

Three Questions by a Christian and their Answers

**Ḥaḍrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad
of Qadian**

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi^{as}
Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at

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Three Questions by a Christian and their Answers

English rendering of *Aik 'Īsā'ī Kei Tīn Sawāl Aur Un Kei Jawābāt*

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About the Author

Born in 1835 in Qadian (India), Ḥaḍrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi^{as}, devoted himself to the study of the Holy Quran and to a life of prayer and devotion. Finding Islam the target of foul attacks from all directions and the fortunes of Muslims at a low ebb, he undertook vindication and exposition of Islam. In his vast corpus of writings (including the epoch-making *Brāhīn-e-Ahmadiyya*), his lectures, discourses, religious debates etc., he argued that Islam was the living faith and the only faith by following which man could establish contact with his Creator and enter into communion with Him. The teachings contained in the Holy Quran and the Law promulgated by Islam were designed to raise man to moral, intellectual and spiritual perfection. He announced that God had appointed him the Messiah and Mahdi as mentioned in the prophecies of the Bible, the Holy Quran and *Aḥādīth*. In 1889 he began to accept initiation into his Community, which is now established in one hundred and seventy-six countries. His eighty books are written mostly in Urdu, but some are in Arabic and Persian.

After his demise in 1908, the Promised Messiah^{as} was succeeded by Ḥaḍrat Maulawī Nūr-ud-Dīn^{ra}, Khalīfatul Masīḥ I. On the death of Ḥaḍrat Maulawī Nūr-ud-Dīn^{ra} in 1914, Ḥaḍrat Mirza Bashīr-ud-Dīn Mahmood Ahmad^{ra}, who was also the Promised Messiah's^{as} Promised Son, was elected as Khalīfa. Ḥaḍrat Mirza Bashīr-ud-Dīn Mahmood Ahmad^{ra} remained in office for nearly fifty-two years. He died in 1965 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Ḥaḍrat Ḥāfīz Mirza Nāsir Ahmadth, the Promised grandson of the Promised Messiah^{as}. After seventeen years of meritorious

service he passed away in 1982. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Ḥaḍrat Mirza Ṭāhir Ahmad^{rh} as Khalīfatul Masīḥ IV who, having led the Community to its present strength and global recognition, passed away on the 19th April, 2003. Ḥaḍrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad Khalīfatul Masīḥ V^{at} is the present head of the Community and enjoys the distinction of being the great-grandson of Ḥaḍrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}.

Publisher's Note

In 1891, a Christian by the name of ‘Abdullāh James made three objections against Islam. He argued that the Holy Prophet^{sa} had been in doubt about his own Prophethood, that he did not show any miracles, and that he did not possess any knowledge of the unseen. Anjuman Ḥimāyat-e-Islam sent these questions to three eminent Muslim scholars, including Ḥaḍrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi^{as}, for their answers.

This book is a translation of the answers written by the Promised Messiah^{as}. The translation was first done by Qāḍī Muhammad Aslam Sahib, of blessed memory, and was published in 1972. The translation has now been revised at Wakālat Taṣnīf, Rabwah, by:

- Raja Ata-ul-Mannan
- Dr. Muhammad Shafiq Sehgal
- Syed Tanwir Mujtaba
- Tahir Mahmood Mubashar

I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad Ayaz, who went through the manuscript and offered valuable suggestions. I likewise express my appreciation for the help and support given by Maulana Munir-ud-Din Shams, Additional Wakīl-ut-Taṣnīf, who provided the vital link for seeking guidance from Ḥaḍrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V^{at}. I am also grateful to Professor Abdul Jalil Sadiq and Mirza Usman Ahmad for proof-reading the manuscript.

Please note that words in the text in normal brackets () and in between the long dashes—are the words of the Promised Messiah^{as}. If any explanatory words or phrases are added by the translator for the purpose of clarification, they are put in square brackets [].

The name of Muhammad^{sa}, the Holy Prophet of Islam, has been followed by the symbol ^{sa}, which is an abbreviation for the salutation *Ṣallallāhu ‘Alaihi Wasallam* (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The names of other Prophets and Messengers are followed by the symbol ^{as}, an abbreviation for ‘*Alaihissalām* (on whom be peace). The actual salutations have not generally been set out in full, but they should nevertheless, be understood as being repeated in full in each case. The symbol ^{ra} is used with the name of the companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and those of the Promised Messiah^{as}. It stands for *Raḍi Allāhu ‘anhu/‘anhā/‘anhum* (May Allah be pleased with him/her/with them). th stands for *Raḥimahullāhu Ta‘ālā* (may Allah have mercy on him). ^{at} stands for *Ayyadahullāhu Ta‘ālā* (May Allah, the Mighty help him).

In transliterating Arabic words we have followed the following system adopted by the Royal Asiatic Society.

- ا at the beginning of a word, pronounced as *a*, *i*, *u* preceded by a very slight aspiration, like *h* in the English word 'honour'.
- ث *th*, pronounced like *th* in the English word 'thing'.
- ح *ḥ*, a guttural aspirate, stronger than *h*.
- خ *kh*, pronounced like the Scotch *ch* in 'loch'.
- ذ *dh*, pronounced like the English *th* in 'that'.
- ص *ṣ*, strongly articulated *s*.
- ض *ḍ*, similar to the English *th* in 'this'.
- ط *ṭ*, strongly articulated palatal *t*.
- ظ *ẓ*, strongly articulated *z*.

- ع ' , a strong guttural, the pronunciation of which must be learnt by the ear.
- غ *gh*, a sound approached very nearly in the r '*grasseye*' in French, and in the German r. It requires the muscles of the throat to be in the 'gargling' position whilst pronouncing it.
- ق *q*, a deep guttural k sound.
- ئ ' , a sort of catch in the voice.

Short vowels are represented by:

- a* for —َ— (like *u* in 'bud');
- i* for —ِ— (like *i* in 'bid');
- u* for —ُ— (like *oo* in 'wood');

Long vowels by:

- ā* for —َ— or آ (like *a* in 'father');
- ī* for ع —ِ— or —ِ— (like *ee* in 'deep');
- ū* for و —ُ— (like *oo* in 'root');

Other:

- ai* for ع —َ— (like *i* in 'site')♦;
- au* for و —َ— (resembling *ou* in 'sound').

Please note that in transliterated words the letter 'e' is to be pronounced as in 'prey' which rhymes with 'day'; however the pronunciation is flat without the element of English diphthong. If in Urdu and Persian words 'e' is lengthened a bit more it is transliterated as 'ei' to be pronounced as 'ei' in 'feign' without the element of diphthong thus 'عے' is transliterated as 'Kei'. For the

♦In Arabic words like شيخ (Shaikh) there is an element of diphthong which is missing when the word is pronounced in Urdu.

nasal sound of 'n' we have used the symbol 'ñ'. Thus Urdu word 'میں' is transliterated as 'meinñ'.*

The consonants not included in the above list have the same phonetic value as in the principal languages of Europe.

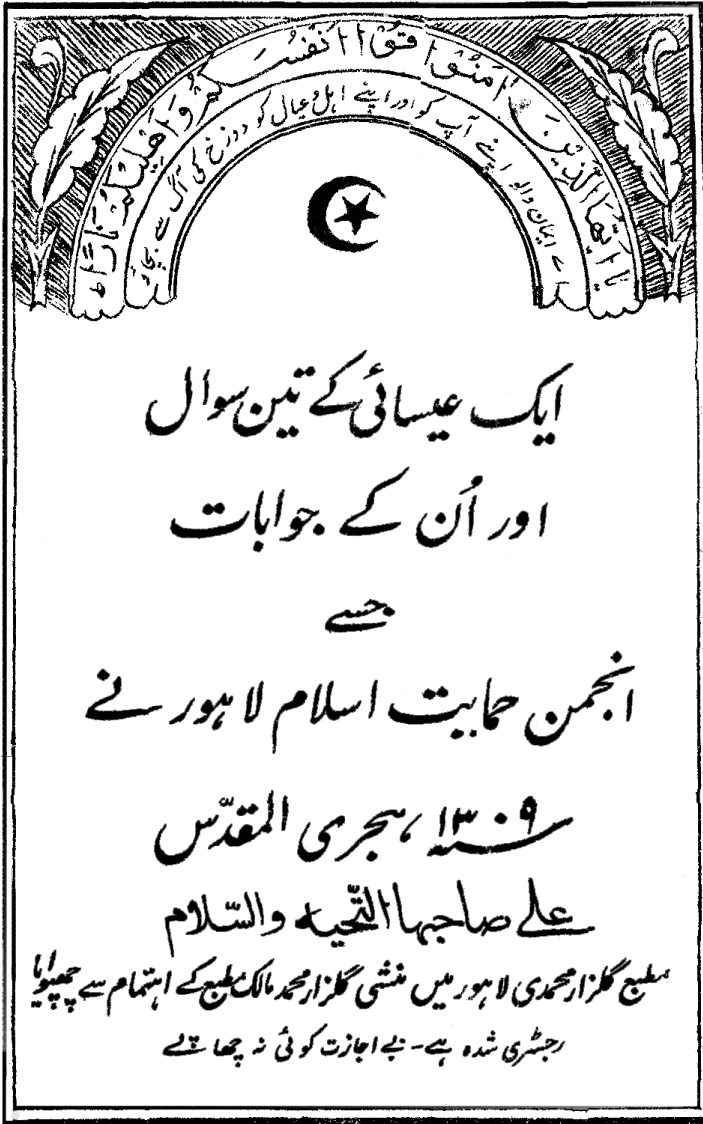
We have not transliterated Arabic words which have become part of English language, e.g., Islam, Mahdi, Quran, Hijra, Ramadan, Hadith, ulema, umma, sunna, kafir, pukka etc.

For quotes straight commas (straight quotes) are used to differentiate them from the curved commas used in the system of transliteration, ‘ for ع, ’ for ء. Commas as punctuation marks are used according to the normal usage. Similarly for apostrophe normal usage is followed.

Chaudhry Muhammad ‘Alī
Wakīlūt Taṣnīf
Tehrīk Jadīd
Rabwah
05 July 2007

* These transliterations are not included in the system of transliteration by Royal Asiatic Society. [Publishers]

Title Page of the First Edition



[Translation of the First Edition Title Page]

*O believers! Save your selves and your families
from the fire of Hell.*

**Three Questions by a Christian
and their Answers.**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ
بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ¹

A few days ago, a Christian gentleman by the name of ‘Abdullāh James, sent to the Anjuman a few questions relating to Islam. The answers to these questions have been written by three honourable friends of the Anjuman, and we are happy to publish them in this book.

The Questions

Question No. 1

Muhammad^{sa} was in doubt about his own Prophethood and about the Holy Quran being the Word of God, as is evident from this verse of Sūrah Al-Baqarah and Sūrah Al-An‘ām:

فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ²

This shows that in his heart of hearts he knew that he was not a Messenger of God. Had he been one, or had he shown any miracles, or had the Mi‘rāj been a reality, or had the Quran been revealed to him by Gabriel, he would never have been in doubt about his own Prophethood. This

¹ In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. We praise Allah and invoke His blessings upon His Messenger, the Holy Prophet^{sa}.

Nay, it is a *collection* of clear Signs in the hearts of those who are given knowledge. [Publishers]

² ...be not therefore of those who doubt.—Al-Baqarah, 2:148; Al-An‘ām, 6:115 [Publishers]

proves that he was in doubt about the Holy Quran and his own Prophethood. Hence he is not a Prophet of God.

Question No. 2

Had Muhammad^{sa} really been a Messenger, he would not have responded so helplessly to questions put to him, and would not have said, 'Only God knows'; which implies that he did not know. Nor would he have lied about the number of *Aṣḥāb-e-Kahaf*,³ nor would he have said that the Sun sets in a murky pool, for the Sun is 90 million times larger than the earth and it can not possibly hide in a pool of murky water.

Question No. 3

Muhammad^{sa} was never granted any miracles, as is stated in Sūrah Al-‘Ankabūt: 'They say why were not a few signs sent down to him from his Lord.' (That is to say, 'Why was not a single sign sent down to him,' for, the expression '*Lā*' in this verse is a universal negative, and it implies the negation of a class as a whole.) Then, in Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl, we read, 'And We did not send signs because people had rejected them before.' Which means that God did not give him any miracles. If he had been given even one miracle, he would not have been in doubt about [his own] Prophethood, nor about the Quran.

