Promised Messiah Speaks:

Holy Quran’s Unchallenged Testimony

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The Holy Quran has emphatically claimed that it is the Word of God and that our lord and master, Muhammad, peace be upon him, is His true Prophet and Messenger, on whom that Holy Word has descended. That claim is clearly set forth in the following verses: *Allah is He beside Whom there is none worthy of worship, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting, All-Sustaining. He has sent down to thee the Book in accordance with the requirements of truth. (3:3-4)* Again: *O mankind, the Messenger has indeed come to you with Truth from your Lord. (4:171)* Again: *We have sent down this Discourse in accordance with the requirements of truth and with truth has it descended. (17:106)* Again: *O mankind, there has come to you a manifest proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear Light. (4:175)* Again: *Proclaim: O mankind, verily I am Allah’s Messenger to you all. (7:159)* Again: *From those who believe and work righteousness and believe in that which has been revealed to Muhammad, and it is the truth from their Lord, Allah removes their ills and improves their condition. (47:3)*

There are hundreds of other verses in which the claim has been put forward clearly that the Holy Quran is the Word of God and that Muhammad, the chosen one, peace be upon him, is His true Prophet. But the verses that we have set out should suffice. We would remind our opponents that this claim is not put forth in any other book as forcefully as it has been put forth in the Holy Quran. We are very eager that the Aryas should show from the Vedas that the four Vedas claimed to be the word of God and set forth clearly that they were revealed to such and such a person at such and such a time. For a book, on behalf of which it is claimed that it is from God, it is a primary necessity that it should set forth this claim clearly; for a book, which gives no indication of its being from God, to be attributed to God, would be an impertinence. A second matter which is worth mentioning is that not only has the Holy Quran claimed that it is from God and that the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was the Messenger of Allah, but has also established this claim with strong and powerful arguments. We shall set forth all these arguments in their order, but for the moment we present the first argument so that seekers after truth should be able to compare in this respect other books with the Holy Quran. We also invite every opponent that if this method of proof establishes the truth of a book and is found in their books also, they should set it forth in their papers and journals; otherwise, we would have to conclude that their books lack this proof of high degree. We affirm with full confidence that this method of proof will not be found in their religion and if we are in error, they should point our our error. That first argument which the Holy Quran has set forth in support of its claim of being from God Almighty is that sane reason holds it to be a strong argument for accepting a true Book and a true Messenger of God, that they should appear at a time when the world should be plunged in darkness, and the people should have adopted paganism in place of the Unity of God, and vice in place of purity, and wrong in place of justice, and ignorance in place of knowledge, and a Reformer should be sorely needed.

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EDITORIAL

FASTING - An Act of Devotional Worship

The faith of Islam has prescribed fasting for its followers during the month of Ramdzan. Such acts have been prescribed in other faiths as well. But their pre-Islamic concept was quite different. The underlying notion appears to have been to appease an otherwise offended deity. Islam, however, has given an entirely new meaning to such acts of worship. Here, these are meant to cultivate certain moral and spiritual qualities in order to express better behaviour and conduct. Let us quote a few verses of the Quran in this respect:

"Why should Allah chastise you if you are grateful and believers?" (4:147)

Does the Lord then desire His praise, it may be asked? But says the Holy Book:

"Whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for his own soul and whoever is ungrateful then surely My Lord is self-sufficient, bountiful." (27:40)

And again:

"If you are ungrateful, then certainly Allah is above the need (of your praise). He likes not ungratefulness in his servants. But if you are grateful, He likes it of you. (Remember) No bearer of a burden will bear another's burden." (39:7)

"If you are ungrateful, you and every one upon this earth, then Allah is Self-sufficient, the Praised one." (14:8)

The above verses emphasise the importance of an attitude of gratefulness which is meant to inculcate in man the sense of pragmatic optimism. For inducing a hopeful urge, it is essential that man should be pleased with the conditions he happens to be placed in and thus express thankfulness to his Lord, this being the main essence of prayer. For promoting growth of one's endowed qualities, the conception of contentment and pleasureable satisfaction is very essential and helpful.

Acts of worship and devotion prescribed by the faith of Islam, such as the regime and rigour of fasting for a whole month have often been criticised as a relic of the past ascetic attitude on life. To abstain from dawn to dusk from partaking all kinds of diet and to spend the greater part of night in prayers, undoubtedly entails some hardship and disturbance in one's routine programme, especially so during the hot and long summer days in tropical countries.

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The sick and the journeying persons have been exempted to find an occasion or substitute for fasting in other than the Ramadzan days. Again the weak who are unable to bear the hardship are enjoined to compensate in the form of feeding a deserving person.

All these exemptions fall under the general law that Allah imposes not a burden on any soul beyond its capacity, While enjoining keeping of fasts and stressing the benefits accruing from it, the Holy Book says:

“Allah desires ease for you and He does not desire imposition of hardship upon you.” (2:185)

The redemption for those not observing fasts has been mentioned as feeding of a deserving person. This throws light on the exact significance underlying the regime of fasts. They are meant to awaken in man the humane feelings for his less fortunate fellows. It happens, generally on the part of the ‘haves’ to ignore the ‘have nots’, unless they are made personally to feel pangs of privation. The arousal of the pitiful plight of the deprived ones, is not confined to the mere act of feeding the hungry but also includes helping of the un-employed section to enable them to earn their living. If the rich and high section does not at all feel the pinch and sympathy for its poorer section, the inevitable consequence would be revolt and violence on the part of the latter.

The method adopted by Islam is that of self-realisation rather than that of imposition through un-desired means. The rigours and regime of fasting is a strong reminder on the part of the rich and flourishing, to realise the needs and necessities of the deprived and the unemployed and to rise to treat the conditions before it is too late. Hence it is related in a tradition of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, that he used to behave increasingly to help the needy in Ramadzan. “The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), used to be all the more benevolent during the month of Ramadzan.” For the sake of rescuing the lower section, it requires practical sacrifice on personal level as well as through parliamentary enactments.

But besides the generation of a sense of fellow-feelings, the benefits of fasting are no less obvious for those who are not mindful of remaining moderate within the prescribed limits of medical advice in matter of food and drink. Modern ways of leading an easy and sedentary manner of life with its fixed meal-times and habituated to partaking of plenty of rich and dainty dishes, has proved to be positively harmful to the health and well-being of man. This is the sole reason of increasing number of diseases such as obesity, diabetes and high blood-pressure. If the baneful factor of worry be also added to the above habits of dietetic intemperance and excessiveness, the ground for an early breakdown of brain or heart has already been prepared. Present-day preventive medicine has proved the beneficial effects of avoiding means of external environmental pollution or infections. But the future preventive medicine has still to discover and prove the harmful effects of living a sedentary life of luxury, plenty and overindulgence.

So long as the body and mind co-exist on this planet, they are intimately interdependent. Bodily conditions are bound to react upon man’s soul, while the conditions of his soul must invariably affect his body. The health of the body is not independent of the health of the soul and vice versa. A healthy body needs a healthy soul. But more often than not, man is too much engrossed in the care of his bodily conditions as to ignore the well-being of his soul. Such a course of life leads to over-indulgence, with consequent bodily morbidity on the one hand and impoverishment of the soul on the other. The body is pampered at the expense of the soul, making both the body and soul to become victims of sickness and weakness. The faith of Islam has sought to restore the balance between the needs of the body and the soul. Thus the exercise of acts of worshipping and acts of sacrificing as illustrated by the Fasting regime of prayerful nights and days of hunger have been prescribed.

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Then such a Messenger should depart from the world when he would have accomplished his work of reform in a fine manner and should have been safeguarded from his enemies which he was occupied in that work. He should have appeared under command like a servant and should have departed under command. In short, he should appear at a time when the age should demand that a heavenly Reformer and Book are needed and he should be called back in accordance with a revealed prophecy after he had firmly planted the tree of reform and a grand revolution should have appeared. We state it with great pride that the brightness with which this argument has been established in support of the Holy Quran and our Holy Prophet, peace be on him, is lacking in the case of other Prophets and other Books. The claim of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was that he had been sent to the whole of mankind; so the Holy Quran convicts all people of being involved in all types of paganism and vice and disobedience as it says: Corruption has appeared on land and water (30:42) and then says: So that thou shouldst be a Warner for the world (25:2) that is to say, that the Holy Prophet should warn all people that on account of their misconduct and false doctrines, they have been accounted very sinful in the estimation of God Almighty.

The word Warner that has been used in this verse concerning all the peoples, which means to warn sinners and evil-doers, is a sure indication that the Quran claimed that the whole world had been corrupted and that everyone had given up the way of truth and good behaviour, inasmuch as a warning is meant for the disobedient and pagans and evil-doers, and a warning is administered to offenders and not to the well behaved. Everyone knows that it is only the vicious and faithless ones who are warned, that it is the way of Allah that a Prophet is a bearer of good tidings for the good and is a Warner for the evil ones. When a Prophet is designated as a Warner for the whole world, it would have to be accepted that by the revelation vouchsafed to that Prophet, the whole world has been held to be involved in misconduct. This is a claim which the Torah did not make in the case of Moses, nor the Gospel in the case of Jesus, but was put forward only by the Holy Quran. Then it was said: You were on the brink of a pit of fire (3:104) meaning that before the advent of the Holy Prophet, mankind had arrived at the brink of hell. The Jews and the Christians were warned that they had perverted the Books of God and had led all the people in every type of mischief and misconduct, and the continued on page 10
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MAKKAH (MECCA) THE SPIRITUAL CENTRE
OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY
by Maulana Abdul Haq Vidyarthi

One of the fundamental aims of Islam is to bring into being a centre of community life for mankind, with the fullest freedom for every member irrespective of caste, creed, colour, or race, to develop his potentialities to the maximum, to break all the chains and barriers which tend to hinder such development, and to promote a general feeling of common brotherhood, equality and sympathy among them; united in the worship of the one and only Creator and Lord of the Universe; striving freely to cultivate those basic moral values of which the attainment forms the highest goal for human civilization. In the Arabic language, a town of this kind is called balad. Al-balad means a township falling inside the clear and given lines, or enclosed by a surrounding wall, designed as a defence against external enemies, with the citizens held together in bonds of sympathy and fellow-feeling. In other words, it should be a town which guarantees security for the citizens against external aggression as well as internal disorder. The Holy Qur'an claims that Makkah, the birth-place of Islam has these characteristics pre-eminently and furnishes the best example of the desired kind of township. Just as Jerusalem stands as a symbol of a particular kind of township for the entire People of Israel, Makkah, too, stands as a symbol of a township and citizenship of a specific type, and of a set of social and religious values associated with it.

