

ADMITTED TRUTHS IN MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE:
A STUDY OF WILLIAM MUIR, SAYYID AHMAD KHAN AND WILLIAM GOLDSACK
IN 19TH CENTURY INDIA

David Otis Coffey

Thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
to the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

The University of Edinburgh

August, 2002



This Thesis is Dedicated

in loving memory of

Randi B. Coffey

1944-1999

And with loving appreciation of

Mary B. Coffey

1908-

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me
and does not represent the work of any other person.

David O. Coffey

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish first to give thanks for the memory of my wife Randi. Her faithfulness to the Lord, love for me, dedication to her Bengali translation of the *New Concise Bible Dictionary*, and cheerfulness in the midst of illness, provide me with an unforgettable example. Also, I am reminded of God's care by the loving prayers, letters, and financial assistance of my mother, Mary Coffey. She has contributed greatly to bringing this thesis to completion. I am also grateful for the memory of my father Otis Coffey. In this effort, as throughout my career, I have received the wise advice of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Barnes. I am also very grateful to my employer, SIM, for enabling me financially to complete my studies.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Carole Hillenbrand. To say that she went beyond her duties in supervising my thesis would be to understate the matter. Professor Hillenbrand's scholarship and rigorous approach to Islamic Studies remain an inspiration to me. Over many years she patiently read and carefully commented on the direction and content of the thesis. I am privileged that my thesis reflects her academic insights as a mentor and supervisor; I am equally grateful that she is also a kind and caring friend.

I am also deeply indebted to Dr. Horton Harris, historian, author and friend, who has repeatedly read and given invaluable suggestions for improving the thesis. His incisive editing of this very long manuscript has made it a far more readable work. Dr. Martin Whittingham, my friend and able colleague, has done a painstaking and masterful job of proofreading.

I am greatly appreciative of many other friends who have helped me during my research. Professor Yasir Suleiman has been of great encouragement to me. Mrs. Frances Abercromby and others at the University of Edinburgh Library have greatly assisted my research. Miss Roselyn Gooden and Dr. Kathleen Temple have provided works on and by William Goldsack from private collections.

In my amassing and assessing of historical detail, Dr. Ida Glaser reminded me of the reason for bringing this research to light: "The ancient writers are still a possible source of knowledge - [one] should anticipate that what they said can still modify the readers' thoughts and behaviour."¹

Soleo Deo Gloria, al-Ḥamdu-li'llāh.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1942), pp. 139, 140.

TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION

CONSONANTS

ب	b	ز	z	ف	f
ت	t	س	s	ق	q
ث	th	ش	sh	ك	k
ج	j	ص	ṣ	ل	l
ح	ḥ	ض	ḍ	م	m
خ	kh	ط	ṭ	ن	n
د	d	ظ	ẓ	ه	h
ذ	dh	ع	‘	و	w
ر	r	غ	gh	ي	y

VOWELS

Short: a´, i , u´

Long: ā , ī , ū and u´

DIPHTHONGS

وَ aw

يَ ay

SPECIAL CASE LETTERS

ء Transliterated as ‘ when in the middle or at the end of a word, but omitted when at the beginning of a word.

ة Transliterated as t.

THE DEFINITE ARTICLE, ال

في ال Transliterated as fi‘l

وال Transliterated as wa‘l

بن ال Transliterated as Banū‘l

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

Common place names which have accepted English spellings are not transliterated (so: Medina, rather than al-Madīnah). Less common place-names have been transliterated.

Technical and religious terms such *astafsīr* have been left in transliteration. Identification of the term in English is provided in the main text and explanatory comments for the general reader, when necessary or helpful, are given in the footnotes.

All personal names are given in transliteration for example al-Shahrastānī. Personal names beginning with al- are not capitalized except at the beginning of a sentence.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS

ABMS	Australian Baptist Missionary Society
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
CLS	Christian Literature Society
CMI	<i>Church Missionary Intelligencer</i>
CMS	Church Missionary Society
LMS	London Missionary Society
RAS	Royal Asiatic Society
RTS	Religious Truth Society
SPCK	Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge
USPG	United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS AND JOURNALS CITED

<i>Addresses</i>	<i>Addresses made in the North-West Provinces.</i>
<i>Al-Jawāb</i>	<i>Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ .</i>
<i>Al-Kindy</i>	<i>The Apology of Al-Kindy, trans. Muir.</i>
<i>Caliphate</i>	<i>Annals of the Early Caliphate: its rise, decline and fall.</i>
<i>Christianity and Government</i>	<i>Christianity and the Government of India.</i>
<i>Controversial Tracts</i>	<i>Martyn's Controversial Tracts on Christianity and Mohammedanism.</i>
<i>Controversy</i>	<i>Muir, The Mohammedan Controversy.</i>
<i>CSHI</i>	<i>The Cambridge Shorter History of India</i>
<i>CEMENA</i>	<i>The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the Middle East and North Africa.</i>
<i>CHI</i>	<i>The Cambridge History of Islam</i>
<i>Coran</i>	<i>Muir, The Coran: Its Composition and Teaching; and the testimony it bears to the Holy Scriptures.</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>Documentary Appendix of translated articles of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān by Troll in Reinterpretation.</i>
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>EI-1, EI-2</i>	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st ed.(1913-42); 2nd ed. (1960 continuing).</i>
<i>Encounters</i>	<i>Gaudeul, Jean-Marie, Encounters and Clashes, Islam and Christianity in History. 2 vols.</i>
<i>Goldsack Story</i>	<i>Whitney, Jeanne, The Goldsack Story From Kent to South Australia, Victoria: 1990.</i>
<i>Indian Mussalmans</i>	<i>Hunter, W.W. The Indian Mussalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?</i>
<i>Al-itqān</i>	<i>Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, al-itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān.</i>
<i>Hughes' Dictionary</i>	<i>T.P. Hughes, A Dictionary of Islam.</i>
<i>Ijāz</i>	<i>Kairānawī, Raḥmat Allāh, Ijāz-i 'Isawī al-mulaqqab biḥ miṣqalah-i tahrīf.</i>

<i>Izhār</i>	Kairānawī, Rahmat Allah, <i>Izhār al-Ḥaqq</i> (<i>Manifestation of the Truth</i>) .
<i>Theology</i>	Sweetman, J.W., <i>Islamic and Christian Theology</i> .
<i>Islam and Christianity</i>	Wherry, E.M. <i>Islam and Christianity in India and the Far East</i> .
<i>Islam and Missions</i>	Wherry, E.M. & Zwemer, S.M. & Mylrea, C.G. <i>Islam and Missions: Being papers read January 23-28, 1911</i> .
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> .
<i>KA</i>	Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, <i>Al-Khuṭubāt al-Aḥmadīyah fī'l-'Arab wa 'l-sīrah al-Muḥammadiyah</i> .
<i>Kitāb niḥāyat</i>	Al-Shahrastāni, <i>Kitāb niḥāyat al-iqdām fī 'ilm al-kalām</i> . Ed. and trans. Alfred Guillaume.
<i>Life of SAK</i>	Graham, G.F.I., <i>The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan</i> .
<i>Life</i>	Muir, W. <i>The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira</i> .
<i>Life and teachings</i>	'Alī, Syed Amir, <i>The Life and Teachings of Moḥammed</i> .
<i>Minār</i>	Muir, William, trans. <i>Minār ul Haqq, The Beacon of Truth: or Testimony of the coran to the Truth of the Christian Religion</i> .
<i>Mishkāt, Selections,</i>	Goldsack, William, tr./ed. <i>Selections from Muhammadan Traditions: Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh</i> .
<i>MSSL</i>	Makātib-i Sir Sayyid, ed. Mushtāq Ḥusain.
<i>MSSA</i>	Makātib-i Sir Sayyid, ed. Mushtāq Ḥusain, Aligar: Bashir Ahmad Malik, 1960.
<i>Muslims and Missionaries</i>	Powell, Avril Ann, <i>Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India</i> .
<i>Objections</i>	Tisdall, W. St. Clair, <i>A Manual of the Leading Muḥammadan Objections to Christianity</i> .
<i>PG</i>	Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeco-Latina</i>
<i>PL</i>	Migne, <i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PMak</i>	<i>Maktūbāt-i Sir Sayyid</i> , ed. M. Isma'īl Pānīpatī.
<i>P Maq</i>	<i>Maqālāt-i Sir Sayyid</i> , ed. M. Isma'īl Pānīpatī.

<i>PKSS</i>	<i>Khuṭubāt i Sir Sayyid</i> , 2 vols., ed. M. Isma'īl Pānīpāī.
<i>Qur'ānic Christians</i>	McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. <i>Qur'ānic Christians, An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis</i> .
<i>Records</i>	Muir, W. <i>Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-West Provinces of India during the Mutiny of 1857</i> .
<i>Reforms</i>	Baljon, J.M.S. Jr., <i>The Reforms and Religious ideas of Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān</i> .
<i>Reinterpretation</i>	Troll, Christian W., <i>Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology</i> .
<i>Response</i>	Michel, T.F., <i>A Muslim theologian's Response to Christianity</i> .
<i>SEI</i>	<i>The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> .
<i>Seventh Discourse</i>	Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad, <i>The Seventh Discourse of the Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible</i> .
<i>The Student</i>	<i>The Student, Edinburgh University Magazine</i> , February, 1903.
TA (I)	Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad <i>Tahdhīb al-aklāq</i> , first period: December 1870-September 1876.
TA (II)	Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad, <i>Tahdhīb al-aklāq</i> , second period: April 1879-July 1881.
TA (III)	Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad, <i>Tahdhīb al-aklāq</i> , third period: April 1894-July 1897.
<i>TFA</i>	Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad, <i>Tusānīf-i-Ahmadīyah</i> .
<i>Timothy's Apology</i>	Mingana, A, "Timothy's Apology for Christianity".
<i>TK</i>	Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad, <i>Tabyīn al-kalām fī tafsīr al-taurāt wa'i-'injīl 'alā millat al-Islām</i> .
<i>TQ</i>	Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad <i>Tafsīr al-Qur'ān</i> .
<i>TUT</i>	Khān, Sayyid Aḥmad, <i>Tahrīr fī usūl al-tafsīr</i> .
<i>Victorian Images</i>	Bennett, Clinton, <i>Victorian Images of Islam</i> .
<i>Vital Forces</i>	Zwemer, S.M., ed. <i>The Vital Forces of Christianity and Islam</i> .

ABSTRACT

Muslim-Christian dialogue is based on two different *sources* of authority - the Qur'ān and the Bible. Muslims and Christians have often entertained one of two *objectives* in dialogue, the first being to prove one's position superior while the second is to gain an adherent to one's position. This thesis recognizes two *methods* and argues that logical dialectic tends to seek the first objective, while admitted truths opens up the possibility of the second. This thesis does this by examining the basis for and the use of admitted truths in the writings of three authors during the 19th century in India.

Chapter I presents an overview of the principal Muslim-Christian dialogues during the 8th-11th centuries which influenced the 19th century dialogues.

Chapter II provides an insight into the cultural context of 19th century India in which both Muslims and Christians strove to set forth their respective views in an alien culture.

Chapter III gives a summary of the lives of William Muir, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and William Goldsack, who were at the forefront of employing admitted truths in India.

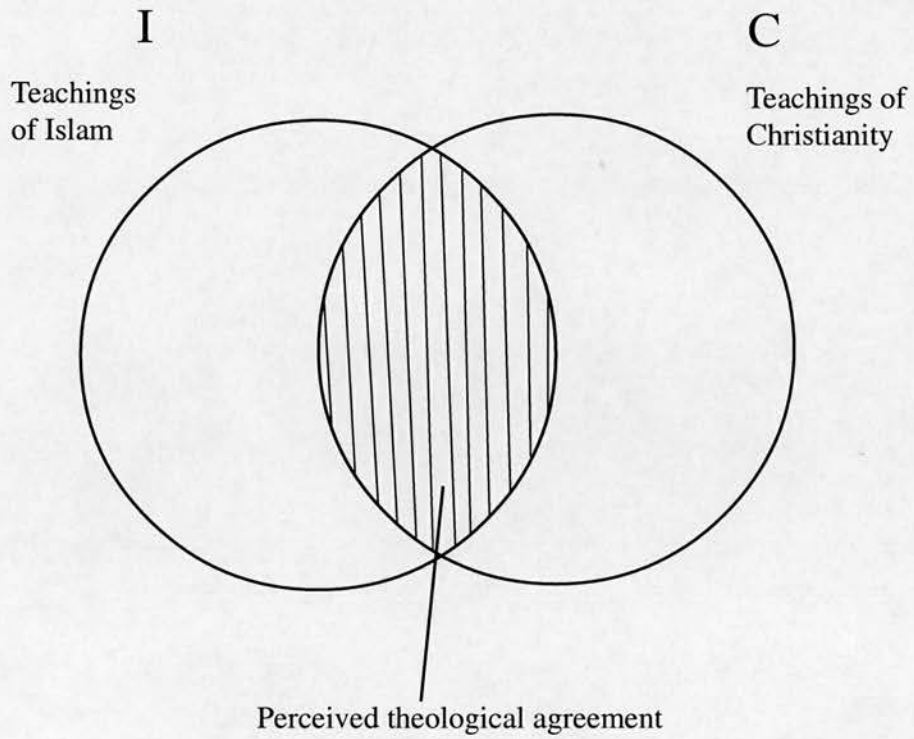
Chapters IV, V, and VI describe how these three authors applied historical analysis to the Qur'ān (IV), the Sunna (V), and the biographies of Muḥammad (VI), and hence demonstrate the basis for their use of these Islamic sources in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

Chapters VII, VIII, and IX show how these three authors use the Islamic sources which admit aspects of Christian truth. Foremost among these truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible are: the trustworthiness of the Biblical Scriptures (VII); the unique place of Jesus (VIII); and the nature and activity of God (IX).

Chapter X (epilogue) concludes that the method of using admitted truths is equally, if not more faithful than logical dialectic to the sources of Islam and Christianity and more sympathetic to the cultural expression of these two faiths. It is therefore more effective in a dialogue in which one has as the objective of gaining an adherent to one's own position.

DIAGRAM A

A comparison of Muslim and Christian theological concepts as used in the 8th-11th centuries



COMMENTARY:

Theological concepts held in common between Islam and Christianity are represented by the shaded area where the circles intersect.

Theological concepts demonstrating the differences between Islam and Christianity are represented by the area where the circles do not intersect.

Diagram A pertains to Chapter One.

INTRODUCTION

1.0 EXAMINING DIALOGUE

1.1 THE USE OF SOURCES TO EXAMINE DIALOGUE

This thesis examines the writings of Muir, Khan and Goldsack in the context of examples taken from the wider history of Muslim-Christian dialogue in the 8th-11th centuries. The use of the original writings of these three authors needs to be described briefly. As they wrote in India during the late 19th and early 20th century, all of their writings are available. Furthermore, one can be reasonably sure of the positions which they held during the different periods of their writing careers. Obtaining an understanding of the theological positions which Muir and Goldsack espoused in their writings is not difficult as their works are preserved in English. This is not the case with many of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's writings. His writings are, for the most part, written in Urdu with the exception of a few very important works such as the first two volumes of the *Tabyīn al-kalām* (*Mohammedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*), 1862, 1865)¹ which appears as a bi-lingual work in Urdu and English. The third volume of the *Tabyīn al-kalām* is to be found in *Tusānīf-i-Ahmadīyah*, I, II (1887) and is in Urdu only. The present author read all of Khān's works which appear in English and consulted secondary sources for those which appear in Urdu. For example, the present author cites from the first two volumes of *Tabyīn al-kalām* in the original, whereas citations from the third volume, like all of Khan's other works existing in Urdu, are from secondary sources.²

¹ *Tabyīn al-kalām fī tafsīr al-taurāt wa'i-'injīl 'alā millat al-Islām, The Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*, vols. i, Ghazipore: Private Press of the author, 1862; vol. ii, ibid, 1865. Also appearing in English were Khān's works: *A Series of Essays on the Life of Mohammed*, vol I. London: Trubner, 1869 and 1870 and *An Account of the Loyal Muhammadans of India*, 3 parts, Meerut: 1860-61). All of these works were written to influence the Western reader.

² See especially Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978. G.F.I. Graham, *The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1885, London: Hodder Stoughton, 1909, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974. J.M.S. Baljon, *The Reforms and Religious ideas of Sir Sayyid*

One facet of the use of secondary sources is important to an understanding of the thesis. Apart from the introductory sections taken from the 8th-11th centuries, an attempt has been made to describe Islam and Muslim-Christian dialogue from the vantage point of Muir, Khān and Goldsack, authors who lived in India during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The value of secondary evidence about these three authors and about their times depends upon the degree to which the facts were noticed by their contemporaries at the time of their occurrence. If attention to these facts was not especially given by their contemporaries, it is unrealistic to expect a full and careful report at a later date. Indeed, after the lapse of some years, the most that could be looked for from such a later witness, would be the bare general outline of important facts. Therefore, wherever possible, the present writer has sought to obtain information from secondary sources *contemporary with the writing and times of Muir, Khān and Goldsack*. In this way the cultural milieu in which the writers lived is most faithfully re-created and their writings most contextually understood.

1.2 THE MEANS OF EXAMINING DIALOGUE

The present author has chosen to use an historical analysis of influential case studies of Muslim-Christian dialogues during two formative periods in the history of Muslim-Christian dialogue. The historical method, admittedly, has several limitations, one being the fact that history is replete with examples of Muslim-Christian dialogues which employ similar methods with differing results. Nevertheless, even here one can observe trends in the results. Furthermore, when the parameters of the dialogues under consideration are carefully defined, historical analysis has the advantage of yielding factual rather than speculative information

Aḥmad Khān (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1949). Cf. Daud Rahbar, "Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's Principles of Exegesis. Translated from his *Tahrīr fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*." *MW* 46 (April 1965), pp. 324-35. Rpt. in Aziz Aḥmad and G.E. von Grunebaum (ed.), *Muslim Self-Statement in India and Pakistan, 1857-1968* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1970), pp. 25-42; C.W. Troll, "Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, 1817-98, and his Theological Critics: the Accusations of ali Bakhsh Khan and Sir Sayyid's Rejoinder," *IC* 51 (October 1977), pp. 261-72 and *IC* 52 (January 1978).

about the method under consideration. To minimize the problems of drawing conclusions based on a small number of dialogues an attempt has been made to choose dialogues which are comparable. Firstly, an attempt has been made to choose representative dialogues which have had a far-reaching impact on a discussion of the same six pivotal topics in Muslim-Christian dialogue.³ Secondly, all the dialogues under investigation occurred during periods of comparative interfaith tolerance. Thirdly, they took place at venues where interaction between Muslims and Christians was permitted if not encouraged.

2.0 A DEFINITION OF DIALOGUE

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that Muslims and Christians during both the 8th-11th centuries as well as the 19th century have often entertained one of two objectives in dialogue, the first being to prove one's position superior while the second is to gain an adherent to one's position. The thesis recognizes two methods and argues that logical dialectic tends to seek the first objective, while admitted truths opens up the possibility of the second.

Conducting dialogue to gain an adherent contrasts greatly with many contemporary ideas of "dialogue", which recognizes that the faiths are different, but these views of dialogue are so affected by post-modern thinking that they do not suppose that their "truth" needs to be normative for anyone else. This thesis will hopefully challenge such readers to review their whole idea of dialogue by learning from the past.

Two great world faiths sprang out of Judaism - the Christian and the Muslim. There is therefore a common background and many theological truths common to the two faiths such as an emphasis on the One God who is the Creator of the universe, the centrality of the Divine Law, the focus on the revelation of God's will by the written Word and the pre-eminent place of the prophets in

³ Viz. the Qur'ān in Islam, the Sunna in Islam, Muḥammad in Islam, the Bible in Islam, Jesus in Islam and God in Islam.

interpreting it. Yet there are also many important theological differences between Islam and Christianity. Muslims and Christians have explored these theological similarities and differences in dialogue from the earliest period of contact to the modern era. If one begins with a comparison of Muslim-Christian dialogue in modern times, the examination is made at a point where the streams are far apart, rather than at the source where they were closer together. Therefore, this study begins with an examination of Muslim-Christian dialogue in the 8th-11th centuries before focusing on the 19th century. The patterns of dialogue which are found in the writings of John of Damascus, al-Kindī, Mar Timothy and Paul of Antioch were repeated in the 19th century by William Muir, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and William Goldsack. The reader will observe that there is a close parallel between the roles played by John of Damascus and William Muir in their foundational writings about Islam as well as a similar influence exerted by Paul of Antioch and William Goldsack in their writings about Muslim-Christian dialogue along the lines of admitted truth.

Early Christians embraced the idea of holding dialogue with non-Christians to gain an adherent and in the New Testament, the term 'to conduct dialogue' (*Gk. dialegomai*) is given a range of translations from 'reasoning' to 'disputing'. The sense of the term 'dialogue' which was held by many of the early Christians was 'reasoning for the sake of persuasion' (Acts 17:2, 18:4 etc.). It is used in this manner when describing the method of admitted truths. This contrasts with the use of disputing (*suzeteo*) to prove one's position superior, which in the Greek world, was often undertaken by professional debaters (*suzetetes*). This latter method is seldom in the New Testament commended to the Christian as the best way of communicating with non-Christians (I Corinthians 1:20).⁴ Indeed, I Timothy 6:5 goes so far as to refer to this type of religious controversy or diatribe

⁴ This verse is best translated "Where is the disputer (*suzetete*) of this world."

(*paradiatrib*) with great contempt. Therefore, the objective of dialogue or controversy seemingly determines its acceptability or unacceptability for the Christian.

The earliest Christian dialogues were held between Christians and Jews. Prophecies in the Old Testament, which were admitted by both Jews and Christians, featured prominently in these dialogues. These first dialogues employed truths admitted by both faiths (hence the method can be termed that of admitted truths) and their purpose was to gain adherents. As Christians came into increased contact with Greek philosophy, the methods of Aristotle, Plato and Philo exerted an influence on Christian apologists.⁵ A second method of dialogue used by Christian apologists emerged which employed logical dialectic to resolve differences between two opposing theological views with the purpose of showing the superiority of one over the other.

Early Muslims also embraced the idea of holding dialogue with non-Muslims to gain an adherent. By the time of Islam's emergence in the early 7th century, patterns of religious dialogue had long been established. These undoubtedly influenced the Qur'ānic admonitions given to the Muslim about entering into dialogue with Christians. On the one hand the Muslim was discouraged from forensic wrangling about religious matters simply to prove to the Christian the correctness of an Islamic theological point. One reads in sūra xl (*al-Mu'min*) 4: "Nobody enters into arguments over the signs (or the verses) of God except those who disbelieve." And again one reads in vs. 35 of this sūra: "Those who dispute concerning the signs of God, without any authority (are) very hateful in the sight of God and the believers!"⁶

⁵ J.W.Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, (hereafter *Theology*), (London: Lutterworth, 1945), Part I, Vol. I, p. 53.

⁶ Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes, Islam and Christianity in History*, (Rome: Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1984), Vol. I, p. 14.

On the other hand, dialogue is commended as a method of gaining an adherent. One reads in sūra xvi (*al-Nahl*):125: "Call thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and dispute with them in the better way". Added to this, the use of truths admitted in Scriptures of the Christians is commended. In this regard one reads in sūra xxix (*al-'Ankabūt*):46: "Dispute not with the People of the book save in the fairest manner, except for those of them that do wrong; and say: We believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we have surrendered."⁷ Thus one observes that the early Muslims were advised, in almost Biblical terms, to "refrain from useless wrangling"⁸ but rather to "dispute with them in the better way" (i.e. to gain an adherent).

2.1 A DEFINITION OF ADMITTED TRUTHS

The early Christian church claimed that all truth is God's truth wherever it be found.⁹ Historic Christianity has believed in the truthfulness of Scripture, not as an exhaustive revelation of truth, but as a sufficient rule for faith and conduct. Human knowledge derives from other sources besides the Bible and where the Biblical text and these other sources overlap, are found admitted truths. The presupposition for this statement is that all truth is ultimately known to God and so may be called "God's truth" whether it be found, in the Bible or elsewhere.¹⁰ The Apostle Paul, among the earliest Christian apologists, perceived that the Christian Gospel and non-Christian religions contained common truths.

This concept can be illustrated by two intersecting circles, one circle representing Christianity, the other Islam. The area where the circles overlap constitutes the area of 'perceived theological agreement' (see diagram A). It was in

⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

⁸ Compare with I Timothy 6:5 where the Christian is to avoid "perverse disputings" (paradiatrib).

⁹ Arthur F. Holmes, *All Truth is God's Truth*, (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 8.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 8, 9. Christians meant that there was an absolute ultimate truth which had its basis in God and the revelation of this truth to man in the Bible. All other assertions of truth are to be compared with it.

this area that dialogue was considered by the early Christians to be most effectively initiated with those of other beliefs. For example, in his sermon to the Athenians at the Areopagus, the Apostle Paul begins with a reference to a statue inscribed with the words "the unknown God" (Acts 17:22) in order to lead the Athenians to a fuller knowledge of God and Christ.¹¹

2.2 A DEFINITION OF LOGICAL DIALECTIC

Later Christians focused their attention on the area where the intersecting circles, representing the Christian and non-Christian religions, were separate. Their method of dialogue, called logical dialectic, was a modification of Aristotelian dialectic, whose purpose was to study and resolve differences between two opposing theological views in favour of one by means of logic.¹²

Although the Islamic theologians looked down on Greek thought, the Islamic philosophers adopted the thinking of Aristotle and his method of logical dialectic. The Muslim apologists also became adept at the Greek method of logical dialectic and subsumed it under the category of 'dialectical theology' (*'ilm al-kalām*). So completely did some of these later Islamic philosophers and apologists adhere to the Greek method of dialectic that al-Fārābī once remarked: "If I had lived in Aristotle's time I would have been a worthy disciple of his."¹³ Similarly, Ibn Sīnā in his *Shifā* wrote: "Though such a long time has elapsed, there cannot be a particle of addition to Aristotle's findings."¹⁴ Most Islamic theologians looked down on the conclusions of the Greeks with regard to religion and adhered only to the Greek *methods* of philosophy, logic (including dialogue), mathematics, physics and medicine. In short they tried to separate the Greek philosophers'

¹¹ It is probable that this verse is just part of the larger 'admitted truth' that there was God, a Supreme God, Zeus for the Greeks. The admitted truth referred to here is that there was Something or Someone unknowable or unknown which Paul came to reveal to the Greek audience.

¹² Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Rhetorica*, cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Vol. I, Pt. I, p. 50.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Shibī, *'Ilm al-Kalām*, p. 153, cited by J.W.Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I, p. 52.

conclusions about religion from their method of enquiry. However, the Islamic apologists became especially conversant with the *method* of Aristotelian dialectic, whose purpose was also to resolve differences between two opposing philosophical or theological views in favour of one by means of logic.¹⁵

The method which Muslim and Christian apologists have chosen in dialogue has been influenced by their objectives. In this regard, Muslims and Christians have often entertained one of two objectives in dialogue - the first to prove one's position superior, the second to gain an adherent to one's position. This thesis recognizes both methods and argues that logical dialectic tends to seek the first objective, while admitted truths opens up the possibility of the second.

3.0 COMPARING THE METHODS OF ADMITTED TRUTHS AND LOGICAL DIALECTIC

A number of 19th and 20th century authors do identify the methods of the earlier and later Muslim and Christian apologists, but most of these works are descriptive and seldom make a comparison between the respective methods.¹⁶ Furthermore, the present author has not found any study which examines the method and use of admitted truths in Muslim-Christian dialogue. Nor are there any studies which compare the method of admitted truths with that of logical dialectic in Muslim-Christian dialogue. Sweetman's work, though somewhat dated, most carefully analyses the exchanges between the medieval Christian and Muslim apologists. He also gives a good analysis of the presuppositions of logical dialectic but unfortunately does not compare it with those of admitted truths.¹⁷ For this reason, the focus of this thesis is to fill the lacunae in scholarship about the presuppositions and use of admitted truths in Muslim-Christian dialogue. A

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See Browne, *Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*, Spath, *Vingt Traités philosophiques et apologetiques d'auteurs arabes chrétiens*, Cheikho, *Vingt Traités théologiques d'auteurs arabes chrétiens*, Muir, *Apology of Al Kindy*, and more recently Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes* (1984), Kate Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face* (1997), A. Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century* (1997), H. Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, (2000).

¹⁷ J.W. Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I, pp. 50-84.

comparison of this method with that of logical dialectic will also be attempted in order to fill a long-standing need for a comparative study of these two methods.

4.0 FORMATIVE PERIODS AND PLACES FOR MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

The Muslim-Christian dialogues which occurred during the historical periods of the 8th-11th centuries in Syria and Iraq and during the 19th and 20th centuries in India, have been chosen for examination in this thesis. Muslim-Christian dialogues during these two periods of time occurred on either side of the great chasm between Islam and Christianity which was caused by the Crusades (12th-16th centuries), followed by the Ottoman rule in the Middle East (16th-19th centuries).

4.1 THE NATURE AND LOCATION OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE IN THE 8TH-11TH CENTURIES

The earliest case study of an examination of Islam by an influential Christian is that of John of Damascus (675-753) who lived and served as an accountant at the court of the Umayyads following their capture of Damascus in 635.¹⁸ Chapter one analyses the arguments set forward by John of Damascus and observes that the ideas the Damascene set forward about Islam in his *Disputatio Saraceni et Christiani*, *De Haeresibus* and *Dialectica* were developed by others in two separate directions.¹⁹ Some aspects of the Damascene's study of Islam were then employed by other early Christian apologists using admitted truths with the objective of gaining an adherent. The Nestorian Patriarch Mar Timothy (728-823), in his famous dialogues with the Caliph al-Mahdī (775-785) at Baghdad, employed the Damascene's study of Jesus as being referred to as 'God's Word' in the Qur'ān and the Bible.²⁰ In his *Risāla*, Paul of Antioch (d. 1180) brought together the

¹⁸ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, Vol. I, p. 28.

¹⁹ Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 68-72.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75. Cf. Gaudeul, *Encounters*, pp. 34, 35.

theological 'truths' admitted both in the Qur'ān and the Bible, which were presented by John of Damascus and Mar Timothy.²¹

Other aspects of John of Damascus' arguments have been employed by apologists using logical dialectic in an attempt to gain a victory by the use of rational argument. Theodore Abū Qurra (740-825) and al-Kindī (d. c. 830) at the court of al-Ma'mūn (813-833) use evidence from John of Damascus in constructing their apologetics against Islam along the lines of logical dialectic.²² Thus, one can see that during the 8th-11th centuries, the methods of admitted truths and logical dialectic existed side by side in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

While the body of knowledge about Islam and Christianity did not change, the objectives with which this evidence was used and the manner of its use varied greatly. Those who employed admitted truths usually emphasized the areas of coherence between the two Faiths to open up the possibility of gaining an adherent to their position. Those who employed logical dialectic usually emphasized the areas of difference to prove their position superior.²³

4.2 THE CHANGE IN THE NATURE AND LOCATION OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE IN THE 12TH-19TH CENTURIES

Three important historical events redefined the nature and location of Muslim-Christian dialogue. The nature of dialogue was changed in favour of logical dialectic by the Crusades, which lasted from 1095 until the fifteenth century. The location of Muslim-Christian dialogue was altered by two different historical events of epic proportions. The first was the Mongol invasion of Syria, Iraq and Persia in the 13th century. This invasion caused many Muslim religious teachers to flee to India and their presence eventually provided the possibility of

²¹ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, pp. 167-170.

²² Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 68, 69.

²³ A few apologists, such as al-Kindī and Mar Timothy used both methods when it suited them. At times the objective of demonstrating the superiority of the Christian position by using logical dialectic would be uppermost in their mind and at other times the need to present Christianity to an inquirer by using admitted truths was of primary concern. This does not alter the fact, however, that the purpose of the method of logical dialectic was to prove one's position superior while that of admitted truths was to open up the possibility of gaining an adherent to one's position.

Muslim-Christian dialogue in this new environment. The second event which influenced the change in location of Muslim-Christian dialogue from the Middle East was the establishment of Ottoman rule during the 16th-19th centuries. The Ottoman armies established the Millet system (religious groups) in countries such as Syria and Iraq which had previously fostered Muslim-Christian dialogue. This system of controlling a captive population was ingenious in that adherents of different faiths were allowed a considerable measure of liberty providing that they did not fraternise with members of another religion. The Christian subjects, organized in their legally recognized millets, never identified themselves with the Muslim Ottoman state, in which they ranked as second class citizens. Therefore, with freedom to converse about religious topics severely restricted, Muslim-Christian dialogue declined in the Middle East.²⁴ With the Middle East becoming less conducive to interfaith relations and with India emerging as a centre of Islamic scholarship, the foundations were laid for the transfer of Muslim-Christian dialogue from the Middle East to India.

4.3 THE RE-EMERGENCE OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE IN INDIA DURING THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

In the 18th and 19th centuries India did, in fact, emerge as the most important environment for Muslim-Christian relations. The only other places where significant Muslim-Christian dialogues had been influential up to and during this period were Persia and Egypt. In the seventeenth century, a Carmelite mission was sent by Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605) to Persia where an opportunity arose for theological discussion between the friars and Shah 'Abbas I (1588-1629).²⁵ There was also a third party of Protestants who had come to Iran in connection with the silk trade. The dialogues between the friars, Muslims and Protestants

²⁴ P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, Bernard Lewis, *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Volume 1A) *The Central Islamic Lands From Pre-Islamic Times to the First World War*, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1970), p. 357. Cf. P.K. Hitti, *A History of the Arabs*, (London: MacMillan, 1970 ed.), pp. 716, regarding the effect of the millet system on Muslim-Christian dialogue.

²⁵ Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, pp. 117-118.

centred on the topics of: fasting and good works; the cross and images; free-will and predestination; and authority. The Carmelites and Protestants held different positions on most of these topics and the Shah adroitly took the side of one against the other.²⁶ However, these dialogues set a pattern for Muslim-Christian dialogue in Persia which Henry Martyn in 1811 was able to build upon.²⁷ Firstly, Martyn uses logical dialectic to demonstrate the insufficiency of the evidence of popular Islam. Secondly, he argues for the integrity of the Biblical Scriptures and attempts to refute the Muslim objections to them. Thirdly, he attempts to teach Christianity from the Biblical Scriptures.²⁸

It was some time between 1824 and 1829 that the Rev. C.G. Pfander of the Basel Mission arrived in Shusha and, after acquiring the Persian language, began to conduct dialogue with Muslims in various places in Persia. He had many opportunities to openly conduct dialogue with Muslim scholars, although, at Kermanshah he narrowly escaped martyrdom. It was while yet in Persia that he published his major work, the *Mizan-ul-Haqq*, or the "Balance of Truth,"²⁹ a book which aroused more discussion among Muslims than any other controversial work published during that century.³⁰ In 1835, the Basel Mission in Shusha in Persia, like many others, was closed by a royal '*Ukase*' (edict) of the Russian Government and many missionaries, including Pfander, then went to India.³¹

The spirit of Islam (and the spirit of Muslim-Christian dialogue) in Egypt was different again to that of India. Egyptian dialogues with Christians were not conducted in an environment alien to Islam nor did they have as their primary

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ W. Muir, *The Mohammedan Controversy and other Indian Articles*, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902), p. 17.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ C.G. Pfander, *Mizan-ul-Haqq or Balance of Truth*, trans. by R.H. Weakley, (London: Religious Tract Society, 1867), also trans. by William Muir, (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1895).

³⁰ E.M. Wherry, *Islam in the Far East*, (London: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1906), pp. 159, 160.

³¹ Ibid.

objective the winning of adherents, but rather the defending of the "honour" of Islam.³² Therefore, Muslim apologists in Egypt employed the method of logical dialectic to show the superiority of Islam while Christian apologists used this same method to defend the tenets of Christianity. The Muslim apologists in India on the other hand, though clinging to Islam as the religion of their ancestors and of their choice, were aware of the need to gain adherents to the Muslim faith by persuasive means.³³ Therefore, in their dialogues they allowed for the presentation of truths admitted by Christians and Muslims. During the 18th and 19th centuries, though there were several other regions where Muslim-Christian dialogue took place, it was most open and most productive in India.

Christian presence in Northern India during the modern era was begun in the 16th century with the visit of Jesuit missionaries to the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1580.³⁴ Following the defeat of Muslim rule by the British in 1757, a series of religious debates followed in which the two great faiths vied for pre-eminence amidst the faith and culture of Hinduism. That is why India became the most prominent focal point of Muslim-Christian dialogue in the 19th and 20th centuries.

5.0 THREE PIONEERS IN MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE IN 19TH CENTURY INDIA

In Section I of this thesis the lives of three pioneers in Muslim-Christian dialogue in 19th century India are examined. William Muir, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and William Goldsack are selected for study for several important reasons. Firstly, they were very influential participants in the Muslim-Christian dialogues in India during the 19th and 20th centuries. Secondly, in their early writings, all three writers focused on the differences between Islam and Christianity, while in their later writings, each one emphasized 'truths' which the two Faiths hold in common. Thirdly, they stand as important transitional figures in the rediscovery

³² H. Kraemer, "A Modern Revindication of Islam," *MW* 29 (1939), pp. 142, 143.

³³ See T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (London: Luzac and Company: 1935).

³⁴ Indian tradition holds that the introduction of Christianity to Southern India was accomplished by the Apostle Thomas in the first Christian century.

of the method of using admitted truths in Muslim-Christian dialogue after a long period when, except for rare instances, logical dialectic was employed.

6.0 THREE STAGES IN THE STUDY OF THE METHOD OF ADMITTED TRUTH

The first stage in the study of admitted truths is a comparison of common theological ideas. Since the inception of Islam, there have been numerous philosophical and theological comparisons made about Islam and Christianity. Early Muslim-Christian apologists who initiated dialogue employing conceptual or theological agreement predated those who used truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible. Paul of Antioch was one of the earliest Christian apologists to base his comparisons on texts in the Qur'ān and Bible rather than comparative theological concepts. Still other apologists initiated dialogue by focusing on the area of conceptual (theological) disagreement and employed the method of logical dialectic. (Diagram A, p. xviii, is illustrative of both of these methods.)

In the second stage of the use of admitted truths in dialogue, 'conceptual or theological agreement' between Islam and Christianity was recognized as being too broad a definition. A textually-based method such as Paul of Antioch's was viewed as better than a method based on conceptual comparison. However, Paul of Antioch did not make a critical study of the Islamic sources before making textual comparisons. To refine his method of textual comparison, Muir, Khān and Goldsack first applied textual analysis to the Qur'ān (IV), the Sunna (V), and the biographies of Muḥammad (VI) as had been done for the Biblical Scriptures. They considered that they were then in a position to compare texts in both the Islamic and Christian sources. Diagrams Bi, Bii, pp. 23, 24, and C p. 25 are an attempt to portray the results of their investigations of these sources. They conducted their investigations for two reasons: firstly, to determine the reliability of the Qur'ānic text (analogous to the historical analysis of the Biblical text), the reliability of the Sunna, and whether Muḥammad measured up to the claims made for him in the

biographies (just as Jesus had been investigated). Secondly, they investigated the Islamic sources to determine the basis for their use in Muslim-Christian dialogue. The following pattern of analysis often emerges in the studies about the Islamic sources by the three authors. Firstly, Muir would set forth a thesis which Khan would then alter, usually by setting forward either a corollary or an anti-thesis. Goldsack would then offer a synthesis of the two earlier positions. This is not a rigid rule in every case, but a pattern which almost invariably may be observed.

The third stage in the use of admitted truths grew out of the critical study of the Islamic and Christian sources. It is characterized by a linguistic and exegetical comparison of passages in both the Qur'ān and the Bible. One observes that in the early period the focus was on 'conceptual agreement' or, in Paul of Antioch's case, the use of truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible before a textual analysis of either book had been made. In the 19th century the focus is on the textual agreement of sources which have undergone previous textual analysis. Put another way, the 19th century writers based their comparisons on 'truths' admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible after having textually analysed both texts. Truths so derived from this method were referred to 'admitted truths' (See Diagram C).

The three 19th century authors discovered that the theological truths admitted in the Qur'ān and Bible centred on the topics of: The Bible in Islam (Chapter Seven); Jesus in Islam (Chapter Eight); and God in Islam (chapter Nine). Studies of the Islamic sources and the aforementioned topics were defined and investigated by using a theological comparison in the early period of Muslim-Christian dialogue and by using the historical method in the 19th century.

The thesis is complete with the epilogue to the abovementioned chapters. However, the present author has added additional material in chart form in the appendices which it is felt will be a very useful addenda for the researcher on Muslim-Christian dialogue.

CHAPTER ONE

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE IN THE 8TH-11TH CENTURIES

1.0 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EARLY MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUES

The importance of studying the early Muslim-Christian dialogues of the 8th-11th century lies firstly in the fact that the topics set forward in these early debates became the pivotal ones for all succeeding Muslim-Christian dialogues.¹ These pivotal topics were: a discussion of the Qur'ān, Sunna, Muḥammad, Jesus in Islam, the Bible in Islam and God in Islam. The participants in early Muslim-Christian dialogue made a theological comparison of Islam and Christianity. In the eighth century, John of Damascus in his *Disputatio Christiani et Saraceni* first analysed Islam by the use of theological comparison with Christianity and in doing so set forward important theological truths which Muslims and Christians hold in common. According to the Damascene's analysis, the main theological truths which Islam and Christianity have in common are the belief in the Unity of God the Creator and Jesus being called Word and Spirit of God. The latter terms about Jesus are pre-eminent, he contended, because in both Muslim and Christian theology God's Word and His Spirit are inseparable from His essence.² Three centuries after John of Damascus, Paul of Antioch (d. 1180) systematized the Damascene's use of admitted truths into a system focusing on the use of admitted truths in the Muslim-Christian dialogues of Syria.

The first reason for studying the dialogues of the 8th-11th century, therefore, is that they had great influence on the dialogues of the 19th century. A second reason for studying them is because they throw light on why some methods of dialogue were more effective than others. One premise of this thesis is

¹ The 8th-11th centuries have been chosen because from the time of the Crusades (12th-16th centuries) dialogue ossified around the arguments brought forward at this earlier period.

² *De Haeresibus*, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XCIV, p. 764ff cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Vol. I, Pt. I, p. 65.

that Muslim-Christian dialogue became ineffective because of an increasing use of dialectic for the purpose of gaining an intellectual victory rather than a reliance on the use of truths admitted both by the Qur'ān and the Bible to gain an adherent. Al-Kindī, though reliant on his skilful use of dialectic, admitted that the most serious limitation in its use by Christians is that Christians (literally Monks) "entrusted with the Gospel have ceased to be missionaries".³

1.1 HISTORICAL INFLUENCES ON THE EARLY MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUES

During the first century of Islam, Muslim scholars were too busy defining their own faith to be greatly concerned with interacting with Christian theology. After the eleventh century the Crusades placed a great barrier between Muslim and Christian relationships. However, between the eighth and the eleventh centuries, there was significant scope for productive Muslim-Christian dialogue.

The greatest opportunity for Muslim-Christian dialogue began during the Umayyad period (661-749) when the centre of the Islamic empire was transferred from Mecca to Damascus. This opportunity reached its climax at Baghdad during the 'Abbāsid Caliphates of al-Mahdī (775-785) and al-Ma'mūn (813-833). The dialogues which were held during this period were wide-ranging; typically the apologists discussed whether or not man is predestined, Scripture is created, whether the Scriptures can be interpreted metaphorically, what one can know about the nature of God, and whether Islam accepted that Jesus has a unique place among the prophets.

