

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

THE CAIRO DEBATE

MUSLIM
vs.
CHRISTIAN

A RESUME'
BY
MAULANA ABUL-ATA
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AHMADIYYA MUSLIM MISSIONARY COLLEGE,
RABWAH.

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FOREWORD

I had the privilege and honour of working as a missionary of Islam in Arab countries from 1931 to 1936. The foremost duty of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Missionaries in the Arab Lands has been both to defend Islam against the onslaughts of Christian missionaries and to regenerate the true spirit of Islam among the Muslims.

So long I was there, I put up a stubborn resistance to the activities of Christian missionaries in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. I retorted the allegations of the Christians by means of speeches and pamphlets and started a monthly magazine "*Al-Bushra*" in Arabic which, by the grace of God, has been regularly published since from Israel (Palestine).

The permanent Headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Mission were at Jabalul Karmal ; Haifa ; from where I had been going round the other Arab countries on my preaching tours. In 1933 I was in Egypt ; and it was there that a religious debate was held at Cairo ; a detailed account of which is before the readers.

I first published it in the Arabic Magazine mentioned above ; with an open challenge to all the Christian missionaries ; but none of them in the Arab countries took up the challenge. In the

same year 1933, it was also published in the 'Review of Religions' Urdu ; at Qadian : India ; with a repeated challenge ; but none of the Priests even in India could come forward to take up the gauntlet.

In Pakistan ; these days ; Christians have redoubled their efforts to convert Muslims to Christianity. To meet the demand of the Muslims in this country we have published it again in a book form in Urdu ; so that they could face the Christian arguments successfully. Let Muslims make a bold use of these arguments and throw a challenge to the Christians and rest assured that none of the Christians would be able to take up the challenge.

Now, at the timely suggestion of the President, Central Lajna Imaullah, we have published it in English also. My thanks are due to Syed Kamal Yousuf ; H.A., Ahmadiyya Muslim Missionary in Scandinavia and a very respectful pupil of mine ; who took the initiative to render it into English and to Prof. Qazi Muhammad Aslam, the University of the Punjab, Lahore ; who was good enough to go through the manuscript and make the necessary corrections.

Abul-Ata Jallundhari.

Rabwah,
Dec. 11, 1963.



MAULANA ABUL-ATA, FORMERLY PRINCIPAL
AHMADIYYA MUSLIM MISSIONARY COLLEGE,
RABWAH.

TWO REVIEWS.

(The following review was written by the late Hazrat Sahibzada Mirza Bashir Ahmad (May God be pleased with him) on the booklet on Nov. 4, 61. — Publisher.)

“A copy of “THE CAIRO DEBATE” has been presented to me by Maulavi Abul-Ata Sahib, our former missionary in the Arab Lands. This is an account of a debate on some fundamentals of Christian Faith between a few of the renowned christian ecclesiastics and the learned Maulavi Sahib during his stay in Egypt. Being a disciple of the Shatterer of the Cross, (i.e. Promised Messiah Ahmad) the victory of the Maulavi Sahib was already anticipated but what has struck me with wonder is the amount of material on the subject that Maulavi Sahib has condensed in this brief literary encounter. The publication of this booklet, I am sure, will be of great use to our missonaries who may come in contact with Christian scholars.”



The revered President of the Central Lajna Imaullah, Sayyeda Maryam Siddiqah writes:—

“In publishing, “THE CAIRO DEBATE” Maulana Abul-Ata Sahib has rendered a great service to the community. The latest Census Report of Pakistan indicates a sizeable increase in Christian population.

It is something that the Muslims should be concerned about. We do not have to spend our time in analysing the causes of this increase but rather should look for the means to bring back to the fold of Islam those who have gone or are likely to go astray. In the achievement of this goal, it is necessary to give this book an extensive distribution; so that these friends may know that true salvation lies only in Islam.

I would like to urge upon all Ahmadi brothers to read this booklet themselves and to circulate it among their friends and especially to recommend its study to their wives and children so that they may educate their communities about the superior teachings of Islam as compared to Christianity. I want to address this appeal specially to parents whose children are studying in Convent Schools where they are likely to fall victim to Christian influence in the course of their secular education. I would suggest to the Office-holders of the branches of Lajna Imaullah to buy this book in large number and to distribute it among their Christian neighbours.

I hope it will be very much appreciated if Maulavi Abul-Ata Sahib will get this booklet translated into English so that it may be distributed among that section of the Pakistani public which is better familiar with this language and for sending it to foreign countries.”

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The Debate Begins

In January - March, 1933, I was in Cairo. I called on various padres so as to expound the gospel of Islam. One Dr. Philips - an American, then in charge of the Cairo mission - arrested my attention. He was very staunch in his Christian beliefs. From the very beginning he set out to lay emphasis on the Atonement. Without faith in Atonement and Crucifixion man had no escape from sin, he asserted. This bold claim was at one with neither ordinary reason nor scriptures, I observed. Salvation and Crucifixion are foreign to each other. His claim, therefore, was not justified, I maintained.

Dr. Philips was not prepared to accept the truth as readily as that. He advanced to elaborate his claim with greater persistence. There was not anyone sinless in the progeny of Adam but Jesus, the son of God. He with his death on the cross atoned for our sins.

This doctrine is at issue between Islam and Christianity. It was settled at last between Dr. Philips and myself to take issue on three points :

- (1) Besides Jesus, the Messiah, is there anyone Immaculate ?
- (2) Was Jesus, the Messiah, truly God ?

(3) Did the Messiah give up his life on the cross ?

Dr. Philips proposed to conduct the talk in harmony with the authority of the Bible ; arguments fetched from outside the Bible were to be dismissed. To this I readily agreed. For even the present Bible could suffice to substantiate our stand. It has suffered, though, from interpolation and distortion. Scholars' investigations also agree that the Bible has undergone changes. Both of us voted for the suggestion. Debate followed peacefully, about a week being awarded to each of the subjects of these talks. As a result, Christian belief stood confuted and Muslim belief established. I was approached by my friends to permit the printing of a summary of those talks so that even laymen can see how poor Christians are in argument, their own revealed books to which they subscribe, disowning their religion.

I acceded to the proposal without hesitation and embark now upon giving a brief account of the proceedings. The actual debate was conditioned to time. I have to state that Dr. Philips hemmed and hawed and could hardly manage to answer. Those who heard us would bear witness. A sense of defeat set in on Dr. Philips and the faces of his colleagues betrayed the same feeling. If any one harbours a doubt he should study the proceedings carefully. If he still has the nerve to refute the arguments, the onus is on him. Let him come to the fore. That is all there is to it.

Debate in Progress

Can any one except Jesus be impeccable ?

In the Christian school of theology this dogma is of cardinal import. They construct the premises and deduce Atonement along the following lines. Every man is under the sway of sin. Its hold is universal. A redeemer and savior is called for. Since mankind is a race of wrongdoers it cannot serve as its own redeemer. But Jesus was God. He assumed the body of man. He was, therefore, whole and upright. It follows he can make good the loss of man and offer atonement.

If we evince that a man—or for that matter men—had led the lives of absolute moral purity the Christian view will fail instantly. The warp and woof of Atonement will disintegrate. The infallibility of prophets stands as anathema to Christians who trade in Atonement. Dr. Philips stuck to his guns. Sinless man is inconceivable. We argued the question twice. In the first discussion Dr. Philips was dumbfounded. He demanded time to prepare his answer stipulating that I hand over my own notes and relevant references. Willingly I fell in with his wishes intent on leaving no room for any excuse. Two weeks of deliberation

and reflection made no difference. In the second round he was worse. Here are my notes :

It appears from the gospels that men are of two kinds : evil-doers and righteous. To paint every one with the brush of sin is tantamount to denouncing the explicit teaching of the gospels. Thus we read :

“Truly, I say to you, many prophets and *righteous men* longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” (Mt. 13 : 17)

“So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on *the good*, and sends rain on *the just* and on the unjust.” (Mt. 5 : 45)

“As he spoke by the mouth of *his holy Prophets* from of old.” (Lk. 1 : 70)

“Because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but *men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*” (Pet 1 : 21)

“There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see *Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God* and you yourselves thrust out.” (Lk. 13:28)

“*We know that any one born of God does not sin*, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.” (Jn. i 5 : 18)

“*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...for so men persecuted

the prophets who were before you."
(Mt. 5 : 10 - 12)

These verses bear testimony

(1) Of the righteousness and holiness of prophets. They were born of God and were inmates of His kingdom. Satan failed to obtain the least access to them. They were persecuted for righteousness' sake (peace and mercy of God be upon all of them). Exalted to a rank as high they must be infallible. Satan can never prevail on them. In the light of these verses one is persuaded to acknowledge that the progeny of Adam embraces vicious men as well as virtuous. Not all of them are given to excesses. Once you accept this truth it will render Christian faith null and void. The superstructure of Atonement will come down with a thud.

(2) Prophets are sent by God as models of virtue to teach people through persuasion. It is written :

“Many years thou didst bear with them, and didst warn them by thy Spirit through thy prophets ;” (Neh. 9 : 30)

How can a prophet be taken as a model of good and a guardian over people and yet himself commit transgressions ? His failing is inconsistent with his office. Any theory that brands prophets as unjust has to be discarded. The charge of sin against them has to be set aside as false.

(3) The Holy Bible testifies to a host of

pious and holy men who were ever obedient to God and who abode by His command. Never did they rebel. Some of them I enlist here :

John (Yahya) - Peace be upon him.

