

**ISLAM
AND
CHRISTIANITY**

by
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ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

(1) Islam is usually considered to be the youngest of the major religions of the world. Actually, it is the oldest. In fact, it is the only religion given to all mankind by God (known in Islam by His proper name, "Allah") through His prophets through the ages. Islam's concept of the universality of prophethood may be explained with reference to the fountain-head of Islam -its revealed book, the Holy Quran. According to it, prophets were sent by Allah to all nations: "And for every nation there was a messenger" (10:47); "For every people there was a guide"(13:7); "And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them" (35:24).

(2) All those prophets were given revealed books which contained the same basic guidance. Says the Holy Quran: "Mankind is a single nation. So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news (to those who believe and do good deeds) and as warners (to those who reject Divine guidance and fall into evil ways), and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people concerning that in which they differed. And none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, vying with one another. So Allah has (now) guided by His will those whom He pleases to the right path" (2:213). This verse explains succinctly the following facts of religious history:

(a) All humanity is one people.

(b) It came to be divided up into different nations in ancient times by migrations, geographical barriers and lack of the (modern)

speedy means of travel. So to each such self-contained nation, Allah sent a prophet to guide its people to the high goal of human creation.

(c) Each prophet was given a revealed Book of guidance for his nation which *inter alia* also judged between the people concerned about the religious differences which existed among them.

(d) That each nation was given the same basic guidance (not only because all mankind is one people but also because the same Divine Being had revealed all those books) is made clear in several places in the Holy Quran, e.g., "And certainly We raised in every nation a messenger, saying: Obey Allah and shun the devil" (16:36). Thus each nation was required to obey its Creator and Fosterer unto perfection (1:1) so as to achieve the sublime goal of human creation, and to shun the devil who, by inciting people to exceed the limits laid down by their Creator, leads people away from that goal to their moral and spiritual degradation and destruction.

(e) Unfortunately, in spite of the uniform guidance given to all nations, they began to differ about that same guidance. Thus came into being the conflicting teachings of the various religions today.

(f) Why did they differ? The Holy Quran explains it by the words: "Vying with one another". Within each nation, the religious divines and priests tried to vie with one another. This they could not do without taking religion-

making into their own hands. Thus they introduced their own beliefs into the religion thereby distorting the original religious beliefs. Furthermore, in those days of chauvinism and national superiority, each nation, tried to forge its own religion to support its individuality and superiority. Since the revealed Book of each nation was not reduced to writing until decades, in fact, centuries later after its revelation, and since those very priests who were "vying" with one another were the custodians of these revealed Books, interpolations and omissions in the divine texts were inevitable. Their true teachings, therefore, were either suppressed, or misconstrued, or disappeared altogether. That is why the Holy Quran condemned those responsible in the following words: "Woe! then to those who write the Books with their hands then say, this is from Allah so that they may take for it a small price. So woe! to them for what their hands write and woe! to them for what they earn" (2:79).

(g) So to resolve the resulting religious differences, Allah revealed the Holy Quran to guide those who believe to the true religion about which the nations had come to differ. Not only was this last Book of Allah reduced to writing as soon as it was revealed, but also its preservation for all times to come was ensured by making that a Divine responsibility: "Surely We have revealed this Reminder (of the truth lost) and surely We are its Guardian" (15:9). This wonderful prophecy, the fulfilment of which is admitted even by the critics of Islam, is

one of the undeniable proofs of the Holy Quran's Divine origin.

(h) The Holy Quran rescued and preserved in itself such truths of the previous revealed books as deserved to be preserved. This is evident from two places in the Holy Quran: "And We have revealed to thee the Book with the truth, verifying that which is before it of the Book (i.e., Divine revelation) and a guardian over it" (5:48) and "In it (Quran) are all the right books" (98:3).

(2) Since the final Divine guidance was to be for all times to come, the parochial teachings of the previous revealed books were improved upon and perfected as stated in the Holy Quran: "This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed my favour to you and chose for you Islam as a religion" (5:3). That previous religions were meant for a particular nation and a particular period and left much to be desired is clear from, for instance, the following sayings of Jesus Christ:

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

(b) "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6).

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

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS ISLAM:

(3) Although as stated previously Islam represents the original uncorrupted religion, Christianity has viciously attacked and criticised Islam. Why? The answer is not purely religious. There is a political background too.

