

ISLAM: THE RELIGION OF MANKIND

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INTRODUCTION

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

".... the faith of your father Abraham (is yours); He named you Muslims before (in the previous scriptures) and in this (the Qur'an), that the Apostle may be a bearer of witness to you, and you may be bearers of witness to mankind"

Sura Hajj (22:78)

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds; and blessings and peace be upon our master, Muhammad (s.a.w.) on his pure progeny and righteous companions and followers, until the Day of Judgement.

Islam means surrender; that is, the surrender of mankind to the Lord of the worlds. It is an absolute surrender or yielding to the One, the only One, the Besought of all.

Thus, Islam in this context means complete freedom from any type of subjection or suppression, and from all forms of deviations or inclinations towards any of God's creatures, except in the course of worshipping Allah, the Exalted.

Islam, is thus the law of Allah the Exalted, offered to the whole of mankind from the beginning of time, in order to liberate man from all forms of slavery. It is a blessing bestowed on man as the most generous of all creatures, endowed with such mental powers enabling him if he so wills, to exploit everything in this universe to his own benefit and happiness.

It is Allah alone Who has the right to command, forbid and question His creatures regarding their deeds; to reward the obedient and punish the disobedient; to grant repentance or forgiveness.

If the obedience of all creatures and their submission to Allah, the Creator, are inborn and natural instincts, perceptible and tangible, so that no creature whether inferior or superior, deviates from it, then the religion of Allah is this very natural obedience:

"Do they seek (follow) other than the religion of Allah, when to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they will be returned."

Sura Aal Imran (3:83)

The duty of the prophets and messengers throughout the history of mankind has been to guide and direct the people according to this natural characteristic. In this way, man could be prevented from being led astray, enabling him to freely submit to the Lord of the worlds through heartfelt belief and a unified code of practical conduct.

This is Islam in its general context; it is the religion of the whole of mankind throughout all ages.

By presenting "Islam the Religion of Mankind", Al-Balagh Foundation endeavors to provide an explanation of one of the most profound ideological concepts in human history. Through its wide scientific effects on the conduct of individuals and societies, Islam has made a profound impression on the different civilizations that have existed throughout the long history of the human race.

We implore Allah the Almighty to help us and our readers, submit to Him, and to create out of our progeny a nation obedient to Him. He is the best Guide to the right way.

Al-Balagh Foundation

ISLAM: THE TITLE AND THE CONTEXT

Names differ greatly in respect to their meanings and implications, and also in respect to their usage.

There are certain names which we encounter and deal with everyday which are used quite randomly. There may be no correlation between the name of an object and the object itself, as is the case with numerous names, titles and attributes.

For example, when someone is named 'Khaz'al' or 'Ja'far', the actual relation between this name and the person has not been taken into consideration. Khaz'al in Arabic originally meant the hyena, and the word Ja'far meant river. There is, as a matter of fact, no actual correlation between people and the nature of a hyena or river; yet they are used occasionally for naming male children. This is a haphazard naming, a nullifying of the relationship between name and subject.

In other instances, a name is strictly chosen to suit the subject and to truthfully represent it.

For example, the name chosen by the Qur'an to represent the teachings of the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (s.a.w.) is 'Islam' - that is, absolute submission and servitude to Allah alone.

The Qur'an due to its unrivalled eloquence, chaste language, deep expression and perfect combination of words, meanings and syntax, carefully chose the name 'Islam' as a truthful expression of the message revealed to Muhammad (s.a.w.). Consequently, this Qur'anic selection is exact and general, maintaining harmony between the manifestations of the teachings and the teachings themselves.

This connection between the teachings and their contexts and aims can well be uncovered by first resorting to the lexicons, from which we come to know that the word 'Islam' means submission and surrender. Then, moving from the lexical terminology, we should carefully study the ideology, legislation and direction of the teachings. We are then apt to recognize that the whole religious structure, in its complete unity, aims at submission and surrender to the Lord of the worlds, and freedom from any type of submission or surrender to human tyrants and illusionary legends.

Thus we recognize the correlation between the name 'Islam', and the manifestations of the faith itself. The Qur'an, as revealed by Allah through His Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), has transformed this word, this name, from its mere linguistic form to the foundation of a faith and way of life.

There is a complete and exact accord between the term 'Islam' and its hidden ideological and legislative truths. This religion, this faith, is called 'Islam' because it is a submission or surrender to the Lord of the worlds, and is also a way towards the freedom and salvation of mankind.

"Those who follow the Apostle-Prophet the 'Ummi' (one who neither reads nor writes), whom they find ordained for them in the Torah and the Gospel, (who) enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful for them all good things and prohibits for them the foul; and removes from them their burden and the fetters (spiritual and social) which were upon them; so (as for) those who believe in him, honour him, help him and follow

the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful."

Sura A'raf (7:157)

ISLAM:

THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS

The concept of submission to Allah has thus been described as the core of the religion and the gist of faith.

Here, 'Islam' as a special title given to the eternal Divine Religion - the Message of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) - and as a general title for the calls of all the prophets, will be discussed .

Since all the prophets called for monotheism and invited mankind to worship Allah alone and liberate themselves from servitude to others, Islam is thus a general title for their calls.

In attempting to analyze this subject, one should refer to Qur'anic verses which deal with the concept of 'Islam'. Among these numerous verses which discuss religion, servitude and submission to the Lord of the worlds, preached by the prophets and messengers from Noah (a.s.) to Muhammad (s.a.w.), one should also note when and how the term 'Islam' has been used. In this way, the clear meaning of 'Islam' and its relation with the calls of all the prophets becomes readily apparent.

The Qur'an uses this word repeatedly and in diverse forms to define true faith and complete submission to Allah's commands. 'Islam' has been used in the form of commands, benedictions and other expressions by the prophets and their faithful followers, announcing their submission or response to its call.

Allah the Exalted, proclaims through His servant Noah (a.s.):

"But if you are averse I have asked of you no wage; my wage is only with Allah,

and I am commanded to be of those who are Muslims (submit to Him)."

Sura Yunus (10:72)

Also, Allah proclaims through Abraham (a.s.):

"When his Lord said to him; be a Muslim, he said: I submit to the Lord of the worlds. And the same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons, and (so did) Jacob, (saying): O my sons! Surely Allah has chosen for you this (We) faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims."

Sura Baqara (2:131 - 132)

"...the faith of your father Abraham (is yours). He named you Muslims before (in previous scriptures)..."

Sura Hajj (22:78)

Allah also relates Joseph'(a.s.) prayer:

"My Lord! You have given me (something) of the kingdom and taught me (something) of the interpretation of events: Originator of the heavens and the earth! You are my Guardian in this world and the hereafter; make me die a Muslim and join me with the righteous."

Sura Yusuf (12:101)

Allah the Exalted, relates Moses' proclamation in the Qur'an:

"And Moses said: O my people! If you believe in Allah, then rely on Him (alone), if you have indeed become Muslims (those who submit to Him)."

Sura Yunus (10:84)

Allah also says:

"Surely We revealed the Torah, in which Was guidance and light, by which the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) judged the Jews..."

Sura Ma'ida (5:44)

And,

"And when I inspired the disciples, (saying): Believe in Me and My Apostle (Jesus), they said: We believe and bear witness that we are Muslims (have submitted)."

Sura Mai'da (5:111)

Allah also commands Muhammad (s.a.w.) like all other prophets to say:

"I am commanded only to serve the Lord of this land (Mecca), Who has made it sacred, and His are all things: And I am commanded to be of those who are Muslims (submit to Him)"

Sura Naml (27:91)

Thus, all these divine invitations meet along the line of submission - Islam - to the Lord of the worlds in its true context; that is, servitude and true faith in Allah, the Exalted. The explicit meaning becomes apparent in Abraham's (a.s.) words: "I submit to the Lord of the worlds"; that is, he regards his submission as a religion for worship, as a trust he commits to his sons and his followers, as a slogan for the monotheists, and as a motto for the invitation to faith:

..... the faith of your father Abraham (is yours); He named you Muslims before (in previous scriptures)....."

Sura Hajj (22:78)

Through these Qur'anic verses we understand that all the prophets followed this unified line of faith with a single aim: The implementation of servitude to Allah mankind's submission to the Lord of the worlds liberating them from the worship of tyrants or their own inner desires.

As such, the Qur'an regards belief in the prophets as a major basis of a Muslim's ideology and as a historical and logical proof of the truthfulness of Muhammad's (s.a.w.) message:

"Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit (become Muslims)."

Sura Baqara (2:136)

"Say: I am not the first of the apostles, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you: I do not follow anything but that which is revealed to me, and I am (nothing) but a plain warner."

Sura Ahqaf (46:9)

All the prophets, as is understood from the above verses, offered to mankind the same religion and the same belief which Allah considered to be the base and the starting point for the reformation of man. It would deliver him from the dark labyrinth of ignorance which has resulted from the ages of legends and myths fabricated by primitive peoples. Man has suffered from this ignorance as he has suffered from the oppression of tyrants, and from poverty, injustice and corruption. He will continue to suffer unless he

turns to the path of the prophets who all shared the same call. This call aimed at the salvation of humanity - generation after generation, nation after nation - from its sufferings and tragedies.

Allah the Exalted, willed that all His messengers should pour their offerings into the same stream, that their flames should unite into a single illumination. This was the call of Islam, the message of Muhammad (s.a.w.), as the eternal religion, the final message, and the theme dominating and encompassing all other missions of the apostles.

"And We have revealed to you the Book (Qur'an) with the truth confirming whatever of the Book(s) was before it and a guardian over it, so judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires (to turn away) from the truth which has come to you; for everyone of you We have appointed a divine law and a (traced out) way..."

Sura Ma'ida (5:48)

"He it is Who sent His Apostle with the guidance and the true religion; that He may make it overcome (other) religions, all of them, however much the polytheists may be averse."

Sura Saff (61:9)

Islam overcame all other religions as it is characterized by equality, rationality, universality and eternity, enabling it to expand over vast periods of man's history, encompassing all aspects of human growth and development. Religion is thus, like a great river which has flowed through all eras of man. This river is represented by Islam - the great religion that was preached by the prophets in accordance with the needs and potentials of their nations - which has flowed through all generations, nations and prophets. Men have taken from this river as much as they needed, yet it remained flowing with life; fertility and growth for all humanity through all ages.

For this reason Allah sent the prophets throughout human history .to guide man to the shores of this great spiritual river which endows him with prosperity and life.

"O you who believe! answer (the call of) Allah, and the Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life..."

Sura Anfal (8:24)

Therefore, the calls of the prophets were alike as all of them advocated Islam, which is the religion of mankind for all time.