The Gospel speaks of John the Baptist clad with chaste and undefiled conduct. Text is cited :

“For he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and *he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.*” (Lk.1:15)

“For the hand of the Lord was with him.” (Lk. 1 : 66)

“And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.” (Lk. 1 : 80)

“Herod feared John, knowing that *he was a righteous and holy man*, and kept him safe.” (Mk. 6 : 20)

“John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance *for the forgiveness of sins.*” (Mk. 1 : 4)

“Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist.” (Mt. 11 : 11)

“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Yet wisdom is justified by her

deeds.” (Mt. 11 : 18 - 19)

“The word of God came to John the son of Zechari’ah in the wilderness.” (Lk. 3 : 2)

John is said in these verses to be an illustrious far removed from all ills. God’s hand was on him. He is a recipient of His revelation. Filled with Holy Spirit from the womb of his mother, practitioner of baptism of repentance to deliver infirm and unholy men, greatest among those born of woman’s womb. Can such a man be a moral wreck? No Christian of sound mind can consider John wanting in good, particularly keeping in mind that Jesus himself had to have a special immersion from John. I call out to all Christians to find fault with John from the Bible.

Abel son of Adam

Abel from the loins of Adam was also truthful and pure in every walk of life. He did not sin. It is in the Gospel :

“That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of *innocent Abel* to the blood of Zechari’ah the son of Barachi’ah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.” (Mt. 23 : 35)

“*By faith Abel* offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which *he received approval as righteous*, God bearing witness by accepting his gift;” (Heb. 11:4)

“And not be like Cain who was of the evil

one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and *his brother's righteous.*" (Jn.i. 3:12)

Prophet Daniel is also immune from any immorality. Testimony of his infallibility abounds in the Bible.

King Nebuchadnezzar lauds Daniel.

"In whom is the spirit of the holy God's."
(Dan. 4 : 8)

"Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom; but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him." (Dan. 6 : 4)

"The Daniel said to the King, "O King, live for ever. My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O King, I have done no wrong." (Dan. 6 : 21-22)

Josi'ah in Bible

"And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left." (King. ii. 22:2)

Zechari'ah' and his wife, according to Luke:

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Lk. 1 : 6)

King Hezeki'ah's accounts in the Bible :

"He trusted in the Lord the God of Israel; so that there was none like him among all the Kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following him, but kept *the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses*. And the Lord was with him ; wherever he went forth, *he prospered.*" (Kings ii. 18 : 5-7)

"Then Hezeki'ah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord—and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how *I have walked before thee in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in thy sight.*" (Is. 38:2-3)

Samson, son of Mano'ah

Angel foretells the news of his birth to his mother:

"Therefore beware, and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for lo, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for *the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth*

from birth to his death.” (Judge. 13:4-5,7)

Samuel

He makes bold of his righteousness before Israel, and the nation bear witness to his piety :

“Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand I have taken a bribe to blind my eyes with? Testify against me and I will restore it to you. They said, “You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man’s hand.”

“And he said to them, “The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.” And they said, “He is witness.” (Sam. 12:3-5)

Simeon

Luke writes:

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” (Lk. 2:25)

Joseph, the husband of Mary, was just.

“And her husband, Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.” (Mt. 1:19)

I have made these citations by way of example.

There are quite a number besides them. It is said of Noah, Daniel, and Job :

“Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it, and break its staff of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord God.” (Ezek. 14:13-14)

Dear readers, this is a resume of the evidence I put forth in the debate. I now submit a resume of the discussion which took the form of question and answer.

Christian : Adam violated. He ate from the forbidden tree. Subsequently a fall ensued. Any one born of the seed of Adam will follow suit. All people, to the exclusion of Jesus the Messiah, who is not of male seed, therefore, are sinful.

Muslim : I do not charge guilt on Adam. Let us assume he did sin. How does it come about that all other people should bear the guilt ?

Chr. Because they are born of Adam and are his sons.

M. This thought does great injustice to mankind. It is not in consonance with the holy Bible either. That Adam sins and his whole progeny is saddled with his sin till doomsday. Bible is very explicit on this :

“The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” (Deut. 24 : 16)

“According to what is written in the law, in the book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin.” (Chron. ii. 25 : 4)

“In those days they shall no longer say : ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ But every one shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.” (Jer. 31 : 29-30)

“Behold, all souls are mine ; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine : the soul that sins shall die.” (Ezek. 18 : 4)

“The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor, the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live ; he shall not die. None

of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live." (Ezek. 18 : 20-22)

The Christian priest did not feel equal to the objection and let it go at that.

M. Lady Mary was born of the male's seed. She according to your rule is bound to be a sinner. It is inevitable that Messiah being her son, shall inherit her sin. For he is born of her.

Chr. Messiah is innocent. We believe Mary is not innocent.

M. The answer is as good as no answer. In your religion if sin is attributed to the issue of Adam merely because they are Adam's sons, why is it that owing to his mother's sins Jesus is not a sinner? Let us have another look. In eating forbidden fruit Eve is a partaker along with Adam. Moreover her sin is graver than that of Adam. It was she who ate first. Adam was seduced afterwards to follow her dictate. So it is written :

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate." (Gen. 3 : 6)

"And Adam was not deceived" says Paul, "but the woman was deceived and became transgressor." (Tim. i. 2 : 14)

Eve's fault is twice as great as that of Adam. If your hypothesis is warranted then a child conceived of co-habitation will carry half of man's and half of woman's guilt thus making up a mediocre sinner. A child conceived only of woman shall inherit her two-fold sin thus becoming a perfect sinner. On this ground a man born only of woman instead of being innocent shall carry more than ordinary sin.

Chr. Side-stepped the substantial objection. Instead he cited the following from Psalms :

“The Lord looks down from heaven upon children of men, to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God. They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt ; there is none that does good, no, not one.” (Ps. 14 : 2-3)

M. These words of God are confined to a particular nation and age. Hence the verses following immediately read :

“Have they no knowledge, all the evil-doers who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord ? There they shall be in great terror, for *God is with the generation of the righteous.*” (Ps. 14 : 4-5)

“There is none that does good, no, not, one.” applies only to certain nations and is addressed to specific persons. On the occasion of taunt and reproach the usage of language demands words which are common and general in scope.

Ch. : David was a prophet. Yet he took possession of the wife of Urias. Eventually had her

engaged in illicit intimacy with him. Is this not a violation of the marriage tie ?

M. : I thought you would not be so daring. You would not tax David with immodesty, seeing that the Gospel opens with the verse, "Jesus Christ, the son of David." If you hold David liable to unchastity (God's refuge) what of Jesus then ?

Chr. : In the book of the genealogy of Jesus, some of his maternal and paternal grandmothers are found guilty of adultery. It matters little for he came to redeem the world. Accordingly he is son of David. No doubt David stooped to adultery. It is the Bible, not I who tells us.

M. : I entreat you to ponder a while. David is God's chosen prophet. He held communion with him. I am not a believer of uncommon status. Still, I am immune from falling prey to this indecency. How comes that a person no less than God's prophet could be subject to such an abominable deed ? Tell me, please, can you be tempted to indecency ?

Chr. : No doubt I am not given to that. But the Bible testifies about David. What can I do?

M. : God has endowed us with intellect. We can discern fake from genuine, false from true. The Bible itself is replete with hints which acquit David. This story is a fabrication in the Bible. No decent man will fall so low. Certainly not a great prophet. The Gospel

contains allegations pertaining to the sins of Jesus

- (1) Jesus took immersion from John. John's baptism was for the "forgiveness of sins." (Mk. 1 : 4)
- (2) Jesus offered wine to people (Jn. 2 : 8). It is written about wine : "Wine and new wine take away the understanding" (Hos. 4 : 11)
- (3) The Gospel also tells of Jesus' lies. On the feast of the tabernacles Jesus replied to his brothers, "Go to the feast yourselves; I am not going up to the feast," and after his brothers were gone "he also went up, not publicly but in private" (Jn. 7 : 8 - 10)
- (4) Jesus addressed, it is evident from the Gospel, to his mother with contempt "O woman ; what have you to do with me ? My hour has not yet come." (Jn. 2 : 4)

There are many things derogatory to the eminence of Jesus. The only way out from these allegations is to renounce them as distortions and believe David and Jesus to be innocent prophets as is the belief of Muslims.

Chr. : Apostle Paul was grounded in religion. He sized himself up righteous. In the last analysis, it dawned upon him that he was a sinner.

M. Paul was indeed a sinner. His confession was in order. About Paul I will not

disagree with you. The pertinent question remains : Does the Bible ascribe any sin to those people I have named with relevant texts? You have been thinking of the matter now for more than two weeks.

Chr. Yes, there is one Samson among them. In the book of Judges, it is written he was an adulteror :

“Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a harlot and he went in to her. The Gazites were told, “Samson has come here, and they surrounded the place.” (Judg.16:1-2).

M. (1) The verse in question goes to suggest only this much : Samson in order to protect himself from his enemies took refuge in a house. This house happened to be that of a lewd woman. A story corresponding to that is in the book of Joshua :

“And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” And they went, and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there.” (Josh. 2 : 1).

Those two men had no affairs with the woman. They were using as a hide - out the house of a prostitute. Samson is in the same situation.

(2) If we assume Samson to be an adulteror, the prophecy of God that “the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth” will go vain.

(3) In the epistle to Hebrews it is written :

“And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets.. who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb. 11 : 32-33).

