret. After seeking Divine help through prayers, the dream and its interpretation were revealed to Daniel. According to the Bible, the dream was as follows:⁸⁹

Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Daniel's interpretation of this dream, according to the Bible, is as follows:⁹⁰

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third

kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain, without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

In Daniel's interpretation, the gold head is the king of Babylon; the silver breast and arms are the kingdoms of Persia and Midia which arose after the kingdom of Babylon. The brass thighs stand for the Greek Empire under Alexander, which became dominant after Persia and Midia. The iron legs stand for the Roman Empire, which attained to power on the decline of the Alexandrian Empire. Further, the dream describes the image's feet as:⁹¹

His feet (i.e., the image's) part of iron and part of clay.

This description points to the fact that the Roman Empire would cover parts of Europe as well as Asia. Iron legs denote the European part of the Roman Empire and point to the strength of a single nationality and a single faith. The feet however, were partly of iron and partly of clay. This meant that the European power was to subjugate parts of Asia and thus become an imperial power. Imperial powers command large territories and vast resources, but they also suffer from the inherent weakness, which comes from the lack of cohesion among their peoples. The dream evidently means that in the latter years, the Roman Empire would begin to decline because of this lack of cohesion. The dream, however, proceeds to foretell more important things:⁹²

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

History documents the complete fulfillment of this part of the Biblical dream i.e. the rise of Islam. In its early days, Islam had to clash with Rome and then with Iran. When they confronted Rome, Rome had conquered the Alexandrian Empire of Greece and had become a great power. Likewise, when had to face Iran, Iran had also become a formidable adversary and had already captured Babylon. The Muslims emerged victorious over both empires and, consequently, the might of two great empires was shattered. Rome and Iran were completely destroyed thus fulfilling the Biblical prophecy of the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, breaking to pieces together, and

becoming like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. The order of events in the dream, their interpretation by Daniel and their historical fulfillment make their meaning absolutely clear. History records that Persia and Midia succeeded Babylon as great world powers. Alexander destroyed these powers and that of Rome later replaced his Empire. The Roman Empire, from its Eastern seat of authority at Constantinople, laid the foundation of a mighty Euro-Asiatic Empire. This Asiatic Roman Empire was later defeated and destroyed by the Holy Prophet and his Companions in total compliance of this Biblical prophecy.

The Holy Prophet himself led the initial expedition against the Roman forces to the Syrian border after receiving a report about their imperative attack on the Muslims. However the two armies never engaged in a full-scale battle; only irregular skirmishes and raids took place. This situation continued till after the Holy Prophet's death when full scale fighting was initiated. It was during the time of the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, when the total discomfiture and annihilation of the Roman Empire occurred. Later, during the time of the second Caliph, Umar, the Muslim armies also defeated the Persian Empire. Thus, these once mighty empires suffered humiliation and defeat and lost their eminence.

References to the *stone* of Daniel's prophecy is also contained elsewhere in the Bible.^{93, 94} Isaiah refers to the Holy One as:

*And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*⁹³

*And many among them shall stumble, and fall and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.*⁹⁴

Matthew indicates that the Promised One, the stone of the prophecy, is not Jesus but another entity coming after Jesus. Matthew thus describes the stone:⁹⁵

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Similarly, Psalms also refers to this stone:⁹⁶

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

This stone is further referred to in Matthew:⁹⁷

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

As stated earlier, Jesus himself denied all claims to this prophecy, which applies to one coming after the son is slain. Christians today fondly apply the prophecy to their church. However, this attempt will not avail. According to Daniel, the thighs of the image were made of brass, the legs (i.e. the Roman Empire) of iron and the feet of iron and clay; the stone smote the image upon his feet. Early

Islam, that is to say, was to clash with the borders of the Asiatic part of the Roman Empire and smash it to pieces. The Roman Empire was the temporal expression of the Christian Church. The stone of the prophecy, therefore, was to clash with the Church. The stone could not be the Church, for the Church could not clash with itself. Nor could it be Jesus because Jesus came a long time before the Church. Whoever destroyed the might of the Roman Empire fulfilled the prophecy. The prophecy, therefore, applies only to the Holy Prophet of Islam and his followers.

The prophecy goes on to say:⁹⁸

The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

This is exactly what happened. The Holy Prophet and his followers defeated the Kaiser and the Chosroes, and the Muslims became the rulers of the whole of the then known world. The stone did become a great mountain; for a thousand years, the direction of the world affairs remained in the hands of the Muslims.

PROPHECIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The following books of the New Testament also foretell the advent of the promised Prophet whose coming was prophesized earlier in the various books of the Old Testament.

1. Matthew
2. John
3. Luke
4. Mark
5. Acts

The prophecy in Matthew states:⁹⁹

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a

nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

This prophecy has already been referred to in an earlier section. In this beautiful parable Jesus has presented an epitome of the history of Prophets. The passage leaves no doubt that the vineyard depicts the world; husbandmen mean mankind at large; fruits, which the householder wishes to collect, imply virtue, piety and devotion to God. Servants portray successive Prophets who were appointed by God and the son means Jesus who appeared after a long line of Prophets. The son was dishonored and *slain* by the husbandmen. Having said this, Jesus goes on to speak of *the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner*. The stone, which had been rejected, is the progeny of Ishmael, whom the sons of Isaac used to treat with contempt. According to the prophecy, one from among the sons of Ishmael was to appear and become the head of the corner. This would be no ordinary prophet but one who would bring a final and complete Law from God. Thus to use Quranic expression *the Seal of the Prophets*. The advent of an Ishmaelite for the grand office would seem strange too. Yet (as Jesus said) God would take away His kingdom from the Israelites and give it to the Ishmaelites, who would prove a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, that is, a people who would keep alive the worship of God in the world. It is self evident that the only outstanding Prophet who came after Jesus and who could be said to answer to this description is the Holy Prophet of Islam. It was he who came into conflict with Judaism and Christianity and completely shattered the influence of both teachings. It was his race that was hated and of him alone could it be truly said:

Whosoever fell on him was broken and on whomsoever he fell was ground to powder.

Again Matthew refers to the coming of another Prophet after him:¹⁰⁰

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The verses mean that Jesus is going to depart from his people and his people will not be able to see him again, until they declare:

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The advent of two prophets is prophesied here. The first advent after Jesus' departure would be of the *like of God*. The second advent would be that of Jesus himself. It has been made absolutely clear that until the advent of one who *cometh in the name of the Lord* has been fulfilled, the second coming of Jesus will not take place. Detailed discussion on the like of God and the like of Moses is contained earlier in this chapter under Deuteronomy where it has been established that the advent prophesied here is that of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Thus Jesus' prophecy about the advent of Islam and its Holy Prophet leave no doubt that in the divine scheme, the advent of Jesus was not to mark the final stage of human spiritual advancement. This stage was to be marked by the advent of one coming *in the name of the Lord*. It cannot be said that after him Jesus is to come again, so Jesus will still mark the last stage in spiritual advancement. The point has been clarified by Jesus himself and is recorded in the Bible:¹⁰⁰

Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Thus according to Jesus' message, only those people will be eligible to receive and acknowledge Jesus on his second coming who would first have accepted and acknowledged the advent of *the like of Moses*. Accordingly, a denier of *the like of Moses* will not be able to recognize Jesus during his second advent. And why not? The reason is simple. Jesus, when he comes again, will be found among the followers of *the like of Moses*. Only those people will be qualified to believe in Jesus' second coming who would first have believed in *the like of Moses*. Jesus, therefore, will not be an independent teacher during his second advent. He will be a strict follower of and an image of *the like of Moses*. The *like of Moses*, therefore, will only mark the last stage of human spiritual advancement.

The New Testament provides additional evidence in support of the above interpretation. According to John, when people inquired of John the Baptist if he were the Christ of the prophecy, he responded in the negative.¹⁰¹ The Bible records John the Baptist's denial that he was either Elias or the prophet whose advent had already been foretold:¹⁰²

Then they "asked him, what then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not".

Then they asked him: "Art thou that prophet ' And he answered, No".

And then they said: Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?.

It is evident from the above that three prophecies were current in the time of Jesus namely, the second coming of Elias, the birth of Christ and the coming of that Prophet, that is, the Promised One of the prophecy in Deuteronomy. Moreover, the three were also believed to be separate persons.

The Bible also confirms that Jesus had himself declared that the advent of John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the second coming of Elias. Thus according to the Bible, the second coming of Elijah in the person of John the Baptist was a spiritual occurrence rather than a physical one. Biblical confirmation of this fact is to be found in Matthew, Luke and Mark:^{103, 104, 105}

*And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*¹⁰³

According to Luke, John's father, Zacharias, had the following revelation before John's birth:¹⁰⁴

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias.

Also according to Mark, Jesus declared emphatically that Elias had indeed come:¹⁰⁵

That Elias is indeed come.

Further, Matthew again attests to the fact of Elijah's second advent:¹⁰⁶

That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed.

From the above Biblical passages, it is evident that the second coming of Elias was spiritual and had taken place in the person of John the Baptist. As for Christ, it is agreed that he is no other than Jesus of the New Testament. Thus the New Testament does not identify the Prophet prophesied in the Old and New Testaments who is to come after Jesus. The New Testament emphatically identifies "Elias" and "Christ" but leaves the third person (i.e. the promised Prophet) unidentified. Thus the "promised Prophet" is neither John nor Jesus but is a separate individual. The Bible further verifies that the promised Prophet had not appeared until the time of Jesus. Hence it is absolutely clear that the promised Biblical Prophet had to appear, according to Biblical testimony, some time after Jesus' advent. A careful scan of the spiritual horizon after Jesus' advent identifies only the Holy Prophet of Islam who claimed "that Prophet hood" and fulfilled all Biblical signs. No other person can make that claim and fulfill the Biblical signs.

Further evidence of the timing of the Promised Prophet's coming after Jesus is contained in Luke:¹⁰⁷

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

This verse also confirms the advent of the Promised Prophet and that he will appear after Jesus. Again, history only identifies the Holy Prophet of Islam who claimed to be that Promised Prophet and fulfilled the Biblical signs. No one, excepting him, has ever made the claim.

Additional evidence to that effect is also contained in John:¹⁰⁸

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

This prophecy also is also fulfilled only in the Holy Prophet of Islam. The phrase "whom the Father will send in my name" can only mean that "he will bear testimony to my truth". The Holy Prophet of Islam testified to the truth of Jesus as a divine and honored Teacher and Prophet, and declared them mistaken and misguided who thought him accursed. The above prophecy states clearly, "He shall teach you all things." The words are reminiscent of those used in the prophecy in Deuteronomy. The description applies only to the Holy Prophet for it was his teaching, which brought comfort to the world.

Moreover, John provides additional irrefutable evidence in support of the above position:¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

The prophecy lays down that the Comforter will come after the departure of Jesus. When the Comforter comes, he will reprove the world of sin and promote truth and justice. He would denounce the sins of the Jews because of their disbelief in Jesus. He would also correct the erroneous belief of Jesus' resurrection and assure the world that Jesus of Nazareth, the Teacher who appeared to Israel, will not return in person; thus heralding the truth to the world. He will promote justice and eliminate all satanic forces. The prophecy also says that when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide the believers into all truth. The book revealed to him will contain no human word; he will foretell things to come and will glorify Jesus and clear him of all charges.

This prophecy undeniably applies to the Holy Prophet of Islam. It unequivocally states that the Comforter cannot come until after Jesus' departure from the world. The timing for the Comforters' advent is further specified in the New Testament. According to Acts, the Comforter was to appear sometimes between Jesus' departure and his second coming.¹¹⁰ This Comforter, therefore, is no other than the Promised One (Prophet) of Deuteronomy who was also to appear after Jesus. The prophecy says that the Promised One will establish the truth and condemn the deniers of Jesus. To satisfy this condition it is imperative that the Promised Prophet be unbiased in the eyes of the world with no relationship to either the Jews or the Christians. Moreover, to be impartial, he should have no racial or religious ties with Jesus. Additionally, because God would appoint him, he should respect all previous prophets and promote respect and reverence for them. Finally, he should not violate the conditions and signs foretold about his advent elsewhere in the scriptures.

The Prophet of Islam is the only person who fulfills all the requirements for the Promised Prophet. He was neither a Jew nor a Christian. Consistent with the prophecy of Deuteronomy, he was from among the brethren of the Jews, i.e. he was an Ishmaelite. His defense of Jesus' honor is extremely convincing and absolutely irrefutable. The Bible and historical events support it. The Quran thus describes the alleged crucifixion as follows:¹¹¹

And their saying, "We did kill the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah"; whereas they slew him not, nor crucified him, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified; and those who differ therein are certainly in a state of doubt about it: they have no definite knowledge thereof, but only follow a conjecture; and they did not convert this conjecture into a certainty; on the contrary, Allah exalted him to Himself. And Allah is Mighty, Wise; and there is none among the People of the Book but will believe in it before

his death; and on the day of resurrection, he (Jesus) shall be a witness against them. So because of the transgression of the Jews, We forbade them pure things, which had been allowed to them, and also because of their hindering many men from Allah's way.

According to the above verse, Jewish excesses were due to their disbelief in Jesus, their blasphemy against Mary and their invalid claim that they had killed Jesus. In fact, they had failed to kill Jesus either by the sword or by crucifixion; they only suspected that he died on the cross. This suspicion was never established as a fact. The Jews continued to differ among themselves and no one had definite knowledge about this event. They only followed conjecture. They certainly failed in their plan to kill Jesus. Allah on the other hand, saved him from an accursed death on the cross and blessed him with His favors because Allah is both Powerful and Wise. The Jews, Christians and Muslims will continue to affirm their belief in Jesus' death on the cross, but on the Day of Judgment, Jesus will himself depose against them and accuse them of affirming a falsehood. Based on these excesses and consistent with his promise, God withdrew his bounties from the Jews which they considered as their birthright. The above Quranic passage is self-explanatory.

The same message is also contained in the New Testament. John records that the Promised One will correct the erroneous belief in the resurrection of Jesus and prove that Jesus, the Israelite, will not come to the world again.¹⁰⁹ The Holy Prophet of Islam corrected this erroneous belief that Jesus rose from the dead, and physically ascended to heaven where he is still alive and will return again in the same physical form. The Quran states the factual position which confirms its earlier statement and also supports the Biblical position:¹¹²

And when Allah will say, "O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men, 'Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah?'" he will answer, "Holy art Thou. I could never say that to which I had no right. If I had said it, Thou wouldst have surely known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. It is only Thou Who art the Knower of hidden things. I said nothing to them except that which Thou didst command me 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord'. And I was a witness over them as long as I remained among them, but since Thou didst cause me to die, Thou hast been the watcher over them; and Thou art witness over all things. If Thou punish them, they are Thy servants; and If Thou forgive them, Thou surely art the Mighty, the Wise".

According to the Quran, the above interrogation will occur on the Day of Judgment. The above passage declares that, contrary to common belief, Jesus is dead and is not alive in heaven. Only his misguided followers had elevated him to godhead after his death.

The prophecy of John¹⁰⁹ continues to describe the attributes of the Promised Prophet. It states that Satan and satanic forces will be smashed at the hands of the Promised One. Among all the Prophets, the Prophet of Islam has achieved a preeminent status for standing up against all the satanic forces. He has instead strongly promoted the purity and piety of human beings. The single, most important visible evidence of this claim is the Muslim prayer for the protection against Satanic influence as taught by the Holy Prophet is "I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the rejected". The Holy Prophet urged his followers to recite this prayer regularly. Today, the Muslims in their daily lives habitually use this prayer. A similar prayer, which is recited as extensively, cannot be found in

the teachings of other Prophets. Consequently, the Muslims more than any other people, are deserving of the promise contained in the Biblical prophecy. Hence their Prophet is uniquely placed to have fulfilled this prophecy. However, elimination of Satanic influence does not imply his physical killing. The Satanic influences and temptations will always be present; without them faith will have no value. To kill Satan, therefore, is to minimize evil influences and propensities and to maximize good influences and dispositions. The Church cannot lay claim to this part of the prophecy because it has declared the Law to be a curse. This declaration casts doubt over the Christian concept of good and evil.

The words in the prophecy,¹¹² “He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak”, can only apply to the Prophet of Islam. There is not a single book in the Old and New Testaments in which man's word has not been mixed with the spoken words of God. On the contrary, the Quran contains only the exact word of God preserved in its pristine purity. Moreover, the words of the prophecy "He will show you things to come", can only apply to the Holy Prophet of Islam who foretold numerous future events more than any other prophet.

The last sign in the prophecy, "he will glorify me", also applies to the Holy Prophet. He cleared Jesus of the stigma of having died an accursed death on the Cross. He also vindicated Jesus' alleged claim to Godhead. By implication, such a claim would make Jesus guilty of disobedience and disloyalty to God.

Additional evidence supporting the advent of the Promised Prophet are found in the Acts:¹¹³

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

The above verses refer to the prophecy in Deuteronomy according to which the promised Prophet who was to be raised from among the brethren of the Jews will be a like of Moses. Accordingly, he would bring a new law, the acceptance of which will be mandatory for the adherents of the Mosaic Law, and the people who refuse to accept this Prophet will be destroyed. A reference to this future event in The Acts establishes unequivocally that the Law and teachings of the Promised Prophet will supersede the teachings of Moses and Jesus. The promised Prophet mentioned in Deuteronomy (and in this passage from The Acts), therefore, was to mark the last stage in the spiritual human advancement, as he was to supersede Moses and Jesus and give the world a new Law.

This passage from the Acts also points to another significant sign about the promised Prophet. It states that all the prophets from Samuel and those that followed him (including Jesus) had foretold the coming of this great Prophet. The Prophecy of Moses has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. Since Jesus came after Samuel, this verse can only mean that from Moses to Jesus every prophet had foretold the advent of this great Prophet. This means that this prophet will lay the

appropriate foundation for the spiritual elevation of mankind to the highest stage. The Holy Prophet of Islam is the only Prophet who fulfills all Biblical signs about the promised Prophet. Accordingly, he is uniquely qualified to be that great Prophet whose advent has been repeatedly prophesied by all Biblical prophets; thus his Law, the Quran, is the prophesied Law. All earlier prophets have pointed to the need of the Quran and have prophesied about it. Consequently, according to the Old and New Testaments, the Quran makes all earlier scriptures redundant. Any denial of the promised Prophet and the Quran will thus cast doubts on the truth of all Biblical prophets. The Bible itself attests to the truth of all prophets, and accordingly Moses said:¹¹⁴

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is a thing which the Lord hath not spoken but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

It is not possible to list the fulfillment of all Biblical prophecies, which culminate in Islam in this book. The reader is however encouraged to investigate this aspect further

A chronological study of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim scriptures confirms the existence of a strong evolutionary trend, which is consistent with human spiritual development. This evolutionary process culminates in Islam, which was the new law in accordance with prophecies contained in the Old, and the New Testaments. Many future events prophesied by the Quran have since been fulfilled. These prophecies are scientifically correct and do not defy the laws of nature. Many other Quranic prophecies point towards events, which are yet to occur, and their exact fulfillment will further signify its truthfulness for future generations.

It is amazing and awe-inspiring to observe God's promises to His prophets and their prophecies made thousands of years ago to be fulfilled to their minutest detail. The exact fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in Jesus Christ and his teachings establishes the evolutionary trend in the Divine plan for human spiritual fulfillment. The subsequent fulfillment of other Old Testament prophecies and those in the New Testament are similarly fulfilled in Islam. This trend of fulfillment of prophecies from previous scriptures leading to subsequent scriptures validates the basic assumptions made in the beginning of this book. With the benefit of hindsight and modern communication facilities, it is relatively simple to review historical records and reconcile them with Biblical prophecies.

This chapter has provided an alternate explanation of some Biblical prophecies. The explanations presented here are based on historical records and can be verified from the various history books and landmarks, which still exist today. The Christian commentators of the Bible have refused to look beyond Christ's time for any evidence that proves the exact fulfillment of Biblical prophecies. If they look for any evidence beyond Christ's time, they will be overwhelmed and will be forced to accept the message of Islam. Hence, Biblical commentators have opted to deny historical facts and instead, rely on supernatural phenomenon in their failing attempt to apply all Biblical prophecies to Jesus. These supernatural explanations are incomprehensible and defy the laws of nature. They cannot be verified and hence their "understanding" demands a blind faith, which is basically what Jews and Christians have.

The alternate explanation of the above Biblical prophecies is based on historical facts subsequent to Jesus' departure from Judea. It is supported by physical and material evidence which can be easily verified. These explanations demonstrate the exact fulfillment of Biblical prophecies to their minutest detail. These explanations are based on logic and reasoning rather than on blind faith based on superstition. The logical understanding of faith will make Divine attributes and His plan for human spiritual advancement more obvious.

The exact fit of the pieces of the Divine puzzle in the message of Islam leads one to appreciate the greatness, absolute authority, unity and all other attributes of God Almighty, the Creator of the Universe.

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CHAPTER V

THE REAL CRUCIFIXION, RESSURECTION & ASCENSION OF JESUS

Although Jewish scriptures foretold the advent of Jesus as the Messiah, ^{1,2,3} the Jews refused to accept him; instead, they rejected him as an imposter and a false claimant. To prove their point, they forced the Romans (the rulers of Judea at that time) to condemn Jesus to death by crucifixion. Death by crucifixion is pronounced an accursed death in Deuteronomy.⁴ Hence the Jews forced Jesus' crucifixion to prove that he was an accursed of God. The main reason that reinforced their opposition and hostility towards Jesus' claim to be the Messiah was that the Jewish scriptures⁵ also foretold that the advent of their Messiah would be preceded by the second coming of prophet Elijah who, according the Jewish belief, had physically ascended to heavens.⁶ His second coming was considered as an essential prerequisite to the Messiah's advent.