As for differences among the messages of the prophets, these were due to the particular requirements of societies during the various periods of prophecy, the societies' level of comprehension and extent of tolerance.

When man thus attained full maturity, he became ready to accept this religion-Islam-to carry its message, and to follow its guidance. This has been explained and confirmed by the Qur'an.

"Surely the religion with (acceptable to) Allah is Islam (submission to His will) and those to whom (formerly) the Book had been given did not oppose (about Islam) but after knowledge (of Islam's truth) had come to them, out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the revelation of Allah then surely Allah is swift at reckoning."

Sura Aal Imran (3:19)

"And whoever follows a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and he will be one of the losers in the hereafter."

Sura Aal Imran (3:85)

This was the religion from which the prophets derived their messages, but it was not their duty to insure the total acceptance of their nations. They had been given the task of informing their nations according to their nation's immediate needs and potentials, leading them to the way of righteousness and peace. This is what the Qur'an says about religion and messages, and about the unity of source and aim, stressing that religion is one- Islam - and the messages of all the prophets were derived from it:

"He has made plain to you of the religion which He enjoined upon Noah, and that which We have revealed to you (Muhammad), and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, (saying): Establish the religion, and be not divided therein; dreadful for the unbelievers is that which you call them to; Allah chooses for Himself whom He pleases, and guides to Himself him who turns (to Him) frequently."

Sura Shura (42:13)

Consequently it is incorrect to describe the calls of the prophets as different religions, because these emanations originated from a single source, inviting towards the same religion, though the messages slightly varied, according to the times, the geographical location, the language and levels of comprehension of the peoples.

"And We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly;..."

Sura Ibrahim (14:4)

In this way the Qur'an proves the oneness of the line and direction followed by the prophets, and affirms that all of them had been commanded to establish the true religion-Islam.

Going through the Qur'anic verses concerning the concepts of religion and its messages, we realize that Islam is the frame encircling all the divine revelations. Islam in fact is the final formulation of the complete divine message that draws a perfect picture of man and life on earth. It is the very base from which the divine calls and messages were made, such as those of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others (peace be upon them):

"And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom".

Sura Zukhruf (43:4)

Thus what was revealed to the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (s.a.w.) was the most advanced programme and the most perfect law of the divine religion, Islam, which was to be conveyed to all humanity.

Since Muhammad (s.a.w.) is the last prophet and the divine message has been revealed in all its entirety and perfectness, therefore all the former messages are to be regarded as null and void, after the revelation of the holy Qur'an. Because the messages sent through the previous prophets were of a temporary nature and limited in time-span, and were the prelude for the final and great call of Islam.

The divine message revealed to Muhammad (s.a.w.) embraces all future eras and generations, and is the final stage of mankind's historical march.

Therefore it is life according to the incumbent upon mankind to mould revealed through the final call and the message of Islam, Seal of the Prophets.

EVALUATION OF THE DIVINE MESSAGES

WHERE DO THE MESSAGES MEET

"... and it is not in (the power of) an apostle to bring a portent save by Allah's leave; for everything there is a time prescribed. Allah effaces and establishes what He pleases, and with Him is the source of the Book."

Sura Ra'd (13:38&39)

It is quite clear from the above verses of the Qur'an that Allah has the power and authority to efface, abrogate and change the divine laws according to what He thinks is best suited for a particular period and era as also the stage of human development. However these changes are only legislative in nature, and are firmly based on the unwavering fundamental principles, which are quite remarkably the same in all messages preached by all the prophets.

In other words the messages and laws advocated by the prophets and apostles throughout the course of history were based on the same principles, foundations and aims, though they differed in certain secondary points concerning certain legislations and duties, which were time-bound, depending upon the particular period of human history.

In order to clearly distinguish between the points where these messages and laws part and meet along the line of this unified religion - Islam - whose principles and foundations never change and are constant, it is necessary to trace back the aims of the divine messages, and to recognize the core of their call and the content of their structure, as related in the glorious Qur'an, and exemplified by the lives and teachings of the prophets.

Principles Common in All Messages

1. All the messages have a common belief which is the major basis on which the entire structure of religion, as well as man's concepts and general thoughts about the universe and life are built. The concept of the Oneness of Allah - monotheism - and the belief in His messengers, angels, scriptures, and the hereafter, is the meeting point around which the messages preached by the prophets gather - there was no prophet who had not called for believing in Allah, in worshipping Him and accepting His Oneness; and who had not announced reward and forewarned punishment.

The glorious Qur'an confirms this fact and relates several examples of the actual words and calls of the prophets addressed to their peoples, some of which are cited below:

"... and the Messiah said: O Children of Israel! serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord..."

Sura Mai'da (5:72)

"And to (the tribe of) 'Aad (We sent) their brother Hud (the prophet). He said: O my people! serve Allah, you have no god other than Him...."

Sura A'raf (7:65)

"Certainly We sent Noah to his people, so he said: O my people! serve Allah, you have no god other than Him."

Sura A'raf (7:59)

"And to (the tribe of) Thamood (We sent) their Salih (the prophet). He said: O my people! serve brother you have no god other than Him; clear proof indeed Allah, has come to you from your Lord...."

Sura A'raf (7:73)

"And to Midi an (We sent) their brother Shu'aib (the prophet). He said: O my people! serve Allah, you have no god other than Him; clear proof indeed has come to you from your Lord; so give full measure and weight, and do not diminish to people their things, and do not make mischief in the land after its reform; this is better for you, if you are believers."

Sura A'raf (7:85)

"And (We sent) Abraham when he said to his people: Serve Allah, and be careful of (your duty to) Him; this is best for you, if you did but know."

Sura Ankabut (29:16)

"And certainly We raised in every nation an apostle, (proclaiming): Serve Allah and shun false gods. So there were some of them (nations) whom Allah guided, and there were others upon whom error had just hold."

Sura Nahl (16:36)

"And We did not send before you any apostle but We revealed to him, that there is no god but Me (Allah), therefore serve Me."

Sura Anbiya (21:25)

2. All the messages have a single aim and advocate good conduct and behaviour, and call people to be righteous, to purify their souls, organize life on the basis of truth and justice, and to fight against injustice, transgression and corruption. The Prophets themselves embodied the highest ideals and the noblest manners and were worthy models of emulation as Allah the Exalted says:

"And we made them Imams (leaders) who guided (people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of the alms, and Us (alone) did they serve."

Sura Anbiya (21:73)

While discussing the elements common in all the divine invitations and messages, we should not forget to refer to an ambiguity which has been talked about a lot within the circles of the Orientalists and their followers whose skepticism is the result of their hostile attitude towards Islam. They allege that the Qur'an was authored by Muhammad (s.a.w.) himself, and that he was influenced by the Torah and the Gospel, and they point out a number of common concepts present in the Qur'an as a proof according to their ambiguity - that it has borrowed its ideals from these two Scriptures, due to Muhammad's (s.a.w.) contacts with Jews and Christians. The advocates of this absurd theory thought that they had discovered a grave defect which according to them questions the very authenticity of the Qur'an and its being a divine revelation.

But surely any one endowed with rational thinking needs no proof to refute this ambiguity about the Qur'an being influenced by the Jewish and Christian thought. It suffices just to remember that all the messages have actually sprung from the same common source - Almighty Allah - the aims of all messages are the same, and therefore the principle elements in the divine proclamations should be common. This amity of principles, concepts

and aims is the result of their single origin, i.e. the unbroken chain of Divine Inspiration which strived to guide man to serve Allah alone, and to liberate humanity from diverse superstitious servitudes to demi-gods and idols. Thus it is clear that these are neither the result of borrowing nor of personal affection, as the skeptics allege, but the proof of the continuation of the Divine Guidance.

Therefore, by recognizing these facts we reach the conclusion that the common similarities between the divine messages are a divine reality that gives unquestionable evidence to the truthfulness of Muhammad's (s.a.w.) prophethood, since it proves that the proclamations of Islam advocate the same goals and aims that had been advocated by the preceding prophets.

WHERE DO THE MESSAGES DIFFER

In the previous chapters, we explained the basic concepts common in all the divine messages, since they originated from a single source. As to the points of difference among the divine messages proclaimed by the prophets these were necessitated due to the changing times and circumstances and concerned only certain secondary principles such as legislation, ways of worship and methods of organizing life. Each message had its particular legislative form through which the teachings of Islam and its major goals in life were suitably expressed. It similarly had its particular way of organizing the society and style of worship, depending upon the period of revelation, the place, the comprehension of the people and the distortion done by the deviators to the previous message and scripture. The Qur'an explains and asserts this by saying:

"And We have revealed to you the Book (Qur'an) with the truth confirming whatever of the Book(s) was before it and a guardian over it, so judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their low desires (to turn away) from the truth which has come to you, for everyone of you We have appointed a divine law and a (traced out) way, and if Allah had willed, He would have made you (all) a single nation, but that He might try you in what He gave you, so vie one with another to hasten to virtuous deeds..."

Sura Mai'da (5:48)

This Qur'anic explanation is enough to make us realize that the differences of the messages merely concern points of legislation, ways of life, and methods of ruling according to a particular time, era or circumstances.

Here, the Qur'an stresses that it is a divine book confirming the previous divine messages, and at the same time 'guarding' their goals. The word 'guardian' used by the Qur'an is a clear reference to the havoc wrought on the previous scriptures, especially on the Torah and the Gospel, by Jews and Christians, who deviating from the messages proclaimed by Moses and Jesus (a.s.), changed, altered, added and revised these scriptures so frequently, that practically nothing divine is left in these books, except those points which are common to the Qur'an.

Hence the Qur'an's emphasis on its laws, regulations and teachings which are to be dominant and observed by all mankind, because these are the ones suitable for humanity in its final march, and these are the most perfect

legislative forms ever devised, and are in perfect harmony with human progress and cultural growth.

Therefore, the differences between one message and the other regarding certain secondary principles was the result of the changing circumstances and situations and the stages of human cultural, mental, physical and psychological development, though basically all messages advocated the same common concepts and goals. Thus, the duties, the worshipping precepts, and the laws brought by the previous prophets were in conformity with, and in accordance to, the prevailing situation and conditions.

WHY SO MANY MESSAGES

From the illustrative examples presented by the Qur'an of the lives of the prophets, the nature of their messages and their struggles against the disbelievers, it is possible to understand the reasons for the many messages and more exactly the reason for the coming of so many messengers and prophets.

Before persuing this subject further, we should know that not all the prophets brought messages or laws to the people they were sent to. Actually, a greater number of prophets had no particular message and were in fact sent only to preach and promote the message of the 'Reformer - Prophet' who preceded them, because people had deviated from the original concept of the message or falsified it.