As stated above, Al-balad, means a township with a protecting wall built all around. Towns of this kind, situated at the centre of strong defensive arrangements, abound in the world and have been in existence since time immemorial. There is, however, a common saying that the alertness of the warden is of no avail, where the master of a house himself desires its destruction. Many people would be surprised to hear that ever since the day the earth came to be populated with the human race; or, to be more exact, ever since the time when history of the human race began to be recorded, there

had a number of religious, cultural traditions and ceremonials. The word Jerusalem itself is a pointer to the inner emotions of its founder. There is a wide difference of opinion as to its correct pronunciation. No one has been able to say, with any degree of certainty, from which language the word came in the first instance. This word consists of two parts, Jeru and Salem. Jeru meaning 'town', and Salem meaning 'one that possesses peace'. Or it is a word of the Syrian language, 'Ur' meaning town, and 'Salem' meaning 'one that possesses peace'. Both in Arabic and Syrian, the meaning of 'Ur' is town, while 'Salem' means a place that lives in peace. In Arabic its pronunciation is 'UrSallima'. Another opinion is that it is 'Vir', plus 'Shalem' the meaning being a town or place dominated and held by Islam. Another meaning of the expression is a place founded on tranquility and peace. When David conquered it, the town became the seat of the Israelite government. In any case, whosoever was its founder and gave the place this name, it carries evidence of his frame of mind, expressed in the wish that it should give tranquility and peace to its inhabitants. Jerusalem lies in the protection of a mountain; and there also is a promise of God that this mountain would be made loftier than all other mountains in the world. But, as we know, a Divine promise is always accompanied by some binding conditions. Where the inhabitants themselves do not care for peace, the promise of God comes to be revoked.

Before Makkah came to be the Qibla (direction in prayer) of the Muslims, the early converts to Islam prayed with their faces turned in the direction of Jerusalem. When David conquered this town about 1000 B.C., a large booty fell into his hands, and imposing palaces were erected for him. While sojourning in them, it occurred to him that his living in grand mansions did not seem proper, when the Lord God of Israel was still living in tents. David, there-

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fore, made three attempts to build a befitting Temple for the worship of God; but his efforts remained fruitless. So the Lord severely admonished him in the following words: "Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?" It is not claimed anywhere in the Old Testament that the Temple was built in obedience to a command from God. In fact, as often as David thought of building a suitable Temple, something happened to frustrate his desire, so that he passed away without building the Temple. After him when Solomon began to build the Temple, he did fulfill the dying wish of his father. Such a construction was also motivated by the need for a central point for the temporal might of Israel. At a later stage, in this brief discussion, it will be shown that inspite of the construction of the Temple, the two underlying aims could not be achieved. In any case, Solomon started the construction work and made liberal use of pine and cedar wood with costly engravings of silver and gold on the planks and the pieces of furniture put into the Temple. Thousands of artisans and workmen were engaged for seven years. When the construction was completed, and the Temple was formally thrown open, the occasion provided a double festival. In the first place the day was a day of rejoicing because a suitable house for God had been built, after Israel had wandered in the wilderness for 500 years; secondly because a daughter of the old enemy of Israel, the Pharaoh, was married to the king of Israel. A great canopy was erected for the occasion, the ceiling of which bore a complete map of the stars. Under this canopy Solomon slept the first night with his new queen and sweetheart, but while Israel rejoiced, God expressed displeasure, because Solomon had taken a foreign princess for wife, which was not allowed. On the day fixed for the opening ceremony of the Temple, Solomon was to get up from sleep before dawn, to declare the Temple open, and to render thanks to the Lord. But he happened to wake in the middle of the night; looking at the map of the stars on the ceiling of the canopy, he fell into an error, miscalculated the time, and again fell asleep. Thus, while he over-slept, the time fixed for the opening and the thanksgiving passed away. The keys of the Temple remained under his pillow, so that no one was able to enter the House. What was still worse, during his second nap, Solomon saw in a dream a reed that had come to be fixed in the sea. A great deal of drifting material gathered around it, to form an Island, from which, after some time, there emerged a king, who came to Jerusalem, and totally destroyed it. When Solomon woke up again, he was late by some hours. The opening ceremony of the Temple was then gone through; but even before the Temple was declared open, Jehovah, in that dream, had foretold the story of its destruction at the hands of an enemy. This dream itself was in the nature of a prophecy, especially when it came there so soon; and in the days to come it continued to be fulfilled time and again. In fact history bears out that it has seldom remained in peace for an uninterrupted period even of fifty years, and has suffered destruction again and again at the hands of the enemies of Israel.

When Solomon was succeeded by his son, Rehoboam, a split occurred in the tribes of Israel, and ten of them rose in rebellion, setting up a centre at Samaria. Only two of the tribes remained under Rehoboam. But this was not all. In the 5th year of his reign, Jerusalem was plundered by Shishak, king of Egypt. In the face of this evidence from history, it is difficult how Jerusalem can be called a place of peace. Here is what the Old Testament has to say on the point: "And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem; And he took way the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made." After this Jerusalem was plundered by king Jehoash. In 856 B.C. Jerusalem was reduced to a heap of ruins by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who led Israel into captivity. About 532 B.C. the temple was rebuilt, or repaired mainly through the efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah. But soon after the holy city was attacked by the Greeks. Finally, in 186 B.C., Antonios installed here a statue of Jupiter. He also sought out Books of Israel, and had them burnt. Jesus also prophesied the total destruction of the Temple. (Matt., 24:1, Luke, 21:7) After a brief period of comparative peace, Jerusalem was again sacked, this time by the Romans. Titus destroyed it in 70 A.D. When the Jews again somewhat raised their head, Hadrian descended ruthlessly on them (134 A.D.), and the holy city suffered once more.

The testimony of history is quite clear that if Jerusalem enjoyed any considerable period of peace, it was only under the Muslim rule.

AJODHIYA, the Invulnerable City of the Hindus

In Hindu history Ajodhiya is held to be a very sacred town. We find songs about it in the Vedas, where it is said that the House of God is situated here, and it is said to be a settlement of the gods. Later on, in the time of Rajah Dasratha, father of Ramchandara, glowing accounts of the grandeur and prosperity of the town are found in the Ramayana of Valmiki. The reasons which place this town above other towns, cities and villages, are detailed in Vayu Puran under "Ajodhiya Mahatam". Ajodhiya was the capatial town of the kingdom of Oudh. It was situated on the banks of river Sarju, which is now called Gogra. Its remains are even now to be seen in the vicinity of Faizabad, round about Ajodhiya as it stands today. Some sources also say that this town was founded by Manuji, which would mean that it is an extremely ancient city. The accounts of its vastness and prosperity in different periods of its history appear to be greatly exaggerated. It is said to have abounded in stately palaces, gardens, parks, playing fields, with horse and elephant stables almost in all homes. The town had a strong wall and a deep moat for defence against the enemy, with a strong army to man the defence in times of danger - an army, every soldier of which was capable of holding at bay as many as 10,000 of the enemy. Rajah Dasratha, Ramechandara's father, from all accounts, was a very pious, just and merciful ruler. The learned Brahman, with a reputation for piety, enjoyed great influence with continued on next page
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the public, as well as with the Rajah. The people, generally speaking, were well off and happy. The Brahman, the Kshatris, and the Vaisyas, all lived peacefully. The people were truthful and honest. The town was sacred and holy, both from inside and outside. It being the reason why it was called Ajodhia, "The Invulnerable Town". But we know that the historical value of the Ramayana is very little, since, like the Arabian Nights, it is mostly full of incredible tales about ginnis, evil spirits, animals and human beings who could transform themselves into whatever species of living beings they liked.

Other sources of knowledge about Ajodhia are the Vedas, a reference from the Atharva Veda, have already been quoted. A somewhat fuller discussion on these passages will be found under "Prophecies" and here we confine ourselves to a few remarks. The Vedic Mantras in question, when translated, would read somewhat as follows: "Ajodhia, the town of the gods, against which none can succeed in war. It has eight circuses, and nine gates. It contains a Treasure of Light (evidently some temple or place of religious worship held to be the House of God, or something like that), which always shines with a heavenly radiance and splendour. The being manifested in this Treasure of Light, of three spokes and three supporters - those gifted with knowledge and comprehension - know about this being. In this place of great and wonderful light; in this invulnerable town, God Himself is manifested."

To show that we have not done any injustice to the mantras in question, in our rough and ready translation, we reproduce here a translation of the passage in question, as given by Prof. Griffith, Principal, Hindu College, Benares: "The fort of gods, impregnable, with circles eight, and portals nine, contains a golden treasure-chest, celestial, begirt with light. Men deep in lore of Brahma know that Animated Being which dwells in the golden treasure-chest, that has three spokes and three supporters. Brahma has passed within the fort - the golden castle never subdued. Bright with excessive brilliancy, compassed with glory, round about."

To state briefly what is to be gleaned from all these sources, this sacred town of the Hindus was protected by a strong wall, and a deep moat, backed by an invincible military might - a single soldier of this army being able to turn back as many as ten thousand of the enemy. The people of the holy town were well off and happy, truthful and honest, at peace among themselves. But in fact this holy city said to have been so impregnable, is soon after seen to have fallen into ruins, trampled upon by the Greeks, the Iranians, the Afghans, the Mughals and the British, one after another. There is hardly any trace of it to be found now beyond some scattered ruins. It was, time and again, subdued by external enemies, while there is also evidence that it suffered from internal disorders as well. The causes of the destruction can be traced from the Ramayana itself, namely, the excess of bondmen and bondwomen in its population, the rigid caste distinctions, degradation of woman in the society of those days, free and uninhibited use of intoxicants, gambling, and many more similar social evils.

Where is GAYA, The Place Where Buddha Found Nirvana?

Gaya is another holy city, at one time the splendid of Behar Province, of which the history is as ancient as that of Jerusalem and Ajodhia. This town, at one time, was the seat of the great and powerful empire ruled over by followers of the Buddhist religion stretched from India, beyond Afghanistan, into the areas of Central Asia. The great religion which later took the whole of Burma, China, and Japan in its embrace was born here, when light came to Buddha, as he sat in contemplation, under an old banyan tree. Gaya is held to be sacred both by the Hindus and the Buddhists. A pilgrimage to the place is believed to wash away one's sins and that of his ancestors. The consequences of evil action, even the sins of the Brahma, who is held by the Hindus to be the progenitor of the human race, is considered to be specially associated with Gaya. At present there are two Gayas situated close to one another; one of the Hindus and the other of the Buddhists. The latter is held to be so sacred that according to the Tibetan Buddhists only a trace of it is now to be found on this earth as a symbol, while the real Gaya, the sacred town, has been lifted into the heavens. On the sacredness of the Gaya of the Hindus, we have a chapter in the Vayu Puran entitled "Gaya Mahatam". In the Gaya of the Buddhists, there is the banyan tree which is held to be very sacred. It is considered to be 2400 years old. But the Hindus believe that this tree is not the one that was associated with Buddha. According to them, the tree really associated with Buddha is the pippal tree to be found in the Gaya of the Hindus. In his time, the emperor Ashoka had a temple built in the Buddha Gaya at a cost of a hundred thousand pieces of gold. The town had very strong fortifications and defences known to military science at that time. But all that has fallen entirely into ruins. When Fahyam, the renowned Chinese traveller, visited India, he found only remnants of a city that had been destroyed. When the Hindu rose against Buddhism, and drove this religion out of India, and also eliminated all traces of this religion from the country, the Buddhists of Ceylon managed to plant a branch of the original banyan tree in their own country, where it took root and grew into a huge tree, which exists even today.