Samson, this text makes it plain, had faith, was righteous, and received the promises of God. Your inference, dear padre, does not hold true. If you strain your mind but little, the case of Samson will appear less embarrassing than that of Jesus. Luke puts it :

“And behold; a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was sitting at table in the Pharsee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.” (Lk. 7 : 37-38)

On this ground it is not warranted to condemn Samson who remains unaccounted for. I ask now about the rest of innocent persons. Can you bring any charge of sin against them?

Chr. No. The holy Bible makes no mention of any one of them sinning.

M. There are at least ten eminent persons presented to you. You had no success with them. You could not establish anything derogatory

to their morals. On the contrary the Bible proclaims their righteousness. Your claim that all people except Jesus are sinful has no foundation. This goes to repudiate the belief in Atonement.

Here the first debate comes to a close. At the end Dr. Philips had to make a declaration in black and white in which he upheld the allegation of David's sins and after that admitted without reservation :

“The sins of John the Baptist, Zachari'ah, his wife, Daniel, Josi'ah, Hezeki'ah, and Abel are not found in the Bible.”

Second Debate in Full Swing

Divinity of Jesus

This debate took place in Dr. Philips' house, the spacious mansion of the American Mission. We dealt with the subject for more than two hours. The arguments put forth by me during our debate are given below. Dr. Philips was unable to dismantle even one. First, let me sum up our talk.

Chr. Jesus was God and Son of God thanks to his having been conceived and born without the agency of a father.

M. Adam's conception lacked the agency of both father and mother. Does he then stand out greater than God and His Son? Similarly, we read about Melchiz'edek, King of Salem: "He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever." (Heb. 7 : 3).

Ch. The gospels are abundantly generous in describing Jesus as the 'Son of God' (Dr. Philips cited quotations on this point).

M. We cannot take these verses in their literal sense but have to interpret the figures of

speech employed in them. There are two reasons for this :

(1) Jesus himself has given gloss to the term "Son of God." In the light of this interpretation he excels in rank no other prophet. He turns out in fact as being somewhat less distinguished than some of the prophets. Thus it is written :

"I and the father are one. The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?" The Jews answered, "We stone you for no good work but for blasphemy; because you, being a man make yourself God." Jesus answered them "Is it not written in your law, 'I said you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (Jn. 10 : 30 - 36).

It is abundantly clear that the Jews looked upon Jesus as a man who blasphemed by posing as God. Had Jesus in fact been God he would have been forthright enough to claim this without any explanation. What he answered was that to prophets and saints of the past it was said, "You are gods", therefore, there was no harm for him to make known that he was 'Son of God' i.e. in the sense in

which prophets of the past were called gods. 'Son of God' is simply a metaphor and not a literal description.

(2) The title of 'Son of God' is conferred on a host of people in the Bible; refer : "And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, Israel is my first-born son,'" (Ex. 4 : 22) "You are the son of the Lord your God....."(Deut.14 : 1). "Father of the fatherless...is God....."(Ps. 68 : 5). "He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever, I will be his father, and he shall be my son....."(Sam.ii.7:13-14). "He said to me, 'It is Solomon your son who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.'" (Chron, i. 28 : 6). "He shall build a house for my name. He shall be my son, and I will be his father," (Chron. i. 22 : 10). "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Sons of God" (Mt.5:9)—"—so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven;—" (Mt. 5 : 45). "And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven." (Mt. 23 : 9). "Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God and every one who loves the parent loves the child." (Jn. i. 5 : 1). "...the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." (Lk. 3 : 38). "For 'In him we live and move and have our being' ; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring'." (Acts 17 : 28). "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Rom. 8 : 14). "...it is the Spirit himself

bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God,—“(Rom. 8 : 16)—”—and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.” (Jn. 11 : 52). “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” (Rom. 8 : 29). “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (Cor. i. 3 : 16). “And I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” (Cor. ii. 6 : 18). “...and in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Sons of the living God.” (Hos. 1 : 10). “...for I am a father to Israel and E’phraim is my first-born.” (Jer. 31 : 9).

From these passages it is as clear as day that in the Bible ‘Son of God’ signifies love and affection. Undoubtedly, Jesus (peace of God be upon him) was God’s beloved prophet.

Chr. The Old Testament also makes it clearly recognizable that Jesus’ status is that of God and Lord.

M. That is misconstrued. Consult the commentary on Matthew published by the Nile Publishing House, Cairo, p. 178: (Translation). Neither did the Messiah let it on who he was, nor was the Old Testament frank in revealing his godhood.

Chr. It is recorded in the book : “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son,

and shall call his name Imman'u-el. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good."

M. Let us suppose that the prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus. Even so it says nothing about his being either God or the Son of God. But indeed this prophecy does not conform with Jesus.

The reasons are:

(1) The mother of Jesus did not give him the name of 'Imman'u-el' which means 'God with us' and which does not apply to Jesus who is reported to have exclaimed: "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "E'lo-i, E'lo-i, la'ma sabach-tha' ni?" which means, "My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Mk. 15 : 34). Neither literally nor in spirit does 'Imman'u-el' tally with Jesus. Muhammad stands out as an eloquent answer to this description. It was he who in a time fraught with danger when a man of great courage would lose heart, comforted his companion Abu Bakr "Grieve not, for God is with us." (Qur'an 9 : 40).

(2) It remains unestablished that Jesus ate curds and honey. It is unbecoming for you to make a claim and furnish no argument.

Chr. The word is 'virgin' in the verse. Except for Mary the mother of Jesus no virgin has borne a child.

M. Decidedly we, too, believe Jesus to have been born without the agency of a father which was to demonstrate the miraculous power of the Almighty God. His power knows no bounds,

Anyhow, the Hebrew word in the book of Isaiah is not reserved for 'virgin' but embraces every young woman virgin or wed.

Chr. I comprehend that the Ahmadies back up this by the criticism of German atheists.

M. I was not aware that German scholars see eye to eye with us. What I expostulate is borne out by the Hebrew language; ref. this Hebrew lexicon which corroborates my observations. The same word occurs in Prov. 30 : 19 which translated into Arabic is "young woman."

Chr. May I bring to your notice another prophecy the perusal of which will make it profoundly manifest that Jesus was the Son of God, not merely a Prophet or messenger: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." (Is. 9 : 6-7).

M. Have you any reason for thinking this prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus? A child is anticipated who was to be "Mighty God Everlasting Father." Jesus according to your religion is the 'Son,' not the 'Father'

Nor was Jesus 'Mighty', but ever humble, so much so that—in your view—the Jews put him to ignominious death. Finally, Jesus was no "Prince of Peace". Says he: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Mt. 10 : 34).

Chr. The prophecy is self-evident and confirms Jesus as God—.

M. I have said that we do not see in Jesus the fulfilment of the prophecy assuming Jesus is to be taken as its true manifestation. However, I should say, it is all in the garb of a metaphor and the Bible teems with such expressions. "And the Lord said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh ; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet." (Ex. 7 : 1). "He shall speak for you to the people; and he shall be to him as God." (Ex. 4 : 16). "I say, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;" (Ps. 82 : 6).

Such was the conversation which followed the formal debate. I had hoped against hope that the reverend gentleman would bring Jesus' miracles into the discussion but he saw fit to give the subject a wide berth. We shall, therefore, put off saying anything on it for the time being.

Let me recapitulate my lecture to countervail the Divinity of Jesus. We extend an invitation to the whole of christendom to refute my arguments. Dr. Philips did not even make the attempt to do so.

(A) The gospels accord Jesus a status not a shade higher than that of prophet and messenger. A prophet cannot be set up as God beside God. The following passages support our claim: "And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (Jn. 17 : 3) "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me : and whoever receives me, receives not me but Him who sent me." (Mk. 9 : 37). "He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mt. 15 : 24). "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." (Jn. 15 : 10). "—but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did." (Jn. 8 : 40). "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives Him who sent me." (Mt. 10 : 40)

Clearly the Messiah is merely a prophet, not God Himself.

(B) God is comprehended from His attributes. Granted Jesus is Master of Divine attributes you are justified in taking him for God. On the other hand if the truth is otherwise and Jesus stands destitute of Divine attributes, your claim to his Divinity is unsound and hostile to truth.

Let us draw a comparison between the attributes and acts of God and those of Jesus:—

(1) It is not up to God to pray; it is up to man to beseech and tender supplication. The way

of God is to attend to man's petitions. It is written: "The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous." (Prov. 15 : 29). "But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed." (Lk. 5 : 16). "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly;" (Lk. 22 : 44). "Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray." (Mt. 26 : 36). "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear." (Heb. 5 : 7).

If Messiah were the Lord, whom then did he implore? Whom did he ask in all humbleness for aid? The verses above disprove the Divinity of Jesus.

(2) God is Almighty; "—and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (Cor. ii. 6 : 18). Jesus is not. He is not God. The following verses contradict Jesus' Omnipotence: "I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me." (Jn. 5 : 30). "And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them." (Mk. 6 : 5). "When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned

him at some length; but he made no answer.” (Lk. 23 : 8-9).

(3) God is All-Aware of the Unseen and the Seen, nothing escapes his knowledge. He has the knowledge of earth and heaven and all that is created (Kings i. 8 : 39). In sharp contrast, Jesus is not imbued with this attribute. Again the gospels furnish us with clear evidence : “But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in the heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Mk. 13 : 32). “In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he was hungry; and seeing of fig tree by the wayside he went to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only. And he said to it, “May no fruit ever come from you again — and the fig tree withered at once.” (Mt. 21 : 18-19). “— came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. And Jesus said, “Who was it that touched me? When all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you.” (Lk. 8 : 44-45). “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mt. 16 : 19). “But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men.” (Mt. 16 : 23).