Consequently, when Jesus proclaimed himself as the Messiah whose advent had been foretold in the Bible, the Jews refused to accept him on the basis that Elijah had still not come. The question of Elijah's Second Coming was put to Jesus by one of the scribes to whom he responded that Elijah had already come.^{7,8,9} Moreover, the New Testament also records evidence to the effect that Elijah's second coming was spiritual, rather than physical and it was to occur in the person of John the Baptist.¹⁰ Thus, Jesus corrected a major misconception that prevailed among the Jews at that time about the physical second coming of Elijah. According the Jesus, the second coming of "a person ascended to heavens" will not be of a physical nature but will be of a spiritual nature. Jesus confirmed that John the Baptist was indeed the spiritual second coming of Elijah who came before Jesus and indeed fulfilled the Biblical prophecy about Elijah second coming (John the Baptist was about six months older than Jesus). By implication, Jesus' resolution of the question of second coming of "ascended personalities" also resolved the real meaning of the term "ascended to heavens". In effect, Jesus denied the "physical ascension" of Elijah, for if he had ascended physically, he should also descend physically, from the heavens. Thus in his answer to the scribe's question about Elijah, Jesus corrected the common Jewish misconception about physical ascension and also clarified that this term is used metaphorically, rather than literally.

In short, Jesus himself denied physical human ascension to heavens and established precedence for the second coming of "ascended personalities". How can he then himself claim to have physically ascended to heavens? As a result of this Jewish wrong belief, they are still, until today, awaiting and praying for Messiah's advent.

The few Jews who accepted Jesus as their awaited Messiah followed his teachings and helped him fulfill his stated mission, which was:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.¹¹

*Verily I say unto you, That ye which have follow me, in this regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*¹²

*These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commended them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*¹³

*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*¹⁴

Thus Jesus explicitly stated that his goal was to uphold, fulfill, and restore the original Law of Moses that had been significantly altered by the Jews. He was to achieve this goal by preaching only to the followers of the Mosaic Law, i.e. the Jews who were represented by the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus first proclaimed himself to be the Messiah when he, according to the New Testament, was about 30 years old. Again, according to the New Testament, he was sentenced to death by crucifixion when he was about 33 years old. Thus the New Testament records general events of the last 2-3 years of Jesus' life in Judea and spends an extraordinary time on the events that occurred during the last week before his supposed death by crucifixion. A review of Biblical evidence both immediately prior to and preceding Jesus' crucifixion is extremely helpful in fully understanding this event.

Two books of the New Testament record Jesus' prophecy about his triumphant return from the capital punishment pronounced on him by the Romans at the behest of the Jews. In response to his followers' questions, Jesus made the following prophecy regarding his crucifixion:

*Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign of thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*¹⁵

*And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: They seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas, the prophet. For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall the son of man be to this generation.*¹⁶

There are two critical aspects in the above prophecy regarding the eventual outcome of this event:

1. That Jesus would stay alive throughout his ordeal on the cross as Jonah did while in the fish's belly. The Bible records that Jonah entered the belly of the whale alive, and remained therein alive, and came out thereof alive. Thus Jesus prophesied that he would enter the heart of the earth alive, would remain there alive and would come out thereof alive. This meant that the designs of his enemies would be frustrated and that they would not succeed in putting him to death on the cross.
2. After successfully surviving that terrible experience, Jesus would be accepted by his people (the Jews) as the Ninevites accepted Jonah. The Bible again confirms that after coming out of the whale's belly, Jonah went to the Ninevites and they accepted his message.¹⁷ Jonah

consequently died a natural death after having accomplished his mission. Up to the time of his crucifixion, Jesus had preached only to the two tribes of Israel, which remained in Judea after the Babylonian invasion. The other ten tribes were taken prisoners by the Babylonians and forcibly taken out of Judea and were scattered in an area east of the Euphrates. The Bible also confirms that these tribes never returned to their native land.¹⁸ Consequently, Jesus had to take his message to these ten remaining tribes of Israel and for his prophecy to be fulfilled; they had to accept his message.

For Jesus' prophecy to be fulfilled in its entirety, it was imperative that Jesus takes his message to these ten remaining tribes. History records these as the "ten lost tribes of Israel". An excellent account of these tribes is found elsewhere.¹⁹ Thus Jesus had himself prophesied that his people, similar to Jonah's experience, would accept his message and his mission would thus be accomplished.

A detailed examination of Biblical description of events immediately before and after crucifixion follows: The Biblical account of Crucifixion is as follows:²⁰

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane and saith unto the disciples, sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: Tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Quite understandably Jesus, a sincere servant of God and a true prophet, was much agitated over the prospect of being condemned to death by crucifixion. Apart from the suffering involved, such a denouement would forever become a barrier to the Jews believing in him as the Messiah, as they would deem his death accursed. He therefore supplicated repeatedly in agony that he might be delivered from death on the cross; being in agony he prayed more earnestly. Thus the Biblical confirmation:²¹

'And his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground'.

As a true prophet, he realized that his duty was to approach God humbly for deliverance. He hoped and believed that his prayer would be accepted, yet his soul was in travail before the awful majesty of God Who alone had full knowledge of His Own designs. That is why Jesus added to his supplication:²²

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.

He was fully conscious that he had to conform to and carry out the Divine will, whatever it might be. Incidentally, this attitude confirms that his relationship with God was that of a prophet and not that of an equal partner in the Godhead.

He had full confidence that his prayer would be accepted, as he had himself told his disciples:

*And all things, whatsoever, ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*²³

*And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*²⁴

*Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.*²⁵

Indeed his prayer was accepted:²⁶

'and there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him'.

Thus, Jesus knew that he would be delivered from death upon the cross, though he did not know how it would come about. His enemies had devised a plan for his ruin and God had devised His plan for his deliverance, as is said in the Quran:²⁷

The enemies of Jesus devised their plans and God devised His plan; God is the Best of planners. God reassured Jesus: I shall cause thee to die a natural death, and shall exalt thee to Myself, and shall clear thee from the calumnies of those who disbelieve, and shall place those who follow thee above those who disbelieve until the Day of Judgment; then to Me shall be your return and I will judge between you concerning that wherein you differ.

God's plan was to be successful. It could not be frustrated. Soon after his supplications in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus was apprehended, whereupon one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest and smote off his ear, on which Jesus rebuked him and said:²⁸

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be.

All this makes it clear that Jesus supplicated most earnestly to be delivered from death upon the cross and was reassured in answer to his supplications that God would deliver him from such a death. A question, however, arises that calls for an answer from those who believe that Jesus was a partner in the Godhead and had appeared in human form to lay down his life on the cross so as to become atonement for the sins of mankind. If that were so, his death upon the cross would be the fulfillment of the very purpose of his coming and he would welcome its approach rather than seek to be delivered from it. Indeed, as a partner in the Godhead, he was in no need of any supplication but if, nevertheless, he did supplicate his supplication would be acted upon, he would be delivered from death upon the cross and would thus himself frustrate the very purpose of his coming. His supplications in the garden of Gethsemane, therefore, furnish a complete refutation of the fiction

that he was a partner in the Godhead and had come into the world to become atonement for the sins of mankind.

Having been apprehended, they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and elders were assembled. He was questioned by the high priest and at the end of the interrogation the high priest rent his clothes, saying,

*He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, he is guilty of death.*²⁹

*When they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.*³⁰

*When Pilate was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.*³¹

This was clearly divine intervention on behalf of Jesus and the first step in the divine plan to deliver him from death upon the cross. There is no instance in the history of religion where divine intervention, even through a dream, has ever been frustrated of its purpose. That the dream of Pilate's wife was a true one and was inspired by God is clear from the fact that she was informed that Jesus was a just man, that is to say, he was righteous. That the purpose of such a dream cannot be frustrated had already been manifested through a dream, which was aimed at securing the safety of Jesus when he was still a baby.

*Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod.*³²

*But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.*³³

This meant that no harm could have come to the child in Egypt, as he would be under divine protection. In the same way, the purpose of the dream seen by Pilate's wife was to persuade Pilate to adopt a favorable attitude towards Jesus whereby the divine purpose for his deliverance from death upon the cross might be facilitated and fulfilled. The attitude of Pilate was affected in accordance with the divine intent, as is said:³⁴

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him

According to the Bible, Pilate questioned Jesus but found nothing amiss with him. It was the time for the Passover feast and at that feast it was customary for the Governor to release a prisoner to the people. Pilate attempted to use the occasion as an excuse to release Jesus. He offered to release either Jesus or Barabbas, knowing fully well that Jesus was innocent of the charges while Barabbas was a convicted felon. Contrary to his expectations, the Jews sought Barabbas' release. Biblical corroboration of the event follows:

Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.³⁵

But the Chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The Governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the Governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.³⁶

Thus, Jesus was condemned to be crucified and was taken to Golgotha, the place of execution. The multitude went on mocking him and reviling him from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?³⁷

Apparently, this exclamation was wrenched from him by the perplexity from which he began to suffer that so far as he could see there was no way of deliverance left open for him, and yet God had promised him deliverance and he wondered whether anything that he had done or had left undone since the divine promise had served to cause offence to God. Stretched, as he was, on the cross he might have felt that the strain of the proceedings of the day and the ill treatment that he had undergone at the hands of the multitude were about to overcome his physical senses. He could not, at the moment, have imagined that his loss of consciousness and his perception of his approaching end were the very means that God in His Wisdom, had designed for his deliverance.³⁸

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

It is noteworthy that all four Gospels use the same expression with regard to the termination of the tragedy upon the cross. It is not said that Jesus died, but that he yielded or gave up the ghost.

Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.³⁹

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.⁴⁰

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.⁴¹

Jesus' clinical death on the cross has never been established with absolute certainty. In fact, Biblical evidence strongly implies that he did not die on the cross. This view is further corroborated by recently discovered documents authored by apostles like Thomas, Barnabas, Hermes and James, which deny the current belief about his supposed death on the cross. The exclusion of these

documents from the New Testament further testifies to the fact that they differed from the version contained in the current books of the New Testament that was assembled almost three centuries after the event of crucifixion by the Council of Nicee in 325 A.D.

“Giving up the ghost” has been generally misunderstood to mean that Jesus had died on the cross. However, in view of scientific evidence that has recently come to light this expression acquires a totally different connotation. This will now be discussed in some detail.

Incidentally, Jesus commending his spirit into the hands of the Father as mentioned in Luke, is consistent with his righteousness as a prophet, but is not consistent with his alleged partnership in the Godhead. The Gospel account continues:

*The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. Two thieves had also been nailed to the cross at the same time with Jesus. Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and **forthwith** came thereout blood and water.⁴²*

After this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and though Pilate marveled if Jesus were already dead: being satisfied on the point by the statement of the centurion readily gave his leave.⁴³

And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never a man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.⁴⁴

God's plan to save Jesus from an accursed death can be clearly discerned during the closing scene of this incident. This plan is also corroborated in the Holy Quran:⁴⁵

The enemies of Jesus devised their plans and God devised His plan; God is the Best of planners.

Jesus perceived that his end was approaching and cried out:³⁷

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

The events from the time when the vinegar soaked sponge was offered to Jesus till the time of his *giving up the ghost* is crucial to the proper understanding of this event and demands a critical analysis. According to the Bible, immediately after Jesus' above comment, a sponge filled with vinegar was put up to him to drink. This, instead of affording him any relief, caused him to be suffocated and he cried out: It is finished. By that time it was dark and, according to the prevalent

practice, order was given to break the legs of those who were hung upon the cross but were still alive. When the soldiers came to Jesus, it seemed to them that he was dead already and they did not break his legs, but one of them pierced his side with a spear and **forthwith** came there out blood and water, which was an indication that blood had not stopped circulating. The spear had not touched the heart but had injured the lung. The strain under which Jesus had labored during the day, his agony upon the cross, his drinking of the vinegar and the thrust of the spear in his side, which injured the lung, all combined to bring about a condition in which his breathing stopped but the circulation of the blood continued. To all appearance he had died, but in truth, despite the semblance of death, he was alive. If he had continued in that state for some time, the circulation of blood would also have stopped, but it was God's plan that the process of his resuscitation should now come into operation. This scenario has been independently corroborated by many researchers^{46, 47} the recent one being a former physician of Britain's Queen Elizabeth.⁴⁸

Joseph of Arimathaea, Jesus' secret disciple, and Nicodemus, an expert physician, now came and took charge of Jesus' body. It was brought down from the cross, wrapped in a linen cloth, which was impregnated with spices, and laid in a sepulcher, which had been recently hewn out of a rock. There can be no doubt that Joseph and Nicodemus must have continued to minister unto Jesus in the strong hope of reviving him as nothing had happened that day which could persuade them to believe that Jesus had truly died. He was a young man of thirty-three, of good physique, enjoying good health right up to the moment of his apprehension and condemnation. It is true that a crown of thorns was placed over his head,⁴⁹ which, though irritating and painful and causing him to bleed, could not have brought about his death. He was put upon the cross in the afternoon of Friday and had to be taken down from the cross before sunset, in accordance with the Law of Moses. The Jews were anxious to observe Moses' law, as failure to do so would bring upon them God's displeasure. Hence, according to the Bible, Jesus and the two thieves remained on the cross for no more than two to three hours. In such circumstances the device adopted of compassing the death of those who were still hanging upon the cross at the approach of sunset was to break their legs. However Jesus' legs were not broken; consequently, when he was taken down from the cross all his limbs were in good condition.

The omission to break Jesus' legs was obviously a part of the divine plan to rescue Jesus from the accursed death, which his enemies were anxious to bring about. Jesus himself referred to this divine plan when he alluded to the sign of Jonah as the only proof of his truthfulness. Jonah was alive throughout his ordeal in the belly of the fish and came out alive. Likewise, Jesus was alive throughout his ordeal on the cross and came down alive from it.

It should also be remembered that though the word burial has been applied to Jesus, there was no actual burial involved. He was placed in a sepulcher, which was like a chamber hewn out of the rock.⁵⁰ The grave in which his body would be buried in case of death was not yet dug. The chamber in which he was placed was wide enough to permit people to enter into and move about in. Thus, nothing whatever had happened from which an inference of death could reasonably be drawn. That is why Pilate, who must have possessed a good deal of knowledge of these things, when told that Jesus had died, marveled if he were already dead. As, however, he had been favorably inclined towards Jesus throughout, in consequence of the dream of his wife, he professed himself satisfied

with the statement of the centurion about the death of Jesus and readily gave the order that the body may be handed over to Joseph of Arimathaea.

The above reconstruction is in exact accord with the Biblical description and the affirmation of the Quran on this subject. God's assurance to Jesus, according to the Quran was that he would die a natural death and would be spiritually exalted towards God; that is to say, he would not suffer death upon the cross. There is a very significant and most emphatic affirmation in the Quran, which corroborates the above assurance:⁵¹

And their claiming: We did kill the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary who claimed to be the Messenger of God, whereas they slew him not, nor did they compass his death upon the cross, but the semblance of death was created for them... They have no definite knowledge about it, but only follow conjecture; they certainly did not compass his death; indeed, God exalted him to Himself; God is Mighty, Wise.

Several biographers of Jesus have, in recent years, expressed grave doubts about his death on the cross. Moreover, recent discoveries from around the Middle East and India provide irrefutable evidence against Jesus' death on the cross. According to the available evidence, the circumstances surrounding the event of the crucifixion point very strongly to the probability that he escaped such a death. Excerpts from some of the biographers follow:

- a) *Pilate, then, would have liked to save Jesus.... According to a tradition, Jesus found a supporter in the wife of the Procurator himself. . . and the idea that the blood of this beautiful young man was about to be spilt, weighed upon her mind. Certain it is that Jesus found Pilate prepossessed in his favor. The Governor questioned him with kindness, and with the desire to find an excuse for sending him away pardoned.⁵²*
- b) *Therefore Pilate endeavored to release him, but the Jews cried out: 'If thou release this man, thou art no friend of Caesar. Whosoever claimeth to be a king denieth the claim of Caesar.' On hearing these words Pilate brought Jesus forth and sat down on the judgment-seat in a place called the Pavement, in Hebrew, Gabbatha. It was the preparation-day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews: Behold your King; but they cried out: Away with him, crucify him. Pilate said to them: Shall I crucify your King? The chief priest replied: We have no King but Caesar. When Pilate perceived that his efforts were of no avail, but on the contrary a tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it. All the people replied: His blood be on us, and on our children. Their clamours, and those of the chief priests prevailed; for Pilate, desirous to satisfy the multitude, gave sentence that their demand should be executed. So he released to them Barabbas, imprisoned on account of sedition and murder, whom they had desired, and delivered Jesus to them to be crucified.⁵³*
- c) *It may be interesting to call attention to the fact that nowhere in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is the positive statement as an observation of one of those disciples that Jesus died on the cross or that he was dead when they removed him from the cross and placed him in the tomb.⁵⁴*
- d) *Crucifixion was a much more lingering kind of death, and, in its earlier stages, much less excruciating than we are apt to imagine, or than otherwise it would have been. As there was but*

little loss of blood- the nails that pierced the extremities touching no large blood-vessel and closing the wounds they made - the death which followed resulted from the processes of bodily exhaustion and irritation; and these were so slow that in no case, where the person crucified was in ordinary health and vigor, did they terminate within twelve hours. Almost invariably he survived the first twenty-four hours, lived generally over the second, occasionally even into the fifth or sixth day. The ancient testimonies to this ~t are quite explicit, nor are modern ones wanting although there are but few parts of the world now where crucifixion is practiced.⁵⁵

- e) *A fact of importance to be known, but which has not been sufficiently regarded, is that crucifixion was a very lingering punishment, and proved fatal not so much by loss of blood, since the wounds in the hands and feet did not lacerate any large vessel, and were nearly closed by the nails which produced them, as by the slow process of nervous irritation and exhaustion. This would of course be liable to variety, depending on differences of age, sex, constitution, and other circumstances; but for persons to live two or more days on the cross was a common occurrence, and there are even instances of some who, having been taken down in time and carefully treated, recovered and survived. In many cases death was partly induced by hunger and thirst, the vicissitudes of heat and cold, or the attacks of ravenous birds and beasts; and in others was designedly accelerated by burning, stoning, suffocation, breaking the bones, or piercing the vital organs.⁵⁶*

Beginning with the closing years of the nineteenth century as time has passed, evidence has become progressively available which puts it beyond doubt that Jesus did not die on the Cross. Detailed discussion on death by crucifixion is persecuted elsewhere.^{57, 58}

RESURRECTION

Unfortunately there is a complete gap in the Biblical account with regard to the activities of Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus after the body of Jesus, wrapped in the shroud, had been placed in the sepulcher. There is, however, one item of information that appears to furnish an explanation of what happened thereafter. Nicodemus had brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight, and the body of Jesus was wound in linen clothes impregnated with the spices.⁴⁴ It was the action of the aloes and the spices that restored Jesus' breathing which had stopped and that in turn helped to maintain and strengthen the action of the heart. No doubt it would have taken some time for Jesus to recover complete consciousness.

This happened during Friday night. Again, we have no indication whatsoever how Jesus passed the day of Saturday and Saturday night.

Matthew alone, of the four Evangelists, mentions that after Jesus' body had been laid in the sepulcher, Joseph rolled a great stone to its door and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.⁵⁹

It is not mentioned, however, whether they were sitting inside the sepulcher or outside of it and when they did depart. The account thus continues:⁶⁰

that the next day, that is to say on the Sabbath the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise

again. Command, therefore, that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: So the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them: Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch

This shows that Pilate was indifferent and left the priests and Pharisees to take such precautions as they thought fit; but their precautions were rendered nugatory, as there was a great earthquake:

For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.⁶¹

'For fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men'.⁶²

The Bible states that Joseph of Arimathaea had prepared the sepulcher for himself and his family and that it belonged to him and therefore he had right of free access to it. Besides, it is unthinkable that after having obtained Pilate's permission to obtain Jesus' body, he should have placed the body in the sepulcher and should not have taken any further care of it. The same applies to Nicodemus, who had provided himself with a large quantity of aloes and spices with which to minister to the body of Jesus.

There is thus left a great deal of room for conjecture and speculation. An attempt is made in the Inquest on Jesus Christ to reconstruct the events, relying greatly on the Biblical accounts:⁶³

Mary of Magdala found the sepulcher open, hurried back to tell Peter and John who ran to the sepulcher as fast as they could. They saw the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head'.

There were obviously several cloths:⁶⁴

the cloths were there but Jesus was gone. 'They discussed it; then the disciples went away again unto their own home'.

Jesus was practically naked. His clothes had been taken from him, and all he had were the linen cloths with which he had been covered in the sepulcher. He just managed to wrap one of these cloths around his body to cover his bareness; but he could not go to Emmaus like this nor could he, so inadequately clothed, go to the city to obtain proper clothes. He solved the problem very simply. He found the garments of a gardener - most likely in a garden shed nearby - borrowed them and went into town and obtained more suitable clothing. Later, he returned the gardener's outfit.

While still wearing gardener's clothes Jesus was evidently observing closely what was going on by the empty sepulcher, when he saw two Apostles, Peter and John, inspecting it. He let them go away unto their own home. Mary Magdalene remained behind, helpless and crying. She cried because they had taken away her lord, and she knew not where they had laid him'.⁶⁵ 'When she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus because he was wearing gardener's clothes. Jesus saith unto her, woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne

him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away'.⁶⁶ With these words Mary Magdalene seems to have turned away from Jesus - the gardener - to look farther when Jesus said to her: Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him: Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Only now did she recognize Jesus because it seems only he would say Mary in this particular way. He said: 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.'⁶⁷ Mary went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and he had spoken these things unto her.