In the eleventh century, a new polemic grew up in which Muslim and Christian combatants attempted to prove the other's position logically untenable. Paul of Antioch (d. 1180) briefly revived the method of using admitted truths in Muslim-Christian dialogue, and for that reason his bright point of light stands out against the dark background of the Crusades. On the Islamic side the foundations

³ *The Apology of Al-Kindy*, translated by W. Muir, (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1882), p. 85.

of this new polemic were laid before the Crusades by Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064) in his *Kitāb al-fīṣal fī'l-milal wa'l-niḥal*, (Book of Discernment between Confessions and Sects) which contained an attack on Christianity. In this work any slight deviation from the Qur'ān renders a corresponding Christian idea fallacious. Ibn Ḥazm made an attempt to divorce the supernatural Christ of the Christian faith from the "historical" Jesus who, in his opinion, was the Jesus of Islam. On the Christian side the new polemic was employed by Dominican missionaries following the theological presuppositions of Thomas Aquinas.⁴ They considered the use of philosophical arguments legitimate for "defensive" purposes, that is to show the weakness of arguments against the Christian faith. The resulting use of logical dialectic in this manner produced an ossified pattern of repetitive, polemical responses which was played out like a sport. An example of this method can be found in the Debate of 1217 at Aleppo between Anba Jirgi, a Christian monk, and three Muslim scholars.⁵ The debate was conducted like a legal case where no-one was expected to change his opinion; at the end of it the opponents shook hands and congratulated one another.⁶

In the 11th century the Roman Church stood at a crossroads in its relationship with the Islamic *Umma* (Community). Pope Gregory VII was one of the last church leaders for four centuries to show any sympathy to Muslims and in his letter in 1076 to al-Nāṣir, a Muslim prince, he wrote:

There is a charity which we owe to each other more than to other peoples, because we recognize and confess one sole God, although in different ways, and we praise and worship Him every day as creator and ruler of the world.⁷

His successor, Pope Urban II, had no such positive regard for Muslims and called for a Crusade to re-take the Holy Land. The ensuing wars lasted from

⁴ Hitti, *The History of the Arabs*, p. 289.

⁵ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, Vol. I, p. 162.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

"1095, when Pope Urban II made his famous call to arms, until the fifteenth century".⁸ The Crusades indelibly changed the nature of constructive missionary dialogue which had been built up between Muslims and Oriental Christians.

1.2 THEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ON EARLY MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

Islam arose in Arabia and so the first important influence on early Muslim-Christian dialogue from the Christian side was Eastern Christianity. Arabia had relations with all three of the main sections of the Christian church, the Royal Melkite⁹ (Byzantine) Church, the Nestorian Church, and the Jacobite (Monophysite) Church.¹⁰ In the fifth century, Nestorius the Patriarch of Constantinople, was accused of separating the divine and human natures of Christ and was declared a heretic at the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.).¹¹ The followers of Nestorius were expelled from the Roman Empire and on the eve of the establishment of Islam they fled to Persia where they established centres of worship.¹² Eutyches, a monk in Constantinople, held that Christ's nature was one and Eutyches' theology was called Monophysitism or 'one nature'. It too was branded heretical but proved popular in Syria and Egypt.¹³ Christianity, up to the middle of the sixth century, had been established in Ceylon, Malabar, Socotra, Bactria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Scythia, Egypt and Abyssinia. It is improbable that so surrounded, Arabia would have remained unaffected by Christianity, even if there was only a little evidence of Christianity within Arabia itself.¹⁴ However,

⁸ Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades, Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1999), p. i.

⁹ Christians who, even during Islamic rule, retained their loyalty to the Council of Chalcedon were later called Melkites (king's men) because of their adherence to the Byzantine liturgy. Cf. Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, p. 38.

¹⁰ Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, p. 2.

¹¹ Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, p. 14.

¹² By the time of Muḥammad there were six provinces of the Nestorian Church, having centres in Seleucia, Jundishabur, Nisibis, Basra, Arbil and Kirkuk. L.E. Browne, *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1933), p. 6.

¹³ Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I, p. 2.

one does find well-established elements of Christianity within the frontiers of Arabia around the year 600, just before Muhammad's call to prophethood.

To the north-west, in the direction of Jerusalem and the Mediterranean, some Arab tribes on the Byzantine frontier had accepted Christianity. Beginning in the fourth century; one Roman Emperor, Marcus Julius Philippus, commonly known as Philip the Arab, who ruled between 244 and 249, was a Christian. Later, an important Arab tribe, the Banū Ghassān, was among several tribes which accepted Christianity in the fourth century, and in the sixth century the Ghassānids acquired a position of political dominance as a result of the designation of their leader Ḥārith ibn Jabūla by the Byzantines as 'phylarch' or tribal leader.¹⁵

However, many of the forms of Christianity which had the most significant influence on Arabia were heretical.

A second pervasive influence on early Muslim-Christian dialogue was the Jewish-Christian debates which had taken place in Syria in the years immediately before the birth of Islam. Converts to Islam from Nestorianism used the same arguments which the Jewish scholar Herban employed against Cyprian and Aphraates. For example, Herban insinuates that Christians have an unworthy idea of God in the incarnation of Jesus.¹⁶ This same Jewish scholar asks how Jesus could use the words "I go to My Father and your Father, to My God and to your God," if he were in fact the Son of God. And again, Herban queries why Jesus, in Matthew xix:17, seemingly disclaimed goodness in his statement: "Why do you call Me good?" Was he differentiating himself from God?¹⁷ Herban concluded his argument on the reasons why Christians err in worshipping Christ with the words:

You worship and serve a man who was begotten and a human being who was crucified. You call a human being God and though God has no son, you say of this Jesus who was crucified that He is God's Son.¹⁸

¹⁵ Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, p. 15.

¹⁶ Cyprian, *Liber Testimoniorum*, Migne: Pat. Graec. xlviii, P. 1075-1080 cited by Rendel Harris in the introduction to "The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph al-Mahdi", tr. Mingana, *The Woodbrooke Studies*, Vol. ii 37 (Cambridge: Heffers, 1928), i.

¹⁷ Aphraates, *Seventeenth Homily*, cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, p. 71.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Many of the questions set forward by Herban were taken over by subsequent Muslim apologists and became standard in almost every Muslim-Christian dialogue.

A third important influence on Islamic apologetics occurred during the early 9th century when Muslim scholars in Baghdad were greatly influenced by the Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle as well as Stoicism, Pythagorism, and above all, the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and Proclus.¹⁹ Greek philosophy and logic had a seminal influence on the method by which Islamic scholars employed dialectic in debate.

2.0 METHODS OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE DURING THE 8TH-11TH CENTURIES

2.1 THE LIFE AND METHODS OF JOHN OF DAMASCUS (675-753).

John of Damascus was an eminent theologian of the Eastern Church who derived his surname from the city where he was born. His Arabic name was al-Manṣūr (the victor), and he received the epithet *Chrysorrhoeas* (gold-pouring) on account of his eloquence.²⁰ John's grandfather was Manṣūr b. Sergūn, governor of Damascus for the Byzantines and it was he who surrendered the city to the Arabs in 635.²¹ John, like his grandfather, worked in the treasury as an accountant for the Umayyads. After 'Umar II assumed power (717-720) the posts once held by Christians were given to Muslims. It may have been this act which caused John to resign his post in 724, surrender his worldly goods and retreat to the monastery of Mar Sabas in Palestine for the rest of his life. He left the monastery only to travel in Syria in order to argue for the use of icons in worship. He died about 752.²²

¹⁹ M. Anawati, "Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism" in *The Legacy of Islam*, eds. J. Schacht, and C.E. Bosworth, (Oxford: The Clarendon and Press, 1974), pp. 352-353.

²⁰ John W. Voorhis, "John of Damascus on the Moslem Heresy," *MW* (1934), pp. 391-398.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

The writings of John of Damascus have a theoretical and practical dimension. His theoretical works *Dialectica*, *De Haeresibus* and *De Fide Orthodoxa* form a trilogy and were instrumental in laying the theological foundations for dialectical theology.²³ His work *Dialectica* describes dialectics as the art of disputation for the purpose of resolving differences between two opposing theological views. In this philosophical treatise to be applied to theology, he sets forward a scheme which has sixty-eight subject headings in philosophy, all of which are explained according to the terminology and methodology of Aristotle.²⁴

De Haeresibus (Concerning Heresies) perceives Islam as a false sect of Christianity which had departed from the fidelity of Christianity owing to errors in history and theology. John notes that the principal historical error concerned the crucifixion. The majority of Muslim scholars held that although the Jews unlawfully purposed to crucify Jesus, they crucified him only in appearance; in reality he was not crucified nor did he die, but God took him to heaven for love of him.²⁵ The principal theological error in a discussion between a Muslim and Christian was that Muslims inconsistently accused Christians of being "associators", i.e. those who joined partners with God. This argument, John holds, was inconsistent because the Qur'ān itself refers to Christ as God's Word and Spirit, these qualities being inseparable from Deity. *De Haeresibus* had such an impact on the use of the dialectical method in Muslim-Christian dialogue that it is said to have been the armoury for all future controversial writings against Islam in the Eastern church.

While *De Haeresibus* was principally concerned with pointing out the errors of Islam, his work the '*Disputatio* (Disputations)' was intended as a

²³ Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I, p. 65.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

handbook to guide Christians who were holding dialogue with Muslims.²⁶ It is not the only work of its kind which has come down to us from an early period, but it is the earliest to emphasize truths admitted by both Islam and Christianity in dialogue. John of Damascus considered it axiomatic to employ in dialogue those truths admitted by both the Qur'ān and the Bible. Among these, he placed particular emphasis on the Unity of God and that Christ is called God's Word and His Spirit (though John admits that in the Qur'ān Jesus is considered but a creature and a servant, born without seed from Mary).²⁷ While later Christians have used, for the purpose of gaining an adherent, the admitted truths which John brought forward, it is uncertain whether this was the Damascene's objective.²⁸

2.2 TWO CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS WHO PREDOMINANTLY USED DIALECTICS

In John of Damascus' writings one finds a scheme of dialectic applied to theology which was designed to resolve differences between Islam and Christianity in favour of the latter. The results John produced in support of Christianity by using the method of dialectic were restated by Theodore Abū Qurra and refined by al-Kindī to cast doubt on Islam.

2.2.1 A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND METHOD OF THEODORE ABŪ QURRA

Theodore Abū Qurra (740-825) studied at the monastery of Mar Sabas in Palestine to which John of Damascus had retired, and is credited with translating John's works from Greek to Arabic.²⁹ Theodore was a Melkite bishop of Ḥarrān

²⁶ The *Disputatio* was later translated into Arabic from Greek and attributed to Abū Qurra. It was divided into two parts: *Disputatio Christiani et Saraceni* (Controversy of a Christian with a Muslim) and *Disputatio Saraceni et Christiani* (Controversy of a Muslim with a Christian). Cf. J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1972), p. 171ff.

²⁷ Sūra iv (al-Nisā') 156

²⁸ John asks of the Muslim if Jesus is called God's Word in the Qur'ān. Upon receiving an affirmative, he notes that the Bible also speaks of Jesus as God's Word incarnate (John 1:14). John then queries if the Word is created or uncreated. When the Muslim replies that it is uncreated, John replies that again Christians agree, citing John 1:1, which speaks of the Jesus as the eternal Word. The ground is then laid for John to present the Gospel more fully to his enquirer. John of Damascus, having brought to the attention of the Muslim these great truths admitted in the Qur'ān and Bible, observes that his Muslim counterpart would be silenced! Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 66, 67.

²⁹ Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 2000), p. 53.

(Mesopotamia), which in the 8th and 9th centuries was a pluralistic environment of Jews, Christians, Muslims, Manichaeans and Pagans. A school of translators in Harrān is recorded as having translated Greek books into Arabic as well as some of Theodore's works.³⁰

Theodore was involved in a dialogue (c. 829) with an Islamic scholar by the name of al-Hāshimī at the court of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn. Muir notes that Caliph al-Ma'mūn respected Theodore and al-Kindī for their resolute Christian stance but was utterly disparaging of Christians who professed Islam in order to enhance their position:

By God, I know well that some (Christian converts to Islam) have not entered into Islam out of earnest desire for our religion, but desiring access to us and aggrandisement in the power of our realm. They have no inner conviction, and no desire for the truth of the religion into which they enter...they are therefore neither Muslims nor Christians.³¹

Theodore's writings in Arabic comprise a series of twelve theological treatises written to provide the Christian living in a Muslim environment with a Biblical defence of his faith. They are entitled: "Freedom", "Trinity and Unity", "The Truth of the Gospel", "The True Religion", "The Ways to Know God and Prove that he has a Son", "The Need for Redemption", "Incarnation", "Sonship in God", and "The Voluntary Death of Christ". Theodore also wrote a treatise for Muslims giving a defence of Christianity and showing that only the Bible provides teaching about God and man which is in full agreement with the truths which one discovers by the use of reason. It is entitled: *A Treatise on the Existence of the Creator and on the True Religion*.³²

Although Theodore identified himself as a follower of John of Damascus, he was more attracted to the Damascene's theoretical method of logic (as described in the *Dialectica*) than he was to John's practical method of holding dialogue (as

³⁰ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 31.

³¹ *The Apology of Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, p. xii.

³² Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 31.

described in the *Disputatio*). One can observe a subtle change of emphasis from a positive presentation of Christianity in the method of John of Damascus to a defence of Christianity in the method of Theodore Abū Qurra.

2.2.2 A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND METHOD OF AL-KINDĪ

While the use of the dialectical method was refined by al-Kindī (d.c. 830), he also used the method of admitted truths when discussing the life of Jesus with a Muslim. He is best known for the *Apology of al-Kindī*. The Muslim philosopher al-Bīrūnī, writing in his *Vestiges of Ancient Nations* (c.1000), describes al-Kindī's work as an apologetic reply to a Muslim scholar known as Ibn Ismā'īl al-Hāshimī who served at the court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833).³³ Al-Bīrūnī's description has given rise to confusion, in the minds of some, between our author al-Kindī and the famous Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb Ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (d.866) known as the 'Philosopher of Islam' and who also flourished at the Court of al-Ma'mūn.³⁴ However, our author was a Christian while the 'Philosopher of Islam' was a Muslim. Both were from the Banū Kinda tribe whose members spread over the centre and north of Arabia, and had, in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., a distinguished role in the history of the Peninsula.³⁵ Thus, our author is able to present himself as an Arab of the Arabs, born and bred of noble Arab birth and yet a Christian by descent, a philosopher, and an honoured attendant at the Court of the Caliph of al-Ma'mūn.³⁶

In translating al-Kindī's *Apology*, Muir observes that the apologist presents his faith and his arguments for Christianity with eloquence in a purely Arabic dress and in the most refined Arabic language. Having said that, Al-Kindī understands - far more than did his Western contemporaries - the value of a

³³ *Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, p. xii.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ W. Muir, *The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira*, 4 vols., (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1858), vol. I, p. clxxiii et seq.

³⁶ *Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, pp. viii-x.

rudimentary form of historical criticism which could be used to supplement the dialectical method. He was undoubtedly one of the first writers of his era to examine the inclusion of foreign words and phrases in the Qur'ān.

There was but a short step from a defence of Christianity in the dialectical method of Theodore Abū Qurra to a vigorous attack on Islam using the dialectical and newly discovered historical-critical method. Al-Kindī took this step and in his written *Apology* he uses historical criticism of the Islamic sources to demonstrate that Islam is not a divine religion but one which has adopted precepts from the religions with which Muḥammad came into contact. The evidence al-Kindī marshalls is compelling but his harsh criticism of Islam and his refusal to allow any alternative explanation of his research reduces the overall impact of his argumentation. In this respect, Muir is forced to admit that: "the censorious epithets [used by al-Kindī] against the Moslem, Jewish, and Magian faiths might well have been materially softened".³⁷ Al-Kindī's *Apology* has had lasting value for three important reasons. Firstly, it is the product, not of a Westerner, but of an indigeneous Arab describing Arabic Christianity. Secondly, his method includes the first critical examination of the collection and text of the Qur'ān. Al-Kindī's conclusions that Talmudic Judaism influenced Islam pre-dated by almost ten centuries similar findings by Orientalists in the 19th century. Thirdly, Al-Kindī's arguments commanded attention, being emulated by Christians and refuted by Muslims. 'Alī Ṭabarī (d.855) and Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) wrote voluminous works in response to the arguments which Al-Kindī set forward. In Spain during the 12th century, al-Kindī's *Apology* was translated into Latin under the direction of Peter the Venerable. This Latin version was re-published in Switzerland in 1543 to provide Reformed Theologians with a refutation of Islam. In 1882 William Muir translated al-Kindī's *Apology* into English, ostensibly to be used as a refutation of

³⁷ Ibid, p. vii.

Islam in India.³⁸ Several important Christian debaters in 19th century India, notably Carl Pfander and William Goldsack, employed ideas prominent in al-Kindī's method of debate.

2.3 A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND METHOD OF 'ALĪ ṬABARĪ

The earliest Muslim counterblast to the arguments of Christian apologists using both the method of dialectic as well as admitted truths was given by 'Alī b. Sahl b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī (d. 855).³⁹ He was a Nestorian Christian physician who instructed al-Rāzi in the medical profession during the reign of al-Mu'taṣim (d.842).⁴⁰ 'Alī Ṭabarī converted to Islam during the Caliphate of al-Mutawakkil (847-861), who issued a series of edicts setting out discriminatory measures against Christians and Jews.

'Alī Ṭabarī lived within twenty years of the Christian apologist al-Kindī and most of his arguments clearly indicate that he was writing in response to the *Apology of Al-Kindī* or the well-documented court records of the dialogue between al-Kindī and al-Hāshimī at the court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn. He rephrased the arguments of al-Kindī so that they would cast doubt on Christianity rather than Islam. He then added arguments from admitted truths in support of Islam. 'Alī-Ṭabarī had access to the Greek classics and understood the categories of logical dialectic, which he used in his argumentation against certain Christian concepts. He also understood the Syriac Bible well enough to make a careful search in it for terms, phrases and passages which he thought might prophesy of Islam and demonstrate its validity.⁴¹

³⁸ *Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, p. v.

³⁹ The spelling of the name of 'Alī b. Sahl b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī in this thesis follows the research of Alphonse Mingana who referred to this Islamic writer as 'Alī Ṭabarī. Other writers have preferred to use the spelling 'Alī al-Ṭabarī.

⁴⁰ 'Alī Ṭabarī, *The Book of Religion and Empire*. trans. by A. Mingana, (Manchester: The University Press, 1922), p. xii.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Two very important apologetic works based on the dialectical method are ascribed to 'Alī Ṭabarī. The first, *Al-radd 'alā'l-naṣārā*⁴² (*Refutation of Christianity*), is certainly his, and the second, *Kitāb al-dīn wa'l-dawla*⁴³ (*The Book of Religion and Empire*), is probably written by another author and ascribed to 'Alī Ṭabarī.⁴⁴ Certainly the methods of the two works are different. In the first the author critically analyses Christian theology using the dialectical method and finds it to be inferior to Islam. In *Kitāb al-dīn* he brings forward passages in the Bible which, according to his interpretation, demonstrate that Muḥammad had been announced in the Bible.⁴⁵

2.4 TWO CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS WHO PREDOMINANTLY USED ADMITTED TRUTHS

The *Disputatio* written by John of Damascus consisted of practical handbooks used to establish the foundations of Muslim-Christian dialogue based on the method of admitted truths. John's conclusions were restated by Mar Timothy and refined by Paul of Antioch. In the two generations which had passed between the Damascene's writings and Mar Timothy's dialogues, the theological terrain had changed dramatically. Muslim scholars had not only gained much more knowledge of the Bible and of Christian theology, but they had also studied how to argue their case by the use of dialectics and admitted truths. For example, just as John of Damascus had pointed out that Jesus could be found in the Qur'ān described metaphorically as the 'Divine Word', so Muslim apologists, during the time of Mar Timothy, alleged that Muḥammad could be found in the New Testament described metaphorically as the 'Paraclete'.⁴⁶

⁴² 'Alī Ṭabarī, *Al-radd 'alā'l-Naṣārā*, in *Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph*, Txt. xxxvi (159), pp. 115-148

⁴³ 'Alī Ṭabarī, *Kitāb al-Dīn wa'l-dawla*, ed. and trans. by A. Mingana, (Manchester: The University Press, 1922).

⁴⁴ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 39.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 41.

⁴⁶ One of the topics which Caliph al-Mahdī and the Islamic apologists of his court brought before Timothy concerned the alleged predictions of Muḥammad in the Bible. In this regard, they believed Muḥammad to be the *Paracletos* whom Jesus prophesied would follow him (John 16:7). Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 35.

2.4.1 A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND METHOD OF MAR TIMOTHY

Mar Timothy I (728-823) was Patriarch of the Nestorian Church from 780 to 823 and presided over the Nestorian church when missionaries were sent as far as India and China.⁴⁷ However, it was in the confrontation with Islam in Syria and Iraq that the Nestorian church faced its greatest challenges. Timothy spoke Greek, Syriac and Arabic, and had studied Islam. He came to believe that he should lay out the tenets of Christianity in active dialogue with the Caliph. Consequently, Timothy moved his See from Ctesiphon to Baghdad where he was allowed to meet with Caliph al-Mahdī (775-785) on several occasions. The *Apology of Timothy* is the Syriac transcription of a formal series of meetings with the Caliph al-Mahdī which took place in about 781. The only ancient MS. that contains the present *Apology of Timothy* is the one preserved in the 'Monastery of our Lady', near Alqosh, which Mingana ascribes to about the thirteenth century C.E.⁴⁸

The long dialogues which were held in the Caliph's court in Baghdad took place in two audiences. The Caliph al-Mahdī, who was known for his conciliatory spirit, encouraged a wide range of topics presented with arguments of substance in a courteous manner. In the first audience, Timothy uses Islamic terms and cites extensively from the Qur'ān using truths admitted by both faiths. In the second audience he explores theological topics and in explaining them uses philosophical comparisons.⁴⁹

The dialogues between Timothy and Caliph al-Mahdī are significant, not only because of the wide range of topics presented but also because of the openness and depth with which each topic is explored. The subjects which concerned Christianity were: whether Jesus could be considered God's Word and

⁴⁷ A. Mingana, "The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph al-Mahdī ", *The Woodbrooke Studies*, ii. 37, (Cambridge: Heffers, 1928), p. 34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

the Bible regarded as trustworthy according to the evidence in the Qur'ān; how the ambiguous verses in the Qur'ān which speak about Jesus' crucifixion could be resolved; whether Muslims and Christians are addressing the same subject when speaking about God; and if they are, why their predicates about God differ so greatly.⁵⁰

The topics about Islam which were discussed were: the nature of evidence which was required to confirm a writing as of God and whether the Qur'ān had met these requirements. Secondly, the nature of the evidence required to confirm a person as a prophet of God and whether Muḥammad had met these requirements.

2.4.2 A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND METHOD OF PAUL OF ANTIOCH

After the ninth century the use of admitted truths was neglected apart from rare exceptions such as Paul of Antioch (d. 1180), who revived the method. Paul lived in the era of the Byzantine emperor Manuel I, who had a positive attitude towards Islam. Little is known about the details of the life of Paul of Antioch apart from the fact that he was a monk and Melkite Bishop of Sidon. However, his *Risāla ilā ba'd aṣḍiqā'ihī al-Muslimīn* (*Letter to Muslim Friends*) was widely read, as it is the best example of basing Muslim-Christian dialogue on truths admitted by both the Qur'ān and the Bible.⁵¹

It would appear that about 1179 Paul had journeyed to Rome, perhaps to attend the Lateran Council of that year. His *Risala* or Letter seems to have been composed shortly after this time as a response to questions put to him by a Muslim friend in Sidon. It is presented as an account of talks which the Bishop had had with Western Christians in Rome and the opinions of the theologians on Islam.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Cf. Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 74-83.

⁵¹ Paul Khoury has edited and translated Paul of Antioch's *Risāla* into French (*Lettre Aux Musulmans*). Cf. Paul Khoury, *Paul D'Antioche: évêque Melkite De Sidon (XIIeS.)*, (Beyrouth, Imprimerie Catholique, 1922).

The letter consisting of about twenty pages was written in Arabic.⁵² The remarkable assertion put forward in this Letter by Paul may be summarized in this statement: that Islam teaches that Christianity is the true religion and this is proved from the Qur'an itself. Paul now adduces seven main theses in support of his claim.

1. Muhammad as sent to the Pagan Arab only, not to Christians, Sūras: xii:2; xiv:4; 2:7.
2. The Qur'ān praises the Christians and their faith, Sūras: iii:55; lvii:27; xxii:40.
3. The Qur'ān confirms the authenticity of the Christian Scriptures, Sūras: iii:3; x:94; xlii:15.
4. The Qur'ān praises monks and the Eucharist or Holy Communion, Sūras: v:82; xxii:17; v:112-115.
5. The doctrine of the Trinity [in contrast to tri-theism] conforms to reason, the use of the Bible and even to the Qur'ān, as is shown by the Bismala, and by Sūras: iv:171; xix:34.
6. This doctrine, when rightly understood, is compatible with Monotheism.
7. Christ came as the "Word of God", the best gift He could make to man, and as a result his Law is perfect and cannot be abrogated.⁵³

The outlines to the method using admitted truths begun by John of Damascus in c. 730, and restated in debate by Mar Timothy (c.780) were ultimately filled in by Paul of Antioch (d.1180), some four centuries later in his *Risāla*. Compared with the earlier works, Paul of Antioch's *Risāla* is short and terse (only twenty pages in length). It had, however, a lasting influence and an expanded version called the 'Letter from Cyprus', was produced by Christian clerics in Cyprus after his death.⁵⁴

⁵² The *Risala* or Letter written by Paul of Antioch to Muslims exists only in an Arabic version which was published in Paul Khoury's *Paul D'Antioche Eveque Melkite de Sidon* (Beyrouth, 1922), along with a French Translation.

⁵³ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 168.

⁵⁴ The "Letter from Cyprus" was expanded in the following areas: 1) it has a detailed discussion of *tahrīf*; 2) it focuses on the Old Testament prophecies of Christ; 3) it offers a revision of the treatment about the incarnation of the Word of God in Jesus, and 4) it uses traditional Christian terminology rather than terminology suited to Muslims. T.F. Michel, *A Muslim theologian's Response to Christianity* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1984), pp. 95, 96.

The greatest importance of Paul of Antioch's original *Risāla* as well as the "Letter from Cyprus" lies in the impact which both works had on the Muslim community. Al-Qarāfī (d.1285), a Muslim scholar who first responded to it, used the original and better version. Unfortunately, this author does not cite from the *Risāla* verbatim, thus limiting his study for researchers. Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) and Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭālib (d.1327) used the revised version ("Letter from Cyprus"). Ibn Taymiyya's response to Paul of Antioch's letter was detailed and comprehensive (in four volumes totalling in all 1400 pages).⁵⁵

2.5 A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND THE METHOD OF IBN TAYMIYYA

Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), a Ḥanbalī theologian, was considered to be the greatest Islamic reformer of his century. He lived through the Mongol invasion and feared that barbarians would destroy Islamic culture. The use of admitted truths by Ibn Taymiyya is evident in his first work written to Christians, *al-Risāla al-Qubrusiyya* (Letter to Cyprus), c.1297. Ibn Taymiyya's letter was written during a wartime situation when the region of Damascus was invaded three times by the Mongols under the Ilkhān Ghāzān. Ghāzān, along with his army, accepted Islam and was allied to an assortment of Christians, Cypriots and Maltese as well as Georgians and Armenians. *Al-Risāla al-Qubrusiyya* was written by Ibn Taymiyya to Ṣirjwās the king of Cyprus requesting good treatment for the Muslim prisoners interned there.⁵⁶ Since the author's first objective was to free Muslim prisoners, and his second objective to invite unbelievers from the Christian community to Islam, the letter is conciliatory. To accomplish this second objective, Ibn Taymiyya begins with the presuppositions of Eastern Christianity and from this point he leads the reader to a consideration of Islam.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Henri Laoust, *Bibliographie d'Ibn Taymiyya d'après Ibn Kathīr*, pp. 121-32 cited by T.F. Michel, *Response*, pp. 95, 96.

⁵⁷ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, pp. 170-171.

Ibn Taymiyya had received a copy of Paul of Antioch's letter in 1317 and wrote an answer to it in four volumes (1400 pages) entitled: *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-masīḥ* (*The Right Answer to those who changed the Messiah's Religion*).⁵⁸ This important polemical work was written twenty years after *al-Risāla al-Qubrusiyya*⁵⁹ and, as the title implies, it was written about Christians rather than to them. During the years between the two works, Ibn Taymiyya had become increasingly sensitive to the dangers coming from pagans, Jews and Christians who tried to influence the pure way of life transmitted by the Prophet. In *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ* Ibn Taymiyya sets out the need for strict obedience to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth - an obedience consciously differentiating itself from non-Muslims, isolating the Jewish and Christian minorities from the Muslim community and forbidding non-Muslims to express publicly beliefs contrary to Islam.

In his response to Paul of Antioch's *Risāla*, Ibn Taymiyya used two main sources. The first was al-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb's *Risāla ila 'Alī ibn Ayyūb*, which is a theological refutation of Christianity. Al-Ḥasan, a convert from Islam to Christianity, was versed in the Trinitarian controversies and the prophecies of Jesus' coming as Messiah. The second was Sa'īd ibn Biṭrīq's *Nazm al-jawhar*, a famous Christian ecclesiastical history written for a Muslim audience.⁶⁰ Sa'īd ibn Biṭrīq's principal interest lay in studying the Christian theological controversies about the person of Christ.

The topics chosen for debate by Ibn Taymiyya were not new but had been part of Muslim-Christian controversies since the work of John of Damascus. His method of refuting Christianity was based on evidence in the Qur'ān, the Bible and from Christian ecclesiastical history, rather than arguments based on logical

⁵⁸ The translation of the *Al-Jawab* which appears in this thesis is that of Thomas F. Michel.

⁵⁹ See Paul Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche*, (Beyrouth: Inst. de Lettres Orientales, 1964), Recherches, Tome XXIV. Cf Michel, *Response*, pp. 95, 96.

⁶⁰ Michel, *Response*, p. 98.

dialectic. He set out to show that in the early days of Christianity, Christians had followed the one true religion announced to them by their prophet, Jesus the son of Mary, but since that time they had deviated from this true faith.

3.0 THE EFFECT OF THE CRUSADES ON MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

Ibn Taymiyya also lived at the beginning of the Crusades and his *al-Jawāb* became one of the most important apologetics against Christian theology. Hillenbrand points out that: "His attacks on Christianity, on its doctrines and practitioners alike, are uncompromisingly hostile."⁶¹ Ibn Taymiyya's apologetic writings against Christianity were followed up by an early fourteenth-century polemicist by the name of Ghazi b. al-Wāsiṭī (d. 1311). Al-Wāsiṭī was by no means a theologian of comparable stature to Ibn Taymiyya but he was a popular writer and "his work established a clear link between the Oriental Christians and the Crusaders."⁶² His writings and those like them had three significant effects in that: they identified the Crusades not only with Frankish Christianity but with Oriental Christianity in general; they contributed towards altering the method of Muslim-Christian dialogue, and they contributed towards a change in the location of Muslim-Christian dialogue.

3.1 THE METHOD OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE WAS ALTERED

The dialectical method employing argument and syllogism became the favoured method of debate between Muslims and Christians for three reasons. Firstly, it was demanded by the Muslim debaters of their Christian counterparts. Well before the Crusades, Abū Qurra was challenged by his Muslim counterpart in debate to:

Prove your case, not with the help of your Isaiahhs or your Matthews whom I do not trust, but rather through the use of notions that are in common use, compelling and accepted by all.⁶³

⁶¹ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, p. 312.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 313.

⁶³ A. Ducellier, *Le Miroir de l'Islam. Musulmans et Cretiens d'Orient au Moyen-Age (7th.-10th. siecles)* (Paris: Julliard, 1971), p. 158, cited by Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 31.

This attitude became increasingly evident amongst those entering into dialogue during the Crusades.

Secondly, by the end of the 11th century there was a lack of good will and courage on the part of adherents of both faiths regarding engaging in dialogue based on admitted truths. During the eleventh century, as a result of the Seljuq Turkish invasions of the Near East in which thousands of Christians perished, the perception of Christians of that time was that eastern Christendom was under threat.⁶⁴ The Western European response, the Crusades, did more to polarize Muslim-Christian opinion and marginalize any possible use of admitted truths than all of the previous conflicts put together. Thirdly, dialectic triumphed by default. Many apologists after the 11th century employed stereotyped patterns of responses until the content of the dialogue itself became ossified.

Between the 12th and the 16th centuries there were fewer public debates and interaction between Christians and Muslims was largely confined to literary activity. One finds an interest in the Islamic sources by enlightened Abbots such as Peter the Venerable (1094-1156) at the Abbey of Cluny. Sheltered from the emerging conflict between Muslims and Christians, scholars in several of the Abbeys quietly translated the 'Religious Books of Islam' from Arabic to Latin. In 1142 Peter travelled from Cluny to Toledo and it was in Spain that much of the translation work was eventually accomplished.⁶⁵ One such collection of Islamic Manuscripts was called the Toledan Collection (c.1150). The best known translator of manuscripts of the Toledan Collection was Robert of Ketton, who translated the Qur'ān and a collection of ḥadīth from Arabic to Latin. One reason for doing this monumental work of translating the Islamic sources was to lay out truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible in order to explain Christianity to

⁶⁴ Michael the Syrian, a Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch in the latter half of the twelfth century, describes the horrors of the Turkish invasion. *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. by J.B. Chabot (Paris, 1901), Vol. II, pp. 412-413.

⁶⁵ Goddard, *Muslim Relations*, p. 93.

Muslims. However, the Crusades eroded confidence in this use of the Muslim and Christian sources. Robert of Ketton describes the attitude of the Christians of his time toward Muslims:

There are Christian priests so overcome with hatred that they declare that the conversion of the Moslems is not even desirable: they say that His (God's) beautiful portion of the human race (the Moslems) should hear nothing of His Truth and be ignorant that His redemption has been accomplished.⁶⁶

For a long time the Toledan Collection remained the only source of European knowledge about Islam. Robert of Ketton's works were used by Nicolo da Cusa as late as 1460 when he wrote his *Cribratio Alchorani*. In 1543 the Toledan Collection was printed at Basel with introductory essays by Luther and Melanchthon, together with a number of other books concerning Islam. These reprints prolonged the influence of these important manuscripts among students of Islam until the 17th century.⁶⁷ While the Crusades influenced the method of Muslim-Christian dialogue, the location of Muslim-Christian dialogue was restricted by the Mongol invasion of the Middle East during the 13th century followed by the reign of the Ottoman Turks during the 16th-18th centuries.

3.2 THE LOCATION OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE WAS ALTERED

3.2.1 THE MONGOLIAN INVASION ALTERED THE LOCATION OF DIALOGUE

The first factor to change the location of Muslim-Christian dialogue was the Mongol invasion of the Middle East. Muslim-Christian dialogue shifted in the direction of India with the migration of Islamic theologians to India following the Mongol invasion of the Middle East in the 13th century. The Mongol invasion resulted in the destruction of the social and religious infrastructure of vast portions of Syria, Iraq and Persia by the Mongols in the 13th century. It took place in two successive waves; the first in 1220-1222 swept through Bukhāra, Samarkand, Merv and Nīṣāpūr; the second in 1256-1260 reached Baghdad, and even Syria and

⁶⁶ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 119.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Palestine.⁶⁸ The Mongols emptied whole cities of their inhabitants and destroyed all aspects of religious culture. Hitti describes the destruction which followed the Mongol horde in these words:

A crimson stream marked their trail. Out of a population of 100,000 Harāt (Herat) was left with 40,000. The mosques of Bukhāra, famed for piety and learning, served as stables for Mongolian horses. Many of the inhabitants of Samarqand and Balkh were either butchered or carried into captivity. Khwarizm was utterly devastated.⁶⁹

The rapidity of the Arab conquest of most of the civilized world and the establishment of Baghdad in 820 as its centre of power was matched by the rapidity of the demise of the Arab state and the destruction of Baghdad in 1258. Many Ṣūfī Islamic theologians from Persia and some from Syria and Iraq fled to India for refuge from the Mongols. India lay beyond the range of the Mongol conquests and many Persian philosophers, theologians, mystics and even rulers (such as Jalāl al-Dīn Mankubirnī, heir to the deposed Persian regent 'Alā' al-Dīn) fled before Chingiz Khan⁷⁰ into Northern India.⁷¹

Ṣūfī saints in particular fled to India because they were persecuted in their home countries for their mystical beliefs.⁷² In India several regular religious orders of pīrs which are named after a great Islamic teacher came to be recognized. The oldest of the Ṣūfī fraternities, the *Chistia* order, traces its roots to Mu'in al-Dīn Chisfī who went to Ajmir from Persia in 1195 A.D. and remained there until his death in 1236 A.D. Believing that God had called him to India to preach where

⁶⁸ P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 482, 483.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ The transliteration of the name of this notorious Mongol ruler (d.1227) is here used as 'Chingiz Khan' rather than 'Gengiz Khan'. See *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Eds. P.M Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis, (Cambridge, The University Press, 1970), Vol. IA, pp. 169-170.

⁷¹ J. Allan, Sir T. Wolsley Haig and H.H. Dodwell, *The Cambridge Shorter history of India*, (Cambridge+The University Press, 1934), p.212.

⁷² The chief idea for which they were persecuted is that the souls of men differ in degree, but not in kind, from the Divine Spirit, of which they are emanations, and to which they will ultimately return. "The Spirit of God is in all He has made, and it in Him. He alone is perfect love, beauty, - hence love to him is the only real thing, all else is illusion." Sa'di says: "I swear by the truth of God that when He showed me His glory all else was illusion.", EI-1, S.V. "Khusrū, Abul-Hasan Amir", by M. Hidayet Hosain, p. 88.

polytheism prevailed, he left Medina and arrived at Lahore in 1193 A.D. where he stayed for several months before going to Ajmir. By the time he died in A.D. 1236, his influence was felt throughout the Indian Subcontinent.⁷³

Another great Ṣūfī saint, contemporaneous with ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, who exerted a tremendous influence on India, was Shaykh Bahā’ al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1147-1234). Although he never visited India, many of his disciples and successors were famous saints of India. The Suhrawardī order was introduced to India by Bahā’ al-Dīn Zakkariyyā who preached in Multan until his death in A.D. 1266 where his tomb is greatly revered.⁷⁴

The third of the major orders in India is the Shaṭṭārī order. This order was introduced into India from Persia by ‘Abd Allāh Shaṭṭārī, a descendant of Suhrawardī, who died in Mālwa, A.D. 1406. Like the Qādiriyyā and the Chisṭīs, the Shaṭṭārī order are mendicants and live without a source of income and are called *Benawa* (without provisions). Nevertheless, the Shaṭṭārī order have had great influence in India because of the miraculous signs which allegedly they perform. At Meerut Empress Nūr Jahān built a tomb to Shāh Pīr of the Shaṭṭārī order.⁷⁵

The Qādiri Order was founded by ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, who was a contemporary of Mu‘in al-Dīn Chisṭī and died in 1166 A.D. in Baghdad. He was a great Ṣūfī poet and a learned theosophical author whose *al-Insān al-Kāmil* or the "Perfect Man" still testifies to his independence as a Muslim theologian. His fraternity was introduced into India three hundred years later by one Sayyid Bandagī Muḥammad Ghawth who came to India in the year 1482 A.D. and succeeded in establishing the Qādiri order.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid., p. 281.

⁷⁴ M.T. Titus, *Indian Islam*, (Oxford: The University Press, 1930), p. 45.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 123

⁷⁶ M.E.Haq, *A History of Sufism in Bengal*, (Dhaka: The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1975), pp.16,17

The Naqshbandi order was founded by Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband of Turkestan who died in A.D. 1389, and was buried near Bukhāra. According to Rose⁷⁷, this order was introduced into India by Khwājah Muḥammad Bāqī Bi'llāh Berang, who died in A.D. 1603, and whose tomb is in Delhi. Herklots observes that another tradition holds that this order was introduced to India by Shaykh Aḥmad Sirbandī, a descendant of the Caliph Abū Bakr.⁷⁸

The migration of these Ṣūfī saints to India from the 12th-16th centuries enabled the spread of the Islamic faith to India by effective, contextually appropriate missionary work. This Ṣūfī preaching was followed up by more conservative Islamic reformers from the 16th-19th. centuries. The resulting entrenched Islamic position in India was not challenged until a group of Evangelical missionaries presented the Christian message during the 18th-19th. centuries. At this point in history, Islam and Christianity vied for preeminence in the faith and culture of an alien country. That is one important reason why India became a prominent place for Christian-Muslim dialogue in the 19th. and 20th. centuries.

3.2.2 OTTOMAN RULE ALTERED THE LOCATION OF DIALOGUE

The second factor to change the location of Muslim-Christian dialogue was the proscription of inter-faith interaction during Ottoman rule. The restrictions which Ottoman rule placed on Muslim-Christian dialogue were mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, but their effects were so important that they deserve further comment. From the 16th-19th centuries, the Ottoman armies established the *Millet* system (religious groups) in regions covering modern day Syria and Iraq⁷⁹ which had previously fostered Muslim-Christian dialogue. Adherents of different faiths were allowed a considerable measure of freedom providing that they did not fraternise with members of another religion. The Ottoman state was

⁷⁷ G.A. Herklots, *Islam In India*, (Oxford: University Press, 1921), p.292.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Iraq did not exist as a 'country' until Great Britain created it in 1920. Previously the area was three regions of the Ottoman Empire - Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra.

organized to keep its inhabitants from uniting and rising against the central government. The line of demarcation was clearly drawn between Muslims and Christians, even between Muslim Turks and Muslim Arabs and between one Christian sect and another.⁸⁰ This system, designed to control social interaction, was so successful that by the year 1800, meaningful Muslim-Christian dialogue (as well as Muslim-Jewish dialogue) had all but ceased in the Ottoman-controlled Middle East.

The proscription of Muslim-Christian interaction by the Ottoman's during the 16th-19th centuries contrasted with the more cordial atmosphere, in almost all areas except Muslim-Christian dialogue, which Christians received in Persia and India during the 17th-19th centuries. The Şafavid Shāh 'Abbās I (1588-1629) attempted to establish relations with Christian Europe.⁸¹ Thus one observes that in Şafavid Persia between the 17th and 18th centuries individuals from Christian lands were received cordially - but not for religious polemics. It was not until early in the 19th century when Henry Martyn (1781-1812) held dialogues with Persian scholars that one finds a re-awakening of Muslim-Christian dialogue. Although Martyn had prepared "Controversial Tracts" he found that it was wisest to set out "to appreciate whatever was best in his Muslim acquaintances and ascribe such to the activity of God,"⁸² before explaining the Christian message.

In India, not only were Christians from the West cordially received, but also they were, in some cases, allowed to engage in religious polemics. The Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) gave an invitation to the Jesuit missionaries of Goa to come, settle at his court and set forward the case for Christianity, an opportunity which they accepted in 1580. The most well known of these

⁸⁰ Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 716.

⁸¹ Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 2000), pp. 119-120. Cf. Abdul Hadi Hairi, 'Reflections on the Shi'i Responses to Missionary Thought and Activities in the Safavid Period', in J Calmard, ed., *Etudes Safavides I* (Paris/Tehran: 1993), pp. 151-64.

