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DIALOGUE WITH CHRISTIANS

AYATULLAH SAYYID MUHAMMAD SHIRAZI

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

DIALOGUE WITH CHRISTIANS

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Contents

۵ Contents
۶ DIALOGUE WITH CHRISTIANS
۶ book id
۶ Point
۱۰ CONTENTS
۱۲ PREFACE
۱۹ KNOWLEDGE IN ISLAM .۱
۲۵ ?IS JESUS THE SON OF GOD .۲
۳۳ THE POSITION OF JESUS AND CHRISTIANS IN ISLAM .۳
۴۳ EXCELLENCES OF ISLAM OVER OTHER RELIGIONSiva .۴
۵۳ ISLAMIC TEACHINGS .۵
۶۷ ISLAMIC DEFENCE WARS.۶
۷۶ TRINITY .۷
۸۳ EPILOGUE
۸۵ About center

DIALOGUE WITH CHRISTIANS

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WITH

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

,IN THE NAME OF ALLAH

,THE ALL-MERCIFUL

THE MERCY-GIVING

p: 3

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا آذِينَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا
فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

!O'People of the Book

Come to a word common between us and you

that we worship none but God

and shall not associate anything with Him

and some of us take not any others

!for lords other than God

:And if they turn back, then say

Bear witness that we are Muslims"

".[those submissive to God]

(Qur'an 3:64)

p: 4

CONTENTS

Preface ...	7
Knowledge in Islam ...	14 .1
Is Jesus the Son of God ...	22 .2
The Position of Jesus and Christianity in Islam ...	30 .3
Excellences of Islam over other ofnlist siement Religions ...	40 .4
Islamic Teachings ...	50 .5
Islamic Defence Wars ...	64 .6
Trinity ...	73 .7
Epilogue ...	82

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In the Name of Allah

the Beneficent, the Merciful

All the praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and the peace and blessings be upon the Holy Prophet
.Muhammad and his Holy Progeny

batThis book is a collection of the discussions and dialogues held between me and a group of Christians who
had come to see me or had come to me to enquire about Islam and, as a result of the guidance that emerged
.from the discussions, embraced Islam

In these discussions our chief aim has been to guide them to the right path, partly by arg- uments and partly
by light discussions, though at times also reacted to the offenses taken by the other party. However, every
.effort was made to avoid any unpleasantness during these discussions

Throughout the discourse, I found an inter- esting thing, that not even one of them was an obstinate Christian
.to deny the truth after knowing it. This remained a redeeming factor throughout our discussions

During the period of 25 years, specially after the Revolution of June 14 in Iraq led by Abdul Karim Qasim
until I was exiled from Karbala

Iraq) to Kuwait in 1971, I held discussions and conversations with hundreds of followers of different religions like Christianity, Sabians, non-believers of the Imamate, Yazidites, Ba'athists, Existentialists, Communists and Zaidites, but did not come across any hotheaded or obstinate person except a communist who was a secretary-general of the Ba'athist Party in one of the provinces of Iraq, with whom discussions were held and he showed much obstinacy and stubbornness

I had discussions concerning Islamic beliefs and religious rites with a large number of individuals and groups mostly of young people many of whom were of Eastern or Western ideologies. It would not be an exaggeration to say that I had discussions with approximately ten thousand youngsters

Sometimes I did come across obstinate people but their ratio may probably be four or five percent. Anyhow, in these encounters, I never came across any prejudice person having firm knowledge with convincing arguments. In fact, such persons normally used to stick to their previous faiths and beliefs. As a matter of principle, such persons kept on insisting on their old beliefs even though the bases of their religion and thought were uprooted

For example, a young Shi'ite university

student came to me to enquire about a certain writer. I told him that I had no attachment with him because of the fact that he had perverted ideas about Imam Ali (upon whom be peace). He asked, "How can you prove this contention?" I replied, "The proof is that, this writer has written that the Qur'anic verse saying, "Draw not near unto prayer when you are drunk," (4:43) was revealed in respect of Imam Ali, and he believes that while Imam Ali was drunk, stood for prayer and recited the Qur'anic verse incorrectly as, "Say, 'O disbelievers! I worship that which you worship' ", instead of the correct one, "Say, 'O disbelievers! I do not worship that which you worship.'" "The Shi'ite youngster said that it was not important because he had quoted history. I asked him, "How can you accept such a contention? Which history book narrates this story? And what is the proof of its authenticity?" He said that he did not expect such a reply from me, and he left my house with his friend murmuring to him, "I was mistaken about him

Once I held discussion with one of the elders of Zaidite sect, I asked him the criterion for recognizing an Imam, saying, "Is it not that he should be specified as an Imam by the Holy Prophet, and that he should have some miracles?" He said, "Why not." "Well then," said I

and adding, "the argument which is applicable to the Imamate of Imam Hasan (upon whom be peace) should also apply to the Imamate of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (upon whom be peace)." He did not reply but said, "One of the conditions necessary for the Imamate (leadership) to revolt with sword." I asked him how he justified armed revolt by an Imam. Again he could not reply. The trouble was that he jumped from one point to the other without sticking to one point. Our discussion lasted long. Ultimately, the Zaidite scholar became silent .and went out of the meeting quickly

I also held discussions with one of the Ismaili scholars who was a graduate from the Ismaili Religious College in which their missionaries are trained. I said to him, "You are an educated youngster and you know that only one of the two parties arguing for and against a point is right and the other is wrong." He agreed. Hea On the basis of this very argument, I said, "That means that either those who believe in the Twelve Imams or those who accepted only six Imams are right?" He said he was not prepared to argue because (contraversial)discussion is prohibited in his sect. "Then, how do you prove that you are right?" I said, "Suppose somebody says there is no God or prophet. How will you answer him?" As I wanted to

argue with him, he said, "No, I am not going to argue as arguing is prohibited in our sect." He had no answer.
.His face became red, he rose and went away

It is much regrettable that I could not note down the details of these discussions and proceedings which would have made it a useful detailed book. All these discussions, conversations and meetings were held with different persons and followers of various religions and creeds who either happened to see me by chance or were invited for discussions. In Karbala, we had required our friends to bring those tourists and religious-minded persons who were interested in the religious research. Our friends too used to bring all sorts of .persons they came across

I am surprised very much that throughout the long period in which these discussions took place, I did not encounter a single person who claimed to be a Baha'i or a Jew and wanting to discuss. I don't know why. Probably they were devoid of any logical reasoning or were not ready for such discussions and parleys, or .maybe, it was only a chance we did not come across such people

It is also worthwhile to say that when the late Ayatullah Sayyid Abul Hasan Isfahani and the late Haj Husayn Qummi died, the religious passed on to my father, Ayatullah Haj

Mirza Mahdi Shirazi, many ministers, ambassadors, state representatives and political personalities used to visit us in Karbala regularly. I and my late father used to discuss with them different religious topics but throughout that long period and frequent meetings we never felt helpless and unable to answer any questions. Most often we were lucky enough to convince our opponents that Islamic view was correct, that it was essential to implement Islamic laws in one's life, and that Islam possesses the best programmes and laws for the salvation of humanity. So, with the grace of Allah, I decided at last to write a book containing some of these conversations

Our aim in writing this preface is to point out that Islam has not been and will never be defeated in any field. Islam has no weakness or defect in its principles or branches in any sense of word. And there is no possibility that any religion may afford to lead mankind towards salvation like Islam or better than it. Had the people of the world learnt and embraced Islam as it was revealed and had it been implemented in all walks of life, there would have been no man who would have not accepted it except some pigheaded and determined enemies of Islam. But such type of people would have been very rare

This is a matter the importance of which I have personally experienced throughout my re- search work and discussions. So I invite all the scholars to turn themselves to this field-the field of discussions and mutual understanding. They should prepare themselves for this great cause so that, with the grace of Allah, they are .guided towards the right path better than before.d gni May Allah help and guide us

Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Husayni ash-Shirazi

Kuwait-

p: 13

Some of our friends who were the students from Baghdad University always used to take part in the discussions and debates concerning Islam. One day, a group of them from the medical college came to me and said that they had an American professor who had been appointed by the Government of Iraq for teaching in their college. Seemingly, he was a judicious man and desirous of finding facts and realities. He .was inquiring much about Islam and was optimistic about the Islamic way of life

When they desired me to meet and discuss (Islam) with him, they were not hopeful of his being convinced about Islam. We fixed near date for them and said that by the grace of Allah he would be inspired by Him to embrace Islam. The collegiates smiled and wondered as how was it possible that an American professor would embrace Islam easily. I asked them whether they thought that Islam was not an acceptable religion, or that they were not satisfied with my competence to interpret Islam, or that the professor was too obstinate and headstrong to accept the truth even after understanding it. The students remained silent. They could not say that their professor was a stronghead and obstinate person as they had

already praised him for his sense of justice. Afterwards, they were thinking out how to persuade him in his capacity as their professor that he should come to Karbala (which is 102 km) from Baghdad despite the fact that the professor did not believe in visiting of holy places. So, I suggested to them to bring him to Karbala just for recreation and excursion. Incidentally, the date of our appointment fell on a festival holiday