On the evening of the same day, Jesus, no longer in the clothes of a gardener, was on his way to Emmaus, a village near Jerusalem, when he caught up with two disciples going in the same direction. Jesus did indeed look strange. No wonder the disciples did not recognize him. As it was written:⁶⁸

'But their eyes were holden that they should not know him'.

'The disciples were thus confused. From the way they talked it was clear that they did not know what was happening, and their interpretations differed. Jesus listened with great interest but finally exclaimed:⁶⁹

O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory',

Jesus thus explained what the scriptures had said about him beginning with Moses and taking them through all the prophets.

Incidentally, Jesus had himself prophesied before his crucifixion that he would go to Galilee after he is risen.⁷⁰ Thus, his trip to Emmaus, after his ordeal on the cross was in fulfillment of his own prophecy. Unlike the Christian belief, he never said he would go to hell or the heavens after his crucifixion. Here the Bible recalls a clear statement by Jesus after the resurrection pointing to the prophecies and their complete fulfillment as borne out by his own experiences. He describes himself as the Messiah and speaks of suffering; but there is not a word about dying. The Biblical record continues as follows:⁷¹

Thus they approached the village of Emmaus which was as far as the Apostles wanted to go. Jesus was about to move on but they urged him: 'Abide with us: for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them . . . as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it and broke it, and gave to them'.

Now they recognized him. His manner of praying and blessing was inimitable:

'and their eyes were opened and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight'.⁷²

'They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them'.⁷³

*'They joined the gathering and told what had passed on the way to Emmaus. There was much agitation and discussion until suddenly Jesus himself stood in the midst of them and saith unto them, peace be on you.'*⁷⁴

*'and calmed their fears. But when they too did not recognize him at once and thought it was a stranger who had surprised them, Jesus spoke to them again. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.'*⁷⁵

They must have looked distressed and doubtful, for Jesus said:

*"Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have."*⁷⁶

*'And while they believed yet not for joy and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it and did eat before them.'*⁷⁷

On the evening on which Jesus showed himself to his disciples, one of them, Thomas, was missing. When the others told him what they had seen and heard he said to them:⁷⁸

Except I shall see in his hands the print of nails . . . and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

On a later occasion when Jesus met them again and Thomas was with them, he said to Thomas:⁷⁹

Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless but believing.

Think what you will of Thomas; he has become for all eternity the principal witness that Jesus existed with the same physical body as before the crucifixion. The same wounds, which Thomas wanted to touch, imply that it was the same physical body.⁸⁰

On a further occasion Jesus again shared bread and fish with his disciples.

Whether one accepts every detail of the reconstruction of resurrection as set out above, its one undeniable feature is that after having been taken down from the cross, Jesus was resuscitated in his physical body. He moved about and met the disciples on several occasions in his physical body, which bore the marks of injuries from which he had suffered. He ate with them, which makes it clear that he was completely human and felt all the human needs, including the need of nourishment and rest.

Bernard Ellen⁸¹ maintains that the ordinary view of the resurrection and his ascension to heaven with his physical body cannot be substantiated. In the Encyclopedia Biblica,⁸² the view is expressed that nothing can be conjectured with any certainty, except that an appearance of Jesus to

the disciples is described. Additional discussion on the logical possibility of physical resurrection and ascension is presented elsewhere.^{54, 83, 84}

Regarding ascension, the Gospels do not contain any positive affirmation that Jesus physically ascended to heaven. There are no human witnesses to that event. The narrative in the Gospels of Matthew and John stops short of this alleged event. However, the Gospels of Mark and Luke comment vaguely on the event of ascension but do not state this event with any authority. Thus Mark's statement describing this event is:⁸⁵

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

This is simply a statement of belief and is not a record of a physically observable event. Likewise, Luke's statement also does not clarify this matter any further:⁸⁶

And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and came up into heaven.

It is obvious from the above Biblical statements that after Jesus had parted from the disciples, they ceased to be witnesses of what happened to him since that time. The current Bible only records their attempts to explain the events of which they themselves had no knowledge. Recently discovered documents from the Nag Hamadi collection in Egypt and the Dead Sea Scrolls near Jerusalem, which contain the oldest versions of the writings on which the Bible is based, also refute this belief.

Another difficulty in believing in the physical (bodily) ascent of Jesus to heaven is the explanation of his habitat after such ascent and how his physical needs are being met. The Bible confirms that Jesus had to satisfy his physical needs of eating and resting when he met his disciples after his removal from the cross. Hence those needs still have to be fulfilled if he ascended in the same physical form. If, however, it is suggested that his ascent to heaven was not physical but the ascent of his spirit, then the question of the whereabouts of his physical body would still remain.

The answers to these and other similar questions are to be sought in considering the purpose of his advent. He had stated positively and emphatically:⁸⁷

Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Again, the Bible records Jesus' affirmation that his goal was to preach only to the Jews (the House of Israel) and that he prohibited his followers from preaching to the gentiles:⁸⁸

I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.... It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.

The same sentiment is again attributed to Jesus elsewhere in the Bible:⁸⁹

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

The existence of the twelve tribes of Israel is a historical fact, which is also corroborated by the Bible and is shown in Figure 1. Likewise, it is also a historical fact that of these twelve tribes, only two were left in Judea when Jesus was born and where he spent most of his life up to the event of his crucifixion. The other ten tribes, according to Biblical and historical records, had been taken prisoners by the invading Babylonians prior to Jesus' birth and were forcibly transported east of the Euphrates by their captors.¹⁹ They were never allowed to return to their native land.¹⁸ Thus, based on Biblical and historical records, up to the event of his crucifixion, Jesus had fulfilled only a fraction of his stated mission. He had himself indicated that he still had to convey his message to the other tribes of Israel:⁹⁰

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Hence according to his own testimony as recorded in the Bible, a major portion of Jesus' stated mission would have remained unfulfilled if his life on earth had come to an end a few days after the event of his crucifixion. It was therefore, incumbent upon him to journey to the lands in which the lost tribes of Israel had been scattered at the end of their Babylonian captivity. Jesus was sure that they would hear his voice; that is to say, they would accept him, thus fulfilling his prophecy about the sign of Jonah in its entirety. The lands inhabited by the ten lost tribes of Israel were situated in the northeastern sector of Asia extending from Syria, through Iran and Afghanistan into Kashmir (India) and possibly Tibet. A detailed account of the lost tribes is presented elsewhere.^{19, 46, 47}

The above Biblical accounts overwhelmingly suggest that Jesus did not die on the cross as Jews and Christians believe today. Had he died at that time, his mission would have remained incomplete, which would have defeated the very purpose of his coming. There are many other strong indications in the Bible, which reveal that Jesus could not possibly have died on the cross. Some of these indications are presented below.

It was necessary that Jesus should escape death on the cross, for the Bible states that whoever was hanged and died on the wood was accursed. The Jews wanted to prove this very point and hence, had Jesus condemned to death by crucifixion. The Arabic and Hebrew equivalents of the word cursed have extremely derogatory connotations;⁹¹ their attribution to an eminent person like Jesus, the Messiah, is nothing short of cruel and unjust blasphemy. The Arabic equivalent of curse is *la'nat* which in its real sense refers to the state of one's heart. A person would be said to be accursed when his heart, i.e. his way of thinking, has become totally estranged from God. In this state, God also rejects this person and deprives them of His mercy and love. The person thus becomes absolutely devoid of His knowledge and guidance and is blinded like the devil. Consequently, the individual is filled with the poison of disbelief and even the last ray of Divine love and knowledge is withdrawn from this person. It is in this state that the bond of loyalty between God and the individual is broken and replaced with hatred, contempt, spite and hostility to the extent that God and the individual become mutual enemies. It is only at this stage that God and

the person become weary of each other. In short, this individual becomes an heir to all the attributes of the Devil and thus becomes accursed like the Devil.

The true significance of the word accursed, as described above, is extremely foul and can never apply to any righteous person who entertains God's love. It is amazing that the Christians did not then realize, and still refuse to accept, the true significance of this term before attributing it to a righteous prophet like Jesus. It is possible that the implications of this term may have been overlooked when modern day Christianity was invented by the Romans. Otherwise it was impossible for them to have used such a filthy word for a righteous man like Jesus. Can one believe that Jesus' heart was ever really estranged from God? That he had denied God, that he hated and disbelieved Him and had become His enemy? Conversely, can one believe that God had ever rejected Jesus and withdrawn His guidance from him? The Bible itself provides answers to these implications and totally rejects them. It thus follows that Jesus had never rejected God nor had God rejected him. Consequently, he was never accursed and under these conditions, it is absolutely impossible that he could die an accursed death. It is a pity that the Jews and Christians continue to uphold this view in spite of the fact that the true significance of this concept, and its absurdity thereof, has been fully exposed.

An additional Biblical testimonies which denies Jesus' death on the cross is contained in Matthew.⁹²

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zechariah son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.

A careful consideration of these verses indicates that Jesus clearly stated that the Jewish practice of killing of prophets had ceased with the death of prophet Zechariah; after him, the Jews would have no power to kill any other prophet. This is a great prophecy which clearly points out that Jesus was not killed as the result of crucifixion at the behest of Jews; he was rather saved from death on the Cross, dying ultimately a natural death. If Jesus were also to be killed by the Jews like Zechariah, he would have hinted at that possibility in these verses. The Christians may argue that the Jews also killed Jesus but his death by the Jews was not considered a sin because his death was for the atonement of mankind's sins. This contention is hardly tenable, as Jesus himself according to John's Gospel, denies it where Jesus is reported to have said that the Jews have been guilty of a great sin for having resolved to kill Jesus.⁹³ Likewise, the Bible contains other references where the Jews have been pronounced guilty of their crimes against Jesus and hence were liable to be punished by God.

Another Biblical statement, attributed to Jesus, denies his alleged death on the cross and his subsequent ascension to heavens:⁹⁴

But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

This verse clearly shows that after surviving his ordeal on the cross, Jesus was to go to Galilee and not to heaven. Jesus' words: *After I am risen* do not mean his resurrection after his death. His choice of such words before his crucifixion was probably intended to prophesy the eventual

outcome of this event. In the eyes of the Jews and the common people he was to die on the Cross, hence Jesus' choice of words was probably meant to foretell what the people would think after that event. Indeed, a man who was nailed to the Cross and who had fainted from the severe pain, had become as good as dead for the people. To be saved from a condition of assured death, as in this case, the choice of such words as coming to life again could not be considered an exaggeration. There is no doubt that after so much suffering, Jesus' escape from death was a miracle; it was no ordinary event.

Additional Gospel testimonies which deny Jesus' death by crucifixion and his subsequent physical ascension are also contained in Matthew:⁹⁵

Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Likewise, the verse in John:⁹⁶

Jesus saith unto him, if I will that he (i.e., the disciple, john) tarry (i.e., in Jerusalem) till I come.

The above verses show with great clarity that Jesus had promised some people that they would continue to live till his return. According to John's Gospel, he had even mentioned that one of his disciples, John, would stay in Jerusalem till his return. The fulfillment of this promise was thus assured. Accordingly, even Christians admit that it was inevitable for the fulfillment of the above prophecies that Jesus' return occur at a time when some of the people of that age, specifically John, were still alive. Hence the prophecy should have been fulfilled according to its promise. This is the basis of the clergy's declaration that, in accordance with his promise, Jesus had come to Jerusalem at the time of its destruction and that John had seen him, as he was alive at that time. However, the Christians deny that Jesus descended from heaven accompanied by appointed signs. They claim that he appeared to John as in a vision so that he may fulfill his prophecies.

The return of this kind, however, does not fulfill this prophecy. This is a very weak interpretation that is patently untenable and absolutely wrong. If the fulfillment of this prophecy was considered in Jesus' appearance to someone in a vision, then it would have been fulfilled long before the destruction of Jerusalem. According to the Bible, Jesus had appeared to Paul earlier in a vision,⁹⁷ and hence the fulfillment of this prophecy. Consequently, there was no need for his subsequent appearance to John.

The Gospel of Matthew provides additional irrefutable testimony that denies Jesus' alleged death by crucifixion and his supposed resurrection:⁹⁸

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

According to this verse, Jesus is foretelling of a time, when due to Divine intervention, additional knowledge, arguments and evidence will be made available to the world which will invalidate the beliefs of Jesus' divinity, his death on the Cross, his ascension to heaven and his physical return.

The heaven will bear witness against the lies of those who denied his being a true prophet, for example, the Jews; and who, on the other hand, regarded him, because of his crucifixion, as a man accursed. The fact of his not having suffered death on the Cross and therefore of his not being accursed would be clearly established. At that time, all the nations of the earth, who had exaggerated or detracted from his true status would become greatly ashamed of their error; that, in the same age, when this fact would be established, people would see Jesus' metaphorical descent to the earth, (second coming) like that of Elijah in John the Baptist, who Jesus himself affirmed. In those very days the Promised Messiah, who would come in the power and spirit of Jesus, would appear with all the lustrous signs, and heavenly support and with the power and glory, which would be recognized.

The statement that all the tribes of the earth would mourn, suggests that all those tribes to whom the description underlying the word 'nation' applies would mourn on that day. There are no exceptions based on geographical, cultural or religious considerations. The verse unequivocally implicates all nations. The Christians should especially follow this prophecy with great attention because they regard themselves as the forgiven group. Whereas, Jesus himself denies this belief; he does not exempt any group living on earth from mourning. Thus, in accordance with this verse, they are included among the mourners. The verse clearly says that when the sign of Jesus would appear in heaven all the nations inhabiting the earth would mourn. So the group that believes otherwise, denies Jesus.¹⁰⁴ The only group that would be exempted from this mourning would be the one that recognizes the Divine signs of Jesus' second coming and accepts him. This group would be formed by the Messiah himself and would not exist prior to his second advent.

Yet another important piece of evidence contained in the Bible points to the denial of Jesus' death by crucifixion and his ascension to heaven. This incident is reported in the Gospel of Matthew which the Christians use as proof of Jesus' divinity.⁹⁹

And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his (viz. Jesus') resurrection and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

On discussing this prophecy further, Christians either concede the statement as metaphorical and having no practical significance or accept it as an act of blind faith. Some, however, believe in its literal truth and consider it as an integral part of their faith. They cannot prove either historically or logically that the event actually took place.

The historical and logical inaccuracy of the above event, as reported, is established without any effort. If this event happened as mentioned in the Gospel, namely, that after Jesus' resurrection, numerous saints came out of the graves and appeared alive to many, then the Day of judgment would have been enacted in this very world and the accuracy of this event would not have been subjected to this discussion. Hence, the greatest Divine secret, which is the basis for the test of faith and sincerity, would have been made manifest to all. Faith would not have been faith any longer, as the nature of the next world would have become a patent fact to all believers and deniers alike. The next world would have become as obvious as the existence of the moon, the sun, and the alternation of day and night. In that case, faith would not have been of any value and it would not have merited any kind of reward.

If it is to be believed that hundreds of prophets and many hundred thousands of saints were brought back to life and they all returned to the city at the time of Jesus' resurrection, then the event is nothing short of the greatest miracle. The Christian assertion that this miracle was shown in support of Jesus' divinity is extremely shallow and shatters at the initial scrutiny. If the people and past prophets of Israel had really been brought to life and had returned to the city alive, the Jews had an excellent opportunity to inquire of them whether Jesus, who claimed to be god or the son of God, was a true claimant or an imposter. They probably did not lose this unique opportunity and must have confirmed the authenticity of Jesus' claim, especially because his advent was also foretold in the Jewish scriptures. It is unthinkable to consider that the Jews, or for that matter any other group, would let such a unique event pass without confirming the authenticity of the claimant who claimed to be the Messiah that the Jews had waited for.

It is impossible to believe that the Jews would have refuted the favorable testimony of hundreds of thousands of saints, from the time of Adam up to the time of John the Baptist, who had been lying in their graves and had been brought back to life to attest to the truth of Jesus' claim? According to the Biblical description, all the resurrected saints emerged from their graves and came to the city at the same time. Naturally, each and every one of them would have borne witness before thousands of people that Jesus, the Messiah, was really the Son of God or God Himself. Hence only he should be worshipped and people should renounce their former beliefs in order to go to heaven, which these saints had themselves witnessed. Yet notwithstanding such excellent evidence and such eyewitness accounts which proceeded from the mouths of hundreds of thousands of dead saints, the Jews did not desist from their denial!

Conversely, their failure to convince the Jews about Jesus' divinity therefore implies that these hundreds of thousands of saints, prophets and apostles, etc., had undoubtedly given unfavorable evidence. They could never have borne witness to the divinity of Jesus. This seems to be the reason why the Jews, after having listened to the evidence of the dead prophets, became confirmed in their denial of Jesus. He wanted to get them to believe in his divinity, but they, as a result of this evidence, denied that he was even a prophet.

In short, such beliefs have highly injurious and evil effects. The belief that hundreds of thousands of dead persons, or any dead person before that time, had been brought back to life either to testify to Jesus' truth or by Jesus himself as proof of his divinity did not serve any useful purpose.

The Muslim interpretation of this incidence is logical and does not deny the Laws of Nature. This interpretation of visions is consistent with similar interpretations mentioned in the Bible, for example, Joseph's dream had an interpretation. Hence, this vision also had to have an interpretation of its own.

The Muslims regard such accounts as visions (or *Kashf* in Arabic), which are intended to convey a message to the believers. Accordingly, a leading ancient authority on the art of interpretation of dreams and visions, Qutbuz-Zaman Shaikh Abdul Chani Al Nablisi has commented on the possible meaning of this vision in his book *Kitab Tabirul Anam*.¹⁰⁰ This interpretation can be translated as:

if anyone sees a dream or a vision of the nature of Kashf, that the dead have come out of the graves and have made for their homes, the interpretation is that a prisoner would be released from his bondage, and that he would be rescued from the hands of his persecutors. The context shows that this prisoner would be a great and a high personage.

Now, it would be noticed how this interpretation applies, with reason, to Jesus. One can readily understand that the dead saints having been brought to life and appearing to head for the city points to the fact that a prisoner may be released. The fact that the dead people being raised were prophets and saints suggests that the prisoner will be an extremely important personality. In context of its timing, the vision meant that Jesus had been saved from death on the Cross. Hence, according to this interpretation, Jesus did not die on the cross and God rescued him from death on the cross according to His plan. This interpretation is totally consistent with Biblical and Quranic evidence which deny Jesus' death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection.

It can thus be concluded that Jesus did not die on the cross and that accounts of the four Gospels do not support the current Christian beliefs about Jesus' clinical death, his resurrection and physical ascension. Rather, the Gospels provide overwhelming evidence to the contrary which is also supported by historical facts, circumstantial evidence, Quranic affirmations and discoveries of older Biblical writings. Any attempts to reconcile Biblical accounts with the current Christian faith have to rely heavily on superstition. In denying historical facts, circumstantial and Quranic evidence and the latest discoveries (Nag Hamadi, Dead Sea Scrolls) in support of Gospel accounts attributed to Paul and others who promoted the current Christian belief, the absolute accuracy of the current Bible has to be conscientiously accepted; a statement that the Bible itself does not make. Moreover, for fully understanding the situation, Jesus' statements, as reported in the Bible should be given more importance than those made by others. Also historical events subsequent to Jesus' departure from Judea and prophecies in the Old Testament must be considered in order to obtain a factual view of the situation.

History records Jesus' travels beyond Judea and his dying a natural death. Recent discoveries of earlier writings authored by Jesus' disciples at Nag Hamadi and around the Dead Sea confirm that Jesus did not die an accursed death on the cross; a number of researchers have investigated this subject. The original and most comprehensive work in this area is by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.⁴⁶

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CHAPTER VI

REDEMPTION OR ATONEMENT OF SIN

It is again confirmed that the intention of any remarks in this discussion is not, in any sense of the word, to injure the feeling of any person or group. The reason for including this discussion here is consistent with the need for this book, i.e., to critically analyze the scriptures, and find support and any evolutionary trends for our beliefs. Redemption of original sin is the main reason that Christians cite for their belief in Jesus' death on the cross. It is imperative to discern this point extensively to present an accurate picture based on Biblical accounts.

The prevalent belief among Christians is that Adam sinned by eating the forbidden fruit. He thus sinned and was expelled from the Garden of Eden. In his fall, all mankind (i.e. his descendants) fell and inherited the sin from him. There was no other way for redemption from the sin except that God out of His mercy should send His only begotten Son, blameless, sinless and innocent, "very God and very man": who truly suffered, died and was buried to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for the original sin but also for all future sins of mankind."¹ The following discussion will help clarify this issue.

- I The Redemption theory is found on the supposition that all the inhabitants of the globe are descendants of Adam and Eve who existed six thousand years ago. Modern science has proved that mankind is much older than the Biblical Adam and Eve.² Even the Bible states that there were men living in parts of the Earth other than the residence of Adam and Eve, because Cain said:³

"I shall be a fugitive and vagabond in the earth and everyone that findeth me shall slay me". And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. Then he left the place where his parents lived and "dwelt in the land of Nod on the East of Edom. He knew his wife; and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city after the name of his son Enoch"!

Now, if there were no other living men besides the sons of Adam and Eve, why did the Lord put a mark on Cain that he might not be killed by anyone, and from where did he get his wife? And how did he built the city if there were no other inhabitants in the world? The Bible also indicates that at the time of the creation of man, the Lord created them male and female and blessed them and called their name Adam in the days when they were created.⁴ It shows that other men were also called Adam, and it was a common name given to all created men. When it is established that all men are not the descendants of the singular Biblical Adam who is supposed to have sinned then the doctrine of Redemption, based on the fall of this Adam in sin, crumble to pieces.