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40. Al-Raghib "Balad."
41. Direction towards which a Muslim turns his face when saying his prayer.
42. Tajal-Urus.
44. Isaiah, 2:2.
45. 2 Samuel, 7:6-7.
46. 1 Kings, 11:1,9,14,31,41; 2 Chronicles, 9:29; Nehemiah, 13:26; Deut., 7:3,4; Exodus, 34:16; Ezra, 9:2.
47. 1 Kings, 14:25-26.
48. 2 Kings, 14:13-14.
49. 1 Kings, 24:25; 2 Chronicles, Chapter 36; Jeremiah, Chapters 37 to 39, and 52; Daniel, 1:1.
50. Ather Veda, Kand 10, Sukt 2, Mantra 32-33.

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Sacred Cities of Zoroastrians
and the Babylonians

Babylon is the sacred city of the religious system associated with the Assyrians. Its ruins abound in the vicinity of what is now called Baghdad. Babylon is no more, but it cannot be denied that Babylonian culture has left a deep mark on human history. Division of the day and night into 24 hours, of the hour into sixty minutes, and of the minute into sixty seconds, still stands to the credit of the babylonian scientists. The hanging gardens of Babylon, its observatories for studying the movements of the heavenly bodies and their effect on human life; the advances they made in the science and art of architecture and their contribution towards the evolution of a written language, are standing monuments to their scientific genius. The Babylonians yoked to the purpose of making their culture and their hold on other peoples, everlasting and unshakable as far as they could make it. But eventually the neighbouring Iranians proved to be more clever. They turned the direction of the river, and forced an entry into the city to turn it upside down. Thus was another so-called House of God (Bab-EI) eliminated from the surface of the earth.

The Iranian Empire was another formidable military power in those days. A number of times it humbled Roman might and penetrated right up to the walls of Rome. It also took Greece in its stride. In the east, it reduced many parts of India. But eventually the Sacred Fire in their temples, too, was extinguished by the Arabs, who were no better than nomad barbarians in the eyes of proud Iranians, and the great temples of the fire-worshippers in Tus and Balakh were replaced by mosques built for the worship of the One and only True God.

The Ideal City of God

Jerusalem, Babylon, Tus, Balakh, Ajodhya and Gaya, all these are towns held by different nations at different times of their history to represent the House of God. They are well known centers of many great world religions; and in their own time they have been beacons of Divine Light, vouchsafed to man by God. But with the exception of Makka, there is no other sacred town that was not destroyed and laid waste at one time or another. Notwithstanding the claims of their invincibility and scriptural prophecies about their prosperity, we see their ruins strewn over the surface of the earth telling their own tales.

Does not Jerusalem mean a town of security and peace? Does not Ajodhya mean a town that is impregnable? Does not Gaya signify a town that is destined to conquer all other towns? Yet every student of history knows that they all fell to the arms of invading armies and were razed to the ground. The ruins of such towns are hardly discernible on the surface of the earth except to eyes specially trained to pick the traces of bygone cultures.

1. Makka, on the other hand, presents a vivid and inspiring contrast. It is the only sacred city of which the sanctity has remained inviolable and which has never been desecrated by the feet of invading armies all through the recorded history. As far back as the history or traditions go the foundations of this city were laid by Abraham, the great Patriarch of the Old Testament, revered equally by the Jews and Christians. In Hindu religious literature and folklore, he is known as Brahmaji; while in Parsi literature and traditions he bears the name of Mahabad. To this Abraham of the Old Testament, Brahma of Hindu Literature and Mahabad of Parsi tradition, a House of God was shown in a dream or a vision, as situated in a dry, unproductive and scarcely populated valley surrounded by a desert. In the same vision he was further given to understand that this House of God had existed at the site from time immemorial but had come to be lost to man in course of time. Makka was thus the sacred city for all the nations who trace their lineage from Abraham, the great patriarch and Prophet in the religious history of so many branches of the human family, who have played great roles in the history of the human race. Abraham rebuilt the Sacred House on the ancient foundations indicated to him in the vision.

2. Generally the origin and growth of great cities including those which came to be known as religious, cultural or political centres, are dependent on favourable geographical and climatic conditions. But in the case of this Sacred House in the Arabian desert, in a valley that lay absolutely arid and unproductive, devoid of satisfactory means of subsistence, we find not a single factor congenial to the growth of a historical city. The story of the Sacred House begins with the visit of a frail woman carrying an infant. The husband of this woman, no other than Abraham himself, brought her to this solitary and barren spot, to leave her and her child by the site of the old Sacred House with only a few days provision. He did so in submission to a command from his Lord. The Divine purpose now was to bring the ancient House back into the glow of human history and to play its destined role under the Divine Scheme. When Abraham was taking leave from his courageous wife, with an infant baby in her laps to fend for herself in that barren and unproductive waste, she just asked one question to her husband, “Has Allah commanded you to act like this?” And there came the reply husked by the emotions of an affectionate husband, “Yes.” Henceforth she remarked: “In that case Allah will never allow us to be destroyed.” And resolutely she steeld her mind to face the future.

3. History tells us that subsequently a spring of water gushed forth at the very site. This proved to be a great asset for these destitutes. Caravans travelling along that route found a good resting place. Various caravans coming to the spring started exchanging goods and thus it became an important business centre. The caravans utilising the water proved to be a source of obtaining means of subsistence for the mother and her child. In the course of time the child grew to his bloom.

4. At about this time Abraham again visited the place in order to know how his wife and child had fared since he left them to their fate. During this second visit, the father and the son rebuilt the Sacred House on the old foundations, using date-palm trunks for pillars and the leaves for a rough kind of roofing. There was no elaborate or mystifying ceremonials; nor burning of various kinds of incenses; no display of gold and silver ware; no dedication of various kinds of jewels and precious stones to impress and overawe the visitors. This was the ancient and sacred House, about a hundred and twenty-five years old at that time, rebuilt by Abraham and his young son, Ishmael for the worship of God.

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Mankind is One
by DR. ALLAH BAKHSH
The Light, Lahore

Thus were evolved two kinds of moral conduct, a national and an international one, having different and mostly opposite connotations. A single code of conduct meant for the whole mankind became conspicuous by its absence. Sense of true patriotism thus transgressed its rightful limits. Love of one's own nation came to imply contempt, hatred and harm of others. Even the god that was worshipped came to be a national one and not the God of whole mankind.

It was during such a state of division and disunity of mankind that a universal and cosmopolitan message of Islam was revealed in order to rescue the world from the wrecking results of separation.

In the first place there should be no misunderstanding regarding the nature of Divine messages during pre-Islamic period. Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man had always been the spirit of Divine revelation granted to nations at different times. The message of mutual love, mercy, forgiveness, justice, equality had always formed the essential and basic part of all previous Divine revelations. None of these ever meant to inculcate injustice, inequality, oppression or aggression against any other people. In the state of singleness and seclusion of the primitive social structure with no means of intermingling and inter-communication, an inter-national code was however unnecessary and pre-mature.

Moreover, the expression of noble sentiments of truth, honesty, justice etc. within a limited circle did in no way signify the manifestation of opposite emotions for others. Such a prejudicial misguidance was occasioned by man's own restrictive and narrow outlook. The faith of Islam not only emphasised the broader outlook of mankind being a single community from its very inauguration but it truly laid the foundations of such a cosmopolitan stage. Having torn asunder the dark veils of ignorance and superstition and having given an unprecedented impetus to learning and harnessing nature's forces, the urge of the Islamic spirit opened the gateway to enlarging human knowledge and conquest of natural elements. The releasing of pent-up human intellectual forces was bound to usher in an era of increasing international communicative age. Hence, before the installation of an international age, it was necessary to reveal an international code of conduct and behaviour which was unnecessary and unwanted before.

Under appropriate headings, we reproduce some of the salient features wherein the Holy Quran has stressed the vital question of oneness of mankind.

ONENESS OF MANKIND

"O people fulfil your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single being, creating its mate of the same kind, thereby spread from them many men and women." (4:1)

"He it is Who has brought you into being from a single soul." (6:98-100)

"People are naught but a single nation." (10:19)

"O you men! We have created you of a male and a female and made you tribes and families that you may know each other." (40:13)

All Prophets and Divine Reformers are as a Single Community with Their Lord

"This your community is as a one community only and I am your Lord." (21:92-93)

"This community of yours is but as a single community, whereas I am your Lord, therefore have regard for your duty to me." (23:52-54)

Belief in all Previous Messengers and Scriptures

"The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord and so do the believers. They all believe in Allah and His Books as well as His Messengers; making no difference between any of His messengers." (2:285)

"They say: Be Jews or Christians (only then) would you be on the right path - Say: We believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us and in that which has been revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, 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 do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit." (2:136)

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Mankind is One
cont.
"The Believers, the Jews, the Christians and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good deeds, they have their reward with their Lord. There is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve." (2:62)

All Nations Blessed with Divine Guidance
"There is not a people but a warner has gone among them." (2:139)
"Every nation had a guide." (13:7)
"Every nation had a messenger." (10:47)
"Indeed, We raised in every nation a messenger saying: serve Allah and shun the evil." (16:36)

Deeds and not Labels to be Recompensed
"And if they call thee a liar, then say: my work is for me and your work is for you, you are clear of what I do and I am clear of what you do." (10:41)
"He Who does an atom's weight of good shall see it and he who does an atom's weight of evil shall see it." (99:7-8)
"Say O unbelievers, you shall have your recompense (for what you do) and I shall have my recompense (for what I do)." (109:1-6)
"Towards this (message) continue to invite them and be steadfast as thou art commanded. Do not follow their low desires. And say: I believe in the book which Allah has revealed. I am commanded to do justice between you. Allah is your Lord as well as your Lord. For us are our deeds and for you your deeds. Thus there is no contention between us and you. Allah will gather us all together and to Him is the eventual returning."
(42:15)
"The Jews say: The Christians follow no good while the Christians say the Jews follow nothing good. But both of them recite the same book." (2:113)

Lip-profession Without Action Does not Benefit
"They say: Fire will not touch us except for a few days. Yea, whoever earns evil, his sins besetting him on every side, these are the inmates of the Fire, therein they abide." (2:80-81)
"They say: None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian. These are their vain desires.