³ People of the Cave. [Publishers]

The Answers

By

*The Recipient of Divine Blessings and Quranic Verities,
Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Chief of Qadian.*

Answer to Question No. 1

In support of his assertion, the critic has quoted an incomplete verse of Sūrah Al-Baqarah. The complete verse is as follows:

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ⁴

When viewed in context of the preceding and following verses, it becomes amply clear that the subject under consideration is neither Prophethood nor the Holy Quran. The only point being stated is that, from now on, Muslims should pray with their faces turned towards the Kaaba and not towards Jerusalem. "This is the Truth", says God, meaning that the Kaaba is the direction for prayer that had been appointed from the very beginning, and this is a fact which has been recorded in ancient Scriptures. Therefore, (O reader of the Book) be not among those who are prone

⁴ *It is the truth from thy Lord; be not therefore of those who doubt.*—Al-Baqarah, 2:148 [Publishers]

to doubt.⁵ The verses which follow continue to deal with the same subject. Allah says:

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ

That is: From wheresoever thou comest forth, turn thy face towards the Kaaba; for that indeed is the truth from thy Lord.

It is obvious that these verses relate to the Kaaba and to nothing else. Since the commandment requiring worshippers to turn towards the Kaaba in their prayers is a general injunction addressed to all believers—some of whom, due to their susceptible dispositions, may be prone to doubt and uncertainty—they have been told not to be troubled as to why they have turned their faces towards the Kaaba while they had previously been offering their prayers facing Jerusalem. They were told that there is nothing new in the change, for, it had been ordained right from the beginning and had been foretold by the Prophets of God. They should, therefore, not be in any doubt about it.

The other verse which the critic has quoted to support his claim is from Sūrah Al-An‘ām, which is given here with its accompanying verses:

⁵ This is a reference to earlier Scriptures, including the New Testament, which contain prophetic reference to the change of Qibla. For instance, it is written, "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."—John 4:21-24 [Author]

⁶ Al-Baqarah, 2:150 [Publishers]

أَفَعَيَّرَ اللَّهُ أَبْنَعِي حَكَمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ⁷

That is: Shall I seek for judge anyone other than Allah, when He it is Who has sent down to you the comprehensive Book. And those to whom We gave the Book (i.e., who have been given knowledge of the Quran) know full well that it has been sent down from thy Lord; so (O reader) be not of those who doubt.

A look at these verses makes it quite apparent that 'those who doubt' are those who have thus far partaken only a small portion of faith, certitude and knowledge. It also appears from the verses quoted above that, 'be not of those who doubt,' are the words of the Holy Prophet^{sa} himself, which have been quoted by the Holy Quran. The passage begins with these words, which can only have been spoken by Holy Prophet^{sa}: أَفَعَيَّرَ اللَّهُ أَبْنَعِي حَكَمًا. The idiomatic translation of these verses would be as follows: I cannot appoint anyone but Allah as judge to judge between you and me. And He is the One Who has sent down to you this Book clearly explained. So those who have been given knowledge of the Book know also that this Book is from God. Therefore, thou (ignorant one), be not of those who doubt.

This proves that it was not the Holy Prophet^{sa} who was in doubt, rather he admonished those who were in doubt through testimony and argument. To claim, in the face of

⁷ Al-An'ām 6:115 [Publishers]

such a clear statement, that the Holy Prophet^{sa} was in doubt about his own Prophethood, betrays nothing but gross ignorance and sheer prejudice.

Someone may think that if it were the new converts or sceptics—weak of faith—who were being admonished for their doubts, the address should have been in the plural 'you', not the singular 'thou'. What is the reason for using the second person singular, instead of the second person plural, when the weak of faith are likely to be many and not just one? The answer is that the singular is often used for a class as a whole, which denotes plurality. You only have to read the Holy Quran from beginning to end to realize that this is the idiom commonly used by the Holy Quran. It frequently addresses a class of people in the form of an individual. Let us take, for example, the following verses:

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُومًا مَّخْذُومًا ۗ وَلَا تَقْضِ رَبَّكَ
 إِلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِلَهًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۗ إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ
 كِلَيْهِمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آفٌ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ۗ وَاحْنِضْ
 لَهُمَا جُنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتَنِي صَغِيرًا ۗ^٨

That is: Set not up with Allah another God lest thou sit down disgraced and forsaken. Thy Lord has commanded: Do not serve anyone but Allah and worship none but Him, and show kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, never say unto them any

⁸ Banī Isrā'īl, 17:23-25 [Publishers]

word expressive of disgust, nor reproach them, but address them with kind words. And lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say: My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood.

It is evident from these verses that the use of the second person singular relates to the umma, and it has been used more than once in these very verses. The addressee is not the Holy Prophet^{sa}, for the verses teach respect and obedience to parents, and we know that the Holy Prophet's^{sa} parents had passed away in his early childhood.

It is established from this verse and from numerous other verses that addressing a class of people in the form of an individual, is a common idiom of the Holy Quran. The same idiom is used in the commandments of the Torah, which are apparently addressed to a single person, but are intended for the Israelites as a whole. We have an example of this in Exodus, Chapters 33 and 34, where Moses^{as} is the apparent addressee: (11) Observe thou that which I command thee this day. (12) Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest. (17) Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

When viewed in their context, it becomes clear that though these verses apparently address only one person, i.e., Moses^{as}, he is not the one for whom the commandments are really intended; for he never went to Canaan, nor could we expect a Man of God and an idol-breaker like Moses^{as} to be guilty of the sin of idolatry. There was no need, therefore,

to warn him against it. Moses^{as}, after all, is the man of God whom He has honoured with the following words in this very chapter: "For thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name." (Exodus:17)

Remember, the same style is used by the Holy Quran. Both the Torah and the Holy Quran address their commandments to Moses^{as} and the Holy Prophet^{sa}, respectively, but the commandments are intended for their respective ummas. Those who are ignorant of this style, may naively imagine that these commandments and warnings are addressed to the Prophets who received them, but a little reflection over the context of these verses shows that this is a complete misconception.

The objection is shown to be completely unfounded when we analyze the verses in which God praises the Holy Prophet's^{sa} perfect faith. He says: **قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَبِّي**⁹ That is: Say, I have received from my Lord clear proofs of the truth of my Prophethood. In another verse He says:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ¹⁰

That is: Say, this is my path, so with full and certain knowledge do I invite you to Allah. In yet another verse, God says:

⁹ Al-An'ām, 6:58 [Publishers]

¹⁰ Yūsuf, 12:109 [Publishers]

وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ
مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ ۗ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا ¹¹

That is: Allah has sent down to you the Book and Wisdom, i.e., He has revealed to you proofs of the truthfulness of the Book and your Prophethood, and has taught you that you could not know by yourself, and great is Allah's grace upon you.

Then, in Sūrah Al-Najm, God says:

مَا كَذَّبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى ¹²
مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى ¹³ ۖ لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى

That is: The heart of the Holy Prophet^{sa} never denied the heavenly signs of his truthfulness that he saw, which means that he was never in doubt about them. The eye wandered not to the right, nor to the left, nor did it transgress the limit, rather it settled right on the truth and stuck to it. Surely, he saw the greatest of the signs of his Lord.

O readers, and lovers of the truth! Consider with justice and fairness, how expressly God Almighty has informed us that the Holy Prophet^{sa} possessed perfect insight and full conviction, and his Prophethood was true, and great signs were shown in his support.

In short, there is not a word, not a jot, in the Holy Quran,

¹¹ Al-Nisā', 4:114 [Publishers]

¹² Al-Najm, 53:12 [Publishers]

¹³ Al-Najm, 53:18-19 [Publishers]

which even remotely suggests that the Holy Prophet^{sa} was ever in doubt about being a Prophet, and about the Holy Quran being the Divine word. The truth is that the perfect certainty, insight and conviction, to which the Holy Prophet^{sa} laid claim, and then proved, finds no parallel in any existing Scripture.

فَهَلْ مَنْ يَسْمَعُ فَيُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى
 اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَيَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ الْمُخْلِصِينَ¹⁴

Let it be noted that the Gospels¹⁵ attribute to Jesus^{as} words which imply that, in his last days, he had begun to doubt whether he was really a Prophet and whether he enjoyed Divine support. For instance, right on the eve of his departure from this world—a time for the men of God to manifest their conviction and the blessings of their faith—Jesus uttered the words '*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*', which means, 'O my God, O my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' What is more, it was also his wont to run away from places where he apprehended the mischief of his opponents, despite the fact that God had already given him assurances of security. Both these circumstances betray doubt and bewilderment. And when we see him crying and supplicating through the night for the tragedy—of which he had prior knowledge—to be averted, we realize that he was

¹⁴ Is there anyone who would now listen and profess his belief in God and in His Holy Prophet^{sa}, and become a sincere Muslim? [Publishers]

¹⁵ All the four Gospels, especially Matthew, give rise to such doubts. [Author]

in doubt about everything.

We have set out these illustrations only to point out the folly of the Christians, who have raised these objections against the Holy Prophet^{sa}. Otherwise, we are quite capable of answering these questions, and vindicating our dear Messiah—who was not above human weaknesses and frailties—of all such allegations, by simply negating his divinity and 'sonship'. But it will be an arduous task indeed for our Christian brothers to do so.

Answer to Question No. 2

Let it be clear that the two verses quoted by the critic to prove that no miracle was shown by the Holy Prophet^{sa}, do not at all support such an inference. On the contrary, the verses prove that the Holy Prophet^{sa} performed all the miracles which a true and perfect Prophet should be able to perform. The point is elaborated below.

The first verse, which the critic quotes out of context, is reproduced here in full, along with adjacent verses, to make the meaning clear:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُتْلَى
عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَذِكْرَى لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ...¹⁶

¹⁶ Al-‘Ankabūt, 29:51-52 [Publishers]

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ط وَلَوْلَا آجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَّجَاءَ
هُمُ الْعَذَابُ ط وَلِيَأْتِيَهُمْ بَعْتَةٌ وَهُمْ لَا يُشْعُرُونَ¹⁷

That is: They say, 'Why are not signs such as those (which you ask for, i.e., signs of chastisement) sent down to him?' Say, 'The signs are with Allah and within His power and I am only a Warner', i.e., my duty is simply to warn you of the Day of Punishment, and I do not bring it down on my own.

Allah further says: Is this sign of mercy not enough for them, (who want to have the sign of chastisement inflicted on them), that We have sent down to thee (O Unlettered Prophet^{sa}), the Book (comprising all perfections), which is recited to them? i.e., the Holy Quran—which is a sign of mercy—serves the same purpose which the unbelievers want to achieve through the signs of chastisement. The purpose of the unbelievers of Mecca in demanding a sign of chastisement was that it should bring them the conviction which mere seeing could not do, for they feared that mere seeing might delude them and they may suffer from optical illusions. To remove this suspicion and misgiving, Allah says: You want a sign that should bring conviction to you. Why then ask for a sign of punishment? Is not the sign of mercy—the Holy Quran—sufficient for this purpose, whose bright and refulgent rays dazzle your eyes, and which reveals to you its inherent excellences, its verities and its miraculous qualities, the like of which you can never produce. The Quran is already exerting its miracu-

¹⁷ Al-‘Ankabūt, 29:54 [Publishers]

lous influence on you and your people.¹⁸ It is descending

¹⁸ These supranormal qualities of the Holy Quran, due to which it is called miraculous, are set forth in Chapters Al-Baqarah, Āl-e-‘Imrān, Al-Nisā’, Al-Mā’idah, Al-An‘ām, Al-A‘rāf, Al-Anfāl, Al-Taubah, Yūnus, Hūd, Al-Ra’d, Ibrāhīm, Al-Ĥijr, Al-Wāqī‘ah, Al-Naml, Al-Ĥajj, Al-Bayyinah, Al-Mujādalah. Here are a few verses for the sake of illustration. Allah says:

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ
 شِقَاقًا لِمَنَافِي الضُّلُومِ
 أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا
 أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا
 أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَتُصْبِحُ الْأَرْضُ مُخْضَرَّةً
 تَقْشَرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ كَمَا تَقْلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ
 أَلَا يَذْكُرُ اللَّهُ فَتَطْعَمُونَ الْقُلُوبَ
 أُولَئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ
 قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ
 إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ
 فِيهَا كُنْتُ قَيِّمًا
 قُلْ لِمَنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْأَنْسُ وَالْإِنْسُ عَلَى أَرْضٍ يَا تُوتَّا بِمَثَلِ هَذَا
 الْقُرْآنِ لَآيَاتُونَ بِمَثَلِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَتْ بَعْضُهُمْ يُعْضِ عَلَيْهِمْ

That is: The Holy Quran guides to the path of peace and leads people out of every darkness into light. It is a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts. Allah has sent down water which has quickened the earth after its death. He has sent down water so that every valley may flow according to its measure. He sends down water and the barren earth becomes green. The skins of those who fear their Lord creep at it, then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah. Remember, it is in the Quran that hearts can find true comfort. Faith is inscribed in the hearts of those who follow the Quran, and they are blessed with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has brought down the Quran, so that it may strengthen the hearts of the believers, and be a sign of guidance and glad-tidings for Muslims. It is We Who have sent down the Quran, and it is We Who shall surely be its Guardian, i.e., the Holy Quran will remain forever pristine, both in respect of its form and

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upon hearts and bringing about a wonderful transformation. It is restoring life to those who have long been dead, and restoring vision to those who have been blind through generations. The Quran is curing a variety of diseases associated with disbelief and heresy. Lepers of acute prejudice are being washed clean of their prejudices. The Quran gives light and drives away darkness. It brings about union with God and produces signs indicative of this union. Why turn away from this sign of mercy which bestows everlasting life, and ask instead for a sign of death and destruction?