Jude was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. He betrayed him and recanted. Yet Jesus addresses

them (including Jude): Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Mt. 19 : 28).

Jesus was All-Aware neither of the obscure nor the manifest. He was in the dark even regarding so crude a matter as the produce season of the fig tree ; It is, therefore, a flagrant blunder to take Jesus for God.

(4) 'Death overtakes him not' : "—who alone has immortality ————" (Tim. i. 6 : 16). On the contrary Jesus is reported to have died: "While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died." Consequently, Jesus cannot possibly be God.

(5) It is God who is the Saviour of Mankind and shields them from disaster. Says David : Many are the afflictions of the righteous ; but the Lord delivers him out of them all." (Ps. 34 : 19). The Messiah was not in a position to rescue people from disaster ; he himself requested God's help "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour'?..." (Jn. 12 :27). In the light of this it is wrong to uphold Jesus as God.

(6) God neither fears nor is afraid of any one. Jesus was most unlike Him. He was overawed and cowed by the Jews as will be seen from the passages below : So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death. Jesus therefore

no longer went about openly among the Jews, but went from there to the country near the wilderness, to a town called E'phraim; and there he stayed with the disciples." (Jn. 11 : 53-54). "Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ." (Mt. 16 : 20). "But after his brothers had gone up to the feast then he also went up, not publicly but in private." (Jn. 7 : 10). How can it be meet to take a scared and timid man for God ?

(7) God's Dominion is on earth and in heaven. Everywhere His authority reigns supreme and His decree can neither be evaded nor can it be impeded. We know all too well that such qualities did not apply to Jesus: "He said to them, "You will drink my cup but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." (Mt. 20 : 23). "And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Mt.26:39). Truly, Messiah was not God.

(8) God is above all His creation. None can tempt Him for good or for bad: "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; (Jas. 1 : 13). It was not a matter of a day or two but for forty consecutive days, gospels tell us, that Satan tempted Jesus who followed wherever he led him: "And

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.'" "And he took him to Jerusalem, and sent him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you, to guard you, and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" "And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time." (Lk. 4:1-13).

(9) The Bible says, "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever." (Chron. i. 16 : 34). The gospels also

have it Jesus declined to accept the compliment of 'Good' : "And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone." (Mk. 10 : 18). Messiah, therefore, was not God.

(10) Slumber seizes Him not nor sleep : "He will not let your foot be moved, he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." (Ps. 121 : 3-4). However, Jesus even slept right through a roaring storm whilst at sea so that others had to wake him up : "And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion ; and they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish ? " (Mk. 4 : 37 - 38).

(11) God is not slain. The slain, therefore, is not God : "Will you still say, 'I am a god' in the presence of those who slay you, though you are but a man, and no god, in the hands of those who wound you?" (Ezek. 28 : 9). "The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree." (Acts 5 : 30). As Jesus was crucified there is no authority for crediting Jesus with Divinity.

(12) None is greater than God. He is Absolute Great. The Bible speaks thus of Jesus : "You heard me say to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father ; for the

Father is greater than I!" (Jn. 14 : 28) "And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him." (Jn. 8 : 29). Says Paul, "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." (Cor. i. 11 : 3).

(13) Bringing the dead to life is attributed to God: "Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who arises the dead; (Cor. ii. 1 : 9). Instead of quickening the dead Jesus himself met with death and God raised him to life: "...this he fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second Psalm, 'Thou art my Son, and today I have begotten thee.'" (Acts. 13 : 33). Jesus is not God but is His righteous servant. God favoured him by His choicest blessings. He was a paragon of virtue for the house of Israel.

(14) God is Unique. There is none like unto Him. Nobody shares with Him in His being, attributes, and acts. Jesus was one man among men. Before his birth he was an embryo in his mother's womb:—

"And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him." (Lk. 2 : 40) — "— the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and

sinner.' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds." (Mt. 11 : 19). "And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." (Lk. 9 : 58). "If any one says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them' 'and he will send them immediately.'" (Mt. 21 : 3). "And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death ; remain here, and watch." (Mk. 14 : 34). "When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled ; and he said, "Where have you laid him ?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept." (Jn. 11 : 33-35).

Jesus was subject to and sought the fulfilment of human needs. Finally, as the Christian version goes, enemies nailed him to death.

Can a person of the limited dimensions and characteristics that the Holy Bible itself shows Jesus to be, be the True God? Is it convincing that he continues to be upheld as God Almighty? Is it rewarding to religious faith that Jesus be sought after for assistance? The answer to these questions is inevitable—It is: No. Jesus, if thought to be God as well as his votaries, are frail.

Those who take Jesus for God have not realized God fully. They come nowhere near to

grasping God's Overpowering Attributes or to knowing that He is Master of Tremendous Capacities.

Final Hold-Forth

Did Jesus die on the Cross ?

This question is a hot-bed of controversy between Christians and Muslims. In the course of religious discussions a clergyman from the very outset will strike the conversation in this familiar fashion : Christians and Jews, despite their discords, are at one that Jesus died on the cross. The chronicles of the Roman Empire are in accord with this fact.

Six hundred years after Jesus a man from the Arabian desert made his appearance and proclaimed contrary to the entire world, "They slew him not nor crucified him" (i.e. killed him by crucifixion). (The Holy Qur'an, 4 : 158). This claim by the unlettered prophet of the Arabian Peninsula is a standing miracle of Muhammad (the choicest blessings of God be upon him). Its vindication by a subsequent research constitutes a valid argument for his truth.

The subject of the death of Jesus on the cross was the theme of our discussions on March 17, 1933. Dr. Philips took elaborate measures to handle this debate. Padre Kamel Mansur and Dr. Elder volunteered to assist Dr. Philips. Each of the three had his say in the debate but their dissertations were crowned with anything but success in front of no

less than 70 persons of great intelligence and education. The padres laboured in vain in this combat of reason in which the Muslim disputant fought single-handed but with God's succour attending him. Oneness vanquished Trinity, and in a way that excites wonder; fortunate were those who cared to attend, who lent ears, and then retained what they had heard in their minds. Padre Kamel Mansur who escorted me to the door on my retiring wished—I had been a Christian missionary, for I had done the reading of Christainity more studiously than had he himself. I told him the truth : 'I have studied so as to gather you together in the fold of Islam—it is up to you to accept my witness and join the religion of Islam which is true with God.

The gist of our debate : I began as follows :—

As stipulated by Dr. Philips it is incumbent upon me to debate the matter with the authority of the Bible. In my estimate, as Dr. Philips is aware, the text of the Bible is adulterated by foreign influence. Christians pin their faith on Jesus' redemptive death. I, on the other hand, insist that God as is wont of Him with prophets, has saved Jesus from death on the cross. People made abortive attempts on the life of Abraham. They thrust him into a blazing fire. God put out the fire. "Jeremiah was gagged and thrown into a well" writes Dr. Zwimer in "Wonderous Mystery", "but God saved him". "Similarly God saved three companions of Daniel who were gagged and pushed into a blazing furnace." (page 67). In the same

manner the Jews attempted to kill Jesus on the cross in order to frame him accused. God delivered him from the accursed death and brought him closer than ever to Him. In short, Jesus' death on the Cross is not sustained by convincing evidence. Before I put forth the event of the crucifixion as it was, I would like to furnish from the gospels those arguments which prove that Jesus did not die on the cross.

- (1) The Torah says about the impostor prophet:
“—but that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from the midst of you—.” (Deut. 13 : 5).

And again :

“And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is accursed by God ; you shall not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance.” (Deut. 21 : 22-23).

Jesus was a claimant to prophethood. The Jews dubbed him impostor—God forbid. Granted that the Jews crucified him and he subsequently died

on the cross the logical conclusion will be, God's refuge, that Jesus is accursed. Thus crucifixion and 'accursedness' became part and parcel of the Christian cult. It is written:

“—Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree’—” (Gal. 3 : 13).

This is the most erroneous belief of the Christians. For it binds Jesus to be false in his claim to prophethood. His crucifixion negates his truth—that, indeed, was the Jews' design. Jesus was true; therefore, his death on the cross is a myth.

(2) In Christian view crucifixion is a 'must' because by this fantastic method they will be forgiven. From the gospels' viewpoint crucifixion is not instrumental for forgiveness. Jesus announces:

“But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, take up your bed and go home” (Mt. 9 : 6).

This was announced when Jesus was alive in flesh. It shows that for the forgiveness for sin, death on the cross is not necessary.

(3) Jesus was killed—the Christians hold—for their sake, to expiate them. Had he not been crucified the mission of Paul and the faith of Christians would become void of meaning. I maintain Jesus did not die on the cross. Your preaching is wrong. Jesus' crucifixion was opposed both to God's will and to his mission. Distinctly says God :

“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice.”
(Hos. 6. : 6) ;

—and Jesus :

“Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mt. 9:13).

God desires mercy and love, not sacrifice. Repentance is the sole means to absorb His mercy. Jesus preached repentance—was concerned throughout his life to invite people to repent. Redemptive death is contradictory to God’s plan and a disservice to the office of Jesus.

(4) In the book of Matthew we read :

“But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Mt. 12 : 39-40).