So, these prophets were not 'Law - givers' but mere 'Reminders' calling people to return to the true message and laws of the 'Reformer - Prophet'.

The questions may arise: Why so many messages?

Why had Allah the Exalted, sent so many messengers, and why wasn't He contented with just a single prophet to be followed by mankind generation after generation?

To answer these questions we have to study the reasons which caused so many envoys, with as many messages to be sent. We must scrutinize the history of the nations, analyse the lives of the peoples, as well as the contents of these divine messages. By doing so we come to infer the following points:

1. The foremost cause of so many messages and messengers was human nature itself and particularly of those people to whom the messages were addressed. The intellectual, physical and psychological abilities of people are not equal and may differ due to such factors as the period of history, development of civilization and etc.

Therefore, religion had to pace along the stages of mankind's gradual progress and development, in harmony with its mental comprehension. The more mature man gets in his needs and understanding, the more perfect is the religion he is in need of. This is in fact, an aspect of divine wisdom and equity, because Allah the Exalted is Just and Wise, His Will never contradictory, His Aim never conflicting, and His Judgement never partial.

For this reason the laws and the duties had to be in accordance with man's abilities and capacities, in fullfilment of his interest and good:

"Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability"

Sura Baqara (2:286)

On this basis, coordination has been made strong between the progress of man's existence and the rules of religious legislation, away from any sort of conflict or contradiction.

It is clear from the above cited reasons that the many messages are in proportional harmony with the progress of humanity and that each new message on the ladder of divine proclamations is on a higher rung, more progressive and more perfect than the preceding one.

2. The second cause explaining the number of messages was the ignorance and superstitions prevalent among the people, due to their particular living conditions and social and natural environments, plus the existence of imposters and hypocrites, who never missed an opportunity to twist the original meanings and exploit the peoples' ignorance for their own selfish interests, thus leading them astray. So in these circumstances a new message was necessary to cure and exterminate the prevalent moral disease. It was an act directed to uproot deviation, and to restore the natural balance to the movement of the soul and the society, and to lead life towards its sound and humanistic direction.

The Qur'an tells us about the symptoms of these diseases of ignorance and superstitions which appeared in diverse forms along the course of history and across the space of human life, and presents them as selected examples of warnings and deterrent lessons. It tells us about the greed and corruption of the Nabateans; the decadence of sexual ethics in the people of Prophet Lot (a.s.) - Sodom and Gomorrah - and the covetousness of Bani Israel (Jews), etc. Hence, the sending of the prophets to uproot and exterminate these moral diseases.

3. Sending numerous prophets also implies a continual reminder and warning, and the unceasing reformative and social interaction with the new message. It also confirms the divine guidance of man and leading him along the right path, so that Allah may complete His blessings and kindness on all peoples, and the evidence of His benevolence may be nurtured among them, so that no one on the Judgement Day may offer an excuse for one's sins and disobediences, on the pretext of being kept ignorant of the truth and left unguided.

Allah, the Exalted says:

"(We sent) apostles as bearers of good tidings and as warners (of Allah's punishment), so that people should not have any excuse (on the Day of Judgement) against Allah after the (coming of) apostles; and Allah is ever Mighty, Wise."

Sura Nisa (4:165)

4. Having reached mental maturity and psychological development, mankind was in need of a perfect and everlasting message, covering all aspects of the growth and progress of civilization, and possessing the ability to guide and direct its developing intellectual faculties and power; a message that would go in parallel direction with time and space and in perfect harmony with human life and nature.

Humanity at this stage, needs a message that addresses the mind, and takes into consideration its maturity and development.

In this stage the mind will be the observer and its role an argument against man, because it is the duty of the mind to rationally cope with the divine law and realize the importance of prophethood so as to understand and accept the invitations and in turn call the people to believe in them, to act according to their teachings and to uplift their mission.

Man, in this final stage of mental and scientific progress is qualified for comprehending this religion and its value, and strengthening his belief, by means of reason and conscience.

It is in this respect, the Prophet's traditions uphold the role of the intellect, its power of reasoning and hence its responsibility. A 'Hadith' (the Prophet's saying) says: "Allah has two arguments against man; visible and hidden. The visible argument are the Messengers, the Prophets and the Imams (the Prophet's infallible successors). The hidden argument is reason"^[1]

Thus, a sound and rational mind acts as an inner messenger of religion, perceiving and manifesting its greatness and value. It is the greatest justification for the continuation of the message, and during the absence of messengers it is an argument against man. Another proof justifying the argument of Islam are those people who propagate and spread the message of the Prophet, enjoining right and forbidding wrong; and enlightening people and delivering them from darkness towards the right path ordained by Allah the Exalted.

Consequently, Islam imposes "enjoining right and forbidding wrong" on its followers, especially on the learned men and women who enjoy intellectual superiority which enables them to assume the missionary role of guides in society and convey the call of Islam; to lead and reform.

Allah the Exalted says:

"And from among you (O Believers) there should be a party who invite to good, and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful."

Sura Aal Imran (3:104)

Therefore it is clear from the reasons cited above, as to why the messages were many, and how they finally culminated in the message of Muhammad (s.a.w.); the message which brought religion-Islam-to its highest degree of perfection and in complete uniformity with human progress and scientific development.

AMENDMENTS IN DIVINE MESSAGES

"Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and in that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit (become Muslims):

Sura Baqara (2:136)

All the divine messages meet along the same line and march towards the same goal; to deliver man from the darkness of unbelief and guide him towards belief in Allah, the Exalted Creator, by means of the same supreme principles of faith. As we have already explained, the laws, legislations,

ethics and ritual worship preached by the prophets, throughout the course of history, and across the expanse of human life were in stages and forms parallel with mankind's religious and cultural development, and its intellectual perfection.

Every prophet paved the way for the next, and endeavoured to guide the human mind, spirit and conduct towards maturity so that it may be prepared to receive the next divine message, and be on guard against deviation.

The successive divine messages adhered to the same course, destroying the corrupt beliefs, the deviated ideas, the distorted laws and the bad morals, which frequently cropped up in every time and place. They undertook the task of building a civilized community, by enlightening the mind and spirit of the individual and the society as a whole, on the basis of the sublime religious principles which guarantee goodness for mankind both in this world and in the hereafter.

They actualized the process of development and perfection by means of wise amendments concerning laws, legislations, rituals, etc.

Divine amendment means the cancellation of a certain law and its replacement by a more suitable one, according to the stage of human development, because the Creator best knows what better suits His creatures.

"... and it is not in (the power of) an apostle to bring a portent save by Allah's leave; for everything there is a time prescribed. Allah effaces and establishes what He pleases and with Him is the source of the Book."

Sura Ra'd (13:38,39)

The divine messages passed through the gradual process of change and amendments, not by any mortal priest or rabbi who distorted scriptures for their own selfish ends, but by divine revelation, through 'Reformer Prophets' (Moses for example), according to the needs of the times - "for everything there is a time" - and in harmony with the developments, taking place.

The Qur'an refers to this by saying:

"Whatever of the verses We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring (in place) one better than it or like it.

Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?"

Sura Baqara (2:106)

This was in order to devise better rules and legislations and lay a perfect legal foundation, precisely covering all aspects of human activities and defining individual and social ethics and relations.

As we already explained earlier, each new message addressed to mankind surpassed the previous one in all its aspects, was of a wider horizon, and more exact in handling the growing human faculties.

Thus, the legislating process continued till it reached full perfection in the message of Muhammad (s.a.w.). The Qur'an profoundly expresses the unity of relations among the elementary principles of all divine messages as follows:

"And We have revealed to you the Book (Qur'an) with the truth confirming whatever of the Book(s) was before it, and a guardian over it, so, judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their low desires (to turn away) from the truth which has come to you, for everyone of

you We have appointed a divine law and a (traced out) way, and if Allah had willed He would have made you (all) a single nation, but that He might try you in what He gave you, so vie one with another to hasten to virtuous deeds; to Allah is your return of all (of you), so He will let you know that in which you differed"

Sura Mai'da (5:48)

In this way the evolutionary process of the divine messages continued, reaching its perfection in the last divine message revealed to the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (s.a.w.). Humanity had come of age, both spiritually and mentally and the message preached by the last great Prophet of Islam was the most perfect scientific version of Divine Laws and Legislations, that would flawlessly cater to the needs of all the future generations, till Doomsday.

".... This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you, and chosen for you Islam as a religion;..."

Sura Mai'da (5:3)

"Surely the religion with Allah is Islam....."

Sura Aal Imran (3:19)

"And whoever follows a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah) it will not be accepted from him, and he will be one of the losers in the hereafter."

Sura Aal Imran (3:85)

THE ORIGINALITY OF THE MESSAGES AND LATER DISTORTIONS

The course of the divine messages from the very beginning had to encounter arrogant attempts by ignorant elements, bent upon effacing them or at least distorting their true message and principles. No efforts were spared by the infidels in creating obstacles to hinder the progress of religion, stop its spread and empty it of its reformative contents. The prophets were persecuted by these tyrants and even martyred. The tyrants vainly thought that they would be able to blot the call of delivery and redemption and keep humanity in bonds.

But the most serious danger faced by the divine calls, was from the hypocrites and counterfeits. These pretended to accept the divine messages, but no sooner had a prophet died, they distorted and fabricated his teachings and scripture, in order to exploit the masses for their own selfish interests.

An outstanding example of this forgery are the Jewish rabbis and Christian priests, who so frequently changed, altered, added and deleted to the divine messages revealed through the Prophets Moses (a.s.) and Jesus (a.s.), that these were turned into semi-pagan religions having obscure rituals, with virtually nothing divine remaining therein. The pure monotheistic religion - Islam - preached by Moses (a.s.) and Jesus (a.s.) was polluted in the course of time by the sediments of the rabbis' and priests' devious thoughts, and assumed deformed and legendary mythical shapes, far removed from intellect and reason and mocked at by correct learning. Falsification and deviation of messages gradually made the one single faith, into different distorted religions. The religion so defined by the imaginations of the priests, had nothing but legends and fables, stagnancy and petrification, and made mankind prostrate before tyrants and despots - a state which caused people to dislike belief, and encouraged the waging of a war of hostility against the very idea of religion. Mankind was absolutely justified in taking such a hostile attitude towards these forged and distorted illusions, and in recoiling from such fossil understandings which were neo-paganism in disguise. In stark contrast to the monotheistic creed, prophets were worshipped as sons of God - a clear influence of pagan Roman beliefs on Christianity.

The Qur'an highlights these forgeries and falsifications in several verses concerning the Jews and the Christians:

"Certainly they have disbelieved who say: The Messiah, son of Mary is Allah; and the Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Surely whoever associates (partners) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden to him the Paradise and his abode is the Fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust. Certainly they have disbelieved who say: Allah is the third (person) of three (trinity); when there is no god but the One God and if they (the Christians) desist not from what they say, a painful doom shall befall those among them who disbelieve."