- II In fact no person can be a sinner deserving punishment until they intentionally and knowingly disobeys God's commandments. An innocent oversight due to ignorance is not considered sin, even in the worldly system of justice. How can it be considered a sin in God's system which is perfect in all respects. In view of this definition, Adam was not a

sinner. According to the Bible, God informed Adam of his plan to create Eve as a helper for him.⁵ Upon God's inquiry as to why he has eaten the fruit from the forbidden tree, Adam rightly replied: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."⁶ And when the woman was questioned by God, "What is this that thou has done!" she replied: "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat."⁷ She confessed that she was only beguiled, which shows that she did not tell Adam that the fruit that she had given him was from the forbidden tree. Adam did not therefore commit a real sin. Saint Paul has expressed a similar view when he said: "And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became the sinner."⁸ The Biblical reason for Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden reads: "the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever, He sent him forth from the Garden of Eden".⁹

This passage clearly indicates that the only reason for Adam's expulsion from the Garden was not his sin for eating from the forbidden tree, but God's fear that he might also eat of the tree of life. Thus the belief that Adam was expelled from the Garden for eating the fruit from the forbidden tree is contrary to Biblical teachings and is ridiculous.

Can we believe that God created humans to keep them ignorant of good and evil? Did he not create them in His own image and after His likeness?¹⁰ It is, therefore, clear that the doctrine of Redemption, based on the sin of Adam, is also untrue.

In the Holy Quran God says; "We gave a commandment to Adam before, but he forget; and We did not find in him any determination to disobey."¹¹

- III The assertion that all humans sin and that nobody can be justified by the law, in the sight of God without believing in the ransom paid by Jesus for the original sin is absolutely wrong. The Bible states that both Zacharias and his wife "were righteous before God; walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."¹² Mary, the Mother of Jesus, according to the Roman Catholic belief, was sinless.
- IV Original sin is only an invention of the Pagan Christian, and it is not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament. The opinion of the Christian Divines is divided on this question.

"In the fifth century Pelagius declared the capacity of every man to become virtuous by his own efforts, and summoned the members of Church in Rome to enter on the way of perfection in Monasticism. His friend, Caelestius, was in 412 charged with and excommunicated for heresy, because he regarded Adam as well as all his descendants as naturally mortal, denied the racial consequences of Adam's fall, asserted the entire innocence of newborn, recognized sinless men before the coming of Christ. Pelagius insisted that sin was an act not a state, and abuse of the freedom of the will and that each man was responsible and liable to punishment for his own acts."¹³

Islam, does not recognize original sin. A child is born with a pure nature and not as Paul says: "We were by nature the children of Wrath; that is liable to punishment."¹⁴

V The natural consequence of eating or touching the forbidden tree was death: "lest ye die."¹⁵ If it were true that Jesus, by his crucifixion, paid the ransom for original sin, then no one should have died after it. Firstly, according to Biblical teaching, Adam did not die after touching the fruit from the forbidden tree but was rather expelled from the Garden of Eden, in total contradiction of its earlier statement. Secondly in similar contradiction of this belief the death sentence is still being carried out. The Christian nations especially, have invented the swiftest ways to death.

VI The belief that by killing His innocent Son, God reconciled His Justice and Mercy, is certainly incomprehensible. "Moral justice cannot take the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent would offer himself. To accept this as justice is equivalent to destroying the very principle of its existence. It then is no longer justice; it becomes indiscriminate revenge."¹⁶ Even Biblical accounts affirm that the doctrine of Atonement is false and contrary to Divine Justice and provides evidence to that effect:

(i) When Judah requested Joseph to take him instead of his younger brothers, Joseph answered: "God forbid that I should do so; but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."¹⁷

(ii) When the Israelites made a god of gold, a calf, Moses said to them:¹⁸

"You have committed a great sin and now I will go up to the Lord, perhaps I can make an atonement for your sin". So Moses went back to the Lord and said "Oh, What a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves a god of gold. But now, please forgive their sin - but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written".

Here Moses offered himself as an atonement for the sin of his people, which Jesus never did. God's answer to his entreaty was, that it was against His justice to take the innocent for the guilty, saying: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."¹⁹ The killing of an innocent person for a guilty one is, therefore, absolutely contrary to justice as well as to mercy. Thus God, instead of reconciling His attributes of Mercy and Justice, destroyed them both according to this Christian belief.

VII The assertion that Jesus, the righteous, was made the propitiation for the sin of the whole world²⁰ is not only incomprehensible, but is also contrary to the axiom of the Old Testament: "The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous and the transgressor for the upright."²¹

- VIII The belief that Jesus, after his death on the Cross, was in hell for three days, during which he suffered the penalty of the sins of the world, is also contrary to what Jesus himself said to one of the two thieves who were crucified with him. "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise."²²
- IX The belief that the Devil, who is said to have deceived Eve in the form of a snake, at last compelled the Almighty to exhibit Himself on the Cross in the form of His Son Jesus, raises a serious question. Who runs the show, God or the Devil? Thus the Christians make the Almighty fall and the deceiver, Satan, triumph".
- X The idea that by believing in the blood of Jesus, humans will be saved and redeemed from the punishment of sin, is directly opposed to the following sayings of Jesus:
- (a) *"I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment, for by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."*²³
 - (b) *"Whosoever speaketh word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, nor in the world to come."*²⁴
 - (c) *"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut thee off, and cast them from thee, it is better for thee to enter into if halt and maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire."*²⁵
 - (d) *"So shall it be at the end of the world: The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*²⁶
 - (e) *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*²⁷
 - (f) *According to the Bible, Jesus will gather all nations on the day of judgment and separate them into two groups. Those with good deeds will be to his right and will be led to an eternal life while those with bad deeds will be to his left and will be led to eternal punishment²⁸. According to this verse, Jesus will reward or penalize people based on their actions alone and not on their belief in the concept of original sin or his being the "Son of God". Thus the above Biblical teaching is totally opposed to the modern Christian doctrine of redemption and the two cannot be reconciled.*

The above Biblical position is supported by the Holy Quran which makes individuals responsible for their actions.²⁹ The Holy Prophet once said:³⁰

Your deeds depend on your intentions.

When Peter the apostle inquired of Jesus how oft shall my brother sin, and I forgive him? Till seven times?³¹ Hence the Bible teaches us to forgive our brothers' sin for at least seventy times. If men out of their compassion and mercy can repeatedly forgive those who sin against them, without punishment, why will it be unjust if God, the Merciful God, out of His unlimited mercy and grace, forgives those who sin against Him, without punishment? The true way for forgiveness of sin is repentance, as taught by all the divine prophets.

Ezekiel, the Prophet, was commanded by God:³²

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live".

The Bible again emphasizes that humility, prayer, the seeking of God's face and the forsaking of the ways of wickedness and unrighteousness are the means by which sins might be forgiven.^{33, 34} God says in the Holy Quran, concerning the sinners:³⁵

They will be saved from punishment, those who repent and believe and do good deeds; these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful".

One point that Christians raise in discussion is that animal sacrifices (referring to the Muslim practice of sacrificing animals on Eid) are less desirable for the redemption of sins. They do not understand that animal sacrifice by Muslims have nothing to do with the redemption of sins. That occasion is to commemorate the great sacrifice that Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael were prepared to offer in response to God's wishes. Having misunderstood the reason behind the Muslim sacrifice, they claim that God gave the ultimate sacrifice of his son to redeem mankind. Had they fully understood the significance of the Muslim practice, they would not have drawn such blatantly incorrect comparisons. God Himself says in the Quran that he does not get any benefit from animal sacrifices by humans.³⁶

A related but apparently extraneous point needs to be explained here. Jews, Christians and Muslims believe that God had commanded Abraham to sacrifice his only son to demonstrate his ultimate obedience. Abraham and his son willingly submitted themselves to God's commandment and God, out of His mercy, spared the child's life and had it replaced by an animal. The point of difference between the three faiths is on who the son was. Muslims believe it was Ishmael, while the Jews and Christians believe it was Isaac. Again, according to the Biblical teachings explained earlier, Ishmael was Abraham's only son for 14 years before Isaac was born. Hence, Isaac was never the only son of Abraham. Secondly, the Jews are known to preserve their religion's traditions and it is incomprehensible to assume that they would choose to overlook this ultimate act

of obedience demonstrated by the great prophet Abraham. It is only the Muslims who have commemorated this great event from its inception and still continue to do so to this day. Hence, history and tradition provide an answer to this irrelevant question and establish that the Abraham's only son who willingly submitted to God's command was Ishmael.

The concept of human sacrifice for the redemption of sin in Christendom is also a pagan custom and serves to further illustrate the strong pagan influence on modern day Christianity. Pagans believed in the sacramental sufferings, death and resurrection of their Gods Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Mithra, etc., who had died "for the sins of mankind". Primitive and semi-civilized idolaters of various countries, especially West Africans, had many forms of sacrifice. In the annual "customs" of Dahomey, now abolished, hundreds of human victims were sacrificed. This primitive custom of human sacrifice is discussed elsewhere.³⁷

The idea of propitiatory sacrifice of animals was found in Judaism (probably borrowed from the pagans of Babylon), but they never believed in human sacrifice, not that the Messiah would be sacrificed on the Cross as a ransom for the sins of the world.

Jesus himself never said anything that could be interpreted with certainty as meaning that the forgiveness of original or actual sin and a great reconciliation between God and man were to be the consequence of his death; he never said that his death was to be regarded as a sacrificial atonement. The words "The Son of Man came... to give his life a ransom for many"³⁸ are evidently a comment by the author of the Gospel, not the words of Jesus. Even if spoken by Jesus, they might only have meant that just as he had lived to bring happiness to others, so he was prepared to die alone for this case without implicating his followers.

The words used by him at the Last Supper are usually supposed to indicate the sacrificial and atoning nature of his death but this is a misinterpretation. According to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus says: "This is my blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many," and according to Luke he says: "This cup is the New Covenant in my blood which is shed for you," and it is only in the much later Gospel of Matthew that the words "for the remission of sins" are added. "The most conservative critic," wrote Hastings Rashdall, the Dean of Carlisle, "Will have no hesitation in treating this addition as an explanatory gloss by the author of Gospel;³⁹ the meaning of the other words may well have been simply that he was about to lay down his life for his friends and to die for the cause."⁴⁰ It was much later that Paul and his collaborators, who after granting the assertion of the Jews that Jesus died on the cross, presented to the Gentiles the crucified Jesus as an atonement and ransom for the sins of the world; a belief similar to what they already believed concerning their own gods.

Paul says: "in Jesus we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."⁴¹ He also called his blood "The blood of his Cross"⁴² and in Hebrews, "The blood of sprinkling."⁴³ John says: "He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."⁴⁴ The various authors commenting on this in their commentary say: "There was wrath in the bosom of God at sin: but, through the sacrifice of Christ for sin offered once for all, He has "turned away all His wrath, and can be just."

The current Christian teaching of a New Covenant in Jesus's blood is simply repulsive and can not be correct because it contradicts both Jesus' objective for coming to this world and also the conditions of God's covenant with Abraham. Jesus had stated that "he had not come to destroy the law of Moses but to uphold it and restore it to its original form". Thus ascribing this new covenant to Jesus contradicts his stated goal. Similarly God had made a covenant with Abraham for which he had demanded that the righteous from among Abraham's progeny should maintain the practice of male circumcision forever.⁴⁵ In view of God's own condition for His covenant with Abraham, Jesus could never have established a new covenant because he was still from Abraham's progeny. Moreover Christians also fail to fulfill God's condition of male circumcision which He had made with Abraham. Thus by default, Christians have distanced themselves from God's command to Abraham. It is only the Muslims, who continue to keep this condition.

Christians who believe in the concept of trinity believe that Jesus himself is at least a third of God. They summarize their beliefs as:

"God came in the person of Christ and took the sin (not only the punishment but the sin itself) upon Himself." "Without the death of Jesus, sin cannot justly be forgiven and made righteous".

This Christian belief is thus tantamount to believing that God committed suicide on the Cross and went into hell for three days, and that He has no right to forgive the sins of His creation without punishing them. That He is not compassionate nor merciful, but like a judge who is bound to punish the culprit according to the law given to him by higher authorities. According to Biblical teachings explained earlier, killing an innocent person for the sins of others is not acceptable to God. Ask any compassionate father who has an only son, what kind of mercy and justice would that be? To think that sins can be washed out by the blood of Jesus is not only irrational but also inconsistent with all conceptions of mercy and justice as well. This Christian concept of justice and mercy is simply illogical and will not even in the work daily lives. How can then God, in His infinite wisdom, design a Law for this universe which is illogical. Interestingly, Jesus by his own admission in the Bible contradicts Paul's teaching and the current Christian belief. In the parable of the householder and the vineyard,⁴⁶ Jesus is quoted as saying: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own"? The master has therefore the right to forgive his servants also.

Islam's concept of God is that He is merciful, compassionate, and most forgiving to His servants. God says in the Holy Quran:⁴⁷

"O Prophet, say, O My servants who have acted extravagantly against their own should, do not despair of the Mercy of Allah; surely He is the Most Forgiving, the Merciful".

He is the sole Master and Creator of all beings. He may forgive whom He likes and may punish when the punishment would benefit the culprit.

The death of Jesus on the Cross, therefore, as Christians believe, is not the means by which sin can be forgiven. It is in itself a great sin to believe that the Merciful God shed the blood of His innocent Son or His own blood for the sins of others, and cursed His Son or Himself. The above

discussion of Divine Justice makes it absolutely clear that Jesus, if he were crucified not once but a thousand times, could not by his death redeem the people of their sins. How appropriate it would be for us to escape the punishment of our sins, to accuse God's beloved prophet Jesus of being cursed by the death on the Cross, which means that his heart abandoned God and he became disobedient to Him.

It is earnestly hoped that Jews and Christians, gifted with reason and wisdom, will give up all irrational dogmas borrowed from paganism. Jesus was but a prophet of God whom God saved from the accursed death on the cross and caused him to die a natural death like other great divine prophets.

Thus the current Christian beliefs of redemption or atonement of sin and trinity are contrary to those preached by Jesus or his close followers. These beliefs appear to be later fabrications and are generally attributable to Paul in the New Testament. Interestingly, gospels authored by the apostles like Barnabas, Thomas, Hermans, Iraneans, etc., which according to early Christian documents were freely used in the church, were excluded from the Bible when it was first compiled in its current form by the Council of Neice in 325 A.D.⁴⁸ Copies of these gospels have since become available from various discoveries and do not support the current Christian beliefs. Rather, they affirm the absolute unity of God and do not support the concept of trinity. Similarly, these gospels deny Jesus' physical death on the cross and his supposed resurrection and physical ascension as the Christians believe today. These gospels especially that of Thomas, affirms that Jesus survived his ordeal on the cross and was still alive when he was removed from the cross. The fact that their books are excluded from the Bible also confirm that these books did not support the Roman interpretation of Jesus' message.

It is indeed sad to see that the modern Christians faith relies more heavily on the Roman interpretation of Jesus' teachings rather than his actual teachings. Thus the process of compilation of the New Testament, destructions of all original documents, the spate of subsequent revisions and improvements and the overwhelmingly influence of Roman culture on modern day Christianity provides ample evidence that the original message has been extensively mutilated.

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CHAPTER VII

SECOND COMING

The world of religion is familiar with the concept of second coming of great religious teachers who have passed away. Curiously enough, all those who are looking forward to the fulfillment of prophecies relating to the second advent of their great teacher except that he would return to the earth in his physical body. This concept has been responsible for great confusion, bewilderment and conflict.

In the case of Jesus himself one factor that reinforced the opposition and hostility of the Jewish divines to his claim of being the Messiah, whose advent had been foretold in their scriptures, was that it had been prophesied that Elijah, the prophet, would be sent before the advent of the Messiah¹. This question was put to Jesus himself and his answer is recorded in the gospels:

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly must first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed...Then, the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John, the Baptist".²

"If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come".³

"And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias".⁴

Thus, Jesus made it clear that a second coming of one who has passed away means the coming of someone in his power and spirit.

Another aspect of this almost universal expectation of the second advent of a great teacher in the latter days is the purpose, the message and function of that teacher. Such an advent has been prophesied in almost all the principal faiths that flourish today upon the earth. Would the message and function of every one of them be identical or would each of them have his own message, different from and in conflict with the messages of the other great teachers in their second advent? If the messages of all of them are to be identical then not more than one would be needed to convey that message and to set an example in conformity with it. If the messages are to be different and conflicting, the advent of so many teachers instead of promoting unity, peace, accord, and spiritual fulfillment, would only foster hostility, discord, enmity, and chaos.

Mankind has now started pressing forward towards a unity of aim and purpose. All the developments that have taken place towards bringing different sections into closer relations with each other afford the strongest indication that the teacher of the latter days would be a single person and there would not be a plurality of personages.

The situation today is that while the children of Israel are still awaiting the advent of the Messiah, the Christians are looking forward to an early second coming of Jesus, the first Messiah. The Muslims have for nearly a century awaited the appearance of the Mahdi and Messiah, whose advent

had been prophesied by the Holy Prophet of Islam. Indeed, the Holy Quran sets forth a second spiritual advent of the Holy Prophet himself in the latter days:⁵

"Among others from among them who have not yet joined them. He is the Mighty, the Wise. That is God's grace; He bestows it on whom He pleases. God is the Master of immense grace".

It is agreed among the Muslims that the Quranic prophecy will be fulfilled through the advent of the prophet in the latter days, that is to say, the Mahdi and the promised Messiah:⁶

"He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth, that he may make it prevail over every other religion, even though those who associate partners with God may dislike it".

The following discussion helps elaborate this issue:

1. There is a very strong presumption that the great teacher of the latter days would appear within the dispensation of Islam. This presumption is upheld by many factors; a detailed exposition of which is beyond the scope of this book. It would be enough only to mention the outstanding ones. The first is that the scripture of Islam, the Holy Quran, proclaims the universality of the mission of the Holy Prophet.

"Proclaim, O Prophet: O Mankind, verily I am God's messenger to you all".⁷

"We have sent thee as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner for the whole of Mankind, but most people know not".⁸

"We have sent thee only as a mercy for the universe"⁽⁹⁾.

2. The scripture of Islam, the Holy Quran, contains comprehensive guidance for the whole of Mankind for all time, as is said:

"A messenger from God, reciting pure scriptures, wherein are lasting commandments".¹⁰

"The Quran is a source of honor for all the worlds".¹¹

"Blessed is He who has sent down the Discriminating Book to His servant that he may be a Warner to all the peoples."¹²

3. The Quran is the only scripture which has been safeguarded against the perversion under divine decree, as is said:

"Surely, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and We will, most surely safeguard it".¹³

The Quran has the unique distinction that of all the scripture it is, from its beginning to end, an entirely verbal revelation. That in itself is a guarantee that it would not be perverted or twisted. All non-Muslim scholars who have made a research into the integrity of the text of

the Holy Quran are agreed that it is an exact and accurate version of the verbal revelation that Muhammad (pbuh), the Prophet of Islam, claimed God had vouchsafed to him. The divine guarantee of safeguarding the Quran, which has just been set out, is not confined to preserving the integrity of the text alone. It extends to all the factors that bear upon the preservation of the Quran as the perfect source of divine guidance for the whole of mankind for all time. For instance, it is a guarantee that the language in which it was revealed, namely classical Arabic, would continue to be a living language in current use all the time, so that no difficulty might be encountered in determining and comprehending the meaning of the Quran. Classical Arabic is today spoken and written over a much larger area of the earth and by many times the number of people than was the case when the Quran was revealed. Besides, the Holy Prophet predicted that at the beginning of every century God Almighty would raise someone from among his followers who would set forth from the Quran the guidance that may be needed by mankind from time to time. In the case of no other scriptures has the integrity of its text, its language and its guidance been maintained.

4. There is the promise contained in the Quran, that in the latter days a prophet would be raised in Islam who would not only defend Islam against the concerted attacks of the followers and exponents of other faiths but would establish the superiority of Islam in every respect over all other religions, as is said:

"He it is Who set His Messenger with guidance and the religion of Truth, that he may make it prevail over every other religion, even though those who associate partners with Allah may dislike it".¹⁴

The commentators of the Quran agree that the promise contained in the above verse would be fulfilled through the Mahdi and the Messiah, whose advent in the latter days had been prophesied by the Holy Prophet himself. It is also agreed that he would be a spiritual reflection of the Holy Prophet. The promised prophet would fulfill the same mission for Muhammad (pbuh) as Jesus did for Moses namely to properly interpret the Divine message in its pristine form. Although God Himself has preserved the Quranic text in fulfillment of His promise made at the time of its revelation, many interpretations of the same text exist today. The existence of differing Quranic interpretations is also prophesied in the Quran¹⁵ which categorizes its messages into two categories: (i) absolute commandments and (ii) allegorics. The first category forms the basis of Islam and is stated in absolute terms. This category is not subject to any human interpretation. The second category is subject to interpretation but can not contradict the first category. The Quran thus urges its readers to research and seek the correct interpretation which God will reveal through His chosen messenger.

5. Islam is the only faith that requires belief in all the Prophets wherever they might have appeared. The Quran affirms:¹⁶

"Verily, we have sent thee with enduring truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and as a Warner; and there is no people whom a Warner has not been sent".

This message is repeated more explicitly elsewhere in the Quran:¹⁷

"Affirm; We believe in God and in that which has been sent down to us and that which was sent down to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and his children and that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and that which was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no discrimination between any of them and to Him do we wholly submit ourselves".

This again is a sure indication that the great teacher who is to appear in the latter days must appear in the dispensation of Islam as he would then be a believer in the righteousness of all the Prophets and would not deny or reject any of them. If he were to appear in any other dispensation which do not accept all other prophets, he would not be acceptable to those whose Prophets are denied or rejected. He must be the champion of God in the mantles of all the Prophets.