Say, bring your proofs if you be truthful. Nay, whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others) he has his reward from his Lord. There is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve." (2:111)

Law of Requital for All Men
"Not in accordance with your vain desires, nor the vain desires of the People of the Book but whoever does evil will be requited for it and will not find for himself a friend or a helper besides Allah. Whoever does good deeds, male or female being a believer, they will enter the garden and will not be dealt with unjustly. Who has a better religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allah and is a benefactor to mankind." (4:123-124)
"The Believers, the Jews, the Sabians, the Christians, the Magians and the polytheists - surely Allah will decide between them on the day of Resurrection. Surely Allah is witness over events." (22:18)

Before the advent of Islam, conception of one humanity had not dawnted. Different faiths were regarded as so many different cults and creeds. There was no idea of a universal God, a universal Law, a universal Book or a universal Prophet. We have earlier quoted sufficient verses of the Holy Quran showing fully how the Holy Book has thrown light on various aspects of the subject of Islam being a universal or world religion. But the pre-Islamic concept has also been mentioned in the pages of the Holy Quran as:
"They say that no one except the Jews or Christians will enter the paradise. These are their vain desires. Say: Bring proofs (in support of your assertion) if you be truthful." (2:111)

And again: "They assert: Only we are the sons and dear ones of Allah. Say: then why does He punish you on account of your sins? Nay, you are only mortals like the other creatures." (5:18)

Thus the concept of racial, national or cult superiority and not of good deeds reigned supreme. Accidents of birth, color or race held the sway. The message of Islam in such a dark age of division and difference was not only the ideal teachings of a visionary, but it was the practical lesson taught through personal example of the Prophet to his worthy disciples who took it to heart and translated it in their lives. Let us first reproduce his Farewell Pilgrimage Message about the universal charter of basic human rights with freedom and equality:
"O people! you have all been created from Adam who was created from dust. You all shall be returned to Him to answer about the fulfilment of your duties. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor of a non-Arab over an Arab." 
"O Men! your lives and properties and honours are as sacred amongst one another as the sacredness of this day, in this sacred month of this sacred year. This day all interest is remitted, including that of Abbas and all retaliative measures prohibited including that of Rabi Bin Harith which is forgiven. Then O People! you have certain rights over your spouses."
"As regards your slaves, see they are fed with the food you eat and clothed with the clothes you wear."
"O men! Listen to what I say and take it to heart! Every Muslim is the brother of the other Muslim. You are all equals, enjoying equal rights and have similar obligations. You are all members of the same brotherhood. Do not tyrannize over people and do not usurp their rights.
"O my people: I leave behind me two things, the Book of God and my Sunnah."

This farewell testament of the Holy Prophet of Islam breathes the spirit of a universal humanity and inter-national brotherhood. The Muslim Ummah has been constituted as a custodian for establishing the just and equal rights of mankind and which should be guided by the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

How the Holy Prophet Translates the Message of Universal Humanity
Zaid was his slave, he gave him not only his liberty but gave him such love that when Zaid's father came to take him away with him to his native home, Zaid preferred the company of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This great spiritual relationship of the Master and the 'slave' came to be expressed afterwards as that of a father with his son. The Holy Prophet arranged marriage of Zaid with one of his cousins Zainab; thus making him a true member of his family. Zaid the freed slave of the Holy Prophet and his son Usamah were placed and made commanders over armies of Quraish!

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The Holy Qur'an Says:

Does not man see that We have created him from a small life-germ? Then lo! he is open disputant. And he strikes out a likeness for Us, and forgets his own creation. Says he: Who will give life to the bones, when they are rotten? say: He will give life to them, Who brought them into existence at first. And He is the Knower of all creation, Who produced fire for you from the green tree, so that with it you kindle. (36:77-80)

These are verses of well-known chapter, Surah Ya Seen, which is recited to a person who is dying. And rightly so, for it discusses the question of life after death, and holds out promise of the life eternal. There could be nothing more re-assuring and soothing to a dying person, for who wants to cease to exist? However poor and miserable one's life may be, one does not wish to die as that looks like the end of one's existence. He who commits suicide is rightly described by the law as "temporarily of unsound mind." He is liable to punishment, if he survives the attempt, under all laws. He also incurs the punishment of the Hereafter.

A normal person who is sound in mind does not wish to cease to exist. To him the good news that he is merely passing on to a next and better life is the best news that could be. Says the Holy Qur'an: "Nay, you prefer the life of this world, while the Hereafter is better and more lasting." (87.16-17) What could be better news to the dying person?

Life After Death

Life after death is therefore the fulfilment of man's strongest desire to live for ever. All religions have given this assurance. Yet, a large number of people these days deny that there is life after death. Why? Because of the Divine Judgment which will be made in the Hereafter of how one spent one's life in this world. The skeptics do not really want to be judged. But they raise spurious objections about the possibility of resuscitation. And the well-known objection is the one quoted in the verses with which this article opens, "Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten?" The flesh rots first. The bones last a long time. But even they rot in course of time. So this ultimate disappearance of the human body is made the basis for the objection to resuscitation.

The first point made by the Holy Qur'an about a person who raises such an objection is that "He strikes out a likeness for Us, and forgets his own creation," meaning that such a person judges Allah upon himself, forgetting that he is a mere creature while Allah is the Creator and the two cannot be alike. Man is helpless in the matter of creation because he himself is a part of it. He should not judge the Great Creator upon himself. Still the objection has to be answered on merits. How can man reduced to dust be resuscitated?

To that a preliminary reply is given: "He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first." This is really a theoretical reply to a theoretical objection. "Who can re-create the human body after it is reduced to dust?" The plain, simple but most logical answer is: "The same Creator Who first created the human body from dust."

I have said that this is only a theoretical reply to a theoretical objection. For the Holy Qur'an says that the human body which deteriorates with age and becomes a burden and a suffering to the ageing person is no longer a suitable vehicle for the human soul whose progress is unlimited and everlasting. The soul, therefore, passes on to another, a better and an everlasting world where it gets a body which does not deteriorate because it is everlasting like the world of the Hereafter, unlike this world's ephemeral life for which an ephemeral body was given. Says the Holy Qur'an in the same chapter as the opening verses of this article: "And whosoever We cause to live long (in this world), We reduce to an object state in the matter of physical creation. Do they not understand?" What people do not understand is that the physical body which necessarily deteriorates with age cannot be the vehicle for an ever-lasting life. It is a drag, a burden and a source of constant suffering to the ageing person. So man is in a way glad to be relieved of his physical sufferings at death. And death should have no horrors or the fear of ceasing to exist, for he goes to a better and an ever-lasting life.

The common misconception that the same body of clay which is reduced to dust in the grave will be revived is removed a few verses later in the same chapter of the Holy Qur'an: "Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them? Yes! And He is the Creator par excellence, the Knowledgeable." (36:81) The mention of the creation of heavens in this verse conveys the great knowledge that the heavens were created for man's life after death. His soul came from the heavens to which it returns. The fact of the human soul returning to its Creator after death is repeated too often in the Holy Qur'an.

The commentary of the late Maulana Muhammad Ali on the verse quoted immediately above is most illuminating: "In the Resurrection, therefore, men will be the like of what they are here, not exactly the same bodies of clay." Elsewhere, after mentioning that man wonders at the new creation, it is said, "We know indeed what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a writing (record) that preserves." (50:4) The body may become dust; but what man does of good or evil is preserved, and it is according to this good or evil that he receives a new body. The idea of Resurrection is carried to perfection in Islam, and the Resurrection is meant to give a new life to all. Ultimately the spirit of man is returned to the Spirit Divine, and that is again and again called the meeting with God.

The Mystery of Resurrection

In this scientific age, man wants to know, and to unveil, all mysteries of Allah's wonderful creation. That leads to scientific research in all branches of the creation. The Holy Qur'an is not a book of physical sciences. But it has made a science of religion and spiritual matters. To enable man to understand the science of the spiritual world, the Holy Qur'an frequently refers to the physical sciences, because the material and spiritual worlds (call them matter and anti-matter as the modern scientists refer to the two) run parallel. And in doing so, the Holy Qur'an disclosed scientific truths nearly 1400 years ago which were not known then even to the scientists of that time. To give only two out of several such cases, the Holy Qur'an said, "And We gave life to all things from water." or "And We created continued on next page
Fire From the Green Tree cont.

*a pair of each thing*.” (51:49) The Arabic word translated as ‘pair’ has a wider connotation of opposite sexes or opposites which attract each other such as positive and negative particles of electricity.

The Holy Qur’an is the only revealed book to give a scientific explanation, with reference to the physical world, of how man’s resurrection takes place after death. In the verses quoted at the beginning of this article, the giving of new life to the dead persons is compared to the production of “fire for you from the green tree, so that with it you kindle.”

Man and the Tree

The above comparison made by the Holy Qur’an is an amazingly simple explanation in a few words of the mystery of resurrection. Details of resurrection may or may not become known to us when we die because we ourselves will be undergoing the process. But one gets some concept of the complicated mystery from the comparison made by the Holy Qur’an.

The greenness of the tree, in fact of all vegetation, is due to the presence in it of a green chemical substance called Chlorophyll. But the Holy Qur’an has named the tree, and not all the vegetation, for a comparison to the man as there is a similarity between the two. The tree is rooted in the earth from which it draws its sustenance and life. So is man rooted in the earth in this life to draw his sustenance and physical life. When sunlight from the sky falls on the tree-sapling it grows and acquires its stature. So does man grow in human stature in the moral and spiritual sense, when the heavenly light (sent down by Allah in the form of revelation through His prophets) falls on man and he benefits from it. As the tree grows old and wrinkles up, and ultimately dries up and dies, it is cut from its roots in the earth. So does man wrinkle up with age, lose his health and colour and ultimately die, when his physical link with the earth is cut off. The sun’s energy, as I will explain later, lies hidden in the dead and dried up tree and is released when a spark is provided and fire is produced which is the stored-up sun’s energy re-appearing as heat and light as it had fallen from the sun on the tree. So will man’s spiritual self, made up of the soul which came from Above and developed in the human body by whatever good or bad man did in his life, and which ‘self’ (Nafs) lies hidden in him, emerges into the next life. The cause which made the hidden energy of the sun re-emerge from the dead tree was the spark applied to it. In the case of man, the cause will be the Divine Command, for the Holy Qur’an says in the very next verse: “His command, when He intends anything is only to say to it: Be, and it becomes.” (36:82) I repeat a portion of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s commentary on this: “The body may become dust; but what man does of good or evil is preserved, and it is according to this good or evil that he receives a new body.”