At the time of arrival of the professor at our house, a group of people were already there for a festival greeting, most of whom were local inhabitants. I welcomed him. After formal courtesy talk, I questioned him how he found Baghdad and its Muslim people. After having the professor narrated his impression about Baghdad and Muslim people, I availed myself of the opportunity to tell him that he had not seen anything of Islam and Muslims yet, otherwise he would have been surprised much more. When he asked how, I told him that "Islam, for example insists for its followers to acquire knowledge so much so that Islam makes it compulsory for all men and all women to acquire knowledge." I also explained to him some of the excellence of science and wisdom and the heavenly reward thereof. I added that, "Islam does not persuade its followers

Holy Prophet, according to some Islamic scholars, was the Chapter of 'Alaq. In the beginning of this chapter, the Holy Prophet was commanded to "Read in the name of your Lord Who created man from a (clot...(and) Who taught by the pen." (96:14

Allah the Almighty, has mentioned "reading and writing" in this chapter as these two skills make the bases for learning and key to the knowledge. There is another more important hadith from the Holy Prophet which says that, "If knowledge be in Pleiades, the inhabitants of Fars (Persia) would fetch it from there." If we take Fars to mean lands other than Arabia, just as they call the non-Arab world as Ajam, we can say that the hadith refers to the recent expedition by the spacemen to the moon. Here is some good news for man to reach any planet of the cluster stars of Pleiades which is at a far greater distance than the planets (of the solar .(system

We can say, in other words, that this saying of the Holy Prophet is an order in disguise, meaning, "O people of the world, fly into the depths of space until you reach a planet of the Pleiades," just as when the scholars of Arabic literature say, "When I say to my son, 'Go to school tomorrow,' it means that he must go to school the next day." Or when a businessman

says to his son, "If profit lies in the land of the enemy, you will certainly fetch it from there," it means that he wants his son to get the profit even from the land of enemy and he knows that his son has the ability to do so.

.Consequently, we have been waiting for that day when mankind will reach a planet of the Pleiades

As you know," I said to the Professor, "when Russian space scientists launched the first artificial satellite, some of the Christian clergymen raised a protest to say that the Russian's act was in defiance of Heavenly powers, while the scholars of Islam congratulated humanity on that remarkable success of science in that direction. They took that success as a proof of the correctness of the predictions and saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad

be Thereafter, I told him that Imam Ali who was the pupil and successor of the Holy Prophet, and all Muslims accepted him as a great leader and all held him in high esteem, had proclaimed saying, "Ask me about the ways of the skies as I know them better than the ways of the earth." I asked him whether this proclamation did not prove that he had the exact knowledge of astronomy, and that the facts discussed by modern man today were already

known to him, although the philosophers were of the view for the last five thousand years that the flight of a
.man to the skies was next to impossible

Every sentence of mine appeared to have deeply moved the doctor and struck like a lightning. These talks prevailed over his mind completely and the signs of awe and amazement were clearly seen in his face and his motions. Then I told him about a verse in the Holy Qur'an which referred to the conquest of the outer space and the oceans. This verse says, "O company of jinn and men, if you have power to penetrate all regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them). You will never penetrate them except with power." (55:33) The
.religious scholars interpreted this power as scientific power

The meeting lasted for over an hour. In the end I enquired him whether he was satisfied that Islam was a universal religion and Muhammad bin Abdallah (may Allah's blessings be upon him and his Progeny) was
.the Prophet from Allah, the Almighty

The doctor bent his head and plunged into meditation. I took advantage of his silence and said, "I hope you will embrace Islam and augment your distinctions of faith, as Allah the Almighty says in His Holy Book,
Allah will

exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge to high ranks.' (58:11) By the grace of Allah, you have already been in possession of the characteristics of vision and wisdom. The only thing which is left is to add to yourself the virtues of belief and faith in Islam." Then I explained to him that by embracing the religion of Islam he would lose nothing and thus I soothed his mental anxiety and uneasiness. Then the

"?doctor went deep into meditation and said, "How should I embrace Islam

I asked him to say, "I bear witness that there is no good except Allah; and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and prophet." In addition to these two declarations, I asked him to declare his acceptance of the authority of Imam Ali and the other (eleven) Imams. He then repeated the two declarations (shahadatayn) accordingly

Thereafter, he requested one of our friends who was his pupil and was acting as interpreter to fix one hour every week to teach him the tenets and rituals of the divine religion of Islam

The people who had assembled there congratulated him. Befitting the occasion, sweets were distributed. The gathering dispersed, saying, "Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds

One day, one of our friends, a grocer, came to me and said that he had a grocer friend whose brother was an Iranian educated engineer. He and two other individuals from Karbala had got three Italian Christian wives with them. The brother of the grocer had tried his best to convince the wife of the brother to embrace Islam but his wife did not give in and in turn criticized Islam. That woman, like his husband, was also a learned person and a university graduate. Besides, she was also enriched in Christian religious knowledge as her .father was a Christian scholar

Our grocer friend sought for my permission to bring them before me with an intention that perhaps Allah might bless them and they could embrace Islam. I fixed up a time for them. The grocer added that according to her husband, the woman was an educated one and well-versed in the current affairs as well as in the religious knowledge. She was said to be very much argumentative in the discussion. I replied, "I hope Allah the Al-mighty, would help me to speak the words of truth and fact." I also advised my grocer friend that he -should bring all the three youngsters along with their wives so that the discus

sion could be made with all of them. The grocer promised to try to bring them together but he expressed his doubt about their coming together because firstly, only one of them, his friend, being pious and faithful, was insisting to get his wife embrace Islam, and secondly, his aged mother also insisted to get his wife embrace Islam.¹⁹¹ But the other two youngsters were devoid of such characteristics. I advised him to try as an old saying goes, "Try to succeed." The grocer accepted it and went away to carry out the plan for all the three Iraqi youngsters

After a few days he came back to me and said that if I had given time to somebody else in that evening then they would suggest to fix time on any other day; and if I was free then they would suggest to me soon after evening prayers at the same night. I said, "You are most welcome this very night

After the evening prayers, we went to our house. The three young engineers along with their wives and that grocer friend with his other grocer friend (who was the brother of that young engineer), came over there.

.During the course of our discussion, the husbands of those Christian women acted as their interpreters

,I asked those women what was their religion

and they told me that they belonged to the Christian religion. I questioned them why they had become Christians. One of them eye-winked to the other one to say that they believed in Christianity because they had accepted Jesus Christ was the son of God, the Father. I asked, "Who told you that Jesus Christ was the son of God?" They replied that all people believe so. I refuted their contention by saying, "This is not true. Do not you know that the present population of the world is three billion out of which only eight hundred million are Christians? Therefore, the remaining people of the world do not believe that Jesus is the son of God." At this the women became silent because they had no counter-argument to present. Then I added, "Moreover, all Christians do not believe that Jesus is the son of God, but most of them believe that he was a human being

Then one of those women asked whether I could say that millions of Christians including the great scholars, hermits, nuns and monks were telling a lie that Jesus was the son of God. I put the same question to them as whether they could similarly say that more than two billion of non-Christian people including great scholars, pious and learned people were telling a lie that Jesus was not the son

The women became silent for a while. Then they asked me to prove the prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's blessing be upon him and his Progeny); and on what ground I had the right of guiding them to the religion of Islam. I said, "Prophet Muhammad brought the miracles with him; claimed to be a prophet and his claim was not contrary to reason and as such we believe in him." She asked me to elaborate my three points, and I explained it to her thus

That the Holy Prophet Muhammad claimed to be a prophet is quite clear and needs no elaboration as you too admit that he claimed so." She confirmed my first point, then I explained my second point

The Prophet of Islam showed miracles to prove his prophethood out of which the Holy Qur'an alone is sufficient. By it he challenged the people of the world to bring even one chapter like any chapter of the Qur'an in the sense of its eloquence and clarity. But none could bring a single chapter like that of the Holy Qur'an

She asked as why the people of the world could not bring an example against the Qur'an. I replied, "It was similar to Jesus who used to give life to dead bodies but none of the Jews

had such power of enlivening even a single dead body." She observed, "The Qur'an is the word." I replied, "Yes, of course, but this word is not like that of the people, it is some- thing supernatural; and that is why the people of the world could not write a single chapter parallel to it. If Muhammad was not a prophet, he could not bring a book like the Qur'an which is supernatural to human being's word in the sense of eloquence, clarity, and literature." Allah says in the Qur'an: 'And this Qur'an is not such as could be forged by those (besides Allah." (10:37