Sura Mai'da (5:72,73)

"And the Jews say: Ezra is the son of Allah; and the Christians say: De Messiah is the son of Allah; these are the words of their mouths; they

imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before; may Allah destroy them; how perverse are they! They have taken their rabbis and priests as Lords besides Allah and (also) the Messiah son of Mary and they were enjoined that they should serve one God only, there is no god but He; Exalted is He above all what they ascribe as partners (to Him)?"

Sura Tawba (9:30,31)

"Woe to those who write the book with their hands and then say: This is from Allah, so that they may make a small gain; therefore woe to them for what their hands have written (fabricated) and woe to them for what they earn thereby."

Sura Baqara (2:79)

The glorious Qur'an draws a clear picture of the perversion done by the Jewish rabbis and the Christian priests to the original creed, laws and concepts of the divinely revealed scriptures; the Torah and the Gospel. By enacting laws and propagating teachings violating the divine message of the original scriptures the Jews and the Christians not only served their own vested interests but in the process gave birth to superficial religions, bearing the clear stamps of their superstitious conscience and poor imagination. Distorting the very contents of these two divine messages, they led astray the greater part of several generations, until that deviation gradually took the form of a special creed and replaced whatever belief was there in the hearts of the few remaining followers of the true path preached by Jesus (a.s.); most of whom due to persecution by Roman Christianity took to the deserts and remote mountains to finally await the coming of the promised Reformer. The majority, either dictated by personal desires or fear of Imperial Rome - which had cleverly put on the mask of Christianity, preserving intact most of its pagan beliefs - drove the last nail into the coffin of the divine message, preached by the uncrucified prophet; Jesus (a.s.), by blindly and without reasoning accepting the creed which we know as Christianity today .

By analysing the so-called Torah and the Gospel now in the hands of their followers, we discover a disfigured and legendary picture, without the least resemblance to the spirit of both the divine scriptures revealed to Moses (a.s.), and Jesus (a.s.). Following are some evidences proving the point, that these books are in fact mere fabrications:

1. Several Gospels are now in circulation among the Christians, each one different from the other to a great extent, and even obviously self-contradicting.

When Allah had revealed only a single Book to Jesus (a.s.), not many; from where did the so many Gospels come from, and how do the learned priests explain the phenomena of these conflicting versions?

The only answer, that not even the highest ranking Christian authorities can refute is, these divine scriptures were subjected to so frequent revisions that eventually they lost the greater part of their originality and true contents, and led to so many conflicting versions of the Gospel.

2. True the source of all divine messages is Allah the Almighty and they all stress on the concept of monotheism and consider Him to be above all human attributes; whereas a glance at the present Torah of the Jews reveals

that it is far removed from the very principles of monotheism. Actually it so disfigures this fundamental principle of the divine message, that the Prophet Ezra (a.s.) is presented as the son of God, in close resemblance to the forged Gospel's view of the Messiah. An interesting point indeed, leaving so many questions unanswered; as to whether the Jews tried to outdo the Christians or was it vice versa? Moreover the Gospel itself betrays its pagan Roman influences when it says that Jesus (a.s.) was an incarnation of God and had a dual nature, both human and divine.

It is quite obvious to a sound rational mind that these are all deviated thoughts and heathen beliefs, which proves without doubt that the hypocrites coined absurd ideas in contrast to the basic principles of the religion brought by Moses (a.s.) and Jesus (a.s.).

3. Another glaring example of the distortion, which even a layman can detect, is the self-contradictions in these so-called holy books of the Jews and Christians. On one hand they sanctify the prophets and present them as lofty models of excellent character, but on the other hand these same books degrade them to the ranks of lecherous criminals, capable of committing every known sin.

Chapter XIX of the Book of Genesis, attributes a horrible crime to Prophet Lot (a.s.) and his two daughters, whom all good believers regard as a spotless person. The shameless story is reproduced below from the Old Testament for our readers, to judge themselves:

"And the firstborn said unto the younger, our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us .for the manner of all the earth: Come let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father, and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, &hold, I lay yester night with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also, and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him, and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus we (.....) the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the first born bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of Moabites unto this day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day."

Genesis (19:31-38)

This passage props up a number of questions, which the learned rabbis and priests, try to evade and insist on their followers to ignore the facts and accept blind obedience.

This same chapter of the Book of Genesis, starts with the destruction of the licentious cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to which the Prophet Lot (a.s.) had been sent by God as a Reformer. And it says that while escaping to Zoar, Lot's wife disregarding God's command turned back to see the destruction of these cities and was instantly turned into a pillar of salt. In other words it means that Lot (a.s.) was a pious, God-fearing man and the cities were destroyed for the sole reason that they did not heed his guidance

and continued their lecherous deeds. And moreover even his wife could not escape God's wrath due to her disobedience .

Now taking another look at verses 31-38, quoted above, we find that Lot - God forbid - was a weak character and his daughters wicked persons. The question arises if the prophets were fools, lechers or simpletons, what missionary roles were they capable of performing? And did the Creator who easily created the whole universe erred in selecting prophets? And lastly, if His messengers themselves were lecherous why did He destroy the promiscuous cities which were only emulating their Prophet?

The only answer is that this very passage like so many other ones in these books betrays its origin. It is a clear case of distortion and later addition by some prejudiced racist Jew, whose only intention was to slander other races, because of some deep personal bias. His distorted mind found the Torah to be the best medium to express his hatred, regardless of the sacrilege he was committing towards God, a Prophet and his family.

Another example of a distortion is Chapter XI of book II of Samuel, which blasphemes the Prophet David (a.s.) and accuses him of committing adultery with the wife of Uriah the Hittite, his faithful companion and a true believer. It alleges that having made Uriah's wife Bathsheba pregnant; David to achieve his sinister designs sent Uriah to the war fronts where he was killed and thus got rid of him.

Now coming to the New Testament, we find in Chapter XI of the Gospel, according to St. John, that Jesus (a.s.) attended a wedding, where they were short of wine and he performed a miracle by converting six stoups of water into the forbidden drink. The Gospel, also says that Jesus Christ used to drink wine, and he was a heavy drinker .

Thus it is quite clear to every believer in God that such allegations are but crafty inventions and cleverly disguised lies against the prophets by those hypocrites, who wanted to distort religion from within, in order to disrepute these pure personalities and at the same time promote a Christ-worshipping cult, appealing to the minds of the pagan Greeks and Romans. Even a casual look at these books reveals their forgery and the real aim of their authors, who by mischievously innovating prophet-worship belittled the doctrine of monotheism and the spotless characters of such great prophets as Moses (a.s.) and Jesus (a.s.).

4. Another evidence proving the forgery of these Books is that they are diffused with polytheism and pagan thoughts, such as the idea of incarnation; the concept of trinity and the belief that the Messiah is god in the shape of man.

The authors of the Gospels had long been under the influence of pagan thoughts and beliefs, then prevailing in Roman society. In order to conform to the pagan Roman mind they disfigured the pure monotheistic spirit of the original Gospel, revealed to Prophet Jesus (a.s.). It is an irrefutable fact of history, confessed even by the Christian priests, that the versions of Gospel now common among the Christians were composed by different authors over a two hundred year period after Jesus (a.s.).

In other words they were forged by the priests according to their own thinking and greedy desires, conforming on one hand with the pagan Roman

culture, and on the other, the already polluted Jewish thought, which alienated from the creed of Moses (a.s.) and other prophets had not only rejected Jesus (a.s.), but was also involved in the far-reaching conspiracy of distorting the divinely revealed word of Jesus (a.s.).

The Christian Church, in line with the era of moral and spiritual decadence and ignorance continued to falsify, deface and deform the true spirit of Jesus' (a.s.) message, so that in course of time such weird and absurd beliefs were added; as the forgiving of sins by the priests; promise of Paradise to the wrong-doer despite evil deeds, and the sale of 'Indulgence Papers' from the Church, in which the Pope guarantees forgiveness, for the money the customer pays.

On studying the Church's way of life, and scrutinizing the Christian clerical hierarchy, one is apt to uncover the major motives behind these disastrous interferences with the divine values preached by the Messiah (a.s.).

The major motive of the Christian Church was to fill its coffers and accumulate wealth. By pretending to possess the authority to forgive sins, it not only blasphemed God; but also deliberately misled simple people by sanctioning the enjoyment of the forbidden things, in the very name of religion and under the pretext of a deferred purification'. It even issued those so-called 'Indulgence Papers' in which it is written; "May our Lord Jesus bless you, and deliver you by the rewards of his all-sacred pains....I, according to my Apostolic power bestowed upon me, relieve you from all your punishments, sentences and clerical consequences that you had deserved; and from all extravagances, evils and sins which you committed however grave and horrible and whatever their causes might have been, though they are kept for our father, His Holiness the Pope and the Apostolic Seat. I shall erase all the filths of sin and all the signs of blame, which you might have brought upon yourself in this life, and I shall lift the punishments from which you should have suffered in the purgatory. I shall turn you anew to participate in the secrets of the Church, and in the company of the saints. I shall turn you again to chastity and goodness which you got when baptized, so that will be closed before you, at death time, the door through which the wrongdoers enter to the place of torture and punishment, while will be opened to you the door leading to the paradise of joy, even if you lived for long years."^[2]

In other words by issuing such absurd papers, the Church has given its followers the free rein to commit whatever crimes they like however capital they may be. Thus the present moral and spiritual decadence of the Christian world like atheism, usurping others' properties, violence, transgression, fraud, adultery, sodomy and other sorts of crimes, including the oppression on Third World countries and political and moral bankruptcy, directly rest on these Papal Papers. It actually inspires them to commit every known sin, crime and aggression, because after all the 'Pope is there to forgive these offences and throw open the doors of paradise to his flock'. No wonder Christian missionaries are spreading across oppressed Africa and other Third World countries, to seek new converts; which in reality means lulling the unsuspecting people to lose their rationality by accepting this

dangerous slow poison called Christianity, and ultimately paving the way for the Imperialist countries to plunder the rich natural resources of Africa and the Third World.

This proves that the Pope substitutes himself for God, Who is the only One to forgive sins and the only One to admit into paradise. The Pope very well knows that he has neither the right nor the power to forgive, since he is but a mere mortal like other human beings, and himself cannot avail any benefit nor ward off any harm. In fact all he and his group of atheists want is to accumulate wealth to satisfy their secret desires and pleasures, and run the fabulous theatrical show under his control called the Church , by making fools of millions around the world.