Allah goes on to say that the unbelievers seem to want only the signs of chastisement and want them soon, and do not have any desire to witness the signs of mercy. The Holy Prophet^{sa} is asked to tell them that had it not been for the fact that signs of chastisement come at their own appointed time, they would surely have tasted Divine chastisement long ago. Punishment shall come, and it shall come unawares.

Come and judge, do you find in these verses any denial of miracles? On the contrary, the verses proclaim that, since

characteristics, and it shall remain under the shelter of Divine protection. Allah further says that the Quran contains all the knowledge, wisdom and truth that is to be found in Divine scriptures. And no man or jinn will be able to produce the like of it, even though they should help one another.* [Author]

* Al-Mā'idah 5:17; Yūnus 10:58; Al-Naḥl 16:66; Al-Ra'd 13:18; Al-Ḥajj 22:64; Al-Zumar 39:24; Al-Ra'd 13:29; Al-Mujādalah 58:23; Al-Naḥl 16:103; Al-Ḥijr 15:10; Al-Bayyinah 98:4; Banī Isrā'īl 17:89 [Publishers]

the unbelievers demanded signs of death and destruction, they were first of all told that they have in their midst the Quran, which is a life-giving sign, and which has been sent, not to destroy them, but to grant them everlasting life. And if a sign of punishment were to come, it would surely destroy them. Why then do you wish to die? If you want nothing but chastisement, then you will surely have what you ask for, and you shall have it very soon.

Thus, in these verses, God promises a sign of chastisement, and, at the same time, draws attention to the signs of Divine mercy inherent in the Holy Quran, which bring about a miraculous change in people's hearts. The critic's assumption that this verse implies a negation of all miracles, without any exception, only betrays his ignorance of the rules of Arabic grammar. It should be remembered that the scope of negation is always limited to the intent of the speaker, whether indicated in words or by implication. If someone says, 'Cold weather has passed', it is obvious that this statement reflects the condition of the speaker's own town, although he may not even have mentioned it by name. Who would ever think that such a statement could apply to all the cold countries, and that warm sunshine had replaced cold weather everywhere. It would obviously be wrong to argue that since this negation pertains to a class as a whole, it, therefore, applies to the whole world?

It is well known that the vanquished idolaters of Mecca finally believed in the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and accepted his miracles as true miracles. And even as unbeliev-

ers, they did not deny his miracles outright. On the contrary, they were so bewildered by what they saw, that when they went to the Byzantine and Persian Empires they proclaimed that the Holy Prophet^{sa} was a man with magical powers. Thus they admitted the signs, albeit in their own way, and these affirmations are to be found in the Holy Quran. They could not possibly have denied these manifest signs of the Holy Prophet's^{sa} Prophethood with such conviction, while they were so overawed by them. If they had indeed denied these miracles so forcefully, how could they have accepted Islam with such conviction that it became a small matter for them to shed their blood and sacrifice their lives for its sake.

The assertion they frequently made during the time of their disbelief, and which is recorded in the Holy Quran, was that—owing to their lack of insight—they considered the Holy Prophet^{sa} to be a magician. Allah says:

وَإِنْ يَرَوْا آيَةً يُعْرِضُوا وَيَقُولُوا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ¹⁹

That is: And when they see a sign, they turn away and say that this is a feat of magic.

He again says:

وَعَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنْذِرٌ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالَ الْكُفْرُونَ هَذَا سِحْرٌ كَذَّابٌ²⁰

That is: They wondered that a warner had come to them from among themselves, and the unbelievers said that he

¹⁹ Al-Qamar, 54:3 [Publishers]

²⁰ Şād, 38:5 [Publishers]

is a magician and a great liar. Since the unbelievers called the Holy Prophet^{sa} a magician, and later accepted the same signs as miracles, and the whole of the Arabian Peninsula accepted Islam and became forever a witness to the miracles of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, it is, therefore, wrong to say that these people could have denied the miracles in such a categorical manner even though it went against their common perception.

On the other hand, the context makes it as clear as day that wherever the Holy Quran mentions the objection of the unbelievers that no signs have been given to the Holy Prophet^{sa}, it also clarifies that these people are only speaking of the signs of their own asking.²¹

²¹ Let it be clear that the demand for signs by the unbelievers has been mentioned in the Holy Quran in more than just a few places. When we look at these verses together, we find that the non-believers of Mecca asked for three kinds of signs: (1) Signs of chastisement, which were a product of their own imagination; (2) Signs of chastisement, which had visited earlier people or had come to them as warning; (3) Signs which completely lift the veil of the unseen, and thus negate the concept of belief in the unseen.

In answer to their demand of signs of chastisement, the Holy Quran tells them to wait, for Divine chastisement will certainly come. Although Allah refuses to repeat the signs of chastisement which had been rejected earlier, such signs have certainly been promised, and they appeared in the form of wars [between the Muslims and the unbelievers]. The demand for the third kind of sign has been rejected outright, and this is how it should have been, for the unbelievers had said: 'We shall only believe when we see a ladder placed between heaven and
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In short, the critic has drawn a far-fetched conclusion from the negation [of miracles] mentioned in the above verse, and has gone far beyond the bounds of the text. The Arab contemporaries of the Holy Prophet^{sa} could never have dreamed of drawing such a conclusion, for, in their heart of hearts, they were fully convinced of the truth of Islam. That

earth and we see you climb the ladder to heaven before our very eyes. And we shall not accept even this sign, unless you come back with a book which we can read and hold in our hands.' They also demanded that the Holy Prophet^{sa} should make canals of water to flow in Mecca, which was always short of water, just as they flowed in Iraq and Syria; or that all their ancestors who had died since the beginning of the world should come back alive, including Quṣayy bin Kilāb, for that old man always spoke the truth, and they wanted to ask him whether the Holy Prophet's claim was true or not. They sought all these self-conceived signs, which they made even more complicated by piling up conditions that have been mentioned at several places in the Holy Quran. To a discerning mind, such demands provide a clear proof of the manifest miracles, evident signs and Prophetic visage of our lord and master, the Holy Prophet^{sa}. Only God knows how disconcerted were the spiritually blind unbelievers by the light of the truth of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, and what wonderful heavenly blessings and heavenly support was being showered on him which so overawed and bewildered them, and they tried to escape with such unreasonable demands. The showing of such miracles would fall outside the scope of 'belief in the unseen'. God, obviously, has the power to place a ladder to the heaven which all people could see; and He could restore to life, not just thousands, but millions of the dead, and could make them bear witness to the truth of the Holy Prophet^{sa} in the presence of their progeny; God could do all this, but, if you think about it, such a full disclosure would have left no room for 'belief in the unseen'—on which depends all merit and reward—and the world would become a picture of Doomsday. Just as it shall be of no avail to believe when the Day of Judgement has arrived—for it will be

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is why they all eventually accepted Islam, barring a few who met their punishment as had been promised. Remember, that similar negations are to be found in the words of Jesus^{as} as well. The Pharisees demanded signs, but Jesus^{as} said regretfully: "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily, I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." (Mark, 8:11)

Just note how clearly Jesus^{as} refuses to show miracles. If the critic would only ponder over this, he would find that his objection is nothing as compared to this objection. This is because the critic has only cited a denial of miracles by the unbelievers. And it is not a general denial, but a denial of some specific signs. And a denial by opponents can obviously not be credible, for they are likely to say things contrary to the facts. But here Jesus^{as} himself refuses to show miracles to his people. He says, "There shall no sign be given unto this generation." There could not be a more emphatic refusal to show miracles, nor could there be a negation more general in intent.

the day of full disclosure—likewise, faith which results from all-too-obvious miracles, will also be of no avail. Faith can only be called faith as long as there remains some aspect of the unseen. There can be no room for faith when all the veils have been lifted. For this reason, Prophets throughout history have shown miracles, but have always left room for the unseen. No Prophet ever restored to life the dead of a whole town and asked them to testify to his Prophethood, nor has any Prophet ever set up a ladder and ascended to heaven, while people looked on. [Author]

The critic then goes on to object to another verse, which he has, again, taken out of context. If it had been taken in its context, it would become clear to all fair-minded observers that it does not contain even a word which suggests a denial of miracles. Rather, the words make it amply clear that miracles had certainly been shown. The verse in question and the accompanying verses, read as follows:

وَأَنْ مِنْ قَرِيْبَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوْهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ ائْتِيَةِ أَوْ مَعْدِبُوْهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ۗ
 كَانَ ذَٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُوْرًا ۗ وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَنْ نُرْسِلَ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا أَنْ كَذَّبَ بِهَا
 الْأَوَّلُونَ ۗ وَآتَيْنَا مُوْدَ التَّاقَةَ مُبْصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا ۗ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا تَحْوِيْفًا ۗ²²

The Glorious God says: Although We shall destroy every township before the Day of Resurrection, or shall punish it with a severe punishment, and this is what has been written down in the Book, We do not send afresh some of those past signs of chastisement (that have already descended as punishment upon people of the past), which were rejected by them. Thus We gave Thamūd the she-camel, a clear sign, (as a fore-warner of the impending punishment, but they rejected it unjustly, and the she-camel caused the ponds of water to dry up for the people of Thamūd, residents of the town of Hījr, and spared no grazing ground for their animals. They were thus caught in great suffering and distress because it ate and drank in plenty.) And We send not signs of punishment but as a warning, i.e., signs of punishment are sent so that people may be fearful. Why then go on demand-

²² Banī Isrāʾīl, 17:59-60 [Publishers]

ing signs which the former peoples saw and which they rejected, and were not at all frightened or deterred by them?

Divine signs, let us say, are of two kinds: (1) Signs consisting of warning and punishment, which can also be called signs of Divine wrath. (2) Signs of glad-tidings or peace, also known as signs of Divine mercy. Signs of warning are shown to people who are hard-hearted, disobedient, faithless and of Pharaonic dispositions, so that they may take heed and their hearts may become overawed by the Might and Majesty of God. Signs of glad-tidings are meant for seekers after truth, sincere believers, lovers of guidance, and meek and humble people, who think lowly of themselves and seek to strengthen their faith. These signs are not meant as warnings. Their purpose is to bring comfort to God's loyal servants, to deepen their faith and conviction, and to lay the hand of His grace and mercy on their troubled hearts. The believers, therefore, always continue to receive such signs through the Holy Quran and keep advancing in faith and conviction. Signs of Divine mercy bring peace and solace to the believers, dispel the anxiety which man is naturally prone to and bring tranquillity to his heart. As a reward for following the Book of God, he receives signs of glad-tidings throughout his life. Signs of peace and comfort keep descending upon him, so that he continues to advance in certainty and knowledge and reaches the stage of *Ḥaq-ul-Yaqīn*.²³ Another blessing of

²³ Perfect Certainty. [Publishers]

these signs of glad-tidings is that, while they help a believer to advance in certainty and Divine knowledge and spiritual power, he also advances in his love for God, for he experiences His favours and His physical and spiritual bounties—both visible and hidden—with which the signs of glad-tidings abound.

Hence signs of glad-tidings are truly glorious and powerful and blessed signs, leading men to their goal and carrying the seeker to the stage of perfect cognition and personal love for God, which is the ultimate stage for His friends.

Much is contained in the Holy Quran about the signs of glad-tidings. It says that these signs are not limited, and makes an eternal promise that the true followers of the Holy Quran will always continue to be blessed with such signs. He says:

لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ
لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ²⁴

That is: For the faithful are signs of glad-tidings in the present life and also in the hereafter, which will help them advance to unlimited heights in the field of Divine love and knowledge in both worlds. These are the words of God that can never fail. To be blessed with signs of glad-tiding is the ultimate triumph. (This is what leads a person to the pinnacle of Divine love and knowledge).