Then I explained my third point to her, saying, "The Holy Qur'an was not contrary to reason. As sometimes it is possible that some- one may claim for something and carry out some supernatural deeds. But that claim and action being abnormal is contrary to reason. The very reason that his claim was contrary to reason is the proof of his supernatural deed's being not a testimonial from God. For example, if someone claims that the sun can produce cold- ness, and in support of his claim he carries out some supernatural deed as to cause the sun eclipse, here we can say that this super- natural action of his and the eclipse of the sun is not a miracle .from God, but an act done upon sorcery, juggling or an unnatural act

".Hence, it was quite obvious that the claim of Prophet Muhammad was never contrary to reason

Then the Italian woman repeated her first argument, saying, "If Jesus Christ was not the son of God, then whose son was he?" I asked her whether she had heard the names of Adam and Eve (Hawa). She replied, "Yes, Adam and Eve were the first and foremost human beings on earth as stated in the Bible." Then I said, "Who was the father of Adam and Eve?" She replied, "Adam and Eve had no father." I asked, "How did they come to this world?" She replied, "By the order of God the Almi- ghty." Then I explained it to her that Jesus came to .the world similarly by the order of God the Almighty, and without any father. She could not say anything

As our discussion had inculcated in them a deep impression, I continued our talk by pointing out to the Christian women that Islam holds Jesus Christ and his mother Mary (Mar yam) in high esteem. I started to praise Virgin Mary (upon whom be peace) and then asked them, "What hinders you to enter this reli- gion
"?which respects and holds in high esteem your Prophet (Jesus) and his mother

In the same tone and tempo, I continued the sensational conversation with a little emotional

touch. The women were very much surprised on my talk that I was saying that Islam held Jesus and his mother in high esteem because they thought before that Islam was cynical about Jesus and his mother. Then I said to them, "Just now I will bring our holy book, the Glorious Qur'an, for you so that you may yourself see with your own eyes how much our Holy Qur'an has praised and held in high esteem Prophet Jesus and his mother Mary. Nevertheless, there is a special chapter in the Qur'an in the name of Maryam (Mary)." Then I fetched the Qur'an, I opened the chapter of Maryam and showed it to them. I turned its pages one by one .before them and showed each and every verse concerning Mary in that chapter

After so many arguments and conversations, Islam made a way in their hearts and I thus taught them to repeat :this formula of accept- ing the Islamic Faith

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah Who is One having no partner. And I bear witness that" Muhammad is His servant and messenger. And I bear witness that Ali and his infallible descendants are the ".success- ors of the Messenger of Allah

-They recited sincerely all three formulas of the faith in Arabic and in their own ton

gues as well. Sweets were then distributed befitting the occasion. Their husbands were advised to teach their wives Islamic injunctions. A set of books on the principles of Islam and its practices was presented to them as a gift. I think that meeting of ours lasted for about three hours

p: 27

THE POSITION OF JESUS AND CHRISTIANS IN ISLAM .3

One day, an educated friend of mine came to see me and said that he got acquainted with a Christian engineer who served in Iraq through his friend who wanted to discuss Islam with him but could not do so because he was not well informed of Christianity and was afraid of taking the responsibility as he had not studied relevant books sufficient to be able to pull on well

A few days later, he brought his friend after the evening prayers, and after a little courtesy talk he asked me whether I believed in Islam to be a religion to which I replied in affirmative. He also asked me whether I also believed that Muhammad (may Allah's blessings be upon him and his Progeny) was a prophet of God, and whether the religion of Muhammad was better than that of Jesus Christ. I replied in affirmative

Then he asked, "Do you believe that whoever does not believe in Islam will be thrown into Hell?" I replied, "Those who do not believe in Islam are of two groups. The first group are those who do not believe in Islam due to having no information about the truth of Islam. This group of people would be tested on the Day of Judgement. If they got through

.that test they would enter Paradise and if they could not clear that test they would be thrown into Hell

The second group are those who do not believe in Islam on purpose and not unknowingly. They know that the religion of Islam is a right one even then they deny it. Such group of people are obstinate and if they do not feel contrite and repent to Allah the Almighty, then they will be thrown into Hell

He said, "If it is so, do you think that millions of Christians will fall into Hell?" I replied, "I did not say so: what I said was that only the obstinate ones will enter Hell and those who were ignorant, having no Islamic knowledge should be tested on the Day of Judgment." He said, "So far I have never heard such a thing from anyone except from you. Contrary to it I have heard from many Muslims that all Christians would fall into fierce Hell." I said, "Whatever I said is the opinion of all Muslims and is also recorded in our books of philosophy and theology." He said, "So a group of Christians shall enter Paradise!" To clarify my point, I said, "All those Christians who believed in Jesus Christ and accepted his religion as true before the advent of Islam shall certainly enter Paradise. But after the advent of Islam, only those Christians who get well through the

".test on the Day of Judgement shall enter Para- dise

The Christian youngster asked whether I knew about Christianity. I replied, "Yes". He questioned me as to how and from where I learnt about Christianity. I said that I learnt about Christianity by studying a lot of books on it and by holding debates and discussions with various renowned scholars. He wondered and asked why I did not embrace Christianity in spite of the fact that I admitted the greatness of Jesus. I replied that I was well aware of the greatness of Jesus but I also knew that Prophet Muhammad held a better status than him. Thus I believed in Jesus and after him I also believe in Muhammad (peace be upon them). He remarked,

".Therefore, as for Christ we feel the same." I said, "Yes

He then asked me, "How can you prove that Muhammad was a prophet?" I said, "The same proof which establishes the prophethood of Jesus also does to the prophethood of Muham- mad." He negated my argument by saying that Jesus was the son of God whereas Muham- mad was the son of Abdullah - the slave of Allah." I asked him, "What do you mean by Jesus is the son of God?" And added, "Do you mean to say that God made

Mary (Maryam) to give birth to Jesus in the same

way as a man makes his wife to give birth to his son? Or do you mean something else? What do you really mean

At this juncture the face of the Christian arengineer appeared to have changed its colour and he bent his head a little down to think over. After a few minutes he raised his head and said, "This incident, being a supernatural one, is beyond one's control of thought and approach of reason." I asked him, "How do you believe in a religion which is beyond the reason?" Then I gave him an example, saying, "If a person comes here and says to you, 'I am a prophet of God, and it is compulsory upon you to obey me', and as soon as you ask for a reasonable proof from him he says to you that, 'It is beyond the approach of your reason to understand me', would you not laugh at that person?" Then I explained to him that it was the nature of human .being that he should not accept anything if he does not understand it

He asked, "So how do you believe in God despite the fact that your reason cannot comprehend Him?" I said, "I know that this world belongs to the Almighty Allah, but I do not know what is His reality. This is similar to the fact that I believe in the existence of electricity

between this bulb and those wire," pointing to the bulb and adding, "but despite this much physical existence, I
".do not know its reality

He then turned to the same subject of the sonship of Jesus Christ, saying, "All Christians all over the world claim that Jesus is the son of God." I refuted him saying, "Firstly, not all Christians believe in this creed. Secondly, their statement is not a proof, otherwise, if you treat it so then all Muslims too claim that Jesus is
"!not the son of God. You should then accept this majority's opinion too

He said, "How do you prove that Jesus is the Prophet of God?" I replied, "As our Holy Qur'an and our Prophet of Islam confirm the prophethood of Jesus Christ (upon whom be peace); I also believe in him." He said, "Sup- pose that the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad do not stand witness to the prophet- hood of Jesus, in that case would you have faith bin Jesus?" I said, "In this case, I would not believe in him." He asked
.for the reason

I explained to him that in the absence of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam, the prophethood of Jesus can either be proved by the statements of Christians or by the Bible, none of which is reliable. He asked for
the reason. I replied, "Because the contents of

the Bible care contrary to reason, and it is not possible for such a book to be termed as the Word of God!" He surprisingly asked, "Is the Bible contrary to reason?" I replied in affirmative, and when he asked for an example, I requested him to refer to the booklet entitled, Absurdities in the Bible! which shows how the Bible .(!accuses Jesus Christ to be born of 2 adultery (may God forbid

Here the Christian youngman bit his finger band said, "No! there is no possibility of such a thing to be in the Bible!" I then opened the Bible for him at once and showed him what I shad said.oolt caused a strange horror in him." Then I explained to him that such irrational topics were in abundance in that book which The would .see later on, by the will of God