⁸² C. Troll, "Christian-Muslim Relations in India, A Critical Survey", *ISCH* (1979), p. 119.

missionaries to accept Akbar's invitation was Jerome Xavier (1549-1617). Xavier wrote several books presenting the life of Jesus from the Canonical and Apocryphal Gospels as well as a book called the "Mirror of Truth" (*Ā'inē-ye Haqq-nomā*) which is a conversation between a philosopher (ostensibly Akbar) and a Christian. *Ā'inē-ye Haqq-nomā* contains five parts:

1. Mankind needs a religion revealed by God.
2. The doctrines of Christianity.
3. The divinity of Christ.
4. The law of Christ compared to the law of Islam.
5. The superiority of Christianity over Islam and other religions, especially from the point of view of the help it brings men.⁸³

The first three topics are presented as a conversation between the Christian and "the Philosopher", probably Akbar himself. The last two topics are presented as discussions between the Christian and a Mulla at Akbar's court.

A rebuttal to this book was written by Aḥmad b. Zayn al-Ābidīn (d. c. 1644) who in his "Cleaning the Mirror of Truth" (*Mesqal-e Šafā dar tagliyee Ā'inē-ye Haqq-nomā*) demonstrated that the Christian doctrines defended by Xavier were quite clearly against natural reason and logic. This refutation consisted of four parts:

1. Refutation of the Trinitarian doctrine.
2. Refutation of the idea of Incarnation.
3. Falsification of the Bible.
4. Authority of the Qur'ān and Muḥammad's Prophethood.⁸⁴

Akbar, who had wanted to hear a positive presentation of the Christian message, turned away when all he received were theological disquisitions.⁸⁵

⁸³ Gaudoul, *Encounters*, pp. 232-233. Cf. Abdul Hadi Hairi, 'Reflections', pp.151-64. And cf. F. Richard, *L'apport de Missionnaires Européens à la Connaissance de l'Iran en Europe et de l'Europe en Iran*, in Calmard, ed., *Etudes*, pp. 251-266. And cf. Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, pp. 120,121.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* The present author acknowledges that Akbar might have turned away from Christianity whatever arguments or methods had been employed - even admitted truths. Also, religious and civil rulers expected a presentation of differing religious views along the lines of logical dialectic. In the early Islamic period, al-Kindī and Abū Qurra were expected to conduct their dialogues in the presence of Caliph al-Ma'mūn using the method of logical dialectic.

4.0 SUMMARY

It has been shown that from the 8th century Muslims and Christians often entertained one of two objectives in dialogue, the first being to prove one's position superior, the second to gain an adherent to one's position. Two different methods were used in achieving these objectives. The method of logical dialectic tends to seek the first objective, while admitted truths opens up the possibility of the second. There were apologists who had great facility in using either method but did so on different occasions when a different outcome was required. In this regard, one of the most versatile Christian writers of the early period was John of Damascus

Two streams of thought emerged from John of Damascus' writings. In his theoretical works, *Dialectica*, *De Haeresibus* and *De Fide Orthodoxa*, the Damascene laid the foundations for Muslim-Christian dialogue based on logical dialectic, which has since been used for the purpose of showing fallacies in Islamic theology. In his work entitled *Disputatio* (Disputations) he wrote a handbook for Christians to use when conducting dialogue with a Muslim and it has since been used by those who employ admitted truths for the purpose of gaining an adherent.

During the first three centuries of Muslim-Christian dialogue, Muslims and Christians had the opportunity of conducting dialogue with the objective of studying the sources and theological beliefs of the other faith in setting forward their respective beliefs. In the 12th century, the Crusades drew a curtain across reasoned enquiry into the beliefs of another faith. The interest in finding truths admitted by Islam and Christianity in order to gain an adherent was abandoned and in its place logical dialectic was employed to demonstrate the superiority of one faith over another. Thus the nature of Muslim-Christian dialogue was influenced by the Crusades. The location of Muslim-Christian dialogue shifted toward India with the migration of Muslim thinkers to India following the Mongol invasion of

the Middle East in the 13th century. The location of Muslim-Christian dialogue shifted away from the Middle East during Ottoman rule during the 16th-19th centuries in which inter-faith relations were proscribed. Thus it was that the location of Muslim-Christian dialogue shifted from the Middle East to India.

Therefore, in the 19th century in India the most significant advances in dialogue between the two faiths took place in an alien culture, that of Hinduism. In this environment both faiths were minutely investigated and assessed. How reliable were the sources - the Bible, the Qur'an and the Traditions? What could be known for certain about their founders? How did their theological doctrines stand up in the light of Enlightenment reason? In order to understand the remarkable developments which determine and shape Muslim-Christian thinking, research and dialogue, it is important to have some knowledge of the 19th century Indian background.

CHAPTER TWO

FACTORS INFLUENCING MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE IN 19TH CENTURY INDIA

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As previously noted, Syria and Iraq were no longer the epicentre of Muslim-Christian dialogue for several reasons. Firstly, the Crusades, followed by the Ottoman governance of the Middle East, made Muslim-Christian dialogue in Syria and Iraq all but impossible. Secondly, in India, surrounded by an alien Hindu culture, adherents of both Islam and Christianity were able to engage in Muslim-Christian dialogue in comparative freedom.

Four historical factors which exerted a significant effect on Muslim-Christian dialogue in India during the 19th century will now be discussed. They are: the effects of first Muslim and second British rule in India, thirdly, the effect of the spread of Christian missions and fourthly the effect of Orientalism in investigating the religious sources of Islam.

2.0 THE EFFECT OF MUSLIM RULE IN INDIA ON MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

Even India's excellent natural barriers did not keep her isolated from invaders. The term 'invasion' can have different meanings. The 'temporal invasion' of Islam began with the Islamic armies capturing Sind in 711 A.D. At the death of the last prominent Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb (1707), the Mughal Empire in India stretched from Quetta to the Hoogli Rivers and from Ceylon to Kashmir.¹ The 'spiritual invasion' of Islam was largely influenced by the coming of the Ṣūfī teachers and holy men to India following the Mongol advance under Chingiz Khān in 1220 A.D., which drove them from Persia. The Muslim

¹ That Bābur (the founder) and his descendants should be known as Mughals, or Mongols, is an irony of history. They were Chaghatai-Turks or Barlas Turks and fought against Tīmūr. Although Tīmūr and all his line loathed the name as that of their bitterest foes, it has been their fate to be branded with it, and it now seems to be too late to correct the error. J. Allan, Sir T. Wolesley Haig, and H.H. Dodwell, eds., *The Cambridge Shorter History of India* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1934), p. 324.

populace in India were nominally influenced by Šūfi Islam. The Muslim ruling class in India usually adhered to a stricter Sunni form of Islam although they would allow a Sunni form of Šūfism if this was the persuasion of the ruling Mughal emperor. On the specific instruction of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, Shi'ite Islam was allowed for a period of time. One sees, therefore, that the Mughal emperor had a significant influence over worship-forms, especially among the Muslim urban dwellers in India.

The religious pendulum swung from a syncretistic form of Islam during the reign of Akbar (1556-1605) to Shi'ite Islam during Jahangir's reign (1605-1627) and the first half of Shāh Jahān's reign (1628-1636). In the second half of Shāh Jahān's reign (1636-1658), Shi'ite Islam was displaced by a politically motivated allegiance to Sunni orthodoxy. Ultimately, a moderate form of Sunni Islam gave way to the reactionary form of Sunni orthodoxy of Aurangzeb (1658-1707).² The star of conservative Sunni orthodoxy had just begun to shine when the political events of the 'British invasion' brought about a permanent setback to Mughal rule in India.

It was not by accident that Muslim-Christian dialogues took place in Sind, the north-west provinces and in East Bengal, for in these areas of India, Islam took root, flourished and Muslims became numerous. Although there are no census figures for the early years of the nineteenth century in India, it is estimated that by mid-century the highest proportion of Muslim inhabitants was in Sind, where three out of four people were Muslim. In the Panjab, Muslims were rather less than half of the population, while in Bengal proper about a half of the total population were Muslim, though in Bengal the urban areas had a much higher proportion of Muslims than the rural areas. In the North-Western Provinces and Awadh

² P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, Bernard Lewis, eds. *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Volume 2) *The Further Islamic Lands, Islamic Society and Civilization* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1970), Vol. 2, pp. 41-52.

Muslims formed about a tenth of the population.³ During this same period, the urban areas with the highest percentage of Muslim population were Delhi with a Muslim population of 50 per cent, Lucknow and Agra with about 30 and 40 per cent respectively,⁴ and Dhaka, East Bengal with about 52 per cent.⁵

3.0 THE EFFECT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA ON MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

Britain did not conquer India in the same way that Muslims conquered Syria and Iraq. Instead, the introduction of British rule took place slowly over more than a century. The 'British invasion' of India began in the 1600s as a pacific conquest by traders, then was established by administrators of the British government in 1687 securing the trade routes. The first British settlements were trading settlements, like those of the Portuguese, French and Dutch. The growth of these settlements was due to two factors, firstly, the spread of trade and secondly, alliances with various Indian states which chose to trade with the West (for initially the benefits were two-way). According to W.W. Hunter, Britain was prepared to confine her influence in India to expanding in the economic arena as long as conditions in the political arena remained stable.⁶ However, in the 18th century her position was challenged and her favourable trade conditions ceased when France tried to drive the Company out of India and the Mughal Empire decayed to the point when there were violent upheavels. Siraj-Ud-Daulah, the Muslim governor of Bengal, allied himself with the French East India Company and then unwisely provoked and lost a military confrontation with the British at Plassey in 1757.⁷ It was from this point that the British East India Company

³ P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1972), p. 2.

⁴ C.J. Christian, *Report on the Census of the North West Provinces of the Bengal Presidency* (Calcutta, 1854), pp. 51, 67 cited by Avril Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1993), p. 56.

⁵ Sirajul Islam ed. *History of Bangladesh 1704-1971* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1992), Vol. 3, "Social and Cultural History", p. 166.

⁶ W.W. Hunter, *A History of British India* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1900), p. 4.

⁷ Richard F. Nyrop, *Area Handbook for Bangladesh* (Washington D.C.: Government Press, 1975), pp.18, 19.

embarked on a course of military expansion in India. Nevertheless, Britain did not take over the government of the country from the East India Company until 1879, twenty-two years after the Indian Mutiny in 1857.

On the one hand, British political administration assured favourable conditions for students of Islam to investigate the wealth of knowledge in India about Islamic sources, theology and culture. On the other hand, Indian nationals conceded that at best the British political administration was more efficient than the previous Indian administrations, but they quickly noted that it was not home rule and therefore unjustified. They further alleged that even where there were bright points of light in colonial rule, these were usually accomplished by unique persons whose dedicated labours stand out against a darker backdrop of an otherwise misguided enterprise. Indian nationals contended that at worst British rule in India was the cause of severe political and social problems.⁸

3.1 THE MUSLIM RESPONSE TO BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

Educated Muslims and Hindus were not slow to recognise the economic and educational benefits which came with British rule. Accordingly, some well-to-do Indians tolerated British rule, but even they moved culturally toward their British rulers only as far as was necessary to participate in material benefits.⁹ Oddly enough, the people from the uneducated classes who stood to benefit most by British rule were the most resistant to it. This class of people did not always regard the gifts of relative peace, order, justice and security in the same manner as the Westerner who bestowed them. Indian Muslims in particular expressed a desire for Muslim rule in the words of a Persian proverb known in India: "A

⁸ W.S. Lilly, *India and Its Problems* (London: 1902), p. 243, cited by Lothrop Stoddard, *The New World of Islam* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), p. 95.

⁹ Lothrop Stoddard, *The New World of Islam*, p. 95.

Muslim ruler is better though he oppress me rather than a *kafir* (an 'unbeliever', in other words, a Christian) though he give me prosperity."¹⁰

Conservative Islamic reformers called for an overthrow of British rule on the basis that the British had displaced Islamic rulers, laws, and languages in India. For over a thousand years, from 711 to 1790, penal justice in Muslim regions of India had been dispensed according to the same Shari'a norms of Awrangzib's era. However, in 1833, Muslim law was replaced with British secular law.¹¹ Other significant changes followed in 1864 when the Muslim religious judges or *qadis*, who had judged Muslim communities, were replaced by secular judges.¹² Between 1837 and 1864 Persian was replaced as the official language of the law courts by English and the vernaculars of India.¹³ The effect of suspending Shari'a Law, Islamic judges and Persian from legal usage set the stage for the debate about whether India was properly *dār al-ḥarb* (land of war) or *dār al-Islam* (land of submission to God). If it was *dār al-ḥarb* then Muslims were obliged to conduct a *jihād* (holy war) against the foreign conquerors.

Liberal reformed Muslim scholars before and after the Indian Mutiny of 1857 argued that India was not *dār al-ḥarb* i.e. an 'abode of war'; nor should a Holy War (*jihād*) be commenced to overthrow the British rule. Before the great revolt, Sayyid Ahmad Khān's arguments for the acceptance of British rule as legitimate were drawn from Muslim concepts of the sultanate as well as Muslim jurisprudence.¹⁴ He also repeated these concepts in his speech delivered at Muradabad in 1858 following the great revolt. At this time, Khān prayed for the welfare of the Viceroy and Queen Victoria, then he addressed God as One who had

¹⁰ A. Woeikof, *Le Turkestan Russe* (Paris: 1914) cited by Stoddard, *The New World of Islam*, p. 111.

¹¹ Hardy, *The Muslims*, p. 50.

¹² J. Allan, Sir T. Wolesley Haig, and H.H. Dodwell, eds., *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 212.

¹³ M. T. Titus, *Indian Islam* (Oxford: The University Press, 1930), p.192.

¹⁴ Hardy, *The Muslims*, p.112.

given dominion over Muslims to the British, who were just rulers.¹⁵ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's sentiments were followed by the lawyer and Qur'ānic scholar, Chiragh 'Alī (1844-95). In answer to Muslims who had questioned him on whether a *jihād* against the British should be called because India was not *dār al-Islām*, Chiragh 'Alī argued:

As British India has no Mohammedan sovereign, no Mohammedan courts of justice, India is neither *dār al-ḥarb* nor *dār al-Islām*, it is simply British India and, as Muslims therein are subject to and protected by the British government, a subtle casuist may call it a *dār al-Amān* or *dār al-Zimma*, that is home of security or of protection.¹⁶

4.0 THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

The nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable expansion of Christian missionary work, with many missionary societies being formed to send people to serve in India. While Christians were allowed to serve within the East India company in India, there existed an initial reluctance towards extending licenses to work in India towards the few independent missionaries who travelled to India. However, as missionaries made significant contributions in advancing social reforms and opening urgently-needed schools, the attitude of the British government began to soften. In this respect, the early missionary movement in India was indebted to William Carey (1761-1834) for bringing about this change on the part of the Government.

William Carey, accompanied by ex-surgeon John Thomas, arrived in India on November 11, 1793 without the East India Company's licenses to reside in India.¹⁷ On Feb. 1, 1794 the Charter Act was passed in which the East India Company Court of Directors stated that unlicensed residents, instead of being

¹⁵ *Mukammal Maju'a* (Lahore: 1900), pp. 3,7, cited by Hardy, *The Muslims*, p. 112.

¹⁶ *Proposed Political, Legal and Social Reforms in the Ottoman Empire and other States*, p. 25 cited by Hardy, *The Muslims*, p. 113.

¹⁷ John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward* (London: 1859), Vol. I, p. 56. According to John Marshman, in deciding to go without licenses, the missionaries had precedents for their action, as there were already hundreds of unlicensed Europeans in India. *Ibid*, vol. I, p.56.

summarily deported, could remain providing some responsible person stood surety for them. But it was not until 1813 that toleration for mission work was secured.¹⁸ This was in no small part due to the enormous contribution of William Carey. Carey was meticulous in research, skilful in planning, and able in execution of his plans. For several years prior to his mission to India he had studied Indian history and geography. It is said that he possessed a greater and more reliable store of information than any other member of the protestant churches in Europe.¹⁹ He had also found the time to learn Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, thereby laying the foundations for his remarkable linguistic career in India. In 1800 Carey joined Danish missionaries at Serampore and superintended the development of a large settlement. By 1801, he had completed the translation of the Bible into Bengali. In May of 1801, the ex-cobbler collaborated with Governor General Wellesley in the development of a department of Bengali and Sanskrit at the newly founded College of Fort William in Serampore where Carey was asked to be Professor of these languages.²⁰

The early missionary movement in India was also greatly encouraged by evangelical chaplains within the East India Company. Buchanan, Brown, Thomason, Corrie, and Martyn were men who could rightly be seen as precursors of the Protestant missionary movement among Muslims in India. This is particularly true of Henry Martyn (1781-1812) who graduated from Cambridge University with distinction in philosophy and whose prowess in logic was well used in his reasoning with the '*ulamā*' of Persia. While at Cambridge Martyn came under the influence of the well-known Anglican evangelical minister Charles Simeon (1759-1836). It was at Simeon's request that Charles Grant and William Wilberforce arranged that Martyn should become an East India Company chaplain.

¹⁸ Arthur Mayhew, *Christianity and Government* (London: Faber and Gwyer Ltd., 1929), p.63.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.68.

Martyn arrived in Calcutta in 1806 and was encouraged in his study of Urdu by the Serampore missionaries and the East India Company chaplains, David Brown and Claudius Buchanan.²¹ His duties were as chaplain in Dinapur, in Bihar, which was but a few miles from the important *madrasas* of Patna. His trips from Dinapur also took him near Lucknow. However, in his diary he made no mention of holding any dialogues with Muslims during his first years of duty; he confined his activities to reading about Islam, principally in George Sale's 'Preliminary Discourse' to the Qur'ān. Martyn prepared himself to go to Persia in 1811 by reading Ludovico Marracci's refutation of the Qur'ān.²² However, it was Sale's more sympathetic portrayal of Islam and Muḥammad which influenced Martyn the most.

As a chaplain in north India Martyn observed the East India Company rule of "non-interference in the religious affairs of the natives".²³ He learned Arabic and Persian from an Arab named Sabat who had earlier declared his allegiance to Christianity before later returning to Islam. In the process Sabat wrote apologetic tractates for both Christians and Muslims. Martyn wrote his own approach to Muslim-Christian dialogue in a series of tracts published in 1811 in Persian and translated into English in 1824 by Samuel Lee, a professor of Arabic at Cambridge University. These tracts were to have a great influence on missionaries in India.

Muir records that Martyn's first tract dealt with the topic of miracles, noting that to be conclusive a miracle must exceed universal experience.²⁴ Martyn

²¹ Avril Ann Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond: Cuzon Press, 1993), p. 90.

²² L. Marracci, *Prodromus ad Refutationem Alcorani* (4 parts, Rome: 1691); Martyn, Journal, 28 January 1811, in *Journals and Letters*, II, p. 331, cited by Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, p. 91.

²³ Mayhew observes that this rule prohibiting proselytising dated back to 1662 when, at the settlement of Bombay, the Principle of Toleration was established. This principle, he notes, read: "There shall be no compulsory conversion, no interference with native habits, and no cow-killing in Hindu quarters." Mayhew believes that this order was inspired by prudential and commercial, rather than by spiritual or ethical motives. Arthur Mayhew, *Christianity and the Government of India* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1929), pp. 38-39.

²⁴ Muir, *The Mohammedan Controversy*, p. 11.



disagrees with the contention of many Muslims that the Qur'ān is miraculous because according to the testimony and opinion of the early Arabs it represented the best of Arabic literature.

The testimony and opinion of the Arabs is therefore insufficient, besides being that of a party concerned; that, were the Coran even allowed to be inimitable, that would not prove it a miracle; and its being an intellectual prodigy is not a virtue, but rather, by making it inappreciable by the vast body of mankind, a defect.²⁵

Muir observes that the second tract written by Martyn directly attacks Muḥammad's mission and alleges that the contents of the Qur'ān, being based on achieving good works alone to please God, were insufficient for salvation. Rather, Martyn observes that this can be achieved only by God's grace. The third tract, Muir notes, begins with an attack on Şūfism and shows that love and union with the Deity cannot be obtained by contemplation but only through God's goodness toward mankind through the atonement of Christ.²⁶ In all of these tracts Martyn contrasts approaching God by means of the law with God's grace mediated by Christ.

Another Christian apologist to have a significant impact on Muslim-Christian dialogue in India during the 19th century was Carl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-1865), the German-born missionary. Pfander, a Pietist Christian with a deep commitment to Muslim-Christian dialogue, formulated his views on Islam and on Islamic civilization while serving in Persia, the Caucasian region of Russia, and in Baghdad from 1825 to 1837. After this twelve year period of work he went to India, joined the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and took a prominent part in the "controversy" with Muslims through public debates and written works. His writings about Christianity for the Muslim reader were originally written in Persian and then translated into Urdu for the Muslim reader in India. In the *Miftah al-asrār (Key of Mysteries)* and the *Tariq al-*

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

ḥayat (Way of Life) he studied Christian doctrine and practice. However, it was Pfander's work *Mīzān al-ḥaqq* (Balance of Truth) which established his prominence as one of the most important Christian apologists to Muslims during the 19th century. The key ideas in the *Mīzān* are:

- 1) Man by natural revelation knows that God created him and left within him the desire to have a personal relationship with Him.
- 2) Man by his conscience knows that he has done sinful acts and they separate him from this Holy God.
- 3) Man by a true divine revelation can know of the Divine plan for man's restoration of fellowship with God.
- 4) Man by accepting God's plan is restored to fellowship with God.²⁷

It must be remembered that the *Mīzān* is a 19th century work written with the Muslim audience in mind. It was not written to address issues in Biblical criticism which had become the focus of Biblical Studies in the West, but it was based on concepts which would be familiar to Muslims.

In the three works mentioned above, Pfander used truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible to demonstrate that Biblical scriptures were trustworthy and had not been abrogated. He then developed concepts about Christianity within the Bible. In these works which were written for Muslims he refrains from "hard words" critical of Islam as a "false religion".²⁸ However, in his work *Remarks on the nature of Muhammadanism*,²⁹ which was written for a European readership and describes Islam, he rejects Islam as a "system of falsehood" and Islamic theology a "mire of error and superstition"³⁰. Nevertheless, Pfander and Muir stand as watersheds between the old method of logical dialectic which described

²⁷ C.G. Pfander, *Mīzān al-ḥaqq or Balance of Truth*. Trans. by R.H. Weakley, (London: RTS, 1867), p. vi.

²⁸ Pfander, *Mīzān al-ḥaqq*, p. 118.

²⁹ Pfander, *Remarks on the nature of Muhammadanism: Traditions* (Calcutta: 1840), pp. 3-5, cited by Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, p. 145, 146.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Islam as altogether false and the new method of admitted truths which described Islam as containing truths admitted in the Bible.

William Muir (1819-1905) himself is the next Christian writer to have a pivotal influence on Muslim-Christian dialogue in 19th century India. As a biographical sketch of his life will be considered in the next chapter, the object of this paragraph will be to mention other Christian writers of Muir's era who collaborated with him or were influenced by him. In the area of Qur'ānic translation, E.M. Wherry acknowledged his debt to Muir's writing when updating the notes of Sale's translation and making this available for a wider audience.³¹ Muir personally assisted W. St. Clair Tisdall (1859-1928) in his studies of Islamic theology. Muir's *Life of Mahomet* is credited by Hughes as having provided him with much of the historical data about the life of Muḥammad which was used in compiling his *Dictionary of Islam* (1885).³² Muir also influenced Edward Sell in his writings about Islamic theology in *The Faith of Islam*, which first appeared in 1880. In his work *The Mohammedan Controversy*, Muir reviews Pfander's debates. Bishop Thomas Valpy French (1825-1891), a longtime friend of Muir, assisted Pfander in his public debates even though French avoided controversy and felt it preferable to engage Muslims in private dialogue rather than in public debate. French was Bishop of Lahore from 1877-1887 and during this period founded the Lahore Divinity School in order to train Indian clergy, believing that a strong indigenous Indian church was necessary to evangelize India. In this respect, French was indebted to Muir's research on indigenous worship forms suitable for use by Indian Christians.³³ Muir's ideas and methods of employing historical facts from the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth as a basis for Muslim-Christian dialogue

³¹ E.M. Wherry's work entitled *A Comprehensive Commentary on The Qur'an Comprising Sale's Translation and Preliminary Discourse with additional notes and emendations* 3 Vols., (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1896).

³² T.P. Hughes, *Hughes' Dictionary of Islam* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., Ltd., 1896), p. vi.

³³ William Muir, Article on "The Indian Liturgy," in *Mohammedan Controversy*, pp. 166-196.

were systematically followed up by William Goldsack, a linguist, missionary and scholar of Islamic Studies who lived in Bengal from 1896 to 1922. Because of the legacy of William Muir's scholarship, which is evident in the works of succeeding Islamic scholars, it is hard to think of a 19th century Christian scholar of comparable influence in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

4.1 THE MUSLIM RESPONSE TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONS DURING THE 19TH CENTURY

Muhammad Mohar 'Ali observes that except on one critical point, the attitude of the Indian populace towards missionaries was more favourable than that of their religious leaders.³⁴ The factor which prejudiced the Indian populace the most against missionaries was a regulation which was introduced in 1832 by Lord William Bentinck and made law in 1845, which provided that no person would be debarred from inheriting his ancestral property on the ground of religion or race.³⁵ The Bengali press drew two conclusions about this law:

Firstly, it is believed that the alteration of the law of inheritance will pave the way for a large-scale conversion. Secondly, it is believed that the Government, after a long period of neutrality in religious affairs, had at last allied themselves with the missionaries in order to facilitate the process of conversion.³⁶

A small group of liberal Islamic reformers maintained a tolerant attitude towards missionaries. W. Cantwell Smith goes further and argues that liberal Islamic reform was a reaction to the stimulus of 19th century Christianity.³⁷ The humanitarianism and liberal idealism that many 19th century Christians displayed challenged the liberal Indian Muslims and elicited a response from them which brought forward a type of Islam permeated with 19th century Christian social values. These values could readily be seen in the Aligarh School which followed

³⁴ Muhammad Mohar 'Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities 1833-1857*, (Chittagong: Mehrub Publications, 1965), p. 117.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 125.

³⁷ W.C.Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, pp. 44,45.

the philosophy of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān.³⁸ Not only did the liberal Islamic reformers admire the social work in which many 19th century missionaries were involved but they also respected their high view of the Biblical Scriptures. In this latter respect, these liberal reformers of Islam were well aware that any attack against the Biblical sources by the higher critics would sooner or later be levelled against the Islamic sources. Therefore such liberals as Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (1817-1898) set forward a defence against what they held to be the unjustifiable attacks by the higher critics against the revealed texts.³⁹

A much larger group of conservative Islamic reformers within mainstream Indian Islam cited the views of the higher critics, who challenged the authenticity of the Biblical Scriptures, while simultaneously stressing the concord of the Islamic sources with modern science and reason. The debates between Raḥmat Allāh, a conservative Islamic reformer, and Pfander typified this new method of Muslim apologetic. Raḥmat Allāh's debates set a precedent of focusing on the criticism of the Biblical Scriptures in other Muslim lands. In Egypt, Rashid Riḍā (1865-1935) used logical dialectic to argue that the extant Gospels of his day were not the same as the original Gospels and that human authorship means falsification.⁴⁰ Eventually, this line of argumentation became standard among conservative 19th century Islamic reformers.

In the late 19th century a new Islamic sect was centered around the person and teaching of Mīrzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1839-1908), and became known as the Aḥmadiyyas. Ghulām Aḥmad attacked the Christian notion that Jesus would return as the Messiah, and claimed that he himself came in the spiritual sense and

³⁸ Ibid., p. 45. Smith observes that while missionaries admired the Aligarh School of thought because it did incorporate Christian social values, they regarded the new Westernized religion of the Aligarh School as not 'really' Islam. Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, pp. 45.

³⁹ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Tabyīn al-kalām fī tafsīr al-taurāt wa-i-'injīl 'alā millat al-Islām, The Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*, (Ghazipur: Private press of the author, 1862), vol. I, p. 32.

⁴⁰ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in The Liberal Age (1798-1939)* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1983, paperback edition), p. 235.

power of Jesus. Mīrzā Ghulām Aḥmad set out to prove that Jesus did not die on the cross but that he merely swooned, revived in the grave and travelled to Kashmir where he eventually died and was buried. This left the field open for Ghulām Aḥmad to claim that he himself was the promised Messiah. Aḥmadi writers and preachers virulently attacked the credibility of the Bible, the person of Jesus Christ and the Christian Church. In so doing, extensive usage was made by the Aḥmadi writers of the higher critics and their followers.⁴¹

5.0 THE INFLUENCE OF ORIENTALISTS ON MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

The Orientalists may be separated into two main categories - the philologists and historiographers. The philologists were engaged in determining the origins of the Asiatic languages, their relationship to one another and the precise connotations of words which played a central part in the culture of a race. Philology was therefore an important factor in the translation of both the Bible and the Qur'ān into other languages, and in understanding comparisons made between Islam and Christianity.

The historiographers were engaged in determining the sources of history and analysing them from an historical point of view, for example, in relation to how much had been borrowed from other historical sources. Such analysis involved certain presuppositions which depended upon the viewpoint of the historiographer. These presuppositions were especially noticeable in investigating the life of Muḥammad. At the end of the 19th century a certain influence from European philosophy also became noticeable, but in comparison with philology and historiography it is not significant for our study.

5.1 THE INFLUENCE OF THE PHILOLOGISTS

In India, Orientalism at its outset was based on philology and dedicated to the study and analysis of the impact of the Sanskrit Vedas, the Arabic Qur'ān and

⁴¹ Khwājah Kamāl al-Din, *The Sources of Christianity* (Woking: Unwin Brothers, Ltd., 1924), pp. 8,9.

the Persian court law upon the culture of the Indian sub-continent. Warren Hastings, during his service as director of the British East India Company (1772-1785), encouraged the study of Sanskrit and Persian for use in the British courts in India. Hastings conceived of a judicial system for India which employed a dual track system. One was for Hindus which utilized legal concepts drawn from the Vedas and written in Sanskrit. The second system of law was for Muslims and this utilized Islamic Law which had hitherto been written in Persian. During Hastings' governance, it was the duty of British officials who governed India to master the Sanskrit and Persian languages in which the Indian laws were contained and to respect the customs and culture which surrounded the adherence of each community's laws.⁴²

Continuing this emphasis, the philologist William Jones took up the study of Sanskrit and in 1784 founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the first institution of its kind dedicated to the study of Oriental languages. Jones did so, as he pointed out to Hastings, "because I can no longer bear to be at the mercy of our Pundits, who deal out Hindu law as they please". He concluded that these intermediaries were often "cruel instruments of extortion", capable of rendering even "the most upright and humane intentions...perfectly useless to the interest of the company, and to the unfortunate natives who happen to be within reach of their power and influence".⁴³ The learning of Sanskrit began for political and juristic reasons but continued owing to the significant interest in literature written in this language.

On the Muslim side, the pioneer work of Western scholars in applying the principles of philology to the study of Islamic sources had an interesting parallel in Shāh Walī Allāh's scholarship. Shāh Walī Allāh received his formative education

⁴² Bernard Cohn, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command", in *Subaltern Studies IV*, Ranajit Guha ed., (Delhi: 1985), p. 289.

⁴³ Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), pp. 12-13, 23-24.

in the Ḥijāz, where he studied the Ḥadīth. On returning to India he wrote his chief theological work (*Hujjat Allāh al-bālagha*)⁴⁴ in which he sought to re-establish the concept of the transcendence of God, whose essence did not lie in the oneness of the universal self, but lay beyond all created objects. He criticised the practice of p̄ir (saint) worship in Ṣūfī Islam as a form of *shirk* (associating anything with God). Shāh Walī Allāh's theological work was written in Arabic for a learned audience. Nevertheless, he was equally concerned about the general populace in India who knew no Arabic and were therefore unable to understand the Qur'ān. Therefore, he pressed for the Qur'ān to be translated first into Persian and then into the vernaculars of India. He first did an annotated translation of the Qur'ān in Persian entitled *Fa'th al-Rahman bi-tarjamat al-Qūr'an*.⁴⁵ This work was followed up by an Urdu translation of the Qur'ān by his son and successor, Shāh Abd-al-'Aziz.⁴⁶ Shāh Walī Allāh then attempted a Musselmani Bengali translation of the Qur'ān using modern philological principles. Whereas the Persian and Urdu translations of the Qur'ān had been allowed, the attempt at a Bengali translation was strongly opposed by fundamentalist Islamic opponents from Delhi, who eventually demanded his execution. It is recorded that his life was spared by a reprieve accorded to him by the Delhi theologians due to his eminence as an Islamic theologian.⁴⁷ Shāh Walī Allāh's writings and his interest in the translation of the Qur'ān into Bengali were to have a strong influence on Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and William Goldsack.

5.2 THE INFLUENCE OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHERS

A critical analysis of Oriental texts formed the second important branch of Orientalist study. The output of research by Western historiographers in India

⁴⁴ Shah Walī-Allāh, *Hujjat Allah al-bālagha*, Arabic text and Urdu tr., Karachi, 1953.

⁴⁵ Aziz Ahmad, *An Intellectual History of Islam In India* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1969), p. 88.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *History of Bangladesh 1704-1971*, s.v. "Bangla Literature in the Eighteenth Century" by Wakil Aḥmed, Vol. III, p. 356.

who analyzed Islamic texts was prolific. George Sale (1697-1736), a lawyer, Arabist and Anglican Clergyman and chaplain with the Levant Company in Syria, made a translation of the Qur'ān with a "Preliminary Discourse" and "terse, balanced, and well-informed notes" widely used by students of Islam in India.⁴⁸ H.L. Fleischer exercised a significant influence on scholarship in India through his service as principal of Madrassah College in India and his historical analysis of Islamic texts. His edition in 1831 of *The History of the World* by Abū al-Fidā' (1273-1331 A.D.) played an important part in the study of the pre-Islamic Arabs.⁴⁹ E.M. Wherry's edition (1896) of Fleischer's work exerted an important influence on the writings of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and on Goldsack's commentary to his translation of the Qur'ān (from Arabic into Bengali, 1915). However, Muir regarded Abū al-Fidā' as late and insignificant in comparison to the earlier Islamic authors.

Gustav Weil (1808-89) was an eminent Orientalist whom Muir acknowledged to have influenced his own scholarship. However, Muir disagreed with the following three opinions held by Weil. Weil had claimed firstly, that the personality of Muḥammad had few redeeming qualities; secondly, that 'Uthmān's recension of the Qur'ān was unreliable; and thirdly that the principles of rationalism espoused by the Mu'tazilites exerted a refining influence on Islam. The works of Alois Sprenger (1813-93), and especially his *Life of Muhammad from Original Sources* (1851),⁵⁰ made a great impact on many Islamic scholars in India. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān knew Sprenger personally from 1846 onwards, when the latter was

⁴⁸ Joseph Schacht and C.E. Bosworth eds., *The Legacy of Islam* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 39.

⁴⁹ *The History of the World* by Abū al-Fidā' (1273-1331) entitled *Mukhtaṣar tarīqur ul-bashar* treated the topic of pre-Islamic history and that of Islam till the year 729 A.H. (1329 A.D.). It was translated by John Gagnier into French in 1723 and made available to a wider audience by H.L. Fleischer's edition in German in 1831.

⁵⁰ Alois Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources* (Allahabad: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1851).

principal of Delhi College.⁵¹ Muir was greatly aided by manuscripts of early Islamic sources, such as that of al-Wāqidi's early biography of Muḥammad, which Sprenger discovered in a private library in India.⁵² Muir, Khān and Goldsack frequently cited the French Orientalist and historian, A.P. Caussin de Perceval (1795-1871), on the history of the Arabs before Islam (*Essai sur l'Histoire des Arabes avant l'Islamisme*, in 3 vols., 1847-48).

H. F. Blochmann (1838-1878), upon graduating from Leipzig in 1857, went to India with the British Army and taught at Madrassah College under Fleischer. One of Blochman's greatest achievements was to reconstruct and rewrite the history of the early Muslim period of Bengal based on a combination of literary, numismatic, and epigraphic sources.⁵³ However, it was Muir's *Life of Mahomet* (1858) which received more attention than any other single Orientalist work. W. W. Hunter (1840-1900), an Anglo-Indian administrator, historian, linguist and an author of many important historical works, regarded Muir's 'Life' as the benchmark for Western and Indian scholars conducting further research from the early Arabic texts in Islamic History.⁵⁴

From the middle of the 19th century into the 20th century many historiographers focused their research around a cultural model. Julius Wellhausen, in his study of Islamic political history, *Das Arabische Reich und Sein Sturz* (1902), dared to evaluate the less glorious political aspects of the emerging Arab empire until A.D.750. Theodore Nöldeke's *Orientalische Skizzen* (1887) in its English translation, *Sketches from Eastern History* (1892), was very

⁵¹ Christian Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978), p. 101.

⁵² A copy of al-Wāqidi's biography was discovered in India by Sprenger, who gave Muir a copy. Muir notes: "this copy was transcribed at Damascus A.H. 713 (A.D. 1318); the chain of copyists attesting its accuracy runs up to the Secretary of Waqidi himself." Muir placed his copy in the India Office Library and a facsimile at the Edinburgh University Library. Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. 66.

⁵³ M. Delwar Hussain, *A Study of Nineteenth Century Historical Works on Muslim Rule in Bengal*, (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1987), pp. 67-108.

⁵⁴ W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Mussalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* (London: Trubner and Company, 1871), p. 193.

influential because it critically analyzed the positive and negative aspects of Islamic civilization. Abraham Geiger (1810-74) examined the sources of Islam and concluded that much had been borrowed from Talmudic Judaism. Similarly, Ignaz Goldziher's (1850-1921) work *Muhammedanische Studien* (1889) combined an Orientalist's critical analysis of the text of the Sunna with a deep knowledge of Talmudic Judaism.

5.2.1 THE MUSLIM RESPONSE TO THE WRITINGS OF THE ORIENTALISTS

All these works received a varied reception, ranging from approval by Western/European scholars of Islam, qualified acceptance by liberal Muslim scholars, and outright rejection by orthodox Muslim scholars. The liberal reformed Islamic scholars accepted British culture as well as Western/European scholarship. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (1817-1898) was by far the most prominent figure in this school of thought. Up to the beginning of the Indian Rebellion, he wrote on a variety of Islamic topics which included mediaeval science, Islamic theology and Islamic history. At the time of the Rebellion of 1857, he lent his considerable influence to opposing it. When the Rebellion was over, he struggled alongside William Muir to bring about a rapprochement between the British and the Muslim communities. After 1870, following his visit to England, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān began writing the *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, a radically new interpretation of the Qur'ān and Islam, incorporating the insights of nineteenth century rationalism. It is worthy of note that his writings before and after 1870 show a marked change from a liberal Islamic theologian to a rationalist philosopher. The most conservative of his writings was his *Essays on the Life of Mohammed*, which defended the Prophet from critical points made by Muir in his biography.⁵⁵ Elsewhere, Khān revised Islamic theology by accepting a more limited role for the *Ḥadīth* (sayings of Muḥammad) and *Fiqh* (the religious law of Islam resulting from

⁵⁵ Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 113.

a systematization of the precepts in the *Ḥadīth*). Instead, Khān attempted to reduce Islamic theology to that which could be understood from the Qur'ān itself. In limiting the influence of the *Sunna* (the deeds of Muḥammad) and the *Ḥadīth* (the sayings of Muḥammad), Khān abandoned *taqlīd*, or reliance on the ancient authority of the *Ḥadīth*, and accepted that his version of Islam was founded on rationalism.⁵⁶

5.3 THE LEGACY OF THE ORIENTALISTS

The Orientalists excelled in the study of Arabic and Persian, the main languages of the Islamic religion and cultures. They were equally adept at preserving and translating classical Islamic manuscripts. Muir and Sprenger especially pioneered a remarkable effort in collecting, preserving and translating early classical Islamic manuscripts which had been brought to India. Still other Orientalists such as Silvestre de Sacy and William Wright ably produced Arabic grammars and dictionaries. In this regard, E.W. Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon* is a lasting monument.⁵⁷ Orientalists of the 19th century who had the greatest effect on Islamic studies and Muslim-Christian dialogue were those who combined philology with historiography and analyzed the Islamic texts. One of the most important examples in this regard was Abraham Geiger (1810-74) who, in his studies of Islam, pointed out that Islam was heavily influenced by Talmudic Judaism.⁵⁸ Geiger in turn influenced Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), who in his studies of the *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*, made the connection between Islam as a religion based on submission to Allah and Judaism, based on submission to Yahweh.

⁵⁶ W. Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India, A Social Analysis* (Lahore: Minerva Book Shop, 1943) p. 14.

⁵⁷ Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1991), p. 135.

⁵⁸ Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (Bonn: 1833, trans. by F.M. Young, *Judaism and Islam* (Madras: S.P.C.K., 1898).

These findings led those engaged in Muslim-Christian dialogue to view Islam in a light similar to Talmudic Judaism.⁵⁹

It will be seen in later chapters of this thesis that the contributions of Muir, Khān and Goldsack owed much to the method of the Orientalists in general and to Geiger and Goldziher in particular. Like these authors, Muir, Khān and Goldsack found a similarity between Talmudic Judaism in the Prophet's time and early Islam. They all held that non-Muslims could understand Islam better by studying it in its historical context. All three scholars were interested in the religions which influenced the development of Islam. Specifically, they were concerned about the way in which the body of Islamic Traditions grew up, its origins, and development and the formation of a recognized corpus of Traditions over the centuries. However, they were primarily concerned with adapting the Orientalist approach in order to separate from the Islamic sources those concepts which were historically unsubstantiated from those which were historically trustworthy. The latter they regarded as conceptual building blocks useful in constructing a framework for Muslim-Christian dialogue based on admitted truths.

⁵⁹ Sweetman observes that as the gradual enlargement of the preceptive element in the *Hadith* took place, Judaism wielded a stronger and more far-reaching influence on Islam. Ablutions and bathing are prescribed in Judaism and Islam (Sūra v:8, 9) cf. many passages in the Mosaic law. The prohibited degrees of marriage are the same in Islam and Judaism (Sūra iv:26-27). The prohibitions with regard to certain foods show similarities with the Jewish Law (Sūra ii:167) particularly in the prohibition of what dies of itself and swine's flesh (see also Sūra v:89). For marriage with a female slave compare Sūra iv:28 with Deut. xxi:10ff., and for divorce Sūra ii:226;228 f. and iv:24 with Deut. xxiv:1. The period of waiting before a woman can be remarried is three months according to Sūra ii:228, and we find the same law in the Talmud (Gebhamoth iv:10). The period for the suckling of a child is two years (Sūra ii:233). This is also to be found in the Talmud (Kethuboth ix:1). The laws of inheritance in the Qu'rān and the Old Testament differ, but are in agreement as to the order in which relatives of the deceased person shall receive their portions (Sūra iv:12ff. and Deut. xxi:15-17) and Num. xxvii. The duty of almsgiving is laid down in all the three religions (Sūra ix:5, 18,60, 104;ii:269f.; vi:138ff; ii:86; lviii:7 cf. Lev. xix:9f and Deut. xiv:28f.) Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, Part I, Vol. I, p. 36.