(a) The first clash between the Muslims and Christians occurred when the Muslims invaded Spain and the Mediterranean islands and the Christians had the worst of the clash. That wound hurt.

(b) The Muslims sweep through Asia Minor also wrested from the Christians their principalities in that region including the sacred city of Jerusalem.

(c) Later the Muslims not only conquered Constantinople but went on to Eastern Europe right through to Poland. Whatever the causes for these conflicts, they alienated the losers, i.e., the Christians.

(d) The Crusades, initiated by the Christian empires of Europe in a joint invasion, led to wars over an extended period. To rouse public opinion in Europe for supporting these infructuous campaigns, Muslims were painted as blood-thirsty monsters who posed a serious threat to Christendom.

(e) In more recent times, the Industrial Revolution in Europe gave the European nations a military advantage and superiority over the less

advanced nations of Asia and Africa who, however, possessed the raw materials needed for the industries of Europe. So the European trade delegations led in due course to the annexation of Southeast Asia and the whole of Africa. These lucrative empires had to be perpetuated. So the European nations decided *inter alia* to convert the subject nations to their own religion: Christianity.

(f) The Christian proselytizers had nothing to fear from the polytheistic religions of their subject races. The Trinity was easy to justify to the polytheistic races who had many more gods than three. If a cow or an idol, which are inferior to man, could be worshipped, it was easier to worship a human being who possessed the moral and spiritual excellence of a prophet, such as Jesus Christ. But the strict monotheism of Islam could not be challenged as it was in conformity with human reason, with the human heart, and now with the testimony of Science that all Universe is one and if governed by uniform laws. All of which leads to the conclusion that the Creator of the Universe must be one, and very much in command and control of the Universe.

(g) The main difference between Islam and Christianity is Unity vs. Trinity. But it is an amazing fact of history that the strict and pure monotheism of Islam was never attacked, or even questioned, by the Christian detractors of Islam. That is because their own hearts, and even their heads, could not support polytheism

of the Trinity. Instead, they maligned and maliciously ridiculed the Holy Prophet of Islam and some tenets of the religion in order to discredit Islam. It is an irony of fate, or Divine justice, that those very concepts for which Islam was castigated are now being accepted by Christendom itself. One of these was fighting in self-defense. Islam permits fighting *in defence* of one's life, religion and property. To quote from the Holy Book itself: "Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed; and surely Allah is able to assist them" (22:39). "And fight with them till there is no more persecution and all religions should be only for Allah" (8:39). The permission to fight in self-defence was misrepresented by the Christian critics as permission to wage aggressive war to force conversion to Islam. However, for the very same reasons of fighting in self-defense, the Christian nations have spent and even now are spending billions of dollars and pounds sterling annually. Could there be a greater vindication of the teachings of Islam?

(h) As opposed to the false, malicious and unscrupulous attacks on Islam and its Holy Prophet, consider Islam's fairness to Christianity. Not only is Jesus Christ described in the Holy Quran as one of the greatest prophets of Allah, and Mary a lady of unusually high moral and spiritual excellence who received Divine revelation, but the charges levelled against both have been severely condemned as false and punishable. The Bible, including the

New Testament (described as *Injeel* in the Holy Quran), is described as a revealed book of Allah. Although it has been distorted by interpolations and the injection of heathen ideas by St. Paul and others - a fact now admitted even by the Christian scholars. While condemning and rejecting the Sonship of God and Trinity, the Holy Quran still requires all Muslims to believe in Jesus Christ as a great prophet of God and the Bible as His once-revealed book. There could not be a better instance of returning good for evil.

In this connection, mention may be made of the special compliment paid to the Christians in the Holy Quran. Thus: "And thou will find nearest in friendship to the believers (i.e., the Muslims) to be those who say, We are Christians. That is because there are priests and monks among them and because they are not proud" (5:82). That Christians will ultimately recognize the truth of Islam is thus foretold: "And when they (the Christians) hear that which has been revealed to the Messenger (Muhammad) thou seest their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth they recognize. They will say: Our Lord, we believe, so write us down with the witnesses (of truth). And what reason have we that we should not believe in Allah and in the Truth that has come to us, whilst we earnestly desire that our Lord should cause us to enter with the righteous people? So Allah rewarded them for what they said with gardens wherein streams flow, to abide in them. And that is the reward of those who do good." (5:83-85).