²⁴ Yūnus, 10:65 [Publishers]

Let it be known that the verse which the critic has quoted in support of his objection is concerned only with signs of warning, as this verse makes clear:

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا تَخْوِيفًا²⁵

We would be quite mistaken if we were to consider all the signs of God to be the signs of wrath, and were to understand from this verse that He sends every sign for the sole purpose of warning, and for no other reason. As I have already mentioned, signs are sent for two purposes: as warnings and as glad-tidings. The Holy Quran, and also the Bible, speak frequently of these two kinds of signs. Therefore, the only logical interpretation of the verse in question is that the signs mentioned in it are only signs of wrath. Otherwise, we will have to admit that all Divine signs are signs of wrath. But this is not at all true, for it can neither be substantiated by the Holy Book, by human reason, nor by the conscience of a pure heart.

It is now clear that, of the two kinds of signs, only the signs of wrath are mentioned in this verse. The question that now remains to be answered relates to the true connotation of the verse *وَمَا مَعَنَا أَنْ نُرْسِلَ بِالْآيَاتِ... إلخ*²⁶ Does it mean that God demonstrated no sign of warning at the hand of the Holy Prophet^{sa}; Or that such signs were not demonstrated by him as had already been shown to earlier people; Or that

²⁵ And We send not Signs but to warn.—Banī Isrāʿīl 17:60

[Publishers]

²⁶ Banī Isrāʿīl, 17:60 [Publishers]

both were shown by the Holy Prophet^{sa}, with the exception of the signs of warning which had been shown to earlier people and had been rejected by them, because they did not consider them to be miracles.

A careful look at the verses under consideration makes it clear that the first two meanings cannot be correct. It would be wrong to understand from this verse that God will not send any of the numerous signs of warning which He can send, nor will He send any of the numerous signs of chastisement as are beyond human perception and are within His limitless power, merely because earlier people had rejected them. It is evident that earlier people rejected only those signs which they had witnessed, for how can something be rejected which has not been seen? While it is in the power of God to show such extraordinary signs as no man can deny, and to which everyone has to submit, and while He has the power to show every sign, and the signs of His power are infinite and limitless, how can it be correct to say that all of them have been seen and rejected within a short period of time! The fact is that only a limited number of signs could have been shown in a limited period of time. Therefore, the correct meaning of the verse is that it is futile to send again the signs which have been seen and rejected by earlier unbelievers. This is the meaning which emerges when the verse is seen in its true context. Here God refers to the she-camel of Thamūd, and this reference shows that the verse relates only to signs of warning which were shown and rejected in the past. This is the third and true meaning of the verse.

Yet another point, which will make things even clearer to discerning people, is that the verse:

وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَنْ نُرْسِلَ بِالْآيَاتِ... الرَّح²⁷

bears an affirmation, rather than a negation, of miracles. The point relates to the definite article '*Al*', which, according to the rules of Arabic grammar, bears either an all-inclusive connotation or a particular connotation. If the former connotation is adopted, the verse would mean, 'Nothing could hinder Us from sending all the signs, except that they have been rejected by earlier peoples.' And if we were to adopt the 'particular' connotation, the verse would mean, 'Nothing could hinder Us from showing the particular signs (which are being demanded by the unbelievers), except that they have been rejected by earlier people.' In either case, the verse affirms the showing of miracles. To say that all signs cannot be shown because they have been rejected by earlier people, proves that some signs will be shown. For instance, when somebody says that he has not given Zaid everything he possesses, it clearly means that he has given Zaid at least a portion of his possessions. Conversely, if the verse means that God did not send some particular signs, it also proves that some other signs were sent. For instance, when someone says that he has not given Zaid some particular things, it means that he has given Zaid something else.

One should first examine the verses adjacent to the one in

²⁷ Banī Isrāʾīl, 17:60[Publishers]

question and see how they both speak of the signs of chastisement. Secondly, is it conceivable that all the unlimited signs and wonders, which appear from time to time as a manifestation of God's infinite power, could have been rejected by earlier people in their limited time? Thirdly, one should consider with all fairness, whether the verse speaks of the signs of warning in particular, or if there is some mention of the signs of mercy and glad-tidings as well. Fourthly, one should look again at the article '*Al*' of the word *Al-Āyāt* and see what meaning it conveys. Having considered all the four points, every person—except the one whom prejudice keeps away from the truth—will find, not one, but thousands of testimonies to prove that the negation in this verse pertains only to a particular category of signs, and it does not in any way affect the other kinds of signs; it, in fact, categorically affirms their existence.

In these verses, Allah clearly declares that the signs of chastisement which these people demand will not be shown to them because they have been rejected by earlier people. To show, over and over again, signs which have been rejected before, would be an indication of weakness, and would not be worthy of the All-Powerful One. Thus, these verses clearly state that signs of chastisement will be shown, but in different ways. There is no need whatsoever to show the same signs again that were shown by Moses^{as} or Noah^{as}, or the signs that were given to the people of Lot^{as} or 'Ād or Thamūd. These verses have been further explained by some other verses. Allah says:

وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلِمَةَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُمْ وَكُفُّوا يَوْمَئِذٍ
 وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ آيَةٌ قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ حَتَّىٰ نُؤْتَىٰ مِثْلَ
 مَا أُوتِيَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ۗ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ 29
 قُلِ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ ۗ مَا عِندِي مَا
 تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ۗ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۗ يَقْضِ الْحَقُّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ 30
 قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ
 فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۗ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ 31
 وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ 32
 قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ
 أَرْضِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبَسَكُمْ شِيْعًا وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ 33
 وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سِيرَ يَوْمِكُمْ إِلَيْهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا 34
 قُلْ لَكُمْ مِيعَادُ يَوْمٍ ۗ لَا تَسْتَأْجِرُونَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً ۗ وَلَا تَسْتَقْدِمُونَ 35
 وَيَسْتَنْبِئُونَكَ أَحَقُّ هُوَ ۗ قُلِ إِي وَرَبِّي إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ ۗ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ 36
 سَرَّيْهِمُ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَسْتَبِينَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ الْحَقُّ 37
 خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ ۗ سَأُورِيكُمْ آيَاتِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ 38

28 Al-An‘ām, 6: 26 [Publishers]

29 Al-An‘ām, 6:125 [Publishers]

30 Al-An‘ām, 6:58 [Publishers]

31 Al-An‘ām, 6:105 [Publishers]

32 Al-Ḥajj, 22:48 [Publishers]

33 Al-An‘ām, 6:66 [Publishers]

34 Al-Naml, 27: 94 [Publishers]

35 Sabā’, 34:31 [Publishers]

36 Yūnus, 10:54 [Publishers]

37 Ḥā Mīm al-Sajdah, 41:54 [Publishers]

That is: And even if they see every sign, they will not believe therein, so much so, that when they come to thee, they dispute with thee. And when there comes to them a sign, they say: 'We will never believe until we are given something similar to that which Allah's Messengers have been given.' Say, 'I have come with a clear proof from my Lord, you see that proof and yet you reject it. That which you wish to hasten (punishment) is not within my power. Judgement lies with no one but Allah. He will make the truth clear and He is the Best of Judges. Surely, one day He will judge between you and me. Clear proofs of my Prophethood have come to you from my Lord: so whoever chooses to see, does so for his own good; and whoever turns blind does so to his own peril, and I am not a watcher over you.' And they ask thee to hasten the punishment. Say, He has the power to send punishment upon you, from above you, or from beneath your feet, or to split you into groups and make you taste one another's wrath. And say, all praise belongs to Allah; He will soon show you His signs, which you will recognize. Say, for you is the promise of a year³⁹ from which you cannot remain behind a single moment, nor can you get ahead of it. And they enquire of thee: Is it true? Say, Yea by my Lord, it is most true and you cannot thwart the fulfilment of God's promises. We will

³⁸ Al-Anbiyā', 21:38 [Publishers]

³⁹ A 'day' in the verse means a year—an idiom found in Bible as well. Exactly a year after this came the first battle, the Battle of Badr, which brought dire punishment for the Meccans. [Author]

soon show them Our signs around their country, as well as among them until it becomes manifest to them that this Prophet is true in his claim. Man loves haste. Certainly I will soon show you My signs, but ask Me not to make haste.

Look, how clearly and firmly these verses hold out promises of the signs that were demanded. They go so far as to say that these signs will be so clear that people will easily recognize them. If someone were to say: It is true that the Holy Quran promises signs of chastisement at several places, and these signs will surely be fulfilled some day, and we also agree that these promises were fulfilled at the time when God manifested His power and rid the Muslims of their weak and helpless state, and from a few they became thousands, and through them He subjugated all the unbelievers of Mecca, who, during their time of tyranny, had arrogantly demanded the signs of chastisement; but where, in the Holy Quran, do we find evidence that the Holy Prophet^{sa} showed other signs besides these?

Let it be clear that the Holy Quran repeatedly mentioned the showing of signs. At places it referred to signs that had already been shown. See the verse:

كَمَآلَمُ يُؤْمِنُوآبِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ⁴⁰

Part 7, Sūrah Al-An‘ām

At other places, the Quran refers to the biased attitude of

⁴⁰ ...as when they initially rejected Our signs.—Al-An‘ām, 6:111

the unbelievers and records their assertion that the signs are no more than sorcery. See the verse:

وَإِنْ يَرَوْا آيَةً يُعَرِّضُوا وَيَقُولُوا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ⁴¹

Part 27, Sūrah Al-Qamar

At places the Quran presents the testimonies of the unbelievers, that they had indeed witnessed the signs, as it says:

وَ شَهِدُوا أَنَّ الرَّسُولَ حَقٌّ وَ جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ⁴²

They have testified to the truth of the Prophet^{sa}, and visible signs have come to them. At places specific miracles have been described, for instance, the miracle of the splitting of the moon, which is a most extraordinary miracle indeed, and is a perfect manifestation of the power of God. I have discussed this in detail in my book *Surma Chashm Ārya*. Anyone interested may refer to it.

It should also be remembered that the majority of those who demanded from the Holy Prophet^{sa} signs of their own imagining, ultimately became witnesses to the signs of the Holy Prophet^{sa} by accepting Islam and spreading it far and wide. As witnesses to the signs and miracles of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, they also had their testimonies recorded in books of Hadith. The attitude of critics in our time is strange: They keep repeating how these elders of faith denied these miracles in their time of ignorance—even though they ul-

⁴¹ And if they see a Sign, they turn and say, 'A passing feat of magic'.—Al-Qamar, 54:3 [Publishers]

⁴² Āl-e-‘Imrān, 3:87 [Publishers]

timately withdrew from their denial with penitent hearts; but they refuse to accept the testimonies provided by the same people after they had turned to the right path!

The miracles and signs of the Holy Prophet^{sa} shine from every angle, it is impossible for them to remain hidden. The miracles that have been testified by the Companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} are about three thousand in number. In addition, there are prophecies, that have already been fulfilled or are continuing to be fulfilled with the passage of time, and they number about ten thousand. Then there are some miracles and prophecies of the Holy Quran, the fulfilment of which we perceive and witness even in this age and no one can ever deny them. These are as follows:

First are the miracles of the signs of chastisement, which were shown to the unbelievers at that time, and it seems as if we too are a witness to these signs even in this age, because they are the inevitable result of some sure and inviolable premises which neither friend nor foe can deny. The first premise, which forms the foundation for these miracles, is the self-evident and incontrovertible fact that these signs were demanded from the Holy Prophet^{sa} when he and his few Companions in Mecca were themselves undergoing great suffering and hardship on account of inviting people to the truth; and Islam was in such a weak and helpless state that the infidels would ridicule and taunt the Muslims by saying, "If you are true, why then are you suffering such pain and torment at our hands? Why does your God, on whom you depend, not come to your rescue?"

Why are you such an insignificant little group of people who are soon going to be annihilated? And if you are indeed true, then why does no punishment come down upon us?"

The Holy Quran's reply to these taunts, at a time when the Muslims were in such a desperate state, forms the second premise which helps us to understand the true grandeur of this prophecy. It was a very trying time for the Holy Prophet^{sa} and his Companions; they were always fearful for their lives and failure stared them in the face from all sides. It was at such a time that the unbelievers demanded the signs of chastisement and were told, in clear and unequivocal terms, that they would soon be shown the sign of the triumph of Islam and of their own chastisement. And Islam—which was no more than a seed at the time—would manifest itself in the form of a great tree. Those who demanded the sign of chastisement would be killed by the sword. The Arabian Peninsula would be cleared of all disbelief and all non-believers, and the governance of the whole of Arabia would fall into the hands of the believers. God Almighty would establish the faith of Islam to such an extent that idol-worship would never recur in the land. The current state of fear and insecurity would give place to peace and tranquillity. Islam would gain strength and continue to dominate until it would become victorious over other lands, and its triumph would spread far and wide. A great kingdom would be born which would not see decline till the end of the world.