CHAPTER THREE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THREE PIONEERS OF ADMITTED TRUTH IN INDIA

WILLIAM MUIR, SAYYID AḤMAD KHĀN AND WILLIAM GOLDSACK

1.0 INTRODUCTION

William Muir (1819-1905), Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (1817-1898), and William Goldsack (1871-1957) are the main subjects for study in this thesis. The reason these writers are selected is because in their writings all three made a significant contribution to the method of using truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible in Muslim-Christian dialogue. Khān and Muir were historical contemporaries and responded to the concepts and writings of each other so frequently that they can be considered as 'symbiotic' thinkers. Muir would frequently put forward his thesis on a given topic, a thesis Khān would then qualify, setting out either his corollary or his antithesis. Goldsack, though closer to the theological perspective of Muir than Khān, drew upon the writings of both men in forming a synthesis. Accordingly, the biographical sketches of Muir and Khān are considered together, while that of Goldsack is given separately.

2.0 THE SYMBIOTIC LIVES OF WILLIAM MUIR AND SAYYID AḤMAD KHĀN

2.1 THE LIFE AND CAREER OF WILLIAM MUIR TO 1857

William Muir, born in Glasgow on 27 April 1819, was the youngest of four sons of William Muir, a merchant in Glasgow, by his wife Helen Macfie, from an Ayrshire family.¹ John Muir, the Sanskrit scholar, was William's eldest brother. The two brothers remained close despite taking different directions philosophically and religiously, with John becoming a rationalist and William

¹ The following 19th century sources provide an outline of William Muir's life and work: C.J. Lyall, 'Sir William Muir', *JRAS*, 1905, pp. 875-879. George Smith, in *DNB*, 1912, second supplement, vol II, p. 659 ff. and Sir Ludovic J. Grant, *The Student, Edinburgh University Magazine*, February, 1903 entitled "Sir William Muir and the University of Edinburgh, 1833-1903". This latter source contains a series of excellent articles by colleagues about Muir. The present author found George Smith's "Indian Reminiscences of Sir William Muir" in the *DNB* well researched and based on personal interviews.

remaining an orthodox Christian. Just two years after Muir's birth his father died and his mother took her four sons and four daughters to Kilmarnock, where William attended the grammar school. Muir's mother then moved the family to Manor Place, Edinburgh where William entered the University of Edinburgh. However, before William had the opportunity of graduating, his great-uncle, Sir James Shaw, chamberlain of the City of London, previously Lord Mayor, gave Mrs. Muir four writerships for the East India Company's civil service. It was an opportunity which the boys could not turn down as they were no longer a wealthy family. Therefore, all her four sons went successively to Haileybury College in preparation to go to serve in India with 'The Company'.²

Founded by Lord Wellesley in 1806 for those serving in India, Haileybury College provided the opportunity to study Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Hindustani. After graduating from the College, all four Muir brothers went to India and then to the North-West Provinces. The second and third sons, James and Mungo, died there after short service.³ On 16th December 1837 Muir landed at Bombay. There he at once entered on the work of settling the periodical assessments of land revenue and with that work his service of 39 years was mainly identified. In 1840, he married a Scottish girl by the name of Elizabeth Huntly (d. October 1897), the daughter of James Wemyss, a tax collector of Cawnpore and descendant of the family of Wemyss Castle in Fifeshire. She was identified with her husband in all his undertakings. The Muirs, who had fifteen children, were stationed successively in the districts of Cawnpore, Bundelkhund, and Fatehpur. From 1847, Muir served as secretary to Thomason's government at Agra, which was then the capital of the North-West Provinces, as it had been of all India in the

² *DNB*, 1912, Second Supplement Vol. II, s.v. "Muir, William", by George Smith, p. 659.

³ *Ibid.*

time of the great Emperor Akbar. He continued serving on the Board of Revenue until the Great Indian Rebellion broke out in 1857.⁴

2.2 THE LIFE AND CAREER OF SAYYID AḤMAD KHĀN TO 1857

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was born on the 17th October 1817 in Delhi.⁵ It was politically a comparatively quiet period, as in 1803 Wellesley had captured Delhi from the Marāfhās and firm rule was established.⁶ Culturally, the British had wisely allowed the Mughal Emperor Shāh 'Alām to retain his sovereignty within his palace, the Red Fort. However, the grand show of the emperor's rule hardly masked the fact that he had few real powers left.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was reared close to the imperial court as his family were of high nobility. Khān's father's side of the family traced their descent from the Prophet, through thirty-six generations. His ancestors, pressed under the tyranny of the Umayyads, fled to Persia, and finally settled down in Herat (Afghanistan). It was in the reign of Shāh Jahān (1628-1666) that members of his family came to India and were appointed to responsible posts.⁷ As a boy, Aḥmad Khān's formal education consisted in learning to read the Qur'ān and then attending a *maktab* (Muslim primary school) where he was taught Persian, Arabic and mathematics. This form of education was not out of the ordinary for a well-bred young man, but it was his mother, an educated and cultured woman, who inculcated in him a love for learning.⁸

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The earliest biography of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was that of an English friend, Major-General G.F.I. Graham, *The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1885). It was followed by that of Aḥfāf Ḥusain Ḥālī, *Ḥayāt-i jawēd*, (1st. ed. Cawnpore: 1901), which is written in Urdu and presents Khān's life from the Muslim point of view. H. Kraemer's article "Islam in India Today," *MW* 21(1931), pp. 151-176, and W.C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, (Lahore: Minerva, 1943) both focus on Khān's social and political endeavours. J.M.S. Baljon, in his *The Reforms and Religious Ideas of Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1949), gives a fuller portrait of Khān. Troll's work, *Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*, is based on the original Urdu texts of Khān's writings and provides the most comprehensive English translation of Khān's most important theological treatises which laid the foundation for his studies of Islam and Muslim-Christian dialogue.

⁶ Baljon, *Reforms*, p. 1.

⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

In spite of the fact that Muir came from a relatively affluent family of Scottish merchants and Khān was descended from a family of high nobility, both young men became impoverished due to the death of their father, the head of the family. In 1838, Aḥmad Khān's father died and he prepared himself for entering the service of the East India Company in much the same way as Muir also prepared for service in the 'Company'.

Thus we see that just as Muir grew up of mercantile aristocracy in Scotland but without financial security, so too Khān grew up in the shadow of the palace which had little influence and very little financial security. One factor separated them. Muir was a member of the ruling British race while Khān was a member of the subject Indian race. As such it would not have been surprising if Khān had had an inimical attitude to British rule. He believed, however, that it was not by accident that Muslim rule had gone. He viewed India as a heterogeneous nation which made rule by another nation almost inevitable.

Khān was first employed in January 1837 by the East India Company as a subaltern judge of the Criminal Department in the Sadr Amin's office at Delhi. In February 1839 he was transferred to Agra as Naib Munshi or deputy reader in the office of the Commissioner of that Division. In 1841 he became Munsif or Sub-Judge of Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's capital for ten years, and was transferred to Delhi in January 1846.⁹

Although Khān was able to integrate himself into the upper-class Indian professional society of the 19th century, he nevertheless sought to escape into a period of history when Islamic civilization flourished in India. In 1844, he wrote a scholarly work entitled the *Archaeological History of the Ruins of Delhi* which in 1864 procured for him the honour of a fellowship of the Royal Asiatic Society.¹⁰ He commences his *Archaeological History* with a list of 142 Hindu and 59 Muslim

⁹ Graham, *Life of SAK*, pp. 6, 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

rulers of Delhi from the year 1400 B.C. up to 1853 A.D. His literary works flourished up until 1850 when he was posted to Rohtak as subordinate judge; in 1855 he was transferred in the same capacity to Bijnore, where he remained until the Mutiny broke out in May 1857.

2.3 MUIR AND KHAN'S SERVICE DURING THE INDIAN REBELLION OF 1857

The Indian Rebellion began as a Mutiny among the Indian Sepoys¹¹. It began on the 10th of May 1857 with the Sepoy regiment stationed at Meerut and spread throughout India, causing a national revolt against the British which lasted until 1859. So calamitous was the Indian Mutiny of 1857 to British interests that it led to the transfer of the administration of India from the East India Company to the British Crown in 1879. It was necessary for Muir to shut himself up with Lady Muir and some of their children in the Fort at Agra. The British historian W. Coldstream observes that here Muir performed the duties of the head of the Intelligence Department with skill and courage, his life at times endangered. John Russel Colvin, the lieutenant-governor, just before his death At Agra on 9 September, 1857, nominated Muir and two others to keep the wheels of government in motion.¹² The invaluable correspondence which Muir controlled, after being partially utilised by Kaye in his history¹³, was edited by Coldstream and published in Edinburgh in 1902.¹⁴ Muir also vividly told the story of his experience for his children in his *Agra in the Mutiny* (1896) illustrated by several pictures. This he was prevailed on to reprint later in two volumes.

¹¹ Sepoy, taken from the Persian word *sipāh* meaning army or horseman, was used in the 19th century of an Indian soldier in the service of the British. *Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. 'Sepoy'.

¹² *D.N.B.*, 1912, s.v. "Muir, William", pp. 660,661.

¹³ Muir observes that Sir J. W. Kaye wrote on the Indian Rebellion in an epic work in three volumes entitled, *The Sepoy War*. In this work, Kaye made use of the records of Muir's correspondence with the officers of the East India Company during the Indian Rebellion. However, upon Kaye's untimely death in the records were returned to Muir who completed the account. William Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department*, vol. I, pp. 1,2.

¹⁴ William Muir, *Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-West Provinces of India during the Mutiny of 1857*, Vols. I, II, ed. William Coldstream, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902).

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was a judge at Bijnore when the Mutiny broke out. During the anxious weeks that followed the outbreak of the revolt, the British men, women and children remained in Bijnore and Khān did all within his power to make their stay safe. He was ultimately the means of saving the whole party. Sir John Strachey, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces, said of him in a speech at Aligarh, on the 11th of December 1880: "No man ever gave nobler proofs of conspicuous courage and loyalty to the British Government than were given by him in 1857: no language that I could use would be worthy of the devotion he showed."¹⁵

Muir did not believe that the Indian Rebellion of 1857 had its origins in an Islamic revolt against the British Government, although he allowed that it was fanned into flames by Islamic extremism.¹⁶ While deploring any such extremism, Muir, in even stronger terms, condemned the British Army for engaging in plunder on the recapture of Delhi.¹⁷ Surendra Nath Sen, a distinguished Indian historian, contrasts what he regards as "the vengeful behaviour of the British Army unit under Wilson which captured Delhi" with the "just opinions of William Muir".¹⁸ He further notes that the credit of restoring to the unfortunate victims of war what remained of their ancestral homesteads, and rehabilitating the deserted city, goes principally to John Lawrence assisted by William Muir and W. Saunders.¹⁹

Following the Indian Rebellion, the Prime Minister of Britain, Lord Palmerston (1784-1865), wrote to Lord Canning that "every building connected with Mahomedan tradition (including the Pearl Mosque at Agra and the most revered Juma Mosque in Delhi) should be levelled to the ground without regard to

¹⁵ John Strachey, *India*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Kegan Paul, 1894), p. 205 ff. (1st ed. 1888): cf. Graham, *Life of Khān*, p. 15.

¹⁶ Muir, *Records*, vol. I, p.35.

¹⁷ In a letter to Lord Beadon, the chief of the civil service, on the 18th. November, 1857, Muir pleads for a more just policy in the British rule of Delhi. Muir, *Records*, vol. I, p.117.

¹⁸ Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (Calcutta: Sree Saraswaty Press Ltd., 1957), p. 358.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

antiquarian veneration or artistic predilection".²⁰ John Lawrence and Muir (who, at that time, was Lord Canning's chief advisor in matters dealing with Islam) immediately prevailed upon Canning to spare the artefacts and shrines of all religions. Lawrence refused outright to destroy the Pearl Mosque at Agra, as was suggested by advocates of stern reprisal methods in Britain, or to hand over the mosques in Delhi and Lahore to Christian communities.²¹ In the end Canning, in his letter to the President of the Board of Control, dated 21 November 1857, allowed Muir's strident objections to the destruction of mosques to stand and responded to his Prime Minister's request as follows:

I am quite opposed to touching the Jumma Masjid which is a religious building-because I will do nothing which shall stamp the rebellion as being in the estimation of the British Government and people a religious one.²²

The greatest effect which the Indian Rebellion had on Muslim-Christian dialogue was to widen the chasm between the two cultures, which in turn created a polarization between the Muslim and Christian faiths. William Muir and Sayyid Aḥmad Khān sought to bridge this cultural divide by participating in projects, such as education, which brought the two communities together.

2.4 MUIR AND KHAN'S SERVICE AFTER THE INDIAN REBELLION OF 1857

Muir and Khān understood that a series of political, social and educational measures needed to be jointly taken by the British government and the Indian Muslims to bring about national unity and they worked towards that end.

2.4.1 MUIR AND KHAN'S POLITICAL MEASURES

In the area of political change, Muir understood that a permanent settlement of land revenue was needed that would content the people and satisfy the need for governmental revenue. George Smith observes that "Muir solved this problem in

²⁰ Letter no. 9, dated 9 Oct. 1857 of Letters from H.M. Ministers Feb. 1856 to Feb. 1862, Canning Papers cited by Hardy, *Muslims*, p. 71.

²¹ Mayhew, *Christianity and Government*, p.122.

²² Letter no. 93 of Letters to the president of the Board of Control, January to December, 1857; Canning Papers cited by Hardy, *Muslims*, p. 72.

his masterly minute of 5 December 1861, by which he showed how the desired result could be reached gradually, on the basis of corn rents".²³

There was not only the need for administrative changes but also the need to change the perception of the British and Muslim communities towards each other. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān began with the British perception of the Muslim and in 1858 wrote two treatises aimed at the British audience. The first was entitled *Asbāb i baghāwat i Hind (The Causes of the Indian Mutiny)*.²⁴ In this treatise he rejects the idea that anyone would have followed the king of Delhi to revive the Mughal Empire. Nor in his opinion was there a Muslim *fatwā* (judicial decision) to call for a *jihād* against the British. He then wrote a second treatise entitled *An Account of the Loyal Muhammadans of India* ²⁵ in which he strove to exonerate those Muslims who were loyal to the British, especially those who were in service to the British government.²⁶

2.4.2 MUIR AND KHAN'S SERVICE TO EDUCATION

After 1857, William Muir and Sayyid Aḥmad Khān joined in bringing together Muslims and British by the use of educational projects which had a lasting effect on India and on Muslim-British relations. Their correspondence in regard to their mutual interest in education provides ample evidence that they had come to know and appreciate each other deeply. The following sequence of letters demonstrates that their friendship could also survive differences of opinion.

²³ *D.N.B.*, 1912, s.v. "Muir, William", p. 660. The situation facing India after 1857 was fourfold. Firstly, there was a dire economic situation caused by the war itself in which goods were expensive. Secondly, there was a famine. Thirdly, there was an increased need for repairs to the damaged public services requiring attention to the transportation system, postal system, and policing system. Finally, there was the need for a reorganisation of the North-West provinces. Muir understood that an immediate and heavy tax on the Indian populace would result in great suffering. He therefore proposed a very gradual tax on wheat, rice and other corn to reorganize the government and fund the civil infrastructure. George Smith, s.v. "Muir, William", *D.N.B.*, 1912, p. 660.

²⁴ Khān, *Asbāb i baghāwat i Hind (The Causes of the Indian Mutiny)* (Moradabad: 1858), 2nd. ed., (Agra: 1873). Cf. Baljon, *Reforms*, p. 14.

²⁵ Khān, *An Account of the Loyal Muhammadans of India*, 3 parts, (Meerut: 1860-61).

²⁶ Baljon, *Reforms*, p. 14.

In 1869, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and his two sons went to England where one, Sayyid Maḥmud, was recommended by William Muir for the first scholarship of the North-West Provinces. While in England, Khān wrote some critical remarks about British government educational policy, and Muir, on the 7th of February 1870, called his statement into question. Khān felt that in doing so, Muir had accused him of a direct falsehood. Muir's answer to Khān on the 9th of November reflects his concern in clarifying the issue: "My dear Syed Ahmed, I should never have dreamt of imputing to you anything approaching to a misstatement of facts. I differed, and still differ, as to the inferences drawn by you therefrom; but that implies no disparagement whatever of yourself."²⁷ Khān immediately replied to Muir:

My dear Sir William Muir,--I cannot tell you what a load your most kind and most gratifying letter of the 9th instant has taken off my mind. I thank you most heartily for having condescended to reply to my letter so soon, and I shall take the first opportunity of waiting on you at Allahabad in order personally to express my thanks. Yours most sincerely and respectfully, Syed Ahmed.²⁸

2.4.2.1 MUIR'S SERVICE TO EDUCATION

Throughout his life, Muir displayed an interest in securing the right for all Indians to receive an education. He had previously secured passage of the Education Despatch of 1854 which in theory opened every school and college to every caste and every outcast in India. Muir was a visionary in setting forward the need for women's educational rights even in such bastions of conservative Indian Islam as Bareilly.²⁹ He also checked, and finally abolished, female infanticide, without creating political discontent. In the area of higher education Muir founded Muir College and University at Allahabad in 1858, only one year after the rebellion.

²⁷ Graham, *Life*, pp. 136, 137.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

²⁹ Muir, "Speech at Durbar held at Bareilly, 4th December 1868", *Addresses made in the North-West Provinces by Sir W. Muir* (Simla: Govt. Press, 1876), pp. 7,8.

He then supported Khān in his plan for a Muslim University at Aligarh. Muir himself was asked by Khān to give the inaugural address, which he did in 1875.³⁰

2.4.2.2 KHĀN'S SERVICE IN EDUCATION

Graham regards Khān's establishment of Aligarh College as "the crowning achievement of his work."³¹ Khān's effort grew out of his belief that an uneducated person was:

like a gray marble block, as long as it is not touched by the hand of a sculptor...so long its splendour, its beautiful form, its bewitching colours and its fine designs remain concealed.³²

He predicted that "if in our country education will be sufficiently spread, then we shall have sufficient means to arise from our backward position."³³ He realized that the most important contribution which he could bring to this situation was a fine educational institution for Muslim youths. For he knew that year after year, century after century, the same subjects with the same text-books had been taught in the *maktabs* (Arabic writing-schools) and madrasas (Islamic colleges). Khān, with his usual candour, stated that:"the most powerful factors in accounting for the backwardness of Muslims in India are to be found in pride of race, a memory of by-gone superiority, religious fears, and a not unnatural attachment to the learning of Islam".³⁴ His ideas on education, presented before the Scientific Society of India in 1864, were adopted. This gave impetus to his further work in education. John Lawrence, then the Viceroy of India, at the recommendation of William Muir, presented a gold medal and a copy of Macaulay's work to Sayyid Aḥmad Khān for his services in the cause of education. The book was inscribed:

³⁰ Graham, *Life of SAK*, pp. 167, 168.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Tahzīb al-Akhlāq*, (1870-1876) ed. of Faḍl al-Dīn, part 2, p. 32.

³³ A quotation from Khān's opening speech at the Muhammadan Educational Conference on 27 Dec. 1886, cited by Baljon, *Reforms*, p. 33.

³⁴ *Review of Instruction*, written in Urdu and English cited by Ḥusain Ḥālī, *Ḥayāt-i jawēd*, (1st. ed. Cawnpore: 1901, lith. print, (Lahore: 1966), Vol. I, p. 84.

Presented by the Viceroy of India, in public Durbar, to Syed Ahmed, a loyal and valuable servant of the Queen, in recognition of his continuous and successful efforts to spread the light of literature and science among his countrymen. Agra, 20th November 1866.³⁵

The planned Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College (later called Aligarh Muslim University) became the climax of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's efforts in education. Muir was on the board of trustees of the College and supported Khān in its establishment by helping him acquire land on which to build it. The ceremony of the opening of the College took place on the 24th of May 1875 and the inaugural address was given on 12th November by Muir himself.³⁶

In 1876, after thirty-seven years' service, Khān retired on his pension, and resided at Aligarh. In October 1876, Muir again visited Aligarh on his way home to see Khān and visit the College. In the course of an address to Muir the college officials announced that a fund to establish a scholarship would be called after his name. "This," they said, "will be for our future generations a memorial of your zeal for Western learning, combined with your attention to the sciences of the Arabs, and an enduring record of the deep impression which you have left on our minds, and your noble exertions on our behalf."³⁷ William Muir replied first in Urdu and then in English:

My friends, "I receive your address with feelings of high gratification. It is a matter of the deepest satisfaction to me that, in my administration of these provinces, I should in any measure have secured the confidence of the great Mohammedan body which you represent. Receive the warm reciprocation of my regard, and my sincere sorrow at the prospect of bidding a final farewell to friends among whom I have lived during the greater part of my life, and whom I so highly and affectionally esteem. Your sincere and faithful friend, W. Muir."³⁸

³⁵ Graham, *Life of SAK*, p. 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 168.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

2.5 MUIR AND KHĀN'S LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Muir's and Khān's writings were concerned with historical and religious subjects. Whereas their religious treatises clearly fall into three separate periods of time, Muir's historical writings cannot so easily be categorized in this manner. Therefore, his historical writings will be considered first before turning to an analysis of both of their writings on religious topics.

2.5.1 WILLIAM MUIR'S HISTORICAL WRITINGS

Muir's historical writings include his *Life of Mahomet* (in book format 1858).³⁹ Between 1881 and 1899 he wrote and then revised his work on the Caliphate. He then wrote *The Mameluke or Slave Dynasty of Egypt* (1896).⁴⁰ These historical writings trace the life of Muḥammad and describe the rise, development and expansion of Islam. In these historical works, Muir sets forward several important deductions about the nature of Islam.

Firstly, Muir observes that according to Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (1445-1505), the Qur'ānic sūras which formed the Islamic Creed were revealed at Mecca while those precepts containing the rules governing the Islamic community of that time were developed from the Qur'ānic sūras revealed at Medina.⁴¹ Some Muslim scholars, he notes, therefore conclude that the Meccan sūras are to be regarded as timeless while those sūras revealed at Medina are for a limited period of time.⁴² Other Muslim scholars, Muir observes, contend that one cannot separate the religious precepts of Mecca from the political admonitions of Medina.⁴³ Muir concludes that while one can discuss the implications of the Meccan passages on

³⁹ William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira*, vols. I,II, III, IV, (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1858).

⁴⁰ William Muir, *The Mameluke or Slave Dynasty of Egypt* (London: Smith and Elder, 1896).

⁴¹ This finding was based on (sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 7 in which the Qur'ānic text admits that the divine revelation consists partly of: "solidly made verses, which form the core of the book, and ambiguous ones." Al-Suyūfī, *al-Itqān*, cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. vi.

⁴² Sayyid Aḥmad Khān suggests that the Meccan precepts associated with the creed of Islam were revealed and were timeless, whereas at Medina precepts associated with Islam as a theocracy were revealed which were only valid as long as there was an Islamic theocracy. "Sir Sayyid's Credo", cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 330, 331.

⁴³ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xiv.

Muslim-Christian dialogue, nevertheless, the Meccan and Medinan sūras are inextricably linked in Islam. One result of the fusion of the religious and political precepts, he believes, has been to silence all questions and doubts over religious beliefs by the recourse to "temporal authority". Another result has been to make Islam highly resistant to change. Therefore, in his *Caliphate*, Muir concludes that "The Islam of today is substantially the Islam we have seen throughout history."⁴⁴

2.5.1.1 MUIR'S LIFE OF MAHOMET

As an historical scholar, Muir's fame rests securely on his *The Life of Mahomet*, the first two volumes of which were published in 1858, and the last two in 1861. The preface is dated Agra, January 2, 1857, on the eve of the Indian Mutiny; the work had been preceded by a long preparatory study, the results of which were communicated in a series of articles, commencing in 1845, in the *Calcutta Review*.⁴⁵ Some of these were republished many years later in a volume entitled *The Mohamedan Controversy, and other Indian articles* (1897). In 1876 Sir William prepared, for more popular use, an abridged version of the *Life of Mahomet* in one volume. This edition omitted the greater portion of the notes, and the introductory chapters on the pre-Islamic history of Arabia, as well as the summaries of the sūras of the Qur'ān, but included the whole of the *Life* proper, and the chapter on the sources of information. A revised edition, with such changes as were required by the progress of research, appeared in 1894.⁴⁶

Lyall notes: "Ever since its original publication, Sir William Muir's *Life* has held the field as the standard presentation, in English, of the career of the Prophet of Islam."⁴⁷ Lyall observes that while Muir availed himself of the labours of his predecessors, Weil, Sprenger and Caussin de Perceval, he founded his *Life of Mahomet* on original authorities, which, at the time when he wrote, had for the

⁴⁴ Muir, *Caliphate*, p. 598.

⁴⁵ C.J. Lyall, "Obituary Notices, "Sir William Muir", *JRAS*, January, 1905, pp. 875, 876.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 876.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

most part not yet been printed.⁴⁸ Lyall notes that Muir had a thorough knowledge of the Arabic Qur'ān and the commentaries on it, which provided the foundation of his research.⁴⁹ He further remarks that the manuscripts which Muir used, and which are now deposited in the India Office Library, consisted of an abridgement of Ibn Hishām's *Sīrat al-rasūl*, which was the autograph of the compiler, dating from A.H. 707; the volume of al-Ṭabarī's *Annals* dealing with the whole of the Prophet's life except the last five years; and, most importantly to Muir, the portion of the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, the secretary of al-Wāqidi, giving the traditions relating to Muḥammad's career.⁵⁰ For the Medinan period of Muḥammad's life Muir was able to use Von Kremer's edition in the *Bibliotheca Indica* of the *Maghāzī* of al-Wāqidi. Furthermore, Lyall observes, Muir had access to the great collections of traditions made by al-Bukhārī and al-Tirmidhī. The study of the Islamic traditions was that branch of Islamic learning most cultivated by Indian scholars, and in Muir's study of the Sunna, he had the assistance of the most erudite men to be found in India.⁵¹

Smith, Lyall and others regarded Muir's introductory chapter on the sources of the biography of Muḥammad as having been written with a skill and clarity never before achieved. They regarded Muir's greatest strength as being his careful application of the historical-critical method in evaluating the Qur'ān and the supplementary data of tradition and the biographies in writing a biography of Muḥammad. Lyall considers that Muir's biography of Muḥammad would be read with profit by those who wished to construct a rational account of the origins of the faith of Islam. On the other hand, he admits:

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 875-876.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 876.

⁵¹ Ibid.

It cannot be denied that the work is marked with a polemic character which must necessarily render it in some degree antipathetic to those who profess the religion of Muhammad.⁵²

Lyall further observes that Muir wrote his *Life of Mahomet* during a time of controversy between Islam and Christianity in India, and the echoes of that controversy make themselves heard from time to time as the narrative proceeds. Yet, he notes, considering how Muir dealt sympathetically with the character of Muḥammad in chapter 37: "It can scarcely be doubted that the author always strives to be just and fair: anyone who has read the thirty-seventh chapter, dealing with the character of the Prophet, must be convinced of this."⁵³

2.5.1.2 MUIR'S CALIPHATE

After his return to Europe, Muir continued to occupy himself with Islamic history, and produced several volumes on the Caliphate: *The Early Caliphate and the Rise of Islam* (1881),⁵⁴ *Annals of the Early Caliphate* (1883), and *The Caliphate, Its Rise, Decline and Fall* (1899)⁵⁵. *The Annals of the Early Caliphate* is based chiefly upon the Chronicles of al-Ṭabarī and the *Kāmil* of Ibn al-Athīr.⁵⁶ Muir also utilised al-Balādhurī in *The Annals of the Early Caliphate*. Muir paid tribute to Gustav Weil's *Geschichte der Chalifen* in the preface to the second edition of Muir's *Caliphate* (September 1891) where he wrote:

Towards the close, and especially for the brief chapter on the Caliphate under the Mameluke dynasty, I have drawn largely on Weil's admirable *Geschichte der Chalifen*. The more his great history is studied in

⁵² Ibid., p. 877.

⁵³ Lyall, "Sir William Muir", p. 876 From the Muslim viewpoint, Buaben qualifies: "Muir makes some fair comments about Muḥammad's personal appearance, faithfulness, moderation, and magnanimity. It may also be true that he acknowledges Muḥammad's deep conviction of divine guidance, steadfastness, determination and honesty in Mecca and his strong denunciation of polytheism and idolatry. However, his censures regarding the Prophet as cruel, crafty, deceptive, voluptuous, sexually profligate, inconsistent, as fabricating revelations, and the fact that his prophethood attenuated into worldly and evil affairs, counteract any fair comments." Jamal Muḥammad Buaben, *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West: A Study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt*, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1996), p. 41.

⁵⁴ William Muir, *The Early Caliphate and the Rise of Islam* (London: Smith Elder, 1881).

⁵⁵ *The Caliphate* is a reworking (1st 1891) of the 1883 *Annals* and the 1899 edition is the date of the 3rd edition.

⁵⁶ Lyall, "Sir William Muir", pp. 876,877.

connection with the original authorities, the more one is impressed with the vast research, the unfailing accuracy, and the dispassionate judgment of the author.⁵⁷

2.5.1.3 MUIR'S HISTORY OF THE MAMELUKE DYNASTY

In 1896, Muir gave to the scholarly world his last historical work on Islam, his *History of the Mameluke or Slave dynasty of Egypt*. This is regarded by Lyall and more contemporary scholars such as Dunlop to be mainly founded on the last two volumes of Weil's *Geschichte der Chalifen*.⁵⁸ Lyall considers the History of the Mameluke Dynasty, like the *Caliphate*, to be marked by:

a clear and engaging arrangement of historical materials and in its rapid outlines is well calculated to give an accurate idea of the rule of the Slave Dynasty of Egypt which was as one of the most extraordinary experiments in government which have ever been tried in human history.⁵⁹

In the light of modern scholarship Muir's work on the Mamluks would very likely be regarded as outdated and inadequate, not only because important manuscripts become available shortly after his research,⁶⁰ but also because he apparently did not consult the rich Mamluk historical sources which were in print at the time of his writing on this topic, e.g. al-Maqrīzī.⁶¹ To the last volume of the *Mameluke or Slave Dynasty of Egypt* Muir prefixed a lecture which he delivered to the Edinburgh University students in 1894 on the Crusades, which he decried as: "that great armament of misguided Christianity."⁶²

⁵⁷ Muir, *Caliphate*, p. vii.

⁵⁸ Dunlop, "Some Remarks on Weil's History of the Caliphs" in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. B. Lewis and P. Holt, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 328, 329.

⁵⁹ Lyall, "Sir William Muir", pp. 876,877.

⁶⁰ S. Brockelmann's *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, lists a number of important manuscripts which were discovered in the 19th century following Muir's writings and added a great deal to the understanding of the Mamluk period. The first one he mentions is *Hawādith al-Duhūr*, also Ibn Hajar al-'Asqālānī's, *Inbā' al-Ghuymr bi Abnā' al-'Umr*, and also Ibn Iyas, *Ta'rikh Miṣr*, 1311-1312. s.v. Mamluks, EI-1, pp.218, 219.

⁶¹ Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, (part I) trans. E. Blochet, Paris 1908; (part 2 Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks de l'Egypte, trans. E. Quatrem`ere, Paris 1837-1845.

⁶² *D.N.B.*, 1912, s.v. "Muir, William", p. 661.

2.5.2 THE THREE DISTINCT PERIODS IN MUIR AND KHAN'S RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

Muir's *Mohammadan Controversy*, though published in book form in 1861, had appeared in the *Calcutta Review* in the form of separate articles since the early 1850s. In the first phase of Muir's religious writings about Islam up to 1855, in works such as *The Mohammedan Controversy*, (Dec. 1845), he contended that "neither Islam in general, nor the Qur'ān in particular, could prepare the Muslim to receive Christian truths".⁶³ However, a second phase of Muir's writings began in 1855, and is clearly reflected in his religious writings about Islam and Christianity. In these writings, he revises his previously held position (that few passages in the Qur'ān and the Bible were compatible) and advanced the idea that Islam (principally the Meccan sūras of the Qur'ān) does, in fact, admit significant truths held by Christianity and it is at these points of agreement that dialogue must be initiated.⁶⁴ Muir published an essay about these admitted truths which was released in 1878 as a book entitled *The Coran: Its Composition and Teaching which uses truths admitted in the Qur'ān to give evidence for the reliability of the Biblical text*. Along the same lines of evidence Muir then wrote *The Old and New Testaments, Tourat, Zubur and Gospel: Moslems invited to see and read them* (1899).⁶⁵ In this work Muir gives evidence of the reliability of the Biblical Scriptures according to the Qur'ān. In a third but important phase, one sees in the *Minār al-Haqq* (1894)⁶⁶, Muir strongly advocating Christians to begin Muslim-Christian dialogue along an Islamic axis (with the use of the Qur'ān). Muir's wholehearted endorsement of the use of admitted truths in *Minār al-Haqq* represents a substantial change even from his more favourable position in 1855

⁶³ Muir, "The Mohammedan Controversy", *Calcutta Review*, 14 (Dec. 1845), p. 47.

⁶⁴ William Muir, *The Coran, Its composition and teaching; and the testimony it bears to the Holy Scriptures* (Agra: 1855, rpt. London: S.P.C.K., 1878), p. 51.

⁶⁵ William Muir, *The Old and New Testaments, Tourāt, Zabūr, and Gospel: Moslems invited to see and read them* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899).

⁶⁶ 'Atiyah, *Minār al-Haqq*, trans. by W. Muir as *The Beacon of Truth: or Testimony of the Coran to the Truth of the Christian Religion* (London: The Religious tract Society, 1894).

and contrasts with his earlier position taken in 1845 that neither Islam in general, nor the Qur'ān in particular, could prepare the Muslim to receive Christian truths.⁶⁷

There are also three periods discernible in Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's religious writings, in which he moves away from conservative Islam via a study of the Christian sources to a philosophical position of theistic naturalism. The first period of his religious writings was from 1842-1857, in which he emphasizes an adherence to pure *tawḥīd* (Unity of God) and a belief that one must return to the Islam of the days of the Prophet. The second is from 1857-1869, when he redefines himself as one seeking to engage constructively with the Christian sources. In this period Khān contends that the message of the Bible was a witness to the basic message of Islam as revealed in the Meccan sūras.⁶⁸ The last period is from 1870-1898 when he redefines himself again, this time as a theistic rationalist.⁶⁹

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's early religious ideas had four formative influences. Firstly, there was the influence of his mother, 'Azīa al-nisā Bēgam, whom he regarded as an example of the fundamental religious virtues, and also the influence of his father Sayyid Mir Muttaqī (d.1838), who was connected in his family line with two Naqshbandī pīrs, Mujaddidi Mir Dard (1721-1785) and Shāh Ghulām 'Alī.⁷⁰ They were Ṣūfī teachers who emphasized moral striving, refinement of inner attitudes and the purification of the heart. The eminent Indian theologian Shāh Wālī Allāh (1702-1763) and his son Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz (1746-1824) also played an important part in Khān's attempt to form a synthesis of all the religious

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Khān, *TK*, III, pp. 82, 84.

⁶⁹ Baljon, *Reforms*, pp. 49, 50. Baljon divides Khān's religious writings into three periods: 1) First stage of his religious thought (1842-1857), 2) Time of transition (1857-69), and 3) Period of independent religious thought (1870-98).

⁷⁰ Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 30.

sciences of Islam and to demonstrate the relevance of Shari'a law to contemporary life.⁷¹

In his early works, Khān determined to "go back to pure Islam". While criticizing the "blind following" (*taqlīd*) of the four schools in *fiqh* (law), he nevertheless advocates a return to the practice of the "first three generations". He believed that true sanctity lies in a complete dedication to Muḥammad and to the enactment of the traditions of the Prophet.⁷² Khān's early religious writings include *Jilā' al-qulūb bi dhikr al-Maḥbūb* (Polishing of the Hearts by Remembering the Beloved), 1841, which is a *maulūd* or a devotional biography of Muḥammad written in Urdu. He wrote another popular work during this period entitled *Kalimat al-Ḥaqq* (The Word of Truth), which was published in 1849.⁷³ This tractate aims at the wide audience of Ṣūfis in India who followed the teachings of the pīrs. Khān called the Muslims of India from blind acceptance of the words of pīrs to a recollection of Muḥammad as the only valid pīr and his Sunna as the only valid path to follow. From these two early works, among many he produced, the reader can see how there are two strands in Khān's early writings. Firstly, Muḥammad became for the Muslim community a model of a life which is altogether pleasing to God. Secondly, obedience to the prescriptions of the Shari'a as understood in the traditions of the Prophet is extolled.

2.5.3 MUIR'S AND KHAN'S RELIGIOUS WRITINGS FROM 1857-1870

From 1857 Muir began to emphasize the importance of the positive use of the Islamic sources in Muslim-Christian dialogue. From this date forward, he began to advise Christians to employ the Qur'an in order to prepare the Muslim for truths admitted in the Bible. He published the first of a number of works embracing admitted truths, calling it *The Coran: Its Composition and Teaching*

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 33.

⁷² Khān, *TFA*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 81, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 45.

⁷³ Khān, *TFA*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 78-91, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 40.

which uses truths admitted in the *Qur'ān* to give evidence for the reliability of the *Biblical text*. It was published in a book format by S.P.C.K. in 1878 in its series relating to non-Christian religions. However, this edition was a re-arrangement and expansion of an early essay printed as far back as 1855, and re-edited in 1860.

As early as 1854, one may detect in Khān's writing a change as he investigates the concepts of Christianity. The Christian-Muslim controversy of the 1850's, and Muir's ideas in particular, drew the attention of Khān to the need for a really Islamic but critical approach to the sources of Islam, namely the *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth*. Instead of adopting a combative attitude which was represented by al-Hindī's books and disciples, Khān undertook to check the validity of Muir's criticisms of the *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth*. Before attempting to write a polemical reply to Muir he decided to study the Bible, since Christians used it to criticize Islam. He made a start at writing a serious bi-lingual commentary on the Bible entitled *The Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible (Tabyīn al-kalām fī tafsīr al-taurāt wa'l-injīl 'alā millat al-Islām)*, published in three parts between 1862 and 1865. In this commentary, translated by Khān himself from Urdu into English⁷⁴, he deals in volume one with the question of authenticity, corruption or abrogation of the Bible. He denies that the Bible had been corrupted or abrogated. Volume two is a commentary on the first eleven chapters of Genesis, while volume three is a commentary on Matthew 1-5. In this work Sayyid Aḥmad Khān points out truths in the Bible which agree with those in the *Qur'ān*. Ḥālī says that:

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's main aim was to go right to the source of Christian religion - the Bible and its teaching, the revealed Scriptures-and explain them in terms of Islam, the final revealed revelation.⁷⁵

The importance of Khan's Commentary on the Holy Bible displays great originality, for a Muslim writer, of his time and for later ones. He responded

⁷⁴ Khān, *The Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible (Tabyīn al-kalām fī tafsīr al-taurāt wa'l-injīl 'alā millat al-Islām)* (Vol. 1, Gazipore: private Press of the author, 1862; Vol. 2, *ibid.*, 1865; Vol. 3, in *Tuṣānīf-i Aḥmadiya*, I, II (1887).

⁷⁵ Ḥālī, *Ḥayāt-i jawēd*, p. 139 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 70.

positively to Muir's challenge to study the earliest history of the Bible and the early Church. He then attempted to study the Christian sources in the light of the Islamic Sources. In particular, he went to the source of the Christian religion, the Bible and its teachings and explains them in terms of Islam. This made him one of the first Muslim scholars to examine the Biblical Scriptures on an Islamic axis and conclude that the Biblical texts of Jews and Christians are generally reliable and not in their present form corrupt. In this regard, he defines *tahrīf* or Scriptural corruption as: "to twist the divine word knowingly and deliberately out of its original purport and true aim towards something else."⁷⁶ He concludes that while there is evidence in the Qur'ān of wrong reading of the Biblical text, there is no evidence that the text of the Bible itself was wilfully altered.

Nor did Khān regard the Bible as having been abrogated by the Qur'ān (*naskh*). He believed that *naskh* occurred in certain passages of the Qur'ān due to "the passing of the period fixed for a certain *ḥukm* (dispensation)."⁷⁷ Thus, he tries to limit or avoid altogether the instances of God giving a command during one time which He had to repeal at a later date. In conclusion, he regards the Biblical text to be both trustworthy and not affected by abrogation; still meriting therefore, consideration by Muslims.⁷⁸ This topic will be dealt with at length in chapter VII of this thesis entitled "The Bible in Islam".

In *Tabyīn al-kalām* it is apparent that Sayyid Aḥmad Khān believes that the truth of the Bible, which includes its historical and geographical details, could be successfully defended against the assault of scientific research. He also understands that historical criticism of the Bible would soon also be applied to the Qur'ān. However, he approved of metaphorical interpretation of both the Qur'ān and the Bible. He discounted the idea of a universal flood [in Genesis 47:19, 23;

⁷⁶ Khān, *TK*, I, p. 64.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Khān, *TQ*, 2, p. 30.

Exodus 10:5 and Numbers 22:11], arguing that the term *hā āreṣ* (the earth) can be taken to mean a particular part of the earth, instead of the whole of it.⁷⁹

In the process of writing his Bible commentary, Khān develops his views in regard to Christ in general and in particular with regard to the supernatural events ascribed to him. He expresses his acceptance of these miracles in the *Tabyīn al-kalām* and retains many traditional Christian views which he later discounts in his *Tafsīr* (commentary) on the Qur'ān written after 1870.⁸⁰

2.5.4 MUIR'S AND KHAN'S RELIGIOUS WRITINGS AFTER 1870

2.5.4.1 MUIR'S RELIGIOUS WRITINGS AFTER 1870

Muir continued advocating the use of admitted truths in Muslim-Christian dialogue after 1870. One of his most popular books for use in Muslim-Christian dialogue was *The Old and New Testaments, Tourat, Zubur and Gospel: Moslems invited to see and read them* (1899). In this work Muir gives evidence of the reliability of these Scriptures noted in the Qur'ān.

Another interesting work was Muir's *Apology of al-Kindy* consisting of an introductory essay, which originally appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, and a summary of the *Apology*, the original Arabic text of which was printed in 1880 by the Reverend A. Tien for the Turkish Mission Aid Society.⁸¹ The *Apology* is a translation of an early Muslim-Christian dialogue (c. 830 A.D.) between al-Kindī and a Muslim scholar known as Ibn Ismā'īl al-Hāshimī who served at the court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833). Muir contrasts al-Kindī's usual use of the method of logical dialectic in Muslim-Christian dialogue with al-Kindī's surprising adoption of the method of admitted truths when discussing the life of Jesus with a Muslim. However, Muir's most comprehensive translated work advocating the use of admitted truths was the *Minār al-Ḥaqq* (published in

⁷⁹ Khān, *TK*, II, pp. 28-31.

⁸⁰ Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 95, fn. 136.

⁸¹ Lyall, "Obituary Notices", p. 879.

Arabic in 1894, and which he translated into English in 1895 with the title *The Beacon of Truth*.⁸² This work sets forward evidence in support of Christian doctrine contained in the Qur'ān. So enthusiastic had Muir become in using Biblical truths admitted in the Qur'ān that he stated about the use of this method in the *Minār al-Ḥaqq* :

The basis of the argument is the Coran, taken verse by verse, with the commentaries thereon. The work from beginning to end is an *argumentum ad hominem*, from the conclusions of which it seems impossible for the believer in the Coran to escape.⁸³

Muir's conclusion about the method of admitted truth used in *Minār al-Ḥaqq* is that "no method of apology of the Christian faith carrying similar weight and cogency has ever been addressed to the Mahometan world."⁸⁴ By reintroducing the method of admitted truth to the Muslim-Christian dialogues held in India during the 19th century, Muir widened the scope of these discussions and placed them on a foundation at once more acceptable to the Muslim and equally faithful to the Muslim and Christian sources.