Chlorophyll and Photosynthesis

Let us revert to the green tree. Its greenness, as I have already explained, is due to the presence of a chemical substance called Chlorophyll. Its primary function is to absorb carbon dioxide gas from the air, but only when the sunlight falls on it. What happens then is a chemical process called photosynthesis. It is retarded on cloudy days and is totally stopped in the dark. Carbon dioxide thus taken in combines with water which the leaves have been supplied from the earth to undergo a series of chemical changes within the leaves. The final product is glucose (sugar) that serves as food for the tree’s growth and development. All these reactions, which are continuously going on in the tree, require some kind of energy for their functioning, which in this case is supplied by the sun light. Chlorophyll traps the sunlight and converts it into solar energy that is used by the plant in manufacturing glucose from carbon dioxide and water.

The solar energy does not disappear after it has performed the manufacturing process but remains entrapped in the plant substance. The energy lies, so to say, in a dormant state. It is a scientific axiom that energy cannot be destroyed but it can be transformed into different forms. The solar energy lies conserved even in the apparently dead and dry logs of wood— but imperceptible to the human eyes due to its limited range of vision. The dormant energy requires a cause to become visible. The cause is provided by its ignition. The elements composing its substance dissociate into the elements it was made of, namely, carbon dioxide, water etc. During this process of disassociation, the conserved solar energy is re-transformed into light and heat (which we term as fire) which originally came from the sun in the form of light and heat. The fire from wood therefore comes from the sun really.

Summing Up

The analogy drawn by the Holy Qur’an may be analysed as follows:
(a) Like the green tree, man is rooted in the earth from which he originates and from which he draws the water of life.
(b) Like the green tree again, man acquires his true stature by a combination of the water of earthly life as well as the heavenly light sent down by Allah in the form of revelation through prophets who have been compared to the sun. Says the Holy Qur’an: “Blessed is He Who made the stars in the heavens and made therein a sun and a moon which is illuminated.” (25:61) Now, science has revealed that the stars are also really suns, but they look like stars because of their distance from the earth. Similarly, the prophets, before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, have become distant from us because their revealed books are more or less lost and so are their true teachings. Their heavenly light has thus become dim for us. By Divine dispensation, the star (namely our sun) meant to give heavenly light to the earth for all time to come however shines in its full glory. Now, the Holy Prophet Muhammad has been compared to our luminous sun (33:46) in the spiritual world. And the Book revealed to him is preserved completely as admitted even by its critics. And the sayings and deeds of the Holy Prophet are fully preserved. So that his revealed Book and his example shine in full glory for the benefit of mankind for all time to come. (The moon referred to in the verse quoted above are the Mufaddids or reformers who will appear every 100 years and will reflect the Prophet’s light after he died as the moon reflects the sun’s light after it has set. Like the moon, because of their elevation in the spiritual world, the Mufaddids catch the Holy Prophet’s light and reflect it for the benefit of the world.)
BOOK REVIEW:
The Gospel of Barnabas

Thereafter, both the text and the translation disappeared.

As mentioned by George Sale, the Spanish manuscript bore a preface 'wherein the discoverer of the original manuscript, who was a Christian monk, called Fra Marino, tells us that, having accidentally met with a writing of Ireneacus (among others), wherein he speaks against St. Paul, alleging for his authority the Gospel of St. Barnabas, he became exceedingly desirous to find this Gospel and that God, of His mercy, having made him very intimate with Pope Sixtus V, one day as they were together in that Pope's library, his Holiness fell asleep and he to employ himself, reaching down a book to read, the first he laid his hand on proved to be the very Gospel he wanted. Overjoyed at this discovery, he scurried not to hide his prize in his sleeve, and on the Pope's awakening, took leave of him, carrying with him that celestial treasure, by reading of which he became a convert to Islam.

In 1907, Lonsdale and Laura Ragg translated this Gospel from the Italian manuscript into English. It was printed at the Clarendon Press, Oxford. But, as usual, this also disappeared.

In 1908, a Christian scholar of Egypt named Khalil Bak Saadat, translated the English version into Arabic. Whether this Arabic translation also disappeared is not known.

In 1910, the Arabic version was translated into Urdu by Maulvi Muhammad Haleem Ansari at the instance of Mohd Insha Ullah, Proprietor and Editor of Newspaper WATTAN, which was published for the second time in 1916 and then the third time in 1962.

In 1973, the English version by Lonsdale and Laura Ragg was published by the Bawany Islamic Literature (Trust) Ltd. Karachi.

In 1974, its Urdu translation by Asif Ziai was published by the Islamic Publications, Shah Alam Market, Lahore.

The genuineness or otherwise of this Gospel has been discussed by the Christian scholars at great length. Various hypotheses have been advanced all of which agree at least on one point, that this Gospel is a literary fraud. There is, however, no agreement as to who committed this fraud, if at all it is a fraud. Some Christian scholars held that it was forged by a Muslim and that there is an Arabic original of it. They threw a challenge to the Muslims to produce the Arabic original and have accused them of having failed to do so during the past two hundred years. Other scholars hold that it was forged by a renegade Christian. Still others say that it was forged by a Spanish Jew who first turned a Christian and then became a Muslim. All the same, it has not been possible for them to deny the loftiness, purity and sublimity of its teachings. Even the Editors of the English translation have admitted in the Introduction by them:

"In Barnabas, without any observable leanings towards Pantheism, there is a succession of noble and beautiful thoughts concerning love of God, union with God and God as Himself the final reward of faithful service which it would be difficult to match in any literature."

No hypothesis, however ingenious, by Christian scholars has been able to explain away the existence of this Gospel. Their long drawn out reasoning about the script, the paper and the binding cover, etc., of the Italian manuscript, at the most, raises the presumption that it was written sometimes in the fourteenth century. There is no evidence whatsoever to prove its text to be a forgery or a literary fraud.

That Barnabas was an Apostle of Christ and not a fictitious person is clear from the following:

"Barnabas touching whom we received commandments, if he comes unto you receive him."

Here Paul refers to commandments of Jesus Christ.

"And when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go to the heathen and they unto the circumcision."

"And Joses, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is being interpreted (The son of Consolation) a Levite and of the country of Cyprus."

That the Gospel of Barnabas was prevalent among the early Christians is clear from the fact that about 75 years

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The Gospel of Barnabas cont.

In vain shall we search the pages of the four Canonical Gospels for such pure and unmixed conception of the Unity of God. But when we turn to our Gospel of Barnabas we find the following:

"Jesus answers: Philip, God is a good without which there is naught good: God is a being without which there is naught that is: God is a life without which there is naught that liveth: So great that He filleth all and is every where. He alone hath no equal. He hath had no beginning, nor will He ever have an end, but to everything hath He given a beginning, and to everything shall He give and end. He hath no father, nor mother; He hath no sons, nor brethren nor companions. And because God hath no body, therefore, He eateth not, sleepeth not, dieth not, walketh not, moveth not, but abideth eternally without human similitude, for that He is incorporeal, uncompounded, of the most simple substance. He is so good that He loveth goodness only; He is so just that when He punisheth or pardoneth it cannot be gainsaid. In short, I say unto thee, Philip, that here on earth thou canst see Him, nor know Him perfectly; but in His Kingdom thou shalt see Him forever."

This verse which may safely be taken as elucidation of Chapter exii of the Quran quoted above is a testimony to the fact that, barring certain interpolations such as reference to Jubilee, etc. the Gospel of Barnabas now in our hands is the original and the real one.

How could Holy Jesus Christ, an Israelite and a Semitic Prophet, deviate from this age-old tradition of monotheism and preach something quite foreign to it? If we keep the Gospel of Barnabas in view as the true Gospel no difficulty arises and the tradition of monotheism stand unbroken. On the contrary, if we take the four Canonical Gospels as the only authentic Gospels, then it is not possible to explain this deviation except by going out of the Semitic tradition and searching its roots in ancient paganism. And there is ample evidence available about it.

The story of Jesus Christ, as given out by Pauline Christianity, is an exact replica of the passion play of Baal, the Babylonian Sun-God, which was in existence centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ and was acted as a popular mystery drama every year in the beginning of Spring on Easter Day. Its main features were deciphered from two of the cuneiform tablets discovered by the German excavators in 1903-04 at Kalah Shargat, the site of ancient Assur. They belonged to the library of Assur formed in the 9th century B.C., or even earlier. A comparison was drawn between the story of Jesus Christ and the story of Bel in the January 1922 issue of the Quest reproduced below:

The Babylonian Passion Play

Bel is taken prisoner. Bel is tried in the House on Mount (the Hall of Justice). Bel is smitten (wounded). Bel is led away to the Mount. Together with Bel, a male-factor is led away and put to death. Another who is also charged as male-factor is let go thus not taken away with Bel. After Bel had gone to the Mount, the city breaks out into tumult and fighting takes place in it. Bel's clothes are carried away.

A woman wipes away the hearts blood of Bel flowing from a drawn-out weapon (Spear?). Bel goes down into the Mount away from Sun and light, appears from life and is held fast in the Mount as in a prison.

Guards watch Bel imprisoned in the strong-hold of the Mount. A goddess sits with Bel. She comes to tend him.

They seek for Bel where he is held fast. In particular, a weeping woman seeks for him at the 'Gate of Burial'.

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The Gospel of Barnabas

cont.

When he is being carried away, the same lamented “O my brother! O, my brother!”

Bel is again brought back to life (as the Sun of Spring) he comes again out of the Mount.

His chief feast, the Babylonian New Year’s festival in March at the time of the spring equinox, is celebrated also as his triumph over the powers of darkness (cp. the creation hymn “once when on high” as the New Year’s festival hymn).

The Christian Passion Play

Jesus is taken prisoner. Jesus is tried in the house of the High priest and the Hall of Pilate. Jesus is scourged. Jesus is led away to crucifixion on Golgotha.

Together with Jesus two male-factors are led away and put to death. Another (Barabbas) is released to the people and thus not taken away with Jesus.

At the death of Jesus, the veil in the temple is rent (Synopt, John cp. Ps xxii, 18).

The lance-thrust in Jesus’ side and out-flow of water and blood (John). Mary Magdalene and two other women busy themselves with the (washing and embalming of the body) (Mark, Luke).

Jesus, in the grave, in the rock tomb (Synopt) goes down into realm of the dead (I pet. iii, 19, Matt. xii, 40 Acts. ii, 24, Rom. X, 17 ‘descent into hell’ dogma).

Guards are set over tomb of Jesus. (Matt.) Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sit before the tomb (Matt., Mark).

Women, in particular Mary Magdalene, come to the tomb to seek Jesus where he is behind the door of the tomb. Mary stands weeping before the empty tomb because they have taken her Lord away (John).

Jesus’ restoration to life, his rising from the grave (on a Sunday morning).

His festival, approximately at the spring equinox, is also celebrated as his triumph over the powers of darkness (cp. e.g. Col. ii, 15).

Is not the story of Jesus Christ as given in the Bible, a recast of the story of Bel? It being so, deprives the evangelical records of the claim to be genuine and makes them complete plagiarism.