6. It is obvious that the great teacher, whose advent in the latter days had been foretold in every one of the principal revealed religions of the world, would be divinely guided; that is to say, he would be the recipient of divine revelation. This is also an important factor that would persuade a seeker after truth to determine that the promised teacher must appear within the dispensation of Islam, inasmuch as the door of divine revelation has long been closed in all faiths other than Islam, and the followers of all those faiths hold firmly to the notion that divine revelation is no longer possible. Thus, the advent of a divinely inspired teacher is possible only in Islam.

There has also been agreement among the Muslims that the Mahdi-Messiah would appear at the beginning of the fourteenth century of the Hegira, corresponding roughly to the last decade of the nineteenth century of the Christian Era. Among several Christian denominations the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century was also considered as the time of the second coming of Jesus.

The timing for the anticipated advent of the Mahdi-Messiah in the Muslims is quite peculiar in that it is consistent with the timing of his second advent according to the Christian belief. Thus the Muslims and the Christians agree that their respective Messiahs would come at about the same time. Again, one God will only send one Messiah at any given time. More interestingly, the advent of the Messiah, by both Muslims and Christians was anticipated towards the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century, which is approximately 13 centuries after the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). Coincidentally, Jesus's first advent also occurred about 1300 years after Moses' birth (1269 to be exact^{*}).¹⁸ The consistent gap between the law giving prophets (Moses and Muhammad, peace be on him) and their respective Messiahs (Jesus and the anticipated Messiah in the 19th-20th century) reveals God's plan for the renewal of his message. Thirteen centuries after Moses' birth, Jesus appeared among the Jews to restore Moses' Message (Torah) in its original form. Moses' message had been distorted to a point where it had lost its meaning and thus Jesus was sent to restore its original meaning. The advent of Jesus among the Jews was part of the overall Divine plan as this event had been foretold in Jewish scriptures long before its manifestation. Likewise, the anticipated advent of the Mahdi-Messiah to revive the law of

^{*}The date of Moses' birth was subjected to conjecture for a long time due to the uncertainty of Biblical chronology. It has now been established that Exodus occurred circa 1215 B.C. in the last year of the reign of Pharaoh Merenptah, the son of Rameses II. Moses is believed to have been close on 60 years of age at that time, so that his birth occurred around the year 1275 B.C.

Muhammad, peace be on him (i.e. Quran) thirteen centuries after the birth of Muhammad does not appear to be a mere coincidence. The revival of the Quranic teaching does not imply that the Quranic text has, in any sense, been changed over time. That is not possible because God had Himself taken the responsibility to safeguard His message.

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, the process of human spiritual evolution was evident from the earlier scriptures that foretold the advent of Islam. Quran, the Islamic scripture, claims to be the complete and final message from God. Unlike previous scriptures, which addressed themselves to specific groups; the Quran proclaims itself to be the guidance for all mankind. Consistent with its claim and the trends about prophecies for the future established by the earlier scriptures one has to refer back to the Quran and to seek guidance for the future to gain insight into the culmination of the process of human spiritual evolution. It will only be at the zenith of this evolutionary process that the Muslims can satisfy Quranic claims about Islam being the perfect religion.

Any trends emerging from the study of the Quran should be reflected in the Prophet's traditions and in various Quranic commentaries by respected Islamic scholars. A review based on this principle follows:¹⁹

"We Ourselves have sent down the Exhortation and WE Ourselves are its Protector".

God's promise to protect Quranic text has been fulfilled and today Quran is the only scripture with absolute integrity and is beyond any controversy. Its text has been preserved exactly as it was originally revealed to the Holy Prophet by Divine design. The Divine promise of safeguarding the Quran does not limit itself to mere words; it also guarantees to preserve its proper interpretation in accordance with the changing human needs. Thus the Quran is a true living book, which provides guidance for all possible aspects of human needs, including spiritual, science, commerce, politics, international relations etc. Thus there exists from God, a promise of both outer and inner protection of the Quran. The inner protection of the Holy Quran at least means that when the followers deviate very far from the Holy Quran, so that the Book becomes reduced to mere words, God will then restore the original power and influence of the Holy Book, make its meaning plain once again and restore to His book all its life and freshness.

As explained earlier, the Quran has differentiated its message into two categories, absolute commandments and allegoric. It cautions its readers against the multitude of possible interpretations in the latter category. It also asserts that the correct interpretation will only be revealed through God's chosen individuals. God's promise of inner protection is again corroborated elsewhere in the Holy Quran:²⁰

"... and He reveals not His secrets to anyone except him whom He chooses, namely a Messenger of His".

This position is further reinforced in the Traditions of the Holy Prophet:²¹

"Verily God will continue for ever to raise for this Ummat in the beginning of every century one who will restore for it its faith".

Another interesting fact is that in accordance with traditions of the Holy Prophet, a reformer (Mujadid) was to be raised from among the Muslims at the head of every century. The mission of the Mujadid was to renew the message of Islam and through Divine guidance, put forth the proper interpretation of the allegoric messages. Islamic literature unanimously record Mujadids (reformers) for the first thirteen centuries but has not yet identified the Mujadid for the fourteenth Islamic century. Incidentally, that was the time when the Muslims were awaiting the advent of the Mahdi-Messiah.

God also promised in the Quran that His message i.e. Islam will prevail in the world and that the message will be spread by His messengers.²²

"Allah has decreed, most surely I will prevail, I and My messengers, Verily, Allah is Powerful, Mighty".

God has ordained that He and His prophets shall always prevail against others. This is the evidence of His Power over all things. Those who bring messages from God must succeed. God is the Guarantor of their success. If this were not so humans would begin to have doubts about His Power and Dominion. The Holy Quran affirms:²³

"Most surely We help Our Messengers, and those who believe, in the present life and on the day when witnesses will stand forth".

And again²⁴

"But Allah grants to His Messengers power over whomsoever He pleases and Allah has power over all things".

It is evident from these verses that according to the Holy Quran God grants power and success to His Messengers. He makes them dominate others, possibly in the physical as well as in the spiritual sense. The Holy Quran also stipulates God's punishment for false claimants to be his messengers. The Quran states that they can not prosper; they must await divine punishment.²⁵

And, had he forged (and attributed) any sayings to Us, We would surely have seized him by the right hand, and then surely We would have severed his life-artery.

The verse is very clear. If a messenger lies deliberately about God, claiming to have had messages from Him, God will seize him by the right hand and cuts asunder his life artery. God's help and support are cut short for him. Instead, he is disgraced. Again the Quran affirms:²⁶

Who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah or gives the lie to His Signs? Surely, the unjust shall not prosper.

This verse leaves no doubt that the unjust cannot prosper according to the Law of God. How can one who lies about God, one who is spiritually the most unjust, succeed in fabricating false claims? It appears, therefore, that God works in two ways. Firstly, He helps His Messengers, and gives

them power and success. Secondly, if a person deliberately concocts a message and attributes it to God, not only is he refused help by God; he is discomfited, disgraced and destroyed by Him.

In summary, the Quran points to the advent of a Messenger in the latter days who would rejuvenate the message of Islam. The latter day messenger will be in the spirit of the Holy Prophet⁵ and also states the fate of false claimants. Muslims unanimously agree that this verse foretells the advent of Mahdi/Messiah in Islam. This concept has been dealt in detail earlier in this chapter. Hence only supporting evidence from the traditions of the Holy Prophet shall be discussed here:

*The Mahdi is none other than the Messiah*²⁷

*How would it be with you when the son of Mary we will descend among you and you will have a leader raised from among you?*²⁸

These two Traditions make it obvious that the Messiah himself would be the Mahdi. He would lead the followers of the Holy Prophet and would be one of them, not an outsider. To think that the Messiah and the Mahdi are two different persons is wrong. It means that a follower of the Holy Prophet will rise for the purpose of revivifying the world, but initially will not have the rank of a prophet. Then the promise relating to the second coming of Jesus will be fulfilled in his person and he will announce himself as the Promised Messiah. The Tradition, therefore, tells us that the Promised One will start his career as a Muslim reformer who will become invested with the office of Messiah. Divine prophecies have to employ metaphors. They would convey very little otherwise. The Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of God) said:²⁹

"The Umma can never die which has met me at one end, and the Messiah, son of Mary, at the other."

Firstly, the above tradition corroborates God's promise about Islam being the final and everlasting law for all mankind. The Holy Prophet is quoted as saying that Jesus, son of Mary, will appear in the Prophet's followers towards the end of time. Jesus' advent after the Holy Prophet, as stated in the above tradition is metaphorical because it has been shown earlier that Jesus died a natural death like all other prophets. Moreover, according to the Quran, it is God's inviolable law to bring dead to life again before the Day of Judgement.³⁰ From the Biblical example of Elijah's second coming which was a spiritual rather than a physical event, (Chapter V) one can easily conclude that the Holy Prophet is referring to the second spiritual advent of Jesus:³¹

My Ummat is like the rain. I do not know whether the better part of it is the earlier one or the later.

In the above tradition, the Holy Prophet is quoted as comparing earlier Muslims to the latter Muslims. This tradition read in conjugation with the previous one implies that the rejuvenation of Islam in the latter days would be imminent.

The Quran and the Prophet of Islam have also foretold the decline of Islam in the middle ages and then its revival in the later days. Thus we read in the Quran:³²

O my Lord, my people indeed treated this Quran as [a thing] abandoned.

And in a Hadees.³³

A time will come when nothing will be left of Islam except its name.

The Holy Prophet also warned his followers of this situation. Thus the traditions record:³⁴

O men, acquire knowledge before knowledge disappears.

Those who heard him asked:

O Prophet of God, how will knowledge disappear while we have the Holy Quran in our possession?

The Holy Prophet replied:

In the same way in which it happened before. Your mother may have mercy on you. Do you not see that the Jews and the Christians possess their books? But they have not the least regard for the teachings contained in the books, which their prophets brought to them from God. Knowledge disappears from the earth when those who have knowledge disappear from the earth.

The Holy Prophet also prophesied about subdivisions among Muslims in the latter days:³⁵

A time will come when my followers will become divided into seventy-three sects. All of them except one will deserve the fire.

Some in the audience asked who the Muslims were who would be on the side of the true Islam. The Holy Prophet answered:³⁴

...those who follow my example and the example of my Companions.

The absolute fulfillment of the above prophecies in this day and age is quite obvious. The Holy Prophet had also foretold additional signs about the advent of the promised Mahdi/Messiah; additional prophecies in this regard follow:³⁶

When Chosroes dies, there will be no Chosroes after him. Similarly, when Caesar dies, there will be no Caesar after him. Then will you expend the treasures of both in the way of God.

Here the Holy Prophet prophesied about the fall of the Roman Empire and the disappearance of the official name of its emperors. If after the destruction of the Roman Empire Christians were to rise again and become a world power, it must be a most unusual development in history. Yet it is this development which is pointed out as a sign of the promised time. The dominance of Christianity after its earlier destruction, improbable as it was, happens to have been clearly foretold. The prophecy was duly fulfilled. The empire of Caesar disappeared according to the prophecy. For a

time the nominal title of Caesar continued. The last rulers of Constantinople called themselves Caesar. On the fall of Constantinople this nominal title also disappeared. Islam displaced Christianity in all parts of the then known world. From the tenth century of the Hijra began to decline of Islam. Christianity began to re-assert itself in countries in which it was completely unknown at the time of the Holy Prophet's prophecy. Now for the last hundred years or so Christian nations have become so dominant in the world that the Holy Prophet's prophecy "the earth will be under the Romans" can be said to have been fulfilled to its very letter.

Another sign foretold by the Holy Prophet was:³⁷

"Iraq will refuse to share her produce and her prosperity. So will Syria, so will Egypt. And you [meaning the Arab peoples] will become as divided and disunited as you once were".

This prophecy has also been fulfilled. Iraq, Syria and Egypt are independent countries, no longer owing allegiance to Turkey and refusing to share their produce and wealth with the leading Muslim power. Arabs have become divided again. The recent Gulf War and the current state of the Muslim countries is an excellent example of Arab disunity and absolute dependence on non-Arab powers.

Numerous important signs have also been foretold about the second coming of Jesus in the Christian and Muslim scriptures and the traditions of the Holy Prophet. Interestingly, the most visible and important sign foretold in both the New Testament and the traditions of the Holy Prophet is the same i.e. darkening of the moon and the sun. The manifestation of this sign is absolutely by Divine Design and beyond human control whatsoever.

In the New Testament (New International Version), Jesus, narrating the signs of his second coming, said:³⁸

For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will be the coming of the son of man.

Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

*Immediately after the distress of those days
"the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light;
The stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."*

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

This Biblical prophecy by Jesus himself unequivocally describes the conditions of his second coming. It compares his second coming to a flash of lightening in which the entire area is lit up and everything becomes visible. Likewise, at the time of his second coming, the falsehood will be exposed. Moreover, the prophecy unequivocally states that the lightening will initiate in the east and spread to the west. It describes the condition prior to Jesus' second advent as distressed and

goes on to identify the celestial signs that will mark the great event; the Biblical signs marking this event are the darkening of the sun, the moon failing to give its light and stars falling from the heavens. Coincidentally, the Bible records that similar celestial signs also marked Jesus' first advent. The Bible further states unequivocally that at the time, the **sign** of the Son of Man (not the son of man) will appear. It then makes an extremely significant prophecy that when the sign of the son of man will appear **all** nations of the earth will mourn. The statement that "**all tribes of the earth will mourn**" includes all groups of people and does not distinguish between geographical, cultural and ethnic boundaries. This prophecy therefore makes, no exception for any group that existed before Jesus' second advent. This prophecy raises a very serious question: Why should all nations mourn at Jesus' second coming? If the Christians have accepted Jesus in the light of his teachings, then they should be happy and be celebrating this unique event. Likewise, if any other group has recognized Jesus in his true capacity, they should be happy at his much-awaited second advent. Hence neither Jews, nor Christians nor Muslims or any other group for that matter will be exempt from this mourning. The statement therefore means that all nations or groups or tribes living on this earth at the time of Jesus' second advent would have failed to follow his proper teachings. His true message would thus have been lost. Consequently, when he would present the facts to the world after his second coming, the world would realize their mistake and mourn at their folly. Only the people that will recognize this unique event and accept Jesus in the light of his teachings and will group around him will be happy at this event. Thus the blessed group will be the one that Jesus will himself form after his second spiritual advent.

The Quran also describes the solar and lunar eclipses as important signs of the latter days:³⁹

"He asks, "When is the Day of the Awakening?" But when the sight is dazzled and the moon is eclipsed and the sun and the moon are in conjunction".

The same concept is detailed in the traditions of the Holy Prophet:⁴⁰

As reported by Muhammad bin Ali, the advent of our Mahdi will be marked by two important signs. These signs have never appeared before, not since the creation of the Heaven and Earth. One is the eclipse of the moon on the first of the Ramadan, and the other is the eclipse of the sun in the middle of Ramadan, and these two signs have not appeared to mark an event since the creation of the Heaven and Earth.

Islamic traditions and literature record numerous additional signs foretelling the advent of the Promised Mahdi/Messiah. A summary of these signs follows:

1. A Restorer ("Mujaddid") will be raised at the head of every century.⁴¹
2. The Promised Messiah will be called "Prophet of God," *Nabiyullah*.⁴²
3. The Mahdi ("Guide") and the Messiah ("Chosen One") will be the one and same person.⁴³
4. The second advent of Jesus will be in the person of an Imam (religious leader) from amongst the Muslims.⁴⁴

5. The Messiah will kill the swine and break the Cross.⁴⁵ This means he will rescue Muslims from depravity and expose the false beliefs on which Christianity was founded.
6. The Mahdi will abrogate religious wars.⁴⁶
7. At the time of the Mahdi's coming, there will be great increase in knowledge and much mixing of the people (⁴⁷).
8. At that time, new means of transport will come into use and camels will be redundant.⁴⁸
9. There will be decline in religious faith, and nothing will be left of Islam except its name and nothing of the Quran except its text.^{49,50}
10. The Christian nations will hold supremacy in the world.^{51,52}
11. When they hear of the Mahdi's advent, Muslims are required to give him "ba'iat" (allegiance) even if they have to crawl on snow to get to him.^{53,54}
12. He will have 313 companions.⁵⁵
13. He will be born a twin.⁵⁶
14. He will recall the teachings of Jesus.⁵⁷
15. He will suffer from two illnesses, one in the upper part of the body and one in the lower part.⁵⁸
16. The pilgrimage to Mecca will be impeded (⁵⁹).
17. There will be plague at the time.⁶⁰
18. The Messiah will rise in the East.^{61,62}
19. He will come from a place called Kada.⁶³
20. He will be of Persian decent.⁶⁴
21. There will also be false claimant.^{65,66}
22. Islam would have three centuries of greatness, then it would ascend back to heaven for a thousand years.⁶⁷ (This brings the start of its revival to the 14th century of the Hijrah).

The following conclusions can be drawn from the above evidence:

1. The New Testament establishes the "second coming of Jesus" and describes the signs before his advent namely "the sun and moon will loose their light."
2. The Quran supports the concept of a divinely inspired teacher, or Mahdi or Messiah for the Muslims, like Jesus was the Messiah to the Israelites after Moses.
3. The traditions of the Holy Prophet overwhelmingly support the concept and also define the conditions and signs before his advent. Interestingly, the most important sign about lunar and solar eclipses before Messiah's advent in Islam is consistent with Jesus' prophecy about his second coming in the New Testament.
4. The timing for the Promised Mahdi-Messiah was ripe in the late 1800's or early 1900's according to both Christian and Muslim sources. According to both beliefs, his second coming is imminent.
5. The string of reformers (mujadids) in Islam, which was to continue till the end of time, has been discontinued?

It follows from the above that the rejuvenation of Islam, after the disappearance of true knowledge and true religion from among its followers, is God's solemn promise. It is therefore necessary that he who claims the office of the Promised Messiah should re-establish the true teaching of Islam and present to the world the true meaning of the Holy Quran. If he fails in this, he can not be the Promised Messiah. If, on the other hand, in the difficult days of which the Holy Prophet warned us, he manages to save Islam from the distortions introduced by ignorant followers, then he is the Promised Messiah. He and his followers answer to the description contained in the Holy Prophet's prophecy "those who follow my example and the example of my companions". It follows that in the rejuvenation of Islam, a very important criterion exists for testing the truth of anyone who claims to be the Messiah. It has to be established whether Islam, as understood and practiced today, has deviated far from its authentic form. Having done this one has to see whether a given claimant to the office of Messiah has or has not restored Islam to its original form.

The fact that current Islam has deviated far from its original message is widely accepted by all thoughtful persons. Anyone denying this fact must be oblivious to practical realities. The Islam practiced today does not produce the old results. Islam as understood today fails to satisfy the conscience even of the Muslims. These things prove that Islam of today is very different from what it used to be.

In spite of overwhelming evidence from the Bible, the Quran, history and literature which is presented earlier in this book, Christians and Muslims denominations do not fully comprehend the concept of spiritual second coming; a precedence of which has already been established in the Bible. The Christians denial of this concept is based on the fact that the entire foundation of modern day Christianity is based on Jesus' death on the cross and his physical ascension. The inaccuracy of this concept has been reviewed in detail in an earlier chapter. Thus accepting this fact is suicidal for the current version of Christianity. Conversely, denying this fact is tantamount to refuting Jesus' own teachings. Some Muslim denominations also deny this concept of spiritual second coming

because of their hypocritical understanding of the concept of finality of prophethood or "Khatam-al-Nabiyeen". These Muslim denominations consider this term to mean that there would be no prophet (in any sense of the word) after the Holy Prophet (pbuh). This view is contrary to their own belief about Jesus' second coming in accordance with the Quranic teachings, which have been discussed earlier. A question arises that if Jesus were to physically descend to earth according to their belief towards the end of time, what would be his capacity on his return? Will he leave behind his prophethood in the heavens? This concept is derogatory to the status of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) because it implies that the Holy Prophet of Islam had to rely on an earlier prophet, who was not his follower, to revive his message. A brief review of this issue will be appropriate here. The Quran states its position on this issue as follows:⁶⁸

*"Muhammad (pbuh) is not the father of any male amongst you, but he is a messenger of God and **KHATAM-AL-NABIYYIN**".*

The Arabic appellation "Khatam-al-Nabiyyin" has been retained in the translation because the meaning of the verse hangs on this term. Without going into much detail the term "Khatam-al-Nabiyyin" has been translated by "leading Muslim divines" from the earliest days of Islam to mean "Seal of Prophets". Seal has the function of attesting the authenticity and hence the verse is translated as "Muhammad (pbuh) is the *SEAL OF PROPHETS*. This concept has been accepted from the earliest days of Islam and has continued through each Islamic century. A detailed discussion on this subject is given in Appendix IV. The appendix also gives the interpretation of this term by the various reformers (Mujaddids) who, according to Quranic teachings, were to be appointed by God to correctly interpret the Quran. The Muslim denominations that refute this concept misread the term as "Khatim-al-Nabiyyin" which means the last of Prophets. The Arabic word in the Quran is KHATAM and not KHATIM and any misconceptions in this regard may be clarified from the Quran itself. It is emphasized again in the strongest terms that either interpretation does not mean that the Quranic Law revealed to the Holy Prophet can, in any sense of the word, be changed, abrogated or modified. Hence, for such difference of opinions, Muslims can refer to the Quran for guidance. The correct interpretation of the term "Seal of Prophet" does not prohibit the continuation of subordinate prophets who would rejuvenate the meaning of the Quran just as Jesus did to the Law of Moses. To the contrary, this interpretation implies the continuation of this process because God was to continue appointing religious reformers till the end of time.

The proponents of the latter interpretation "Last of Prophets" quote from the following tradition of the Holy Prophet in support of their claim:⁶⁹

I am the last of Prophets. There is no prophet after me. My mosque is the last of mosques.