When a person first looks at these two premises, and discovers that the time when this prophecy was announced

was one of great hardship, despair and misery for Islam, and how the prophecy made at that time was diametrically opposed to prevailing conditions, and how it was beyond all imagination and conjecture, and was, in fact, an outright impossibility, and then casts an unprejudiced look at the history of Islam—which is accessible to friend and foe alike—he will see how clearly this prophecy was fulfilled, how powerfully it moved hearts, and how it manifested itself far and wide with all its might and power; he will then be obliged to admit that this is most certainly a miracle to which he himself is a witness, and he will remain in no doubt about it whatsoever.

The second miracle of the Holy Quran, which we can perceive and witness in our own time, is the marvellous transformation of the Companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, through their submission to the Holy Quran and under the influence of the Holy Prophet's^{sa} companionship. When we look at the kind of people they were and how they behaved before they accepted Islam, and how they were transformed by the company of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and by submission to the Holy Quran, and how, in respect of their morals, their beliefs, their behaviour, their demeanour, their conduct, and all their practices, they rid themselves of their evil condition and entered into a pure and immaculate state; and when we look at the wonderful influence which brought a strange light and radiance to their rusty beings, we have to concede that this change was indeed miraculous and it was brought about specially by the Hand of God, as He says in

the Holy Quran: I found them dead and I brought them to life, I found them falling into the pit of hell and I rescued them from this dreadful state, I found them ailing and I healed them, I found them in darkness and I gave them light.

In order to manifest this miracle, God Almighty has, on the one hand, described the evil condition of the people of Arabia before they accepted Islam, and, on the other, He has described their transformation into a state of piety after their acceptance of Islam, so that whoever analyzes the condition of the Arabs at the time of their denial, and compares it to their condition after they had entered the fold of Islam, will become convinced that this change was completely out of the ordinary, and was no less than a miracle.

The third miracle of the Holy Quran, to which we can ourselves testify, lies in the truths and verities, and points of beauty and subtlety which abound in its eloquent text. This miracle has been greatly emphasized in the Holy Quran. It says, let the Jinn and men join in their effort to produce the like of this Book; they shall fail. This miracle is corroborated by the fact that, although this challenge of the Holy Quran has been proclaimed loud and clear in every corner of the world for the last thirteen hundred years, no one has been able to take it up. This categorically proves that the whole human potential put together is incapable of contesting the Holy Quran. In fact, if we were to search for the equivalent of just one, out of the innumerable excellences of the Holy Quran, it would be beyond the capacity of a poor mortal to produce anything like it.

One of the many beauties of the Holy Quran, for instance, is that it is a compendium of all religious verities. There is not a single religious verity, relating to truth and wisdom, which is not to be found in the Holy Quran. But can anyone show us another book which possesses this quality? If anyone is in doubt about the Holy Quran being the compendium of all religious verities, regardless of whether he is a Christian, an Ārya, a Brahmū Samājist or an atheist, he is welcome to test this claim in the manner of his own choosing and thus satisfy himself; and I undertake to satisfy any seeker after truth who comes to me.

All the sacred truths found in the Bible, all the points of truth and wisdom contained in the writings of the sages which have come to my knowledge, all the verities which have perchance been recorded and have survived in the Vedas of the Hindus that I have had the occasion to see, and all the finer points of truth and wisdom contained in hundreds of books by the Sufis that I know of, I find them all in the Holy Quran. It has become categorically and unambiguously clear to me, as a result of the perfect inductive knowledge that I have acquired from thirty long years of deep and extensive observation, that there is not a single spiritual truth that can contribute to the consummation of the self and development and training of the human mind and soul, which is not to be found in the Holy Quran. I am not alone in reaching this conclusion, the Holy Quran itself makes this claim—a claim which has been tested, not only by myself, but by thousands of scholars who have all along testified to its truth.

The fourth miracle of the Holy Quran is its spiritual influence which endures to this day, i.e., those who follow the Holy Quran, attain stations of Divine acceptance and are blessed with Divine discourse. God hears their prayers and answers them out of His love and grace. He communicates to them some of the secrets of the unseen, just as He does to His Prophets, and He distinguishes them from His other creation with signs of His help and succour. This is a sign that will last in the Muslim umma till the Day of Judgment. It has continued to be manifested in the past, it lives on to this day, and is a verifiable fact. Even today there are people among the Muslims whom God blesses with His special support and honours them with pure and true revelations, glad-tidings and news of the unseen.

Now, you who seek after truth and crave and thirst for true signs, be fair, and ponder with an unbiased mind how wonderful the signs that God Almighty has mentioned in the Holy Quran are, and how they can be seen and felt in every age! As for the miracles of earlier Prophets, they are a thing of the past and are much like fairy tales. Only God knows how authentic they really are.

This is particularly true of the miracles of Jesus^{as} mentioned in the New Testament. Even though we allow for the fact that they have been related in the form of fables and tales and are full of exaggerations, it is still difficult to clear them of all the doubts and misgivings to which they are susceptible. Even if we were to suppose for a moment that there is no exaggeration in all that has been written in the

New Testament about Jesus^{as} curing the lame, the crippled, the paralyzed, and the sick, etc., by his mere touch, and that it is all to be taken literally, and it does not have any other connotation, even then it would not confer any merit on him.

First of all, there was a pool in those very days which could cure people suffering from all such ailments if they had a dip in it at a particular moment. This has been mentioned in the New Testament itself.

Secondly, it has been proven by long observation and research that the healing of the sick is one of the many branches of science, and many people are to be found even today who are adept in this field. This science requires extreme concentration, mental power, and expertise in controlling another person's thoughts. Hence, this ability has nothing to do with Prophethood, and it does not even require that the person practising it should be pious. This science has been in vogue since times immemorial. Some eminent Muslim scholars—such as Moḥyuddīn Ibn-e-‘Arabī, author of the *Fuṣūṣ*, and some elders of the Naqshbandī order—are known to have been great experts in this science and had no equal in their own times. Of some of them it has been said that, with perfect concentration, and with the leave of God, they could even talk to the people who had recently passed away;⁴³ and that they could

⁴³ It is not contrary to the laws of nature for a recently deceased person to be restored to life for a few minutes or hours through the art of concentration. And why should we consider such a thing to be beyond the
Contd...

gather two or three hundred patients around them and restore them to health with a single glance. Those who were less proficient in this art would cure a patient by touching him or his clothes. When he practised this art, the practitioner would feel as if some sort of energy was radiating from his person; and the patient would at times feel as though some poisonous matter within him was moving down to his lower limbs until it vanished altogether.

Muslims have written numerous books on this subject, and I believe the Hindus have done the same. The art of mesmerism invented by the Europeans in our time is also a branch of the same knowledge. Upon examination, the New Testament reveals that Jesus^{as} was also, to an extent, proficient in this art, though not to the degree of perfection. Nevertheless, since people in those days were simple-minded and ignorant of this art, it was considered deserving of greater acclaim than it actually was. But, as time passed, and the truth became more and more evident, people grew weaker in their faith, until they began to say that healing the sick or curing the insane by such practices is not something that deserves merit, and it does not even require that one should be a believer, let alone that it should serve as a proof of someone's Prophethood or Sainthood. They even say that to become perfect in the exercise of curing bodily ailments and to occupy oneself day and night in this voca-

realm of possibility, when we know that certain drugs do cause some animals to be revived after death. [Author]

tion is very harmful for spiritual advancement, and such people are poor at imparting spiritual training, and their heart's ability to give light to others also becomes feeble.

Perhaps it may be for this very reason that Jesus^{as} proved to be so weak in imparting spiritual training. Reverend Taylor, who appears to be a man of stature on account of his office and his personal ability, writes with great regret that the spiritual training imparted by the Messiah^{as} proved to be weak and ineffective. The people who formed his company, and were known as the Apostles, showed no enviable example, either in their spiritual development or in the perfection of their human capacities. (Would that Jesus^{as} had concentrated less on the practice of healing the sick and had given more attention to curing the spiritual weaknesses and ailments of his disciples, and particularly those of Judas Iscariot.) At this point, the said gentleman also writes that if the Apostles are compared with the Companions of the Prophet of Arabia^{sa}, in their spiritual development and the strength of their faith, we would have to admit, albeit regretfully, that the Apostles were seriously lacking in spiritual development, and that Jesus' companionship proved of little help in enhancing their faculties of mind and heart which could have earned them any merit vis-à-vis the Companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. Rather, they showed cowardice, lack of faith, meanness, worldliness and infidelity at every step. The Companions of the Arabian Prophet^{sa}, on the other hand, showed such sincerity and devotion, the like of which can hardly be found amongst

followers of any other Prophet. This was the result of perfect spiritual training which completely transformed them and raised them to immeasurable heights. Likewise, many Western intellectuals have recently published books in which they have admitted that, if we leave aside those miracles of the Prophet of Arabia^{sa} which are found duly recorded, and consider only the circumstances of his devotion to God, his faith, his steadfastness, his perfect and pure teachings, his spiritual influence, his reformation of many mischief-makers, and the implicit and explicit Divine support he enjoyed, our sense of justice compels us to admit that all these accomplishments are undoubtedly miraculous in nature and are beyond the realm of human power, and these signs are potent and powerful enough to prove the truth and authenticity of someone's Prophethood. No man, unless God is with him, can ever succeed and become perfect in these matters, nor can he be accompanied by such unseen support.

Answer to Question No. 3

The objections raised by the Christian gentleman are not three objections, they are, in fact, three misunderstandings which have found their way into his heart through lack of deliberation. To these three misunderstandings we will turn one by one.

The answer to the first misunderstanding is that it is never a distinctive sign of a true Prophet to know everything of the unseen, just like God. It is solely God's prerogative to possess the knowledge of the unseen in His own right and as a personal attribute. Since time immemorial, men of God have

believed the Necessary Being to be the Knower of the unseen, and have believed all other existents to be excluded from this knowledge. That is to say, they believed that God has to be the Knower of the unseen, and that this attribute is the exclusive prerogative of His Being. It is not the prerogative of all existents—whose being is liable to pass into non-existence and non-reality—to share with God this or other such attributes. Just as no one can be the partner of God in His Person, the same prohibition stands in respect of His attributes. Therefore, all other existents are barred from the knowledge of the unseen, regardless of whether they are Prophets or *Muḥaddathīn* or Saints. Yes, receiving knowledge of the unseen through Divine revelation has always been the privilege of His chosen ones, and today we find it only in the followers of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and in no one else.

It is the way of God that, from time to time, He favours His chosen ones with some of His special secrets, and the bounty of the knowledge of the unseen rains down upon them at the appointed and predetermined time. In fact, those who are truly close to God are tested and recognized by the fact that they are given knowledge of some future events, and some hidden secrets are revealed to them. But all this is not by their own authority and their own choosing, rather these bounties are given to them by the will and choice and authority of God.

It is the practice of the Benevolent One to hear most of the supplications of those who do as He wills, and become solely and wholly His, and are lost in Him, and He also oc-

asionally reveals to them knowledge of His past action or future intention. But they can learn nothing without Divine communication. True, they are close to God, but they are not God. They only understand what they are made to understand, they only know what they are told, they only see what they are shown, and they only speak what they are made to speak; they are nothing in themselves. They only speak when the Supreme Power urges them to speak through revelation, and they only see when it makes them see, and they only hear when it speaks to them. Until God reveals to them something of the unseen, they have no inkling of it. The lives of all the Prophets bear testimony to this fact.

Take the example of the Messiah^{as}, how he acknowledges his own ignorance and says: But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. (Mark 13:32). He again says: I do nothing of myself (I cannot do anything); but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. It is not for me to raise anybody to the height of righteousness.⁴⁴ Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. (Mark)⁴⁵

In short, no Prophet has ever claimed omnipotence or omniscience. Look at the humble man who is known as the Messiah, and whom ignorant creature-worshippers have taken for God, and see how on every occasion he proved,

⁴⁴ John 8:28 [Publishers]

⁴⁵ Mark 10:18 [Publishers]

through his word and deed, that he was but a poor, weak and frail man, possessing no personal good or merit, and in what beautiful words he made his final admission as his life drew to an end. It is written in the Gospels that the Messiah (learning of his imminent arrest) became extremely anxious and grief-stricken, and said to them (his disciples): My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. And he said: Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me.⁴⁶ That is to say, You are All-Powerful and I am only a weak and humble man. Only You can remove this calamity. And he finally gave up his ghost crying *Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?*, which is translated as: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"⁴⁷

Now, although the prayer was not heard—for it was irrevocably destined not be heard, and what power would a poor creature have before the definite will of the Creator!—still, upon the hope that it might be accepted, the Messiah^{as} took the admission of his humility and submission to the extreme. If he had indeed known beforehand that his prayer would be rejected and would never be heard, would he have gone on praying all night till dawn? And would he still have fervently employed himself and his disciples in

⁴⁶ Matthew 26:38-39, Mark 14:36 [Publishers]

⁴⁷ Matthew 27:46 [Publishers]

this vain exercise? Here the critic would agree that Jesus^{as} was sure that only God knew and he knew not.