The sign of the Cross is also not too Christian in origin. It does not date from the crucifixion. Clement, in his list of Christian symbols, does not make mention of it. It, in fact, is a symbol of paganism. There is an ancient cross in the Municipal Museum at Alexandria. Strangely enough the cross in Christianity signifies the same as did the Egyptian Cross - the sign of new life brought about by crucifixion.

The institution of monks and nuns can also be easily traced to paganism. Jesus neither advocated nor recommended celibacy. His single life may be taken to encourage monasticism, but how are we to explain the tonsure. Even Paul, who drew so lavishly upon paganism to build his Church, is silent on the question. Sun-worship alone can explain it. As stated by Tertullian, Mithraism and its monks and nuns, with the tonsure in honour of the disc of the Sun.

The evidence that the Pauline Christianity owes everything to the pagan world is so overwhelmingly preponderating that one is constrained to say with full justification in the words of Arch Bishop of York that “the Church repels.”

The Pauline Christianity having been found to be a child of paganism, the four Canonical Gospels lose all authenticity. On the contrary, the Gospel of Barnabas wherein Jesus Christ appears as a human being and an inspired Prophet of God preaching the Unity of God in strict conformity with the Jewish tradition of monotheism can be and is the only authentic Gospel.

(c) The Christian scholars have laboured hard to prove the Gospel of Barnabas to be a literary fraud executed by some Muslim, a renegade Christian or a Jew who first turned a Christian and then became a Muslim. All the three hypotheses do not hold good for the simple reason that the author of the Gospel of Barnabas is completely ignorant of the Quran. Two instances shall suffice to prove it. Firstly, the Holy Quran mentions the number of heavens as 7 more than half a dozen times but the Gospel of Barnabas mentions their number as nine. Secondly, the Holy Quran among others mentions the following miracles of Jesus Christ:

(i) Jesus announces his prophethood while still in the cradel. Says the Quran: “Then she pointed to him. They said, How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, young boy?”

“He spake: Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet, And hath made me blessed wheresover I may be and hath enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I remain alive.”

“And (hath made me) dutiful towards her who bore me and hath not made me arrogant, unblest.” “Peace on me the day I was born and the day I die and the day I shall be raised.”

(ii) Putting life in the likeness of a bird made of clay. Says the Quran: “When Allah saith: O son of Mary! Remember my favour unto thee and unto thy mother; how, I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit so that . . . thou dist shape of clay as it were the likeness of a bird by My permission and didst blow upon it and it was a bird by My permission.”

Now it is clear that the author of the Gospel of Barnabas, who specifically mentions the various miracles worked by Jesus Christ such as raising the dead to life, curing the leper and the blind, etc., if he had read the Quran, could not have failed to mention the above miracles also. The fact that he does not even remotely hint at them shows that he had never read the Quran. No Muslim, or renegade to Islam from Christianity or Judaism was therefore the author of this Gospel.

(d) A perusal of the Gospel of Barnabas is sufficient to refute the allegation that it is a forgery or a literary fraud. Its teachings can successfully vie with any revealed teachings in the world. Its words are the words of an inspired Prophet. If we accept it as a forgery, as the Christian scholars say, then the most surprising fact which baffles explanation is how a man of such remarkable and superb talents who forged this Gospel has remained unknown to this day. If we take it as the authentic Gospel of Barnabas and no forgery or literary fraud, no such difficulty confronts us.

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(e) The Spanish text and its translation done by Thomas Monkhouse were communicated to Dr. White, Bampton Lecturer, in 1784, whereafter both the text and the translation disappeared and are untraceable till today. Similarly, the English translation done by Lonsdale and Laura Ragg in 1907 also disappeared. The question is that if this Gospel is a forgery or a literary fraud, then why did the Christian World suppress it again and again. Or it is because it is the only authentic Gospel and since it strikes at the root of the Trinitarian Christianity, the Christian World hastened to suppress it the moment it saw the light of day.

Now a word about the challenge to the Muslims to produce the Arabic original. In the first instance, no copy of the Gospel of Barnabas ever existed in the Muslim world. Had there been any, the Muslim libraries of Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Cordova and Delhi would have been full of it and the Muslim polemical writers would have jumped upon it and used it against the Christians vehemently. As it is, the Muslim scholars and encyclopaedic writers were completely ignorant of it until its Italian and Spanish texts were brought to light in the West, not by Muslims but by Christian scholars in the beginning of the 18th century. One copy was found in the possession of a Pope and the other in the possession of ‘person of great name and authority’ in Amsterdam. Now, of all the world, if anybody can be asked to throw light on it, it is the Pope and the ‘person of great name and authority’. They are to explain how they came to possess copies of this Gospel. To ask the Muslims to produce the Arabic original is not only unreasonable but also illogical. According to the Law of Evidence, the person found in possession of a thing, has to explain his possession.

If it is accepted by the Christians as the true and authentic Gospel, the age-old offer of the Quran to unite the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims in a common brotherhood of worshippers of the One True God can materialise, doing away with the prejudices and misunderstandings which have marred their relations for centuries past.

NOTES
1. Epistle to the Colossians 4:10.
2. Epistle to the Galatians 2:9.
5. Sura III verse 64, The Quran.
8. The Quran. 19:29 to 33.
9. Ibid., 5:110.

(d) When the tree dies, it is cut off from the earth. So is man on his death.
(e) When a spark is applied to the dead and dried up tree, it is transformed into another form, namely, that of fire. In that process the carbon within the tree combines with the oxygen once generated by the tree for the benefit of mankind and the animal world. Similarly, a dead human being’s own goodness and the good he did to others combine to give him the new life. The activating cause, like the spark applied to the dead wood, is the Divine Command “Be and it becomes” as already explained earlier. Like the sun’s energy hidden in the tree which comes out in the form of fire when the wood is lit, the spiritual energy received by man from On High which lies hidden his body comes out of it in the form of a new creation as different from his first creation as fire is from the dead wood.

Fire From the Green Tree cont.

(c) Like the green tree, with the help of the heavenly light, the man who accepts that light and acts upon it, gains moral and spiritual stature for himself and also serves Allah’s creation as the green tree does. Remember, that with the help of the heavenly light, the green tree derives nourishment for its own growth and development, and it also purifies the atmosphere by absorbing and breaking up its poisonous carbon dioxide, and re-generating oxygen for the benefit of mankind and even the animals.

Human Form in the Hereafter

I have already quoted the Holy Qur’an's verse: “Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them (human beings). Yes. And He is the Creator par excellence, the Knowledgeable.” (36:81)

Man’s re-creation for his life in the heavens will be like his worldly being but not the same body. Other places in the Holy Qur’an also throw light on the subject. To quote one of them: “We have ordained death among you, and We are not to be overcome, that We may change your state and make you grow into what you know not.” (56:60-61) Maulana Muhammad Ali’s commentary on it runs as follows: “It is the Resurrection that is spoken of here. The present state will be changed, we are told, and men will be made to grow into a new creation which they do not know (here). Clearly it is not the material body of this life, but a new body which grows out of the deeds of men.”
As the father and the son worked on the building, they sang, as workmen often do, such as: O God, our Lord, be pleased to accept this humble labour at our hands, for indeed Thou are the Hearing and the Knowing! Our Lord, make us both very well obedient to Thee; and of our descendants raise a nation that should be similarly obedient to thee."56

6. Another prayer offered by the old father on this occasion was: “Make this city a place of security and peace, and feed its people with fruits.”57 Naturally, wherever a man constructs a building, or lays the foundations of a town, he has very similar thoughts and desires in his mind. But the prayer of this old man of God was accepted by the Lord, Who responded: “When We made this House a place that was to be resorted to again and again by the people, and We made it a place of peace and security for them.”58 Thus every word of the prayer offered by Abraham bore ample fruit, and gradually an important settlement and a great city sprang up at the site, where people began to converge from all parts of the world - people of many races and colours, rich and poor, young and old, rulers and the ruled, all travelling devoutly, to worship the One and the Only True God, the Lord of all mankind and the entire universe. Naturally the town around the House of God continued to grow in prosperity and importance.

7. If Makka had never been subjected to an attack by the enemy, it could have been urged that perhaps it had remained safe and secure purely as a matter of chance. But the fact is that it has been attacked by powerful enemies, at different times, and the attack was everytime repulsed in singular circumstances. The people of Makka totally lacked the means and the power for throwing back great military powers of the times. They openly admitted their weakness, but also remained confident that God Himself would protect it; and this is exactly what happened each time. The enemy was repulsed every time, in a set of circumstances which indicated that there was some hidden Hand which defended it. This is a miracle of which human history cannot furnish another instance.

8. Four great military powers rose at different times, in the countries bordering on Arabia; the Greeks, the Romans, the Iranians, and the Abyssinians. The military genius of Alexander the Great is admitted by all. In Europe, Africa, Iran Afghanistan, and India, there was none who could stand against him. But it is remarkable that the moment he realised his eyes in the direction of Makka, he was overtaken by death. From Aelbis Gulus to Nero, the Roman Emperors had ambitions to extend their power and influence over the Arabian peninsula. Ibn-i-Qutada has written that the Roman Emperor of the time helped Qusai to strengthen his grip over Makka.59 The Emperor had hoped that Qusai would remain under Roman influence. But in Makka he became quite independent. Some time after this Uthman ibn al Hawairith of the Asad tribe became Christian. The Roman Emperor bestowed on him a crown, and sent him to Makka, to be accepted by the Makkans as their ruler. But the Makkans refused to accept him, even though they could ill-afford to displease the Romans, since the Makkans lived on their trade with Syria and Palestine, where Roman rule was supreme. Abu ‘Amir, the hermit, threatened the Makkans with a Roman attack against which they would hardly be in a position to defend themselves. But a war ensued between the Romans and Iranians, and prevented the Romans from turning their attention to Arabia.60

The third military power on the outskirts of Arabia was that of Iran. It was so strong that at times it inflicted defeats even on the Romans. On the eastern side, its possessions ran through Afghanistan to portions of India. In Arabia, Yemen owed allegiance to it. Assuming that Makka, too, was in his hand, the Emperor instructed his governor in Yemen to send the man who claimed to be a prophet of God to present himself at the imperial court, and to place him under arrest, should he refuse to comply, and send him up in chains. But soon after this imperial order was issued, war broke out between the Romans and Persians, and the emperor remained preoccupied by other events, so that he could not pursue the matter any further.