Another work demonstrating Muir's cultural understanding of the Muslims' appreciation of evidence based on historical tradition is, *The Lord's Supper An Abiding Witness to the Death of Christ* (London: RTS, 1895). In this work, Muir cites the continuous tradition of the observance of the Lord's Supper in memory of Jesus' crucifixion by Christians in many lands from the first century onwards. Muir also wrote a history of the Christian Church for an Urdu audience entitled *Masīḥī kalīsā kī tārikh* (History of the Christian Church).⁸⁵

⁸² *Minār al-Ḥaqq* (*The Beacon of Truth*) or *Testimony of the Coran to the Truth of the Christian Religion*, translated from the Arabic by William Muir, (London: RTS, 1895). The identity of the author of this work was not disclosed by Muir until some years later when he was identified as an Arab Protestant Christian by the name of 'Atiyah from Syria, who lived in the 19th century. Cf. Cornelius H. Patton ed., *Christian Literature in Moslem Lands*, (New York: George H. Doran, 1923), p. 63.

⁸³ *Minar*, Trans, Muir, pp. 7,8.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Masīḥī kalīsā kī tārikh* (Agra: n.p., 1848). Cf *TK*, I, p. 93.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, upon returning from England in 1870 where he had been exposed to Western source criticism, changed his theological method. He made his new-found goal the interpretation of Islam as a natural religion, and in his religious reforms from this date forward he asked whether any particular aspect of Islam could be brought into line with Nature and its laws. To accomplish this objective, he not only adopted a new vocabulary for expressing his religious thoughts but also undertook the task of bringing his religious thoughts in line with science. He believed that one could no longer accept evidence which contradicted empirical evidence. He rejects the idea that any religion, including Islam, could be accepted on the basis of miracle. Between 1880-95 Khān wrote *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, (commentary on the Qur'ān in 6 volumes). In the *Tafsīr*, he begins the process of demythologizing the miracles about Jesus which he had previously endorsed in the *Tabyīn al-kalām*. For example, in the *Tabyīn al-kalām*, he had accepted the concept of the Virgin Birth of Jesus, as it finds support from the Qur'ān in sūra iii ('*Al-'Imrān*):44-47 and sūra xix (*Maryam*): 19-22. After his denial of the supernatural in 1870, he rescinds this statement in the *Tafsīr*, stating: "the disciples of Jesus knew and accepted that he was proceeded from the seed of Joseph".⁸⁶ At the time of his writing of *Tabyīn al-kalām* he held that "there is a special relationship between Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God, as the Qur'ān (also) states, Jesus is 'spirit of God' (*rūḥ Allāh*) and "Apostle of God" (*rasūl Allāh*), and in this sense He can also be named 'Son of God'.⁸⁷ However, in his *Tafsīr* he explains that the origin of Christ's epithet 'Son of God' was that:

Among the Greeks it was commonly held that a very holy and reverend person should be called 'Son of God': Hercules, Romulus, Pythagoras, Plato are all called sons of a Greek god...When the disciples intended to

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Khān, *TK*, III, pp. 2-15, cited by cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 96.

spread the Christian religion by means of the Greek language, they had to give Christ such a title of honour.⁸⁸

The crucifixion of Jesus remained the enigma for Sayyid Aḥmad Khān. Initially, he accepted the Sunni Muslim tradition concerning the crucifixion which holds that someone was substituted in the place of Jesus on the cross while Jesus himself was taken up to heaven before he died and will return to earth as the *Mahdī*. However, by the time of the writing of the *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, he had a different hypothesis, namely, that Jesus was crucified but did not die on the cross. Instead, he contends that:

After three or four hours Christ was taken down from the cross and it is certain that at that moment he was still alive. Then the disciples concealed him in a very secret place, out of fear of the enmity of the Jews...and they spread the rumour that Christ ascended to heaven.⁸⁹

When Sayyid Aḥmad Khān turned to apply his new-found rationalistic pre-suppositions to Islam, he contended that one accepted Islam on the basis of Muḥammad's profound thoughts and holy life. Muḥammad is, he argues, "the person through whom it (the true religion of Islam) was taught."⁹⁰

Although Muir's *Life of Mahomet and the History of Islam to the era of the Hegira* appeared in the *Calcutta Review* in the form of separate articles from the early 1850s, Khān did not consider that it needed a reply until it had appeared in book form (1858), a work which he apparently read in the 1860s. Muir's work questioned the sources of Islam in the light of critical historiography. Khān, while realizing the force of Muir's historical arguments, did not set about writing his own life of the Prophet until 1870, when he had access to an adequate library in London. Khān called his work *A Series of Essays on the Life of Mohammed* (1870).⁹¹ He focuses mainly on Muir's first Volume of Muḥammad's *Life*, which

⁸⁸ Khān, *TQ*, 2, p. 29, cited by Baljon, *Reforms*, p. 81, fn.

⁸⁹ Khān, *TQ*, II, p. 43, cited by Baljon, *Reforms*, p. 82.

⁹⁰ Khān, *TFA*, vol. I, pt. II, p. 187, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 101.

⁹¹ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *A Series of Essays on the Life of Mohammed*, vol. I, (London: Trubner, 1869), pp. 128ff.

examines the "sources" of a biography of the Prophet. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān questions Muir's choice rather than use of Islamic sources. In particular, he contends that Muir relied too much on al-Wāqīdī to the exclusion of Abu'l-Fidā' (1273-1332), whom he regards as a better source. Ḥālī states that the two main objectives of Khān's writings were to present the essence of Islam to the peoples of Christendom and to correct the mistaken ideas regarding the "Founder of Islam".⁹² While Khān was approving of Muir's general assessment of the Qur'ān as "the genuine and unaltered record of the words spoken or dictated by Muḥammad himself",⁹³ he rejects Muir's suggestion that a part of Muḥammad's "revealed words may possibly have been lost, destroyed or become obsolete."⁹⁴ Khān also defends the traditional arrangement of the Qur'ān against Muir's criticism of its being "a chaotic mingling of subjects, ever and anon disjoined as well by chronology as by sense."⁹⁵ Khān considers this to demonstrate a lack of understanding of Muslim literature.⁹⁶ Muir maintained that the traditions and the collections of the Sunna were unreliable. Initially, Khān rejected this criticism, but he also was led to the conclusion that very few of the Islamic traditions were reliable. In the end he accepted only the Qur'ān and portions of the Bible that qualified as dictated revelation (such as the Sermon on the Mount), as divinely revealed. These points are discussed in full in Chapter Four of this thesis.

2.5.5 MUIR AND KHĀN'S FINAL YEARS OF SERVICE AND LEGACY

2.5.5.1 MUIR'S FINAL YEARS OF SERVICE AND HIS LEGACY

Acting as provisional member of the governor-general's legislative council from 1864, Muir became foreign secretary under John, Lord Lawrence in 1867 when he was created K.C.S.I.⁹⁷ From 1868-1874 Muir held the high office of

⁹² Ibid., p. 128.

⁹³ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. v.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. VII.

⁹⁷ Knight Commander of the Star of India (a British title).

Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western provinces. On his retirement from India in 1876 he accepted the invitation of Lord Salisbury, Secretary of State for India, to join the council of India in London, but he resigned his seat there on 15th December 1885 on being appointed Principal of Edinburgh University. That office he held till his death in 1905. At the University of Edinburgh, Muir identified himself with students of all races and creeds. He believed, however, that he stood in the tradition of the reformers who founded the University of Edinburgh and who were also great educationalists. He also stood in a widening stream of evangelical thought at the University of Edinburgh which dated from 1831 when the Bonars with Sir Henry Moncrieff and Robert Murray McCheyne founded a society for the study of the Biblical Scriptures at the University. However, Sir William was equally interested in Islam and gave lectures on Islamic Studies so frequently that a kindly caricature of him holding a Qur'ān and draped in the flowing Persian garb of an Islamic teacher adorns McEwan Hall. The Muir Institute to promote Oriental Studies at the University of Edinburgh was named in memory of William and John Muir some forty years after the former's death.⁹⁸

The academic world recognized Muir's scholarship and he received honorary doctorates from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Cambridge, Oxford and Bologna. He was elected President of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1884, and in 1903, in recognition of "the great value, importance, and volume" of his work on Islamic history and literature, he was awarded the triennial jubilee gold medal.

⁹⁸ While the name the 'Muir Institute' was given long after William Muir's death in 1905, the basis on which this institute was founded dates to 1862 when William and John Muir returned from India to endow the Shaw Professorship of Sanskrit and comparative literature at Edinburgh University in memory of their grand-uncle, Sir James Shaw, who enabled them to serve with the East India company. When William Muir returned to the University of Edinburgh as Principal in 1885, he gave lectures on Islamic Studies. Some forty years after William Muir's death Muir Institute was founded in memory of William and John Muir. G.S. Smith, *D.N.B.*, 1912, s.v. "Muir, William", p. 661.

More than a century has passed since Muir completed his historical writings on Islam and they still have an enduring quality. Throughout this long period of time, these writings have received extensive although qualified recognition. Hourani comments that "Muir's books on Muḥammad and the Caliphate are...still not quite superseded; despite this, Muir "upheld, almost without qualification, the traditional Christian assessment of Islam."⁹⁹ Clinton Bennett observes that "Muir's fiercest Muslim critics recognized his learning and high ability and regarded his *Life* as the best from the pen of a foreigner."¹⁰⁰ However, some critics have held that by including opinions from the Christian perspective in the notes of his 'Life', Muir weakened the whole treatise. Jamal Bauben observes in this regard: "Muir's intimation of Christianity as a 'purer faith' in itself constrains him and is where certain aspects of his methodology are found wanting".¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, Muir's work continues to exert great importance in Muslim-Christian dialogue and for this reason he is frequently chosen by Muslims as a point of departure in studying Muslim-Christian dialogue. Bauben writes:

We chose Muir as our starting point in nineteenth-century Western scholarship primarily because his was the largest work undertaken during that century. Secondly it was one of the first in English based on original Arabic sources. The acceptability of Muir's work as the *sine qua non* source-book on Muḥammad in the West is evident from the way many later writers constantly refer to it.¹⁰²

2.5.5.2 KHAN'S FINAL YEARS OF SERVICE AND HIS LEGACY

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān continued to serve at the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh until his death in 1898. Here members of the young Muslim elite came into contact with European culture and knowledge and this educational institution influenced many of the Muslim leaders of India. Second only to Khān's work in education was his effort to introduce religious reforms.

⁹⁹ A. Hourani, *Europe and the Middle East*, (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ C. Bennett, *Victorian Images of Islam* (London: Grey Seal Publications, 1992), p. 119.

¹⁰¹ Bauben, *Image of the Prophet*, p. 25.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

He recognized that, with the introduction of Western knowledge, Islamic sources and theology would come under the scrutiny of historical criticism. Until his death, he sought for ways to reconstruct the 'original and pure Islam', in which all 'non-genuine' elements, i.e. all that was incompatible with the spirit of his times, were discarded or imputed to the influences of Judaism and Christianity.¹⁰³ Muslims responded to his reconstruction of Islamic theology in different ways.

Orthodox Muslims in the Indian subcontinent openly attacked his theology for being a revival of the Mu'tazilite doctrines, his philosophical position for his adherence to rationalism, and his social and political tolerance of the British.¹⁰⁴ Orthodox Islam in India prohibited the exercise of reason in the discussion of the tenets of their own religion. Everything is established upon the authority of the pillars of the Faith. The perception that he had aligned with the infidel was strengthened by the publication of his first volume of *The Mohamedan Commentary on the Holy Bible* which allowed that the Bible is trustworthy and Jesus is unique. When Khān went on his journey to England, the rumour spread among Muslims in India that he would come back a convert to Christianity.¹⁰⁵ Khān's efforts to establish a liberal arts college for Muslims in which he was assisted by Sir William Muir were opposed by Maulwī Imdād 'Aī, Maulwī Muḥammad 'Aī, and Maulwī 'Aī Bakhsh. However, it was Khān's opinions on religious subjects in the *Tahzib al-Aklāq*, and later on in his commentary on the Qur'ān which raised the greatest protests from the orthodox Muslims. Maulwī 'Aī Bakhsh even made a pilgrimage to Mecca with the special purpose of putting forward two questions before the muftis (persons who supply fatwas) of the four schools in order to get a fatwa to discredit Khān; firstly, on the basis of his denial

¹⁰³ Baljon, *Reforms*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁴ While al-Afghānī openly attacked Sayyid Aḥmad Khān for his theology, it was actually Khān's political tolerance of the British that most offended him. See N.R. Keddie, *Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī, a Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

¹⁰⁵ Troll, *Reinterpretations*, p. 20.

of the existence of the devil and the angels, Muhammad's heavenly journey, the splitting of the chest of the Prophet; and secondly, because he founded the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College with the pre-suppositions that unless Muslims do not adopt modern philosophy and ideas of Europe they are uneducated. The substance of the fatwās that resulted from this report stated:

In the first case the verdict is: 'this man is erring and causes people to err or rather he is an agent of the devil, and wants to seduce the Muslims, and God regards him as a greater obstacle to a true belief than the Jews and Christians.'

In the second case the verdict is: 'It is not allowed to support this College - it must be demolished and its founder and supporters severely punished, and everyone who defends Islam must oppose this College as much as he can'.¹⁰⁶

Besides these fatwās there appeared a whole literature of refutations and polemics against the writings of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān in general and the *Tahzib al-Aklāq* in particular.¹⁰⁷ Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānōtawī (1832-80) of Deoband was Khān's most formidable theological opponent and attempted to refute Khān's fifteen main theological tenets.¹⁰⁸ Thus, one could summarize the three main points of issue between Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and the orthodox Muslims of India as follows: firstly, his establishment of the Aligarh College; secondly, his idea of God as principally the first cause; and thirdly, his views of the Qur'ān as being subject to rational interpretation and the compilations of the traditions as being unreliable. The view of the orthodox was that Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's views would so weaken Islam in India and elsewhere that it could not withstand criticism for a new generation.

However, Khān was regarded by other Muslims as a champion of Islam because he bolstered up the waning faith of a multitude of educated Muslims, who were weakening in their support of the old conservative positions. In particular

¹⁰⁶ Husain Hāī, *Hayāt-i jawēd*, 2, p. 286, 288, cited by Baljon *The Reforms and Religious ideas of Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁷ Special papers appeared to refute *Tahzib al-Aklāq* which included the *Nūr al-Āfāq* and the *Nūr al-Anwār* in Cawnpore, the *Lawḥ i Mahfūz* in Muradabad, and Terhawin in Agra.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's religious ideas were embraced and passed on by way of Sayyid Amir 'Alī in his work *The Spirit of Islam*, which is an amplified edition of an earlier work by this same author entitled *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammad*.¹⁰⁹ Also, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) credits Khān with being: "The first modern Muslim to catch a glimpse of the positive character of the age that was coming and ...felt the need for a fresh orientation of Islam and worked for it."¹¹⁰ In the 20th century, Aziz Aḥmad and Fazlur Rahman echoed this view and described Khān as being the most important religious thinker in the context of Islamic modernism in India.¹¹¹

Some Christians, including Muir, Hughes and Goldsack, saw in Sayyid Aḥmad Khān a Muslim leader who would make a rapprochement with Christianity as Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1832) had done with Hinduism in his establishment of the Brahma Samaj. In 1875, Thomas Patrick Hughes observed: "It is not improbable that the Broad Church Muhammadanism will occupy a similar position as that of the Brahma Samaj amongst the Hindus."¹¹² Other Christians, however, such as Maulvi 'Imād-al-Dīn, a doctor of divinity and the most educated Muslim convert to Christianity in India (baptised in Amritsar in 1866, d. 1901), argues that Khān's postulates - that 'There is no faith without reason', and that 'The religion of Islam is a rational Faith' - are not only misleading, but false in the sense intended. Furthermore, 'Imād-al-Dīn points out that one who builds his foundation on rationalism cannot claim to be a true Muslim or a true Christian.¹¹³

In the area of politics, D.N.Bannerjea, the well-known Congress leader, honoured Sayyid Aḥmad Khān for his contribution towards Hindu-Muslim

¹⁰⁹ Sayyid Amir 'Alī, *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammad* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1873).

¹¹⁰ Muhammad Iqbal, *Islam and Ahmadism* (Lahore: Anjuman-i khuddām-ud-dīn, 1936), p. 21.

¹¹¹ Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1960*, (London: OUP, 1967), pp. 53-54, cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (New York: Doubleday, 1968).

¹¹² T.P. Hughes, *Conference on Urdu and Hindi Christian Literature*, 1875, p. 30, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 18.

¹¹³ E.M. Wherry, *The Muslim Controversy* (London: CLS, 1905), pp. 36-57.

understanding.¹¹⁴ The British recognized his efforts in bringing about cohesion between the British and Muslims and in 1874 made him K.C.S.I. Jawaharlal Nehru, searching for communal unity in India, found in Khān an "Indian nationalist."¹¹⁵ After partition, Muslims claimed that Khān was first and foremost a Muslim and therefore "Pakistanis could rightly claim him as one of the fathers of their country (Pakistan)."¹¹⁶

A measure of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's influence is that some educated Indians as well as British claimed that his views supported their position. Others, especially the orthodox Muslims in India, felt compelled to give a reason as to why his views did not accord with theirs. All educated Indians understood that his opinions were worthy of consideration.

3.0 THE LIFE OF WILLIAM GOLDSACK (1871-1957)

3.1 THE EARLY LIFE OF WILLIAM GOLDSACK

William Goldsack was born and bred in south Australia.¹¹⁷ His grandfather, Redman Goldsack, emigrated from England via New Zealand to Glen Osmond, Australia in 1844 on a sea voyage so hazardous that the ship, the Charles Forbes, was almost lost.¹¹⁸ The passengers were described as predominantly tradesmen though of "an exceeding respectable class".¹¹⁹ Redman Goldsack

¹¹⁴ D.N. Bannerjea, *India's Nation Builders* (London: Headley, 1919), pt. II, 3rd. ed. (Madras: Ganesh, 1918), p. 214.

¹¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (1936 rpt. London: The Bodley Head, 1949), pp. 463-464 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 10.

¹¹⁶ S. Abdul Latif, *The Great Leader* (Lahore: Lion Press, 1946), p. 54.

¹¹⁷ No published account of the life and work of William Goldsack exists. Accordingly, it has been necessary to compile a sketch of this important writer from primary sources. These sources are very widely spread in numerous publications and journals. Foremost are the writings of Goldsack himself, a list of which appears in the bibliography. Details of his life have been drawn from a number of sources such as articles found in missionary journals of the time, or minutes from important mission business meetings. In addition all the extant letters of Goldsack have been researched. The present author is particularly indebted to Ms. Rosalind Gooden who has provided numerous letters and publications by William Goldsack held in the files of the Australian Baptist Missionary Society, and to the library of Regent's College, Oxford which has provided to the author many of Goldsack's writings.

¹¹⁸ Jean Neal, *Pioneer Passengers To Nelson by Sailing Ship, 1842* cited by Jeanne Whitney, *The Goldsack Story From Kent to South Australia*, (Box Hill North, Victoria: published by the author, 8 Roycliff Court, 1990), p. 9.

¹¹⁹ *The New Zealand Examiner*, cited by Whitney, *The Goldsack Story*, p. 9.

founded the Goldsack Brothers business of smithing and carriage-making in 1844, which continued for a century.¹²⁰ He also established a mechanical engineering institute, the Glen Osmond Institute, which was opened on 10 August, 1854.¹²¹

William Goldsack's father Mark Goldsack (1846-1914) was a highly-regarded mechanical engineer and from his marriage to Mary Ferguson (1844-1909) came seven children, of whom William was the eldest. It was through Mark Goldsack, who was the librarian at the local library, that the children gained their love of literature and through Mary Goldsack that all the children became very proficient in their school work and faithful in the study of the Christian Scriptures.¹²²

3.2 GOLDSACK'S PREPARATION FOR MISSIONARY SERVICE

Up to age 23, William Goldsack's life had centered around church, school, and his trade. His academic ability being evident, however, he was invited to study Christian theology in 1894 under the highly regarded Biblical scholar, Dr. Silas Mead (1834-1909), a graduate of Regent's College, Oxford and the University of London in Oriental Languages.¹²³ In 1895, Goldsack entered the Baptist Theological College of Adelaide and spent two years (from 1895-1897) where he continued his Biblical studies under Mead.¹²⁴ However, it was the influence of Dr. George Henry Rouse (1823-1909), a missionary writer to Muslims in India, which left the greatest impression on Goldsack.

The influences of William Goldsack's peers take a prominent place in his preparation for service in India. These included Goldsack's longtime friend, Cecil

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Rosalind M. Gooden "The Glen Osmond Mechanics' Institute," an unpublished manuscript written for the Department of Education at the University of Adelaide, (Adelaide: 1982), p.4

¹²² Whitney, *The Goldsack Story*, pp.43-57. Whitney notes that though William Goldsack became the most famous as a missionary educator, nevertheless his brothers were also very able men.

¹²³ Rosalind Gooden, *A Critical Biography of a Significant Australian Baptist Identity: Rev Silas Mead, MA, LL.B.*, (unpublished M.A. dissertation: University of Adelaide, 1992), p.15.

¹²⁴ H. Estcourt Hughes, *Our First hundred Years: The Baptist Church of South Australia*. (Adelaide, 1937), p. 263.

Mead (1866-1940) and Laura Margaret Fowler (1870-1952), who trained to be physicians at Adelaide University and later went with Goldsack to Bengal as medical missionaries. William Goldsack met his fiancée Charlotte Farquhar Somerville (1871-1969) at Glen Osmond Baptist Church and both prepared to serve in India. Charlotte, like all unmarried girls whose fiancé was going to serve abroad, had to wait at home until her husband-to-be had passed his language exams and had set up a 'proper household'.¹²⁵ Charlotte Somerville and William Goldsack married in India in 1898.

3.3 GOLDSACK'S FIRST PERIOD OF SERVICE, (PABNA, 1897-1912)

In 1897 Goldsack travelled to India and journeyed to Pabna, Bengal, a city situated a hundred and twenty miles north-north-east of Calcutta and some eighty miles to the north-north-west of Dhaka (the present-day capital of Bangladesh). The city of Pabna, on the river Ganges, was at that time a well-known Islamic city¹²⁶ with a population of about seven million people.¹²⁷ The dialect was Mussulmani Bengali, an Islamised dialect of Bengali, spoken by about 24 million people, about fifty per cent of the province as it was at that time. Educational opportunity had always been valued in East Bengal, although it had been traditionally accessible to only a fraction of the populace. The earliest schools known to have existed in this part of the Indian subcontinent were the Hindu Brahman schools. The Muslims brought with them their own educational system to Bengal in the 13th century.¹²⁸ In East Bengal, Muslim schools were generally attached to mosques where the Qur'ān and other Arabic Persian literature formed the basis of the curriculum.

¹²⁵ John G. Raws, in a letter written to William Goldsack dated, July 10th, 1908 from the Secretary's Letters 1908 at Faridpur Mission, from the files of the Australian Baptist Mission Society, Hawthorne, Victoria.

¹²⁶ Muhammad Enamul Haq, *A History of Sūfism in Bengal* (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1975), p. 7.

¹²⁷ Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Home Affairs, *Census Commission, Bangladesh Census of Population, 1974*, (Dhaka: 1974), p. 20.

¹²⁸ Haq, *A History of Sūfism in Bengal*, p. 7.

Goldsack passed, with distinction, two examinations on Bengali administered by the University of Calcutta and also began his study of Arabic in India under an Islamic scholar in Pabna.¹²⁹ In addition he spent two periods in the Middle East for the study of Arabic, one in Homs, Syria in 1912 and the second in Cairo in 1917 where, as recorded by John Takle, he was a diligent student and spent fourteen hours a day on his Arabic and Islamic Studies.¹³⁰ So great was his appetite for languages that ultimately he became proficient in colloquial and Qur'ānic Arabic as well as the foremost authority on the Musselmani Bengali language.

3.3.1 FAMILY LIFE IN 19TH CENTURY BENGAL

After their marriage in 1898, William and Charlotte lived in Pabna, East Bengal from 1898-1912. Adding to the demands of adjusting to married life in India, learning a new language, and fitting into a new culture, were the problems of coping with disease and living amidst natural disasters. Cecil Mead pens these harsh statistics:

In one area of Bengal during 1906-1907, hundreds died of cholera and typhoid, thirty-eight children were said to have been carried off by mad jackals, nine persons died of hydrophobia after being bitten by one of these animals, eighty-five deaths were due to attacks by crocodiles, and two thousand seven hundred thirty persons were reported to have died from snake bites¹³¹.

Rouse adds that the cultural adjustments of being a foreigner with a different character and constitution to that of the Indian nationals posed a greater adjustment than becoming accustomed to a different climate.¹³² Nevertheless, William and

¹²⁹ From the records of the Australian Baptist Mission Society, Hawthorne, Victoria for the year 1898 as provided for the author by R. Gooden. Gooden observes that Goldsack, like Martyn, Muir, Rouse and Bate, began his studies of Arabic in India where distinguished Muslim scholars gave tutorials at prominent Islamic religious centres.

¹³⁰ John Takle, *Our Bond, News and Notes of the Australasian Baptist Missions*, East Bengal, January 1912, p. 4.

¹³¹ Cecil Mead, *Our Bond, News and Notes of the Australasian Baptist Missions*, East Bengal, 1907, p.4.

¹³² G.H. Rouse "Missions in India--The Field of Labour" in *Truth and Progress*, September, 1869 in the files of Australian Baptist Mission Society, Hawthorne Victoria.

Charlotte adjusted to the climatic and cultural differences to such a degree that they lived a very fulfilled life in 19th century Bengal. The Goldsack's two children were born during this first period of service. Harold Goldsack was born in 1908 and Mary in 1910.¹³³ Both children went on to distinguish themselves academically. Harold Goldsack became an agriculturist and wrote for the *South Australian Naturalist*, *The Australian National Parks and Wild Life Reserves* (from 1965-1970), and in *Black's Flora of South Australia* which appeared in 1943.¹³⁴ Mary Goldsack, who attended school in Adelaide, was an excellent student and married in Calcutta to Mortimer Temple, a lecturer at the University of Calcutta and later at the University of Newcastle, N.S. Wales.¹³⁵

3.3.2 WILLIAM AND CHARLOTTE'S SOCIAL WORK IN PABNA (1897-1912)

William and Charlotte did not confine their activities to literary pursuits and the upbringing of their children but both were involved in social projects in Pabna. Charlotte Goldsack, Dr. Laura Hope and Elizabeth Arnold initiated social work among Muslim women which focused on medical assistance, preventative medicine and education.¹³⁶ They also assisted those women and children who were homeless due to the annual natural disasters in Bengal. This need led to the construction of the "Zananah Mission Home" which could be used as a residence and a clinic for women and children.¹³⁷

Similarly, William Goldsack did not confine his activity merely to literary pursuits. He very early on recognized the need for technical education in Bengal and decided that this would provide the best means for breaking down the walls of prejudice and adequately serving young men in the Bengali Muslim community.

¹³³ E. Arnold, *Our Bond, News and Notes of the Australasian Baptist Missions*, East Bengal, Feb., 1911, p.8.

¹³⁴ Whitney, *The Goldsack Story*, p. 46.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ E. Arnold, *Our Bond, News and Notes of the Australasian Baptist Missions*, East Bengal, January 1906, p.11.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p.3.

He used his earlier training in carpentry and metal-work to begin the Pabna Industrial School in 1907. This technical school became a well-known institution in providing many disadvantaged individuals a means to develop a skill and thereby to become self-supporting.

3.3.3 GOLDSACK'S WRITINGS DURING THE FIRST PERIOD (PABNA, 1897-1912)

Local traditions in Pabna describe the Islamic missionary ventures of a number of *shaykhs*, '*ulamā*' and *zāhids* (jurists and ascetics) who came to Bengal in the thirteenth century for preaching. One of the most important religious Ṣūfī figures of this era was Makhdūm Shāh Daulah Shahīd (alive in the latter part of the 13th century A.D.), whose grave exists at Shabazpur in the Pabna district.¹³⁸ Makhdūm Shāh Daulah was a very wealthy Persian prince who left his native land for Bengal as a Ṣūfī missionary travelling via Bukhāra to receive a blessing from the Ṣūfī mystic Shāh Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī (1196-1291). However, upon his arrival in Pabna, Makhdūm Shāh Daulah was martyred for his faith by a powerful Hindu Raja who believed that his presence threatened Hinduism. He received the name Shahīd due to his martyrdom. Though Makhdūm Shāh Daulah Shahīd did not survive to accomplish his goal in spreading Sufism, his ancestors and followers did so in his memory.¹³⁹

Goldsack's writings on the Islamic traditions reflect a deep understanding of Indian Ṣūfism, but his studies of Islamic theology indicate that he understood equally well the position taken by conservative reformed Muslims in India. By the 19th century the reformed Islamic traditions held well defined views and were represented by two groups of Islamic theologians with opposite theological presuppositions and political opinions.¹⁴⁰ One group was composed of

¹³⁸ Enamul Haq, *A History of Sufi-ism in Bengal*, (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1975), p. 215.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ The political forces leading up to this polarization of Muslim opinion were the replacement of Muslim law with British law in 1833, the abolition of the government posts of *Qāḍī* (Muslim

conservative (in law and theology) revivalists led by Sayyid Aḥmad of Rae Bareli (1796-1831) who emphasized unquestioning acceptance and observance of the religious ordinances as handed down from ancient religious authorities. Another group was the pre-Modernist reform movement of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, who affirmed the prophetic office of Muḥammad and the preminence of the Qur'ān but contended that the individual should assert his natural right to interpret the Qur'ān in the light of reason.

Goldsack's systematic twenty three year plan of research and writing reflects a very ordered and disciplined writer. During this first period at Pabna, Goldsack's writings represent his effort to understand the history, aims, doctrines, and practices of the Islamic Faith from Islamic sources alone. After moving from Pabna in 1912, he began a second period which involved the completion of the translation he had begun on the Qur'ān, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh* and the Gospels into Musselmani Bengali. In his third period he developed a method of Muslim-Christian dialogue which employed these translated primary sources in laying out the arguments along the lines of admitted truths. Thus we see that Goldsack's initial writings accented the sharp theological differences between Islam and Christianity. His attempt to form an opinion about topics of coherence between Christian and Islamic beliefs came after years of translating the Islamic and Christian sources into Bengali and using these in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

3.3.3.1 GOLDSACK'S TRACTATES (1898-1905)

Goldsack's tractates, written between 1898 and 1905, were the most polemical of all his works.¹⁴¹ They were published to answer anti-Christian articles printed in leading Bengali Muslim newspapers. John Takle observes:

judges) in 1864, and between 1837 and 1864 the replacement of Persian as the official language of the courts by English and the vernaculars of India. See Chapter Two of this thesis.

¹⁴¹ The polemical nature of Goldsack's tractates, which were published from 1900-1905 by the Calcutta Tract and Book Society, is discernible from such titles as: *Hajrat Muhammad Begona Chilen ki na* (Was Muhammad Sinless?); *Muhammad Sahib and Isa Masih* (Muhammad and Jesus Christ), *Tahrif Qur'ān*, (Corruption of the Qur'ān); *Radde Qadiani* (Qadiani Refuted).

Al-Islam, a leading Islamic daily, contains such articles as one entitled "Where is the original Bible?" *Muhammadi*, an Ahmadiyya Bengali weekly, publishes titles such as "Was Jesus sinless?" and "The destroyer of Trinity."¹⁴²

The Christian response to these articles was made mainly to the more controversial Muslim articles and in the form of tracts. Takle observes that those produced by William Goldsack, though controversial, were well read:

Goldsack's tractates published since 1900 have run through editions varying from 20,000 to 90,000. However, it is doubted whether titles such as *Jesus or Muhammad?* should again be used, since they put the Muslim reader into a hostile attitude from the start. Rather, the main task is now felt to be the preparation of a more popular literature in Mussulmani Bengali, with more positive and less controversial teaching, for the multitudes of the simple folk whose literature is the rhymed *puthi* (verse) sold in the village market.¹⁴³

In time, Goldsack also took up the writing of brief devotional literature which was more positive in tone than his earlier tractates yet still aimed at the "multitudes of the simple folk whose literature is rhymed *puthi*."¹⁴⁴ His stated aim in these later tractates was to "take up the good aspects of Islam, and show how they are perfected in the gospel."¹⁴⁵ His method for doing so was to employ truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible.

3.3.3.2 GOLDSACK'S *IN ISLAM* SERIES WRITTEN BETWEEN 1906-1912

Between the years 1906 to 1912, Goldsack published a series of six books known as the *In Islam* series, the most popular of which were translated into a number of languages. These works, which examine theological topics as described by Islamic sources are as follows:

Christ in Islam, Bengali, Urdu, Arabic, Sindhi and English (1905).

Testimony of the Qur'ān to Christ, (1905).

Other Faiths in Islam, (1906).

¹⁴² J. Takle, "Bengali and Mussulmani Bengali Literature" in *Christian Literature in Moslem Lands*, Cornelius H. Patton, ed. (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1923), pp. 120, 121.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ W. St.Clair Tisdall, "Literature for Moslems", in *Methods*, ed. Wherry, p. 92.

The Origins of the Qur'ān: an Inquiry into the Sources of Islam, (1907).

God in Islam, English, Bengali, Urdu, Arabic and Sindhi, (1908).

The Qur'ān Examined, (1909).

The Qur'ān in Islam, English, Bengali, Urdu, Arabic, and Sindhi (1912).

In these contextually relevant theological works Goldsack set forth his views about the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, the doctrines of Islam, the person of Muḥammad and the person of Jesus. They were part of a ten year project to form the basis for discussing concepts in Islam and Christianity along the lines of admitted truth. And in a sense, one can regard these works as an introduction to his major work, a translation of the Qur'ān, complete with classical Islamic commentary, into Musselmani Bengali. While the first part of Goldsack's translation of the Qur'ān was published in 1908, it was not completed until 1915.

3.3.4 GOLDSACK AS EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY IN INDIA

In 1910 Goldsack, in succession to G. H. Rouse, was appointed editor of the Christian Literature Society in Bengal and worked alongside the General editor of the C.L.S., Canon Edward Sell. One of the most important writers during Goldsack's tenure of editorship in Bengal was W.R.W. Gardner. Gardner's theological works entitled *Christianity and Muhammadanism*,¹⁴⁶ *The Qur'ānic Doctrine of Man*,¹⁴⁷ *The Qur'ānic Doctrine of Salvation*,¹⁴⁸ *The Doctrine of Sin*,¹⁴⁹ *The Doctrine of God*,¹⁵⁰ and *The Life of al-Ghazālī*¹⁵¹ were published between 1910 and 1919. Gardner's excellent works do not profess to be a comprehensive theology of Islam and Christianity, yet they do define many of the doctrines in Islam and compare them with those in Christianity.

¹⁴⁶ W.R.W. Gardner, *Christianity and Muhammadanism* (Madras: C.L.S., 1910).

¹⁴⁷ W.R.W. Gardner, *The Qur'ānic Doctrine of Man*, (Madras: C.L.S., 1913).

¹⁴⁸ W.R.W. Gardner, *The Qur'ānic Doctrine of Salvation*, (Madras: C.L.S., 1914).

¹⁴⁹ W.R.W. Gardner, *The Qur'ānic Doctrine of Sin*, (Madras: C.L.S., 1914).

¹⁵⁰ W.R.W. Gardner, *The Qur'ānic Doctrine of God*, (Madras: C.L.S., 1916).

¹⁵¹ W.R.W. Gardner, *The Life of al-Ghazālī*, (Madras: C.L.S., 1919).

3.4.0 GOLDSACK'S SECOND PERIOD OF SERVICE (JESSORE, 1913-1922)

In 1912, Goldsack made preparations to travel to Syria to improve his Arabic, and during the year 1912-1913, he resided at Homs, north of Damascus, an ancient centre of Arabic scholarship. On his return he took up a new position at Jessore, some seventy miles to the north-east of Calcutta, where he was now appointed to direct the literary work of the Baptist Missionary Society. Moving from Pabna to Jessore at this period in time seemed to have the advantage of moving to a more secure and cosmopolitan environment. However, recent changes in the landscape had led to an increase in fevers and disease with the result that Goldsack suffered constantly from ill-health.

Nevertheless, in terms of literary production, he embarked upon perhaps the most fruitful period of his career and with the Rev. Bevan Jones established an Islamic Studies programme at Serampore College near Calcutta. This programme consisted of a three-year course which studied the writings and traditions of Islam in conjunction with the Bible. It was in this period that Goldsack set about completing his other great task begun in 1908, that of completing the translation of the Qur'ān into Musselmani Bengali.

3.4.1 GOLDSACK'S TRANSLATION OF THE QUR'AN (1908-1915)

A brief look at the history of Islamic literature in Bengal is necessary in order to enable the reader to comprehend the difficulty of translating Islamic sources into Musselmani Bengali. During the 13th century Bengal came under the sway of Şūfī Muslims. Although Bengali is one of the oldest languages of South Asia, it was neither the official nor the religious language of Bengal. The Muslims who conquered Bengal at the beginning of the thirteenth century and ruled it until the end of the eighteenth century used Persian as the language of culture, administration and inter-state communication. Consequently, as many as 2,500

Persian words as well as Arabic and Urdu words are said to have penetrated Bengali vocabulary.¹⁵²

In the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries a host of Hindu writers, such as Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra, Madhusudan, Dina Bandhu Mitra and ultimately the great Indian poet and philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore (1841-1941) produced a large quantity of Bengali prose as well as poetry that completely transformed Bengali literature and raised it from rural folk-literature to the level of world literature.¹⁵³

Conservative Muslims in Bengal remained aloof from the publication of Islamic literature in any language other than Arabic and Persian. More liberal minded Muslims had the vision of composing Bengali works to make Islamic ideals popular to those who could not read the traditional languages of Islamic literature. Shaykh Mūṭṭalib, the author of an acclaimed book of poetry entitled *Kifa-i-tul Musallir*, which dealt with moral issues in Islam, expressed his fear of having written about Islamic concepts in Musselmani Bengali.

Arabite shokale bujhe bhalo mondo
(Most people do not understand morals in the Arabic language)

Tekarne deshi bhashe rachilu probondo
(On that account I have composed in the native language)

Musselmani shastrakhata Bangla karilu.
(I have translated the Islamic Scriptures into Bengali)

Ei pap hoilo mar nischioi janilu.
(I know I have committed a sin by doing so.)¹⁵⁴

Mofakhkhar Hussain Khān observes that:

The Bengali 'ulamā' considered the translation of the Qur'ān into Bengali an act of blasphemy. They had the peculiar conviction that if the Holy Qur'ān

¹⁵² Abdus Subhan, "Arabic, Persian and Urdu Literatures", in *History of Bangladesh 1704-1971*, Ed. by Sirajul Islam (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1992), Vol. III, pp. 434-446.

¹⁵³ Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal (1884-1912)*, (Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 304.

¹⁵⁴ *History of Bangladesh 1704-1971*, Ed. Sirajul Islam, s.v. "Bangla Literature in the Eighteenth Century" by Wakil Ahmed, Vol. III, p. 356.

and other religious works were translated into this language the people would be misled.¹⁵⁵

Thus, attempts at translating Islamic primary sources into Bengali were never easily done, even for the most judicious and recognized of Muslim Bengali scholars, Shāh Walī Allāh (1702-1763). This great reformer of mystical Ṣūfism in Bengal saw the need to translate the Qur'ān into Musselmani Bengali for the benefit of the populace. In pursuing this goal his fundamentalist opponents from Delhi demanded his execution. As previously noted, he was spared only by a reprieve accorded to him.¹⁵⁶

Goldsack understood the importance of translating the Islamic and Christian primary sources into the vernacular of the Muslims in Bengal for use in Muslim-Christian dialogue. He also comprehended the cultural and religious identity crisis which the Bengali Muslims felt and early on decided to put his writings, which encompassed translations of the Qur'ān, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh* and the Gospels, and books on Muslim-Christian dialogue, into Musselmani Bengali. Enamul Haq remarks: "the more Arabic, Persian and Urdu words embedded in the Bengali matrix the better, for such words from the languages of Muslim religion and culture satisfied (Bengali) Muslim pride and served to establish the separate identity of their community."¹⁵⁷

Goldsack believed his greatest work to be the translation of the Qur'ān into Musselmani Bengali, so that Christian concepts could be discussed from the Islamic point of view and misconceptions about Christian doctrine clarified. The translation was published in separate parts, the first being completed in 1908 and the entire work was completed seven years later in 1915.

¹⁵⁵ Mofakhkhar Hussain Khān, "A History of Bengali Translations of The Holy Qur'an", *MW* 72 (1982), p.120.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Enamul Haq, *Muslim Bengali Literature*, p.175, cited by Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal (1884-1912)*, pp. 307, 308.

3.4.2 GOLDSACK'S DEFENCE OF HIS TRANSLATION OF THE QUR'ĀN

The Christian community demonstrated little sympathy with a missionary's spending time and money on translating the Qur'ān. By 1910, Goldsack found himself struggling to meet the costs of printing the remaining sections of the Qur'ān. He was at this time forced to write and explain in detail the Biblical and methodological reasons for his involvement in translating the Qur'ān into Musselmani Bengali. His written defence to his Christian sceptics on the importance of using the Qur'ān is also his clearest summary for using the method of admitted truth. He argues that:

To the Muslim the Qur'ān is the final court of appeal; with him its testimony is all-sufficing. And there are Muslims who refuse to read the Bible, or to consider the claims of Christ. Now it is a fact that the Qur'ān, again and again, speaks of both Old and New Testaments as 'the Word of God' and as 'a light and guidance to men.' Their plenary inspiration is constantly assumed, and they are described as 'complete as to whatever is excellent, an explanation of every question, and a direction and a mercy, that men might believe in the meeting of their Lord.'

Or, take again the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. How few Muslims have any conception of the high, rather the supreme place given to Him by the Qur'ān! He is there described as 'the Word of God' and 'a Spirit from God.' His miraculous birth, and His miracles are all borne witness to, and He alone of all the Prophets of Islam is the Sinless Prophet. Surely we are not wrong in making use of such testimony to urge the Muslim to a closer study of the Person and claims of this Great One.

The evidence which we put before him is the evidence of his own Qur'ān; evidence which he dare not put lightly aside or neglect as unimportant. Let Muslims then learn what their own Qur'ān teaches on these subjects, and we shall find that the Qur'ān too will become a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ.¹⁵⁸

Goldsack's translation of the Qur'ān was completed in instalments by 1915, but it required another five years before publication in one volume was complete (1920). By this time both the Christian and Muslim audience had read and been influenced by each "instalment" of this groundbreaking translation.

¹⁵⁸ William Goldsack, letter to Rev. H.H. Collins in *The Southern Baptist*, (date illegible) from the personal files of Gladys Collins held by the ABMS, Hawthorne, Victoria.

3.4.3 MUSLIM RESPONSES TO GOLDSACK'S TRANSLATION OF THE QUR'ĀN

Mofakhkhar Hussain Khān, reviewing the history of Qur'ānic translations in Bengal, observes: "the earliest complete Bengali translation of the Holy Qur'ān was made by the Brahmin Bhai Girish Chandra Sen (1835-1910)."¹⁵⁹ He notes that this translation did not use a wide range of Musselmani Bengali as did the second made by William Goldsack. Goldsack had undertaken the first linguistic analysis of Musselmani Bengali and from this analysis had compiled a dictionary of Urdu, Persian and Arabic elements incorporated into the Bengali language by Muslims. Mofakhkhar Hussain Khān does not comment on Goldsack's choice of commentary, but he notes that Goldsack's translation and style of presentation maintained a high standard overall and was reminiscent of the early Persian Qur'āns in India.