To investigate whether prophet Jonah was alive in the belly of the whale, or dead, we have only to study the book of Jonah. We find :

“And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah ; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish,—” (Jon. 1 : 17, 2 : 1)

Jesus, to his generation, offered one mainstay

in the sign of Jonah: Jonah entered the belly of the whale alive, remained in it alive though unconscious and the whale regurgitated him while he was still alive. It is essential that Jesus should be deposited in the tomb alive, remain alive in it and be abducted from there alive. Otherwise Jesus's promise and the only miracle could never see the light of day.

There are only two ways left for Christians. Either they refuse Jesus' crucifixion and believe that he was protected from death on the cross as is our belief. This way the prophecy of Jesus is proved true and his miracle comes to pass: or they must stick to his death on the cross—at the cost of rejecting his miracle.

Beware that in the latter case will be lost also Jesus' prophethood because he has hinged his truth on only one miracle—that of Jonah. It will be just and right to hold that Jesus was not killed on the cross.

(5) When Jesus came to know of the crucifixion and the evil design of the Jews he is reported by Luke to pray:

“And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, “Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.”
(Lk. 22 : 41-43).

Without the least shadow of doubt Jesus prayed

in great humbleness only to be saved from dreadful and disgraceful death. The cup was the cup of death. One question presents itself : Was Jesus' prayer heard ? If it was heard and granted it follows that the myth of Jesus' death on the cross is false. If it went unheard then the truth of Jesus is questionable. In the book of Proverbs we find :

“The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.” (Prov. 15 : 29).

True it is that God listened to his cries and wailings—such is the way of God—and delivered Jesus from the grip of accursed death on the tree.

(6) It is in the letter to Hebrews:

“In the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear.” (Heb. 5 : 7).

This is a premonition and a statement of an actual event. This prophecy is attested by the Proverbs.

“The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short.” (Prov. 10 : 27).

This prophecy cannot be fulfilled unless we recognize that Jesus was taken down alive from the cross. It was due to the glad tidings of God that Jesus sustained the satisfaction that he could not die on the cross. When, therefore, agony on the cross intensified he cried : ‘My God, my God, why

hast Thou forsaken me' it was to recollect the promise of God. God keeps His word ; therefore, He saved Jesus from death on the cross. People took his swoon for death and removed him from the tree.

(7) The Gospels reveal that God in order to protect Jesus from the jaws of death brought extraordinary causes into play. One incident described in the Gospels is that God caused Pilate's wife to dream and she let her husband know :

“Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him to-day in a dream.” (Mt. 27 : 19).

It was God's decree that Jesus should survive. Who is there to obstruct God's plans ?

(8) Jesus was the shepherd of Israel.

‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah ; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.’ (Mt. 2 : 6).

Jesus says himself :

“ — — ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ — —” (Mt. 15 : 24).

When Jesus made his appearance the Jews were in exile and ‘the sheep of the house of Israel’ were lost. Thus Jesus says : “I have some other sheep which are not of this house, I have to bring them, too”. It is a fact that the Jews

were dispersed from India to Ethiopia :

“ — an edict was written according to all that Mor'decai commanded concerning the Jews to the satraps and the governors and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia—and also to the Jews in their script and their language—.” (Esher 8 : 9).

If Jesus died on the cross at 33 and the chapter closed there, then this is tantamount to discrediting his prophethood. Thus the only safe thing is that he survived death on the cross. From there he travelled about to deliver his message to different tribes.

(9) Jesus used to rebuke the Jews :

“—that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechari'ah the son of Barachi'ah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.”
(Mt. 23 : 35).

Had Jesus also been slain by the Jews and had blood spilled, he should have pointed it out or rather made it a decisive factor ; and that occasion called for this statement. Jesus' marked silence at this juncture signifies that he was not going to be killed on the cross by the Jews or else the mentioning of his blood should have taken priority.

(10) In the explicit sayings of Jesus in the Gospels mostly only his suffering is reported :

“ — So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands. ” (Mt. 17 : 12).

“ — But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. ”
(Lk. 17 : 24-25).

“ — I have earnestly desired to eat this pass-over with you before I suffer ;— ” (Lk. 22 : 15).

After the event of the crucifixion Jesus says :

“ — ‘ O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory ? ’ ” (Lk. 24 : 25-26).

From the elucidations it is clear as dawn that Jesus was due only to undergo sufferings afterwards he was to have a new lease of life and escape death on the cross. References to death and killing are too fragmentary. Where death or killing is mentioned clearly, the description is exaggerated. The two kinds of text can be reconciled ; by saying that in the Bible suffering and agony are often termed ‘ death ’. Paul says :

“ I protest, brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day ! ” (1 Cor. 15 : 31).

Crucifixion in True Perspective

Aforegiven ten arguments dispose of Jesus' death on the cross. The real story of the cross is that the Jews attempted to kill Jesus. He was brought before the Roman court. Pilate, the governor, convinced of his innocence resolved to acquit him. The Jews had a hold on and influence over the authorities. They shouted :

“—If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend ; every one who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar.”
(Jn. 19 : 12).

Pilate was scared. He gave in. Finally yielding to the wish of the Jews he surrendered jesus to be crucified, still saying :

“ I am innocent of this man's blood ; see to it yourselves.” (Mt. 27 : 24)

In his heart of hearts he wanted to set Jesus free. He played his hand underboard. He appointed for the crucifixion the Friday which was followed by a special sabbath requiring elaborate preparations by the Jews. Then he delayed the execution until afternoon thus reducing the duration of hanging to three hours (Jn). On the ancient cross this was decidedly an insufficient length of time for

crucifixion, Dr. Dermond Robinson, a European doctor of repute, writes: 'A crucified person, as a rule, took 24 to 28 hours to die' ("Dawn" May 16, 1927 and "The Commentary of John" printed in Cairo p. 785). The Jewish code of law forbade keeping a victim on the cross after sunset. The Jews, therefore, asked for permission to remove Jesus from the cross, so he was taken down. Pilate's men did not break the bones of Jesus as was done in the case of the two thieves whose death was ensured by their bones being broken. They declared him dead. Pilate who had an understanding with Joseph Arimathea (a secret disciple of Jesus) called him and handed Jesus over to him. With the aid of Nicodemus, Joseph Arimathea administered processed medicines and spices to the injured body of Jesus who eventually came round and was nursed with preparations of which till this day we read in the ancient books of medicine (*Marham-i-Isa* or Jesus' Ointment). Thus in the long run Pilate succeeded in 'keeping his hand clean' in such a way that not only was Jesus saved but the Jews could lodge no complaint against Pilate to Caesar. Instead, they set about broadcasting that they had killed Jesus and disproved his claim to being an apostle of God. Jesus' disciples had fled already. They could not hold against the Jews. They fell in with them and confirmed that Jesus had been slain and crucified. But he had been resurrected from the dead and now he lived on. To cover up their weakness and not

being able to prove Jesus alive on the earth, they began to say, Jesus had gone to heaven. Thus they attributed to innocent Jesus the curse of God. All this, due to their weakness and their notorious simple-mindedness !

It is also probable that the clever idea of Jesus' ascent to heaven was invented by some one to divert the attention of the Jews. Subsequently this became a general belief. Jews and Christians remained like this until in the fullness of time the Holy Prophet Muhammad, aided by the Holy Spirit, made his august appearance. He cleared the clouds of ignorance on the authority of divine revelation. He proclaimed loudly to clear Jesus from the curse of Jews and Christians :

“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.”
(Qur'an 4 : 158-159).

No Christian should view this established truth with astonishment. This is in accord with reason and proved by evidence. It safeguards Jesus' honour and is in keeping with the scriptural prophecies. In this world of ours such incidents of swooning

and keeling over occur frequently and lead to mistakes of supposed death. Below is an illustration from the Bible :

“But Jews came there from Antioch and Ico'nium; and having persuaded the people, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city.” (Acts. 14 : 19-20).

Translator's Note :

“Mr. Primrose (the Scottish surgeon and anaesthetist) points out that a state of low vitality combined with a minimal blood circulation cannot be easily distinguished from death and believes that in Jesus' case this condition was due to the delayed shock of the scourging.” (*The Nazarene Gospel Restored* by Robert Graves, P. 739).

Scrutinizing the Gospel Crucifixion Reports

The onus is on me to settle the value of the Gospel narratives. It should be borne in mind that none of the four Gospel writers was eye-witness to the crucifixion. For, the disciples of Jesus deserted him when enemies hemmed in on him (Mt. 26 : 56). Most probably the Gospel writers were not even his disciples. Their editing, therefore, is mere hearsay. Their evidence is based on second-hand reporting. In the reporting of only one event over twenty discrepancies more than suffice to discredit the evidence. I beg of my readers to sit in judgment on the case of murder of the one great among prophets. This case is of enormous consequence. For, if murder was committed, according to Christians and Jews alike, the victim is accursed. The Christians who claim that the Messiah was killed have no eyewitness at their disposal. They rely on the speculations and hearsay of the editors of the Gospels whose testimony is at variance. It is the law of all courts of the world that when witnesses are at variance they are automatically ruled void.

Below I note the discrepancies :

- (1) Who shouldered the cross to Golgatha—Jesus, or Simon ?

According to Mark :

“And they compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyre’ne,.....to carry his cross.....”
(Mk.15 : 21-22).

According to Luke :

“.....they seized one Simon of Cyre’ne..... and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus.” (Lk. 23 : 26).