Afterwards, in an apologizing tone, I regretted to him and said, "I am sorry for touch- ing your sentiments though I did not utter at my own but was compelled by you to do so. Otherwise, Jesus (upon whom be peace) is one of the Great Prophets who is holy and righteous in our view. It is compulsory to be- lieven inschim as it is the same with Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's blessings be upon whim and his Progeny)."ni ynsm 918 9tor) tart -To

Regarding the reason that I could not ac- Icept the statements of Christians to serve as the

purpose of proof, I explained it to him that there are so many persons in the world whose number is many times larger than that of Christians, for example, the Jews, Buddhists, Magians and Confucians together, and so many other people of different religions in the world, who contrary to Christians, do not recognize Jesus as a prophet. As the words of the people oppose each other, the statements of both sides lose their .credibility. That is why I believe in Jesus on the basis of the Holy Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad

He said, "So what is your opinion now." "I said, "In my opinion, let us suppose that we have just now entered this world and want to adopt a religion for ourselves. Then first of all we must remove from ourselves all sorts of our past imitations and thoughts so that we may be able to find out with a free mind as to which religion is worthy of following and then we would be able to determine to follow that religion sincerely." He said, "Very well, so how can we find the fact?" I said, "Here we have two books, the Bible and the Qur'an. The former does not merit any more to be an authentic book for a religion for the obvious reasons that there are many irrational things in the New and Old Testaments. Therefore, either the original of this book was not correct or its original

copy was correct but was later interpolated. Consequently, in both cases, the Bible is not an authentic book to
.be relied on. So the Holy Qur'an is left

He said, "There is every possibility that there might be some other religion other than that of the Holy Qur'an, so how can I gather that the other religion is not better than that of Islam? Similarly, how can I take for granted that the Qur'an is authentic so that I may accept it and follow its Prophet?" I said, "As your question is justified, let me prove the authenticity and the truthfulness of the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an says in one of its verses, If you be in doubt about what We have revealed to Our Servant [Muhammad then produce one chapter like one chapter like that of it [Qur'an] and call your witnesses other than Allah, if you are truthful."

((2:23

Then I added, "The Arabs were the people who were master of eloquence and clarity and Muhammad was one of them, but apparently he could neither read nor write because he had not learned from any man, the Arabs could have easily competed with him in the Qur'an, but their inability to compete with him in it proves
.that no human being is competent to challenge the Holy Prophet in bringing the likeness of the Holy Qur'an

Hence, this incident provides sufficient proof that there is no doubt in the revelation of the Holy Qur'an from God the Almighty." He asked, "There is every possibility that some of the Arabs might have been successful in bringing another book similar to the Qur'an but that has not reached us." I replied, "Had they successful in doing so, the Christians and the Jews would certainly have taken care of that because they had been very much in search of such a thing as to find fault in the of the Holy Prophet. And since there is no trace in history in this connection, it proves sufficiently that all the opponents of the Holy Prophet failed completely to bring
".another book similar to the Holy Qur'an

Then I gave him a philosophical example saying, "The absence of a thing with regard to its existence proves non-existence. Similarly, the non-existence of a proof for the existence of something is itself a proof of its
.non-existence. If you do not find a person in this room

At this point, the Christian engineer seemed to have been convinced by my argument, and when he asked me for my suggestion, I said to him, "In my opinion, you should believe the prophethood of Muhammad." He
,asked

Does one have to disbelieve in Jesus Christ by believing in Muhammad?" "Not at all!" I answered him, and added, "But in fact, Islam clearly commands its followers to believe in the prophethood of Jesus Christ as well. Moreover, Jesus is recognized by Islam as one of the Five Great Prophets deputed by Allah the Almighty to the east and west of the world as His Messenger, and they are called ulul-azm." "Who are the Five Great Prophets?" He asked. I replied, "They are Prophets Noah (Nuh), Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Musa), Jesus (Isa) and Muhammad (peace be upon them all

Then I started to encourage him to learn Islam; and by the grace and blessings of Allah, he embraced Islam and recited the formulas for accepting Islam and he also accepted the authority of Imam Ali (upon whom be .(peace

.The meeting lasted for about one and a half hours

p: 37

During the holy month of Ramazan (Ra- madan), one day I reached my house after the mid-day congregational prayers. I continu- ously attended to explain various religious issues being asked by many Muslims for about one hour while sitting in the courtyard of the holy shrine of Imam Husayn (upon whom be peace) in Karbala. So I wanted to take rest at that time. Suddenly, the door-bell started ringing. There was no body else in my house to attend to that. I thought not to attend to that but once it struck to me that someone be .in need which if fulfilled by me, would accrue a great heavenly reward to me. But I was irresolute

Then I remembered that around the same time I had given time to a responsible of- ficial of Baghdad. We were to discuss about the import of machinery for establishing a local radio station at Karbala, and establishing a college, namely The Qur'an Hakim College and seven other items. At that occasion, the time too was nearly the same as was fixed. On the other side, I did not want to hold the sch- eduled meeting before I could take a rest. More- over, those of my companions in whose pre- sence I used to hold such meetings had not

come yet. The reason was that I had never held such meetings without the presence of my companions especially when the meetings were presumed to prolong. So this was our practices that in such meetings some of our companions and friends were also present

By hook or by crook, I stood up and opened the door. I came across an aged man whose age appeared to be about 60 years. He greeted me and said, "My family members and I have come from Kazimain just to see you. Is it possible for you to grace us with a sitting in your house?" I said, "You are most welcome." He said, "My son has received his education in Germany and has returned from there recently with a German Christian wife.. Both my wife and I have tried our best to convert his wife into a Muslim but in vain. In turn she thanks us for getting her convinced first about the genuineness of Islam. When we tried to convince her, she did not give in and in turn entered into an argument with us. At last call of us decided to seek your guidance in this matter. That is why we have come here from Kazimain taking the advantage of our days off-Friday

So I said to him, "I am very happy to receive all of you." He went away. He had parked his car at the same road, he brought his wife, son and daughter-in-law. To Then I

desired his daughter-in-law to say what she wanted. Her young husband himself became her interpreter. She said, "My husband and his parents have been urging me to embrace Islam although I have not seen any bad thing in Christianity so as to change my religion. I am a pious and religious woman and have also studied the Bible and also used to attend church. All members of my family are also religious people. Keeping these conditions in view, does it suit me in your opinion that I should quit Christianity and enter Islam? After all, why?" She tried to explain her contention by quoting an example, saying, "If you possess a beautiful house, will you wish to change it

Now I started to talk to her in such a way as to enable her to keep pace with my guiding lines and to follow me fully. I said, "I do not want you to abandon your religion. I want you to augment the beauty of your religion with another beauty of Islam. I do not want you to change your house but to add another storeys over your house so that you may have more facilities like open air and brighter light for enjoying better life

With much surprise, she said, "But I do not think so." I said, "No, this is surely so. The example of the religions of Christianity and Islam

is like the stages of education, i.e. high school stage and university stage. So the example of my inviting you to Islam is like inviting you to a university after you have cleared successfully the stages of high school, so that you may complete your education." She said, "How can I agree with you when I have been learning from the very beginning in my home, in my school and in my environment that Islam has been deadly against Christianity, and that Muhammad was the fatal enemy of Christ and Muslims have been the enemies of Christians

I said, "Whatever you have been learning from your very beginning is quite in reverse order because Islam is the well-wisher of Christianity. Its proof is available in our Holy Qur'an which says, Say (O Muslims!): We believe in Allah, and in what is revealed to us, and that which Moses and Jesus received." (2:136) Muhammad also is a well-wisher of Christ as mentioned in the Qur'an, The Messiah, son of Mary, was no other than a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) had passed away before him. (5:57) According to the following verse, Muslims are all well-wishers of Christians: 'You will find the nearest of them in affection to those who believe (to be) those who say, "Lo! We are Christians." (5:82

Then I asked her, "After having seen these

clearcut verses of the Holy Qur'an, do you still think that that which you have heard before is right or this which you hear and see now?" The Christian lady was very much impressed with my argumentative talk. Her family members also expressed their surprised and said that they never thought so but that as the Christian lady said, this was due to the weak publicity of us at home and abroad. May Allah help us

Das benThen she said, "Now I agree with you as you have proved it from the Qur'an itself. If you had not proved it from the Qur'an, I would have said that you were saying so just to convince me to embrace Islam and that talk would have been treated as baseless. Now you may please elaborate to me as to how the religion of Islam after Christianity is a 'university stage' after a 'high school stage'?" I said, "You yourself are a Christian and know well that Christianity is a religion of morality." She replied in affirmative. Then I said, "But Islam has augmented the excellences of morals with several other important parts in the same manner as in the university stage where several other departments of learning are established in addition to those of the high school stage of education." She said, "Give an example." I said, "For example, Islam has established the systems of politics and economics, and laid down the programmes for

army forces, wealth and others." to set elood 929 The German lady being astonished much by my statements, asked, 'Does Islam deal with these subjects too?' I said, "Oh, yes, why not?" She said, "I was made to understand before that Islam was a set of ridiculous stories and dis- tortions of Judaism and Christianity." I said, "No, but the opposite is true. Islam has puri- fied Judaism and Christianity from the ridicu- lous stories and distortions and that is why in the Holy Qur'an it says, And We have revealed to you the Book (Qur'an) (with truth, confirming whatever Book was before it, and a watcher over it." (5:49