3.4.4 AN ASSESSMENT OF GOLDSACK'S TRANSLATION OF THE BENGALI QUR'ĀN

Randi Coffey, the creator of the first Musselmani Bengali Bible Concordance (1988)¹⁶⁰, contrasts the style of the Bengali used in the notes with that of the text in Goldsack's translation of the Qur'ān. She observes:

The notes, in contrast to the text, are rendered in a much higher form of Bengali. The style and vocabulary of the notes are so difficult that it is likely to have been above the comprehension of the average reader. Furthermore, they are probably too critical to be appreciated by the more orthodox Muslim."¹⁶¹

Coffey believes that Goldsack may have purposely translated the Qur'ānic text and the notes with very different audiences in mind. She concludes that the text is translated using an easy form of the Musselmani Bengali vernacular which would be understood and appreciated by the general populace. The notes, like the commentary on the Qur'ān in some of the more ancient Persian editions, by

¹⁵⁹ Khan, "A History of Bengali Translations of The Holy Qur'ān", p.132.

¹⁶⁰ R. Coffey, *Kitaber Kunji*, (London: Angus Hudson Ltd., 1984).

¹⁶¹ R. Coffey, "Comments on William Goldsack's Translation of the Qur'ān", (Edinburgh: unpublished paper, 1998).

contrast are couched in the highest form of Bengali, to be read principally by scholars.¹⁶²

Goldsack's translation of the Qur'ān set a literary standard which was emulated by many future translations. Mofakkkhar Hussain Khān suggests that the following editions of the Qur'ān were indebted to earlier translations, and especially to that of Goldsack.¹⁶³ Khān notes that Reazuddin Aḥmad followed Goldsack's translation and printed portions of the Qur'ān in 1908 and ultimately published the Qur'ān in its entirety at the Oriental Printers and Publishers Limited, Calcutta, in 1922,1923, and 1925.¹⁶⁴ The next translation he mentions is that of Maulānā 'Abbās 'Alī (1859-1932). A portion of his work was printed at the Altāfi Press, Calcutta in 1909 and went through five editions, the fifth appearing in 1939.¹⁶⁵ The next translation, Khān notes, was done by Khandaker Abdul Fazal Abdul Karim. His translation of the Qur'ān was accompanied by a commentary in very simple language. Like Goldsack's this Qur'ān was published (1915) in thirty parts.¹⁶⁶ Most of these translations of the Qur'ān used the same commentaries which Goldsack had incorporated in his earlier work.

Before the independence of Pakistan in 1947, many Musselmani Bengali translations of the Qur'ān began to appear, but after Partition these faced proscription by the government of Pakistan. Goldsack's translation of the Qur'ān was included in this ban. G.B. Ball writes:

If Goldsack had contented himself with simply translating the Qur'ān the result might have been different. However, he added, as footnotes to the translated text, his own commentary. Many Bengali Muslims had reservations as to the propriety of translating the Qur'ān into their language, no matter who did it; some were ready to welcome such a venture but the commentary alienated Muslims of both opinions. So offensive was the

162 Ibid.

163 Khān, "A History of Bengali Translations of The Holy Qur'an", p.134.

164 Ibid.

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid.

commentary held to be that, with the birth of Pakistan, Goldsack's work was proscribed.¹⁶⁷

However, the present author believes that Goldsack's translation of the Qur'ān was not singled out for proscription, but simply proscribed along with all the other independent translations. Nevertheless, these early Qur'ānic translations in Musselmani Bengali continued to be read by many people in Bengal and used by scholars in teaching and in Muslim-Christian dialogue. C.D. Baldwin, a scholar of Islamic Studies, writes:

I would first speak about the various aspects or teachings of Islam; the Qur'ān; the Traditions; Ijma and the like. Then I would meet (questions) and objections from the Qur'ān. (I used) Goldsack's Qur'ān - now proscribed! but unbeatable for all that.¹⁶⁸

3.4.5 GOLDSACK'S TRANSLATION OF THE GOSPELS INTO MUSSELMANI BENGALI

In 1580, when Roman Catholic missionaries first arrived at the Mughal court in India, there was no Bible available in any languages known to Indian Muslims. Therefore, on their arrival the Roman Fathers presented Akbar with seven volumes of the Royal Polyglot Bible in Hebrew, Greek and Latin which had been printed in Antwerp.¹⁶⁹ It was not until 1804 that the first Baptist missionaries of Serampore, William Carey, Marshman and Ward drew up a long term plan for translating the Bible into the major languages of India. The Urdu translation of all four Gospels was published that same year, but was considered unsuitable for distribution to Muslims because it had been set in the Devanagiri rather than Arabic script. Although Carey's magnificent Bengali Bible was translated between 1804-1808, it was in the vernacular of the Hindu Bengalis rather than the Muslim Bengalis. The reason for an emphasis on Hindustani Bengali was due to the fact that the populace of India was predominantly Hindu,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.111

¹⁶⁸ C.D. Baldwin in a letter to G.B. Ball 16, 2, '78, G.B. Ball, *The Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal 1864-1954* (unpublished M.A. Thesis: Flinders University of South Australia, 1978), p. 110.

¹⁶⁹ Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, p. 23.

and therefore the development of literature for this language group took precedence. It was not until Henry Martyn translated the New Testament into Arabic, Persian and Urdu (1806-1810) to facilitate his dialogues with Muslims that Musselmanized translations of the Bible became available.¹⁷⁰ But it was not until a century later that William Goldsack in 1912 provided the first translation of the four Gospels into Musselmani Bengali. The New Testament text of the East Pakistan Bible Society of 1961 was built upon Goldsack's text, and subsequent Musselmani translations of the Bible have been influenced by it. In India, as in most Muslim countries, there was little appreciation of the argument that only original autographs of the Biblical text were held to be inerrant while the versions were believed to be reliable. The theories of Western critics of the Bible advanced in the 19th century gave support to Muslim suspicions that the Bible was unreliable.

Goldsack translated the Gospels into Musselmani Bengali because he realized that a Muslim would not accept the word choices in the Carey version, which was translated for Hindus. In order to engage in dialogue along the lines of admitted truth, Goldsack realized that he needed the Qur'ān and the Bible in Musselmani Bengali. Initially, he translated the four Gospels into Musselmani Bengali from Greek as this was the portion of the Biblical text most widely read by Muslims. This edition was first published by the Baptist Tract Society of Calcutta in 1912. The four Gospels were revised again in 1920-22 when a complete translation of the New Testament in Musselmani Bengali was envisioned. Ill health and an accidental destruction of his manuscripts prevented Goldsack from finishing the entire New Testament and it was eventually completed by others. However, his word choices greatly influenced succeeding Musselmani Bengali translations of the Bible.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 82.

3.4.6 GOLDSACK'S TRANSLATION OF THE *MISHKĀT* INTO ENGLISH

During his career, Goldsack developed an increasing interest in the study of Islam through the lens of the Islamic traditions.¹⁷¹ He observes that the Qur'ān provides the key to understanding Islamic orthodoxy and the traditions provide the means of observing Islamic orthopraxy. The practice of Islam is regarded as at least as important as the study of theology, and therefore a knowledge of the Islamic traditions is essential for Muslim-Christian dialogue.¹⁷² Furthermore, he notes that the Islamic traditions hold an extremely important place in popular Islam and therefore he studied them throughout his lifetime. This study culminated in his translation and publication of an extensive and representative collection of the most authentic traditions from the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh* entitled *Selections From Muḥammadan Traditions*.¹⁷³ In spite of the great influence of the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, the only other English translation before Goldsack's was that of Captain Matthews (1809). Goldsack's translation was published in 1923 upon his departure from India.

3.4.7. GOLDSACK'S HISTORICAL WORKS ON ISLAM FROM 1912-1922

During the last four years of writing Goldsack worked at a feverish pace; his labours during this time included: translating in its entirety Pfander's *Mizān al-Ḥaqq* (Balance of Truth) into Bengali, which was published in 1917; writing *Islame Ḥadīth* (The traditions in Islam), a book examining the importance of the Islamic traditions in the lives of Muslims which was published in Bengali, Arabic, and English in 1919; and producing *The Bible in Islam*, a book published in Bengali, Urdu, Arabic, Sindhi and English in 1922.

¹⁷¹ A full discussion of this topic is given in Chapter Five, "The Sunna in Islam".

¹⁷² Goldsack, *The Traditions in Islam: Being an essay on the Origin and Value of Muḥammadan Tradition*. (Madras: C.L.S., 1919), p. v, preface.

¹⁷³ *Selections From Muḥammadan Traditions: Being a Carefully Chosen and thoroughly Representative Collection of the Most Authentic Traditions from the Celebrated Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, trans. W. Goldsack (Madras: CLS, 1923).

3.4.8 GOLDSACK'S LEXICAL WORKS ON ISLAM FROM 1912-1922

Goldsack dedicated as his farewell gift to all future missionary writers and translators his *Musselmani Bengali-English Dictionary*, published by CLS for India in 1923.¹⁷⁴ This work, containing nearly six thousand Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Hindi words commonly used by the Muslims of Bengal, was the first of its kind. Goldsack's *Musselmani Bengali-English Dictionary* soon became the most-well used linguistic tool in the translation of works from English into Musselmani Bengali.

3.4.9 GOLDSACK'S THESIS ABOUT THE USE OF ADMITTED TRUTHS IN DIALOGUE

As early as 1906 at the Cairo Conference convened to discuss methods of mission work among Muslims, Goldsack formulated his new approach in using truths admitted in the Bible and the Qur'ān when initiating dialogue.¹⁷⁵ He carefully revised this approach until he departed from India in 1922. As Goldsack's arguments are at the heart of this thesis, they are quoted in some detail. Goldsack began his keynote address:

Let us, having acquired a good working knowledge of the language of the masses, make it a first principle in our address to work up from admitted truths. Too often our message arouses opposition and resentment at the very outset, because we begin by dilating upon the sonship of Christ, or the reasonableness of the Trinity. It was not thus that the early apostles sought to reach and teach monotheistic Jews. It was, 'Jesus of Nazareth a man approved of God' 'His Servant Jesus' or the 'Prophet, whom the Lord would raise up amongst them' of whom Peter and his companions spoke, and whom they held up before the people. The way not to secure a hearing is to begin by insisting upon the divinity of Christ. That subject will come up later - who would wish to avoid it? - but to begin with it is to begin at the wrong end, and to effectually bar the way to further instruction. The miraculous birth, the prophethood and Messiahship of Jesus, His wonderful miracles and not less sublime teachings are all acknowledged in Islam, and are known, more or less, to every Muslim. Let us begin with these, and then slowly and almost imperceptibly, our

¹⁷⁴ William Goldsack, *A Mussalmani Bengali-English Dictionary*, (Calcutta: D.N. Banerjee Press, 1923).

¹⁷⁵ The Cairo Conference of 1906 was convened by S.M. Zwemer, H.U. Weitbrecht, John Giffen and E.M. Wherry. The focus of discussion as represented in a keynote address by Goldsack was the use of truths admitted in Islam and Christianity as the best means of initiating Muslim-Christian dialogue. E.M. Wherry, *Methods of Mission Work among Muslims*, (London: Fleming H. Revell, 1906).

hearers will be led to see, as did the centurion of old, that truly this was the Son of God.¹⁷⁶

3.4.10 CRITICISMS OF THE USE OF ADMITTED TRUTH

In his striving to conduct dialogue along the lines of admitted truth, Goldsack faced a certain amount of scepticism from his Muslim audience because he was a Christian laying out his arguments along an Islamic axis from the Qur'ān. However, it was his Christian colleagues who gave him the greatest opposition. Rev. W. Hooper, D.D., a C.M.S. missionary and theologian from Allahabad, challenged Goldsack's methodology of using the Qur'ān to present Christian concepts.¹⁷⁷

Firstly, Hooper objects to Goldsack's use of Islamic forms of address and titles of Jesus, considering them at best to be misleading.¹⁷⁸

I was startled, not to say shocked, to find that he (Goldsack) holds that while we may well call our Lord 'the Word of God' (*Kalimat Allāh*); because He is so called in the Qur'ān, yet we should not call Him 'the Son of God,' except in reference to His birth of a virgin, according to Luke 1:35'.¹⁷⁹

In his reply to Hooper Goldsack states:

Using concepts such as the Qur'ānic titles of Christ, especially if they are also Scriptural, may furnish the basis of Christian teaching, which is both conciliatory to the hearer, and useful to the person doing dialogue. (For example), most Muslims assent to the statement that Christ is the "Word of God" (*Kalimat Allāh*); let it be our objective to show them what the content of that title means to Christians.¹⁸⁰

Goldsack then responds to Hooper's criticism of his use of such Islamic titles as '*Rūh Allāh*' (Spirit of God) for Jesus, which are not used in the Bible.

Every Christian worker amongst Moslems knows that the distinctive title which Islam gives to our Lord is, '*Rūh Allāh*' -the Spirit of God. The Bible speaks of the second Adam as a "Life-giving Spirit" (I Corinthians 15:45); shall we then accept the Moslem title, and use it in argument, or

176 Goldsack, "How to Reach and Teach Moslems", in *Methods*, ed., Wherry, p.36.

177 W. Hooper, "Presentation of Christian Doctrine", in *Methods*, ed. Wherry, p. 178.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid.

180 Goldsack, "How to Reach and Teach," pp. 37,38.

must we brand as mistaken the ascription of a title to the Son of Mary, which really belongs to the third person of the blessed Trinity?¹⁸¹

Goldsack believed that one could use this form of address for Jesus with Biblical justification and cultural identification.¹⁸²

Hooper held the opinion that it was impossible to expect every missionary to be an expert in Islamic matters in order effectively to teach the Gospel and conduct dialogue with Muslims.¹⁸³ Goldsack strongly rejects this opinion with these words:

While every missionary cannot be an expert, to remain ignorant of the main teachings of the Qur'ān and the traditions, and to be insensible to the main facts of Islamic history is to curtail our influence with and largely nullify our attempts to teach Muslims, whether literate or illiterate. Upon the other hand, an apt quotation will invariably gain the respect and attention of one's audience.¹⁸⁴

The core of all of Hooper's arguments was his contention that a Christian's purpose at the outset of Muslim-Christian dialogue is to focus on the presentation of Christian theological truth.¹⁸⁵ Goldsack, by contrast, repeated his belief that: "too often addresses may be heard dealing in philosophical abstractions and hair-splitting disquisitions on the rationale of the atonement and which are absolutely beyond the comprehension of those to whom they are addressed." Rather, he noted: "The Muslim heart ...feels the need of atonement for sin, and the blood which flows at the *Baqr Id* (animal sacrifice at Ramadan) furnishes a text to point to the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world."¹⁸⁶

3.4.11 THE LIMITATIONS IN THE USE OF ADMITTED TRUTHS

In spite of Goldack's able defense of the use of admitted truths in Muslim-Christian dialogue, he was well aware of the limitations of this method. The following example of a discussion about a controversial tractate illustrates his

181 Ibid., pp. 37, 38.

182 Ibid.

183 Hooper, "Presentation of Christian Doctrine", p. 178.

184 Goldsack, "How to Reach and Teach," pp. 38, 39.

185 Hooper, D.D., "Presentation of Christian Doctrine," p. 178

186 Goldsack, "How to Reach and Teach", p. 40.

understanding about the parameters of use of admitted truths. In north-west India in the year 1919, a tractate in Urdu entitled *Haqa'iq-i Qur'ān* (Truths of the Qur'ān) was printed from the manuscript of "a Mullah who was an enquirer and a confessed believer in Jesus Christ as Saviour." His tractate went through six editions selling a total of 100,000 copies. Christians, Arya Samajists, and Muslims alike kept up a steady demand for it.¹⁸⁷ In this tractate the writer employed the use of admitted truths to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus over Muḥammad. He cited fourteen statements from the Qur'ān about Jesus, which he observed had no parallel in the life of Muḥammad.

1. Jesus' birth was of a virgin (Sūra (*Maryam*): xix: 19-22), whereas there was no evidence that this was so in the case of Muḥammad.
2. The Qur'ān describes the excellence of Mary, the mother of Jesus (sūra iii ('*Al-Imrān*) 42) whereas this is not said of the mother of Muḥammad.
3. Miraculous events attended the birth of Jesus (Sūra (*Maryam*): XIX: 19-25).
4. Jesus was declared to be a prophet while an infant in the cradle (*Maryam*): XIX: 30) while Muḥammad did not claim to be a prophet until advanced in years.
5. Jesus was rescued (by angels) from His enemies and from death and was carried up to heaven, (sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):156, 157) but when enemies sought to kill Muḥammad he hid in a cave.
6. Jesus was exalted to heaven-where he has existed in His humanity without food or drink for 2,000 years.
7. Jesus raised the dead and exercised divine power, (Sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*):109, 110)
8. The Qur'ān, which declares that God is "Creator of all things," (sūra xiii (*al-Ra'd*): 17), also says that Jesus created birds (Sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*):109, 110).
9. Jesus healed the blind, the deaf and lepers by His miraculous power, (Sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*) 109, 110).
10. Jesus could tell what people had been doing, eating, etc, (sūra iii: (*al-Imrān*):43-45).

¹⁸⁷ *Haqa'iq-i Qur'ān, Truths of the Qur'ān*, (Ludhiana, C.L.S., 1919) cited by Bevan Jones, "How not to use the Qur'ān", *MW* 30 (1940) pp.280-91.

11. The Qur'ān shows all prophets to have been sinners with the exception of Jesus. Adam in sūra vii (*al-A'rāf*): 23,24, Abraham in sūra xxi (*al-Anbiyā'*), Moses in sūra xxviii (*al-Qaṣaṣ*):15, David in sūra xxxviii (*Sād*): 23,24, Muḥammad in sūra xlvii (*Muḥammad*): 21 and in sūra xlviii (*al-Faḥ*) 1,2, but Jesus is never commanded to repent as he was kept holy (sūra xix (*Maryam*):20).

12. Muḥammad died and has been buried for 1300 years, while Christ has been alive 2,000 years in heaven and the Qur'ān says that "the living and dead are not equal," (sūra xxxv (*al-Malā'ika*) 21, 22).

13. Christ is to come again to conquer *Dajjāl*, the anti-Christ, and to re-establish men in the faith, (sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 156, 157).

14. According to the Qur'ān, Muḥammad was only an apostle (sūra vii (*al-A'rāf*):157) and asks pardon for his sins (sūra xlvii (*Muḥammad*):21, sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):106); but the Messiah is absolutely sinless and a divine person, for as the Qur'ān says, God "breathed into Mary of His Spirit." (sūra xxi (*al-Anbiyā'*):91).¹⁸⁸

Wherry reports that this tractate fell like a bomb in the Muslim camp.¹⁸⁹

Letters were addressed by Muslims to the *Paigham-i-Sulah*, Lahore (the Urdu journal of the Aḥmadiyya), urging a reply to it. Much later, such a reply was made by Maulanā Muḥammad 'Alī in 1921. But first, a reply came from one who signed himself "Abdallāh," of Jessore, East Bengal.¹⁹⁰

In his detailed examination of the fourteen arguments which claimed to be based on statements admitted by both the Bible and the Qur'ān, 'Abdallāh made the following criticism.

1. The author of the tractate's first point is an argument from the silence of the Qur'ān about the facts surrounding Muḥammad's birth; nor does he acknowledge that an angel announced the birth of John the Baptist.
2. Second, a man's status before God does not depend upon his mother and the Qur'ānic phrase "God hath chosen thee above all the women of the world" is qualified to mean "those of Mary's own time."¹⁹¹
3. Third, the Islamic traditions have records of many miracles attending the birth of Muḥammad.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Wherry, "*Ḥaqa'iq-i Qur'ān, Truths of the Qur'ān*", cited by Bevan Jones, "How not to use the Qur'ān", p. 282.

¹⁹⁰ A signed type-written copy from the author was also sent to E.M. Wherry.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

4. The assumption is false that the prophet who received his call late in life is inferior to one who received it in childhood (he compares Abraham to Samuel, or Moses to Jeremiah).
5. While accepting that Jesus did not die but was taken up alive to heaven 'Abdallāh rejects the implication that Muḥammad, because he was not so taken up, is therefore inferior.
6. Other prophets were taken up to heaven and have lived there for many centuries longer than Christ, such as Moses and Elijah. 'Abdallāh asks if these must then be superior to Christ.
7. In describing Christ's raising the dead, 'Abdallāh observes that he did so *by the permission of God* even as Elijah had done.
8. In the Qur'ān when Jesus is said to "create," it is *by the permission of God*, i.e., it means that he had no power of his own to do so.
9. 'Abdallāh notes that according to the Islamic traditions Muḥammad performed such miracles as the splitting of the moon which is also mentioned in the Qur'ān (54:1,2).
10. Muḥammad did foretell events, such as the fall of Mecca, and the defeat of the Persians. By contrast to Elijah who consistently prophesied the future, Jesus did not know the time of the Resurrection Day.
11. Jesus was a sinner according to his own words, "Why callest thou me good?" The demand made of Muḥammad that he should ask for pardon is that he should be an example of humility to his followers.
12. The Islamic traditions state that Christ will return to earth in order for him *to die*.
13. According to the Islamic traditions, the true faith which Christ is to establish on his return is Islam, the faith which he (Christ) himself must embrace before he can obtain final salvation. This fact, 'Abdallāh notes, proves the superiority of Muḥammad.
14. 'Abdallāh concludes that the writer of the tractate seeks to prove too much, for the Qur'ān says that God breathed His Spirit into Adam also. He asks, was Adam then divine?¹⁹²

The remarkable fact about this anonymous rejoinder, is that 'Abdallāh of Jessore, was none other than William Goldsack as he himself revealed before he left India.¹⁹³ Goldsack had apparently written this answer for a number of reasons. Goldsack may have believed that on some points the Christian author of

¹⁹² Ibid., pp. 283-285.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 285.

the tractate had employed admitted truths incorrectly and unwisely and in some instances had gone beyond an accepted Islamic interpretation of the Qur'ān. He was sure that a vigorous rejoinder from Muslim scholars would soon follow, and he wished to pre-empt the criticism which he believed this Muslim work would contain.¹⁹⁴

Three points may be ascertained about the parameters of the use of admitted truths from this interesting case. Firstly, concern for truth needs to take precedence over concerns of one's own religious affiliations. The tract evidences the sincerity and conviction of Goldsack and his concern to make sure that what was written conformed to the truth, so far as this could be ascertained.

Secondly, Goldsack was well aware that other interpretations of these admitted truths might be given. In some cases, he believed that the Christian author of the tractate had gone beyond an accepted Islamic interpretation of the Qur'ānic passages in question. He may have wanted to set forth the best arguments which he believed could be given from the Muslim side, in order to see what could then be presented from the Christian viewpoint. As it turned out, he left India shortly afterwards and no explanation or elucidation from him was ever forthcoming, although in 1919 E.M. Wherry had already given a preliminary answer.¹⁹⁵ What Goldsack made abundantly clear is that there can be no accurate *tafsīr* (interpretation) without a careful *istifsār* (inquiry).

¹⁹⁴ This, in fact did happen, as Maulanā Muḥammad 'Alī, the President of the Aḥmadiyya, thought it worth his while to write a rejoinder of 159 pages which he published in 1921 under the title *Muhammad and Christ*, (Lahore: 1921). It is likely that Muḥammad 'Alī had read 'Abdallah's' reply as he used the exact arguments which 'Abdallāh, a.k.a. Goldsack, had employed in his earlier article.

¹⁹⁵ E.M. Wherry, *MW* 9 (1919), pp. 252-64. It is certain that Wherry knew that Abdallāh was William Goldsack. And it is further clear that Wherry did not agree that Goldsack had written a helpful response to the Moulavie's tractate on admitted truths. Wherry concludes: "Our [Jessore] friend has failed to see the point, or at least he ignores the point of almost every one of the Moulavies statements."

3.5 GOLDSACK'S RETIREMENT FROM MISSIONARY SERVICE

On January 11, 1922, Goldsack wrote to C.E. Wilson, the director of the Baptist Mission Society, announcing that he would be resigning his position and returning to Australia.¹⁹⁶ He pointed out that his decision was prompted by two main considerations. Firstly, his children were now in their teen age years and needed help in settling into education and new careers back in Australia. Secondly, since his return from Cairo in 1917 Goldsack had been plagued by malaria, and in particular by distressing eruptions of boils which, combined with insomnia, made his life a misery and drained him of all vitality. Feeling that he had accomplished all the major goals of his literary work, he considered that the time had now come for him to leave India.¹⁹⁷

Back in South Australia he continued to lecture in Islamics and missions, as well as working as an orchardist. His health began rapidly to improve and he lived to the age of 85, dying in 1957. Charlotte survived him by twelve years, dying at the age of 97 in 1969. In later years the Baptist Missionary Society rated Goldsack as "one of our greatest experts on Islam"¹⁹⁸ and "the greatest Islamic scholar which Australia has produced."¹⁹⁹ Louis Bevan Jones, upon Goldsack's unobtrusive departure from Bengal, wrote the following words:

Our brother Goldsack slipped away from India and from us last March (1922) unobserved and without a cheer. How characteristic of the man! For twenty years and more he had given his best strength of body, mind, and soul here in the swamps of Bengal, digging away at Arabic roots and turning out volume after volume in a noble endeavour to rouse Muslims to a sense of the inadequacy of their own system and the superior excellence of God's gracious revelation in Christ.

Most of us still only vaguely realize what a tremendous lot of literary work he put into those years. And now that his latest volume of the translation

¹⁹⁶ Source: Letter by William Goldsack to Rev. C.E. Wilson 11/01/ 1922 in the files of the B.M.S. archives Regent's Park College, Oxford.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ D.S., Wills, ed. "Ye Are My Witnesses" 1792-1942-One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the B.M.S. in India. (Calcutta: 1942), p. 42, cited by G.B.Ball, *The Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal 1864-1954*, p. 110.

¹⁹⁹ Ball, *The Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal 1864-1954*, p.110.

of the *Mishkāt al-Masābīh* has appeared it deserves a word of appreciation, lest an unsuspecting but not ungrateful public should remain in ignorance of the very great debt that is owing to him for the care and skill he has expended on it.

But there is quite a catalogue of this man's productions. His biggest work is an edition of the Qur'ān in thirty parts giving a much-needed Bengali translation in parallel lines with the Arabic text; and the text is elucidated by a commentary (drawn from Islamic sources) on the occasion and significance of the various verses. It was a great labour of love covering a number of his best years.

Some years ago Goldsack conceived the idea of producing a series of cheap booklets in English on the outstanding points of contact and controversy between Christianity and Islam--the "In Islam" series. Separate volumes were published at a few annas each, dealing with God, Christ, Muḥammad, the Bible, the Qur'ān, the Origins of the Qur'ān, Muḥammad and the Bible, and the Traditions in Islam. Almost all of these have also appeared in Bengali.

Goldsack also prepared more than a dozen leaflets in Mussalmani-Bengali on such subjects as "Is the Gospel abrogated?" "What say the former Scriptures?" He wrote too the story of a Muslim student's search for truth, under the title of "Ghulam Jabbar's Renunciation," a book of 140 pages which has been translated into Bengali and even Chinese.

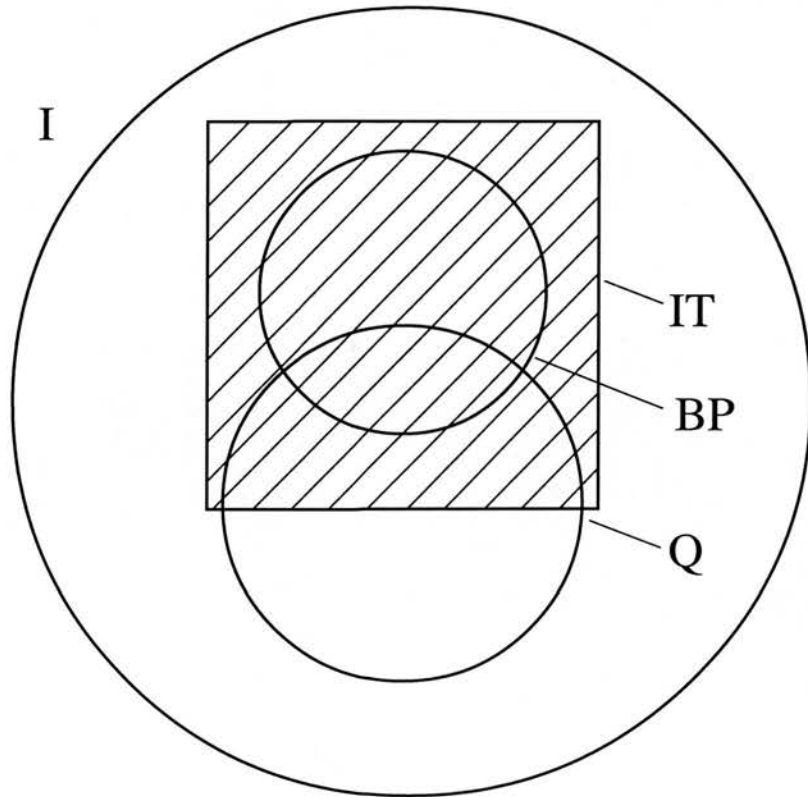
Early this year there appeared from the pen of our friend a 'Mussalmani-Bengali'-English Dictionary of 120 pages which ought to prove a boon to all those who meet with this *patois* in their daily avocations. Like that other 'W.G.' (William Gairdner of Cairo) he has been piling up a heavy literary score and has 'carried his bat.' Goldsack, we take off our hats to you!

(Louis Bevan-Jones).²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Louis Bevan Jones, "William Goldsack's Latest Book", *B.M.S. Monthly Newsletter* (November, 1923), p.8, in the files of Regent's Park College, Oxford.

DIAGRAM Bi

Diagrams Bi, Bii, and C pertain to Chapters Four, Five and Six and depict an analysis of the sources of Islam by Muir, Khān and Goldsack.



COMMENTARY

I represents the teachings of Islam

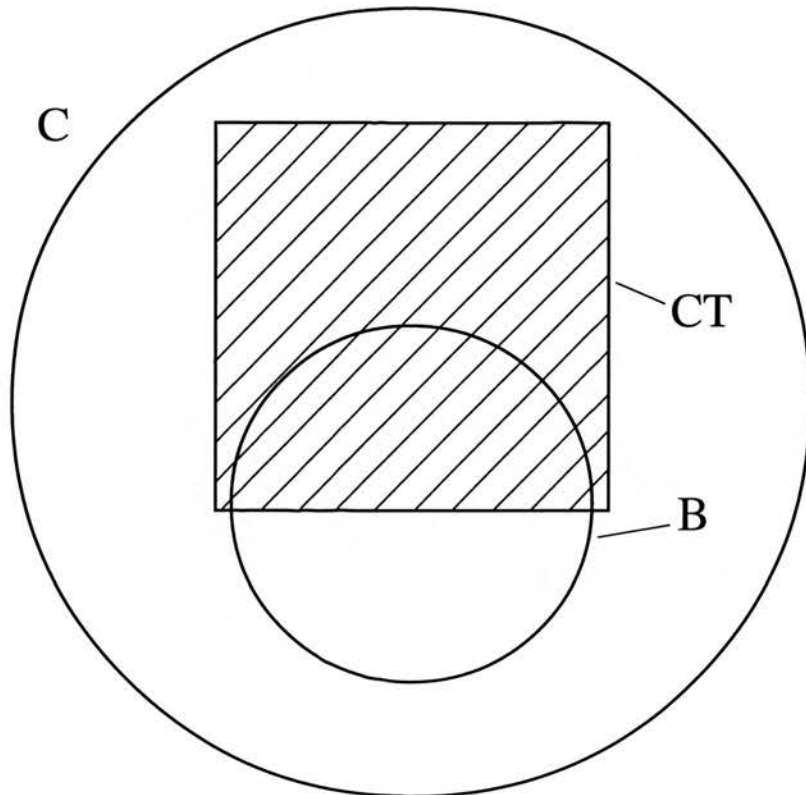
IT represents Islamic traditions

BP represents the Biographies of the Prophet

Q represents the Qur'ān.

DIAGRAM Bii

Analysis of the sources of Christianity by Muir, Khān and Goldsack.



COMMENTARY

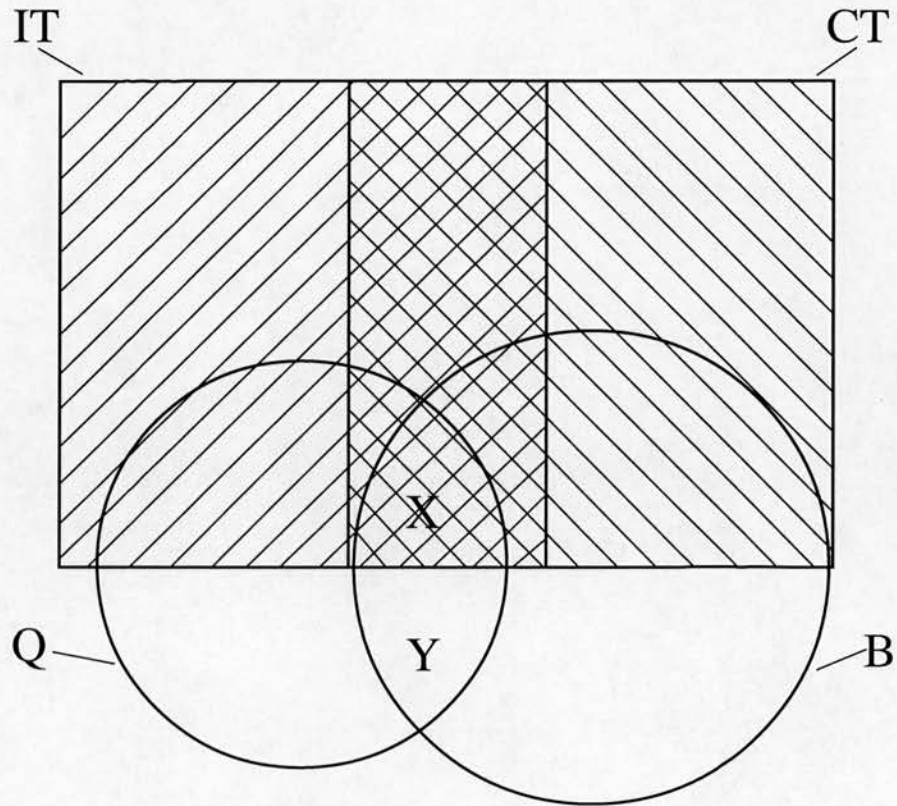
C represents the teachings of Christianity

CT represents Christian traditions

B represents the Bible

DIAGRAM C

A comparison of Muslim and Christian sources as used by
Muir, Khān and Goldsack.



COMMENTARY

IT and Q represent Islamic traditions and the Qur'ān as in diagram Bi

CT and B represent Christian traditions and the Bible as in diagram Bii

The overlapping areas are teachings shared by Christianity and Islam

The areas of interest to this thesis are X + Y (what the Bible and the Qur'ān have in common), and X (what the Bible, the Qur'ān, the Islamic traditions and the Christian traditions have in common).

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDIES ON THE QUR'AN IN ISLAM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Qur'ān takes precedence over all other Islamic sources as the final authority for Islamic faith and practice. Islam, like Christianity, teaches that the revelation of God's will to mankind has been a process which has been continuing through the whole history of the human race. The records of this revelation - the word of God in a lower sense - are to be found in the sacred books which have been given to the successive prophets and which, according to Islam, culminated in the Qur'ān.¹

2.0 PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUR'AN IN THE 8TH-11TH CENTURIES

Islamic perceptions of the Qur'ān were defined by a series of Islamic debates which took place in the 8th century. It should be remembered that these were not debates involving Muslims with Christians but principally involving the Mu'tazilites, Muslims who advocated the use of reason (*'aql*), in debate with the orthodox Muslims who advocated the use of precedent and tradition.²

The Christian apologists of the 8th century who had interactions with Islam were also forming their opinions about the Qur'ān based to a large extent on the Islamic debates of the 8th century. In the 19th century, the early Islamic debates, Orientalists believed, would shed light on crucial questions concerning: the essence of the Qur'ān, how the Qur'ān was given, how it was collected into a book, whether it contained external sources, and how the Qur'ān is to be interpreted. The studies about these debates gave direction to Qur'ānic Studies and to Muslim-

¹ W.R.W. Gardner, *Christianity and Muhammadanism* (Madras: CLS, 1910), pp. 44-46.

² Ignaz Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (Heidelberg, 1910), trans. by by Andras and Ruth Hamori as *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (Princeton: The University Press, pp.98-103).

Christian dialogue. In the case of our three 19th century authors, Muir (in vol. I of his *Life*) and Goldsack (in his *Qur'ān in Islam*) decided that the place to begin a study of the Qur'ān was with an investigation of Islamic evidence about the Qur'ān arising from the early Islamic debates about it.³ Khān in his reply to Muir (*Khuṭubāt al-Ahmadīyah 'ala al-'Arab wa'l-sīrah al-Muḥammadiyah allafahā al-muftaqir ila Allah al-ṣamad Sayyid Aḥmad 'afā Allah 'anhu*)⁴ replied to Muir's evidence from Islamic the sources in general and the early Islamic debates in particular concerning the Qur'ān.

John of Damascus died before the middle of the eighth century, when the debates over the Qur'ān were still fresh. He noted that the Qur'ān teaches many concepts of interest to Christians, among which the most important were:

That God is One, the Creator, neither begotten nor begetting (sura cxii:3); that Christ is a word of God and His Spirit (sura iv:169); that the Jews unlawfully purposed to crucify Him (Jesus) but they crucified Him only in appearance for Christ was really not crucified nor did He die, but God took Him to Heaven for love of Him. (iv: 156,157).⁵

John of Damascus was primarily interested in giving information about the Qur'ān to Christians. He observes that with regard to authority, the Qur'ān is the final court of appeal for the Muslim. As such, he believes that it is imperative for a Christian holding dialogue with a Muslim to understand the Qur'ān and to be able to use it properly. During the era of John of Damascus Christians were becoming increasingly interested in knowing the Islamic teachings about God and Jesus. The Damascene pointed out that some Qur'ānic verses could be employed as admitted truths in providing points at which Christians could begin dialogue with

³ Muir's first volume of his *Life* deals with the Islamic debates about the essence of the Qur'ān, how it was collected into a book, whether it contained external sources, and how the Qur'ān is to be interpreted. Similarly, Goldsack's writing on the Qur'ān (*The Qur'ān in Islam*) also focuses on the Islamic debates about the Qur'ān. Khān responds to Muir's use of Islamic evidence in appraising the Qur'ān.

⁴ The original Urdu text was published first in Sir Sayyid's ed. of *Tuṣānīf-i Aḥmadīyah*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 182-639 (Aligarh: Institute Press, 1887).

⁵ John of Damascus, *De Haer.*, Migne, *PG*, Vol. xciv, 764, cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 65.

Muslims. For example, in order to prove Jesus' divinity, John set forward the concept in the Qur'ān of the Word (*kalām*) in its reference to Christ. However, the Damascene categorized other concepts in the Qur'ān as contrary to the Bible (such as the seeming denial of the crucifixion). There were three categories of sūras in the Qur'ān which John of Damascus rejected: the first category are those sūras which he regarded as ahistorical;⁶ in the second category are those sūras which he regarded as unethical;⁷ while still others he believed were irrational.⁸

Al-Kindī was a contemporary of the famous Islamic biographer, al-Wāqidi (d. 822) who investigated the traditions surrounding the collection of the Qur'ān. Al-Wāqidi also described 'Uthmān's recension of the Qur'ān and set out the disputes between the Mu'tazilites and the Muḥaddithūn (ḥadīth scholars) regarding the interpretation of the Qur'ān.⁹ Accordingly, al-Kindī was well placed to understand the Islamic sources and to employ an historical appraisal of the Qur'ān which was, for his generation, unusually far-sighted. He rejected the Islamic claim that the Qur'ān is a divine book on the basis stated for it in the Qur'ān itself, namely: 'that neither man nor genius could produce the like thereof' (sūra ii:23). With regard to the question of the unique style and poetic beauty claimed for the Qur'ān, al-Kindī observes that there were Arab poets of renown, such as Imru'l-Qays, whose writings predated the Qur'ān and for whom it was claimed that their conceptions and language equalled or surpassed that of the Qur'ān.¹⁰ And even if its style were admitted to be unique for a local Arab community, this, he contends,

⁶ For example, the seeming denial of the crucifixion in sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):156, 157.

⁷ For example, the permission given in sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 3 that by law a man may have four wives, and may take a thousand concubines if he is able. Also, that a Muslim man may divorce his wife if he desires to take another wife but can only be remarried to her after another she has been married to another man, sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 230.

⁸ For example, sūra xxvi (*al-Shu'arā'*):155 reads: There was a camel from God; which drank a whole river, and according to sūra liv (*al-Qamar*):28, nourished people, supplying milk instead of water. John of Damascus, *De Haer.*, in Migne, PG, Vol. xciv, 764 cited by Voorhis in "John of Damascus on the Moslem Heresy", p. 396.

⁹ *Kitāb al-Wāqidi*, p. 168, cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xix.

¹⁰ *Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, p. 30. Al-Kindī observes that in sūra xliii:57 one finds a record of Muḥammad's response to the Meccans' contention that the early Arabic poetry was superior to the Qur'ān.

has no logical bearing on whether it should be regarded as of divine origin. As to the unique content of the Qur'ān, al-Kindī asks what single truth one finds there revealed which was unknown to the ancients and which had not already been introduced into Arab society. In this regard he cites a number of inclusions in the Qur'ān from other cultures and religious sources. Firstly, he notes that there are foreign words included in the Qur'ān.

If the claim be that the Qur'ān is an unparalleled and miraculous model of Arabic according to the texts sura xii:2; xliii:2; then why do we find in it foreign words, such as '*namāric*', from the Persian, and '*mishkāt*', from the Abyssinian, vocabulary?¹¹

He then lists a number of other foreign words included in the Qur'ān and observes that the inclusion of foreign expressions into the Qur'ān must be due to one of two things; either to the poverty of the Arabian vocabulary, which is confessed by all Arabs to be the richest of all languages, or to the fact that different persons had a hand in the work.

Secondly, al-Kindī holds that the Qur'ān contains concepts from Christianity and Judaism which were prevalent in Arabia. Regarding those ideas adopted from Christianity, he maintains that the Qur'ān includes apocryphal Christian ideas imparted by a heretical Nestorian monk by the name of Sergius. Al-Kindī then sets forward the theory that two Jewish doctors, 'Abdallāh and Ka'b, tampered with the earliest Qur'ānic text of Abū Bakr, so that it reflected Jewish concepts.¹² This, he suggests, accounts for the variance in the readings by the time of 'Uthmān and the need for a standardized text.

Finally, al-Kindī not only studies foreign words and ideas incorporated in the Qur'ān, but also critically analyzes the doctrine of the abrogation of one text in the Qur'ān by another.¹³ In this regard he accuses al-Ḥajjāj (b. 661) of corrupting the Qur'ān and points to contradictions in it which were introduced through this

¹¹ Ibid. *Namāric*, carpets or cushions; *mishkāt*, a lamp.

¹² Ibid, pp. 24, 25.