According to Matthew :

“..... they came upon a man of Cyre’ne, Simon by name ; this man they compelled to carry his cross.” (Mt. 27 : 32).

John—in sharp contrast to these three—narrates :

“So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place.....called in Hebrew Gol’gatha.” (Jn. 19 : 17).

- (2) Did the Messiah taste wine mixed with myrrh or vinegar before he was put on the cross ?

According to Matthew :

“And when they came to a place called Gol’gathathey offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall, but when he tasted it he would not drink it.” (Mt. 27 : 33-34).

According to Mark :

“And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh ; but he did not take it.” (Mk. 15 : 23)

Matthew reports that Jesus tasted the "wine mingled with gall", but would not drink it. In the latter report he did not at all take the "wine mingled with myrrh." Luke and John omit the incident altogether.

- (3) The story of vinegar on the cross. Luke keeps mum on it. John says :

"After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), "I thirst." A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth....." (Jn. 19 : 28 - 30).

According to Mark :

".....And one ran and, filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying....." (Mk. 15 : 34 - 36).

According to Matthew :

".....And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink." (Mt. 27 : 47 - 49).

The three testimonies clash. John reports that by saying "I thirst" Jesus let his wish be known to slake his thirst. According to the other two neither did he ask for water nor did he say "I thirst." John states 'they' held the sponge to Jesus' mouth. Matthew and Mark reduce 'they' to just one person.

Again Mark and Matthew are in dispute : Mark

has it that the one man who gave Jesus to drink said "Wait, let us see whether Eli'jah will come to take him down" whereas in Matthew it is not the one man but "the others" who utter it.

- (4) At what time was the Messiah put on the tree? Matthew and Luke leave out the hour of Jesus being put on the cross.

John reports :

"Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover ; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King ! '... Then he handed him over to them to be crucified." (Jn. 19 : 14 - 16).

It was about the sixth hour, i.e. afternoon, that Jesus was nailed on the cross. Mark has another time to tell :

"And it was the third hour, when they crucified him." (Mk. 15 : 25).

In one report it is the sixth, in the other the third hour. How can we put our trust in such evidence ?

- (5) Was it one thief or both who reviled Jesus ?

According to Matthew :

"And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way". (Mt. 27 : 44).

According to Mark :

".....Those who were crucified with him also reviled him." (Mk. 15 : 32).

Luke, the third witness, belies the former two :

“One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation ?” (Lk. 23 : 39 - 40).

The three of them are in flagrant disagreement, the first two claiming that both the thieves reviled Jesus, the third testifying that one thief reviled and the second acquitted Jesus. John, the fourth one, reserves his say !

(6) Where, and how many were the women on this occasion ?

“.....but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Mag’dalene.” (Jn. 19 : 25).

“And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.” (Lk. 23 : 49).

“There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Mag’dalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salo’me, who when he was in Galilee followed him and ministered to him ; and also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.” (Mk. 15 : 40 - 41).

“There were also many women there, looking

on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him; among whom were Mary Mag'dalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zeb'edee."

(Mt. 27 : 55 - 56).

John makes them "standing by the cross" and the synoptic Gospels have it "stood at a distance and saw". Only John is aware of Jesus mother being present. The synoptic Gospels are not in the know. John spots Mary Mag'dalene near by the cross. Synoptic Gospels place her far off. There is a world of difference between the two reports. There is a difference of numerical order of the women—3 or 4 or several women?

(7) Did darkness engulf the whole world?

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour."

(Mt. 27 : 45).

"And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." (Mk. 15 : 33).

"It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.—" (Lk 23 : 44).

This is the evidence of the synoptic Gospels. John is non-committal and his silence stirs bewilderment. It is illogical that John who is given to exaggeration should keep silent about such a grand miracle. Who told the three simpletons that the

whole world was covered with darkness? They were simple and ignorant and regarded their own tiny village as "the whole world." Even this much cannot be proved until we know that there was darkness in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, history lends no support to this either.

- (8) The story of Jesus crying aloud and the tearing of the curtain of the temple.

Matthew reports :

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, La'ma sabachtha'ni?" And Jesus cried again with a loud voice... And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,..." (Mt. 27 : 46-52).

Mark reads :

"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "E'lo-i, E'lo-i, la'ma sabachtha'ni?" ... And Jesus uttered a loud cry,...And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." (Mk. 15:34-38).

Luke says :

"... While the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two, then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!..." (Lk. 23 : 45 - 46).

John vouches for none of these fantastic things. The omission of such significant incidents when they are called for, discredits the evidence. Besides there are conflicting statements in synoptic Gospels. Mark confines himself to the loud cry of Jesus and to the tearing of the curtain of the temple from top to bottom. Luke's version is that the curtain was torn into two from between—not from top to bottom. Matthew is not content and adds that the earth shook and the rocks were split, the tombs were thrust open and saints who had been dead and buried became alive and went home. If Matthew's rendering holds good then the others are guilty of suppressing important events of history. On the other hand, if the rest are true then Matthew's evidence is nothing but myth. It was only a freak, a trick of thought devoid of any reality. The latter picture, according to Chronicles, is true. Thus mutual conflict, untruth, and contradictions annul the evidence."

(9) Did Jesus give piercing cry prior to the curtain being torn, or vice-versa?

In Matthew and Mark Jesus cries out twice, in Luke only once. The former two record Jesus saying "E'lo-i, E'lo-i, la'ma sabach-tha'ni?" on the cross. Luke does not incorporate it. John entirely leaves it out. Thus two of them agree on Jesus crying twice. Luke instead reports Jesus saying, "Father, into thy hands I commit my

spirit!" but this is not mentioned in the other two! The reporters are at divergence whether Jesus' second cry and committing his soul was first, or the tearing of the curtain of the temple happened first: in Luke the curtain is torn asunder first and Jesus cries next, in Matthew and Mark the curtain is torn not only after Jesus' cry but also after he died.

(10) Testimony of the centurion :

Luke says after the temple curtain was torn :

"Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, "Certainly this man was innocent!..." (Lk. 23 : 47)

Mark :—

"And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, Truly this man was a son of God!" (Mk. 15 : 39)

Matthew :—

"When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was a son of God?" (Mt. 27 : 54).

These remarks are from synoptic Gospels. John gives wide berth to this matter. First of all John's evasion is quaint. Secondly several differences appear in the aforesaid statements. Mark says that the centurion passed his remark when he saw that Jesus had breathed his last. Luke first

reports his praising God and then making his remarks. Matthew incorporates many others with the centurion. They 'saw the earthquake' and 'were filled with awe' and exclaimed afterwards. Apart from this their testimonies differ widely from one other. In Matthew the centurion is reported to remark, "Truly this was a son of God." According to Mark the centurion says, "Truly this *man* was a son of God." Luke's version makes the centurion say, "Certainly this man was innocent." In Matthew the centurion's utterance is "son of God" not "man." In Mark both "man" and "son of God" are used. In Luke there is "man" and "innocent," and "son of God" is omitted. This is interesting gradual variation. Now Christians are in a fix. If they discredit one report the rest will be dropped too. And if all of them are harping on the same then it should be admitted that "son of God" and "innocent" are only synonyms expressing the same idea. The Gospel writers used "son of God" in the sense of "innocent"—which answers the question of sonship of Jesus.

- (11) Were people or the Jews aware of Jesus' death when he cried? Matthew and Mark make no contribution to this problem. In Luke we find:
- "And all the multitudes who assembled to see the sight, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances and the

women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.” (Lk. 23 : 48-49).

In John :—

“Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.” (Jn. 19 : 31).

It is evident from John that the Jews demanded the ‘breaking of legs because they thought up till the last moment, that Jesus had not expired. Otherwise the demand is senseless. In the eleventh hour such a brutal and barbarous demand on the part of the Jews explodes the myth of the earthquake, the springing open of graves, the rising of the dead, and the ripping of the temple curtain. In such circumstances the Jews would never have made such a savage demand. At least Pilate would have upbraided them that despite their having seen awe-inspiring miracles they still had the audacity to demand the breaking of Jesus’ legs, and would have told them to fear God. John’s statement concerning the Jews puts it squarely that Jesus had not died. In Luke people are reported to have turned home beating their breasts when they observed the tragedy of Jesus. These people along with women saw it all standing at a distance ! At this juncture we wish to ask one question : assuming there was pitch darkness

“from the sixth hour until the ninth,” — the sun was covered, the earth quaked, the rocks were riven — how did the people standing ‘far off’ observe these incidents? Either their watching is a cooked up thing or the story of darkness all over the world is a lie. In the light of sound enquiry both of these assumptions are wrong. To some extent the silence of Matthew and Mark on the matter, and John’s omission of the spreading of darkness lend support to our view.

(12) Were Jesus’ legs broken?

The synoptic Gospels impart no information. Only John after relating the Jews’ demand transmits:

“So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.”
(Jn. 19: 32-33).