She pointed out, "Now, two questions arise for me." I asked which were they. She said, "Firstly, what are the ridiculous stories in the Judaism and Christianity? Secondly, is it pos- sible that such things may have crept into Christianity?" I said, "I do not want to touch this aspect of the matter because I dislike to injure your feelings and deprive ourselves from the positive results of the discussion. Anyhow, I point out one issue to you. The Christians believe in the trinity and say that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are 'three' persons yet they are 'one'. Is it possible?" She answered, "What is the objection?" I said to her while holding three books in my hand, "Are these

books three or one?" She said, "Three." I said, "If a person comes and says to you that these books are three as well as one, what will you say to him? Will you not say to him, 'It is not possible that three entities to be
'?called as one entity

The Christian lady was astonished so much as if she had heard that argument for the first time in her life. She said, "How is that the Christians believe in trinity?" I said, "I do not know, you yourself ask them. I only know
".this much that their belief is false

She said, "I have another question. You have said that Islam is a religion of every thing. What relation does exist between religion and poli- tics or economics?" I said, "A (true) religion possesses each and everything. But since Christ- ianity has undergone many distortions, there remained nothing in it except the ethical teach- ings." She said, "Can you explain, for example, the economics of Islam?" I said, "Well, let me quote for
:you relevant verses from the Holy Qur'an

(And know that whatever you earn of your profits, one-fifth (khums) of it is the share of Allah.' (8:41 (1"

The alms are only for the poor and the needy. ' (9:60) "Broilperdo it a dedW (2

Allah permitted trading and forbidden (3

(b)son you who believe, abide by your (commercial) contracts." (5:1(4

Then, keeping in view her comprehension, I started to interpret these Qur'anic verses dealing with Islamic economy. She declared, "I accept the truthfulness of Islam, but only one thing is left, which if you could explain to my entire satisfaction, I shall embrace Islam, otherwise not, even though the whole of Islam has become crystal clear to me. I have repeatedly inquired about it from my husband and others but none could satisfy me." I asked her what her question was, although I was much worried lest her question was just to kill the time and to keep herself away from Islam. She said, "Since the first days I came to Iraq," she said while pointing at her husband and others, "this family has been putting pressure on me to wear an Islamic covering (hijab). So, if wearing Islamic covering (hijab) in Islam is compulsory, then I cannot embrace it at any rate." I said, "Have you seen the jewellers how they hide their precious jewels in iron safes and beautiful covers?" She said, "Yes, I have seen so." I asked, "Why do they do so?" She replied, "Just to protect them from the thieves

I said, "Islamic philosophy of wearing hijab is the same. For example, you are a young lady

and know very well that in every society there are thieves who are against chastity and modesty. As the jewels are safeguarded from the thieves, Islam has similarly made it compulsory on its followers to safeguard the chastity, dignity and nobleness of their female class, and as such this order is only in your own interest."

She said, "This explanation is very much satisfactory for me. Now, as wearing hijab is obligatory in Islam,

"?why non-hijab women are seen in Iraqi television? Is Iraq not an Islamic country

I said, "Is your country, Germany, independent or under the yoke of colonialism?" She said, "After the World

War II, we fell under the yoke of colonialism." I said, "Do you believe that colonialism allows you to plan

the developments of your country according to your own wishes, to implement the laws out of your own

choice, and to let you live as you like?" She said with a gloomy heart, "No, not at all!" I said, "We Muslims too

have fallen into the hands of the colonialism for the last 50 years and all of our national and cultural

programmes are drawn up by them. Consequently, we Muslims are deprived of implementing any Islamic

programmes at our own." She said, "Indeed, this is true

bal Here the Christian lady embraced Islam

herself and declared, "I bear witness there is not god but Allah, the One having no partner; and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Servant and Messenger of Allah." She also accepted the immediate successorship of Imam nangiato ed sand of Ali

All members of her family, especially her husband, knew no bound of happiness on her embracing Islam. Our .discussion lasted for about two-and-a-half hours

p: 47

One day, a western youngster like a hippy came to our house with a certain youngsters of Karbala. I how he happened to bring that foreigner. He said that he had himself requested him to take him to a renowned .religious scholar for he wanted to put certain questions about Islam. Therefore, he brought him to me

I welcomed him and enquired about his name, country and the reason of his visit to Iraq, and especially to Karbala. I also enquired about his level of education and cultural know- ledge. In response to my queries he said that he was an American. He had studied about all religions and ideologies. He was a graduate from an American university. He had come to Iraq as a tourist, hence also to Karbala. He added that he liked Islam as he found it more rational than all other religions. Anyhow, he said that he had some questions concerning Islam, which if cleared to his entire satisfaction, would enable him to abandon Christianity and to embrace .Islam

I asked him, "Why do you want to abandon Christianity?" He said, "Most youngsters in America especially those who are well educated and highly informed, do not have firm faith in Christianity in the true sense of -the word be

cause they take serious notice of several irrational religious traditions and simultaneously observe that none of the fathers, clergy and other men of religion have any commendable virtues and notable characteristics

I said, "If it is so as you say then why young Christians do not discard Christianity?" He said, "Firstly, most of them have discarded Christianity, and secondly, those who still show their attachment with it are doing so by one reason or another. Some are bound to follow their elders and fathers and some of them fear from communism and disbelief. They believe that as soon as they abandon Christianity, communism will creep in. In their opinion, Christianity is the only barrier against the expansion of communist influence over the people of their country. In their opinion, the aims and objects of the communism are to root out every thing from their government to their economy, their freedom and system of inheritance throughout their countries

I said, "Why don't you then take shelter in Islam?" He said, "Because Islam presented before them appears to them as ill-shaped and distorted. Moreover, there is no such preacher of Islam in America who may introduce the real shape of Islam in such an impressive way that American youngsters may attract to it

I said, "Do you acknowledge the beauty of Islam?" He said, "For the very purpose I have come to you to
".question about it

Then he narrated how he happened to meet that Karbalai youngster who guided him to my house. The young American knew Arabic like a beginner, hence there was no interpreter to reply his questions except in special parts of the discussion when linguistic complications were involved, one of our English-speaking companions played as an interpreter. Our discussion as an started when he asked for the proof of the existence of
.God

I answered, "The proof of His existence is recognized from His signs, because there is no effect without a cause." Then I pointed out to him, "As you know already the United States has employed 300,000 space experts for its Aeronautical Department and has allocated a budget of hundreds of millions of dollars for making artificial satellites. Can you prove that those American satellites have their inventors but that the moon the illuminating natural satellite – which is millions of times bigger than an artificial satellite has no Creator?" He was much satisfied with this explanation, and put another question, "Why don't we see God?" I
said, "Do you think that every existing thing is visible?" He said, "I believe in only tangible

things." I said, "No, this is not the case. You too believe in the tangible as well as rational (or immaterial) things." When he said how, I said, "Do you believe in the existence of reason, soul, gravitational power and so on?" He said, "Yes, I believe all of them." I said, "Have you seen all of them?" His reply was negative. Then I said, "Therefore, you also believe those things which your senses do not perceive, and saw what actually you
".perceive is their effect." He said, "Your reply is logical

The American youngster brought another notopic by asking, "Although Muhammad was not a prophet apparently, how do you believe bring his prophethood?" I said, "How do you prove that he was not a prophet?" He said, "The argument is clear that he rose up with sword." I said, "Firstly, do you believe in the prophethood of Moses (upon whom be peace)." He replied in affirmative. Then I related to him the story of Moses mentioned in the Bible, Numbers 31:7-35, when he rose up with a thing even worse than the sword. He was ordered by God to put the conquered cities on fire, and to kill the males, children and their animals. He
-admit- witnessed the fact and said, "That is why I came to you to make it clear and to find another reli

"...glorification for myself because our Bible has got many such ridiculous stories

Then I said, "Secondly, have you studied the holy wars fought by the Prophet of Islam? Do you know that all wars in the beginning of Islam were defensive ones and none was ever offensive?" He said, "For the first time
...in my life, I hear such a story from you

I said, "You have to consult authentic his- tory to get the exact information of these facts." Then I gave him an Arabic version of the book In the Light of Islam and advised him to study especially the chapter dealing with
...the holy wars

The Christian youth started studying then and there, and one of our English-speaking com- panions started helping him in translating and understanding the book. Meanwhile, I took the advantage of this short period
...of time to meet those faithful Muslims who were waiting to see me