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

The creeds which distinguish Christianity from other religions are: 1) Trinity; 2) Divinity and Sonship of Jesus Christ; 3) Original (or Inherited Sin); 4) Atonement of Sins. Islam rejects and condemns all these creeds. Let us examine them one by one.

TRINITY:

It has been defined as: "There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost are all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods but one God."

That statement of the Christian faith defies reason and all understanding. To mention some of the many objections to it:

(a) Jesus Christ himself never even mentioned the Trinity. He knew or said nothing at all about there being three Divine Persons in Godhead. He preached nothing but the Unity of God, as for instance, when he said: "The first of all commandments is Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29); or "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

(b) The four Canonical Gospels contain no reference to the Trinity.

- (c) The Apostles know nothing of it.
- (d) Even St. Paul, the founder of present-day Christianity, knew nothing of the Three-in-one God.
- (e) The creed was imported more than a hundred years after Jesus from mythology and paganism rampant in the Mediterranean littoral, to attract the Gentiles to Christianity.
- (f) Trinity defies reason and is repugnant to it.
- (g) It is against the testimony of modern Science which has found that all Universe is one and it is governed by uniform laws, so that its Creator and Ruler is One.
- (h) The concept of three gods, each being equal in every sense of the word, and none being complete and perfect by himself, casts the biggest slur on the glory, majesty and perfection of God.
- (i) To quote Revd. J.F. DeGroot in his Book Catholic Teaching: "The Most Holy Trinity is a mystery in the strictest sense of the word. For reason alone cannot prove the existence of a Triune God; Revelation teaches it. And even after the existence of the mystery has been revealed to us, it remains impossible for the human intellect to grasp how Three Persons have but one Divine Nature." Revealed to whom? Not to Jesus Christ, not to the Apostles nor the authors of the Gospels and not St. Paul. They

knew nothing about it; in fact their teachings prove the One and only God!

THE DIVINITY AND SONSHIP OF JESUS:

The Athanasian creed states: "Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ". The concept was improved upon later by saying that the Son was Co-Existent and Co-Eternal with God the Father.

How can father and son be co-existent and co-eternal? This is another mystery that defies reason. It may further be argued that:

(a) Jesus himself preached about One God as shown earlier.

(b) When a person is to all appearances a human being, it requires a lot of evidence to accept him as a Divine Being, particularly when he is at pains to describe himself as the "Son of Man".

(c) As for the wondrous miracles that he is reported to have performed, such miracles were performed by other prophets and even lesser persons, "including magicians" as well. But that did not make them gods. And if the miracles have been correctly reported, then the vast multitudes that are reported to have witnessed them should have been converted.

(d) If Jesus was the Son of God, why do two of the four Canonical Gospels, namely Matthew and Luke, which alone give us his genealogy, call him the son of Joseph (the carpenter)?

(e) The contemporaries of Jesus knew nothing of his birth from a Virgin. They looked upon him as one of the many children of Joseph, the carpenter, and his lawfully-wedded wife Mary. This is clear from many references in the Gospels such as:

(i) "And they said, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know" (John 6:25).

(ii) "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (1:54).

(iii) "And all bore him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22).

(iv) "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us." (Matthew 13:55-56)

(v) The precocious wisdom of Jesus impressed his father Joseph and his mother Mary too: "the child's father and mother were lost in wonder at all that was said of him" (Luke 2:3). Luke also reports Jesus'

parents to be Joseph and Mary, thus: Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover" (Luke 2:41).

(vi) Once Jesus was lost for 3 days, and both Joseph and Mary searched for him. When he was found Mary protested thus to Jesus: "Son! Why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing" (Luke 2:48).

Now who can know better than the mother who the father of her son is? If Mary knew that Jesus was born of Immaculate Conception, and that he indeed was the Son of God, would she (a great God-fearing lady) have described Joseph the carpenter as the father of Jesus?

(f) Jesus was one of the twins born together, the other child being Thomas which name means "a twin" (Thilo. Acta Thomae, 94 Encyclopaedia Biblica Col.5058, Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible Vol. IVm 753m Breviaries, published by Dominican Father Press, Mosul, 1886). The twin brothers Jesus and Thomas were so alike that at a wedding which both attended they were mistaken for each other (Acta Thomase, Vol. XX, P.46). Now can anyone believe that, of the twins Jesus and Thomas, one was born of Immaculate Conception and the other of their common father - Joseph the carpenter?