Since it was the day of Preparation of the Sabbath the Jews could watch no longer. The Messiah was not dead yet. In the later part of the same day they demanded from Pilate the breaking of Jesus’ legs, the permission of which he readily granted. Afterwards the Jews went home. The matter of breaking the legs of Jesus was left completely in Pilate’s hands. As we have noted Pilate in his heart of hearts wanted Jesus to outlive. Most probably when he despatched his centurion

he let his intention be known to him so that the soldiers should omit breaking Jesus' legs. The legs of the two thieves were crushed, those of Jesus were left intact. John describes why his bones were not broken: "when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs", (the words "came to Jesus" repudiate the report of Luke that people saw Jesus dead while at a distance and darkness enveloped the ground, since the centurions could know his death only when they "came to Jesus" at a very close range). This is John's own interpretation of the thing. He was absent on the occasion. His testimony is only a hearsay. Therefore, it does not stand the test of history and carries no weight, particularly when the three other witnesses possess no knowledge of it. Granting that some centurions did utter these words, more than once have unconscious men been taken for dead. This is his own mistake. The fact of the matter is that if some one really has said that he might have been an officer in whom Pilate confided, he would have said it deliberately to distract the attention of the centurions. And lest no insincere persons became suspicious and tipped off authority. It is also obvious from the Gospel reports that to save Jesus, Pilate had thought out a good plan. On this occasion he and his subordinates had recourse to some manoeuvres. At any rate, according to John's report the bones of Jesus were *not* broken and synoptics are silent on the subject.

(13) Gushing forth of blood and water from the sides of Jesus.

The synoptics are uncommunicative. Only John reveals :

“But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.” (Jn. 19 : 34).

From this act on the part of the centurion it appears that he doubted whether Jesus was dead. He was not aware of Pilates' tactics ; when he pierced the side of Jesus, blood and water rushed forth, and it is evident that the flow of blood and water is a pointer to life and pulsation. This goes to establish that Jesus was in a swoon and was not dead. That is all there is to it.

(14) Who took possession of Jesus' body and who placed it in the tomb ?

“And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb which he had hewn in the rock ; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed,” (Mt. 27 : 59-60).

“And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. And he bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock ; and he rolled a stone against the door of

the tomb.” (Mk. 15 : 45-46).

“Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud, and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid.” (Lk. 23 : 53).

“...So he came and took away his body. Nicode'mus also,...came. They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths...as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.” (Jn. 19 : 38-42).

In synoptics only Joseph of Arimathe'a is seen to take Jesus' body, winds it in winding sheets. then deposits the body in the grave. John puts Nicdode'mus along with Joseph of Arimathe'a in this performance.

(15) Who was Joseph of Arimathe'a ?

“When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathe'a, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.” (Mt. 27 : 57).

“Joseph of Arimathe'a, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.” (Mk. 15 : 43).

“Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathe'a. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their purpose and deed, and he was looking for the kingdom of God.” (Lk. 23 : 50-51).

“After this Joseph of Arimathe’a, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews....” (Jn. 19 : 38).

In Mark and Luke he is seen as a member of the Jews’ sanhedrin, a courageous and righteous man. In John he is shown fearful of the Jews and keeps his allegiance to Jesus on the sly. Matthew tells us that he openly was a disciple of Jesus. Whatever the case may be the question is how Joseph of Arimathe’a, who was coward enough not to let his faith be known for fear of the Jews, in such a critical situation when all the disciples of Jesus had betrayed him, had the audacity to demand Jesus’ body from Pilate. This narrative of the Gospels seems irrational. It is baffling to see that Pilate did not ask him what relation he had with Jesus and why he asked for his body; instead he rushed to hand over the body to him. Only from this incident, if Christians think it over, they could come to know that all of it was due to Pilate’s well-engineered plan. It was but proper to select such a person for the removal of the body whose membership of Jesus’ community was not known. On the encouragement of Pilate he could take heart to carry out the plan swiftly.

(16) Who dug Jesus’ sepulchre, and where?

“Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, where no one had ever been

laid...they laid Jesus there.” (Jn. 19 : 41-42).
“...and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb, where
no one had ever yet been laid.” (Lk. 23 : 53).
“...and laid him in a tomb which had been
hewn out of the rock ;.....” (Mk. 15 : 46).
“And Joseph took the body...and laid it in
his own new tomb, which he had hewn in
the rock ;.....”(Mt. 27 : 59-60).

The first three witnesses do not say under whose behest the grave was dug. Luke eludes as if the grave had been there for long. Thanks to Matthew who describes in clear terms that it was Joseph Arimathe'a who had had it dug, the foregoing passages are pregnant with the following facts :—

1. The garden where the grave was situated was in the immediate neighbourhood of the place of crucifixion.
2. It was hewn in a rock i.e. it was spacious.
3. It was not occupied by anyone previously. Thus the air was not polluted.
4. It was freshly dug.
5. Joseph Arimathe'a had it hewn out purposefully.

Add to these five points the fact that Nicode'mus who had joined hands with Joseph Arimathe'a in this adventure, had called on Jesus on the night before the crucifixion (Jn. 19 : 39), and keeping in view that the whole strategy was also known to Jesus, the matter is made clear as daylight. If anyone reflects with due care he

will admit that Pilate, in order to have his scheme become a success, provided Joseph and Nicode'mus with the wherewithal to collaborate. They had stored in advance the needed spices and the like. Pilate also dropped hints as to where the grave should be hewn. Pilate succeeded. Jesus recovered from his swoon in time; was thus saved from death.

(17) Where were the women when Jesus was laid in the tomb?

“Mary Mag'dalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulchre.” (Mt. 27 : 61).

“Mary Mag'dalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.” (Mk. 15 : 47).

“The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid” (Lk. 23 : 55).

John keeps silent.

The synoptics are at variance again. Matthew and Mark report two Marys. Luke says that all the women of Galilee who were there, were present. There is also a difference between ‘sitting before the tomb’ and ‘seeing where he was laid’.

(18) Jews demand the tomb to be watched.

Matthew reports the Jews saying to Pilate :

“... and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ There-

fore, order the sepulchre to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of Soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." (Mt. 27 : 63-65).

Besides Matthew no other editor has filed that incident. The silence of the other three narrators on this important issue is one of the Gospel secrets. At any rate, Pilate looked down upon the Jews' demand and curtly answered, "Go, make it as secure as you can." Pilate was laughing at the Jews' untoward activities, for they came on the second day after crucifixion, even after the sabbath, and Jesus' body was no longer there!

(19) Who visited Jesus' tomb first? When and why?

The narratives of the Gospels vary considerably:

"Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Mag'dalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre." (Mt. 28 : 1).

"And when the sabbath was past, Mary Mag'dalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salo'me, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen." (Mk. 16 : 1 - 2).

“But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices which they had prepared.” (Lk. 24 : 1)

“Now on the first day of the week Mary Mag'dalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark.....” (Jn. 20 : 1).

The narratives reveal the following :

1. Mary Mag'dalene was the first to appear at the tomb, according to John.—according to Luke the women of Galilee and the men with them, were the first to visit the tomb. Mark reports that it was Mary the mother of James, Salo'me, and Mary Mag'dalene all together who came first. This conflict cannot be set at rest.
2. Matthew says the women came only to 'see the sepulchre'. In the views of Mark and Luke they came with the set purpose to smear Jesus with spices. John does not bother to say a thing about it.
3. The time of arrival is given by the narrators in contradiction to each other :
John says, 'early, while it was still dark' ;
Mark says 'very early—' '—when the sun had risen'. There are great differences concerning the persons who came first, the purpose of their visit, and the time of it.

Indian priests tamper with Gospels text

In Arabic Gospels in Luke 24 : 1, men are

reported along with women of Galilee. Whilst translating from Arabic into Urdu I saw that in Luke (printed 1908), the presence of men was omitted. I thought it might have been an addition in Arabic. To my surprise it was also mentioned in the English version as "and certain others with them". In Hebrew, too, both men and women are incorporated. Except the Urdu version, English, Arabic, and Hebrew versions have it that other people went to the tomb besides the women of Galilee. One feels sorry for those responsible for the Urdu translation. May God lead them to truth!

(20) What happened next to those who came first to the tomb?

This is a long story reported in Jn. 20 : 1 - 10, Lk. 24:2-7, Mk. 16:3-7, and Mt. 28 : 1 - 7. If we quote verbatim all the relevant references, the subject will swell in length and they are rife with divergencies. First of all I wish to draw your attention to the saying of John who declares about the disciples of Jesus, "For as yet they did not know the scripture that he must rise from the dead." (Jn. 20 : 9) This statement jeopardizes all other reports in respect of Jesus foretelling his resurrection from the dead (Mt. 27 : 63). It also runs counter to all the sayings of the scriptures employed to prove that Jesus will come to life a second time. For Jesus did not tell his disciples ; had he told them, they must have been expecting to see him in his second life (since Jesus' death on the cross was not

foredoomed, the question of a second life does not arise).

Now I proceed to touch only on one among the aforesaid divergencies :

John writes that Mary Mag'dalene made straight to Peter and the other disciples who had a way with Jesus, and delivered the news. She found neither angels nor others there. That was the first time. The second time she saw two angels, one at the head, the other at the feet of Jesus in the tomb. In Luke we find the women of Galilee entering the tomb and seeing two men in white garments. These two men gave no message to the women for the disciples of Jesus. In Mark the women see a young man sitting on the right and he told them to go to the disciples and tell them to go to Galilee. Finally we read in Matthew that both Marys saw a great quake and a descending angel who said to them to tell the disciples that the Messiah will be in Galilee before them.

This is the summary of the controversy. There is no scope for detailed account.

(21) Did the women deliver the message of the angel or angels to the disciples ?

Matthew and John give no account of the women informing the disciples of the message. Mark and Luke are not in line with each other.

Mark writes :

“They went out and fled from the tomb ;
for trembling and astonishment had come

upon them ; and *they said nothing to anyone*, for they were afraid." (Mk. 16 : 8).