The Qur'an attacks this greed and avarice of the priests and the pontiffs who exploit religious responsibility by taking advantage of peoples' simplicity and suck their blood and lead them astray. It exposes the true nature of this so-called religious establishment, and uncovers its selfish aims which contradict reason and the very essence of religion and its universal reformative call to enlighten mankind and deliver them from darkness.

The Qur'an says:

"O you who believe! Indeed many of the (Jewish) rabbis and the (Christian) priests falsely consume the wealth of the people (their followers) and prevent (them) from the way of Allah; and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, announce to them (O Muhammad) a painful doom."

Sura Tawba (9:34)

THE TIDINGS OF THE PROPHETS REGARDING MUHAMMAD

In the previous chapters we discussed that the grand messages of the prophets invited mankind towards the Universal Religion called Islam; which means submission and surrender to the commands of the Creator, Allah.

Islam, which guided humanity in its stages of development and promises salvation in the hereafter. Islam which was preached by such great prophets as Abraham, Moses, Jesus (peace be upon them) and several others, scattered across the face of the earth, reached its climax with its final and most scientific message, the Holy Qur'an, which was revealed to its greatest Prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.). This last final call or set of legislations was to supersede all previous messages, since it is the most advanced version, equipped to serve mankind and its scientific and technological progress till Doomsday. In other words the previous messages were preparatory steps and paving measures to groom mankind intellectually for the great task of shouldering this perfect message, and believing sincerely in it.

Therefore it was natural for the carriers of previous messages, Moses and Jesus (a.s.), to direct their followers to await this great revelation, and whole-heartedly accept its invitation by believing in the Seal Of the prophets, Muhammad (s.a.w). as after him neither there will be a messenger nor a message. The sacred scriptures which contained many passages, indicating the coming of this great Prophet, exhorted their followers to await the auspicious event and gather under Muhammad's (s.a.w.) banner when he appears. Despite the havoc wrought on the Torah and the Gospel by the rabbis and the priests, fragments remained in these very books, heralding the great Reformer. The Jews eagerly awaited the coming of a prophet promised by God to deliver and guide mankind.

They even wrote books describing the signs of his appearance. Jews living in 'Yathreb' and other parts of Arabia and constantly embroiled with the idol worshipping pagan Arab tribes of Aws and the Khazraj,^[3] used to declare that as soon as the promised one will appear in this very land, he will put an end to the evil practices of these Arabs.

The following verses of the holy Qur'an beautifully describe these facts:

"And certainly We gave Moses the Book (Torah) and after him We sent (many) apostles one after another, and We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty) and we strengthened him with the holy spirit (angel Gabriel). What! whenever then an apostle came to you with that (teachings) which your souls did not desire, you were insolent, so you called some (apostles) liars and some (apostles) you slew. And they (Jews) say: Our hearts are covered. Nay, Allah has cursed them on account of their unbelief; so little it is that they believe. And when there came to them a Book (Qur'an) from Allah, verifying that which they have (Torah), although before that they used to pray for victory over those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that (Prophet) which they did recognize, (to be the truth) they disbelieved in him; so Allah's curse is on the unbelievers."

Sura Baqara (2:87-89)

The events which were foretold to the Jews in their books and which they were awaiting as manifest signs of the great Reformer's appearance did take place before the coming of Muhammad (s.a.w.), a fact towards which the Qur'an points:

"... although before that they used to pray for victory over those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that (Prophet) which they did recognize (to be the truth) they disbelieved in him..."

Sura Baqara (2:89)

Commenting on the revelation of the above verse, the Prophet's cousin, Abdullah Ibn Abbas who was a renowned exegete says: The Jews used to invoke Allah, in the name of the awaited Prophet (before declaration of Muhammad's (s.a.w.) prophethood) against the Arab tribes of Aws and Khazraj . But when Allah commanded Muhammad (s.a.w.) to publicly announce his prophethood they disbelieved in him and went back on their words; on the pretext that he was not from the Israelites but was an Arab and thus they shamelessly denied what they used to say in his praise.

Upon this, three of the Arabs; Muadh ibn Jubail, Bishr ibn Bara and Dawud ibn Salamah, who had renounced idolatry and accepted Islam, reminded them in the following words: "O Jews; Fear Allah and accept Islam; because you yourself used to pray for victory over us by the right of Muhammad (s.a.w.), while we were idolators, remember you used to praise him and foretell his prophethood and describe his attributes to us" To this Salam ibn Mushkim; the Jew, replied that Muhammad (s.a.w) brought nothing to them they knew and he is not the prophet, which they were telling about. To refute these Jewish denials the above verse was revealed.^[4]

Al-Aiyashi, in his famous exegesis on the holy Qur'an has recorded Imam Ja'afar As-Sadeq's (a.s.) narration to Abu Basir. The Imam says that the Jews had been informed in their books, that the migration (Hejira) route of the last Prophet would pass through somewhere between the places called 'Ayr' and 'Ohud'. in the Hejaz.^[5] Keen to locate the place the Jews migrated to the Hejaz to await the eventual coming of the last Reformer.

Passing along Mount Hadad, they thought it rhymed perfectly with the predicted Ohud and they dispersed along the valley, making settlements in 'Taima', 'Fadak' and 'Khaiber'. After some time a group of Taima Jews longing to see their brethren, hired the services of a Bedouin and his camels, who promised to show them the predicted lands, called Ayr and Ohud. When the party reached the city of Yathreb (Medina) the Bedouin told them that this is Ayr and that is Ohud. Immediately the Jews dismounted and informed the Bedouin that they no longer required either his services or his camels, because they had reached their avowed goal and intend to settle there. They wrote to their brethren in Fadak and Khaiber about their discovery of the promised place and invited them to join them in Yathreb. The Khaiber and Fadak Jews, as they had grown roots in those places showed reluctance in deserting their settlements, but however assured the Yathreb Jews, that since it is in close proximity to their places, when it happens (the appearance of the awaited Prophet), they will rush to Yathreb.

Gradually as time passed the Jews, profiting in trade and commerce amassed considerable wealth and bought large properties in and around

Yathreb . Their new found wealth and prosperity attracted the covetous eyes of 'Tubba', King of Yemen, who raided them. The Jews fortified themselves and after a long siege, the conflicting parties came to terms. King Tubba revealed his intentions of permanently settling in Yathreb , to which the Jews objected, saying that Yathreb being the future migration place of the expected Prophet, it is sacred to them and no one else may reside there until then. The King of Yemen persuaded them that in that case he will leave two of his near relatives from the Aws and Khazraj tribes in Yathreb, so that they may also support the promised Reformer when he appears.

In course of time the numbers of the Aws and Khazraj who were Arabs greatly increased and soon they started vying with the Jews for supremacy and laid their hands on Jewish lands and properties. It was during these conflicts against the idol-worshipping Arabs (the Aws and Khazraj tribes) that the Jews who were expecting the last Prophet and had migrated to Arabia solely for this purpose, used to rebuke the pagan Arabs by saying:

"When Muhammad (s.a.w) finally appears, we shall drive you from our lands and properties."

But when Muhammad (s.a.w.) did finally appear and declared his prophethood, it were these very same Jews who generations ago had come in his search - who rejected him saying that he was an Arab and not of the Israelites.

Whereas the pagan Arabs of the tribes of Aws and Khazraj renounced idolatry , accepted Islam and rallied to his cause, for which ironically the Jews had waited so long, only to deviate at the last moment. Thus it is towards this fact that the Holy Qur'an draws attention."

"... although before that they used to pray for victory over those who disbelieved..."

Sura Baqara (2:89)

It will not be out of context to cite the following passages from the Old Testament, which to any discernible and rational mind are a pointer to the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.)

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will requite it of him."

Deuteronomy (18:18,19)

"And as for Ishmael I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall be beget and I will make him a great nation."

Genesis (17:20)

"Here is My servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one in whom I delight, I have bestowed My spirit upon him, and he will make justice shine on the nations. He will not call out or lift his voice high, or make himself heard in the open market. He will not break a bruised reed, or snuff out a smouldering wick; he will make justice shine on every race, never faltering, never breaking down, he will plant justice on earth, while coasts and islands wait for his teaching. Thus speaks the Lord Who is God, He Who created

the skies and stretched them out, Who fashioned the earth and all that grows in it, Who gave breath to its people, the breath of life to all who walk upon it: I, the Lord, have called you with righteous purpose and taken you by the hand; I have formed You and appointed you to be a light to all peoples, a beacon for the nations... Let the wilderness and its towns rejoice, and the villages of the tribe of Kedar (Qaydar)^[6].

Isaiah (42:1-6,11)

These prophecies could apply to none of the Hebrew prophets. Even Jesus (a.s.) made it plain that his mission was far from being universal, saying: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel".

(Mathew 15:24)

His calling was limited and it was the later non Jewish converts, not Jesus (a.s.) who gave Christianity its inclusive nature. Nor was Jesus (a.s) or any of the Hebrew prophets related in any way to Kedar (Qaydar). In promising a great prophet from the Arabs, Isaiah (a.s.) was merely amplifying the prophecy made previously by Moses (a.s.).

God revealed to Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18,19) that a prophet would arise from the brothers of the Hebrews the Arabs, who were children of the brother of Isaac, Ishmael (peace be upon them)- who would command world wide attention and obedience.

Ishmael's (a.s.) descendants came to be known as Arabs, a term which in Hebrew, meant those who inhabited the 'Arabah' (desert). Further, of all the sons of Ishmael (a.s.) the one mentioned most prominently in the Old Testament is Kedar. In some verses Kedar is synonymous with the Arabs in general.' This is an important indication that the line of Kedar was marked by God for a unique purpose for it was from this line Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) sprang.

JESUS' PROPHECY ABOUT MUHAMMAD

"And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Surely I am the apostle of Allah to you, verifying that which was (revealed) before me of the Torah, and giving the good tidings of an Apostle who will come after me, whose name is Ahmad..."

Sura Saff (61:6)

"Those who follow the Apostle - Prophet the Ummi whom they find ordained for them in the Torah and the Gospel, he enjoins them good and forbids them evil..."

Sura A'raf (7:157)

The Gospel of Jesus (a.s.) brought into sharper focus the identity of the one who would fulfil the promise to make the line of Ishmael (a.s.) a great nation. In the Gospel of John - a New Testament book which is not the Gospel of Jesus (a.s.) and which may be considered as representing only in general terms portions of Jesus' teaching - Jesus (a.s.) informs his close companions that his work among them was drawing to conclusion, but God would send someone else after a time to carry forward the prophetic movement. This someone, however, would be the last of the prophets.

The following passages of the New Testament lend further proof to the Prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w):

"And this is the record of John (the Baptist) when the Jews sent priests and levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who art thou?"