¹³ Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I p. 69.

intolerant governor.¹⁴ Al-Kindī's observations in this regard are incisive, as al-Ḥajjāj was reproached with corrupting the Qur'ānic text by early traditionists. However, most later Muslim scholars consider that al-Ḥajjāj's work was limited to a critical revision and the introduction of orthographical signs to prevent incorrect readings in the recitation of the sacred text.¹⁵ Al-Kindī concludes that as the Qur'ān was neither unique in style nor content, the claim for it having come from the Preserved Tablet in a pure Arabic form could not be substantiated.¹⁶

Al-Kindī considers the greatest significance of the Qur'ān to be that it is the earliest and most important record of that which Muḥammad thought and said.¹⁷ Muir was deeply influenced by al-Kindī's assessment¹⁸ and he too concludes: "the Qur'ān is a store house of Muḥammad's own words recorded during his life, extending over the whole course of his public career, and illustrating his religious views, his public acts, and his domestic character."¹⁹

‘Alī Ṭabarī (d.855) responds to al-Kindī's arguments in the section "Divine Origin of the Qur'ān" of *Kitāb al-dīn wa'l-dawla*, arguing that the beauty of the Qur'ān is in fact a witness to its divine origin. He claims:

I examined the Qur'ān and discovered that no book written by an Arab, or a Persian, or an Indian, or a Greek, which contained, like the Qur'ān, unity, praise, and glorification of the Most High God, compares to it."²⁰

‘Alī Ṭabarī furthermore notes that in contrast to the Old Testament, which he regarded as unbalanced with praises for those who obey the legal prescriptions and curses on those who disobey them, the Qur'ān is "perfectly balanced, being interwoven with the unity of God, hymns, praises, prescriptions, laws, and history".²¹ Therefore, he concludes that the Qur'ān most perfectly reflects the

¹⁴ *Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, p. 33.

¹⁵ Cf. S.V. "Ḥadjjād", EI-1, Vol. III, pp. 202, 203.

¹⁶ *Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, p. 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.

¹⁹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. XXVII.

²⁰ ‘Alī Ṭabarī, *Religion and Empire*, pp. 50, 51.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

beauty of composition, the balance of judgment, the accuracy of history and the exaltation of God.²²

In the twelfth century Paul of Antioch bases his entire apologetic method of dialogue upon statements in the Qur'ān. He speaks of the Qur'ān with such reverence that some scholars have concluded that he regarded it as inspired.²³ But Paul of Antioch never gives his opinion about the revelatory nature of the Qur'ān. He seems to hold that it contains God's Word (truths consistent with the Bible) even if other statements are not in agreement with the Bible. In such cases he holds simply that all truths consistent with the Bible are of God, because all truth is God's truth. His writings were designed to employ the Qur'ān in confirming rather than proving Christian doctrines. Primary among the truths admitted by both the Qur'ān and the Bible, he claims, is the trustworthiness of the Biblical Scriptures and that Jesus is God's Word. He also emphasizes the Qur'ānic teachings about Jesus, namely, that he was born of a virgin without sin, that he was called God's Word and Messiah, and that he will be the Just Judge at the Last Day.²⁴

Both 'Alī Ṭabaṛī and Ibn Taymiyya examine the question of the divine nature of the Qur'ān in the context of the prophethood of Muḥammad. They argue that while there were other miraculous signs which attested to Muḥammad's prophethood, the greatest of these was the Qur'ān. Ibn Taymiyya reasons that, considering that Muḥammad was unlettered, the beauty of the composition of the Qur'ān provided evidence of its miraculous nature. He urges that the inerrancy of the Qur'ān is linked with the prophetic office which in Muḥammad, specifically points to: a) Muḥammad's knowledge of unknown matters in both the past and the

²² Ibid.

²³ P. Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche*, tome xxiv, p. 84.

²⁴ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 168.

future, b) his accomplishment of miracles; and c) the evidence that Islam is "the best of communities".²⁵

The early Muslim-Christian dialogues about the Qur'ān laid the foundations for Christian thinking about the Qur'ān in the 19th century. In both periods fundamental questions were raised about whether firstly, 'Uthmān's recension of the Qur'ān was reliable, secondly, whether the Qur'ān contained external sources, thirdly, whether the Qur'ān could be interpreted in the same way as any other book, regarding parts of it as metaphorical, and finally, in both eras apologists studied the parameters of the use of the Qur'ān in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

3.0 PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUR'ĀN IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Up to the 19th century most dialogues between Muslims and Christians were conducted according to a scholastic method whereby scholars presented their arguments from a dogmatic basis and then framed a response to their opponent's arguments on the basis of logic. Muslim apologists, like the Greeks of an earlier time, requested the use of a "logical approach" of argumentation. It will be remembered that the unidentified Muslim scholar holding dialogue with Theodore Abū Qurra (740-825) demanded:

Prove it, not with the help of your Isaiahs or your Matthews whom I do not trust, but rather through the use of notions that are in common use, compelling and accepted by all.²⁶

For example, Henry Martyn (1781-1812) debated with the Persian Shi'ite scholar Mīrzā Ibrāhīm, who contended on a dogmatic basis that the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān rested on the evidence in the Qur'ān and the Sunna, and that though produced by an illiterate man, it could not be equalled by the learned Meccans. Martyn countered from logic that:

Because the learned men of Mecca were unable to produce a book equal to the Qur'ān, this cannot be construed as affording proof that such an act is

²⁵ This statement is a summation of the emphasis of the *Jawāb*. Michel, *Response*, p. 111.

²⁶ See Chapter One of this thesis. A. Ducellier, *Le Miroir de l'islam: Musulmans et Chrétiens d'Orient (7-11 siècles)*, p. 53, cited by Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 31.

really a miracle. Their confession in this place must be understood as applying to themselves alone, and not to all mankind.²⁷

However, from the 19th century onwards, Muslim-Christian dialogue patterned on this scholastic method of argumentation was considered to be inadequate on two counts. Firstly, it did not meet the assertions of modern Islamic scholarship. For example, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān advanced the argument that the miracle of the Qur'ān did not lie in its eloquent clarity, coupled with its unique composition, but rather in its quality of eminent guidance (*hidāya*).²⁸ Secondly, the scholastic method of dialogue focused attention primarily on the differences between Islam and Christianity without pointing out areas of common ground. The first scholars to discard this older method were philosophers of religion who, under the influence of the writings of F. Max Müller (1823-1900), began with the presupposition that all religions had equal legitimacy.²⁹ However, the philosophers of religion went to the opposite extreme of the scholastics and focused exclusively on those areas of common philosophical ideas held by different faiths.³⁰ A method of studying the relationships between Islam and Christianity was needed which set forth both areas of difference and commonality without being linked to either extreme. Muir, Khān and Goldsack believed that historical analysis of the sources of Islam would meet this requirement. They began their investigation into the Qur'ān with an historical analysis of three Islamic debates about the Qur'ān as recorded in the Islamic sources. The results of these

²⁷ Henry Martyn, *Controversial Tracts*, pp. 81, 82.

²⁸ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Maqālāt-i Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, (PMAq)*, 16 vols., ed. M. Ismā'īl Pānīpatī (Lahore: Majlis-i taraqqī-i adab, 1962-65), Vol. XIII, p. 136 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 189.

²⁹ Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, p. 28.

³⁰ F.D. Maurice (1805-1872) in his work *The Religions of the World* (London: Macmillan, 1846), pp. 232 and 238, concludes that Islam was preparatory for the Gospel and occupies a place in God's providence to call men to the truth. Similarly, Reginald Bosworth Smith (1839-1908) in his work *Mohammed and Mohammedanism* (London: Smith, Elder, 1874), p. ix, searched for "points of resemblance rather than of difference [with Christianity]". Neither author had lived in a Muslim country, read Arabic, or had compared truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible. Rather, they made philosophical comparisons between Islam and Christianity emphasizing the ideas which they believed the two faiths shared. See Bennett, *Victorian Images*, pp. 46-74 for a sketch of Maurice's life and writings and pp. 74-103 for that of Smith.

three Islamic debates have had important implications for the development of Qur'ānic studies as well as Muslim-Christian dialogue.

Although they differed in their conclusions, Muir and Goldsack made an historical analysis of the earliest Islamic debates about the Qur'ān. These debates, which occurred in the second century of the Muslim era, were as intense as those about the Person of Christ in the second century of the Christian era. On the basis of these debates early Islamic scholars were polarized into two major camps, the rationalists (*Mu'tazilites*) and the ḥadīth scholars (*Muḥaddithūn*).

4.0 THE FIRST ISLAMIC DEBATE CONCERNING THE RELIABILITY OF 'UTHMĀN'S RECENSION

One of the most significant debates between Muslim scholars in the second century of the Muslim era concerned the reliability of the Qur'ān compiled by the Caliph 'Uthmān. Goldsack cites al-Bukhārī's account that, in effect, the whole Qur'ān was drawn up twice by Zayd ibn Thābit.³¹ The first recension of the Qur'ān commissioned by Abū Bakr in A.H. 11-12 did not contain vowel pointings and within a short period of time discrepancies and contradictions which existed between various readings of the Qur'ān were recognized as being of a serious nature. Between A.H. 29-30, the Caliph 'Uthmān took steps to resolve the issue by having a standardized edition collated. There were seven other readings of the Qur'ān which had been collected by the readers (*Qurrā'*) of the Qur'ān when 'Uthmān made his recension.³² These variant readings 'Uthmān burned in order to standardize his reading of the text. 'Uthmān's controversial action of transcribing one complete copy of the Qur'ān then burning the others had the effect of raising questions about whether his recension of the Qur'ān represented *ipsissima verba* the statements of Muḥammad. When doubts about this matter

³¹ Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, pp. 13, 14.

³² The seven most famous 'readers' of the Qur'ān were held to be: Imām Nāfi' of Madina, Imām Ibn Kathīr of Mecca, Imām Abū 'Umar of Baṣra, Imām Ibn 'Āmir of Syria and Imām Ḥamza, Imām Kisā'i and Imām 'Āsim all of Kūfa. *Thawābit al-Qur'ān*, cited by Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, pp. 10, 11.

grew the Muslim community was plunged into internal conflict with the effect that it cost 'Uthmān his life in A.H. 35.³³

4.1 THE BACKGROUND TO THE DEBATE ABOUT 'UTHMAN'S RECENSION

From the limited information in the traditional Islamic sources about the rise of the readers (*Qurrā'*) it is apparent that they had considerable influence among the Muslim community.³⁴ In the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, chapter *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, are found traditions reflecting the great concern that certain readings of the Qur'ān differed from each other and from Abū Bakr's transcript. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb related that Muḥammad acknowledged: "The Qur'ān was revealed in seven readings, read it in the way which is easy to you."³⁵ Based on this tradition, the orthodox Islamic view has been that Muḥammad's far-sighted wisdom was illustrated by his verdict that any one of the seven readers' ways of reading was equally valid. However, Goldsack points out that this decision actually led to deep splits in Islamic theology, as during the Prophet's lifetime the Qur'ān was being read *and interpreted* in various mutually exclusive ways.³⁶ Consequently, the Caliph 'Uthmān tried to forestall this doctrinal anarchy which threatened the unity of Islam by preventing a multiplication of different readings of the Qur'ānic texts.³⁷

Nineteenth-century orientalist entertained a wide range of opinions about the reliability of the 'Uthmānic text. Muir holds that "the recension of 'Uthmān's has been handed down without any variations of importance; we might say no variations at all."³⁸ As evidence of this, Muir appeals to the fact that "in spite of

³³ See Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, pp. 13, 14.

³⁴ Goldsack, *Origins*, pp.10,11.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ In another tradition, recorded by Muslim, one learns that a famous Qur'ān reader named Ibn Ka'b, upon hearing two men reciting the *Namāz* in a reading different from his own, stated: 'such a revolt arose in my heart as had not existed since the times of ignorance;' cited by Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, p. 11

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 11, 12, Cf. L. Caetani, "'Uthmān and The Recension of The Koran", *MW* 15, (1915), pp. 388, 389.

³⁸ Ibid.

embittered factions in Islam, but one Coran has always been current among Muslims giving irrefutable proof that we have now before us the very text prepared by the unfortunate Caliph ('Uthmān)."³⁹ Muir concludes that there were no alterations in 'Uthmān's text:

The recension of 'Uthmān has been handed down to us unaltered. So carefully, indeed, has it been preserved, that there are no variations of importance - we might almost say no variations at all, among the innumerable copies of the Coran scattered throughout the vast bounds of the empire of Islam.⁴⁰

Gustav Weil qualified Muir's opinion, maintaining only that "no important alterations, additions, or omissions have been made in the Qur'ān ."⁴¹ While Muir allows that some of the text of the Qur'ān might have been lost, destroyed or have become obsolete *before* Zayd's second recension under 'Uthmān, he concludes that since that time "there is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text."⁴²

From a dogmatic basis Sayyid Aḥmad Khān initially rejected the idea that there *could be* any differences between any of the accepted readings of the Qur'ān and the 'Uthmānic text. Any proven difference would demonstrate, he believed, that God was unable to preserve His own Word and would call into question God's transcendence, power and holiness.⁴³ Furthermore, Khān held that of the copy of the Qur'ān currently read by Muslims: "not even one letter remains outside it. Otherwise no verse of the Glorious Qur'ān could be taken as the Word of God with certainty."⁴⁴

By contrast, the reader will observe in the following sections that Goldsack sets forward the argument that 'Uthmān's recension was different to the seven

³⁹ Ibid., Vol., I, p. xix.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Vol. I, p. xiv.

⁴¹ Weil, *Mohammed*, p. 352, cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xxvii.

⁴² Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. v, fn., xiv.

⁴³ Khān, *TFA*, Vol I, Part 2, p. 465, cf. PMAK, Vol. XI, p. 498, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 129.

⁴⁴ "Fifteen Principles Submitted by Sayyid Aḥmad Khān to the 'Ulamā' of Saharanpur", *PMak*, pp. 24-27 and *PMaq*, Vol. X, pp. 102-05 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 276.

most important and early readings of the Qur'ān. Furthermore, he contends that 'Uthmān's burning of all other variant readings confirmed the suspicion that the Qur'ān compiled under his direction differed materially from them.⁴⁵

4.2 THE ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF 'UTHMĀN'S RECENSION

In summarizing Muir's arguments in favour of the reliability of 'Uthmān's recension of the Qur'ān, the following were the most influential: firstly, the readers of the Qur'ān, like other reciters of poetry in Arabia, could recite the contents of the Qur'ān with exactness over a long period of time; secondly, Abū Bakr's edition, on which 'Uthmān's edition of the Qur'ān was based, is an authentic and complete collection of Muḥammad's original words; thirdly, 'Uthman's edition was a faithful edition of Abū Bakr's edition and needed to be compiled only because there needed to be a standard reading of the text of the Qur'ān; fourthly, the anger of the *qurrā'* at the burning of their texts cannot be considered as proof that their text differed materially from that of 'Uthmān's recension of the Qur'ān as they would not, without protest, have allowed 'Uthmān to destroy their copies, even though their texts differed from his in minor points.⁴⁶ In this regard Muir contends that the evidence which throws suspicion of unfair dealing by 'Uthmān upon 'Alī is spurious, late and suspicious for the following reason:

'Uthmān could not possibly have omitted these surahs without being observed at the time; and that it cannot be imagined that 'Alī and his followers, not to mention the whole body of the Muslims who deeply revered the Qur'ān as the Word of God, would have permitted such a proceeding.⁴⁷

Muir admits that due to his steadfast refusal to obey the Caliph's edict and surrender his important recension of the Qur'ān, Ibn Mas'ūd was put to death and his text was burnt. However, Muir does not accept that any inquisitorial

⁴⁵ *Mishkāt*, chapter three, cited by Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, pp. xvi-xvii.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

proceedings were focused on Ibn Mas'ūd *in particular*.⁴⁸ Finally, the fact that the collations of the readers of the Qur'ān differed in only minor points was demonstrated by the fact that comparatively early on 'Uthmān's text was received by the Muslim *umma*, even by those unfriendly to 'Uthmān such as 'Alī. Among many scholars of the 19th century, these arguments were persuasive in demonstrating that the 'Uthmānic recension of the Qur'ān was, in fact, the authentic text given by Muḥammad.

In summarizing Goldsack's arguments against the reliability of 'Uthmān's recension of the Qur'ān, the following arguments are the most important. Firstly, he raises the question that if the memory of the followers of Muḥammad had been found to be defective from the year 15-30 A.H. (the time between the first and second recension of the Qur'ān) how could it be assumed that the Qur'ānic verses were remembered with exactness before this period of time.⁴⁹ Secondly, Goldsack questions whether Abū Bakr's collation was complete and accurate, noting that according to the *Fihrist*:

It was necessary for Zayd to seek out the fragments of the Qur'ān from every quarter and gather them together, from date-leaves, bits of parchment, tablets of white stone and from the hearts of men.⁵⁰

Thirdly, he raises the question of why, if 'Uthmān's recension of the Qur'ān was an exact copy of Abū Bakr's, apart from the vowel pointings, it nevertheless required a completely new text?⁵¹ Moreover, if the first recension of Zayd contained the actual words of Muḥammad, why was Zayd prepared to undertake another major recension so quickly? Fourthly, Goldsack notes that in the *Fānīki Kitāb al-Dabistān*, 'Alī is recorded to have alleged that 'Uthmān's Qur'ān was incomplete when compared with the collection of the Qur'ān he himself had made. In this regard 'Alī addressed Abū Bakr thus:

⁴⁸ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p.xvii.

⁴⁹ Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, pp. 13, 14.

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. by G. Flügel, p. 24, cited by Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, p. 12.

⁵¹ Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, p. 13.

I saw that people were adding to the word of God, and I resolved in my mind that I would never wear my outer cloth again, except at the time of *namāz*, until I had collected the word of God.⁵²

Fifthly, Goldsack concludes that 'Uthmān's unmerciful treatment of Ibn Mas'ūd upon this great scholar's refusal to destroy his copy of the Qur'ān, can be explained on no other hypothesis but that 'Uthmān's recension differed very considerably from the reading which Ibn Mas'ūd had learned from the Prophet.⁵³ In the year 378 A.H. a copy of his Qur'ān was found at Baghdad which proved to be substantively different from 'Uthmān's Qur'ān.⁵⁴ It was burnt at once. Lastly, Goldsack raises the issue that if 'Uthmān was motivated only by purposes of establishing a single unified reading, why did his enemies call him "The tearer of the Books" and why did they give him the stigma: "He found the Qur'āns many and left one; he tore up the Book⁵⁵"? Therefore, Goldsack does not accept the assessment by Muir that the Muslim *umma* comparatively quickly accepted 'Uthmān's recension. By contrast, he notes that it was one debate in Islamic history which occasioned a civil war among the Muslim community. In this respect, Goldsack's conclusions are not dissimilar to those of Weil and Nöldeke in the 19th century and to those of Arthur Jeffrey,⁵⁶ Alphonse Mingana,⁵⁷ and, as previously mentioned, John Burton in the 20th century.

One may compare Muir's endorsement of Von Hammer-Purgstall statement: "We may hold the Qur'ān to be as surely Muḥammad's words as the Muslims hold it to be the Word of God,"⁵⁸ with Goldsack's endorsement of the

⁵² Ibid., pp. 17, 18.

⁵³ Ibid. Cf. Weil, *Geschichte der Chalifen*, i, p. 169.

⁵⁴ Ibid. It is recorded that Ibn Mas'ūd's edition of the Qur'ān did not contain sūra i (*al-Fātiḥa*), sūra lxxv (*al-Ṭalāq*), and sūra cxiv (*al-Nās*). Cf. J. Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'ān* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1977), p. 31, and Arthur Jeffrey, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937).

⁵⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, I, 2952, 10; 11, 516, cited by Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, p. 12.

⁵⁶ See Jeffery, *Materials*, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Agnes Smith Lewis and Alphonse Mingana, *Leaves from three ancient Qur'āns possibly pre-Othmanic* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 1914).

⁵⁸ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xxvii.

words of Ibn 'Umar: "Let no one of you say, "I have the whole Qur'ān."⁵⁹ In spite of Muir's arguments being more persuasive, Goldsack's cumulative research makes us pause to consider whether the Qur'ān we now have is *ipsissima verba* that given by Muḥammad as claimed by the Sunni Islamic scholars.

5.0 THE SECOND ISLAMIC DEBATE CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE QU'RĀN

The second most influential debate among Islamic scholars of the late second Islamic century concerned the nature of the Qur'ān and in particular whether it was created or uncreated. A related issue is whether the Qur'ān, like other literary and historical works, contains external sources.

5.1 ISLAMIC VIEWS ABOUT THE QU'RĀN DURING THE 8TH CENTURY

From the eighth century A.D., orthodox Muslims held, on dogmatic grounds, that the Qur'ān is uncreated and was taken from the 'Mother of the Book' (or the Preserved Tablet)⁶⁰ according to sūra xlv (*al-Jāthiya*):21 and sūra lvi (*al-Wāqī'a*):76. Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767) states that:

The Qur'ān is the Word of God, and His inspired Word and Revelation. It is a necessary attribute of God. It is not God, but still it is inseparable from God. It is written in a volume, it is read in a language, it is remembered in the heart, and its letters, and its vowel points, and its writings are all created, for these are the works of men, but God's Word is uncreated.⁶¹

The corollary to this argument is that because the Qur'ān is uncreated it cannot contain external sources. The Mu'tazilites were adamant that the Qur'ān could not be one of the attributes of God. In order to preserve the idea that only the Divine Unity existed from eternity, they adopted the view that the Qur'ān is a created book.⁶² Goldsack observes that the Islamic debate over whether the Qur'ān was a

⁵⁹ Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, p. 38.

⁶⁰ The "Mother of the book", *Umm al-Kitāb*, is the Heavenly Prototype of all revelation written down by God. The same concept occurs in Philo and the *Wisdom of Ben Sirach* of 'Wisdom' as the Mother of the Divine Logos, (See Philo, *de Fuga et Inventione*, p. 108). In the *Wisdom of Ben Sirach* one reads: "He that taketh hold of the Law findeth Sophia and she will meet him as a mother" *Sirach* xv:1, cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, p. 25.

⁶¹ Gardner, *Christianity and Muhammadanism*, p. 40.

⁶² Imām Bayhaqī in his *Kitāb al Asmā' wa'l-Ṣifāt* cites ibn al-Jarrāh who said, 'The person who thinks the Qur'ān is created is an unbeliever.' Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, p. 38.

created entity reached its climax during the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mūn (A.H.198-21/ A.D. 813-33) who supported the teaching of the Mu'tazilites. However, after the eminent theologian, al-Ash'arī (d. 935), in the last version of his dogmatics, championed the view that the written or recited Qur'ān is identical in being and reality with the uncreated and eternal word of God, the victory of the orthodox school was assured. Since that point in history most Muslims have embraced the thesis that the Qur'ān is uncreated. Up to the 20th century, most Islamic scholars adopted this position and were unprepared critically to analyze the contents of the Qur'ān for any influence from external sources.⁶³

5.2 VIEWS OF 19TH CENTURY LIBERAL ISLAMIC SCHOLARS ABOUT THE QUR'AN

Goldsack observes that the Mu'tazilites have had a following in virtually every period of history. He notes that up to the 9th century one finds references to pre-Islamic sources included in the Qur'ān within Ibn Hishām's biography of Muḥammad (*Ṣirāt al-rasūl*), Muslim's collection of Traditions, and in Ibn Khaldūn's (1332-1406) *al-Muqaddima* ('The Introduction' sc. to a Universal History). From the 9th-14th centuries (A.D.) the following admit that the Qur'ān is a created entity which includes external sources: al-Bīrūnī (11th century) in his *al-Āthār al-bāqiya* and Abu'l-Fidā' (1273-1331) in his *al-Tawārīkh al-Qadīma*.⁶⁴ Abu'l-Fidā' regards the rituals in the pre-Islamic religions of the Persians, Greeks, Jews, Melkite Christians, Nestorian Christians, Sabaeans, and early Arabs as having an important influence on the Islamic rituals described in the Qur'ān.

During the 19th century, liberal Islamic writers subscribed to the early Mu'tazilite idea that the Qur'ān is a created book and observed that this opened up the possibility that it also contained external sources. Khān, in his writings after 1870, accepted this view. In his *Maroam al-'Arab qabl al-Islām* he wrote on the

⁶³ Goldsack, *Origins*, pp.vii-viii. Cf. Ignaz Goldziher, who concluded: "The doctrine which emerged was that speech is an eternal attribute of God, which as such had no beginning and never ceases". Goldziher, *Vorlesungen*, p.113.

⁶⁴ Goldsack, *Origins*, pp.vii-viii.

evidence for external sources of the pre-Islamic Arabs in the Qur'ān.⁶⁵ Khān also states: "I can by no means rest content with the superstitious notion that Scripture, and all Scriptures in general, even the Holy Qur'ān, must not be subjected to critical examination."⁶⁶ From this pre-supposition he set forward his new conception of the nature of the revelation of the Qur'ān, stating that it is a book created by the inspired activity of a man whose nature was perfectly attuned to God.⁶⁷

5.3 VIEWS OF 19TH CENTURY HISTORIOGRAPHERS ABOUT THE QUR'AN

Historiographers concluded that the Qur'ān contains words, figures of speech and ideas from the different religions present in 6th century Arabia.⁶⁸ Accordingly, the historiographers established four sets of criteria for assessing the influence of a religion in Arabia on the teachings of Muḥammad: firstly, whether he had an opportunity to borrow ideas from a particular religious tradition; secondly, whether he had a motive in borrowing stories from a particular religious tradition; thirdly, whether it was compatible with his plan to borrow from a

⁶⁵ Khān comments on the use of the *qiṣaṣ* from other religions in *TFA*, I, II, p. 408/ P Maq, XI, p. 399; P Maq, I, p. 87. His essay on the description of the stories surrounding David, Solomon and Abraham is found in his article "Ikhtilāt riwāt al-Yahūd fī Islām"; see Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 141.

⁶⁶ Khān, *TK*, Part ii, p. 338, cited by William Goldsack, *Origins*, p. ix.

⁶⁷ Muhammad D. Rahbar, "Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's Principles of Exegesis", trans. from *Tahṛir fī 'Uṣūl al-Taḥsīn: first twelve principles*, MW 46 (1956), pp. 104-112.

⁶⁸ An extensive literature on the possible Islamic borrowings from other religions, especially Judaism, has developed since Geiger's writings were published (1898); see: Ignaz Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, Bell, *Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, Margoliouth, *Schweich Lectures: Relations between Arabs and Israelites*, Tor Andrae, *Ursprung des Islams*, Arthur Jeffrey, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, Browne, *Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*, Barthold, Von Kremer, A. Sprenger, *Life of Muhammad*, and Theodor Noldeke, *Über den Ursprung des Qorāns*, bearb. von Friedrich Schwally, (Leipzig: 1909). However, almost all of this research came after Muir's writing, and his works on this topic reflect the influence of W. St. Clair Tisdall, who, in his *Yanabi'u'l Islam*, demonstrates that concepts in the Qur'ān closely reflected ideas in the pagan Arabian religions, Zoroastrianism, Talmudic Judaism and apocryphal Christianity. In 1901, the *Yanabi'u'l Islam* was translated into English by W. Muir, *The Sources of Islam* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1901). In 1905, Tisdall made a revision of the *Yanabi'u'l Islam* and entitled it *The Original Sources of Islam*, (London: S.P.C.K., 1905).

particular religious tradition; and finally, whether the Qur'ān closely reflected in words, figures of speech and ideas a particular religious tradition.⁶⁹

In studying the historical sources about the ancient origins of the concept of monotheism in Arabia, Muir notes that the Mosaic record reliably traces the origins of the Arab races in the North from the descendants of Abraham and shows a similarity of place-names and tribes in that region.⁷⁰ Although the monotheistic faith of the descendants of Abraham was diluted by the animism of the tribes of Syria, the concept of the Divine Unity was not lost. Herodotus, more than four centuries before Jesus, tells us that the Arabs of his day had only two gods, Orotal and Alilat, evidently meaning Allah-taālā and Allāt.⁷¹ Epiphanius (315-403 A.D), concludes that the ancient traditions of Arabia, though all but overcome by animism, still preserved statements in agreement with the writings of Moses.⁷² In the seventh century, Muḥammad asserted that during the days of Abraham, the forefathers of the Meccans had learned of the Divine Unity.⁷³ Ibn Hishām and al-Ṭabarī state that the concept of the Divine Unity was passed on from the time of Abraham to Muḥammad by oral tradition. Among Muḥammad's relatives and earliest followers were those who identified themselves as *ḥanīfs* and to whom Muḥammad claimed to be indebted for his theistic ideas.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Muhammad aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen*, 1833, trans. by F.M. Young, *Judaism and Islam* (Madras: S.P.C.K., 1898), pp. 20-23.

⁷⁰ Muir observes that descendants of the following Biblical persons settled in Arabia: Cush, the son of Ham and Joktan son of Eber, the fifth in descent from Shem. Several centuries later Abraham's descendants spread over the north of Arabia. The Abrahamic races included: 1. Ishmaelites, 2. Keturahites, 3. Edomites (or descendants of Esau), 4. Moabites and Ammonites, and 5. Nahorites." Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, pp. cviii-cxi. Cf. E.F.C. Rosenmüller, (*Handbuch des biblischen Altertumskunde*, (4 vols, 1823-31); N. Morren trans. as *The Biblical Geography of Asia Minor, Phoenicia, and Arabia*, (Edinburgh, 1841).

⁷¹ Tisdall, *Sources*, trans. by W. Muir, pp. 4,5.

⁷² Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. 2, p. 218.

⁷³ *Ibid.* In support of this concept sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 124 reads: "Who is better than he that resigneth himself to God, and worketh righteousness, and followeth the religion of Abraham the faithful? and truly God took Abraham for his friend."

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Muir, of the three authors in question, most carefully studied the history of Arabia. He began his research into pre-Islamic Arabia from the Biblical evidence, then made a careful study of the the history of Arabia from classical sources,⁷⁵ before investigating the indigenous traditions. He acknowledges that due to his living in India his secondary sources were few and limited.⁷⁶ Therefore, in Muir's research in India, when describing the conditions which existed in Arabia prior to Islam, he relied on classical Roman, Biblical and Islamic sources as well as early church historians such as Eusebius but seldomly employed later Western secondary sources.⁷⁷

Muir had a particular interest in the Western scholars who traversed Arabia and added to his knowledge of North Arabia.⁷⁸ The first modern scholar to describe the land of Arabia was Carsten Niebuhr, a member of a scientific expedition sent by the king of Denmark in 1761. In 1812, the Swiss explorer, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, discovered Petra and under the name of Ibrāhīm ibn-'Abdullāh visited Mecca and Medina.⁷⁹ In 1925 Professor Snouck Hurgronje of Leiden visited both Mecca and Medina. In 1845 a young Finno-Swedish scholar,

⁷⁵ In this regard, Muir consulted Roman sources such as Herodotus and Strabo, Christian sources such as Eusebius and also Islamic sources such as those written by al-Wāqidi, Ibn Hishām, and al-Ṭabarī.

⁷⁶ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. cvi, n.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Muir acknowledges that in his inquiry about the pre-Islamic culture, he did have access to the following secondary sources: 1) *The Biblical Geography of Asia Minor, Phenicia, and Arabia*, by E.F.C. Rosenmüller, translated into English by the Rev. N. Morren, Edinburgh, 1841. 2) *Essai sur L'histoire Des Arabes avant L'Islamisme, &c.* Par A.P. Caussin de Percxeval. (In three vols.) Vol. i. Paris, 1847. 3) *The Historical Geography of Arabia*, by the Rev. Charles Forster, two vol.s London, 1844. 4) *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature*: edited by John Kitto, D.D. Edinburgh, 1845. Articles, -Arabia, Ethiopia, Cush, Nebaioth, Ildumea, &c. Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. cvi, n.

⁷⁸ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, pp.cxlī-cixv. The term 'North Arabia' is here used for the North Arabia and the Najdis of Central Arabia. The geographical division of the land by the desert into northern and southern sections has its counterpart in the peoples who inhabit it. The North Arabians are mostly nomads living in tents in al-Ḥijāz nd Najd whereas the South Arabians are in the main sedentary and living in the Yemen, Ḥaḍramawt and along the neighbouring coast. The Northerners speak the language of the Qu'rān, the Arabic par excellence whereas the Southerners used ancient Semitic tongue of their own, Sabaean or Ḥimyarite.

⁷⁹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. 7.

George Augustus Wallin, visited the Najd for linguistic study. William Gifford Palgrave, a Jew who converted to Christianity, was stationed at Zaḥlah, Lebanon. In 1853 Sir Richard F. Burton, famous as the translator of the *Arabian Nights*, visited the holy cities as a pilgrim.⁸⁰ Lady Anne Blunt, one of two European women to penetrate North Arabia (1879), reached Najd on several occasions. In 1875, a Christian Englishman, Charles M. Doughty, traversed northern Arabia. His record of the journey, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, has become a classic of English literature.⁸¹ All of these scholars provided Muir with insights into the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina and enhanced his learning about these cities religiously forbidden to non-Muslims.

However, Muir had less knowledge of South Arabian civilisation as research about much of this region only came to light from the 1880's onward. Muir did know about the "successive discoveries of Himyar writing and inscriptions at Sana, Hisna al-Ghorab, Khariba and Mareb."⁸² However, in Muir's era, these inscriptions had not yet been deciphered, as he notes: "notwithstanding many learned and ingenious attempts to unravel these inscriptions no certain clue has yet been found".⁸³ These Ḥimyarite inscriptions discovered by Joseph Halevy, 1869-70,⁸⁴ which afforded the West the first opportunity to learn what the South Arabian writers wrote about themselves were ultimately deciphered by Eduard Glaser, the Austrian Jewish scholar, between 1882-1894.⁸⁵ They disclosed much information about South Arabia, of which Muir would have had little or no knowledge at the time of his writing. Bertram

⁸⁰ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. 6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Cf. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 6-8. Hitti notes that Doughty's writings paved the way for T.E. Lawrence's later work entitled *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

⁸² Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. cxlvii.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 7, 8. These inscriptions pointed to the possibility that the Sabaeans were the first civilized Arabians. The inscriptions found by Eduard Glaser in the Yemen yielded some 2000 inscriptions extending as far back as the seventh century B.C. They described the South Arabian language (Ḥimyarite) and described the Minaean kingdom.

Thomas, the young English orientalist, in January 1931 crossed the great southern desert of Arabia for the first time, providing a better geographical idea of this region. His adventure was matched by J.B. Philby, al-Ḥājj 'Abdullah, who, starting at al-Hufūf near the Persian Gulf on January 7, 1932, crossed the southern desert of Arabia, Al-Rub' Al-Khāli, from east to west in ninety days.⁸⁶

Regarding the early Christianity and Judaism of Arabia, Muir is on more certain ground and notes that Christianity was introduced in Arabia by Paul himself according to the New Testament.⁸⁷ Furthermore, Muir correctly observes that in the third century, the Governor of Arabia, anxious to learn the doctrines of Origen, sent an urgent summons for him through the Prefect of Egypt.⁸⁸ In the fourth century, Petra was the residence of a Metropolitan, whose diocese embraced the ancient Idumea and Nabathea.⁸⁹ Muir also notes that Christianity is recorded as having come to Yemen by the Emperor Constantius in 356 under the leadership of one Theophilus Indus, an Arian.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, he notes that Judaism became widespread in Yemen under the second Ḥimyarite kingdom.⁹¹

In reviewing his conclusions about the peopling of Arabia, Muir notes that no firm conclusions can be drawn from Islamic tradition itself.⁹² Islamic tradition, he notes, "does give the genealogies of Ḥimyar kings and the links of the great Qurayshite line of descent. But the latter do not ascend much beyond the Christian era, and former only five or six centuries farther."⁹³ Beyond these periods, he holds that Muslim tradition is unreliable because it is not original but was gained

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Galatians, i:17 cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. cxxix. In the Bible 'Arabia' most certainly does not refer to the *Ḥijāz* or *Nājd* but much nearer places in North Arabia such as Damascus and Palmyra. However, Damascus, situated along the most important of trade routes, would have had constant contact with all parts of Arabia.

⁸⁸ Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine*, Vol. vi:19-37, cited by Muir, *Life*, p. cxxix.

⁸⁹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. cxxix.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. clvii.

⁹² Ibid., Vol. I, p. cvii.

⁹³ Ibid.

second hand from the Jewish traditions which were themselves unreliable. Muir therefore, falls back on the Mosaic record as the only reliable guide to the original settlements in Arabia. In this regard he notes that it has been argued with probability that a portion of the descendants of Cush, the son of Ham, found their way into Arabia and formed the first body of post-diluvian settlers there.⁹⁴ He notes that the next colonists were the progeny of Joktan, son of Eber, the fifth in descent from Shem. He notes that the Mosaic text informs us that they settled eastward in Arabia, that is in the north of the peninsula.⁹⁵ Muir then observes that Abraham, the sixth in descent from Peleg, is the key figure of the peninsula and went into the northern settlements of the Arabian peninsula and there his descendants settled: 1) the Ishmaelites; 2) Keturahites; 3) Edomites, or descendants of Esau; 4) Moabites and Ammonites; 5) Nahorites.⁹⁶ The descendants of Abraham, Muir notes, had a knowledge of worshipping the one true God but declined into idolatry. He notes that this slide into idolatry would have displaced the memory of Abraham and his religion had not the neighbourhood of the Jews, and the intercourse with them, revived it.⁹⁷

6.1 CONCEPTS FROM THE NATIVE RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS OF ARABIA

Muir holds that the native religious systems in Arabia of idolatry, stone worship, Sabeanism and ancient Semitism had an important influence on the Qur'ān. He contends that according to the early Islamic sources the Bedouin's religion, like other forms of primitive belief, was animistic and worship was made to trees and stones.⁹⁸ Muir observes that the worship of unshapen stones,

⁹⁴ Muir cites *Kitto's Cyclopaedia*, articles, 'Cush, Ethiopia, and Arabia', Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. cix.

⁹⁵ Genesis, x:30 cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. cx.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. cxi.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. cxxviii.

⁹⁸ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, pp. ccxii, ccxiii. He notes that Ibn Hishām (Sirah, p. 22) and al-Ṭabarī (Vol. i, p. 922) speak of a sacred palm tree in Najrān to which gifts were offered. These sources also noted that Al-Lāt in al-Ṭā'if was represented by a square stone and dhu al-Shara in Petra by a quadrangular block of unhewn black stone four feet high and two feet wide.

declared to be anathema in the Qur'ān, was nevertheless permitted in the worship of the Black Stone at the Ka'ba.⁹⁹ Muir contends that testimonies of Islamic writers leave no room for doubt that animistic practices, observed long before the time of Muḥammad, were incorporated into his system of belief and ultimately into the Qur'ān itself.¹⁰⁰ The Prophet's own followers found it difficult to harmonize the retention of these practices with a purely theistic system. Muslim records a tradition which relates that:

'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb kissed the black stone and said, 'My God, I well know that thou art simply a piece of stone, and if I had not seen the Apostle of God kiss thee, then I had not kissed thee.'¹⁰¹

Of the other religious beliefs which had an influence on Arabia, Sabaenism is both prominent and ancient. There were two views in Muir's era about the identity of the Sabaeans of South Arabia. Tisdall observes that according to the Qur'ān they were one of the four communities which possessed a "Holy Book" according to sūras xxii: 17 and ii: 59. He held that it is possible that the Sabaeans were a semi-Christian sect which originated from the Mandaean, a religion which had much in common with Gnosticism.¹⁰²

While not denying the origin of the Sabaeans from the Mandaean, Muir contends upon his reading of the Islamic sources that the religion of South Arabia (including Sabaenism and Mandaenism) was in its essence a planetary astral system of an age which predated Gnosticism.¹⁰³ He notes that the cult of

⁹⁹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. ccxiii. Here Muir cites Ibn Ishāq who observed: "the adoration of stones among the Ishmaelites originated in the practice of carrying a stone from the sacred enclosure of Mecca when they went upon a journey, out of reverence to the Ka'ba; and wherever they went they set it up and made circuits round about it as to the Ka'ba, until at the last they worshipped every goodly stone which they saw, and forgot their religion, and changed the faith of Abraham and Ishmael, and worshipped images." Ibn Hishām, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ *Mishkāt*, Chapter on Pilgrimage, see 1, part 3, cited by Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 5.

¹⁰² Tisdall, *The Original Sources*, pp. 54,55 The Mandaean derive their name from Manda, an emanation of a god. Tisdall notes that he is said in their sacred book, the *Sidrā Rabbā*, to have manifested himself in a series of incarnations, the first three were Abel, Seth and Enoch whereas the last was John the Baptist. John the Baptist is alleged to have given his powers to Jesus of Nazareth who returned to the Kingdom of Light after he was taken to heaven at the cross. This idea, Tisdall observes, is seemingly repeated in the Qur'ān, sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*).

¹⁰³ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. clvii.

worshipping the mood-god and other celestial deities is reflected in the Qur'ān (sūra ii (al-Baqara):100) where the North Arabian goddess al-Lāt, is described as being worshipped.¹⁰⁴ Muir believes that Sabaeism in Arabia was the earliest form of departure from the monotheism of Abraham. The book of Job in the Old Testament, he notes, contains references to Sabaean names of the Himyar dynasty of ancient Yemen.¹⁰⁵ Muir also notes that Sabaean worship of the sun, moon and stars continued from Biblical times through the 4th century A.D. and so influenced worship at the Ka'ba that the seven circuits of the Ka'ba were emblematic of the revolutions of the planetary bodies.¹⁰⁶ Muir cites Ibn Hishām who states that: "Shahrastānī informs us that there was an opinion among the Arabs, that the walking round the Ka'ba and other ceremonies, were symbolical of the motion of the planets, and of other astronomical facts."¹⁰⁷

Twentieth century researchers attempted to resolve the question of whether Sabaeism and Mandaneanism traced its relationship to Gnosticism, as Tisdall believed, or to Zoroastrianism, as Muir held. In the early 20th century researchers held that the Sabaeans and the Mandaneans were the same people who came from a Gnostic sect which still survives in the marshy district at the mouth of the Euphrates and are mentioned in the Qur'ān, sūra ii (al-Baqara): 59; sūra v (al-Mā'ida) 73; sūra xxii (al-Ḥajj): 17.¹⁰⁸ This initial position was modified by the discovery in 1945 at Nag Hammadi of scrolls written in Coptic dating from about A.D. 350 to 400 which provided a treasury of Gnostic works. These Gnostic

¹⁰⁴ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. ccxii.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Muir notes that the name Abd Shams, "servant" or "votary of the Sun," occurs in the Himyar dynasty about the eighth century B.C.; and again in the fourth century. Muir notes that one of these is said to have restored Ayn Shams or Heliopolis according to M.C. de Perceval, vol. i, p. 52. Muir also notes that the stars worshipped by the various tribes are specified by Pococke's *Specimen*, p. 4. This writer writes that the Qur'ān, in sūra xxvii (al-Naml) 25, records that the people of Saba worshipped the sun in the days of Solomon. Muir also notes that Sale in his *Preliminary Discourse* (to his translation of the Qur'ān pp.19,20) notes that the constellations worshipped by the Arabs, according to sūra liii (al-Najm) 49 is an evident allusion to the adoration of Al Shira, or Sirius. Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. ccxii, fn.

¹⁰⁶ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. ccxii.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Hishām, p. 27 cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, pp. ccxii, fn.