(g) It is evident that St. Paul, the founder of the present-day Christianity, believed Jesus to be the son of Joseph, the carpenter (who was descended

from King David) when Paul said: "Jesus Christ, our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh (Romans I 1:3), and "God had sworn with an oath to him (David) that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (The Act 2:30).

(h) Other Christian authorities also believed that Jesus was the son of a man. Some of them are quoted below:

(i) "Jesus is the Messiah, yet a mere man, born by natural generation to Joseph and Mary" (p.318, History of the Apostolic Church).

(ii) "All the believing Jews (i.e., the Christians of the time) and all the rest of Nazarene Jews esteemed Jesus with one consent as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary (Commentary on the Holy Bible" Vol. III, p. 276, by Professor Dummelow of the Cambridge University and 42 other Christian scholars).

(iii) "The removal of verses 34 and 35 (Gospel of St. Luke) which contain the only reference to Virgin Birth, as interpolation is justified" (Hasting's Dictionary of Christ and the Gospel, p. 306). Professor Weiss, another authority, dismissed the same entries about Virgin Birth as "mere forgeries".

(iv) "The Virgin Birth disappears from the source altogether" (Encyclopaedia Biblica: Col 29570).

(v) "Christ will be a man among men -- the Messiah will be descended from the seed of David: He will not be born of virgin, for God's promise to the ancient King was that he who is to come would issue from his seed." Are we to think that God was merely mocking him? (Commentary on Matthew by Paulus). If Jesus was not born from a virgin mother, and if he was descended from David's seed, the literal concept of his being the son of God has no leg to stand on.

SON OF GOD:

It is, however, true that Jesus while describing himself as the Son of Man, also occasionally used the expression "Father" for God, and the 'Son' for himself. That he used the term "Son of God" for himself only metaphorically is clear from John 10:31-36. When the Jews wanted to stone him for blasphemy for calling God 'Father', he explained that he had called himself only the 'son of God' while the Old Testament referred to all prophets as "gods". The Book of Psalms, 82:6, refers to 'children of God' and in Exodus 22:28, even judges are called 'gods'. And the whole nation of Israel has been called God's son: "Israel is my son even my first born" (Exodus 4:22); David and Solomon are called the "Son of God" in Psalms 2:7 and I Chronicles 22:10).

Jesus himself called the peacemakers and those who love their enemies as Sons of God (Matthew 5:9, 44-45).

It is thus clear from the above discussion that Jesus was the physical son of Joseph and Mary, and that the expression 'Son of God' was used by him for himself and for others only metaphorically. That being so, the Divinity of Jesus has no foundation, and with that the earlier concept of Trinity is destroyed. The third god of the trinity, namely, the Holy Ghost, had an uncertain position. In any case, his only role described is that of descending upon Jesus, and, later on, upon his disciples (hardly a great enough role for a god). To descend upon prophets is more appropriate for angels, and the archangel Gabriel (Christianity's Holy Ghost) used to descend upon all prophets with God's messages. To raise human beings and angels to the position of god has been a common weakness among all human beings who incline towards polytheism.

The Holy Quran, in contrast, has raised all human beings to the position of vicegerents of God upon the earth, and angels were required to submit to man (2:34). The ennoblement of man in Islam is one of its most distinguishing features.

ORIGINAL SIN AND ATONEMENT

Mankind has been demeaned and morally disabled by the concept of the Original Sin or Inherited Sin. According to the Bible, the devil deguiled Eve who, in turn, made Adam eat the forbidden fruit. But the real transgressor was woman as stated by St. Paul in his First Epistle to Timothy, "And Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (2:14). So through her, primarily, the Original Sin was transmitted to each generation that succeeded. Even in newly born babies the consequence of Original Sin is so

severe that if they are not baptized they are doomed to burn for ever and ever in the fire of hell (St. Augustine). Till recently the unbaptized infants were not buried in consecrated burial grounds because they were believed to have died in mortal sin.