This group however fails to consider this tradition in its entirety. They only use the first two parts of the tradition but ignore the last part, which is extremely important. It is this last part that signifies that the language used in this tradition is symbolic. If however, this tradition is considered using the criterion adopted by the latter group, than the construction of new mosques, after the Holy Prophet's death, should also be prohibited.

Hence, the correct interpretation of this tradition is that there can be no law-bearing prophet after the Holy Prophet who can abrogate or modify the Quranic Law. Likewise, the prophet's mosque

implies a form of worship instituted by the Holy Prophet, which, according to the above tradition, can not be changed. This interpretation is further corroborated by the Holy Prophet's wife Hazrat Ayesha.⁷⁰

"Certainly do say, he [the Holy Prophet] is the seal of all prophets, but do not say there is no prophet after him".

It is thus obvious that the earliest interpretation of "Khatam-al-Nabiyyin", during and immediately after the Prophet's death, was "Seal of Prophets" and not the "Last of Prophets".

With the benefit of hind sight and the above evidence, it will be a relatively simple exercise to scan historical records and identify any claimants in that time window that fulfill the requirement set forth by the Christian and Muslim faiths. If no claimant can be identified, then we will have to await his imminent advent.

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CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A chronological study of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim scriptures reveals a conclusive trend in human spiritual development. The first documented evidence of the initiation of this trend is found in the beginnings of Judaism. The Jewish scriptures contain clear prophecies for future religious developments and set the stage for the eventual fulfillment of human spiritual needs. The first such prophecy dates back some 4,000 years to the time of Moses and is recorded in Deuteronomy. Subsequent books of the Old Testament corroborate this prophecy and reinforce it by stipulating conditions and signs for its fulfillment. In the span of some 1300 years, the Jews had significantly altered God's original Law, as revealed to Moses. Jesus' advent, in accordance with the prophecies of the Old Testament, was designed to restore the Law of Moses to its original form. The New Testament records Jesus' mission as being the restoration of the Law of Moses. Thus, Jesus' advent marked the next stage in this evolutionary process. Some of the teachings contained in the Old and New Testaments may appear to be contradictory. However, when viewed in chronological context, they are absolutely logical and mutually complementary.

Again, in accordance with the Old Testament prophecy, the final stage of this process initiated with the promulgation of the New Law which was designed to supersede the Mosaic Law. The Old Testament provides details about the New Law and the next Law-bearing prophet; information about his ancestry, his place of advent, the characteristics of the New Law and its mode of revelation and preservation had all been defined in the Old Testament. The New Testament also corroborates the Old Testament prophecies regarding the promulgation of the New Law. In addition to providing insights into the prophesied events, the New Testament also foretells future events. The revelation of the Quran is in exact accordance with the Biblical prophecies and marks the advent of the eventual stage of this evolutionary process. The Quran testifies to the authenticity of earlier prophets and claims to be the final message from God, which, in accordance with earlier prophecies and unlike earlier scriptures, is for all mankind. The validity of the Quranic claims can be easily confirmed by referring to Biblical prophecies and their fulfillment in accordance with their associated signs. Manipulation of these prophesied signs is beyond human control and hence their manifestation in the predetermined sequence is a clear sign of their fulfillment by divine design.

The New Law again confirms the Divine source of the previous Laws and refers to them as the basis for its promulgation. Consistent with the past trend, this Law again prophesied about future events, which are quite consistent with those contained in earlier scriptures. In cases where the scriptures are not consistent, the latter scripture has to be believed because of its preservation in its pristine form. Due to doubts about the absolute preservation of earlier scriptures and the element of human interpolation in their compilation, their verdict in such instances will be rejected.

In hindsight, the consistency of prophesied events in the above scriptures, their fulfillment in their entirety provides irrefutable evidence in support of the evolution in human spiritual development. This trend becomes obvious only after an unbiased chronological study of the above religious scriptures, without regard to scriptural boundaries. If, however, the scriptures are considered separately and the fulfillment of the prophesied events is sought within each of them, without reference to earlier or prior scriptures, then a great difficulty may be encountered in their understanding. Consequently, humans have relied heavily on superstition and supernatural beliefs in their attempts to explain the fulfillment of such events. Some of these beliefs and explanations are contrary to the laws of nature, science and logic. It is ironic that people are willing to accept these senseless explanations rather than seeking the truth. For example, the Jews rejected Jesus based on their belief of the physical second coming of Elijah and hence, missed the boat to

the next stage of human spiritual development. Likewise, the Christians who refused to accept the message of Islam, in contravention of Biblical teachings, could not advance to the next stage in this process. The Muslims, who refuse to accept the correct meaning of *Seal of Prophets*, will likewise forgo their chance to advance to the final stage of this evolutionary process. It is amazing to observe Muslims going through the same misconceptions about Jesus' second coming which the Jews did at the time of his initial advent. Contrary to the laws of nature, they are also awaiting the physical second coming of Jesus as the Jews did for Elijah. This disbelief and its correction thereof has already been discussed in Chapter VII. Thus, based on overwhelming evidence from the Bible, Quran, history, Islamic traditions and science, Jesus' spiritual second advent has occurred in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. His claim to Messiahship fulfills all signs contained in the aforementioned sources.

In conclusion, the fact that the consistency of prophecies about the future, which initiated in the Jewish scriptures, and are reinforced in the Christian and Muslim scriptures is astonishing. Their exact fulfillment after some 4,000 years, in spite of all the human self-acknowledged interpolations in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, is absolutely amazing. That their progression and outcome is unaffected by the numerous worldly upheavals proves conclusively that these occurrences were part of the overall Divine plan towards the eventual development of human spiritual needs. Consequently, the teachings and prophecies of the latest Law i.e. the Quran should be followed and used to the advantage of mankind. These observations further prove the existence of a Supreme Power Which is running the show. It further confirms the validity of the initial assumptions made in Chapter I regarding the absolute and unqualified unity of God. Hence, the mysteries surrounding the various religions can be easily resolved by such an analysis. It is believed that a similar trend will also be observed if this analysis is expanded to include other world religions.

It is amazing that the clergy in each religion discourages and even prohibits such attempts at resolving dogmatic differences among the different religions. They should stand by their claim of guiding their followers towards God by taking the lead in resolving such matters. Instead, they have chosen to fiercely protect their beliefs like vultures protecting the decaying carcass, to use Jesus' description, by attempting to ignore subsequent facts which have since come to light. Experience from around the world demonstrates that the clergy's agenda is quite different from the above position. Their main interest is in retaining their control over their followers for economic and political purposes rather than guiding them towards God. This hypocrisy on their part is responsible for the crime and numerous diseases in the society, which are perpetuated by the clergy or their followers. It is earnestly hoped that readers will be encouraged to undertake individual research on similar lines to resolve this or other religious matters to differentiate between fact and fiction. Hopefully, such widespread individual efforts will force the clergy to reevaluate their hypocrisy and assume their proper position in such debates.

APPENDIX I
Allah's Names & Attributes

<i>al-Adl</i>	The Just	<i>al-Haleem</i>	The Forbearing
<i>al-Ahad</i>	The One	<i>al-Haqq</i>	The True
<i>al-Ali</i>	The High	<i>al-Hayy</i>	The Living
<i>al-Awwal</i>	The First	<i>al-Jaleel</i>	The Sublime
<i>al-Azeez</i>	The Mighty	<i>al-Kabeer</i>	<i>The Great</i>
<i>al-Ba'ith</i>	The Resurrector	<i>al-Khabeer</i>	<i>The Knowing</i>
<i>al-Bari</i>	The Originator	<i>al-Khaliq</i>	<i>The Creator</i>
<i>al-Baseer</i>	The All-Seeing	<i>al-Majeed</i>	<i>The Glorious</i>
<i>al-Batin</i>	The Hidden	<i>al-Malik</i>	<i>The Sovereign</i>
<i>Dhul-Jalal-wal-Ikram</i>	The Lord of Majesty and Bounty	<i>Malik-ul-Mulk</i>	<i>The Owner of Sovereignty</i>
<i>al-Ghaffar</i>	The Forgiver	<i>at-Mu'akhir</i>	<i>The Postponer</i>
<i>al-Ghanee</i>	The Self-Sufficient	<i>at-Mughni</i>	<i>The Enricher</i>
<i>al-Hafeez</i>	The Preserver	<i>al-Muhsi</i>	<i>The Reckoner</i>
<i>al-Hakeem</i>	The Wise	<i>al-Mu'id</i>	<i>The Restorer</i>
<i>al-Hameed</i>	The Praiseworthy	<i>al-Mujeeb</i>	<i>The Responser</i>
<i>al-Haseeb</i>	The Reckoner	<i>al-Mumeet</i>	<i>The Giver of Death</i>
<i>al-Jabbar</i>	The Compeller	<i>al-Muqaddim</i>	<i>The Expediter</i>
<i>al-Jame</i>	The Gatherer	<i>al-Muqsit</i>	<i>The Just</i>
<i>al-Kareem</i>	The Generous	<i>al-Muqtadir</i>	<i>The Powerful</i>
<i>al-Khafid</i>	The Abaser	<i>al-Musawwir</i>	<i>The Fashioner</i>
<i>al-Lateef</i>	The Subtle One	<i>al-Mutakabbir</i>	<i>The Majestic</i>
<i>al-Majid</i>	The Noble	<i>al-Muta'li</i>	<i>The Most Exalted</i>
<i>al-Mani</i>	The Preventer	<i>al-Nafi</i>	<i>The Propitious</i>
<i>al-Mateen</i>	The Firm	<i>al-Muzill</i>	<i>The Abaser</i>
<i>al-Mubdi</i>	The Originator	<i>al-Qabid</i>	<i>The Constrictor</i>
<i>al-Muhaymin</i>	The Protector	<i>al-Nur</i>	<i>The Light</i>
<i>al-Muhyi</i>	The Giver of Life	<i>al-Qahhar</i>	<i>The Subduer</i>
<i>al-Mu'izz</i>	The Honorer	<i>al-Qadir</i>	<i>The Powerful</i>
<i>al-Mumin</i>	The Guardian of Faith	<i>al-Qayyum</i>	<i>The Self-Subsisting</i>
<i>al-Muntaqim</i>	The Avenger	<i>al-Qawi</i>	<i>The Strong</i>
<i>al-Muqeet</i>	The Sustainer	<i>ar-Rafe</i>	<i>The Exalter</i>
<i>al-Afu</i>	The Pardoner	<i>al-Quddus</i>	<i>The Holy</i>
<i>al-Akhir</i>	The Last	<i>ar-Rahman</i>	<i>The Gracious</i>
<i>al-Aleem</i>	The-Knowing	<i>ar-Raheem</i>	<i>The Merciful</i>
<i>al-Azeem</i>	The Great	<i>ar-Rasheed</i>	<i>The Guide to the Right Path</i>
<i>al-Badi</i>	The Incomparable	<i>ar-Raqeeb</i>	<i>The Watchful</i>
<i>al-Baqi</i>	The Everlasting	<i>as-Sabur</i>	<i>The Patient</i>
<i>al-Barr</i>	The Benign	<i>as-Salam</i>	<i>The Source of Peace</i>
<i>al-Basit</i>	The Expander	<i>as-Samad</i>	<i>The Eternal</i>
<i>ad-Dhar</i>	The Distresser	<i>as-Samee</i>	<i>The All-Hearing</i>
<i>at-Fattah</i>	The Opener	<i>ash-Shaheed</i>	<i>The Witness</i>
<i>al-Ghafur</i>	The All-forgiving	<i>ash-Shakur</i>	<i>The Appreciator</i>
<i>al-Hadi</i>	The Guide	<i>at-Tawwab</i>	<i>The Oft-Returning</i>
<i>al-Hakam</i>	The Judge	<i>al-Wadud</i>	<i>The Loving</i>

al-Wahhab The Bestower
al-Wahid The Unique
al-Wajid The Finder
al-Wakeel The Trustee
al-Walee The Friend
al-Wali The Governor
al-Warith The Inheritor
al-Wasi The All-Embracing
al-Zahir The Manifest

Appendix II

Prophets of the Quran AND THE BIBLE
(Biblical prophets in capitals, Quranic in brackets)

THE EARLY PROPHETS

HISTORICAL EVENT

4000 BC	ADAM (Adam)	The first Prophet
	ENOCH (Idris)	
	NOAH (Nooh)	The Great Flood
	(Hood)	

THE HOUSE OF ABRAHAM

2165 – 1900 (B.C.)	ABRAHAM (Ibrahim)	
	LOT (Saleh)	Ka'aba Rebuilt
	(Loot)	
2065 – 1885 (B.C.)	ISHMAEL (Isma'eel)	
	ISAAC (Is'haq)	
2005 – 1858 (B.C.)	JACOB (Yaqub)	
1914-1804 (B.C.)	JOSEPH (Yusuf)	Hebrews follow Joseph to Egypt
		Israel in Bondage under the Egyptian Kings

MOSAIC PERIOD

1525 – 1405 (B.C.)	MOSES	AARON	JETHRO	Exodus
	(Musa)	(Haroon)	(Shuaib)	
1043 (B.C.)				Israelites wandering in the Desert
				SAUL becomes the first Israelite King
				United Kingdom of Israel

THE KINGDOM PROPHETS

1040 (B.C.)	SAMUEL	
1020 - 970 (B.C.)	GAD	
1010 - 925 (B.C.)	NATHAN	United Kingdom of Israel
1011-971 (B.C.)	DAVID (Da'ood)	
971 – 931 B.C.)	SOLOMON (Suleiman)	

Northern Kingdom of Israel (B.C.)

931 - 908	AHIJAH
920 – 903	IDDO
890 – 865	JEHU
875 – 852	ELIJAH (Elias)
860 -	MICAIAH
851 – 795	ELISHA (Al-Yasa'a)
788 – 772	JONAH (Yunus)
767 – 755	AMOS
755 – 712	HOSEA
737 – 722	ODED
722	Capital Samaria conquered by Assyria

Southern Kingdom of Judah (B.C.)

931 – 901	SHEMAIAH
900 – 875	AZARIAH
895 – 870	HANANI
865 – 835	JAHAZIEL
840 – 825	OBADIAH
825 – 810	JOEL
740 – 692	ISAIAH
734 – 700	MICAH
650 – 620	NAHUM
635 – 622	ZEPHANIAH
635 – 610	HULDAH
625 – 610	JEREMIAH
620 – 608	HABAKKUK
605 – 535	DANIEL
586	Fall of Jerusalem (conquest by Babylon) Israelites exiled from Jerusalem.
593 – 560	EZEKIEL (Dhul-Kifl)
539	Israel returns to Jerusalem and start its Restoration
	JOB (Ayub)
520 – 505	HAGGAI
520 – 490	ZECHARIAH
480 – 458	EZRA (Uzair)
433 – 415	MALACHI
	Old Testament Ends

400 Silent Years (no known prophets among the Israelites)

APPENDIX III

PUBLISHED IN THE FORMAT OF
THE BIBLE SOCIETY'S
THIRD JUBILEE BIBLE

Edited by
JOHN STIRLING

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New Testament Section, Copyright 1946,
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PREFACE

The Revised Standard Version of the Bible is an authorized revision of the American Standard Version, published in 1901, which was a revision of the King James Version, published in 1611.

The first English version of the Scriptures made by direct translation from the original Hebrew and Greek, and the first to be printed, was the work of William Tyndale. He met bitter opposition. He was accused of willfully perverting the meaning of the Scriptures, and his New Testament were ordered to be burned as "untrue translations." He was finally betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and in October 1536, was publicly executed and burned at the stake.

Yet Tyndale's work became the foundation of subsequent English versions, notably that of Coverdale, 1535; the Geneva Bible, 1560; and the Bishop's Bible, 1568. In 1582 translation of the New Testament, made from the Latin Vulgate by Roman Catholic scholars, was published at Rheims.

The translators who made the King James Version took into account all of these preceding versions; and comparison shows that it owes something to each of them. It kept felicitous phrases and apt expressions, from whatever source, which had stood the test of public usage. It owed most, especially in the New Testament, to Tyndale.

The King James Version had to compete with the Geneva Bible in popular use; but in the end it prevailed, and for more than two and a half centuries no other authorized translation of the Bible into English was made. The King James Version became the "Authorized Version" of the English-speaking peoples.

The King James Version has with good reason been termed "the noblest monument of English prose." Its revisers in 1881 expressed admiration for "its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression . . . the music of its cadences, and the felicities of its rhythm." It entered, as no other book has, into the making of the personal character and the public institutions of the English-speaking peoples. We owe to it an incalculable debt.

Yet the King James Version has grave defects. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of Biblical studies and the discovery of many manuscripts more ancient than those upon which the King James Version was based, made it manifest that these defects are so many and so serious as to call for revision of the English translation. The task was undertaken, by authority of the Church of England, in 1870. The English Revised Version of the Bible was published in 1881-1885; and the American Standard Version, its variant embodying the preferences of the American Scholars associated in the work, was published in 1901.

Because of unhappy experience with unauthorized publications in the two decades between 1881 and 1901, which tampered with the text of the English Revised Version in the supposed interest of the American public, the American Standard Version was copyrighted, to protect the text from unauthorized changes. In 1928 this copyright was acquired by the International Council of Religious Education, and thus passed into the ownership of the churches of the United States and Canada which were associated in this Council through their boards of education and publication.

The Council appointed a committee of scholars to have charge of the text of the American Standard Version and to undertake inquiry as to whether further revision was necessary. For more than two years the Committee worked upon the problem of whether or not revision should be undertaken; and, if so, what should be its nature and extent. In the end the decision was reached that there is a need for a thorough revision of the version of 1901, which will stay as close to the Tyndale-King James tradition as it can in the light of our present knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek texts and their meaning on the one hand, and our present understanding of English on the other.

In 1937 the revision was authorized by vote of the Council, which directed that the resulting version should "embody the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures, and express this meaning in English diction which is designed for use in public and private worship and preserve those qualities which have given to the King James Version a supreme place in English literature."

Thirty-two scholars have served as members of the Committee charged with making the revision, and they have secured the review and counsel of an Advisory Board of fifty representatives of the co-operating denominations. The Committee has worked in two sections, one dealing with the Old Testament and one with the New Testament. Each section has submitted its work to the scrutiny of the members of the other section; and the charter of the Committee requires that all changes be agreed upon by a two-thirds vote of the total membership of the Committee. The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published in 1946. The publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, was authorized by vote of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. in 1951.

The problem of establishing the correct Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Old Testament is very different from the corresponding problem in the New Testament. For the New Testament we have a large number of Greek manuscripts, preserving the many variant forms of the text. Some of them were made only two or three centuries later than the original composition of the books. For the Old Testament, only late manuscripts survive, all (with the exception of the Dead Sea texts of Isaiah and Habakkuk and some fragments of other books) based on a standardized form of the text established many centuries after the books were written.

The present revision is based on the consonantal Hebrew and Aramaic texts as fixed early in the Christian era and revised by Jewish scholars (the "Masoretes") of the sixth to ninth centuries. The vowel signs, which were added by the Masoretes, are accepted also in the

main, but where a more probable and convincing reading can be obtained by assuming different vowels, this has been done. No notes are given in such cases, because the vowel points are less ancient and reliable than the consonants.

Departures from the consonantal text of the best manuscripts have been made only where it seems clear that errors in copying had been made before the text was standardized. Most of the corrections adopted are based on the ancient versions (translations into Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, and Latin), which were made before the time of the Masoretic revision and therefore reflect earlier forms of the text. In every such instance a footnote specifies the version or versions from which the correction has been derived, and also gives a translation of the Masoretic text.

Sometimes it is evident that the text has suffered in transmission, but none of the versions provides a satisfactory restoration. Here we can only follow the best judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text. Such corrections are indicated in the footnotes by the abbreviation Cn, and a translation of the Masoretic Text is added.

The Discovery of the meaning of the text, once the best readings have been established, is aided by many new resources for understanding the original languages. Much progress has been made in the historical and comparative study of these languages. A vast quantity of writings in related Semitic languages, some of them only recently discovered, has greatly enlarged our knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic. Sometimes the present translation will be found to render a Hebrew word in a sense quite different from that of the traditional interpretation. It has not been felt necessary in such cases to attach a footnote, because no change in the text is involved and it may be assumed that the new rendering was not adopted without convincing evidence. The analysis of religious texts from the ancient Near East has made clearer the significance of ideas and practices recorded in the Old Testament. Many difficulties and obscurities, of course, remain. Where the choice between two meanings is particularly difficult or doubtful, we have given an alternative rendering in a footnote. If in the judgment of the Committee the meaning of a passage is quite uncertain or obscure, either because of corruption in the text or because of the inadequacy of our present knowledge of the language, that fact is indicated by a note. It should not be assumed, however, that the Committee was entirely sure or unanimous concerning every rendering not so indicated. To record all minority views was obviously out of the question.

A major departure from the practice of the American Standard Version is the rendering of the Divine Name, the "Tetragrammaton." The American Standard Version used the term "Jehovah"; the King James Version had employed this in four places, but everywhere else, except in three cases where it was employed as part of a proper name, used the English word LORD (or in certain cases GOD) printed in capitals. The present revision returns to the procedure of the King James Version, which follows the precedent of the ancient Greek and Latin translators and the long established practice in the reading of the Hebrew scriptures in the synagogue. While it is almost if not quite certain that the Name was originally pronounced "Yahweh," this pronunciation was not indicated when the Masoretes added vowel signs to the consonantal Hebrew text. To the four consonants YHWH of the Name, which had come to be regarded as too sacred to be pronounced, they attached vowel signs indicating that in its place should be read the Hebrew word Adonai meaning "Lord" (or Elohim meaning "God"). The ancient Greek translators substituted the word Kyrios (Lord) for the Name. The Vulgate likewise used the Latin word Dominus. The form "Jehovah" is of late medieval origin; it is a combination of the consonants of the Divine Name and the vowels attached to it by the Masoretes but belonging to an entirely different word. The sound of Y is represented by J and the sound of W by V, as in Latin. For two reasons the Committee has returned to the more familiar usage of the King James Version: (1) the word "Jehovah" does not accurately represent any form of the Name ever used in Hebrew; and (2) the use of any proper name for the one and only God, as though there were other gods from whom He had to be distinguished, was discontinued in Judaism before the Christian era and is entirely inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church.