And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed I am not the Christ.

And they asked him, what then? Art thou Elias?"

And he saith I am not. Art thou THAT PROPHET? And he answered, No.

And they asked him, and said unto him, why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither THAT PROPHET."

John (1:19-21,25)

"If ye love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.

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

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

John (14:15, 16,26,30)

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I shall send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."

John (15:26)

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement:

Of sin, because they believe not on me;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Of judgement because the prince of this world is judged.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

John (16:7-14)

A careful study of these passages brings to light the following facts:

- 1) Jesus Christ (a. s.) prophesies the coming of a Comforter after him.
- 2) The coming of the Comforter depends on Christ's departure.
- 3) He is sent by Almighty Allah.
- 4) He will teach everything.
- 5) He will draw attention towards what the Christ had foretold.
- 6) He will testify and glorify Christ.
- 7) He will not speak by himself but what he divinely hears.
- 8) He will foretell future events.
- 9) The world will follow his religion.
- 10) He will stay forever.

In view of these glaring facts if we cast a glimpse at the life of Prophet Muhammad(s.a.w.) we will discover the amazing truth that these points perfectly tally with his mission and hence without doubt he is the 'Comforter' whose tidings Jesus (a.s.) gave. Because the holy Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad(s.a.w.) not only confirms and glorifies Jesus (a.s.) and his Prophethood but reminds people of Christ's prophecy. Besides, the Qur'an is a final revelation for mankind and an eternal message. It is an inexhaustible mine of information, foretells future events and promises that Islam will eventually spread all over the world uniting humanity in peace and harmony.

A closer look at the word 'Comforter' as mentioned in the Bible will help us uncover some more startling facts.

Comforter here stands for the word 'Parakletos' mentioned in the Greek version of the New Testament from which the English translation is made. And more precisely the meaning of 'Parakletos' is an advocate, one who counsels or advises another from deep concern for the other's welfare. Or to say it more clearly 'Parakletos' would designate one who would be considered "Mercy for all creatures" (Rahmatun lil Alameen), the term the holy Qur'an uses in chapter 21 verse 107 to describe Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

Moreover scholars have pointed out that what Jesus' said in his native language of Aramaic represents another similar Greek word 'Periklytos', which means the Admirable or the Glorified One and corresponds exactly to the Arabic word 'Ahmad'.

Hence the Qur'an's quotation of Jesus' good tidings to the Jews: "An Apostle will come alter me whose name is Ahmad".

When Jesus declares of this coming Prophet Counsellor that he would "abide with you forever," he shows that there would be no need for additional prophets to succeed him. He would be the last one. He would lead mankind "to every aspect of the truth." So truthful and trustworthy would he be that he will be called Al-Armin (The Truthful) or as the text of John 16:13 says, "the spirit of truth", one of whom it could be said: "He has brought them the Truth." (Qur'an 23:70)

The term 'spirit' here does not mean that the coming Prophet would be other than human. In New Testament Greek, this word has also been applied to an inspired person, "the possessor of a spiritual communication" or revelation. This is why the next sentence of the verse containing this expression says: "He will guide you unto all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear (from God), that shall he speak." (John 16:13).

This person would receive the revelation of truth from God and these words alone would constitute the message, not his own opinions or the writings of his companions. His message or revelation would be first and foremost and literally the Word of God. Note that this corresponds exactly to what God revealed to Moses (a.s.) about the Prophet who would come from among the "brothers" of the Hebrews: "I... will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deuteronomy 18:18).

Now compare these to the following verse of the holy Qur'an which drives home the ultimate truth:

"Your companion (Muhammed) does not err, nor does he go astray; Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed, The Lord of Mighty Power has taught him."

Sura Najm (53:25)

It cannot be overlooked that Jesus (a.s.) gives a unique requirement that would help to identify the last Prophet: "He shall glorify me" (John 16:14). If anyone had come claiming to be this Prophet, but did not give due honor to Jesus (a.s.) as Prophet and Messiah, he would be the wrong one. At the same time, this Prophet to come would not be a follower of Jesus (a.s.), that is, a Christian, because Jesus (a.s.) said that this Prophet would reveal things of which Jesus (a.s.) himself was unaware. If Jesus (a.s.) had brought "all the truth," there would have been no need for him to single out someone else who would come with all the truth. Likewise, since this Prophet would bring all the truth he would have to be the last one, the seal of the Prophets. Therefore, we would have to look for someone who, like Abraham (a.s.) in whose line he would come, would be neither Jew nor Christian but would believe in God. He would "glorify" Jesus (a.s.) by insisting that Jesus (a.s.) was a true Messenger of God and by acknowledging that Jesus (a.s.) was the true Messiah. But the teaching of this Prophet would come from God Himself. As a revelation from God, the message of this last Prophet would confirm what God revealed previously by means of the original Torah and the original Gospel, but his message would be no mere plagiarized copy, no condensed edition of either the Torah or the Gospel. God Almighty had said, "I... will put My words in his mouth:" and it is proper that these words agree with previously revealed words of the One and Same God. "Whatsoever he shall hear (from God), that shall he speak."

History has recorded that Christians during the first few centuries after Christ, not only believed in these above-mentioned facts but eagerly awaited the coming of the last Prophet, as foretold by Jesus (a.s.) It was only during the 3rd century, when hordes of Roman pagans began converting to Christianity, the pure monotheistic message of Prophet Jesus (a.s.) showed signs of pollution, with weird heathen ideas such as 'God Father', 'God Son', 'Holy Ghost' and 'Trinity' creeping in.

This strange Holy Ghost interpretation gained currency only after Christians began to look upon God as a Trinity with the Holy Ghost being an aspect of it. Neither the word Trinity nor its concepts can be found anywhere in the Bible. The Paraclete would be a man, not a ghost, because the same word is applied to Jesus (a.s.) himself, in John (2:1).

The annals of history prove that faithful Christians from time to time stood up against these heretical ideas.

But when Constantine assumed the reins of the Roman Empire, not only did he espouse the cause of the heretics, but also launched a mass persecution against the true believers, forcing them to flee to deserts and inaccessible mountains to live as hermits.

Finally the following passage from the French Encyclopaedia, 'Larousse',^[7] is a sufficient admittance to the truth of Islam: "Muhammad" is

a derivative of the word 'Mahmood', whose root-word is 'Hamd', which means glorifying. Strangely another word is derived from the same origin and that is 'Ahmad'. It is widely believed, Christians in the Arabian Peninsula used the word 'Ahmad' for the Greek word 'Paraclete' mentioned in the Bible, which means 'the Glorified or Promised one'. Muslims subsequently made great efforts saying this refers to Prophet Muhammad, as described by the Qur'an (in Chapter 61)."

Thus it is clear that despite centuries of disastrous human interference in the Torah and the Bible, portions remain indicating the eternal truth of Islam.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica has the following comments on the Gospels:

"They resemble oil paintings rather than photographs. Legendary and apologetic motifs, and the various preoccupations of the communities for which they were first produced, can readily be discerned as influences upon their narratives."^[8]

The coming of Muhammad (s.a.w.) was heralded, not only by Moses (a.s.) and Jesus (a.s.), but by all the prophets.

Even Abraham (a.s.), the father of the prophets, foretold his coming, and prayed God for a guide and rescuer. This is explicitly referred to by the Qur'an which quotes Abraham's prayer:

"Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among them who shall recite to them Your revelations, and teach them the Book and the Wisdom and cleanse them (of false beliefs); surely You are the Mighty, the Wise."

Sura Baqara (2:129)

The verse given below declaring the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.) is a clear answer to Abraham's (a.s.) prayer mentioned above; for Muhammad (s.a.w.), was a direct descendent of Abraham (a.s.) through his eldest son Ishmael (a.s.):

"He it is Who raised among the unlettered, an Apostle from among themselves, who recites to them His revelations and cleanses them (of false beliefs), and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, although they were before certainly in clear error."

Sura Jum'a (62:2)

These facts are quite obvious to a rational thinker and any seeker of truth interested in finding the path of guidance, like Negus, the Christian king of Abyssinia, who positively responded to the call of truth. When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) wrote to Negus citing proofs of his prophethood, foretold in the Torah and the Gospel and invited him to accept Islam, Negus immediately surrendered (became Muslim) to the message of Islam. History has preserved his eternal words as a fair testimony of a just man, free from the effects of the environment, or the pressures of obstinacy and bigotry; "I call Allah as witness that he (Muhammad s.a.w.) is the prophet awaited for by the followers of the Scriptures..."^[9]

Thus, anyone pursuing truth can clearly discern that Muhammad (s.a.w.) had been heralded by the previous prophets, and that he was the awaited one to reform mankind and deliver them, from darkness and going astray. Yes, it was he whom all the prophets had heralded and prayed Allah to send.

THE HISTORIC STRUGGLE OF THE PROPHETS

"Thus have We made for every prophet an opponent from among the sinners..."

Sura Furqan (25:31)

An observer following humanity's historical march and the process of its long and bitter struggle, discerns two directly opposite currents, two conflicting forces. On one hand, there is the power of evil, transgression, perversion, deviation, blasphemy and tyranny, personified through a number of tyrannic despots and dictators, such as Pharaoh, Nimrod, Abu Jahl and the unjust dominating classes in every era and nation.

On the other hand, there is the power of faith, piety, truth, peace and the call to justice, mercy and equality, personified through such great prophets as Abraham (a.s.), Moses (a.s.), Jesus (a.s.) and Muhammad (s.a.w.) and their sincere followers who spread the message of monotheism and proclaimed the call of faith, to save humanity from slipping in the darkness of disbelief and idolatry.

That faithful group always appears, on the stage of history to wage a sacred struggle against the forces of perversion and deviation. There was not a single prophet who did not suffer, together with his followers, from tyranny, oppression, torture and persecution, because of his invitation towards truth and righteousness, and opposition to injustice, disbelief and tyranny. And there were no advocates of truth who did not suffer the same fate as the prophets did. In the way of Allah they endured imprisonment, terror, torture, banishment and martyrdom at the hands of the tyrants and dictators, the enemies of Allah and mankind. The glorious Qur'an illustrates this epic struggle between the prophets and their followers on one side, and the enemies of Allah and truth on the other:

"And how many a prophet has fought with whom were devoted men (beside him), so they did not become weak-hearted on account of what befell them in the way of Allah, nor did they weaken (in their faith) nor did they abase themselves; and Allah loves the patient. And their saying was none other than what they said: "Our Lord! forgive us our faults and our extravagance in our affair, and make firm our feet (on the right path) and help us against the unbelieving people."

Sura Aal Imran (3:146,147)

"Thus have We made for every prophet an opponent from among the sinners and sufficient is your Lord as a Guide and Helper."