When the king of Abyssinia saw the popularity and prosperity of Makka, he became jealous and decided to create a rival religious centre, and to destroy Makka by force of arms. The implementation of this plan was entrusted to the governor of Yemen, which province was held by Abyssinia at that time. The name of this governor was Abraha. The Christian Church built in Sa’aa was set up as the new centre, and a vigorous propaganda campaign was launched to wean away the Arabs from Makka. It was supplemented by a determined military attack on the sacred city. A huge army marched against Makka. Besides other weapons it had a number of elephants, a formidable beast in the eyes of the Arabs, who were not accustomed to its sight. As this army came within the striking distance, Abdul Mutталib, the most prominent of the Makkah chiefs, decided that the town should be evacuated, since its defence against the attacking forces was not possible; and this operation was duly carried out. But some foraging party of Abraha’s army captured a herd of camels which belonged to Abdul Muttalib. At that same time Abraha sent word to the Makkah chiefs that if they had anything to say to him he would be happy to receive a deputation of their representatives. “What can I do for you?” asked Abraha, when this deputation went to him; and Abdul Muttalib replied: “Some of your men have captured a herd of camels which belong to me. Kindly give orders that those camels should be returned to us.” “Good,” responded Abraha, happy to find that the Arabs were willing to talk, and might be persuaded peacefully to fall into agreement with his plans. “However,” he continued, “it is a strange request that you have made. I am here with a formidable army to destroy your sacred city, and I give you a chance to save it from destruction by coming to terms with me. In this critical situation, all that you care about is a small herd of camels that belongs to you.” “Yes,” replied Abdul Muttalib. “That is quite correct. I am the owner of these camels; naturally, I am anxious to regain them. As for the Ka’ba, it has its

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own Master and Owner, Who will see to its proper defence against all its enemies.”

Abraha was greatly impressed by this dignified reply, and indeed so it turned out to be. The formidable army was attacked by some kind of pestilence as it lay in camp within eyesight from Makka. Thousands died, and the rest fled.63

Now these are historical events, the authenticity and reliability of which cannot be contested. All through its history, Makka has never had any serious military potential. For one reason or another, it attracted determined attacks from the strongest military forces. Yet the fact remains that no enemy has ever been able to set his foot within the town. All other cities held to be sacred and inviolable by the followers of the various religions have been depopulated or destroyed, so that nothing remains of their grandeur, except heaps of ruins. These cities and towns had very strong military forces, and social orders committed to their defence. Makka, on the other hand, had no military potential, whatsoever, at its back; but it has remained truly impregnable and continues to be so. Here is a supreme miracle for those who can think dispassionately.

8. At this time the Temple which Solomon had built, does not exist, nor does Ajodhiya, nor Gaya for the blessings of all these places have been transferred to the House of God in Makka, which has remained safe from danger of every kind, and shall continue to remain so in the future. For the students of history, there is a unique miracle in all this, for one can undoubtedly see the Hand of God that has held the enemy always far from its walls.

9. But the meaning of Makka is not only this, that it is a place of peace and security, a place that no enemy will ever be able to conquer. It also has a second meaning - namely, that it will break the neck of all its enemies. Therefore, let us study the history of this town, to see whether or not it has been able to break the neck of its enemies, as implied in the name it bears. We find that Alexander the Great rose from Greece like an irresistible storm, and in one grand sweep over-ran country after country, radically changing the political map of the world of those days. There was no military power anywhere that could repulse his attack. But the moment he raised his eyes toward Makka, the Hand of God actually broke his neck, so to say. The Romans conquered most of the European countries and many parts of Africa and Asia. But the Persians fell on them reaching practically the walls of Constantinople. And sometime afterwards when the Persians thought of invading Arabia, the Romans stood against them. This is the negative aspect of the miracle that no one has been able to conquer Makka. The positive aspect is that even though Makka had no military potential, nor any kind of a regular army to defend it, nor any gold and silver, nor treasures nor any other kind of wealth, yet within a short period of two decades its people rose like a whirlwind and smashed two powerful empires, the Roman empire on the west, and the Persian empire on the east. At the same time the Muslims established the superiority of their civilization and culture. The Egyptians and Abyssinians, too, had to bow down before them.

10. The Holy Qur’an has beautifully referred to all these things in a short chapter, entitled Al-balad, wherein Allah draws attention to the witness of this ancient town, and develops an argument on the basis of this testimony. Many people think that the universe came into existence merely by accident, as a matter of pure chance. But this is quite wrong, and palpably absurd. The history of this sacred city is enough to prove that at the back of all this material phenomena there is the Hand of God.

Under divine instruction, Abraham, an old man of 125 years, and Ismael, his son, a young lad, rebuilt the Ka’ba on its old foundations. They worked alone, the two of them, and while engaged on the task, they prayed to God very fervently that their sacrifice and their labour be accepted by the Lord. Since man has been created to strive hard in order to rise higher in the spiritual scale, the house of God was to be a simple structure, without any pomp and show with no expensive timber, no silver and gold, no precious stones, as in the case of Jerusalem, Ajodhiya, Gaya, and Babylon, etc. Nor was there a standing army dedicated to its defence. But the House of God, and the town that grew at the site, have endured through the centuries, while other towns, held to be sacred and inviolable, have perished. This shows that Allah does not like to live in temples built to express the grandeur of the people who built them. He likes sincerity and simplicity in man, the sincerity and simplicity of Abraham and Ismael, as symbolised in the plain building of the House of God, and the fact that this House has remained inviolable, constitutes irrefutable proof of the existence and the power of God.

11. Further, this chapter says that this House of God was built to serve as the centre and the symbol of forces which were to work for the emancipation of mankind from various kinds of chains such as colour and racial prejudices, class conflicts resulting from disparity in incomes of various classes etc.64 And what will make thee comprehend what is the uphill road? It is to free a slave. Or to feed the needy in a day of hunger.65 Or to look after the welfare of orphans nearly related.65 Or the poor man lying in the dust.66 These are some of the eternal values which the House of God in Makka symbolises; and as such it is for ever to remain inviolable. This is the world which Islam desires to build, so that all those who live in it should live in peace from external enemies, as well as from those living within this impregnable stronghold.

56. The Qur’an, ii, 127, 128.
57. The Qur’an, ii, 126.
58. Ibid., ii, 125.
61. Al-Razi, Ch. Al-Fil, p. 506.
62. The Qur’an, xc, 13.
63. Ibid., xc, 12.
64. Ibid., xc, 14.
65. Ibid., xc, 15.
66. Ibid., xc, 16.
The Loving Tenderness of God
by Arfaque Malik

The two most important attributes of Allah (God) as recorded in the Holy Quran are ‘Rahim’ and ‘Rahman’. Both the divine epithets rahman and rahim are derived from the noun rahmah, which signifies ‘mercy’, ‘compassion’, ‘loving tenderness’ and more comprehensively ‘grace’, and thus comprising the idea of love and mercy. 13 ‘Al-Rahman’, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: ‘Is the Beneficent God Whose love and mercy are manifested in the creation of this world, and al-Rahim is the Merciful God Whose love and mercy are manifested in the state that comes after.’ 14 “Thus the former is expressive of the utmost degree of love and generosity, the latter of unbounded and constant favour and mercy.” 15 The attributes occur 400 times in the Quran, while the same attribute in verb form - showing of mercy - occurs about 170 times, bringing the total to about 570. 16 The two terms, though, have been derived from the same root - they express two different aspects of Allah’s grace. “Al-Rahman means the Being over-flowing with the quality of mercy and always ready to pour it out upon his creation. Rahim means the Being who not only possesses Rahmat but gives perennial expression to it and everything of the universe derives good from it every moment. The words Rahaman and Rahim are the measures of Faran and Fail. According to the rules of Arabic language, the larger the number of letters added to the root, the more extensive or more intensive does become its meaning (Kashshay). The measure of Faran conveys the idea of fullness and extensiveness while the measure of Fail expresses the idea of repetition and continuous out-pouring for those who deserve it. 17 The vastness of Divine mercy is immeasurable. A few verses of the Holy Quran are being quoted as an example:

“And your God is one God, there is no God but He! He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.” 18

“He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy.” 19

“He is Beneficent, He is Merciful.” 20

“He has ordained mercy on Himself.” 21

“And My mercy encompasses all things.” 22

These are but only a few verses of the Holy Quran which highlight ‘loving tenderness’ and ‘mercy’ of God as taught by the Holy Quran. The Bible, on the other hand, has a different story to tell. We shall now quote some verses from the Bible and leave it to the reader to judge if the words came out from the heart of love:

“And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters.” 23

“I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.” 24

“God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth and is furious.” 25

“I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion; the wild beast shall tear them.” 26

“To him that smote Egypt in their first born; for his mercy endureth for ever, and he shall bring his mercies to the children of his servants.” 27

“The Lord is a man of war.” 28

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” 29

“Unto the woman he said, ‘I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception.’” 30

“And the Lord our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people.” 31

“But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.” 32

“And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword.” 33

Could these curses, these threats, these orders come from the heart of love? Can such statements be the commandments of the Merciful God? If not, why do the Christian missionaries make a capital of God’s love for mankind?

The truth is not as recorded in the Bible but in the Holy Quran. The concept of God in the man made Bible is highly illogical, refutation of which is a futile exercise. We leave it to the readers to judge the truth.

NOTES
1. Holy Quran: Al-Fatiha 1:2
4. Ibid p.3 note 3
5. Ibid p.3 note 3
7. Abdul Hamad Siddiqui, The Holy Quran: English Translation and Explanatory Notes, Islamic Book Center, Lahore - vol.1 p.4
8. Al. Quran 2:163
9. Al. Quran 12:93
10. Al. Quran 59:22
11. Al. Quran 6:12
12. Al. Quran 7:156
16. Ibid. Nahum 1:2
17. Ibid. Hosea 13:8
18. Ibid. Psalms 136:10,18
19. Ibid. Exodus 15:3
20. Ibid. St Matthew 10:34-35
21. Ibid. Genesis 3:16
22. Ibid. Deutoronomy 2:33
23. Ibid. Deut. 20:16-17
24. Ibid. Deut. 20:13
Mankind is One

cont.

Bilal the Muazzin was another alien belonging to another racial order and foreign country. A black-skinned African was raised to the rank of a spiritual leader, next to Imam or the leader in prayers.

Then again, Salman of Persia and Suhail from Roman Empire on accepting Islam, were taken by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as members of his own family, as the famous tradition goes “Salman is from our own and belongs to our household.”

Thus the distinctions of race, rank and region were obliterated and real brotherhood of Islam belonging to different races, clans and languages came into existence.

Racial, national or religious superiority and favouritism reigned supreme before Islam. Accordingly persons and peoples were not judged and recompensed on the merit of their actions but merely on the basis of their accidents of birth, colour or creed. The faith of Islam gave for the first time an unprecedented impetus to the concept of a universal mankind. It gave an unparalleled release of human energies on a world-wide scale. The West having come in contact with the Muslims in Spain caught the spark of freedom of human faculties and an era of Renaissance during the Middle Ages dawned upon the Western world. The dominant characteristic of the modern culture is the awakening of the human mind, the intellect and self, while the human soul and spirit remains shackled as before. This was foretold by the Holy Prophet of Islam when he described it as a person having its left eye as brilliant as a shining star while its right eye blind-a very apt description of the materialistic present-day culture.