The King James Version of the New Testament was based upon a Greek text that was marred by mistakes, containing the accumulated errors of fourteen centuries of manuscript copying. It was essentially the Greek text of the New Testament as edited by Beza, 1589, who closely followed that published by Erasmus, 1516-1535, which was based upon a few medieval manuscripts. The earliest and best of the eight manuscripts which Erasmus consulted was from the tenth century, and he made the least use of it because it differed most from the commonly received text; Beza had access to two manuscripts of great value, dating from the fifth and sixth centuries, but made very little use of them because they differed from the text published by Erasmus.

We now possess many more ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, and are far better equipped to seek to recover the original wording of the Greek text. The evidence for the text of the books of the New Testament is better than for any other ancient book, both in the number of extant manuscripts and in the nearness of the date of some of these manuscripts to the date when the book was originally written.

The revisers in the 1870's had most of the evidence that we now have for the Greek text, though most ancient of all extant manuscripts were not discovered until 1931. But they lacked the resources which discoveries within the past eighty years have afforded for understanding the vocabulary, grammar and idioms of the Greek New Testament. An amazing body of Greek papyri has been unearthed in Egypt since the 1870's – private letters, official reports, wills, business accounts, petitions, and other such trivial everyday recordings of the activities of human beings. In 1895 appeared the first of Adolf Deissmann's studies of these ordinary materials. He proved that many words which had hitherto been assumed to belong to what was called "Biblical Greek" were current in the spoken vernacular of the first Century A.D. The New Testament was written in the Koine, the common Greek which was spoken and understood practically everywhere throughout the Roman Empire in the early centuries of the Christian era. This development in the study of New Testament Greek has come since the work on the English Revised Version and the American Standard Version was done, and at many points sheds new light upon the meaning of the Greek text.

A major reason for revision of the King James Version, which is valid for both the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the change since 1611 in English usage. Many forms of expression have become archaic, while still generally intelligible - the use of thou, thee, thy, thine and the verb endings -est and -edst, the verb ending -eth and -th, it came to pass that, whosoever, whatsoever, inasmuch that, because that, for that, unto, howbeit, peradventure, holden, aforetime, must needs, would fain, behooved, to you-ward, etc. Other words are obsolete and no longer understood by the common reader. The greatest problem, however, is presented by the English words which are still in constant use but now convey a different meaning from that which they had in 1611 and in the King James Version. These words were once accurate translations of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures; but now, having changed in meaning, they have become misleading. They no longer say what the King James translators meant them to say.

The King James Version uses the word "let" in the sense of "hinder," "prevent" to mean "precede," "allow" in the sense of "approve," "communicate" for "share," "conversation" for "conduct," "comprehend" for "overcome," "ghost" for "spirit," "wealth" for "well-being," "allege" for "prove," "demand" for "ask," "take no thought" for "be not anxious," "purchase a good degree" for "gain a good standing," etc. The Greek word for "immediately" is translated in the King James Version not only by "immediately" and "straightway" but also by the terms "anon," "by and by," and "presently." There are more than three hundred such English words which are used in the King James Version in a sense substantially different from that which they now convey. It not only does the King James translators no honour, but it is quite unfair to them and to the truth which they understood and expressed, to retain these words which now convey meanings they did not intend

The Revised Standard Version of the Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, was published on September 30, 1952, and has met with wide acceptance. This preface does not undertake to set forth in detail the lines along which the revision proceeded. That is done in pamphlets *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament* and *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament*, written by members of the Committee and designed to help the general public to understand the main principles which have guided this comprehensive revision of the King James and American Standard versions.

These principles were reaffirmed by the Committee in 1959, in connection with a study of criticisms and suggestions from various readers. As a result, a few changes have been authorized for the present and subsequent editions. Most of these are corrections of punctuation, capitalization, or footnotes. Some changes of words or phrases are made in the interest of consistency, clarity or accuracy of translation. Examples of such changes are "from," Job 19.26; "bread," Matthew 7.9, 1 Corinthians 10.17; "is he," Matthew 21.9 and parallels; "the Son," Matthew 27.54. Mark 15.39: "ask nothing of me," John 16.23; "for this life only," 1 Corinthians 15.19; "the husband of one wife," 1 Timothy 3.2, 12; 5.9; Titus 1.6.

All the reasons which led to the demand for revision of the King James Version in the nineteenth century are still valid, and are even more cogent now than then. We have had a freer charter than our predecessors in the 1870's in that we have not been required, as they were, to limit the language of the English Bible to the vocabulary of the Elizabethan age. But we hope that we have not taken undue advantage of that freedom. The Revised Standard Version is not a new translation in the language of today. It is not a paraphrase which aims at striking idioms. It is a revision that seeks to preserve all that is best in the English

Bible as it has been known and used through the years. It is intended for use in public and private worship, not merely for reading and instruction. We have resisted the temptation to use phrases that are merely current usage, and have sought to put the message of the Bible in simple, enduring words that are worthy to stand in the great Tyndale-King James traditions, we are glad to say, with the King James translators: "Truly (good Christian Reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one . . . but to make a good one better."

The Bible is more than a historical document to be preserved. And it is more than a classic of English literature to be cherished and admired. It is a record of God's dealing with men, of God's revelation of Himself and His will. It records the life and work of Him in whom the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among men. The Bible carries its full message, not to those who regard it simply as a heritage of the past or praise its literary style, but to those who read it that they may discern and understand God's Word to men. That Word must not be disguised in phrases that are no longer clear, or hidden under words that have changed or lost their meaning. It must stand forth in language that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today. . It is our hope and our earnest prayer that this REVISED STANDARD VERSION of the Bible may be used by God to speak to men in these momentous times, and to help them to understand and believe and obey His Word.

ABBREVIATIONS

In the notes to the books of the Old Testament, the following abbreviations are used: Ms for manuscript; Mss for manuscripts. Heb denotes the Hebrew of the consonantal Masoretic Text of the Old Testament; and MT denotes the Hebrew of the pointed Masoretic Text of the Old Testament.

The ancient versions of the Old Testament are indicated by:

Gk	Septuagint, Greek Version of Old Testament
Sam	Samaritan Hebrew text of Old Testament
Syr	Syriac Version of Old Testament
Tg	Targum
Vg	Vulgate, Latin Version of Old Testament

Cn indicates a correction made where the text has suffered in transmission and the versions provide no satisfactory restoration but the Committee agrees with the judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text. The reader is referred to the Preface for a statement of policy concerning text and notes.

APPENDIX IV

THE
HOLY BIBLE

RIVISED STANDARD VERSION

CONTAINING THE
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS
CATHOLIC EDITION

*Prepared by the Catholic Biblical
Association of Great Britain*

*With a Foreword by
His Eminence John Cardinal Heenan
Archbishop of Westminster*

LONDON
CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
Publishers to the Holy See

The Editors of this edition, Dom Bernard Orchard, O.S.B. and the Revd R. C. Fuller, D.D., L.S.S., wish to express appreciation for permission to use, with authorized changes, the Revised Standard Version of the Bible copyrighted 1946 and 1952.

INTRODUCTION

This edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible has been prepared for the use of Catholics by a committee of the Catholic Biblical Association of Great Britain. It is published with ecclesiastical approval and by agreement with the Standard Bible Committee and the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

The Revised Standard Version itself needs no lengthy introduction, being already well known and widely read. It is, as its preface states, "an authorized revision of the American Standard Version, published in 1901, which was a revision of the King James Version, published in 1611." In Britain, the King James Version is more commonly called the Authorized Version. It occupies a unique place in English Biblical and indeed literary tradition. The Standard Bible of 1901 was the work of an American committee revising it in the light of modern textual criticism. In 1937 it was decided to make a revision of the Standard Version which should "embody the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures, and express this meaning in English diction which is designed for use in public and private worship and preserves those qualities which have given to the King James Version a supreme place in English literature." The New Testament in this new version was published in 1946 and the whole Bible in 1952.

The remarkable success which attended the new revision on its appearance seems to be ample justification of the revisers' aims and it has been acclaimed on all sides as a translation which combines accuracy and clarity of meaning with beauty of language and traditional diction.

For four hundred years, following upon the great upheaval of the Reformation, Catholics and Protestants have gone their separate ways and suspected each other's translations of the Bible of having been in some way manipulated in the interest of doctrinal presuppositions. It must be admitted that these suspicions were not always without foundation. At the present time, however, the science of textual criticism and philology, not to mention others, have made such great advances that the Bible text used by translators is substantially the same for all - Protestants and Catholics alike.

Today, and indeed since the appearance in 1943 of the Encyclical Letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, encouraging Biblical studies, Catholics like every one else go back to the original languages and base their translations on the same critical principles.

With the improvement in interdenominational relations and the advance of Biblical knowledge, the possibility of producing a Bible common to all Christians was mooted as far back as 1953. It was felt that, if such a thing could be achieved, it would be of incalculable benefit in wiping away remaining misconceptions and prejudices and in fostering still further good relations between the Churches. The Word of God would then not only be our common heritage and unifying link but be recognized as such, and those engaged in theological discussion could appeal to the same authoritative text. A decisive step towards this objective could be made by editing the Revised Standard Version for Catholic use.

A small committee of members of the Catholic Biblical Association was formed and permission obtained to examine this translation and suggest any changes that might be required to make it acceptable to Catholics. The Standard Bible Committee of the U.S.A. was then approached and they gave a warm welcome to the proposal. Here was a wonderful opportunity to make a real step forward in the field of ecumenical relations. However, ideas of this kind take time to penetrate all levels and many difficulties and delays ensued. But a change of mind has taken place and what seemed to many in 1953 to be a novel idea of doubtful value or even of no value at all is now generally recognized to be a legitimate and desirable goal.

In the present edition the aim has not been to improve the translation as such. No doubt there are many places where a different rendering might have been chosen on critical grounds. This has been avoided. But there are other places where, the critical evidence being clearly balanced, considerations of Catholic tradition have favoured a particular rendering or the inclusion of a passage omitted by the RSV translators.

In the Old Testament it has not been thought necessary to make any changes in the text. There is however, the very important difference in the number of books. Catholic Bibles include seven extra books and part of two others. These are known to Catholics as "deuterocanonical" and are regarded as an integral part of the Canon of the Old Testament. They are here printed in the order in which they appear in the Latin Vulgate, with the exception of the extra parts of the Book of Esther. As these parts do not occur in the Hebrew text of Esther, St Jerome extracted them from their place in the Greek in deference to the view favouring their canonicity and included them in his translation of Esther. But not regarding them as canonical he put them together at the end of the Hebrew text regardless of their historical or logical sequence. In this edition of the RSV they have been restored to their proper place in the narrative. These books and parts of books are regarded by Protestants as apocryphal.

This question of the “Apocrypha” is the one big problem left and needs to be carefully considered when discussing the possibility of a common Bible. The books known as the Apocrypha are: 1 and 2 Esdras (3 and 4 Esdras) Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch with the Letter of Jeremiah, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Additions to Daniel and Esther, the prayer of Manasseh. Since the time of the Reformation these books have been regarded as non-canonical by Protestants and either grouped at the end of the Old Testament or left out altogether. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, have continued to regard them as inspired and canonical, with the following exceptions. There are three items in the Apocrypha which are not included in the deuterocanonical books, namely 1 and 2 Esdras (3 and 4 Esdras) and the Prayer of Manasseh, and which in consequence are not printed in this Bible. The other books are given in the translation of the Revised Standard Version.

A word must be said here about the origin of these books. In the days of Jesus Christ, the Jews had no precisely defined (in the sense of officially closed) Canon of the Scriptures. Besides the books of the Hebrew Canon as we now know it, there were others of more recent origin (mostly of the first and second centuries B.C.) which were held in great esteem but whose exact status had not been finally determined. Though many of them had been written in Hebrew or Aramaic they seem to have circulated mainly outside Palestine, in a Greek translation or text, among the Greek-speaking Jews of the Dispersion, especially in Egypt. The books were less acceptable to the Jews of the Pharisaic tradition in Jerusalem, but many fragments of them in Hebrew and Aramaic have been found at Qumran where there was a religious community distinct from the Pharisees.

The first Christians were Aramaic-speaking Jews of Palestine and they used the Hebrew Scriptures. Very soon the Greek-speaking Jewish and Gentile converts outnumbered those of Aramaic speech; and consequently the Bible they used, namely the Greek Septuagint translation which included the books referred to above, came into general use. The books thus came to be implicitly accepted by the Christians of the first centuries, though no attempt was made to issue an official decree defining the limits of the Old Testament Canon.

With the virtual disappearance of the priestly class as a force in Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, and the rise of the Pharisees to a position of dominance as champions of the national heritage, the Jews set about the task of consolidating their tradition and defining the limits of their sacred writings. Towards the end of the first century A.D. at Jamnia, they decided that their Bible consisted only of books written up to the time of Ezra, when prophecy was deemed to have ceased; and this criterion, though not applied uniformly, excluded the books of more recent origin which were on the whole less in accord with the Pharisaic outlook. The need for a decision was forced upon the Jews because of the growing controversies with Christians; and besides delimiting the Canon of Scripture they also not long afterwards condemned the Greek Septuagint translation as inaccurate. Though the decision about the Canon was not of course binding upon the Christians, it did have some influence on them in the course of centuries and various writers expressed doubts about the extra books of the Greek Bible which had come into general use. This was especially so in the fourth century A.D. when, for example, St Jerome regarded them as non-canonical. Eventually official decrees confirming the longer Canon were issued towards the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries in the West at the Hippo and Carthage and in the East during the eighth and ninth centuries at Nicaea and Constantinople. But doubts and adverse opinions continued to be expressed in various quarters and by prominent writers.

In the sixteenth century the Reformers rejected the extra books, partly, perhaps, because some of the teaching contained in them seemed to favour Roman doctrine, but chiefly because they were not in the Hebrew Canon. Finally, the Council of Trent issued its decree on the Canon of Scripture in 1546 declaring that all the books which it had been the custom to read in the Catholic Church and which were contained in the ancient Latin Vulgate Bible must be accepted as sacred and canonical. The decree gave a list of the books in question which in fact coincided with the lists issued by earlier Councils in the West. It is interesting to note that though 3 and 4 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh were excluded from the list they were printed at the end of many subsequent Latin Bibles “ne prorsus interirent” – “lest they altogether perish.”

The positions taken up in the sixteenth century with regard to the Old Testament Canon are substantially the same as those held today. The aim of this edition is to show that there is more common ground for the practical purpose of Bible reading than perhaps may appear at first sight. Thus, there is an increasing tendency on the part of Protestants to include the “Apocrypha” in their Bibles without necessarily admitting their inspired and canonical character. On the other hand, Roman Catholics do not today attach the same significance to the traditional order of books in the Old Testament as they once did. There seems room for some accommodation here. This is an important development and it must be taken in conjunction with another equally important, namely, the steadily diminishing number of textual differences, as may be seen in the present edition.

To turn now to the text of the “Apocrypha.” There is in the first place a striking contrast between the uniformity imposed on the Hebrew text by the rabbis and the lack of it in the Greek text of the Christian Bible. The

other ancient versions add to the variety. The consequence of this is that there are often substantial differences between the English translations of these books according to which Greek recension or version has been used. Thus, for example, in the case of the Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), the Latin, on which the Douay Version is based, is notably longer than the Revised Standard Version which is based on the Greek. It is generally agreed that the Greek underlying the RSV is better than the recension underlying the Latin. On critical principles therefore we should accept the RSV text as preferable to the Douay. It is admitted today that the decree of Trent declaring that Catholics must accept the books contained in the Latin Vulgate with all their parts does not oblige us to accept passages which have been judged, according to the best critical principles, not to be part of the original text. Thus the passage known as the "Three Heavenly Witnesses" or the "Comma Johanneum" (1 John 5.7-8), which is in the Latin Vulgate and in versions based on it, does not appear in recent Catholic editions of the New Testament. This procedure is in accordance with the directives given in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*.

The aim of the translator must be to render into intelligible language, as faithfully as possible, what he regards on solid critical grounds as the original text or the closest possible approximation to it. In some cases the original has not come down to us, but it is still incumbent on the translator to try to get as near as possible to it by a study of the most ancient versions.

In conclusion, a tribute of thanks must be paid to the Catholic bishops who have approved this edition and to the American Standard Bible Committee who have throughout-given their unfailing and generous support in spite of difficulties and delays. Thanks are due also to all those who throughout the years of waiting have been inspired by the ideal of Christian unity to persevere in the work of producing this Bible. Its appearance coincides in time with a development in relations between Christian bodies which no one could have foreseen ten years ago, a development which offers great promise of the fulfillment of our Saviour's words, "that they may all be one" (John 17-21).

APPENDIX V

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FOREWORD

It is a very responsible thing to translate the Holy Scriptures from their original languages, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, into modern speech. Translating the Holy Scriptures means a rendering into another language the thoughts and sayings of the heavenly Author of this sacred library of sixty-six books, Jehovah God, which holy men of long ago put down in writing under inspiration for our benefit today.

That is a sobering thought. The translators who have a fear and love of the divine Author of the Holy Scriptures feel especially a responsibility toward Him to transmit his thoughts and declarations as accurately as possible. They also feel a responsibility toward the searching readers of the modern translation who depend upon the inspired Word of the Most High God for their everlasting salvation.

It was with such a sense of solemn responsibility that the committee of dedicated men have produced the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, over the course of many years. As soon as each part of the translation became available for publication it was turned over to the publishers for printing, all together in six volumes. The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures, containing the twenty-seven books from Matthew through The Revelation, first appeared in 1950. In due order the volumes of the New World Translation of the Hebrew-Aramaic Scriptures appeared, the first volume in 1953, the second in 1955, the third in 1957, the fourth in 1958, and the fifth in 1960.

From the start of the work it was the desire of the translators to have all these contemplated volumes brought together in the form of one book, inasmuch as the Holy Scriptures are in fact one book by the One Author. To this end, as soon as the final volume of the series had been issued in 1960, the committee set to work to prepare the entire translation for publication under one cover. The committee was then able to take under survey the translation as a whole, and to discern where improvements could be made.

An effort was put forth to bring about even greater consistency in the rendering of the related parts of the Holy Scriptures, such as in harmonizing with the original Hebrew readings the readings of quotations made in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Since the one-volume edition of the Holy Scripture was to contain no footnotes, many footnote readings that had appeared in the earlier translation in the six distinct volumes were lifted and put in the main text of the one-volume edition. This does not mean that the earlier rendering that was now replaced was rejected. Rather, the purpose was to attain to closer conformity to the literal reading in the original languages. All this process has resulted in revisions in the main text of the translation.

The now completed one-volume edition may therefore be properly called a revised edition of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. In releasing it for publication we do so with a deep sense of gratitude to the Divine Author of the Holy Scriptures, who has thus privileged us and in whose spirit we have trusted to co-operate with us in this worthy work. We hope for His blessing upon the published translation in behalf of all who read and use it in learning his holy will.

New World Bible Translation Committee.

January 17, 1961, New York, N.Y.

"YOU" AND VERBS IN THE PLURAL NUMBER

"You" printed in all capital letters means that the pronoun is in the plural number. Also, where the plural number of a verb is not certainly apparent to the reader, its plurality is indicated by printing it capitalized.

[] Brackets enclose words inserted to complete or clarify the sense In the English text.

APPENDIX VI

A PROPHET LIKE MOSES (By: Shakil Ahmad Monir)

One day God said to Moses: *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.* (Deut 18:18).

Since the above promise, many prophets have appeared but none have shared all his attributes. But there was only one Prophet who came and was called *The-like-of-Moses*. Following is a discussion on the attributes of prophets who came after Moses”

1. The first notable prophet after Moses was Elijah - peace be on them. He had the following similarities with Moses.
 - a. In Moses' time, Israel was steeped in calf-worship; in Elijah's time, Israel was steeped in Ba'al-worship.
 - b. Moses entered into a contest with the Pharaoh's magicians and defeated them; Elijah entered into a contest with Baal's magician and was victorious.
 - c. Moses met an angel of the Lord, at Horeb, the mount of God; Elijah also met an angel of the Lord, at Horeb, the Mount of God.
 - d. Moses kept 40 days' fast; and Elijah also fasted for 40 days.
 - e. Moses was helped in his mission by Joshua, who later succeeded him as a prophet; Elijah too was helped in his mission by Elisha, who later succeeded him as a prophet.
2. The next notable prophet is Jesus, peace be on him. He too had several similarities with Moses. Christians claim that he was the prophesized prophet of Deuteronomy. While the similarities between Moses and Jesus are given below, Jesus was regarded as the “Son of God” which is a higher station than a prophet's.
 - a. Both Moses and Jesus faced persecution of Israelite children, from the rulers of their time.
 - b. Both came out of Egypt to carry out the mission of their life.
 - c. Both kept 40 days' of fast at the start of their mission.
 - d. Both were called Redeemers of their people, in their own right.
3. The similarities however take a dramatic turn, when we come down to prophet Muhammad, peace be on him. The first significant thing in his case is that God Himself has drawn a parallel between him and Moses, saying:

Verily, We have sent to you a Messenger, who is witness over you, just as We sent a Messenger to Pharaoh (Holy Quran 73:16)

On this basis, Muslims refer to the Holy Prophet of Islam as *Maseel-e-Musa*, i.e. like Moses.