So, according to Christianity, mankind became doomed to eternal hell because of the Original Sin, no matter how good and virtuous a man or woman may be. The Rev. W. Goldseck writes in this connection:

"It should be clear as day-light to any one that God cannot break His own law: He cannot forgive a sinner without first giving him an appropriate punishment. For if he did so, who would call Him just and equitable". (Goldseck: Atonement, p.5).

So how was Divine justice satisfied? By the blood of Christ:

Since Christ, God and man, has taken upon Himself our sins (by his death on the Cross) in order to atone for them by giving satisfaction to God's outraged justice" (Rev. J.F. DeGroot, Catholic Teaching, p. 162).

BIBLE QUOTED:

It is amazing that these dogmas have been unquestioningly believed by the Christians who are otherwise so sensible and perceptive. Before offering my own comments, let me quote the Bible itself against these concepts:

"In those days they shall say no more: "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge." (Jeremiah 31:29).

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

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? Saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways and Live? (Ezekiel 18:20-23).

That Jesus himself regarded children as innocent and pure, and not as born in sin, would be clear from his saying: "Suffer the little children to come up to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God." (Mark 10:14). These were not baptized children but ordinary children of the Jews.

OUR COMMENT

My own comment on the concepts of the Inherited Sin and Atonement are as follows:

(a) There is no authority for them in the Gospels. Such basic concepts should have had clear support from the sacred book of the Christians, i.e., the Gospels or in the sayings of Jesus himself - the man who was to become the sacrificial lamb for sinful humanity.

(b) Does it stand to reason that the sin committed by ancestors should condemn their posterity to eternal hell? As the Bible itself says: If the fathers ate sour grapes it would not set the teeth of the children on edge (Jeremiah 31:29).

(c) If sin is an inherited thing, who did Adam inherit his sin from? According to the Bible, he was the son of God (Luke 3:38) and he was in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Or, if sin is in the nature of man, whose fault is it? That of the man or his Creator? The reflection on God himself in these concepts is too horrible an insolence to even think of.

(d) If the Original Sin is inherited by mankind why did God wait for thousands of years before sending His Son to offer his vicarious sacrifice to save mankind, and thus make no attempt to save those who passed away before Jesus? Is this the much vaunted justice of God?

(e) But we find from the Bible itself that mankind before Jesus was no more or no less sinful than those who were supposed to have been cured of sin by their faith in the atonement of Jesus. Let us begin from Jesus' own time and go backwards:

(i) John, the Baptist, was a little ahead of Jesus in point of time and he baptized Jesus and thus cured him of his sinfulness, after which the Holy Ghost descended upon Jesus, and he called this baptism the fulfilment of his righteousness (Matthew

3:15). And Jesus described John as "A prophet, yea I say unto you and more than a prophet....verily I say unto, among them that are born of woman (and Jesus was one of them) there hath not risen a man greater than John, the Baptist" (Matt: 11:9 and 11:11).

(ii) "John, the Baptist's parents - Zacharias and Elizabeth - are described as "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6).

(iii) David is described as having walked before God "in truth and righteousness, and in the uprightness of heart" (I Kings 3:6).

(iv) Both Moses and Aaron are praised in the Bible: Aaron as the "Saint of the Lord" (Psalms 106:16) and Moses is certified by God Himself as "My servant Moses - who is faithful in all mine house" (Num. 12:7).

(v) Abraham is described as being under the shield of God and having exceedingly great reward (Genesis 15:1). Again, "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things" (Genesis 24:1). Furthermore, God says of him: "Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws" (Genesis 26:5).

(vi) As far back as Enoch, the Bible says that: "Enoch walked with God" (Genesis

5:24). Examples of these kinds abound. Were these people inheritors of sin, the "Wages of which are death" and eternal damnation in Hell? They lived *before* Jesus and did not even mention him, not to speak of believing in him as alleged by Christian zealots when faced with Bible's own list of virtuous men before Jesus.

MERCY VERSUS JUSTICE:

In Islam, the emphasis is on the mercy of Allah, the one and only true God. Mercy is one of the most repeated words, in one form or another, in the Holy Quran. And forgiveness is another Divine attribute most emphasized. For instance:

And thy Lord is Forgiving, Full of Mercy"
(18:58).

Our Lord, Thou embraces all things in mercy and knowledge." (40:7).

"And My mercy encompasses all things"
(7:156).

"And your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself"
(6:54).