Due to marvellous advancements in the domain of secular sciences, the whole of mankind has assumed today the characteristic of a single nation. The vast and fast means of communication have enabled very frequent mingling of nations on international levels. National trade and commerce have also assumed an international complex. Similarly in the spheres of information, broadcasting and education fast communicative means have played significant role in creating international understanding. Health problems are no longer considered on nation level but international bodies like World Health Organization tackle problems to completely eradicate some of the common epidemics. To maintain world peace and to solve conflicts between different nations. The United Nations Organization has the Security Council as its very important branch; and so are the World Bank and International Court of Justice. In all these respects the world today looks quite different from what it was five hundred years ago. Efforts are afoot to eradicate hatred from among the adherents of different great religions of the world in order to create love and harmony among them and thus promote international peace. This organization is called “World Religions for Peace.” It signifies that the religions of the world should be united for the purpose of securing peace in the world. If conflicting secular interests of different nations disturb the peace of the world, no less do the religious differences, racial and regional prejudices disturb peace of the world. Without justice there can be no peace. Neither any court nor any assembly nor any police or military force can solve such conflicts. It is only the conscience and will of man, freed from all prejudicial concepts of inequality and infused with the conviction of a universal God and a universal humanity which can create a congenial atmosphere for peace. Such a belief is possible only through the medium of the Islamic Faith as inculcated in the Holy Quran and Sunnah. Even non-Muslim historians agree that it is only the faith of Islam which has been able to cement such varied and conflicting interests into a single community.

H.A.R. Gibb thus writes towards the close of his well-known book “Whither Islam”:

“We must wait upon the Islamic society to restore the balance of Western civilization upset by the one-sided nature of that progress.” (p.377)

And again: “For the fullest development of its own cultural and economic life, Islam cannot do without the cooperation of European society; for the fullest development of its cultural life, Europe cannot do without the forces and capacities which lie within Islamic society.” (p.378)

And he concludes his book with the following remarkable paragraph:

“But Islam has yet a further service to render to the cause of humanity; it possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and co-operation. No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity, and of endeavour so many and so varied races of mankind. Islam has still the power to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of the East and the West is to be replaced by co-operation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition.”

HOLY QURAN’S UNCHALLENGED TESTIMONY cont.

idol worshippers were charged with worshipping stones and men and stars and the elements and that they had forgotten the True Creator and were guilty of devouring the property of orphans and of killing children and of doing wrong to their partners, and that they had transgressed beyond measure in everything. It was said: Know that Allah revives the earth after its death (57:18); that is to say, that the whole earth had died and would now be revived afresh by God. In short, the Holy Quran charged the whole world with misconduct and idol worship and held the Christians and the Jews to be at the root of all evil and set out all the types of vices in which they indulged.

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The Quran drew such a picture of the misconduct of the world that except in the case of the age of Noah, no other age appears to resemble it. We have contented ourselves with citing only a few verses and would urge our readers to study the Holy Quran carefully so as to discover how forcefully and with what effective words the Holy Quran has set forth that the whole world had been corrupted and had died, and that mankind was standing on the brink of hell. It urged the Holy Prophet to warn the whole world that it was in a serious condition. A study of the Holy Quran reveals that the world was involved in paganism and idol worship and misconduct and all manner of sin, and was sunk in the deep well of vice. It is true that the Gospel mentions some of the misconduct of the Jews, but it nowhere said that the whole world had been corrupted and had died and had become filled with paganism and misconduct. Nor did Jesus claim that he was a Messenger to the whole world. He addressed the Jews, who were a small people and inhabited a few villages within sight of Jesus. But the Holy Quran mentions the death of the whole world and describes the evil condition of all peoples. The Jews were the descendants of the Prophets and professed faith in the Torah, though they did not act in accordance with it; but in the time of the Prophet in addition to all sorts of corruption in conduct, doctrine had also been corrupted. Thousands of people were atheists and thousands denied revelation and all sorts of evils were rife on the earth. Jesus mentioned the misconduct of the Jews who were a small people, which shows that the Jews were then in need of a Reformer. But the argument that we put forth in the case of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, that he came at the time of general corruption and was called back after effecting a full reform, and the presentation of both these aspects in the Holy Quran, and his calling the attention of the world to it, is a matter which is not to be discovered in the Gospel and indeed not in any other Book except in the Holy Quran. These arguments are put forth by the Holy Quran itself and it claims that its truth is established by a consideration of both these aspects. It appeared at a time when misconduct and false doctrines had become widespread and the world had drifted far away from truth and reality and the Unity of God and purity. The affirmation of the Quran in this respect is confirmed by a study of comparative history. There is evidence of the confession of every people that that age was so full of darkness that every people had become prone to creature worship and that is the reason that when the Holy Quran charged all people with misguided ignorance and evil-doing, not one of them was able to prove its innocence. Observe how forcefully God Almighty speaks of the vices of the people of the Book and describes the death of the whole world. It says: Let them not be like those who were given the Book before them and the term of Allah’s favour was prolonged for them so that their hearts were hardened and most of them became disobedient. Keep in mind that Allah revives the earth after its death. We have made the Signs manifest to you that you may understand. (57:17-18)

This means that the believers are admonished that they should not behave like the people of the Book who were given the Book before them and a long time passed and their hearts were hardened and most of them became disobedient and vicious. They are reminded that the earth had died and that God is now reviving it. These are signs of the need and truth of the Holy Quran which are being explained to you so that you might understand.

Now you will realize that we have not put forward this argument from our own mind, but that it is the Quran that puts it forward and after setting forth both parts of the argument, it says that these are Signs in support of the turth of the Holy Prophet and the Holy Quran which have been set forth so that you might reflect and arrive at the reality.

The second part of this argument is that the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was called back from the world to his Lord at a time when he had completed his task fully and this is also clearly set forth in the Holy Quran; as it is said: This day have I perfected your religion for you and have completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you Islam as your faith (5:4); meaning that by the revelation of the Quran and by the reform of the people your faith has been perfected and Divine favour has been completed for you and God has chosen Islam as your religion. This was an indication that the revelation of the Quran had been completed and it had carried out surprising and wonderful changes in eager hearts and had perfected their training and that Divine favour had been completed for the Muslims. These are the two aspects which are the purpose of the advent of a Prophet. This verse announces forcefully that the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, did not depart this life till Islam had been perfected by the revelation of the Quran and the proper training of the Muslims. This is a sign of Divine origin which is not bestowed on false claimant. Indeed before the Holy Prophet, no true prophet had shown this high example of perfection that on the one side the Book of God should be completed in peace and on the other side the training of people should be perfected and the disbelieving people should be defeated on every direction and Islam should be victorious on every side.

At another place it is said: Now that Allah’s succour has become manifest and victory has been achieved and thou hast seen people join the religion of Allah in large numbers, then glorify thy Lord with His praise and seek forgiveness of Him. Surely He is Oft-Returning with compassion. (110:2-4)

This means that the success and victory that had been promised having come and thou having seen, O Prophet, that people are entering into Islam in great hosts, then praise and glorify God, that is to say, confess that whatever has happened was not thy doing but was the grace and beneficence of Allah, and supplicate Allah in final istighfar for He is Oft-Returning with compassion. When prophets are urged to istighfar, it is wrong to conclude that this means that they have to seek forgiveness like sinful people. In their case it is a confession of their nothingness and humility and weakness and is a respectful way of seeking help. As these verses affirm that the purpose of the advent of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, had been fulfilled, that is to say, thousands of people had accepted Islam and this was an indication of the

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The Holy Quran’s Unchallenged Testimony
continued

approaching death of the Holy Prophet (he died within a year of the receipt of this revelation), it was natural that as these verses had given pleasure to the Holy Prophet, he should also be concerned that the garden having been planted, what about its future irrigation? So God Almighty, in order to remove this concern of the Holy Prophet, urged him to istighfar. The meaning of maghfarat is so to cover up a person that he should be safeguarded against calamities. Thus maghfarat means a helmet. Istighfar means that the calamity that is feared or the sin that is apprehended, may be covered up and stopped from becoming manifest. In this case it was to convey reassurance to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) that he should not grieve over the faith, that God Almighty would not let it be destroyed and would ever turn to it in mercy and hold back the misfortunes which could follow upon some weakness (Noorul Quran).

“O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil.” (2:183)

How can fasting, abstaining from food and drink, be a guard against evil? The answer to this question may be sought first of all in the verse itself. The practice of fasting is intended as a form of exercise or training in a particular form of self-control, which, if properly pursued, will strengthen the resistance of the Muslim to any temptation to evil.

Many lessons could be drawn from this verse. To begin with, there is a clear allusion in this verse to the practice of fasting in earlier revealed traditions of religious practice. In Judaism and Christianity exist some form of fasting. In Hinduism and Buddhism, abstinence from food and drink and moderation of diet are recognized as modes for spiritual improvement, providing practice in the control of bodily appetite and symbolizing reduction of one’s earthly wants. Secondly, we note in the succeeding verse that those who have difficulty in fasting may, as an alternative, provide sustenance for a needy person. Now it is a social evil that there should be people suffering from basic human needs, and well-to-do members of the society fail to perform a manifest duty in the name of Allah. Sincere and effective acts of charity counteract the social evil of poverty, and are considered meritorious acts as envisaged in the verse 183, that fasting can both ameliorate needs of others and train us to be less selfish. In this way we do indeed create within ourselves a spiritual defense against evil.

Jesus, peace be upon him, is said to have fasted for forty days and forty nights after his baptism by John. In the Gospel according to St. Matthew we read:

“There was Jesus lead up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said ‘If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made of bread.’ But he answered and said ‘It is written, man shall not live by

bread alone, but by every word that procedeth out of the mouth of God.’”
(Matthew 4:1-4)

Now it was in the month of fasting, or during the month of Ramdan, that the word of Allah, the Holy Quran, was revealed for the guidance of mankind.

Thus Fasting, as prescribed by the Holy Quran, provides a rational exercise in self-control and concern for those who need your help and attention.

“The month of Ramdan is that in which the Qur’an was revealed . . . Therefore, whoever of you witness the month, he shall fast during it, and whoever is sick or on a journey (he shall fast), a (like) number of days.”
(The Qur’an, 2:185)

“It is made lawful to you to approach your wives on the night of the fast, they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them. - and eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct to you from the blackness of the night at dawn, then complete the fast till night.”
(The Qur’an, 2:187)
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—Alphonse de Lamartine in *Histoire de la Turquie*

QUR'AN, THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL FORCE

"It is the one miracle claimed by Muhammad—his standing miracle, he called it—and a miracle it is."

—Bosworth Smith

"Never has a people been led more rapidly to civilization, such as it was, than were the Arabs through Islam. . . . And to it was also indirectly due the marvelous development of all branches of science in the Moslem world."

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"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 web into the old warp of history."

—Dr. Steingass, *Hughes' Dictionary of Islam*

THE BEAUTIFUL CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAM

"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 phases 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