Luke writes :

"And returning from the tomb *they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.*"

(Lk. 24 : 9)

(22) To whom and in what way did Jesus first appear ?

According to Mark he first appeared to Mary Mag'dalene. (Mk. 16 : 9). John verifies the statement of Mark. (Jn. 20 : 13 - 17). Luke's report is contradictory to the rest as he reports Jesus to have first appeared to two men who were going from Jerusalem to Emma'us. They said while they were talking together :

"Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said ; but him did they not see."

(Lk. 24 : 24).

Is there any possibility of reconciling these texts ?
(23) Did the disciples believe in the news of Jesus' rising on the third day ?

John and Matthew do not enlighten us on the subject. Mark informs us that twice they refused to accept it. (Mk. 16 : 11 - 13). Luke transmits as follows :

".....but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them."

(Lk. 24 : 11).

Dear readers ! Such grave contradictions in only one incident affirm that these assertions are

not from God. The witnesses whose 'evidence' Christians not only believe, but insist on making others believe too, have no basis to stand on. No judge of sound judgment will accept these statements as foundation for a decision. They are wrong. The truth is evident and Christian claims false.

Questions & answers

The following is a resume' of the talk with the Padres.

Christian. You assert that Jesus was nailed on the cross but escaped death. If that is so then what is the meaning of this verse of the Qur'an :

“They slew him not, nor crucified him.” (i.e. killed him by crucifixion). (4 : 158).

Furthermore this view is in conflict with the view of the majority of Muslims, for they hold that Jesus was not at all put on the cross.

Ahmadi-Muslim. We have agreed that discussion will be held according to the Bible. You are, therefore, not justified in raising other issues. Remember, however, that the meaning of “*ma-salabuho*” is that the Jews failed to *kill* Jesus on the cross ; so he was not *crucified*. The Qur'an and lexicon support this meaning. We find in chapter Yusuf :

“For one of you, he will pour out wine for his Lord to drink ; and as for the other, he will be crucified (Fa-Yuslabo).”

(12 : 42).

In the lexicon of 'Taj-ul-Aurus' it is given : 'Saleeb' means fat. In *Sehah* the marrow of the bones is called 'saleeb'. One crucified is called 'Maslub' because the marrow of his bones exudes. 'Salab' is derived from "the known way of killing". For the marrow and other fluids exude forth from the bones of a crucified person. (See also Lane and Aqrab.)

The Qur'an negates the death of Jesus on the cross and says that the Jews and Christians follow only their conjectures. Jesus' crucifixion was made up for their benefit. They have no proof of his death. The Qur'an declares that the Jews made an attempt on Jesus' life but it was frustrated. I have proved that claim from the Bible also. Your saying that the majority of Muslims endorse a different view is to cash in on Muslim feelings and take advantage of differences of Muslims among themselves. It should be borne in mind that in the subject under discussion all Muslims are at one that Jesus did not die on the cross. How he escaped death on the cross is a different matter. Some are of the opinion that he was raised to heaven ; the Jews could not lay hand on him. He was neither hanged on the cross nor did he die. We believe according to the Qur'an and its explicit teachings that Jesus suffered in the path of God. The Jews resolved to kill him and left

no stone unturned to carry out their nefarious designs. After all Jesus survived the cross. We have established this with mighty arguments. When it is established that Jesus did not die on the cross, mere nailing will be of no avail to Christians. The doctrine of Atonement and crucifixion goes to pieces. I challenge all Christians to refute my arguments!

Ch. In the sign of Jonah and the sign of Jesus the similarity is not in being alive in the belly of the whale and in being alive in the tomb. The resemblance is only in the stay of three nights and three days.

Ah-M. The similarity you claim is not fulfilled. Jesus, in your views, remained one—not three days and two nights, nor three nights in the sepulchre. Thus the unique sign of Jesus is falsified. Is it possible for any Christian to prove that Jesus tarried in the tomb for three days and three nights?

Ch. The Jews did not say that Jesus was only in a stupor. Nor did the annals of the Roman Empire record that fact.

Ah-M. If the Jews had confessed that their pet notion—that Jesus was an impostor and was, therefore, accursed—would have gone wrong. If Pilate had allowed the news of the survival of Jesus to leak out, he would have exposed himself to the authority for a crime against the state. No wonder, the Jews' crime and Pilate's statement happen to be the same. Even this much

is reliable only if the statements are intact and safe. How can we trust the Jews' version for Jesus? No sane person can take one foe's statement against another foe as an authentic statement of fact. If you have to accept the Jews' reports, then you should also accept the Jews' claim that it was in the night Jesus' disciples stole away his body (Mt 28 : 13 - 15). The Jews' belief about Jesus' birth is also known to you. Are you willing to approve them?

Ch. Jesus' disciples were killed and slaughtered and met severe privations. Did they deceive people in announcing that the Messiah died on the cross and rose again?

Ah-M. That the disciples were tortured for believing in Jesus is not a new thing. All early believers are tortured. The accounts would melt iron wills and make hearts go to pieces. There remains their acceptance of Jesus' crucifixion; this only shows how simple they were, as pointed out by the interpreter of Matthew. Since they were not present at the crucifixion, they accepted the Jews' propaganda. But shrewd, people like Paul put a new construction on Jesus' crucifixion.

Ch. If Jesus was in a coma, how did he manage to come out of the tomb since there was a boulder before it?

Ah-M. He did not come out on his own but as indicated, Joseph Arimathea and Nicodemus carried him and by the use of spices made him

come round. The two of them assisted each other, the tomb having been quite a large chamber which could contain four-five persons. I have seen it myself.

Ch. The Jews had centurions posted (ed : by the state) at the tomb to protect it. When the centurions were there, how could Jesus be spirited away ?

Ah-M. The Jews made their demand for the watching of the tomb after the Sabbath. The night and the day of the sabbath had sufficed to do the job. The two devout disciples of Jesus to whom Pilate had alluded, made good the opportunity. That was why Pilate at once acceded to the Jews' demand. And with seeming fineness told them to go themselves and watch. Thus in the garb of irony he made a jest of their stupidity.

Ch. It occurs in the Gospels that Jesus rose from the dead and the centurions gave evidence of his death.

Ah-M. The centurions' evidence is widely inconsistent. I have shown it in its true colours. Paul's assertion that he rose from the dead is not binding. We do not wish to trade on human credulity. We want transparent and historical facts. This saying is interpreted as 'great suffering' the way that Paul said that he 'died every day'.

Ch. Jesus appeared to his disciples for forty days and showed his wounds to them. How can you deny his death on the cross ?

Ah-M. If Jesus appeared in their dreams then it is not trustworthy. If it was in reality it would prove that he was alive, and he was alive when he was taken down from the cross. How can you insist that he died on the cross? Especially when the Gospels are torn with inconsistencies.

Ch. We do not regard the entire Gospels, as they are, to be from God. Gospel writers in their particular environment and keeping specific aims in mind wrote the Gospels; therefore, they are at variance with one another. Each one wrote according to his special demands.

Ah-M. Thus we cannot rely on Gospel reports. Such a world of difference in respect of a single incident is positive proof of its being un-original. The only way to resolve this conflict is what I have already pointed out: You do not have to believe in the crucifixion of God.

Ch. We do not think the one who was crucified was God. Jesus died in the capacity of man.

Ah-M. If the killed one was man, then man shall be the expiation for the sins of mankind? There seems to be no need why God should assume the body of man and attire in humbleness. Indeed, Jesus did not die on the cross. Can any Gospel writer give evidence to the effect that he observed Jesus die on the cross? Paul's witness will not avail a bit, for Paul was not among his disciples nor was he present at the time of crucifixion. His re-

ports can be rejected as mere hearsay. Paul had a motive in believing. He wanted to employ the crucifixion for the Atonement and afterwards use it as argument in favour of Jesus' divinity.

Ch : In one of Paul's epistles it occurs that without bloodshed forgiveness cannot be achieved.

Ah-M. That is Paul's assertion. God's will is that He wants mercy, not sacrifice. (Hosea). Nevertheless, if we accept Paul's saying, how does it suggest that Jesus died on the cross? You are under the obligation first to prove his crucifixion and later to interpret and explain his death. I have proved that Jesus' death on the cross is not proved from the Bible.

Ch : If Jesus did not die on the cross, then our preaching is futile, our suffering unrewarding and vain; why do we forsake our homes and go about preaching the Gospels of Christianity?

Ah-M. Whatever may be the case; whether your preachings are of any consequence or otherwise, the Messiah (on whom be Mercy of Allah) did not die on the cross. My arguments are standing proof. God's words, "They slew him not, nor crucified him", hold true and the prevalent faith of Christians is false.

Our last word is that all praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the universes.

TWO COMMENTS ON “THE CAIRO DEBATE”

The editor, “The SIDQ-E-JADID, Lucknow”, says :

“An argumentative pamphlet in refutation of Christianity. It covers the following subjects:

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2. Is Jesus God ?
3. Did Jesus die on the Cross ?

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(The Sidq-e-Jadid, Lucknow, March 23, 1963)



The editor, “The DAILY NAWA-E-WAQT, Lahore”, says :

“In this pamphlet, Moulavi Abul-Ata, a missionary of the Ahmadiyya Movement, has reproduced the proceedings of those Controversis which he held with Christians in Egypt. Those who are interested in Christianity and its criticism and are inclined to participate in such debates will find the pamphlet useful and full of information.”

(The Nawa-e-Waqt, Lahore, Nov. 28. 1961.)

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