Sura Furqan (25:31)

The Seal of the prophets, Muhammad (s.a.w.) along with his brave cousin Imam Ali (a.s.) and his sincere companions, was always in the forefront of the struggle for the sake of truth and for making this earth a place of peace and happiness. The glorious Qur'an testifies to the role played by the great Prophet and his faithful followers in defending justice and faith, with the spirit of self-sacrifice and redemption, in harmony with the teachings of Allah, and in pursuit of the logic of reform and divine examination:

"Therefore bear up patiently as did the apostles endowed with constancy had patience, and do not seek to hasten for them (their doom). On the day

that they shall see what they are promised they shall be as if they had not tarried save an hour of the day. A clear message! Shall then any be destroyed save the transgressing people?"

Sura Ahqaf (46:35)

Thus through this long and bitter historical struggle, the prophets and their followers resisted disbelief, injustice and corruption and inspired the oppressed people with the spirit of heroism and self-sacrifice and guided them in raising the banner of protest for the realization of their deprived rights, in the face of the despots and the dictators, who had enslaved mankind, and had considered themselves god-heads on this earth. Allah, the Strong and Mighty, helps and guides the faithful who struggle in His way and will surely punish those who are disbelievers.

"And (as for) those who strive hard for us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good."

Sura Ankabut (29:69)

"... then We gave the punishment to those who were guilty and helping the believers is ever incumbent upon Us."

Sura Rum (30:47)

WHY WE BECAME MUSLIMS

In this age of reason and scientific progress, when all religions and traditional sets of beliefs have been exposed in their true colours as being nothing but superstitious .ignorance, Islam with its emphasis on rationality has made a great impact on the modern human mind. With the gradual removal of the veils of prejudice, bigotry and ignorance, more and more people are realizing the truth, and joining the Universal brotherhood, called Islam, which knows no barriers of race, colour, language and even geographical boundaries. Despite the massive anti-Islamic propaganda of the International media in league with Zionism and the Church, whose global economic exploitation has put vast resources at their disposal; seekers of truth from various dimes are coming into the Islamic fold.

Following we present a summarized account from some of our new brothers and sisters on how and why they became Muslims.

Dr. Gernia

(A former French MP)

For a long time I have carefully studied the holy Qur'an and was amazed to discover that its verses contain a mine of knowledge, dealing with such diverse sciences as astronomy, medicine, biology, health, social care, etc. And the interesting point is, all of these remarkably agree with our own modern rational mind and scientific discoveries made on these subjects.

However the important thing which convinced me of the truth of Islam and Muhammad's (s.a.w) prophethood was the fact that without ever sitting before a teacher, he already knew before 1400 years, what modern science is beginning to unravel today. I firmly believe that if any scientist or scholar compares the Qur'anic verses with his own particular field of research, undoubtedly like me, he will realize the truth and become a Muslim.

Mr. Yacoub Raymond - France

Three important points made me reject Christianity and accept Islam:

1) Christianity though acknowledging the past prophets, elevates Jesus (a.s) to the position of God traces of pagan Roman influences - thus distorting the fundamental concept of the divinely revealed messages; Monotheism.

2) The absurd logic of Trinity, which credits Jesus with a dual personality - human and divine These two irrational ideas are Christianity's major flaws in the light of the monotheist concept of God as taught by the Prophets Abraham (a.s.) and Moses (a s).

3) Finally, Christianity gave birth to the Institution of the Church, which claims to act as an intermediary between God and man. This erroneous concept is in fact a green signal to its followers to commit sins, because of the Church's pretension to forgive them.

What a stupid idea! Does the Church which is run by fallible mortals has the power to forgive the sinners, instead of the Omnipotent, Immortal God? A dangerous notion indeed which no doubt explains the vices and their natural consequences - diseases and social breakdowns rampant in Christian countries.

Another important factor which drove me away from Christianity was the intense love for the material world among the Christians.

When we draw a comparison between Islam and Christianity, we discover the obvious truth Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) not only confirmed the prophethood of all the previous prophets, but that which was revealed to him (the holy Qur'an) are the only words of the Almighty, genuinely preserved unlike the previously revealed books, (Torah and Gospel) which have been badly tampered with and distorted.

Professor Roger Garaudy (Rajaa')

(French philosopher and man of letters. Speaker of the French Parliament from 1956 to 1958, whose historical conversion on 11 Ramadhan, 1402 (1982) made quite an uproar in the West.)

The only solution for the great crisis threatening to tear apart the present day world is the application of Islamic laws. Islam holds the key to social reforms, because of its subliming character which fosters spiritual unity.

The holy Qur'an helps us to see in everything or event, signs of Allah's Majesty, thereby proving the existence of a Higher Being, Who guides nature and life. Of course the main purpose of religion is to promote cooperation and unity.

Today the West needs Islam more than ever before, in order to give life its meaning and history its purpose.

The West has unfortunately separated science from wisdom, thought from its mode, which are so harmoniously knitted together in Islam as a single unit. Islam is the goal and the refined form of the Abrahamic creeds and teachings, whose earlier crude forms were Judaism and Christianity. There is no other way out for the West except to look towards Islam for deliverance from the catastrophic exploitation of Capitalism.

Marmaduke Pickthall

(British scholar who became a Muslim, changing his name to Muhammad, famous for his explanatory translation of the holy Qur'an)

There is no greater blessing for a human being to enjoy other than being guided towards Islam. Once you realize the truth and accept Islam, the mist will be automatically removed. You begin to differentiate between faith and disbelief, truth and falsehood, happiness and misery. I thank Almighty God for bestowing this great blessing on me. My awakened conscience has filled my life with such great happiness which I knew not before. In short, I am proud to be part of the Muslim Ummah, enjoying the shade of this blessed tree called Islam.

Lord Douglas Hamilton

(British industrialist, now known as Adel Hamilton)

Islam is the only religion capable of combating social discrimination, agnosticism and the decadence of modern civilization. It continues to attract a number of university graduates, who have been disillusioned with various ideologies and isms.

Sir Archibald Hamilton-U.K.

It was quite natural for me not to resist the magnetic pull of Islam. What a wonderful system of life! Besides forbidding all generally frowned upon vices, it explicitly prohibits the drinking of alcoholic beverages and intoxicants as well as the taking or giving of usury. In other words Islam does not allow any individual or group to exploit the other. These wise

injunctions coupled with the philanthropic obligations of 'Khoms' and 'Zakat' (poor-rates) to be distributed by the haves among the havenots without the latter's need to beg, make Islam a dynamic religion. Moreover begging is discouraged by Islam as a loss of self-respect.

These laws, not only maintain a social balance by removing barriers of ignorance but elevate human dignity to its greatest heights.

In short Islam guides life on a straight forward path, while Christianity crookedly preaches to its followers that God should be worshipped on Sunday and humans on the other days of the week.

Miss Brigitte Honey - U.K.

Through some of my friends I came across an English translation of the holy Qur'an. After reading the first two chapters when I had just started the third one, I suddenly felt an uncontrollable urge to prostrate myself before God.

It was the first time I had ever done such a thing in my life. The greater its significance, considering the fact that I had grown up in an irreligious atmosphere and had studied and dismissed various philosophies and ideas.

I accepted Islam the same instance, the only religion appealing to common sense and free from any sort of polytheistic traces. Islamic laws cover all aspects of human life and are in perfect harmony with science and nature.

Islam has a most complete code for binding the international community into a cohesive unit. It is far removed from any superstitious trends and has given birth to an entirely distinct art, culture, philosophy, industry and.... Etc., elevating human values to heights never attained before.

To sum it all, Islam with its profound belief in Allah, maintains a perfect equilibrium between both the spiritual and the material worlds.

Miss. Hadia Heidi Walsor - London, U.K.

Christianity in this age of reason is a dead religion, having failed miserably to keep pace with the progress of civilization. Christianity with its emphasis on baptism, monogamy and the theatrical funeral ceremony all of which stem from the polytheist concept of Trinity is not even weird but defies simple logic. Even when I was a child the very idea of Jesus (a.s.) being both divine and human sounded absurd to me. In fact the whole theory blasphemes Almighty God Himself.

Religion should be a source of the most sublime morals and ethics and in addition to inspiring its followers, should protect them against temptations. On the contrary an irrational set of beliefs as preached by the Christian Church undermines morals, breeding vices in the society as is evident for all.

Compare this with the rationality of Islam Let us take polygamy as an example, which is allowed in Islam in perfect harmony with human nature, although with certain reasonable regulations.

Is it not better to practice lawful healthy polygamy rather than stick to the hypocrisy of monogamy imposed by the Church, which leads to countless illicit affairs and consequently to diseases and social perversion? The day Europe realizes the freedom, liberty and rationality Islamic laws offer, it will get rid of all its social ills.

Mr. Donald Requil - U.S.A.

The simplicity of Prophet Muhammad's (s.a.w.) life coupled with the rationality of Islam made me change my belief. It is the only religion free of any absurdities and preposterous ideas. Once you realize the rationality of Islam, you become a true believer.

"We are nearer to him (man) than his jugular vein."

Sura Qaf (50:16)

"I am very near, I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls..."

Sura Baqara (2:186)

"... Wherever you look Allah is everywhere..."

Sura Baqara (2:115)

How rational and simple is Islam, no need for any intercessor. All people are equal before Allah. There is no difference whatsoever of colour, race, social status,... etc. And no one is superior to another except in terms of piety.

Moreover a glance at the life of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) his teachings, personality and behaviour, all indicate that he is the last and greatest of the prophets and Islam is a complete set of rules for humanity unlike Christianity, which utterly fails in this regard and could be described as against the very laws of nature itself.

Istraed Shmart - U.S.A.

I came across several Muslims in Elynews, whose friendship enlightened me about Islam and eventually I became a Muslim. The turning point in my life was, when one of my Muslim friends said that if God really willed to have a son, undoubtedly he would not have adopted one of his own creatures. "Brother, He the Almighty is Eternal and above all these defects", remarked my friend.

These magic words awakened my conscience. The sentence was quite logical and after reasoning, I realized that Jesus Christ (a.s.) was just one of the Prophets sent by God most high, and had been wrongly transformed-to suit the pagan mind-into a thing he never claimed he was. I began to question the belief that why should one man die on the cross for the sins committed by others and act as redeemer with Almighty God, when I myself can pray to Him sincerely and He has the power to grant my prayer. The answers were ably provided by Islam which testified Jesus'(a.s.) innocence to the whole sordid affair coined by the Church fathers, and I finally became a Muslim.