Having finished reading the relevant chapter of the book, he found himself in a profound surprise as to how the enemies of Islam had distorted the history and presented it to the youngsters in a bad shape just to meet their own ends. Then he accepted that Muhammad did not rise up with the sword, but asked, "How could you
...prove that he was a Prophet?" I

said, "How do you Christians prove that Jesus –Christ (upon whom be peace) was a prophet?" He said, ". Actually, I have no proof in support of the prophethood of Jesus as I myself do not believe in Christianity

I suggested to him that we should decide la criterion for the recognition and truthfulness s of the prophets, so as to distinguish between ba true and a false prophet. With a strange cur– iosity he said, "This point has itself been one of my basic questions." I said, "How do you find bout that such and such person is a doctor and such and such person is an engineer?" He said, Either through a certificate or degree issued a by a medical centre or a university, or through one's own experience. For example, if I see b with my own eyes that such and such person has cured the disease of any eye with some omedicine, I will call him a doctor. Similarly, sif a person draws up a good plan of a building meeting the engineering requirements, then he bocan be called an .engineer

Then I said, "In the case of a prophet, the same formula applies also. So the evidence of God will prove that he is a prophet." He said, "Who can see God so that his witness on the prophethood of Muhammad could be proved?" I said, "A miracle is an evidence of God which He bestows upon him who is a prophet from

Him." He said, "How can the miracle be taken as an evidence from God?" I said, "Contra-vention of the (natural) laws is beyond the control of everybody except God the Almighty. So, when Allah delegates this power (of performing miracles) to any person, it proves itself that that person is a prophet from God." He said, "It's an excellent logical reply, I put the same question to a number of Christian and Islamic scholars but none of them could ever satisfy me. Anyhow, now we have reached a stage where you have to prove that
".Muhammad was provided with a miracle

I said, "The miracle of Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's blessings be upon him and his Progeny) is already crystal clear to me and I have also seen it with my own eyes." He asked surprisingly, "Have you yourself seen the miracle of Muhammad?" I replied in affirmative. He asked, "Which is that miracle?" I said while pointing to Qur'an, "This Qur'an is the miracle of Muhammad." He said, "How can Qur'an be the miracle of Muhammad?" I said, "Muhammad challenged the people of the world to bring even a small chapter like that of the Holy Qur'an but none of them could neither produce even a 3-verses-chapter for the last fourteen centuries and nor can they do so even today." He said, "How can this statement be authentic

"?that Muhammad challenged the people of the whole world but none could meet it

Then I quoted a verse of the Qur'an (2:23) which says, "If you are in doubt about what We have sent down to Our Servant (Muhammad) produce then a chapter like it and call your witnesses other than Allah, if you are truthful," and said to him, "Here is the solid proof of that a literary challenge. No body on earth could produce even a small chapter like that of the Holy Qur'an. Had there been so, it would have been recorded in history. Have you ever happened to see any book of history in the whole of your life that somebody wrote something similar to the Qur'an?" When he replied in negative, I said, "So, that is itself a proof that mankind (could not produce an example of the Holy Qur'an." 02394 aid nodes bas (01:5A

He turned to another question, "If Islam is right, why Muslims are backward?" I said, "For the reason that Muslims do not act upon Islam." He said, "Being Muslims, how do they not act upon Islam?" I said, "Are Americans Christians or not?" He said, "Yes, they are." I asked, "Do they act upon Christianity properly?" He said, "No." I said, "Similarly, Muslims also do not act upon Islam, hence they are backward. In the beginning -of Islam, they used to follow Islam in To letter and spirit and as such they achieved Is

Islamic goals." He said, "How do you invite me to a religion, the followers of which themselves are backward?" I said, "If you find a highway but see that its pedestrians are deviating to left or right, will you adopt that straight road or leave it for the reason of its deviants?" He said, "I shall certainly adopt the straight way and .will not care for its non-disciplined deviants." I said, "I also invite you to Islam without caring its deviants

He appreciated my reply very much and said, "I have some questions about some verses of the Qur'an. Would you allow me to ask for the same?" I encouraged him to ask whatever questions he wanted. He then took out a piece of paper and read out a Qur'anic verse which says, "Allah is kind and gentle to His servants." (42:19) and asked, "In this verse what does the word *latif* (kind and gentle) mean, keeping in view the Islamic belief that God has no body (to be attributed with this attribute)?" I said, "It is a kind of resemblance like that of delicate things like water which influences (penetrates into) other things, similarly, the power and knowledge of Allah influence over every thing. Islamic scholars say that, 'Set aside preliminary things and take out the result.'" When I explained to him, he became happy.g

Then he said, "Allah says in the Chapter of

Victory, 48:1-2, Lo! We have given you (O Muhammad) a signal victory, that Allah may forgive you of your sin which is past and that which is to come.' It is possible that a sinful person may become a prophet?" I .answered

The Holy Prophet was sinful only in the eyes of Meccans because of having insulted their idols before and breaking them after the conquest of Mecca. No sooner when Allah informed him of the conquest of Mecca than his 'sins' were forgiven. In other words, we can explain it like this: When a human being becomes a leader, all his subordinates submit before him and object no more to any of his actions despite of the fact that most of his actions were previously treated as objectionable. Hence, Allah says, 'We bestowed upon you an open conquest so as to get you rid of the sins (in the eyes of Meccans). Therefore, the conquest was the reason for forgiveness. Whatever we say is available in all the exegesis of the Quran by the great Islamic scholars and interpreters.' Then I added, "If you have not said that you did not believe in the Bible, I would have approved that the sins and blasphemy were similarly attributed to the prophets in the Bible." He affirmed that he did not believe in the Bible

The American Christian continued further with his talk, saying, "I met some persons in America who claimed to be followers of the Qadiani religion. They were persuading me to embrace their religion claiming that their religion succeeded Islam, and was brought by a certain Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani who claimed himself to be a prophet. Do you believe in that religion?" I replied in negative, and when he asked for the reason, I said, "Firstly because the Prophet of Islam said that no prophet would come after him. Accordingly, whosoever claims to be a prophet after him, is an imposter and his claim of prophethood is false. Secondly, Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani has merely claimed the prophethood but had not shown any miracle. If the prophethood is treated acceptable without any miracle then thousands of prophets can appear in the world. So you and others too can claim to be prophets on any fine morning. Do you think that by mere claim of prophethood one can become a prophet?" He smiled and said, "No

Then he added, "But Qadianis are very much active and progressive in the propagation of their religion." I said, "Do the activity and progress in the propagation of a religion prove its being true? If we treat it so, then the fascists, communists and other followers of various

".ideologies will have to be treated to be right

Then he turned to another question, "There is a verse in the Qur'an saying that every good and bad thing is from Allah. So if a bad thing is also from God because it says, 'All is from Allah,' (4:78) then why should people be punished for their evil?" I said, "What is meant here by bad things are those things which are beyond the control of human being, for example, sudden death, a disease not caused by human being, famine, flood, destructive typhoon and similar other calamities. That is why Allah says in the next verse,

". Whatever of good befalls on you it is from Allah, and whatever of ill befalls on you it is from yourself

He said, "We used to study in the university that Muslims believe in the destiny and providence which, according to the interpretation of our professor means that God has decreed everything that comes to pass on one's life, therefore, Muslims do not make efforts, hence they are backward. Is it so?" I said, "No, it has no reality. Destiny (qada') means the Divine Decree of Allah which He decrees on things for the betterment and in the best interest of human beings. Similarly, Providence (qadar) means the appropriate measure which Allah Who is the origin of creation provides for it as per His Wisdom in the same manner as an engineer

who

draws up a plan for a building according to the exact techniques of his professional knowledge. In this connection, Allah the Almighty has fixed an everlasting system that whatever is in the control of and feasible for human being, He has imposed no compulsion. Man is fully free in his actions and performances. If something of good has been done, it has been done at man's own and if something bad has been done, it has also been done at his own. If something happens beyond the control and power of human being, that happens with the Will and Power of God, like floods, storms and other 'calamities', and human being shall not be held responsible and punishable for those happenings." Then referring to his professor's comments, I added, "Regarding your professor's inference that Muslims' backwardness was due to their lack of working because of their belief in the destiny and providence, you should have asked him that if it is true, then how Muslims
"worked and progressed at the rise of Islam

When our discussion reached here, the American youngster expressed his complete satisfaction over Islam and requested me to let him become a Muslim. I thanked Allah and taught him to declare the Unity of God, the Prophet-hood of Muhammad and the Imamate of Ali. He said that he had memorized both declara

tions before but was ignorant of the Imamate of Ali ibn Abi Talib and the infallible Imams (peace be upon them). Therefore, I explained it to him about the right of divine leadership (Imamate) of the Twelve Infallible Imams, and thus he completely embraced Islam