Given below is a two column comparison between the two prophets, both in minor, as well as, in major points, covering their life, mission and their achievements. A note on Jesus, peace be on him, is included where appropriate.

MOSES ^{sa*}	MUHAMMAD ^{sa}
Birth: A Levite by birth, belonged to a noble tribe who possessed the hereditary honor of keeping the Tabernacle and the House of God in Jerusalem.	Birth: Belonged to the famous tribe of Quraish, which, for generations possessed the hereditary honour of keeping the Kaaba, the House of God, in Mecca.
Infancy: Breast-feed and nursed by a lady, other than his mother, for compensation. It is written: <i>Take this child away and nurse him for me, I will pay you your wages</i> (Exodus 2:9)	Infancy: As an infant, breast-fed and nursed by a paid nurse, Halima. She says: <i>Every woman refused him, when she knew that he was an orphan. For, we hoped to get a goodly payment from the child's father. I went and took him, as I could not find any one to nurse.</i> (Ibne Ishaq p.104)
Early life¹: Lived among idol-worshippers. His own people, the Israelites also became idolaters, because of their long association with the Egyptians and lack of Divine Teachers among them for a long time.	Early life: Lived among Idol-worshippers. His own people the Arabs, including his near relations indulged in idolatry, because of lack of Divine Teachers among them for a long time.
First Marriage: Moses ^{sa} married in the family he worked for in Midian. His diligence, honesty and righteousness impressed them. He married in his employer's household. Baptism: Moses was not baptized. He founded the Jewish religion.	First Marriage: Muhammad ^{sa} married Khadija, a rich widow whom he worked for as a young man. Having been impressed with his honesty, and intelligence, she proposed to him. He married in his employer's household. Baptism: Muhammad was not baptized. He laid the foundation of Islam.
First Call: It came at Horeb: <i>Put off your shoe from your feet; for the place you are standing is holy to the Lord... come, I send you to Pharaoh, that bring forth My people, the sons of Israel.</i> (Exodus 3:5-10). After this experience, Moses hid his face in fear. (Exodus 3:6)	First Call: Came at Hira (a cave): <i>Read! in the name of Thy Lord Who created man from a clot of will blood. Read! and Thy Lord is Most Generous Who taught by the pen, taught man what he knew not (then).</i> (Quran 95:2-6). Muhammad was frightened after this experience; he returned home and hid his face under a blanket (Bukhari 1:1)
Divine Status²: Jewish scripture refers to Moses as God: <i>You shall be to him as God</i> (Exodus 4:7). And: <i>See I make you as God to Pharaoh</i> (Exodus 7:11). The magicians of Pharaoh saw Moses' finger and they cried out: <i>This is the finger of God</i> (Exodus 8:19)	Divine Status: The Quran refers to Muhammad as 'God': When he threw a handful of pebbles at the enemy in the Battle of Badr, the revelation said: <i>It was God who threw it</i> (Holy Quran 8:18). And when he put his hand atop the hands of his followers, at Hudaibiyya, the revelation said: <i>The hand of God was on top of their hands.</i> (Quran 48:1 1)
First Commandment: Moses' first commandment was to establishment the unity of God: <i>The Lord your God is One Lord, and you shall</i>	First Commandment: Unity of God was forcefully emphasized by Muhammad. The first pillar of Islam is the affirmation: <i>La ilaha</i>

* Traditional salutation used after prophets' names. It means "peace be on him".

¹ Jesus' early life, in contrast, was spent in strict religious atmosphere. His parents worshipped One True God and regularly visited Jerusalem, the seat of Divine Law of the Jehovah God.

² Jesus has allegorically been called the "Son of God" in the scriptures.

<p><i>love</i> the Lord your God with all your heart. This continued to be the first Commandment for all succeeding prophets, judges and kings, down to Jesus Christ and his Apostles.</p>	<p><i>ilial-lah Muhammad ur Rasulallah</i> meaning "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger".</p>
<p>Exodus³ (Migration): Moses' led the Jews out of Egypt as a result of their continued persecution by the Pharaohs. He thus migrated with his people as a result of persecution. This Exodus proved to be the turning point in the history of Israel. The eve of Exodus is reckoned as the starting point of the Jewish Passover festival.</p>	<p>Hijra (Migration): Mohammad led Muslims out of Mecca because of severe persecution by his people. He thus migrated with his followers as a result of persecution. This successful migration was a turning point in Islamic history and marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar.</p>
<p>Destruction of arch enemy: Moses struck the waters of the sea with his rod, this movement of his hand was a signal for a wind to blow, and the tide to return, which led to the drowning of pharaoh and his hosts in the sea. (Exodus 15:21-28).</p>	<p>Destruction of arch enemy: Muhammad threw a handful of small pebbles towards the enemy, in the battle of Badr. This movement of his hand became a signal for a strong sand-storm to blow in the eyes of the enemy; and it eventually led to the destruction of Abu-Jahl, and his hosts were totally routed. (Holy Quran 8:18; Hisham under battle of Badr)</p>
<p>The Pledge: Moses took pledge from 70 of his elders that they will be obedient to God and loyal to him. On that same occasion, they offered animal sacrifice to the Lord, as a burnt and peace offering. (Exodus 24:1-8)</p>	<p>The Pledge: The Holy Prophet also took pledge from 700 of his elders, at Hudaibiyya. That same day, 70 camels were sacrificed to the Lord, for the 'Umrah' that was intended that year. (Quran 48:19; and Ibne Ishaq P.500)</p>
<p>Battles⁴ (Jihad): After the exodus, Moses fought several battles against the surrounding pagan tribes, to consolidate his position in the area. He himself commanded his armies and was successful in all the battles he fought by way of Jihad. (Ref: Num 21:23-35; Num 31:1-54; 32:20-42. Deut 2:32-35; 3:1-8).</p>	<p>Battles (Jihad): The battles which the Holy Prophet fought were all fought after the Hijra i.e. the exodus of the Muslims from Mecca. He was forced to fight these battles against the hostile pagan tribes, in self-defense. He himself trained and commanded his armies; and he was spectacularly successful in all the battles he fought as Jihad. (Ref: Quran 3:14, 3:124; 8:45; 22:40 and Islamic history).</p>
<p>The Law⁵ (Shariah): Moses was a lawgiver prophet. Starting from the basic commandments such as., 'Do not kill' 'Do not steal' etc. he gave his people a comprehensive Law covering moral, religious, social, judicial,</p>	<p>The Law (Shariah): The Holy Prophet was also a lawgiver. Starting from very basic commandments like that of Moses, he gave mankind a complete Divine Law covering all aspects of man's life at individual, national as</p>

³ Jesus also migrated to another land, after his persecution and his recovery from his ordeal on the cross. His migration to the eastern land was also successful. But he never led his followers there. He himself proclaims: "I say to you: Where I am going, you cannot come."

⁴ Though Jesus made preparations for fighting his enemies, and according to Luke, told his disciples to sell their belongings to buy swords (Luke 22:36). But: "... they said, 'Look Lord! Here are two swords and he said to them: 'It is enough' (Luke 22:28). Thus, he never fought a Jihad against his enemies.

⁵ Jesus, according to his own statement, was not a law-giver. On being asked about his commandments, he referred the person to the commandments of Moses.

penal, medical, marital and many other fields. His law called the 'Law of Torah' had statutes, ordinances and commandments numbering about 500.	well as international level. 'This Law called the 'Law of Quran' contains statutes, ordinances and commandments numbering about 700.
Written Record ⁶ : Moses was so particular about the written record of what he taught, that he got all the statutes, ordinances and commandments written down in a book in his presence and he established a practice by which this book was read out during assemblies and congregations.	Written Record: The Holy Prophet had the entire Holy Quran written down in his presence, by his own dictation. Additionally, he encouraged his followers to memorize the Quran and the practice of reciting Quranic verses during prayers, - a practice continuing till today.
Farewell Address: Near the time of his death, Moses spoke before the whole Assembly of Israel, and he said to them: <i>Give ear o' heavens and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth.</i> Then he spoke to them of their faith and their duties, and to end he said: <i>Lay to heart all the words which I enjoin you this day.</i> He also said: <i>I make this sworn covenant but with him who is not here with us this day, as with him who stands here with us this day before our Lord.</i> (Ref. Deut 32:1, 45, 46; and Deut 29:15)	Farewell Address: On the occasion of his last Haj, the Holy Prophet addressed the entire assembly of his followers in the valley Of Arafat, saying: <i>O men! lend me your ears. For, I do not know whether I will stand before you again in the valley and address you as I address you this day.</i> Then at the end he said: <i>What I enjoin you this day... is meant for all times; you should all remember it very well.</i> And he said: <i>Communicate this to the ends Of the earth; maybe he who is not present here this day benefits from it more than he who is present.</i> (Ref. Sihah Sitta, Tabari)

Of the above similarities between Moses and Mohammad, the following three have special significance and are probably the most conclusive:

- (a) Exodus or migration (Hijrat)
- (b) Defensive Battles against pagans to fight persecution (Jihad)
- (c) The Law (Shariah)

The only prophet whose attributes are similar to Moses is Prophet Mohammad. Thus he is the prophet prophesized in Deuteronomy and other books of the Old and New Testament.

⁶ There is no record of any instance where Jesus had his followers to write down anything in his presence or by his dictation. The gospels are later collection of events as recalled by his followers.

APPENDIX VII
INTERPRETATION OF KHATAM-UN-NABIYYIN
BY EMINENT MUSLIM SCHOLARS
Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad

While discussing the subject of prophethood and of Imamate, a sage of very great eminence, the sixth Imam of the Shia sect who lived in the first century of Islam (d.148AH/765AD), Hazrat Ja'far Sadiq, peace be on him, said:

Hazrat Abu Ja'far, while discussing the Quranic verse: *For verily We granted the Book to the children of Abraham*, said that God vouchsafed to the children of Abraham Messengers, Prophets and Imams. But what is ironical is that people believe in what God blessed the children of Abraham yet they deny this blessing for the progeny of Muhammad.

The very eminent saint, the sun of the world of mysticism, Hazrat Maulana Jalalud Din Rumi, God's mercy be on him, born 6(AAH/1207AD, d.672AH/1273AD, says:

Strive hard in the path of virtue in a manner so that you may be blessed with prophethood and you still be a follower. (Mathtiavi Maulana Rum, Chapter 1, p.53)

A highly distinguished Commentator from Spain and the great Sheikh Hazrat Mohyi ud Din Ibni Arabi (d.638AH/1240 AD), says:

Prophethood among mankind shall continue till the end of days though Law-bearing prophethood has ceased. Law-bearing prophethood is merely a kind of prophethood.

The most distinguished Sufi of Spain, the great Sheikh Hazrat Mohyiud Din Ibn Arabi (d.638AH), says:

The height of Muhammad's exaltedness is expressed by the fact that through the "Darud" prayer he has raised his own progeny to the level of prophets and he was granted the superiority over Hazrat Abraham through the fact that the Law he brought shall never be abrogated. (Fatuhaati Makkiyya, Vol. 1, p.545)

The Chief of the Mystics and the Sheikh of his time, Hazrat Al-Sheikh Bali Afandi (d.960AH), has said:

... Khatamar Rusul" is he after whom no prophet with a new law shall be born. (Sharah Fusustil flakam)

A very renowned Sufi and a very famous writer and speaker, Hazrat Imam Abdul Wagab Sh'erani (d.976AH/ 1568AD), says:

Let it be known that the order of prophethood has not totally ceased: it is the Law-bearing prophethood which has discontinued. (Al Yawaqeeq walJawahar, Vol. 111, p.35)

The saint among the saints, the Imam and the Reformer of the second millenium, Hazrat Sheikh Ahmad Farooqi of Sarhind (d.1034 AH/ 1624 AD), has stated:

The rising of a prophet after the Khatamar Rusul Hazrat Muhammad, the Chosen One, peace and blessings be upon him, from among his own followers and as a heritage, does not in any way run counter to his status as the Khatamar Rusul. Therefore, O' ye reader, do not be among those who doubt. (Maktubai Imam Rabbani Hazrat Mujaddid Alif Thani)

Hazrat Shah Waliullah of Delhi (d.1171AH/1702AD), the most renowned Muhaddith (writer of Traditions), universally acknowledged orator and Reformer of the twelfth century of Islam, has, in his famous book Taffieemati Ilahiyya, stated under Divine inspiration:

The meaning of the Holy Prophet being the Khataman Nabiyyeen is that there shall not now appear a person whom God may appoint with a Law for mankind, that is to say, there shall now be no prophet who shall come with a new Law.

Hazrat Mirza Mazhar Jan Janan Naqshbandi (d. 1195 AH/ 1781 AD), an acknowledged authority on Mysticism, well known literary person and master of poetry and prose, has said:

No perfection, except the perfection of prophethood bearing Law, has ended. With respect to the other beneficences of God Almighty, He is neither miserly nor niggardly. (Maqaniati Mazhari, p.88)

Maulana Muhammad Qasim (d. 1297AH/1880AD) states:

If there may appear to be equality and similarity between the original and its reflection, it does not matter, because superiority even then belongs to him, for he is the original and the Khataman Nabiyyeen. (Tahzeerun-Nas, p.30 or 33)

Hazrat Maulana Farangi Mahal, who died in 1304AH, has said:

The divines of the Sunni sect also believe in and expound the fact that in the course of the Ministry of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be on him, there cannot appear a law-bearing prophet and his prophethood extends to the end of days. A prophet who appears during his ministry shall necessarily be a follower of the Law of Muhammad. (Majmu'ah Fatawa, Maulvi Abdul Hayee, Vol. 1, p. 144)

The most distinguished scholar of the Sunni sect, an ocean of rational knowledge and a very eminent scholar, Hazrat Maulana Abul Hasanat Abdul Hayee (d.13(AAH/1886AD) of Farangi Mahal, Lucknow (on page 16 of his book Dafe-utWaswas, new edition), gives his personal convictions in connection with the 'Khatami Nubuwwat' and says:

After the demise of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be on him, or even during his own lifetime, it is not an impossibility for someone to be exalted to the position of a simple prophet. But a prophet with a new Law is, indeed, forbidden.

The most renowned and distinguished commentator of the Holy Quran and a leader of the Sufi school of thought, Hazrat Njohyiud Din Ibni Arabi, has said:

From the study and contemplation of the Darud we have arrived at the definite conclusion that there shall, from among the Muslims, certainly be persons whose status, in the matter of prophethood, shall advance to the level of the prophets, if Allah pleases. But they shall not be given any book of Law. (Patuizati Makiyya, Vol. 1, p.545)

Hazrat Sayyad Abdul Karim Jilani has written:

The coming of the Law bearing prophets, after the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings on him, has ceased as he has been exalted to be the "Khataman-Nabiyyeen" because he brought with him such a perfect Law as no prophet had brought before him. (Al-Insanul Kamil, Vol. 1, p-68, Egypt edition)

The venerable Sheikh Abdul Qadir of Kurdistan says:

The meanings of the Holy Prophet being the Khataman Nabiyyeen are that no one after him shall be appointed a prophet with a new Law.

Hazrat Mohyiud Din Ibn Arabi has said:

The Law-bearing prophethood and messengership has now ceased after the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be on him. Therefore, there shall be no Law-bearing prophet after him. (Fususul Hakam, pp. 140-141.)

Hazrat Shah Waii Ullah says:

There cannot appear an independent prophet after the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be on him, who is not his follower and his adherent. (Al-Khairul Katheer, p. 111.)

The very renowned Sufi Hazrat Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ali Hussain Al Hakim of Tirmidhi (d.308AH) has stated:

How can the glory and superiority of Muhammad, peace and blessings on him, be manifested if we claim that he was the last, in time, to appear in the world? This is, no doubt, an interpretation of the foolish and the ignorant. (Kitab Khatantal A uliya, p.34 1)

Hazrat Abu Saeed Mubarak (d.513AH), the grand preceptor of the Sufis, teacher of the saints, exemplar for those who tread the path of righteousness, a model for the pure souls and the chief of saints, was also the preceptor of Hazrat Sayyad Abdul Qadir Jilani. He said:

Man is the most privileged of God's creatures. When he reaches the zenith of exaltedness he begins to manifest in himself all the above-mentioned qualities and their corollaries. He is then called a perfect man and the acme of all perfections. These attributes are found in the Holy Prophet in the highest abundance, peace and blessings be upon him. That is the reason why he is called "Khataman-Nabiyyeen". (Tohfa Mursalah Sharif, p.51, translated)

The learned Maulana says again:

Prophets, as they are the message-bearers of God, are His vice-regents. It would, therefore, be necessary that they are endowed with Divine authority. From among the subordinate posts, the post of the governor or the minister is the highest and all other posts are subordinate to them and they can over-rule the decisions and rulings of their subordinates; similarly there is no position higher than the Khatam of the prophets. Every other prophet is undoubtedly subordinate to him. (Debate (Mubahitha) at Shahjahanpur,

Maulana Muhammad Qasim states further:

If finality of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet be considered in the light of his excellent attributes and of his having reached the apex of excellence, as I have already stated, but not chronologically, and which height no one can ever aspire to reach, the point of his superiority over all persons becomes established over those who have passed away and also over those who come after him. if we accept this view it shall not at all contravene his finality, even though someone in the future did rise to the high status of prophethood. (Tahzeerun Nas, p.28)

Maulana Muhammad Qasim of Nanauta (d.1297AH/ 1880AD) states:

According to the layman the Messenger of Allah, peace and bless(seal), is supposed to have apings on him, being the KHATAM peared after all the previous prophets. But men of understanding and the wise know it very well that being the first or the last, chronologically, does not carry any weight. How could, therefore, the words of the Holy Quran Bi4t lw iy ilie Messeriger of 411ah and the seal of the Prophets (33:41) mean to glorify him? But I know very well that none from among the Muslims would be prepared to agree with the common men. (Tahzeerun Nas, p.3)

Qari Muhammad Tayyab, Manager, the Darul Uloom of Deoband states:

Just as there is from among the angels and satans a person par excellence who excels everyone of its kind in beneficence and cannot be surpassed-Gabriel in the case of the angels and Iblis the accursed in the case of satans apportions them evils and wickedness. Similarly there is a Khatam for the prophets and a Khatam for Dajjaals, and they are both supreme in their respective spheres. From among the prophets there is he who is the acme of perfection and at the same time bestower of perfection to others. His name is Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be on him. (Talimati Islam aur Masihi Aqwam, pp.223-224)

Abul Hassan Sharif (d.406AH), God be pleased with him, was a renowned scholar and he has explained in the following words what Khataman-Nabiyyeen means:

This has been spoken metaphorically and means that God Almighty has appointed the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, over the books of all the previous prophets and he authenticates teachings and verifies these in the same way as documents are verified with the affixing of the seal to make these authentic. (Talkhisul Bayaan Fi Majazatul Quran, p. 191)

Hazrat Ayesha Ummul Momineen, the Truthful, God be pleased with her and who has been universally accepted to have taught half of the Islamic faith to the Muslims, said:

O ye Muslims! do proclaim that the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was the Khataman-Nabiyyeen but never say that there shall be no prophet after him. (Durri Manshoor, Vol.5, p.204)

Shaikh-ul-Imam, Ibni Qateebah (d.267AH), after quoting what Hazrat Ayesha, the Truthful, had said, comments:

This statement (of Hazrat Ayesha) does not go against what the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, had said, i.e. La Nabi B'adi. Because what the Holy Prophet actually meant was that no prophet would come after him who would abrogate his Code of Law. (Tawil Mukhtaliful Ahadith, p.236)

The very renowned Muhaddith and scholar of the Indian sub-continent, Imam Muhammad Tahir (d.986AH/1578AD), stated:

This view of Hazrat Ayesha is based on the assumption that Jesus, peace be on him, was expected to come down. This view too does not contradict the saying of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, "There is no prophet after me." What he meant to say was that there shall be no prophet after him who shall abrogate his Law.

The renowned commentator of the Mishkat and a very admired Muhaddith of the sub-continent of India, Mulla Ali Qari (d. 1014AH / 1606AD), says:

According to the Ulema (religious scholars) the words "La Nabiyya B'adee" mean that no prophet in the future shall be raised who shall abrogate the Law of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings on him. (Al-Isha'at Fi Ashraqatus Saat, p.226)

Abdul Wahab She'rani (d.976AH/1568AD), while explaining the Hadith *La Nabiyya B'adi* and *La Rasool B'adi*, expounded that there shall be no Law-bearing prophet after him. (Al Yawaqeat Wal Jawahar, Vol.2, p.35).

Hazrat Shah Waii Ullah of Delhi (d.1176AD) writes:

From the sayings of the Holy Prophet 'La Nabiyya B'adi and La Rasool' we come to understand that prophethood that has ceased is the Law-bearing prophethood. (Qiratul Ainain Fi Tafadhulul Shaikhain, p.39)

Hafiz Barkhurdar, the successor to Hazrat Sheikh Nausha Ganj, a renowned saint and religious leader, while explaining the above Hadith, said:

The meaning of this hadith is that there is no prophet after me who shall be raised with a new Law, except when God wishes to raise from among the prophets and the saints. (Nibras, 445 footnote)

The famous and well-known religious leader of the Ahli Hadith, Nawab Siddiq Hassan Khan, says:

The Hadees 'La Wahi b'ada Mautee' has no foundation, although "La Nabiyya Ba'adee' is quite correct, which, according to the men of letters, means that 'There shall be no prophet after me who shall be raised with a new code of Law which shall abrogate my Law'. (Iqtarabus Sa'at, p. 162)