Al - Haj Dr. Abdul Karim Satyo

(Professor of Economics at a Japanese University)

Islam is without any ambiguity, in proving the existence of the Almighty One. It convincingly explains this Manifest Truth, without which everything would be chaos and all our accepted social morals will lose their meaning and justification. If humanity succeeds in discovering this Eternal Truth, people will accept Islam in multitudinous crowds.

Abdullah Amora-Japan

My search for truth brought me in touch with Islam.

When I compared Islamic laws to Christianity, I was amazed to discover that they are so precisely perfect that they have not undergone even the

slightest change since they were revealed, unlike the Bible, which contains nothing original.

The Qur'an is Allah's genuine word and has been entirely preserved in its original state, whereas the Bible, which has come down to us, is neither the word of God nor His divine laws. In fact the Bible is more or less a brief biography of a part of Jesus (a.s.) life and has been tampered with and revised so frequently down the centuries, that it is doubtful to say what percentage of it contains the actual events of Prophet Jesus'(a.s) life.

The greatest and the most glaring defect of Christianity is the absurd concept of Trinity and its forcing down the throats of simple people. The very emphasis on its blind acceptance, in utter disregard to reason and intellect betrays its nonsensical nature. Sadly Christian doctrine has encouraged crimes and loose moralities in society, contrary to Islam which inspires the building of a pure civilization.

Leopold Vaise

(An Austrian journalist and writer who changed his name to Muhammad Assad)

Honestly I am at a loss to say which particular field in Islam attracts me more. For me Islam is like a complete and flawless structure whose parts are inter-related and joined firmly and harmoniously together. In other words, no part of Islamic laws or values is out of place or dispensable and is precisely perfect in catering to even the minutest detail of a human's life. In short Islam is a cohesive unit whose every idea cosily fits in its right place and this has made a profound effect on my life.

Professor Mohammed Ezzeddin (Nishkanata Badhiyya) - India

(A former principal of a Hyderabad College and currently Professor of history at Maharaja college Mysore)

Islam is the only religion in full historical limelight and not of obscure origins as other religions. Islamic laws are in full conformity with reason and intellect, making it a practical religion and not a visionary theory. Besides the above characteristics unlike any other religion, Islam remarkably caters to the needs of people of every era and generation and is compatible to all cultures and levels of intellect. In brief it is the only platform capable of fostering universal brotherhood among mankind.

ISLAM AS SEEN BY PROMINENT WESTERN THINKERS

It is unfortunate that the Christian West instead of sincerely trying to understand the phenomenal success of Islam has considered it a rival religion. During the centuries of the crusades, this trend gained much force and impetus and a huge amount of literature was produced to tarnish the image of Islam.

Truth needs no advocates to plead on its behalf. But the prolonged malicious propaganda against Islam has created great confusion even in the minds of some free and objective thinkers. But Islam has begun to unfold its genuineness to the modern scholars whose bold and objective observations on Islam belie all the charges levelled against it by the so-called unbiased orientalisists.

The following are some observations on Islam, the Qur'an and Muhammad (s.a.w.) by well acknowledged non-Muslim Western scholars and thinkers of modern times which we hope would contribute to initiating an objective evaluation of the Islamic faith.

ABOUT ISLAM

"I am not a Muslim in the usual sense, though I hope I am 'Muslim' as 'one surrendered to God', but I believe that embedded in the Qur'an and other expressions of the Islamic vision are vast stores of divine truth from which I and other occidentals have still much to learn, and Islam is certainly a strong contender for the supplying of the basic framework of the one religion of the future."

W. Montgomery Watt

"Islam and Christianity Today",
London, 1983, page IX.

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him-the wonderful man - and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Saviour of humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today."

George Bernard Shaw

"The Genuine Islam",
Vol. 1, No. 81936.

"History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated."

De Lacy O'Leary

"Islam at the Crossroads",

London , 1923, page 8.

"But Islam has a still further service to render to the cause of humanity. It stands after all nearer to the real East than Europe does, and it possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and cooperation. No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity, and of endeavours so many and so various races of mankind... Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of East and West is to be replaced by cooperation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition. In its hands lies very largely the solution of the problem with which Europe is faced in its relation with East. If they unite, the hope of a peaceful issue is immeasurably enhanced. But if Europe, by rejecting the cooperation of Islam, throws it into the arms of its rivals, the issue can only be disastrous for both."

H.A.R. Gibb

"Whither Islam" London, 1932, p.379.

"The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding achievements of Islam and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue."

A. J. Toynbee

"Civilization on Trial",
New York, 1948, p. 205.

"The rise of Islam is perhaps the most amazing event in human history. Springing from a land and a people like previously negligible, Islam spread within a century over half the earth, shattering great empires, overthrowing long-established religions, remoulding the souls of races, and building up a whole new world, the world of Islam.

The closer we examine this development the more extraordinary does it appear. The other great religions won their way slowly, by painful struggle and finally triumphed with the aid of powerful monarchs converted to the new faith. Christianity had its Constantine, Buddhism its Asoka, and Zoroastrianism its Cyrus, each lending to his chosen cult the mighty force of secular authority, not so Islam. Arising in a desert land sparsely inhabited by a nomad race previously undistinguished in human annals.

Islam sallied forth on its great adventure with the slenderest human backing and against the heaviest material odds. Yet Islam triumphed with seemingly miraculous ease, and a couple of generations saw the Fiery Crescent borne victorious from the Pyrenees to the Himalayas and from the desert of Central Asia to the deserts of Central Africa."

A. M. L. Stoddard

Quoted in "Islam-The Religion of All Prophets",
Begum Bawani Waqf, Karachi Pakistan p.56.

"Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term considered etymologically and historically. The definition of rationalism as a system that bases religious beliefs on principles furnished by reason applies to it exactly. The teachings of the Prophet, the Qur'an have invariably kept their place as the fundamental starting point, and the dogma of unity of God has always been proclaimed therein with a grandeur, a

majesty, and invariable purity and with a note of sure conviction, which it is hard to find surpassed outside the pale of Islam. This fidelity to the fundamental dogma of the religion, the elemental simplicity of the formula in which it is enunciated, the proof that it gains from the fervid conviction of the missionaries who propagate it, are so many causes to explain the success of Muhammadan missionary efforts. A creed so precise, so stripped of all theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvellous power of winning its way into the consciences of men."

Edward Montet

"La Propagande Chretienne et ses Adversaires Musulmans",
Paris 1890, Quoted by T W Arnold in "The Preaching of Islam",
London 1913, pp. 413-414.

ABOUT THE QUR'AN

"The Koran admittedly occupies an important position among the great religious books of the world.

Though the youngest of the epochmaking works belonging to this class of literature, it yields to hardly any in the wonderful effect which it has produced on large masses of men. It has created an all but new phase of human thought and a fresh type of character . It first transformed a number of heterogeneous desert tribes of the Arabian Peninsula into a nation of heroes, and then proceeded to create the vast politico-religious organizations of Muhammadan world which are one of the great forces with which Europe and the East have to reckon today."

G. Margoliouth

Introduction to J M. Rodwell's The Koran,
New York: Everyman's Library, 1977 p. VII.

"A work, then, which calls forth so powerful and seemingly incompatible emotions even in the distant reader-distant as to time, and still more so as mental development- a work which not only conquers the repugnance with which he may begin its perusal, but changes this adverse feeling into astonishment and admiration, such a work must be a wonderful production of the human mind indeed and a problem of the highest interest to every thoughtful observer of the destinies of mankind."

Dr Steingass

Quoted in "Hughes' Dictionary of Islam" pp. 526-7

"Here, therefore, its merits as a literary production should perhaps not be measured by some preconceived maxims of subjective and aesthetic taste, but by the effects which it produced in Muhammad's contemporaries and fellow countrymen. If it spoke so powerfully and convincingly to the hearts of his hearers as to weld hitherto centrifugal and antagonistic elements into one compact and well organized body, animated by ideas far beyond those which had until now ruled the Arabian mind, then its eloquence was perfect, simply because it created a civilized nation out of savage tribes, and shot a fresh woof into the old warp of history."

Dr Steingass

Quoted in "Hughes' Dictionary of Islam" P.528.

"In making the present attempt to improve on the performance of my predecessors, and to produce something which might be accepted as echoing however faintly the sublime rhetoric of the Arabic Koran, I have been at pains to study the intricate and richly varied rhythms which - apart from the message itself - constitute the Koran's undeniable claim to rank amongst the greatest literary masterpieces of mankind... This very characteristic feature - 'that inimitable symphony', as the believing Pickthall described his Holy Book, 'the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy' - has been almost totally ignored by previous translators; it is therefore not surprising that what they have wrought sounds dull and flat indeed in comparison with the splendidly decorated original."

Arthur J Arberry

"The Koran Interpreted",

London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p X

"A totally objective examination of it [the Qur'an] in the light of modern know-ledge, leads us to recognize the agreement between the two, as has been already noted on repeated occasions. It makes us deem it quite unthinkable for a man of Muhammad's time to have been the author of such statements, on account of the state of knowledge in his day. Such considerations are part of what gives the Qur'anic Revelation its unique place, and forces the impartial scientist to admit his inability to provide an explanation which calls solely upon materialistic reasoning."

Maurice Bucaille

"The Qur'an and Modern Science", 1981, p 18

"The above observation makes the hypothesis advanced by those who see Muhammad as the author of the Qur'an untenable. How could a man, from being illiterate, become the most important author, in terms of literary merits, in the whole of Arabic literature? How could he then pronounce truths of a scientific nature that no other human-being could possibly have developed at that time, and all this without once making the slightest error in his pronouncement on the subject?"

Maurice Bucaille

"The Bible, the Qur'an and Science", 1978, p.125

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

Notes

[1] Al-Harrani Abu Muhammad Al-Hassan ibn 'Ali, "Tuhaful Uqool Un Aalir Rasool" P.285.

[2] Even Christian authorities have questioned the very conception of the Church. Says the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Some of the futurist sayings, if taken by themselves, raise the question whether Jesus intended to found a Church."(Vol. 4, p.535).

[3] 'Aws' and 'Khazraj' were two of the Arab tribes who lived in Medina. They accepted Islam and backed the prophet when he and other Muslims migrated from Mecca to Medina.

[4] Tafseer ul Mizan, Vol. I

[5] Eastern part of the Arabian peninsula, bordering the Red sea, which contains the leading cities such as, Mecca, Medina, Jeddah and Tayef.

[6] New English Bible

[7]- See Jeremiah 2:10; Ezekiel 27:21; Isaiah 60:7; Song of Solomon 1:5

[8] Volume 23, page 4174, under the title 'Muhammad Founder of Islam'.

[9] Vol. 4 p.534, titled Christianity

[10]. "Idhharul Haq" Vol. 2, P.281.

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