.Our meeting lasted from morning to evening with the exception of breaks for lunch and after- noon prayers

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p: 61

A Christian couple came to see me. The wife was not wearing hijab (an Islamic covering). As soon as I came to know that both of them were Christians and had come to discuss about Islam, I said to the wife to put on .hijab in order to enable me to talk to her. The woman was annoyed over my suggestion

We have previously faced such situations too. So, I said to her, "This is my belief and you know that one's belief is respected everywhere in the world." She replied in affirmative and covered her hair, and said, "Actually, we are from Scotland, but have lived in London where we attended a few public addresses of Muslims at Hyde Park. We heard there that Islam had 500 million followers. This was very much surprising .for us." To make them more sur- prised, I said to them that in fact Islam has 800 million followers

Why do you wonder?" I asked them. One of them said, "Because Islam is a religion of savagery and even then" it attained perfection despite having a lot of absurdities. So it is sur- prising as to how 800 million persons follow such a religion." I said, "This attribute is not applicable to Islam. Who told you that Islam is such a religion as you have said? Have you stud- ied Islamic books? Or are you just reflecting the

biased views against Islam?" One of them said, "We have not yet discussed this issue with Muslims. We have not even yet attended any Muslims' religious gatherings anywhere. This is our first trip to visit Iraq and a few other Arab countries. We have not yet studied any Islamic book either. We know nothing more than what we have used to hear from our elders or fathers of our churches. Moreover, we put much faith in our
".clergymen and do not hesitate to admit that we respect them and rely on whatever they say

I asked, "Have your Christian priests ever said why Islam was a religion of savagery? Why Islam ceases to be
"?valid in this age? And which aspect of Islam is ridiculous one

vorol of botnsw The husband said, "Yes, I heard so from them. The reason to call Islam a religion of savagery is that it was spread by sword. To achieve success by force is an act of savage animals and not of human beings who should achieve success by virtue of reason and good manners. The reason that Islam is not applicable in our age any more is because of its holy book, the Qur'an which has favoured horse and do- key but prohibited wine and music. Such statements might have been of some sense in the past but not in the
current age of industrial and scientific progress. Therefore, this religion

has no place in this age. The ridiculous things in Islam are its beliefs in the myth of the seven heavens and
".seven earths, and its legalizaiton of marrying to four wives at one time

I said, "Were these your only criticisms against Islam?" He said, "For the time being I say this much only. " I said, "I do not like to criticize Christianity but objectionable aspects exists in Christianity to such a proportion that they have no end in comparison to those as you think are in Islam. Anyhow, I confine myself just to remove your doubts expressed about Islam." He said, "On the contrary, if there is any criticism against Christianity, I am ready to wel- come it with my open heart." I preferred to remove his doubts about Islam, and he first wanted to know the reply to the criticism that Islam was spread by sword. I said, "The religion of Islam was spread and expanded because of its good moral manners. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an about the examply character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's blessings be upon him and his progeny), ..You have the finest manners.' (68:5) Sometimes Islam used sword just to defend itself but not to spread itself. That is why the Holy Qur'an says, "Those who are suppressed are allowed to fight against their oppressors and Allah is powerful enough to help them,' (22:39) and 'Whoso aggressé s

(over you, you too face them with the same force.'" (2:194

I went on saying, "When Islam was first proclaimed, a small group of people accepted and believed in it. The infidels condemned that group and some of them were thus martyred and some of them took asylum in Abyssinia (Ethiopia). As soon as the pressure of infidels increased over Muslims, they migrated from their homeland (Mecca) to Madina. The polytheists also imposed economic sanctions against them, against which Muslims faced them daresly. The infidels once blocked the way for Muslims' trade caravan from Madina to Syria. Muslims had to defend their trade caravan as a result of which a battle took place which ended in favour of Muslims. After that battle, the infidels equipped themselves with sufficient fighting material so as to crush Muslims and eliminate Islam. Muslims defended themselves till Islam emerged victorious and the infidels were defeated. This fact is supported by all the authentic books of history. Do

"?you presume that self-defence is tantamount to spreading by sword or inviting at sword's point

He said, "If it is so, I withdraw my words." For his satisfaction, the relevant books on this subject were shown to him with the help of interpreters. At last, he was convinced. There

after, he asked, "How do you treat the word of our fathers of the churches? Do all of them tell lies?" I said, "I respect all of them very much but whosoever accuses Islam in terms of its spread by sword is either an ignorant or an obstinate; otherwise, history is there (to rebut such falsehood)." He said, "What do you have to say about the termination of Islamic age?" I said, "This is Islam which teaches us to ___" 1) Believe in the one unique God who is Just and Powerful. He sent prophets for the guidance of human beings. The prophets too had their successors (to maintain the guidance). All human beings have to return to Allah to have their reward .to their deeds (in this world). The good-doers shall enter Paradise and the bad- doers into Hell

Worship Allah and to deal fairly with people. He has ordained for us the rules for marriage, divorce,(2" .inheritance and all the needs of human beings from birth to death

.Maintain the obligation of righteous- ness, honesty, allegiance and modesty(3"

Refrain from telling lies, exercising dishonesty and cruelty." egeilni to(4"

Then I questioned him, "Do you presume that the age of these values has ended?" He replied in negative. I said, "But as for the horse and the donkey you referred to, do you think

that these are bad things? If Islam admires useful things, is it a sin? Don't you know that that the age of these values has ended?" He replied in negative. I said, "But as for the horse and the donkey you referred to, do you think that these are bad things? If Islam admires useful things, is it a sin? Don't you know that nowadays the world feels pride to defend the horse and other animals? Is it not so that man meets many of his requirements from horse? Even in this advanced age, a great number of people make use of donkey for carrying house- hold effects and other loads." When he confir- med my answer, I added, "On the very same basis, if horse and .donkey are admired in Islam, it does not provide any proof for the badness of Islam

The Christian man next asked opinion on the prohibition of wine and music in Islam. I said, "It has now been proved medi- cally and psychologically that both wine and music are harmful to man and cause psycholo- gical and physical diseases. So, as a prevention against such diseases, Islam has prohibited both of them. Do you know that prevention is bet- ter than cure?" He agreed again and added, "I have studied about their being .harmful in a few journals

Then he asked me about Islamic faith on

the seven heavens and seven earths. I said, "Literally, samawat (skies or heavens) means a space and a circle. We do not have more than seven circles in our solar system which are the seven (common) planets, namely, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus, Venus and Earth. (Each one of them is a globe with an outer space called a sky). This has also been narrated by Imam Ridha (upon whom be peace) that, "This Earth of ours has its sky around it. Similarly there is another globe having its sky around it. Likewise the series goes up to the ".seven planets.' Obviously, the intention of Imam is to point out the same seven planets of our solar system

The Christian man said, "It is, of course, wonderful. I have never dreamt of such a reply. I was thinking about the seven skies (heavens) and the seven earths as to be like the ancient myths and ridiculous stories. As Islam has introduced itself for the whole of the universe, the same has accordingly been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an." Then he added, "I am very grateful to you for explaining the facts of Islam to me. Similarly, kindly ".let me know as to why polygyny has been allowed in Islam

I asked them how many unmarried women they knew. The answer was seventeen. I said, "Why these helpless -women are still unmar

ried?" And added, "It is Islam which in the best interest of both man and woman, has allowed a man to marry up to four women. This is a sort of sympathy towards the womenfolk as to not remain unmarried for ever, and it is also a sort of concession for the menfolk to save their energy from suspension and wastage. There is a great number of men who are in a good position to maintain well more than one wife. Do you think that Islam should not take care of the energies of men and women and stop them from going to waste. Should Islam not arrange for putting in use the human energies? Moreover Islam has allowed polygyny only for those men who are absolutely in need of it, and has not termed it compulsory to all. Therefore, there should be no question of objection on it. You also might have observed that most of Muslims are content with one wife".only

Both of them said that they had never come across such a crystal clear and eloquent explanation so far. I said, "The only reason is that you have never contacted Islamic scholars before to discuss such problems, otherwise, almost all of them are ready to remove such difficulties and solve such religious problems." Then they asked, "What advantage will we have if we embrace Islam?" I said, "When someone embraces Islam, he is bestowed upon with the goodness

of both worlds because Islamic programmes are to augment the prosperity of mankind. If the Islamic programmes are followed, it will cause man to win Allah's pleasure, and will be made to enter Paradise in the
".next world