Likewise, the reason why so many of Jesus^{'as} prophecies turned out to be false was his ignorance of matters of the unseen, which caused him to misunderstand and misinterpret Divine prophecies.

For instance, he once said: "In the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye (O my twelve disciples) also shall sit upon twelve thrones." (See Matthew 20:28) But it is evident from the same Gospel that Judas Iscariot ended up being deprived of the throne. Though he heard the prophecy that he would sit on the throne, this is not what was destined for him. The question is, if Jesus^{as} had truly known beforehand that this man was going to become an apostate and that his end was going to be an evil one, why did he make him the false promise that he would sit on a throne? Similarly, Jesus once saw a fig tree from a distance and went to it so that he could eat some figs, but when he found not a single fig on the tree, he became extremely annoyed and cursed the tree in anger, which had no effect on the tree. If he indeed possessed knowledge of the unseen, he would never have gone up to a barren tree to eat its fruit.

On another occasion, when a woman happened to touch his cloak, he looked around and asked who had touched him. Had he possessed even a little knowledge of the unseen, it would not have been a great matter to know who had done it.

On yet another occasion, he prophesied that men of his generation would not pass away without witnessing all that he had promised, (i.e., his second coming, the falling of the stars, etc.) But no stars fell on earth from heaven, nor did Jesus^{as} come to sit in judgement over men, even though his own century went by, and eighteen more centuries have gone by since, and even the nineteenth century is coming to an end.

These few testimonies—which have been drawn from the four Gospels themselves—are enough to prove that Jesus^{as} did not possess any knowledge of the unseen. The same is true of other Hebrew Prophets. No doubt, Jacob^{as} was a Prophet, but he remained unaware of what was happening to his son in a wilderness in his own village. Daniel^{as} knew nothing of dreams and their interpretations, until God Himself revealed to him the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It becomes clear from this study that when a Prophet professes ignorance of a certain matter, and says that only God knows about it, he is right in saying so. It is in keeping with his dignity as a Prophet, and in it lies his pride of being a humble man of God. This, in fact, further raises his status in the eyes of his Merciful Master, and does not in any way detract from his status as a Prophet. If anyone should want to know what share the Holy Prophet^{sa} had of the knowledge of the unseen which is revealed by God, I am prepared to produce strong arguments to prove that the prophecies of the Holy Prophet^{sa} are a thousand times greater, both in quantity and quality, than the prophecies of all Prophets of the Old and New Testaments put together. These prophecies have

been detailed in the books of Hadith, which have been compiled with great care. The Quranic description of these prophecies, though brief, is quite satisfactory and effective. What is more, Muslims do not live by old tales alone, as do the followers of other religions. In every century, Muslims have told followers of other religions that these blessings are ever-present in Islam, and even today Muslims continue to invite them to come and test this claim before they accept it, but they do not pay heed. God's argument has been completed against them, for we invite them and they do not come; we show them but they refuse to see; they have completely turned away their eyes and ears from us lest they should hear and see and be guided.

The critic's second misunderstanding—that the Holy Quran has given an inaccurate account of the number of the People of the Cave—is a mere assertion. The critic does not say why this account is wrong and, as against this, what is the correct account. Nor does he advance any arguments so that they may be analyzed and answered to satisfaction. If the critic had any objection to the Quranic text, he ought to have given his reasons, for, it does not behove a seeker after truth to reject something without giving any reason for it.

The third misunderstanding which has arisen in the mind of the critic relates to the Holy Quran's account of a king (whose travels have been described in the Quran), who, during his travels, came to a place where he saw the Sun setting in a murky pool. Treating the metaphor as a literal expression, the Christian gentleman asks how it could be

possible for the Sun, which is so big, to hide in a small marshy pool? This objection is akin to saying, 'The New Testament describes Jesus^{as} as the lamb of God. How can this be possible, when a lamb has horns on its head, and wool on its skin, and walks like quadrupeds with its head down, and eats what they eat.' My dear sir, from where and from whom did you learn about the Holy Quran claiming that the Sun actually hid in a marshy pool? The Holy Quran merely reproduces the perception of the traveller, and says that, to his eyes, the Sun appeared to be setting in a marshy pool. Hence, the description here is of what the man saw, and how he came to a place where the Sun did not appear to be setting behind a hill or a habitation or behind some trees, as is commonly observed, but to be setting into a marshy pool. The meaning is that there were no habitation, no trees and no hills, nor was there any sign of these things as far as the eye could see; there was only a marshy pool into which the Sun seemed to be setting.

Look at the context of the verses carefully, do you find any scholarly research? All you find is the account of a man travelling far and wide, and the purpose of all the description is to show the kind of wilderness in which he found himself. Trying to relate all this to astronomy is simply taking things out of context.

For instance, if someone says that overnight the sky had become so clear and cloudless that the stars seemed to shine like dots, will you start arguing with him and ask how can stars be as small as dots, and will you start quoting

from books of astronomy? If you do, you will be acting foolishly, for the speaker never intended his statement as a literal fact, all he was doing was expressing himself in a metaphor, just as all people do. O, you who eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood during the Holy Communion, are you unaware of the use of metaphors and symbolic expressions? Who does not know that in the language of every country there is a wide room for the use of symbols and metaphors. Divine revelation also makes use of the same metaphors and symbols which common people have innocently adopted in their everyday speech.

It is not the way of Divine revelation to abide by abstruse philosophical terms at every place and occasion. Since the revelation is addressed to the masses, it is important that it should speak in their own idiom and according to their own understanding. There is, no doubt, a time and place for speaking in terms of fact and scientific detail, but it is impossible for a man to simply abandon the use of metaphors and figurative speech when his first and foremost duty is to speak to the common man at his own level, so that they may understand and their hearts may be moved by his words. Admittedly, there is no revealed book which has distanced itself from the use of metaphors and symbols, or has considered this practice to be wrong. Has there ever been such a revealed book? If we reflect, we will find that in our own speech we make use of hundreds of metaphors and idioms everyday, and no one finds fault with them. For instance, when one says, "The first moon is fine as a hair",

or, "The stars are like dots", or, "The moon is hiding in a cloud", or, "Though three morning hours have passed, the Sun has risen no higher than a pole", or when we speak of having eaten a plate of *pilau* or having drunk a glass of *sherbat*; on hearing all these expressions, no one wonders how the moon of the first night can be as thin as a hair, or how the stars can be as small as dots, or how the moon can hide behind a cloud, or how can the Sun—which is so fast that it covers thousands of miles a day—travel no more than the length of a pole in the span of three hours; nor can eating a plate of *pilau* or drinking a glass of *sherbat*, lead anyone to think that the plate and glass have also been swallowed; rather, everyone would understand that only the rice and water contained in them have been consumed. Even an opponent, if he is wise, will not like anyone to object to things that are so obvious. I have myself heard from some fair-minded Christians that people who raise such objections are either totally ignorant or completely biased.

When the same metaphors and idioms have been used in Divine revelation, would it be fair to take them literally and to make them a target of criticism? In such a case, not a single Divine Scripture would escape unscathed. Do not sailors, when travelling in a ship or a steamer, observe, day after day, the spectacle of the Sun rising from water and setting into water? And do they not describe its rising and setting to one another exactly as they see it? If, during such a discussion, one was to start countering them with arguments relating to astronomy and the solar system, he would only be

inviting the retort, "You fool, are you the only one who knows of these matters, and do you think we are ignorant?"

Though the Christian critic has tried to find fault with the Holy Quran, he has ignored the writings of the New Testament, which genuinely attract such criticism. For example, it is written in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark that you will see the Messiah coming to judge mankind when the Sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven.⁴⁸ Here, the same science of astronomy presents us with the problem of how the stars can fall upon the earth and break into pieces and get lodged in some nook of the earth, and yet mankind should survive and emerge unscathed, regardless of the fact that the falling of even a single star is enough to destroy all its inhabitants. Another point worth considering is how, when the stars have fallen on earth and have wiped out all earthly creatures, will the words of Jesus, 'You shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven,' come true? Who will witness the descent of Jesus when mankind shall be lying dead under the debris of thousands of stars? How will the earth itself remain secure and firm in its orbit, when its own survival is dependent upon the gravity of the stars? And who shall be the chosen ones (mentioned in the Gospels) whom Jesus^{as} will gather together from the farthest parts of the earth, and whom shall he warn and reprove, while the falling of stars necessitates universal death and destruction,

⁴⁸ Matthew 24:29 [Publishers]

and would, in fact, turn the earth upside down. Just consider, do the above statements not go against the science of astronomy? The New Testament attracts yet another objection from the same point of view: It is written in the Gospel of Matthew, "And lo, the star, which they (the Magi) saw in the East, went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was." (2:9)

Will the Christians kindly tell us, in the light of astronomy, the name of the wonderful star that moved along with the Magi. What kind of movement was it, and to which laws did it conform? I cannot see how the Gospel of Matthew can escape criticism from astronomers. Some Christians get frustrated and respond: "These are not the words of Jesus at all. They are only the words of Matthew, and we do not consider Matthew's statements to be the revealed word." What an answer! It completely exposes the true nature of the New Testament as a revealed book! Even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that these are not the words of Jesus^{as}, and are in fact the words of Matthew or someone else, Jesus' own statement (which is believed to be the revealed word and regarding which I have just raised an objection) is of a similar nature and spoken in the same style. Let them at least try to conform his statements the laws of astronomy! And if this statement is not a revealed one, and is only a man-made addition in the New Testament, then why do you claim that each and every statement of the Gospels you possess is the revealed word? Why do you not proclaim, clearly and unambiguously, that, apart from the little that

came from Jesus' own mouth, everything else in the Gospels was written by their compilers according to their own way of thinking and in their own wisdom and understanding, and it cannot be considered free of errors. This concept, as I have learnt from the everyday writings of clergymen, is now being expressed publicly. It is now being commonly admitted that the miracles which the Gospels mention as historical facts, are not the revealed word, but have been written by the compilers of the Gospels in view of their own surmise, hearsay, or whatever they learnt from external sources. With this admission, the clergymen have sought to deflect much of the criticism that is levied at the Gospels, and they now admit that about nine-tenth of the Gospels is the word of man and only one-tenth revelation. One of the many losses they have incurred due to this admission is that they have forfeited the miracles of Jesus^{as}, and no longer have any evidence to prove them. Although the Gospel writers have recorded Jesus' miracles as historical facts, his own unsullied account, which is called the 'revealed word', appears not only to be at odds with their account, but presents quite the opposite picture. Jesus^{as}, in his own statements that are known as 'revealed', has often refused to show any miracles, and clearly refused to show miracles to those who demanded them. Even Herod, when he asked Jesus^{as} for a miracle, was not shown any. Many other people also wanted to see his signs and asked him to show them, but he declined and could not do so. So much so, that he prayed to God all night for the sign that he should remain safe from the hands

of the Jews, but even this he was not granted, and his prayer went unheard. Then, after he had been put on the cross, the Jews, in all sincerity, said that they would all believe in him if he could only come down alive from the cross, But even this he could not do. It is clear from these instances that, as far as the revealed text of the Gospels goes, Jesus was not a man of miracles. Any statements, which might lead us to think that Jesus^{as} showed some miracles, are in fact multi-faceted and admit of more than one interpretation. There is no reason whatsoever to take them literally, or to stretch their meaning so far as to associate them with the miracles related by the writers of the Gospels on their own authority. There is not a single statement uttered by Jesus^{as} himself, which manifestly proves the occurrence and existence of those miracles. On the contrary, his own emphatic statements show that not a single miracle was ever manifested by him.⁴⁹

I cannot understand why Christians do not trust Jesus' own 'revealed' words. Why do they rely upon other statements and stretch them more than they deserve, when, according to their own admission, they are not revealed, and have been included in the Gospels as historical narratives, and are altogether unconnected with revelation, and are completely at variance with the revealed statements. Hence,

⁴⁹ The Holy Quran testifies only to the miracles of the Messiah who never laid claim to divinity, for there have been many Messiahs, and there will be many more. Also, the Quranic testimony admits of more than one interpretation, but it certainly does not testify to whatever has been written by the Gospel writers. [Author]

when the revealed and un-revealed statements are completely at odds with one another, the only way to resolve the incompatibility is to consider the un-revealed statements to be unreliable and mere exaggerations by the Gospel writers. The fact that they did exaggerate here and there is quite apparent, as we find in the last verse of John, with which the Holy Gospel ends. It reads:

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

Can exaggeration go any further? Is the world, which contains all the wonders of heaven and earth, unable to accommodate a description of what Jesus did during three or so years of his life! Who will give credence to the statements of people who make such exaggerations!