"And despair not of Allah's mercy. Surely none despairs of Allah's mercy except the disbelieving people" (12:87).

"And who despair of the mercy of his Lord but the erring ones? (15:56)

And the star verse on the subject is:

"Say: O My servants who have wronged their souls excessively, despair not of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives sins altogether. He is indeed the Forgiving, the Merciful" (39:53).

However lest the over-whelming mercy of Allah be abused, the next verse enjoins such sinners thus:

"And turn to your Lord and submit to Him [i.e., obey His guidance in the Holy Quran] before chastisement comes to you, then you will not be helped" (39:54).

As opposed to the above message of hope and salvation for those sinners who repent and reform themselves. Christianity holds that the "Justice of God" must punish them - unless of course they believe in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. These ideas of justice and atonement cannot stand scrutiny. For instance:

(a) Is it justice that the sin, and that too a minor one committed by Adam and Eve, should make the whole of mankind sinners, so that even an innocent child who dies without baptism is condemned to eternal hell? Would even a primitive, backward society, accept such a view of divine justice? Divine justice is supposed to be more just and perfect.

(b) Even if it is supposed that solitary and minor sin committed by Adam and Eve is transmitted throughout mankind till eternity, who is responsible for this transmission? Why,

God of course. If so, why should mankind be doomed to eternal hell for an act of God?

(c) Is it justice again, and that too Divine, that the blood of the innocent Son (the only sinless person according to the Christian dogma) should absolve and redeem mankind? What would you think of a judge who hangs his own innocent son in place of the guilty criminals.

(d) And are those who believe in the Atonement of the Son, redeemed of sin? A look at Europe and America does not show it. There is more sin in Christian countries, even according to the Biblical standards, than in the rest of the world.

(e) The dogma of Atonement, in fact, encourages sin because if the declaration of faith in it saves mankind, then a life-long indulgence in sin can easily be washed off just by a last minute confession of faith in Atonement to a priest at the bedside of the dying person.

(f) Such an important dogma as the atonement of sins should have been preached by Jesus Christ himself rather than being left to the later clergy to propound.

ATONEMENT AND VICARIOUS SACRIFICE

The above two creeds are based on the thinking that Jesus voluntarily gave the Supreme Sacrifice. That thinking is against facts for:

(a) The gospels show that Jesus did his level best to hide and evade his arrest, so much so that he lamented that while even a fox had a hole to hide in, the "son of man" [Jesus himself] had nowhere to lay his head.

(b) and when arrest and crucifixion seemed imminent, the attitude to Jesus was far from that of a person gladly seeking crucifixion to save the sinful humanity. Consider the following.

"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death. And he went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said: Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me" (Mark 14:34-36).

"And being in agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was as it were drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. 26:38).

On the cross, Jesus cried "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46).

(c) Why this charge of God having forsaken him? Because, his earnest prayers earlier had been heard (i.e. accepted) according to the Bible: "When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto

Him that was able to save him from death, and *was heard in that he feared*" (Hebrews 5:7). The italics in the above quotation are mine to bring to notice that Jesus' prayer of agony had in fact been heard.

(d) It is God's way in His infinite mercy and might that he always accepts the prayers of His humble servants - more so of His prophets whom He has sent and whose failure in their mission would reflect upon Him too. The Holy Quran is full of such instances, for every prophet was severely opposed. But God and His prophets always prevailed in the end. Instances of God accepting the prayers of His prophets in distress occur throughout the Holy Quran but more so in section 6 of chapter 23 entitled "The Prophets." In fact the prayer of any person in distress is heard: "Or who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil" (27:62).

The great distress and anguish of Jesus has been described above. How could his prayer for being saved from the ignominy of being hanged on the cross be accursed of God. And for a prophet to be killed is the sign of his being a false prophet (Deut. 18:20). It is these consequences of being hanged and killed on the cross that caused such distress and anguish to Jesus. And God could not possibly have let the Jews kill Jesus on the cross and thus prove him to be not only a false prophet but also accursed of God.