Our discussion lasted long. At last, the Christian woman embraced Islam but the Christian man felt fear and hesitated to embrace Islam. Then I said to him, "Since your wife has embraced Islam, why do you hesitate?" He remained silent. I further elaborated Islam to him. At last he said, "I shall think about it." But I explained it to him that when the truth becomes clear to someone, there remains no justification to think it over again. He said, "In submission to your convincing arguments, should I abandon my religion?" I said, "No, this is not the case. You shall augment your faith in the Prophet Jesus Christ (upon whom be peace) with addition of your Islamic faith because the truth of Islam has become clear to you." His wife having embraced Islam encouraged him also. With the grace of Allah the Almighty, he too embraced Islam. Thereafter, I .advised to contact Islamic scholars for obtaining more information about Islam when they return to London

p: 70

One day, an Italian Christian tourist came to us in a bitter mood. He seemed to have lost his temper. He asked one of the servants of the holy shrine of Imam Husayn (upon whom be peace) to bring him to an Islamic scholar for enquiring about some issues. The servant brought him to an Islamic scholar for enquiring about some issues. The servant brought him to my house only three hours before sunset. The tourist was speaking English, and I asked for one of my English-speaking companions to become his interpreter

The tourist said, "I had heard about Muslims being savages but did not believe in their being so, up to such an extent." I said, "Have you seen all Muslims?" He replied in negative. I said, "Therefore, do not say that all Muslims are savages. Perhaps some of them might be so." He nodded, and I requested him to allow me to ask him some questions before he could ask me his questions. Then I asked him from which country he came, to which religion he belonged and what his level of education was. He said that he had come from Italy, he was a Christian and a graduate from some university

When I requested him to ask his questions, he said, "Some Muslims in this city behave savagely." I said, "What has happened?" He

said, "I wanted to enter the museum of Husayn, but they prevented me. When I asked for the reason, they said that I was unclean. After all, does it carry any sense? Is it possible for a person of my age to be unclean?" I said, "Do not feel uneasy so much. Who said so to you? Was that a scholar or some ignorant person?" He said, "Surely he was some ignorant person. I said, "Don't you Christians have any ignorant people in Italy?" He said, ". "Why not." I said, "So there remains no justification for your being uneasy so much

He said, "All right, then kindly ask them to let me enter the museum [shrine] of Husayn." I said, "I can not do this, because Imam Husayn, the owner of the shrine who is laid there does not allow you to enter his place." He was surprised and asked for the reason. I said, "You belong to a religion the followers of which had been attacking him, his grandfather and his companions." He said, "Did Christians attack them?" I said, "Yes. Because Christians treated Prophet Muhammad – the grandfather of Imam Husayn – like a liar, and thus they did not believe in him as a prophet as Jesus. Do you have a right to prevent a person who attacks you
"?from entering your house

The Christian tourist lowered his head and was pondering over something. Then he took a

why don't you treat Adam as the son of God while he came to the world not only without a father but also
".without a mother

The Christian being helpless to reply ponder- ed over the matter for a while, then he gave his proof to prove the prophethood of Jesus, say- ing, "I mean to say that Jesus was a prophet on the basis that he was bestowed with the mira- cles." I said, "Muhammad had also been besto- wed with miracles." He said, "What are the mir- acles of Muhammad." I said, "Allah cleft the moon in two." He said, "Oh, it is a ridiculous story also narrated to me by one of my church fathers that Muhammadans believed that the moon had been cleft in two, came down and entered into Muhammad's sleeve. Is it logical that the moon with its so much volume could
"?enter into the sleeve of a person

I said, "Firstly, I did not say that the moon entered into the sleeve of Muhammad. This por- tion has been added by you. Secondly, what can prevent Allah from cleaving apart the moon in the space and separating its parts? It is possi- ble that particles of the cleaved parts of the moon may have come down to the earth while the mass of the moon remained the same as we see it today in the sky and those few particles of the moon may
have entered the sleeve of Mu- hammad and thereafter returned to their original

place where they gave the moon its ultimately original shape." He said, "This is an ambiguous explanation.
.We should leave it. A logical mind does not accept it

Then to show him the irrational belief they hold, I asked him, "How is it that you can believe in an irrational word but cannot admit a reasonable word?" He said, "How have we admitted an irrational word?" I said, "Splitting of the moon, as I said, how its particles came down to the sleeve of Muhammad is a reasonable word, but the statement of you Christians who believe in the trinity that there are three persons, yet at the same time, they are not three separate persons but are one person. Isn't it an irrational word? Is it possible that these three fingers," pointing at my three fingers "are three and at the very same time are one as well?" He said, "It shall be like a triangle, which even having three sides is nothing more than one triangle." I said, "Do you mean that God is one but has three sides?" He said, "No." I said, "Then what does the example of the triangle
"?mean

Having thought over a little, he could not give a logical answer but gave the common answer given by the trinitarians when they fail, "The priests say that trinity is a mystery." I said, "It makes clear to both of us that
your

point (on this issue of trinity) is not logical." Here he became silent. Then I added, "On the very same basis, Muhammad has shown the miracle in cleaving the moon just like Jesus had shown, other miracles." He said, "How do you prove about the miracle of your prophet?" I said, "Our Holy Book, the Qur'an says, "The hour drew near and the moon did rend asunder."(54:1) Had this event been fabricated the world's contemporary authorities at the time of the Holy Prophet would certainly have proved it wrong. Having been there no such evidence, it proves that the miracle had really happened

Now, to deny this incident altogether, he said that he did not believe in the Holy Qur'an. When I asked him for the reason, he said, "Because the Qur'an abuses Christians." I said, "Which verse of the Qur'an abuses Christians?" He said, "Qur'an calls us kafirs, i.e. unbelievers." I said, "Do you know this meaning of kafir?" He said, "Kafir is an abusive term." I said, "No. Whosoever does not believe in God or in the prophets of God, or in the Day of Judgment, is called an unbeliever, i.e. kafir. As Christians do not believe in Muhammad, they are called unbelievers and as such this is not an abusive term but the expression of a fact." Then I added, -"Accordingly, if the rea

son for Christians' disbelief in the Qur'an is its use of abusive language against them, then why do you believe
"in the Bible in spite of the fact that it uses abusive language in respect of Jesus Christ

He surprisingly said, "Does the Bible use abusive language for Jesus?" I replied in affirmative; and when he asked me to show him that part, I quoted Paul's letter to Galatians 3:13 saying that Jesus is "Being made a curse for us." He said, "This is absolutely wrong. There is no such verse in the Bible!" I said, "Yes, it is certainly there." Then I opened the Bible and showed him the relevant verse. The interpreter translated the
".same for him. His surprise was beyond all limits. He said, "I had never heard such story before

Then I said to him, "Do you want the Jews to believe in the New Testament?" He said, "Yes, why not?" I said, "But Jews have a right to say, 'We do not believe in a book which uses abusive language against us', because the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3, verse 22, calls Jews the offsprings of vipers. What shall be your reply to them? Now let us suppose that the Holy Qur'an uses abusive language against Christians, but it should also be kept in mind that the Qur'an is justified to abuse them who instead of believing in it, revolt against it
because the

This book consists of seven chapters comprising of seven dialogues which I had with Christians who later embraced Islam. I have described all events as they occurred without adding anything more except that I have deleted those parts which have been repeatedly talked about on the Prophet of Islam and on the proofs of his prophethood

The reader will observe that simplicity and introductory style of these dialogues) which I presented here without changing or adding to the original conversations of the other parties whom I conversed with them according to their levels of knowledge and understanding

Let it not remain unsaid that most of the time we had to change the original names of those who embraced Islam into Islamic ones. Sometimes we had to recontract their marriages for the sake of precaution. We also used to present them copies of the Holy Qur'an and other Islamic books

The time spent for these discourses, if calculated, will come up to five times the size of these dialogues which have been abridged and some parts deleted in order to put in a book form

.May Allah, the Guide, guide us on the Right Path, and help His servants

.(Ayatullah Mujahid Sayyid Muhammad Shirazi was born at Najaf (Iraq) in 1347 Hijrah (1927 *

At the age of nine he came and settled down at Karbala (Iraq) along with his father, where not only he * completed his primary edu- cation but received his education in different branches of learning from his father, eminent scholars and specialists till he reached to the pinnacle of learning and became a Marja' .(highest authority in the Islamic jurisprudence) at the age of 33 in 1960

He established a large number of educa- tional, welfare, social, religious and vocational institutions in Iraq, * .Iran, Kuwait, Syria and other places

With his own ability, resourcefulness and extensive knowledge, he made the world more richer with his * .contributions of more than 400 precious books on various branches of learning

Imam Shirazi, being a Marja' with a large following, participated practically in the crusade against * imperialism, communism and interna- tional zionism to the point that he was exiled to Lebanon by the Ba'thist regime of Iraq in 1971. He later stayed in Kuwait till September 1979 when he migrated to Qum .(Iran) after the estab- lishment of the first Islamic Republic in the world

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?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: 9

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