Hindus have written similar books regarding their Avatars. With cunning and deception, they too have built an edifice of lies. They too were influenced by these fabrications, and from one end of the country to the other, their hearts became filled with Rām and Krishna. Books which are replete with fabrications are like tombs that are made to look bright and shiny from outside, but contain nothing within. How is it possible for people to know the truth about these books, while they were born several hundred years later, and made to believe that these books are so holy and pristine as though they have only just descended from heaven. How can they

know how these books were compiled? Few are the eyes that can cut through the veils, and fathom the truth, and catch the culprit; and countless are the souls that are liable to fall under the spell of falsehood. This is what has caused a whole world to go astray and many more continue to go the same way. These ignorant people have not considered the important question of evidence or lack of evidence, and have chosen not to be cautious of the natural tendency to contrive and scheme, which has been witnessed in mankind from time immemorial, and have thus allowed themselves to be trapped in this satanic snare. Like an evil alchemist who takes a thousand coins from a simpleton and promises to turn them into gold worth a million or two, these cunning people have deprived the ignorant of their true and pure faith and have assured them of false piety and false blessings which have no practical existence, nor any evidence. In the end, they have made their people worse than themselves, in wickedness, deceit, world-love and pursuit of their baser self.

Remember, even a fragment of evidence given by the Holy Quran with regard to the miracles and prophecies shown by the Holy Prophet^{sa}, is a thousand times more substantial than the evidence of a mountain of Gospels regarding the miracles and prophecies of the Messiah^{as}. Why? Because, according to the statements of Christian scholars themselves, the Gospels are only the words of the disciples. What is more, the accounts have not even been witnessed by the disciples first hand, nor do they provide any link of how they learnt of these events, nor even do they claim to

have personally witnessed them. On the other hand, whatever is written in the Holy Quran regarding the miracles of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, is the testimony of the Holy and Truthful God Himself. Even a single verse would have been enough, but—God be praised—the Holy Quran is full of such testimonies. Just think of the difference: there is the testimony of God on the one hand—which admits of no lies—and, on the other, we have uncorroborated tales and testimonies that are replete with exaggerations.

بہ نزدیک دانائے بیدار دل
جوے سیم بہتر ز صد تودہ گل⁵⁰

There is nothing strange about these fabrications; such things have happened before and continue to happen to this day. Christians themselves admit that, in their early period, many people wrote books in which they described the astonishing feats of their elders, and ascribed them to God. In due course, it was even claimed that these books were from God.⁵¹

Now, since it has been the ancient practice of Christians and Jews to indulge in such fabrications, there is no reason why Matthew and the other Gospels should be made an exception

⁵⁰ For the wise and the prudent;

A streamlet of silver is better than a hundred mounds of earth.

[Publishers]

⁵¹ It is difficult to say with any degree of certainty, as to how the unjustified and uncorroborated account of the miracles of Jesus^{as} and his
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of. Much like the accounts of a money-lender, which reveal their hidden secrets through obvious discrepancies and errors, the mischief which the four Gospels ventured to conceal is also revealing itself. It is for this reason that serious misgivings have been born in the minds of discerning people in Europe and America. They would much prefer to

undue eulogy found way into the Gospels. Although the Christians freely admit that the Gospel writers have added these things on their own, I believe that these additions were made gradually. Cunning fabricators, who came later, have had ample opportunity. Whole fabricated books, which found fame as revealed books, were written and circulated by Christians and Jews in the very early days. And by virtue of such forgery, not one, but a number of Gospels gained currency. Christians themselves admit that some Gospels were fabricated after Jesus^{as}, among which is the Gospel of Barnabas, but this is only what the Christians say. I say that since there are serious differences between those Gospels and the four books of the current New Testament—so much so, that the Gospel of Barnabas denies that Jesus^{as} was ever crucified, and is even opposed to the doctrine of the Trinity, and does not recognize the divinity and sonship of Jesus^{as}, and, in categorical terms, gives the gladdening of the coming of the Holy Prophet^{sa}—why should we accept the Christians' unsubstantiated claim that only the Gospels to which they have given currency are true, and all those opposed to them are false. Moreover, when forgery has been so widespread among the Christians that some masters of the art wrote complete books on their own and spread them among the people, and did not let any doubt fall upon their integrity, why then should it have been difficult for them to alter and tamper with any other book? Again, when it has been admitted that these Gospels were not written in the time of Jesus^{as}, and that the four Gospels came into existence some sixty or seventy years—more or less, in view of the diverse narratives—after Jesus^{as} death, this casts even greater doubt upon them, for, we cannot say with any degree of certainty that the disciples lived that long, or their faculties had remained

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remain atheists, than to believe in the god presented by the Gospels, who is inconsistent, imperfect and made of flesh and bone. A learned American friend of mine has informed me through various letters that there is hardly an intellectual in those countries who considers the Christian religion to be unflawed, and who would not be willing to accept Islam. And though the Christians have brought out interpolated and blemished translations of the Holy Quran in Europe and America, the light which is inherent in the Holy Quran is still casting its influence on pure hearts. There is great enthusiasm among the people of Europe and America, and they have been thrown into confusion by the false doctrines of the New Testament. Some of them have even begun to say that there was no actual person called the Messiah or Jesus, and that he only stands for the Sun, while the twelve disciples stand for the twelve Constellations.

Again, the fact which exposes the reality of the Christian faith more than anything else, is that none of the signs of a true believer, mentioned by Jesus^{as}, are to be found amongst its

intact till that time. Cutting a long story short, let me remind the readers that Christians have never provided any conclusive argument to prove that the four Gospels, which they give currency to, are free from any fabrication or interpolation, while the other twelve are fake. On the contrary, they themselves admit that the four Gospels are not the pure word of God. And even if they had not made such an admission, there would still be no doubt that the Gospels have been tampered with. The onus of proof lies with them, and to this day they have not been able to provide proof of the authenticity of the four Gospels as against the others.

[Author]

people. Jesus^{as} said: If you follow me you will receive every blessing and acceptance just like me, and you too will be granted miracles and signs of acceptance, and the sign of your true faith will be that you will have the power to show miracles and signs of every kind. Whatever you wish will be done for you, and nothing will be impossible for you.

But of these blessings, Christians possess nothing. They know nothing of the One God, Who hears the prayers of His favoured servants, and answers them instantaneously with His mercy and affection, and does for them many wonderful things. But true Muslims—who are heir to the righteous ones who passed before them—do recognize this God and witness the signs of His mercy. They stand as distinct from their opponents, as the Sun is distinct from darkness. I have said time and again that this claim is not without foundation. A true religion can be distinguished from a false one by a heavenly distinction as well as an earthly distinction. The earthly distinction is the distinction that is made through human reason, human conscience and the laws of nature. When Christianity and Islam are judged by this standard, it becomes clear that Islam is the religion whose principles are free from all artificiality or affectation. Its injunctions are neither unnatural nor artificial, and there is nothing in them that one has to be forced into accepting, as God Himself has said time and again. The Holy Quran only reminds us of the true philosophy of nature and its verities, unlocks for us its hidden secrets, and does not present anything that is opposed to nature; it rather reveals to us its subtleties and profundities.

On the other hand, the Christian teaching, which is attributed to the Gospels, presents an entirely new and strange 'God', on whose suicide depends man's salvation from sin and chastisement, and on whose suffering depends his happiness, and on whose disgrace and humiliation depends his honour. It is further said that he is such a strange 'God' that he lived a part of his life free from a body and its imperfections, while in the second part, (owing to some unknown misfortune), he became forever confined to the fetters of embodiment and its limitations. Flesh, bone, etc., became essential for his soul, and, because of this incarnation which is to stay with him for all times to come, he had to undergo all kinds of afflictions, under whose unbearable burden he finally died. He came back to life, but was again captured by the same body, which shall keep him forever, and he will never be able to free himself from it.

Can a true nature accept this doctrine? Can a pure conscience testify to it? Can even a part of the law of nature justify that God—Who is perfect and free from all weaknesses and shortcomings—should fall into such a calamity and misfortune, that He has to die for the salvation of His creatures whenever He creates a new universe; and that He cannot express His attribute of beneficence, nor can He do any good for His creation in this world or in the hereafter without committing suicide!

If it is indeed necessary for God to die in order to bestow mercy on His creatures, it necessitates that He must always face the calamity of death, and He must have tasted count-

less deaths before. It also necessitates that, like the Parmeshwar of the Hindus, His attributes must have been suspended. Just think! Can God be so humble and weak that He should be unable to do any good for His creation without first committing suicide? Can such weakness and helplessness befit the Almighty God? What was the result of the death of the Christian god? Nothing. Their god died, but Satan and his workshop remained unaffected. The same Satan and his friends are present today as they were before. The same crimes—theft, robbery, adultery, murder, fraud, drinking,⁵² gambling, world-worship, infidelity, unbelief, polytheism, atheism, and countless other sins—which had existed before the crucifixion of the Messiah, exist to this day with the same, nay, greater intensity.

⁵² According to recent newspaper reports, the British Empire spends 130,060,000 pounds in the production and consumption of alcohol. One correspondent, M.A., writes that alcohol is responsible for hundreds of suicides in London alone. Among the 3,000,000 inhabitants of the city, there are hardly ten thousand who are not habitual drinkers. Otherwise, all men and women indulge freely in drinking and toasting. There is no party or social gathering in which brandy, sherry and red wine are not the first to be served. Wine is considered the main feature of every occasion. Amazingly enough, prominent clergymen of London, though they call themselves virtuous, are themselves first-rate drinkers. [The correspondent writes that] in all such gatherings where I happened to go, with the introduction of my friend Mr. Nichollette, I invariably met some young reverends and priests as well. Drinking is not considered a vice, and drinking in public is so common that, while going around London, I saw a number of drunk people staggering along with a bottle of wine in their hands. Similarly, women were also seen walking
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For instance, at the time when the god of the Christians was still alive, they were in a much better state, but as soon as he was overtaken by death—which is known as the Atonement—Satan took control of them in an amazing manner, and countless doors of sin, transgression and egotism were opened for them. The Christians themselves acknowledge this fact. Reverend Pfander, author of *Mizānul Haq*, says

unsteadily with a bottle of beer. I saw many decent and respectable people lying drunk in the drains. Thanks to alcoholism, so many suicides take place in London every year that they have become a virtual epidemic. (*Rahbar-e-Hind*, Lahore, 1st February, 1883).

Another gentleman has similarly mentioned that adultery is so common in London that over seventy thousand illegitimate children are born in that city every year. He has written such things about the immorality of those people, that I find it impossible to go into their details.

Some others have written that, in Europe, out of ten cultured and educated people, nine will be found to be atheists. They have totally freed themselves of religious restrictions, and do not believe in God, nor consider themselves accountable to Him. Day by day, atheism continues to spread in Europe like a disease. And the British Government, because of its liberal stand, does not feel at all averse to its spread, so much so, that some confirmed atheists have found seats in the Parliament, and no one seems to care.

In modern European civilization, it is not only considered lawful for strangers to kiss young women, but is even seen as something commendable. No one can say with certainty if there is a single woman in England who, in her very youth, has not been kissed by some young man who is unrelated to her. Materialism has reached such proportions that Alexander Russell Webb has written in one of his letters (to me) that, in his view, there is not one among the civilized and educated people of that country who cares for the hereafter, and everyone of them is totally given to material-worship. It becomes clear from all these statements that all the blessings of Jesus' Atonement, which Christian

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that it was on account of the abundance of sin, inner immorality, and the general spreading of wickedness and debauchery among the Christians, that Muhammad^{sa} was sent to punish them. It becomes evident from this discourse that the flood of sin and transgression overtook the Christians after the Messiah's crucifixion. This also shows that the purpose of the Messiah's death was not to slow down the surge of sin. For instance, if people had indulged in a lot of drinking and adultery before his death, or had been confirmed world-worshippers, all such sins should have vanished after his death. [But this is not what happened], for it requires no evidence to realize that all the drinking, world-worship and adultery rampant these days, particularly in the countries of Europe, was also rampant before the death of the Messiah. In fact, no one can prove that

clergymen preach to the simple and naïve people of India, are no more than a fabrication. The truth is that, with the acceptance of Atonement, the Christian temperament has undergone a change: drinking has become more widespread, adultery and lustful approaches have come to be considered lawful, and gambling has increased by leaps and bounds. Things such as worshipping God with a pure heart and turning wholly towards Him, have been done away with.