JESUS DID NOT DIE ON THE CROSS:

The Holy Quran, which has exonerated Jesus and Mary of all false charged, has said categorically: "And their [The Jews] saying: We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah, and they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross, but he was made to appear to them as such" (4:157). That Jesus did not actually die on the cross but was in a death-like swoon, that he was tended and nursed by his close associates (not the disciples, though) in a cave, with herbs and ointments, that he left the cave after 3 days in disguise of a gardener, that he met his disciples in secret for a few days and that he then left for an unknown destination, is evident from evidence in the Gospel, an excellent summary of which is given in footnote of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English translation of the Holy Quran:

...See 752. The Gospels contain clear testimony showing that Jesus Christ escaped death on the cross. The following points may be noted: (1) Jesus remained on the cross for a few hours only (Mark 15:25; John 19:14) but death by crucifixion was always tardy. (2) The two men crucified with Jesus were still alive when taken down from the cross; the presumption is that Jesus too was alive. (3) The breaking of legs was resorted to in the case of the two criminals, but dispensed with in the case of Jesus (John 19:32,33). (4) The side of Jesus being pierced, blood rushed out and this was a certain sign of life. (5) Even Pilate did not believe that Jesus actually died in so short a time (Mark 15:44). (6) Jesus was not buried like the two criminals,

but was given into the charge of a wealthy disciple of his, who lavished care on him and put him in a spacious tomb hewn in the side of a rock (Mark 15:46). (7) When the tomb was seen on the third day, the stone was found to have been removed from its mouth (Mark 16:4), which would not have been the case if there had been a supernatural rising. (8) Mary, when she saw him, took him for the gardener (John 20:15), which shows that Jesus had disguised himself as a gardener. (9) Such disguise would not have been needed if Jesus had risen from the dead. (10) It was in the same body of flesh that the disciples saw Jesus, and the wounds were still there deep enough for a man to thrust his hand in (John 20:25-28). (11) He still felt hunger and ate as his disciples at (Luke 24:39-43). (12) Jesus Christ undertook a journey to Galilee with two of his disciples walking side by side with him (Matt. 28:10), which shows that he was fleeing for refuge; a journey to Galilee was not necessary to rise to heaven. (13) In all post-crucifixion appearances Jesus is found hiding himself as if he feared being discovered. (14) Jesus Christ prayed the whole night before his arrest to be saved from the accursed death on the cross, and he also asked his disciples to pray for him, the prayers of a righteous man in distress and affliction are always accepted. He seems to have even received a promise from God to be saved, and it was to this promise that he referred when he cried out on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Heb. 5:7 makes the matter still more clear, for there it is plainly stated that the prayer of Jesus was

accepted: "When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared".

The statements made in the Quran corroborate the above statements quoted from the Gospels. Jesus did not die on the cross, nor was he killed as were the two thieves, but to the Jews he appeared as if he were dead.

To Muslims, the evidence of the Holy Quran is more than enough. After asserting in more than one place that Jesus did not die on the cross, the Holy Quran goes on to make a statement, little noticed in the fourteen centuries of recent discoveries, that Jesus and Mary were given refuge by God in "a plateau of fruits and springs" (23:50) - a description which fits Kashmir and no other land. The graves of Mary (at Muree, called after her) and of Jesus in Srinagar (Kashmir) confirm their having found refuge in Kashmir where they died nobly, and rest in eternal peace and bliss.

THE LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL:

In the Gospel, Jesus disclosed more than once that he had really come for the lost sheep of Israel. That had been taken to mean the "spiritually lost" Jews of Palestine. But they had repudiated him and had caused him to be crucified. A prophet of the high stature of Jesus' could not have been a failure in his mission. Such a failure would also have reflected unfavourably on God who had sent Jesus on this mission.

There are in history the well-known Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. These tribes had been forcefully removed from Palestine to the east by the Babylonian King Nebuchednezzar, and had eventually settled in what is now Afghanistan, the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan and Kashmir. In those days of poor communication and contact, they lost complete touch with the other two tribes of Israel (Jews) that had remained in Palestine. They were therefore described as "lost". Jesus' mission was really to them. And to them he went the two tribes of Palestine (Jews) repudiated him. His blessed mother accompanied him. These ten tribes in Kashmir and the surrounding areas accepted him and he died a successful prophet and was buried in Mohalla Khanyar, Srinagar (Kashmir) where his tomb is described in the archaeological department records as that of "Yuz Asaf, Nabi (Prophet)." "Yuz" is Kashmiri form of "Yusu" or Jesus. And Asaf Stands for Yusuf (Joseph), the father of Jesus.