True, the people of Europe are very law-abiding and crimes against society, such as theft, murder, rape, etc., which are prohibited under the laws of the Royal Government for the common good of the country, have been checked; but this is not because of their belief in Atonement, it is only due to their fear of the law and because of social pressures. Without these, the Christians would have crossed all bounds. Nor is this a perfect check, for crimes are committed in Europe just as in any other place. [Author]

even a thousandth part of the sinfulness and debauchery had existed then. Besides, when we study the Gospels, it becomes quite clear that Jesus^{as} had never wanted to be apprehended and beaten and to be put on the cross by the Jews. For if this was his desire, then why would he have cried all night and prayed for the calamity to be averted, and why did he keep crying and praying: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me." The fact is that the Messiah was apprehended unawares and against his will, and to his last breath he kept crying and praying, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" That is to say, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"⁵³

This shows that the Messiah wanted to live and stay in this world for some more time, and his soul was in extreme anguish that his life may be spared. But he had to undertake this journey against his will. We also need to see what the Messiah achieved by dying for his people in the manner suggested by the Christians, and how did this benefit his people? Had he lived, he would have brought about a great transformation among them, and would have removed their weaknesses. But what did his untimely death achieve? It only brought about every kind of mischief, and caused such corruption that led a whole world to ruin. No doubt, brave people do lay down their lives for the good of their people, and put themselves in danger to save them, but not in the absurd and foolish manner that is ascribed to the Messiah.

⁵³ Matthew 27:46 [Publishers]

Anyone who prudently lays down his life, or puts it in danger for the sake of his people always chooses the best and most advantageous of all the available options. Even if it causes suffering to him or costs him his life, it still ensures that his people will be saved from the calamity. But one who commits suicide by hanging himself, or swallowing poison, or jumping into a well, and thinks that his suicide will do some good for his people, can only be a fool. No wise or virtuous person can do such a thing. Such a death is, in fact, completely unlawful, and only a very stupid or ignorant person ever desires it. I say truly that the death of a perfect man, who possesses will and determination, can never be good for his people, it is rather a great tragedy and an occasion to lament—except in special situations whereby it is necessary for a man to court death in order to save many other lives. And if a person, who is a source of great benefit for God’s creatures, decides to commit suicide, he will be guilty of a great sin against God, and will be held more accountable than other such sinners. Perfect men, therefore, are under obligation to pray to God for a long life, so that they are able to do for mankind all the great things that they are motivated to do. The death of a mischievous person, on the other hand, is better for himself as well as for mankind, because with his death the account of his mischief stops swelling, and mankind does not have to suffer his daily torments anymore. If it is asked, which of the Prophets put himself in the greatest danger in order to manifest the Glory of God, and who among them was most willing to sacrifice himself for his people at times of genuine need and through reasonable

means—was it Jesus^{as} or some other Prophet, or was it our Chief and Master Muhammad^{sa}—I regret to say that it is not possible for me, in this short article, to say how passionately I wish to present the luminous arguments, manifest signs, and historical testimonies with which I am eager to answer this question. But, if life permits, I will write a separate book on this subject. Now let me just briefly give the glad-tiding that the Perfect Man, who was ever ready to sacrifice himself for his people and for all mankind, is none other than our Holy Prophet^{sa}.

سَيِّدُنَا وَ مَوْلَانَا وَ وَحِيدُنَا وَ فَرِيدُنَا أَحْمَدُ مُجْتَبَى مُحَمَّدٌ مُصْطَفَى
الرَّسُولِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الْعَرَبِيِّ الْقُرَشِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ⁵⁴

I have more or less explained the earthly difference between a true religion and a false one. In other words, I have written some of the points that can be decided through the use of reason and conscience. But there is another distinction disclosed to us by heaven. It is also a very important distinction, and it is so important that it is not possible to distinguish truth from falsehood without it. The distinction is that the true follower of a true religion enjoys a special relationship with God, becomes a reflection of the Prophet he follows, and serves as a mirror for the latter's spiritual powers and blessings. Just as a grandson is also called son

⁵⁴ Our Chief and Master, our most distinguished and peerless one, Ahmad, the elect, Muhammad, the Chosen one, the Unlettered Arab and Quraishite Prophet and Messenger, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. [Publishers]

because of the son's intermediary link, similarly, the person who is nourished under the benign influence of a Prophet and in his submission, is treated with the same favours and blessings that are bestowed on the Prophet himself. Just as signs are granted to a Prophet, so are his true followers given special signs to increase their Divine knowledge. Such people serve as living signs for the truth of the religion in whose support they have appeared. God supports them from heaven, hears most of their prayers, and informs them of their acceptance. They do have their share of calamities, but these are not meant to destroy them; they are only meant to show signs of special Divine power in their support. They receive honour after they have been disgraced, and are given life after they are dead, so that the extraordinary works of God are manifested in them.

A subtle point that needs to be remembered in this context is that prayers are accepted in two ways: As a trial, or as a favour. Even the prayers of sinful, disobedient and unbelieving people are at times accepted in order to try them; but this does not signify true acceptance, it is, in fact, a kind of test or trial. But for a prayer to be accepted as a favour, the person who prays must be among the chosen ones of God, and should manifest all the blessings and signs that accompany such people. For, God never truly accepts the prayers of disobedient people, He only hears the prayers of those who are righteous in His eyes and follow His commandments. Therefore, the distinction between the acceptance of prayer as a trial, and its acceptance as a fa-

avour, is that the former does not require a person to be righteous and a friend of God, nor does it necessitate that God, having accepted the prayer, should grant tidings of its acceptance through His specific communication, nor do these prayers relate to such lofty matters that their acceptance should be regarded as wonderful or extraordinary. On the other hand, prayers which are accepted as a favour, possess the following visible signs:

1. The one who prays is God-fearing, righteous and perfect.
2. He is informed of the acceptance of his prayers through Divine word.
3. Most of the prayers that are accepted are of a very high order and relate to difficult and complicated matters, and their acceptance, when it comes, strikes everyone as something beyond the power of man, and a manifestation of extraordinary Divine power which He displays only for His chosen ones.
4. Whereas the acceptance of prayer by way of trial is a rare phenomenon, the acceptance of prayer as a favour is quite a frequent one. At times, a person whose prayers are heard by way of favour, is engrossed by such grave difficulties that no one in his place could have escaped them except by committing suicide. This is exactly what happens: people who worship the world, and have forsaken God, are at times afflicted by such terrible woes and diseases and insoluble problems, that their own lack of faith makes them despair of God, and they end up taking some

poison, jumping into a well, or shooting themselves. But, at such critical moments, God helps the favoured ones in a most wonderful and extraordinary manner. Divine grace comes to their rescue in such an amazing way that an intimate friend instinctively testifies that this man enjoys Divine support.

5. The one whose prayer is heard as a favour is the focus of Divine blessings, and God takes care of all his affairs. The light of Divine love, the abandoned loftiness peculiar to the accepted ones, and signs of spiritual ecstasy and bounty are all evident on his face, as Allah says:

تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ⁵⁵

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ الَّذِينَ
 آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
 وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۗ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Thou wilt find in their faces the freshness of bliss.—Al-Taṭṭif, 83:25 [Publishers]

⁵⁶ Behold! the friends of Allah shall certainly have no fear, nor shall they grieve—those who believed and acted ever righteously—for them are glad-tidings in the present life and *also* in the Hereafter—there is no changing the words of Allah; that indeed is the supreme triumph.—Yūnus, 10:63-65 [Publishers]

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ نَحْنُ أَوْلِيُّكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدَّعُونَ ⁵⁷

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۗ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۗ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ^{58*}

⁵⁷As for those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah', and then remain steadfast, the angels descend on them, *saying*: 'Fear ye not, nor grieve; and rejoice in the Garden that you were promised. 'We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter. Therein you will have all that your souls will desire, and therein you will have all that you will ask for.—Ĥā Mīm al-Sajdah, 41: 31-32 [Publishers]

⁵⁸ And when My servants ask thee about Me, *say*: 'I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way.—Al-Baqarah, 2:187 [Publishers]

* Do understand that the Friends of God, who love Him and are loved by Him, are distinguished by the following signs. They have no fear of what they will eat or what they will drink or how they will get rid of certain calamities, because they keep receiving assurances from Him. They grieve not over the past, for they are blessed with patience. The second sign is that they are true believers, which means that they are perfect in their faith; and they are God-fearing, which means that they distance themselves from everything that is against their faith and against true submission. Their third sign is that they keep receiving glad-tidings through Divine converse and true dreams. This is a promise which God has made to them in this life, as well as in the hereafter, and this promise will never be withdrawn. This is the friendship and distinction that they have been blessed with, i.e., the chosen servants of God, who are His friends, certainly receive their share of Divine converse and true dreams, and deserve to be honoured with Divine communication
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Let it be known that the status of being loved, accepted and befriended by God—some signs of which I have briefly mentioned—can never be achieved without following the Holy Prophet^{sa}. If a Christian or an Ārya or a Jew wants to display the signs and blessings of acceptance, as against a true follower of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, let him know that he can

and Divine address. And this indeed is the very outstanding sign of their friendship. (This exactly is the law of God's sovereignty) that those who turn away from sundry gods and take Him as their Lord, and declare that He alone is their Master, (and look to no other being for sustenance), and remain steadfast at the time of every trial, (no matter how strong the earthquakes, or how severe the storms, or how impenetrable the darkness, they are not the least shaken or unnerved, and remain perfectly steadfast); it is they upon whom angels come down with the message—they receive glad-tidings through revelations and true visions—that God is their Friend, their Protector and their Guardian, both in this world and in the hereafter, and that in the hereafter they will get whatever their hearts desire. In other words, even if they have unpleasant things to endure in this world, it should not worry them, for in the hereafter all their worries will come to an end, and all their desires will be satisfied. One may ask, how can all one's desires be fulfilled in the hereafter? I say, this is essential for salvation, and this is what salvation stands for. Salvation would have no meaning if one were to continue to be haunted by unfulfilled desires. There can be no salvation which is accompanied by some sort of chastisement. It is, therefore, important that *Jannah*, or Paradise, or *Mukṭī Khāna*, or *Surg*, whatever you may call it, is a place where one receives the greatest fortune, and it must be a place which provides man with unadulterated happiness, he must be free from any visible or hidden sorrow, nor should the torment of failure come back to haunt him there. Yes, it is true that in heaven there will be nothing unworthy and nothing unseemly, but pious hearts will have no desire for such things either. On the contrary, these pure and holy hearts, which have been freed from evil thoughts, will entertain only

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never do it. A very clear method of putting these things to the test is that a Christian, or anyone else for that matter, should enter a contest with a righteous Muslim who truly follows the Holy Prophet^{sa}, and should declare: 'Whatever signs appear from heaven for your sake, or whatever secrets of the unseen are revealed to you, or whatever support you are granted by way of acceptance of prayers, or whatever Divine wonders are manifested for your honour and glory, or whatever exceptional rewards are promised to you by way

pure desires, in keeping with the purity of human nature and the pristine will of the Creator. This will be, so that man may fully attain his inner and outer, physical and spiritual, perfection, and may come to be called 'the perfect man' by utilizing all his faculties. Moreover, admitting one into Paradise is not for the purpose of obliterating all human imprints, as is thought by our Christian and Ārya opponents. The object, instead, is that all the imprints of human nature should shine physically and spiritually in a consummate manner, and all things which are essential for man's physical and spiritual creation should shine forth perfectly, after all his intemperance has been removed. And then God says: When My favourite people (who are the chosen ones) seek Me and ask where I am, let them know that I am very near. I hear the prayers of My sincere servant as soon as he cries to Me (with his heart or tongue). I hear him at once (this clearly shows that I am near). But they should also make themselves deserving of My response to their call. Let them remember that man turns into an obstacle for himself when he forsakes his pristine state and turns away from Him. Then God also turns away from him. Therefore, they are required to have firm faith in Me (for prayer is more readily heard by virtue of firmness of faith). If they do so, they will achieve righteousness, which means that God shall always be with them and Divine favours and guidance shall never abandon them. Acceptance of prayers, therefore, is a mighty sign of the Friends of God. *Do ponder over this!* [Author]

of prophecy, or whatever warnings are conveyed to you regarding your antagonists who cause you pain, in respect of all these, I, too, shall display whatever you display.'

Let me tell you that it is beyond the power of any antagonist to enter such a contest, and no one will ever come forward for such a challenge, for their own hearts testify to their falsehood. They have nothing to do with the true God, Who helps the righteous and befriends the truthful, as I have already explained to some extent.

وَهَذَا الْخَيْرُ كَلَامِنَا وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ أَوْلَىٰ وَ الْخَيْرَ وَ ظَاهِرًا
وَ بَاطِنًا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا نِعْمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَ نِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ*

*And our last words are: 'All praise belongs to Allah, from the first to the last, from the evident to the hidden; He is our Friend; the Best of Friends and the Best of Guardians.' [Publishers]

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