Mary, when she died, was buried in the hill-top now known as Murree in Rawalpindi district of Pakistan. For this most fascinating but not generally known episode in the post-crucifixion life of Jesus, there is lot of historical evidence about which the reader would be more that satisfied if he were to read.

1. Jesus in Heaven on Earth
By Khwaja Nazir Ahmad, Bar-at-Law
2. Jesus Died in Kashmir
By A. Faber - Kaiser

The former is available from any of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam centres given at the

end of this booklet. The latter was published in English and is generally available in bookshops and book-stalls. There have been numerous reviews of the latter in European magazines, and English and American newspapers.

RECENT CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

In the last two or three decades, Christian scholars themselves have repudiated the dogmas of Jesus being called God Incarnate or the Son of God, of Trinity, and of Jesus' Resurrection and Atonement. So much literature has come out on the subject that it is not possible to refer to all of it here. I shall attempt to mention some of it briefly. A book called "The Myth of God Incarnate" was published in England in 1977, and was rightly described as "*explosive*". It contains the joint wisdom of seven professors of Christianity at the world famous universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Birmingham. At the press conference of its editors, flashed by Reuter News Service, they concluded that:

- (a) Jesus in his time did not lay claim to divinity.
- (b) He was only a man chosen by God but not the son of God.
- (c) Jesus never taught the doctrine of Trinity. It was invented later under pagan and other influences.

Equally categorical repudiation came from the distinguished professors of the Department of Theology and Religion in Southampton University (England). In

their letter dated July 8, 1977, addressed to the important *Church Times* of London, they said *inter alia*:

"We believe that it is the duty of theologians, especially of those who teach at universities, to raise publicly questions about the principles of Christian faith, to justify those principles or to show them as false in accordance with evidence and with sound reasoning."

In compliance with that, these scholars expressed their conclusion -

- (a) That there is no divine son, that there never has been one, and that there never could be one.
- (b) That the belief in Jesus as divine son rests upon a false interpretation of the facts by the authors of the New Testament.
- (c) That the above belief belongs to the "myth" or "symbol" category, that it is incapable of comprehension by the modern man and that it should be abandoned.

That is the revolution taking place in Protestant thinking. Even the more orthodox Roman Catholicism is suffering an upheaval which is described in two issues of the world-famous weekly *Time* magazine, entitled respectively as "U.S. Catholicism - A Church Divided" (issue dated May 24, 1976) and "New Debate over Jesus' Divinity" (issue dated February 27, 1978). While the former article deals with the Roman Catholic transformation of that in the U.S.A., the latter deals with the citadel of Roman Catholicism, namely, Europe in all

its non-communist countries such as Germany, France, Holland, Spain, etc. Some concepts emerging from the new thinking are quoted below:

- (a) "At the limit it is an absurdity to say that God makes himself into man. God cannot be anything other than God."
- (b) Jesus was a man and only a man.
- (c) Jesus was a man elected and sent by God.

Edwin Lewis, a professor of Divinity in the U.S.A. has summed up in A Manual of Christian Balance that "People in the 20th century are not prepared to believe Jesus to be God". No wonder then that Sir Saul Norwood of Oxford University, England, has said, "It should always be remembered that a large number of the men and women of Europe and America are no longer Christians. And in fact would perhaps be right to say that their majority is like that (Has the Church Failed?)

If present day Christians, at least a large number of them if not the majority, are turning away from Christianity, it is not surprising, for:

- (a) Present-day Christianity is not the religion of Jesus. It was foisted upon his religion by St. Paul and the latter-day Bishops, so much so as to change the original religion completely.
- (b) The dogmas of the present-day Christianity cannot withstand the light of reason and enlightenment engendered by the development of knowledge and the sciences in this age.

As stated in the opening part of this paper, the true teachings of Jesus were basically the same as that of Islam (in which religion the teachings of all prophets have been preserved and perfected). And the reader is invited to study Islam dispassionately and without pre-formed notions based on false propaganda against it. Mankind cannot live happily or survive without religion. And the religion of all mankind, the religion of nature, the religion of all prophets of the Great Creator is Islam. The very name means attainment of peace, internal and external, by submission to the Will of the Creator as contained in the Holy Quran. A study of that sublime book, now available with English translation and commentary, would help those in search of Truth and peace of mind.