¹⁰⁸ Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 233.

writings, while demonstrating a link to Sabaeism and Mandaneanism, also showed that the Gnostic sources relied greatly on Zoroastrianism;¹⁰⁹ indeed, one of the Gnostic sources discovered at Nag Hammadi is attributed to Zoroaster himself.¹¹⁰ Thus Muir's view is upheld that ancient Zoroastrianism apparently influenced the beliefs of the Mandaneans and Sabaeans which in turn were linked to those of the Gnostics of Nag Hammadi.¹¹¹

Goldsack observes that Abū'l Fidā' also contends that there is a close similarity between the rituals of Islam and those of the Sabaeans.¹¹² In the first place he notes that the Sabaeans were diligent in prayer seven times a day, five of which correspond to those which are used by Muslims.¹¹³ Another similar ritual he notes is that they prayed over the dead and fasted for thirty days from sunrise to sunset as is done in the Muslim fast of Ramaḍān.¹¹⁴ In another similarity, he notes that they observed the festivals of *fiṭr* (breaking the fast at the end of the month) and *hilāl* (new moon) as is done in Islam. Finally, the Sabaeans honoured the Ka'ba and performed the Pilgrimage.¹¹⁵

Nineteenth century scholars pointed out that one finds in the Qur'ān words, concepts and rituals prevalent during the pre-Islamic period known as the *Jāhiliyya* (days of religious ignorance) which are Semitic. In Chapter Nine of this thesis it will be shown that studies of the etymology of the term 'Allāh' indicate that it was borrowed from Judaism or Abrahamic Monotheism at a very early date. However, it is sufficient at this point to note that the name of God, Allāh, is the most important religious term shared by the Qur'ān and the literature of the pre-Islamic

¹⁰⁹ S.G.F. Brandon, *Religion in Ancient History* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), pp. 334-335.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Abu'l-Fidā', *Al-Tawārīkh al-Qadīma, Hist. Ante-Islamica*, ed. Fleisher, p. 148, cited by Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 10.

¹¹³ Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Cf. Tisdall, *The Original Sources*, p. 53.

period. Goldsack observes that during the pre-Islamic period, 'ilāh' was the name used for any god, but 'Al-Ilāh,¹¹⁶ contracted to Allāh was used as the name of the Supreme Deity. In the pre-Islamic period the name Allāh had been used by the ancient pagan poets Nābigha and Labīd; also the pre-Islamic poetry entitled *Mu'allaqāt*¹¹⁷ refers to the Supreme Deity as Allāh. In pre-Islamic *ceremonial* usage, Ibn Hishām informs us that the Quraysh, when performing the ceremony of *iḥlāl* (literally "to declare permitted") said: "We are present in Thy service O God (Allāh); Thou hast no partner except the partner of Thy dread; Thou ownest him and whatsoever he owneth."¹¹⁸ In pre-Islamic *cultural* usage the name Allāh was given to the house of God, *Bait-Allāh*; it was appended to personal names, Muḥammad's father being 'Abdallāh, it was used in oaths when calling on the name of God (*Allāh, Allāhumma*); and it was used in imprecations when calling a foe: "an enemy of God".¹¹⁹

There are also numerous religiously important concepts easily identified from ancient Semitic ideas which became enshrined in the animism of Arabia and were eventually contextualized for Islamic use. For example, the name *ḥajj* or (*hāg or hajj*) is taken from the Hebrew root denoting the making of a circuit as in the story of the Israelites at Sinai (Ex. xxiii:14); also the feast of booths is called *ḥajj* in the Old Testament (Judges xxi: 19). The details associated with the Old Testament *ḥajj* mentioned in Exodus xix such as abstinence from sexual intercourse, washing of garments, and the pause (verse 15 cf. *wuqūf*) before

¹¹⁶ *Al-Ilāh* is the name for God with the definite article prefixed, so that Allah is the exact equivalent of the Greek '*Ho Theos*'.

¹¹⁷ Hitti cites Al-Suyūṭi who observes that among the ancient odes in Arabia the so-called "Seven Mu'allaqat" (suspended) hold first place. He notes that in his time they were still honoured throughout the Arabic-speaking world as masterpieces of poetical composition. Furthermore, al-Suyūṭi records that according to legend each of these odes was awarded the annual prize at the fair of Ukaz and was inscribed in golden letters and suspended on the walls of the Ka'bah. Al-Suyūṭi, *al-Muzhir* (Cairo, 1282), vol. ii, p. 240 cited by Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 93.

¹¹⁸ Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

God, are all part of the Muslim pilgrimage.¹²⁰ However, the details of this Old Testament concept of *hajj* were soon enmeshed with the *tarwiya*, the libations at Zamzam, the stoning, the reverence of the Black Stone and many other rites which find their origin in solar or fertility cults practised in Arabia.¹²¹ In this respect, Goldsack cites Abu'l-Fidā', who observes:

They (the pre-Islamic Arabs) used to perform the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, where they put on the 'umrā and iḥrām, and they also performed the tawāf (circumambulation of the Ka'ba), and the running at Mounts Ṣafā and Marwa, and the casting of stones, and at the end of every three years spent a month in solitary contemplation...and they performed circumcision, and cut off the right hand of thieves.¹²²

Muir concludes that the Prophet did not regard it as inconsistent to make as one pillar of the new-found faith the worship of the One True God, Allāh, and another the retention of the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba at Mecca, the latter being the most revered animistic site of worship in Arabia. Thus, for Muir, the gulf between the idolatry of the Arabs and the pure theism of Israel was bridged over.

Upon this common ground Mahomet took his stand, and proclaimed to his people a new and a spiritual system, in accents to which all Arabia could respond. The rites of the Ka'ba were retained, but stripped by him of every idolatrous tendency; and they still hang, a strange unmeaning shroud around the living theism of Islam.¹²³

6.2 CONCEPTS FROM TALMUDIC JUDAISM

Muir and Goldsack contend that concepts from Talmudic Judaism were also incorporated into Islam.¹²⁴ Muir observes that Muḥammad's Jewish contacts

¹²⁰ Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 6,7.

¹²¹ Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 5.

¹²² Abu'l-Fidā' mentions a number of pre-Islamic concepts from the native religious systems of Arabia adopted by the Qur'ān, viz.: *ḥadd*, the punishment for theft, circumcision as practiced by the priests of the Ka'ba, *iḥlāl* literally 'raising the voice for the *talbiyah* (recitation of God's praise on the pilgrimage), *iḥrām*, the pilgrim's dress et. al. Abu'l-Fidā', *Al-Tawārikh al-Qadima*, p. 180, cited by Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 5.

¹²³ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. ccxviii.

¹²⁴ The 19th century marked the zenith of literary studies about possible Islamic borrowings from Judaism. Muir and Goldsack frequently cite Abraham Geiger's *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthum aufgenommen?* (Bonn: 1833), trans. by F.M. Young, *Judaism and Islam* (Madras: S.P.C.K., 1898). Following Geiger, there were many other writers who wrote on the possible Islamic borrowings from Judaism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, those which are still relevant to current research are: Charles C. Torrey, *The Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1892); Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies (Muhammedanische Studien)*,

may have been disciples, visitors from one of the Jewish tribes, or residents of the city of Yathrib (Medina):

They had a knowledge, rude and imperfect perhaps, but comprehensive, of the outlines of Jewish history and tradition. These, distorted by Rabbinical fable...supplied the material for the Scriptural stories, which begin to form a chief portion of the Coran.¹²⁵

Goldsack considers that the stories of Talmudic Judaism, which confounds names, dates, and facts of history, account for the equally unhistorical character of the Qur'ān. He notes that an example of this can be seen in sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 161, which lists the chronological order of the Biblical prophets as the Patriarchs, then Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon and last of all David.¹²⁶

Goldsack maintains that there are many terms found in the Qur'ān which have their origin in Old Testament or Rabbinic sources. A few from Goldsack's list of terms are: *darasa*, 'religious instruction' as in *midrash*; *Tābūt*, 'the Ark'; *Taurāt*, 'the Law'; *Jannātu 'Adn* (Garden of Eden) from Hebrew *Gannatu Eden*; *Jahannam*, (Hell) from the Hebrew *Gehinnom*; *sabt*, (sabbath); *sakīnat*, (presence of God) from the Hebrew *sakinah*; *tāghūt*, (the worship of false Gods or idols) from the Hebrew *shigguts* (worship of detestable things); *Furqān*, (deliverance or redemption) from the Hebrew *qanah* (to redeem or deliver); *mā'ūn*, lit. 'necessary refuge' from the Hebrew *meonah*, necessary eternal refuge; and *malakut*, 'government' from the Hebrew *melek* (king).¹²⁷

Muir and Goldsack further point out that a number of the rituals in Islam closely resemble those of Judaism. Among these are Muḥammad's initial adoption of Jerusalem as the *qibla* (direction of prayer) of the Islamic Faith and the observation of the Day of Atonement (*Ashura*) until his argument with the Jews,

Halle, 1889-1890, edited by S. M. Stern, translated by C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967, 1971); and Arthur Jeffrey, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), and as a background to the origin, collection and textual history of the Qur'ān, Theodor Nöldeke, *Die Geschichte des Korantextes* (Leipzig: 1938).

¹²⁵ Muir, *Life*, Vol. II, pp. 184, 185.

¹²⁶ Goldsack, *Origins*, pp. 22, 23.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

when it was declared to commemorate *'īd al-adḥā* being the Muslim day of remembrance of Abraham's sacrifice of Ishmael.¹²⁸ Goldsack observes that both the Jews and Sabaeans observed a month's fast in the year, but in connection with this fast there was one observance which was decidedly of Jewish origin. In sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):183 one reads: "Eat and drink until ye can discern a white thread from a black thread by the daybreak; then fast strictly till night."¹²⁹ Goldsack observes that in the Mishnah Berakhoth one reads that the fast began, "when one can distinguish between a blue thread and a white one."¹³⁰

Finally, Goldsack holds that there are some foundational theological ideas which the Qur'ān has in common with Talmudic Judaism. One example is Scripture being preserved on tables of stone (Deuteronomy 10: 1,2) which is repeated in sūra lxxxv (*al-Burūj*): 21, where one reads: "Yet it is a glorious Qur'ān on a preserved table." The Arabic for table (*lawḥ*) found in the Qur'ān, is a cognate of the Hebrew word for table (*luah*) as used in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy.¹³¹

Muir and Goldsack concur with the statement made by the Old Testament scholar Emanuel Deutsch that:

Although Muḥammad may be regarded as *ummiyun* (unlearned) with regard to the Old Testament Scriptures, nevertheless, he had breathed almost from his childhood the air of contemporary Judaism, such Judaism as is found by us crystallised in the Talmud, the Targum, and the Midrash.¹³²

128 Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. cxi, Muslims claim that Abraham's son was of Ishmael and the location was at Mecca. Muir notes that Hagar, when cast forth by Abraham, dwelt with her son in the wilderness of Paran, to the north of Arabia (Genesis xxi:25; xxv:18).

Cf. Tisdall, *The Original Sources*, pp. 58, 59

129 Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 21.

130 *Ibid.*

131 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

132 Emanuel Deutsch, s.v. "Old Testament", Thomas Patrick Hughes, *Hughes' Dictionary*, p.439.

Goldsack observes that when Muḥammad announced his prophetic role in 612 A.D, the Persians had overrun and taken possession of Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor. However, by the time of the Hijra in A.D. 622, Heraclius, the Emperor of the Byzantine empire, had forced the Persians to sue for peace.¹³³ The Persian cultural influence continued and Ibn Hishām notes that in the early days of Islam, not only were Persian stories of Rostam, Isfandiyār, and the ancient kings of Persia current in Medina, but the Quraysh tribe were in the habit of comparing their tales gleaned from the Persians with those of the Qur'ān. Owing to the mockery of al-Naḍr bin al-Ḥārith claiming that (الاولين اكتبه كما اكتبته) (والله ما محمد باحسن حديثاً مني وما حديثه الا اساطير Muḥammad are simply tales of the ancients (Persians))¹³⁴ the imprecatory sūra xlv (*Al-Jāthiya*) came upon him. Goldsack contends that al-Naḍr among the Meccans, in comparing the stories of Muḥammad with those which they knew of the Persians, saw in them similarities of content, style and even vocabulary.¹³⁵

Goldsack observes that among the narratives which are common to Persian Zoroastrianism and the Qur'ān is the celebrated night journey of Muḥammad known as the Mi'rāj . Muḥammad's night journey is described in sūra xvii (*al-Isrā'īl*) which reads:

Praise be to Him who transported His servant by night to the sacred temple from the further temple, the circuit of which we have blessed, that we might show him of our signs.¹³⁶

¹³³ Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 6.

¹³⁴ Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh (Das Leben Muhammed's)*. Edited by Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, 2 vols (Göttingen, 1858-1860), cited by Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 6.

¹³⁵ Goldsack notes that the stories of Rostam and Isfandiyar and the Kings of Persia which were referred to by al-Naḍr are among those which, some generations later, Firdawsi, the most celebrated of the epic poets of Persia, learnt from the collection which he tells us a Persian villager had made, and which Firdawsi has left in poetic form in the *Shahnamah*. Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 6. Cf. Tisdall, *Original Sources*, pp. 216, 217.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 7

Goldsack observes that in spite of the caution in the 62nd verse of the same sūrah not to translate it literally, Muslim commentators and traditionists portray in detail a literal bodily journey by night upon the back of a fabulous steed, not merely to the further temple (the temple of Jerusalem), but to heaven itself, where the Prophet ascended from storey to storey, until he reached the very presence of God and learned many of the secrets of heaven.¹³⁷ Goldsack believes that this story may be borrowed from the Zoroastrian account of the ascension to heaven of the Persian Priest, Arta Viraf, which is contained in a Pahlavi book called *The Book of Arta Viraf*.¹³⁸ He observes that the Qur'ānic account agrees in almost all details with the story found here in which the hero, a young Magian priest of saintly life, ascended to heaven under the guidance of an angel, and after passing into the presence of God and beholding the beauties of heaven returned to the earth to tell Zoroastrians what he had seen.¹³⁹

Goldsack asserts that not only do Qur'ānic narratives adopt Persian sources but that the Qur'ān also employs Zoroastrian words and phrases when referring to heaven and hell and death and judgment. The Qur'ānic term *Jinn* Goldsack considers to derive from the Avestic '*Jaina*' referring to an evil spirit¹⁴⁰, and the idea of the *Ḥūrīs* or large-eyed damsels he believes are derived from Persian legends about the *Pairakas*, called by the modern people of Iran *Parīs*.¹⁴¹ Goldsack cites Tisdall, who notes that the *Ḥūrīs* were described by the ancient Zoroastrians as female spirits living in the air and closely connected with the stars and light.¹⁴² Again Goldsack cites Tisdall, who notes that the name 'Azāzīl,

137 Sūrah xvii (*al-Isrā'īl*): 62, reads: "We have not appointed the vision which we showed thee, except as a test for men." Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 8.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 9. Goldsack and Tisdal concur that the word seems to be Persian, for the singular *Jini* is the Avestic *Jaini*, a wicked (female) spirit. Tisdal, *Original Sources*, pp. 236-237, cited by Goldsack, *Origins*, pp. 8,9.

141 Ibid., pp. 8, 9.

142 Tisdal, *Original Sources*, pp. 236, 237, cited by Goldsack, *Origins*, pp. 8,9.

according to the Muslim tradition, was the original name of Satan or *Iblīs*. While the name is Hebrew and occurs in the original text of Leviticus (xvi:8, 10, 26), the story about 'Azāzīl, Goldsack and Tisdall hold to be Zoroastrian.¹⁴³ The following details in the Muslim traditions parallel the Zoroastrian story of Satan: 1) In each story Satan worshipped God for a thousand years before being banned from heaven and sent to earth. 2) In each story Satan worshipped in seven successive levels of heaven for one thousand years before being cast out. 3) In each story Satan was cast out because he would not worship Adam. 4) In each story it is said that he tried to bribe admittance of the Peacock watchman to the place in heaven where Adam dwelt in order to tempt him.

Goldsack turns to the concept of *al-Şirāt* or "The Way," which is used of a metaphorical bridge which passes over the abyss of hell, and which only the pious Muslim will be able to traverse without difficulty while unbelievers are unable to cross it. He again cites Tisdall who notes that though the word *Şirāt* is used in a metaphorical sense to mean way, as in the phrase *Al-Şirāt al-Mustaqim* ("the Right Way," according to *sūra i (al-Fātiḥa)*, it is not an Arabic word at all.¹⁴⁴ According to Goldsack and Tisdall, its derivation shows that it is from the Persian *Chinvat* in Arabic letters since the Arabic language, not having any character to represent the sound ch (as in church), replaces it by the (Ş), the first letter in *Şirāt*. *Chinvat* in Persian means a collector, one who reckons up or takes account. The *Şirāt* gets its meaning as the *Chinvata-peretus*, "The bridge (also over hell) of him that reckons up" good deeds and bad. Each man's spirit must cross over the bridge to enter Paradise.¹⁴⁵ Goldsack and Tisdall both contended that the aforementioned examples indicated the extent to which the Persian language and the Zoroastrian religion influenced Islam.

143 Tisdall, *Original Sources*, pp. 245-246, cited by Goldsack, *Origins*, pp. 9.

144 Tisdall, *Original Sources*, pp. 250, 251 cited by Goldsack, *Origins*, pp. 10.

145 *Ibid.*

Muir observes that in spite of five centuries of Christian evangelization in Arabia, "one can point to but a sprinkling here and there of Christian converts: the *Banū Taghlib*, the *Banū Ḥārith* of Najrān, the *Banū Ḥanīfa* of Yamāma, and the *Banū Tay* at Taymā', and hardly any more."¹⁴⁶ That there were few Christians in Arabia, he observes, seems all the more unusual considering the fact that Arabia had relations with all three of the main sections of the Christian Church, the Royal (Melkite) Byzantine Church; the Nestorian Church and the Jacobite Monophysite Church. Also, there were many Christian churches along the trade routes in Arabia before Muḥammad. There are legends describing how Muhammad met bishops and ascetics of the Christian faith. Muir notes that while this is possible, the Qur'ān itself does not portray a close knowledge of the Christian faith as endorsed by the Ecumenical Christian Creeds.¹⁴⁷ Muir wrote in 1861, regarding the substance of the Christian faith which is reflected in the Qur'ān:

We do not find a single ceremony or doctrine of Islam in any degree moulded, or even tinged, by the peculiar tenets of Christianity; while on the contrary, Judaism has given its colour to the whole system, and lent to it the shape and type, if not the actual substance, of many ordinances.¹⁴⁸

However, after thirty years of research on Islam, Muir's thinking changed regarding the substance of the Christian Faith which is reflected in the Qur'ānic record. By 1894, he admits that it seems impossible for the Christian or the believer in the Qur'ān to escape the fact that the Qur'ān embraces such Christian truths as the high view of the Biblical text and the exalted nature of the person of Jesus.¹⁴⁹ Both of these concepts, Muir observes, were set forward toward the end of the Meccan period.

¹⁴⁶ Muir, *Life*, 3rd. ed., pp. cxxviii, cxxix.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., Cf. Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Muir, *Life*, pp. 143, 144.

¹⁴⁹ *Minār*, p. 9. Cf. Muir, *The Coran*, p. 19.

The topic of Christian concepts found in the Islamic sources forms the basis of the last third of this thesis and therefore will not be discussed at this point. However the reader can read about 'The Bible in Islam' (Chapter Seven), 'Jesus in Islam' (Chapter Eight), and 'God in Islam' (Chapter Nine).

6.5 A SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE OF EXTERNAL SOURCES IN THE QUR'AN

The evidence reviewed above provides strong support for the thesis of Western/European scholars of Islam that the Qur'ān contains concepts from Animism, Sabaeism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. The question must be asked, however, whether Muḥammad considered the inclusion of external sources in the Qur'ān (from the Books he considered to be revealed) to be outside God's will. Rather, it would seem that he believed that certain ideas within the Qur'ān were a repetition of concepts from the 'approved' religions of the Jews, Christians, Sabaeans and Zoroastrians. This concept is emphasized in sūra xxxix (*Al-Zumar*): 24, which reads: "God hath sent down the most excellent tiding, a writing like unto others, *a repetition*."

This verse represents Muḥammad's view and therefore one can assume that he believed that the 'Revealed Books', like the Qur'ān, all contained truths from the Preserved Tablet. He further believed that they would stand so as to give evidence from the prophets, culminating with himself according to sūra xxxiii (*Al-Aḥzāb*):40.¹⁵⁰ In conclusion, rather than denying that the Qur'ān contains external sources, a theory which may be more consistent with Muḥammad's view, as based on these passages, is that the Qur'ān contains divine truths which are similar to sources from the "Previous Books of God" because the revelations in the Qur'ān are on a continuum with the former revelations and bring them to a climax. A not too dissimilar theory was embraced by such liberal 19th century Muslim

¹⁵⁰ Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, p. 23.

scholars as Sayyid 'Amir 'Āli¹⁵¹ and Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, who stated of the Biblical texts:

We Mohomedans believe from our heart, that the Towrat, Zuboor, the writings of all the prophets, and the Injeel, are all true and sacred records, proceeding primarily from God; and we believe further, that the Koran is the last message which came down from heaven.¹⁵²

7.0. THE THIRD ISLAMIC DEBATE CONCERNED INTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'ĀN

While the first debate focused upon the collation of the Qur'ān, and the second upon its composition, the third Islamic debate focused on the interpretation of the Qur'ān. In studying Qur'ānic interpretation, related issues arose such as the topics of abrogation, chronology and the relative importance of the Qur'ānic sūras. One of the earliest questions in Qur'ānic interpretation concerned whether or not metaphorical interpretation of the Qur'ān was allowed. The orthodox Muslim exegetes, believing that each stanza, verse and letter was divine, insisted that passages of the Qur'ān should be interpreted literally. The Mu'tazilite scholars feared that in making literal (and possibly anthropomorphic) interpretations, they would commit the grave sin of associating a physical object with the Divine Unity. Therefore they concluded that a metaphorical interpretation must be allowed for some passages. This problem set the stage for a third and very significant debate about the Qur'ān. This debate raged around the interpretation of several important passages in the Qur'ān. The one most cited is sūra vii (*Al-A'rāf*): 54 "*thumma istiwa' 'alā'l-'arsh*" (then He sat down upon the throne). The orthodox Muslim exegete, 'Anas ibn Mālik states: "God's sitting upon the throne is known; how it is done is unknown; it must be believed; and questions about it are an innovation."¹⁵³ The Mu'tazilites of the 2nd Islamic century held that any word or phrase which might be misunderstood as associating a temporal object with the

¹⁵¹ Sayyid 'Amir 'Āli, *Spirit of Islam*, pp. 235-6, cited by Goldsack, *Origins*, pp. 10,11.

¹⁵² Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *TK*, Vol. I, p. 32.

¹⁵³ 'Anas ibn Mālik, *Al-Muwatta'* (Cairo: A.H. 1279-1280) cited by Goldsack, *God in Islam*, p. 14.

Divine Unity must be interpreted in a figurative or metaphorical sense (*ta'wīl*). Ignaz Goldziher observes that by the time of al-Zamakhsharī (1074-1143), metaphorical interpretation of the Qur'ān had become a science and he interprets the "throne of God" passage as representing God's majesty and power.¹⁵⁴

7.1 THE SUMMARY OF THE THIRD ISLAMIC DEBATE

Orthodox Islamic scholars insisted on a literal interpretation of the passages in question, even if this interpretation might lead to an anthropomorphic interpretation. The Mu'tazilites, insisted on metaphorical interpretation especially if the text might otherwise be construed as anthropomorphic. For example, they interpreted the throne passage as standing for God's majesty and power.¹⁵⁵ During the 19th century, many liberal Islamic scholars criticized the method of al-Rāzi and embraced that of al-Zamakhsharī. Orthodox Muslim scholars of the 19th century such as 'Alī Bakhsh Khān reaffirmed Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's main accusation against the use of metaphorical interpretation, namely that it was used without any *dalīl* (reason).¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān set down his reasons for using metaphorical interpretation of the Qur'ān in his *Fifteen Principles of Exegesis*. The seventh principle holds the key to his approach and rests on the Mu'tazilite tenet that no meaning of a word should be interpreted literally which is "impossible in the light of rational argument" or "opposed to the law of nature which God Himself has declared."¹⁵⁷

8.0 THE INFLUENCE OF THE DEBATE ABOUT INTERPRETATION ON QUR'ĀNIC STUDIES

The legacies of each of the three Islamic debates about the Qur'ān were different in all but one respect. All three debates drew attention to the issues concerning the essence, form, and final authority of the Qur'ān. The first debate

154 Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1920), p. 117.

155 Ibid.

156 Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 163.

157 Khān, *TUT*, p. 52, *Maqālāt-i Sir Sayyid*, Vol. II, p. 248, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 166.

reflected the establishment of one Qur'ān which could not be evaluated by any shafts of light which a variant reading might throw upon the text. However, in the process of establishing 'Uthmān's text, strong differences of opinion emerged about it between the Muslims of ancient Iraq, Syria, Kūfa and Baṣra.

The second debate, concerning whether the Qur'ān was created or uncreated, focused particular attention on whether it could contain external sources. The Mu'tazilites considered the meaning alone to be divine, whereas the orthodox Islamic theologians regarded each stanza, verse, word and letter of the Qur'ān to be divine. Therefore, the former group allowed that external sources could be included in the Qur'ān whereas the latter group did not.

The third debate also brought forward the need to include in a study of Qur'ānic interpretation the concepts of abrogation, chronology, and the comparative importance of the Qur'ānic sūras. The legacy of the debate about Qur'ānic interpretation proved to be very important for Qur'ānic Studies and Muslim-Christian dialogue and will be discussed in greater length.

8.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PERCEPTION OF THE QUR'ĀN TO INTERPRETATION

Firstly, the perception of the nature of the Qur'ān is important to Muslim-Christian dialogue. To Muir, as an historian, the author of the Qur'ān was none other than Muḥammad. Muir did not approach the Qur'ān as a record of God's revelation, but rather as a "store-house of Mahomet's own words recorded during his life...illustrating his religious views."¹⁵⁸ Accordingly, he viewed the Qur'ān as a document like any other which could be subjected to the same historical and critical analysis and could be interpreted metaphorically.

Before 1870, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān strongly objected to Muir's assessment of the Qur'ān as a man-made book. In agreement with the orthodox Muslim position on the nature of the Qur'ān he stated: "the Qur'ān is not a book composed

¹⁵⁸ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, xxvii.

by a writer. It is the speech of God and the very words (of God) have been written down in it."¹⁵⁹ After 1870, he modified his exegetical approach, contending that it was necessary to construct and apply principles of exegesis of the Qur'ān in the light of the Arabic thought forms of Muḥammad's time. He also advocated that one must keep in mind the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) of the different verses.¹⁶⁰

8.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF ABROGATION IN THE QUR'ĀN TO INTERPRETATION

A second consideration in interpreting the Qur'ān was to determine whether a particular passage represents abiding truths or statements given only for guidance at a particular time and in a specific situation.

Muir observes that the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān in parts to suit the varying necessities of the hour led eventually to passages which were irreconcilably opposed in their meaning; and when this happened the earlier was abrogated by the later in accordance with sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):100, "Whatever verses we cancel or cause thee to forget, we give thee better in their stead, or the like thereof".¹⁶¹ Commenting on this text, Muir observes:

While it is maintained that we now have the Coran as it was left by Mahomet, there is no ground for asserting that passages, once given forth as inspired, may not at some subsequent period have been changed or withdrawn by *the Prophet himself* (emphasis added).¹⁶²

For Muir, the cancelling of a passage did not affect the value of the Qur'ān as an "exponent of Mahomet's opinions, or rather of the opinions he finally professed to

¹⁵⁹ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *TFA*, I, II, p. 480/ *PMAq*, Vol. XI, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 526. Cf. *Sir Sayyid's credo: the texts translated*, Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 197ff, in which he notes that in regard to the revelatory character of the Qur'ān the Prophet recited to the people exactly the same words in which God had conveyed the meanings to the Prophet.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. II, pp. 136, 137.

¹⁶² The theory of abrogation has its bases for evidence firstly, in the Qur'ān [eg. sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):100], secondly, in the traditions, and thirdly, in the doctrine of *'ilm al-naskh*, by which one verse of the Qur'ān abrogated another and by which one ḥadīth abrogated another ḥadīth. Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xxiv.

hold; since what we now have, though possibly corrected and modified by himself, is still his own."¹⁶³

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān objects to Muir's suggestion that a part of Muḥammad's "revealed words may possibly have been lost, destroyed or become obsolete."¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, he asserts that: "no reading (*tilāwat*) of any verse of the Qur'ān was abrogated and no verse of the Holy Qur'ān was abrogated."¹⁶⁵ In denying abrogation of an earlier sūra by a later one in the Qur'ān, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān is not in agreement with the majority of Islamic theologians. Muir notes that most Islamic scholars, like Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, necessarily admit the abrogation of Qur'ānic passages, though trying to limit these to a minimum.¹⁶⁶

The present author believes that the early position of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān on abrogation (prior to 1857) was close to that of Al-Shahrastānī, who takes *naskh* (abrogation) to refer to the Qur'ān's 'abrogating' all passages from the pre-Islamic Scriptures not in agreement with the Qur'ān, rather than to sūras within the Qur'ān itself.¹⁶⁷ However, after 1857, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān rejects the idea that the Qur'ān abrogated the pre-Islamic Scriptures and simply concludes that the Qur'ān had a *fuller revelation* than the pre-Islamic Scriptures and that Muḥammad was the "Seal of the prophets" because *nothing new* is to be added after his revelation.¹⁶⁸

8.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE QUR'ĀN TO INTERPRETATION

The debate about Qur'ānic interpretation raised the question of the need to arrange the sūras of the Qur'ān in chronological order. Muir notes that on the negative side, the text of the Qur'ān exhibits: "a chaotic mingling of subjects, ever

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, p. v.

¹⁶⁵ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Beliefs Agreed upon with Mahdī 'Alī (Masā'il-i-Mutafiqah)*, TA 1, 1873; rpt. PMAq, Vol. I, pp. 296-97, translated by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 275.

¹⁶⁶ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *Al-itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo, 1317 A.H.), vol. 2, p. 23, cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. v. Muir observes that the *Itqān* gives a list of twenty verses which are acknowledged by all commentators as being abrogated.

¹⁶⁷ Al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb niḥāyat al-iqdām fī 'ilm al-kalām*, trans. Alfred Guillaume, p. 158.

¹⁶⁸ Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 191.

and anon disjointed as well by chronology as by the sense."¹⁶⁹ On the positive side, he notes that the Qur'ānic text displays "an artless simplicity, of a patchwork of Qur'ānic verses, which testifies to the faithfulness of its compilers and proves that they dared not do more than simply collect the sacred fragments and place them in juxtaposition without regard to either time or subject."¹⁷⁰ Therefore, its several parts could only be understood in connection with the life of Muḥammad.¹⁷¹

Muir observes that the earliest Islamic scholar to study the problem of Qur'ānic chronology was Ibn 'Abbās (d.32 A.H), the father of Qur'ānic exegesis, but that he did not dare to place the Qur'ān in chronological order as the recited order had become sacrosanct in the minds of the readers.¹⁷² Similarly, Muir notes that al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H.), al-Tha'ālibī (d.427 A.H.) and al-Baghawī (d. 516 A.H.) all voiced questions about the lack of chronological order in the Qur'ānic sūras. However, they too did not replace the orthodox Islamic scheme which held that the Qur'ān is rightly divided according to length with the seven longest sūras being first, those of about 100 verses next, followed by the shortest sūras.¹⁷³ Muir concludes that while Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī in his *Itqān*, was not the first to acknowledge the problem of a lack of chronological sequence of the Qur'ānic sūras, he was, nevertheless, the first to attempt to place them in the sequence of their revelation.¹⁷⁴

Muir, following al-Suyūfī's suggested order, arranged the sūras into six periods which were similar to those in the *Itqān*: The first Meccan period includes eighteen sūras and were characterized by short rhapsodies which may have been

¹⁶⁹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. vii.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. xxii.

¹⁷¹ Muir, *The Coran*, pp. 8,9.

¹⁷² Concerning the chronological arrangement of the Qur'ān, Ibn 'Abbās held views which were well in advance of his time. He communicated to an intimate friend in this regard: "Were I to teach all, the people would stone me." Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, p. 131.

¹⁷³ Muir, *Life*, Vol. II, p. 222.

¹⁷⁴ Al-Suyūfī, *al-Itqān*, cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. vi.

composed before Muḥammad had conceived the idea of a Divine mission. None of them are in the form of a message from the Deity.¹⁷⁵

The second Meccan period coincided with the beginning of Muḥammad's ministry (610) when, perplexed with the mysterious destiny of man and the failure of repeated revelations to enlighten the gross darkness shrouding the peninsula, he would fall into ecstatic reveries; and at last he believed himself to be a preacher of righteousness and the reformer of his people.¹⁷⁶

The third Meccan period is from the commencement of Muḥammad's public ministry to the Abyssinian emigration of his disciples (615). Apart from Muḥammad's temporary compromise with idolatry (sūra liii, *Al-Najm*) the Meccan sūras emphasize the Unity of God and the rejection of idolatry. Included in them are teachings on the resurrection, paradise, and hell. Finally, the Meccan sūras describe the growing opposition of the Quraysh tribe towards the Muslims.¹⁷⁷

The fourth Meccan period is from the sixth to the tenth year (616-619) of Muḥammad's ministry. In Muir's view, with this period begin narratives from the Jewish Scriptures, and Rabbinical and Arab legends about the creation and fall of man, the flood, the stories of Abraham, David, and Solomon.¹⁷⁸

The fifth period is from the tenth year of Muḥammad's ministry in 620 A.D. to the flight from Mecca in 622 A.D. Apart from the rites of the pilgrimage which were enjoined in the sūras of this period, the remainder of the passages are theological. The condemnation of the unbelieving Quraysh is repeated amidst reminders of the resurrection and judgment which leads to either heaven or hell.

¹⁷⁵ Muir, *The Coran*, pp. 43-47. Sūras of the first Meccan period include: 113, 100, 99, 91, 106, 1, 101, 95, 102, 104, 82, 92, 105, 89, 90, 93, 94, 108.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. These sūras began with sūra 96 which contains his call, "Recite in the name of the Lord..." Ultimately Muḥammad received sūras 113 on the unity and eternity of God, and sūra 74 on the resurrection and hell. This period closes with sūra 111 in which unbelievers are cursed.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. During this period were given sūras: 87, 97, 88, 80, 81, 84, 86, 95, 85, 83, 78, 77, 76, 75, 70, 109, 107, 55, 56.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 16. During this period were given sūras: 67, 53, 32, 39, 73, 79, 54, 34, 31, 69, 68, 41, 71, 52, 50, 45, 44, 37, 30, 26, 15, 51.

The passages of this period also give proofs of God's unity, power and providence. Also in this period one finds narratives from the Gospels about the birth of Jesus in sūras: xix (*Maryam*) 1; iii (*al-'Imrān*) 6; v (*al-Mā'ida*):118. One also finds information about Jesus' miracles in sūras: xxxvi (*Yā Sīn*) and xviii (*Al-Kahf*).¹⁷⁹ Notably, the references to the crucifixion convey an ambiguous picture, with this event seemingly denied in sūra iv (*Al-Nisā'*):155,156 but, according to Goldsack, tacitly affirmed in sūras: iii (*al-'Imrān*):47-50; xix (*Maryam*):34; and v (*al-Mā'ida*):117.¹⁸⁰

Muir observes that the flight to Medina changes the scene, and with it the character of portions of the Qur'ān there revealed. References to the idolaters of Mecca are replaced by the "hypocrites" of Medina in reference to the Jews at the point when they refused to acknowledge his prophetic claims. Muir notes that the Pentateuch and the Gospel are still appealed to; but the Prophet's main objective becomes the reformation of the religions of Judaism and Christianity.

Muir holds that the last period at Medina, including sūras 98, 2, 3, 8, 47, 62, 5, 59, continues an underlying theme of hostility toward the Jews. In Medina are formulated rules to govern the Islamic community. First was the denunciation of the disaffected citizens of Medina, injunctions to fight and permission to bear arms in the sacred months.¹⁸¹ Secondly, there were social rules and marital regulations.¹⁸² In sūra xxxiii (*al-Aḥzāb*) an exception was made to these rules for Muḥammad in order to permit his marriage to Zaynab, the wife of his adopted son. Thirdly, the rules governing *jihād* are given and conclude with the command to fight against Jews and Christians until they pay tax or are humbled.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Goldsack, *Christ In Islam*, p. He notes that sūras iii:47-50, xix:34 and v:117 affirm the death of Jesus in these words: "God made Jesus to die".

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Cf. sūras 4, 58, 65, 63, 24, 33, which contain social rules and marital regulations.

¹⁸³ Cf. sūras 57, 61, 48, 60, 66, 49, 9, which have an underlying theme of *jihād*.

Muir's work on the chronology of the Qur'ān became widely discussed by 19th century historians and translators.¹⁸⁴ The most credible counterweight to Muir's chronology was G. Weil's influential work, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in den Koran*.¹⁸⁵ Weil rejected the seminal effort of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī and ordered the sūras of the Qur'ān according to strict literary analysis.¹⁸⁶ According to F. Buhl¹⁸⁷, Weil's method of arranging the sūras of the Qur'ān by literary analysis gained credence because it was then adopted and refined by Nöldeke,¹⁸⁸ popularized by Grimme¹⁸⁹ and analyzed by Hirschfeld.¹⁹⁰

In trying to form an appraisal of these different methods and conclusions, it appears to the present author that Muir's approach, relying on historical and literary criticism, offers more promise than Weil's approach which relied almost exclusively on literary criticism. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the more 19th century authorities were consulted regarding the chronological order of the sūras of the Qur'ān, the less agreement appeared between their results. In Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam* three distinct chronological lists are given - that of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, of Muir (who modified Jalāl al-Dīn's chronology) and of Rodwell.¹⁹¹ Nöldeke's *History of the Koran* was another influential 19th century work which affords a fourth list.¹⁹² All of them were authorities on the subject; each professing to have arrived at his results by internal evidence and criticism of the

¹⁸⁴ Prominent among these scholars were: Sprenger in the second edition of his work *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammad*, (1869), Rodwell's *Koran* (1876), E.H. Palmer's *The Qur'ān, in Sacred Books of the East* (1880), and Thomas Patrick Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam* (1896).

¹⁸⁵ G. Weil, *Historisch kritische Einleitung in den Koran*, (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2nd. ed., 1878).

¹⁸⁶ Weil arranged the Meccan sūras as follows: 1st group were characterized by short passionate addresses; 2nd group were centered around the teaching of monotheism and warnings against polytheism 3rd. group reflects prosaic passages about earlier prophets in general and of Christ in particular.

Weil noted that the Medinan sūras were concerned with the following themes: 1) harsh criticism of the Jews, 2) the need to reform Judaism and Christianity, 3) summons to *jihād*.

¹⁸⁷ EI-1, s.v. "Koran" by F. Buhl, pp. 1074, 1075.

¹⁸⁸ Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, 1860 2nd ed., by Schwally, i., 1909; ii, 1919.

¹⁸⁹ H. Grimme, *Mohammed*, part 2, 1895, 1-29.

¹⁹⁰ H. Hirschfeld, *New Researches in the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, 1902.

¹⁹¹ Hughes' *Dictionary*, 's.v.'Qur'ān, pp. 483-530.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 527.

accepted text, with the help of authoritative tradition. Where there was little agreement about the particular place of a sūra in chronological order, there was broader agreement about which sūras derived from the Meccan and Medinan periods.

9.0 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE QUR'ĀN TO DIALOGUE

Based on the ability to categorize sūras according to their general period of time, the question emerged among Islamic theologians as to whether all sūras were to be treated equally or whether some held precedence over others. On the one hand there is a stress in the Qur'ān that it is "a (clear) Arabic Qur'ān with no crookedness in it" (sūra xxxix (*al-Zumar*):28, cf sūras xviii:1 and xli:3). On the other hand, the Qur'ānic text admits that the divine revelation consists partly of "solidly made verses, which form the core of the book, and ambiguous ones," (sūra iii (*al-Imrān*): 7). Consequently, Muslim scholars sought to separate the 'solid' from the 'ambiguous'. Muir notes that in doing so many Muslim scholars have held the Meccan sūras to be pre-eminently 'solid'. It is these which contain such important doctrines as the creed of Islam ("there is no God but the Lord, and Mahomet is His Apostle").¹⁹³ This creed, Muir notes, had three important aspects: firstly, it swept away idolatry and the "association with God"; secondly, it removed other objects of worship; and thirdly, it established the Qur'ān as the final authority of faith and practice. Muir also notes that it is these Meccan sūras which form the closest approximation to Christian thought.

Although Sayyid Aḥmad Khān did not make a formal comparison of the difference between the Meccan and Medinan sūras of the Qur'ān, he implies such a comparison in his article on the distinction between fundamental teachings and non-fundamental teachings within the Qur'ān.¹⁹⁴ For example, he does not regard

¹⁹³ Muir, *The Coran*, p. 51.

¹⁹⁴ "Sir Sayyid's Credo" is a synthesis of his theological framework by C. Troll, in *Reinterpretation*. In a lecture on Islam (1884) Khān set before the religious society entitled *Anjuman-i ḥimayat i Islām* a synopsis of his theology about Islam which is included by Troll as

the outward rituals accompanying prayer (which were given in Medina) to be of the same importance as the teaching that it is the duty of man to pray with a heartfelt yearning to the One True God (as given at Mecca). Khān argued that although true communion with God can have meaning without the outward ritual, the opposite is not the case.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, he concludes that within the Qur'ān there are timeless truths which are for every generation, as well as those admonitions which are understood to be for a certain period of time only.¹⁹⁶

It seems that Khān believed that in Mecca precepts associated with the creed of Islam were revealed and were timeless, whereas in Medina precepts associated with Islam as a theocracy were revealed which were only valid as long as there was an Islamic theocracy.¹⁹⁷ Troll's explanation of Khān's position implies that when the Caliphate passed and Islam could no longer be considered a theocracy, the non-fundamental precepts associated with this theocracy were superseded by the fundamental ones which would last for all time.¹⁹⁸

The study of the Qur'ānic chronology is important for Muslim-Christian dialogue for two reasons. Firstly, one is able to place the teachings relevant to Christianity, such as the status of Jesus, into the history of Muḥammad's life.

central to Khān's Credo. In a portion of Khān's lecture he deals with with the 'Distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental elements in the religious commandments'. He argues that: "the undisputed and unequivocal, explicitly revealed precepts like belief in the Unity of God, and prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and almsgiving which God Almighty as declared in the Qur'ān (Mecca sūras) to be a religious duty." Lecture on Islam, 1884 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 319-321.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. "The fundamental element of prayer God has made a duty. Yet in order to teach man how to perform this duty there are non-fundamental elements which protect the fundamental one such as the religious obligation to ablution, the obligation to stand, sit, prostrate. These injunctions were given (at Medina) to protect the earlier (Meccan) injunctions). Those (later elements given at Medina) can be waived as in the end they are not fundamental. Only that element is fundamental which cannot at any time, as long as man is man, be waived." Lecture on Islam, 1884 cited by Troll's *Reinterpretation*, pp. 330-331.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Troll notes that the Shari'a as the Muslims knew it during Khān's time consisted of explicit statements (about the Pillars of the Faith) based on unambiguous verses in the Qur'ān and therefore must be regarded as fundamental precepts, and statements based on ambiguous verses in the Qur'ān about how to observe the Pillars of the Faith which could be waived for valid reasons and therefore were regarded as non-fundamental precepts. Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 205, 206.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Rodwell observed that Muḥammad's earliest exhortations were expressed with extreme brevity. When a change occurred in the position of Muḥammad the sūras begin to assume a more didactic tone, though the poetical rhyme is preserved. Gradually, however, one exchanges the poet for the missionary who aims to convert. Also, the assertion of dogmatic truths, of judgment, of heaven and hell make way for increasingly historical statements first from Jewish, and then from Christian sources. And then at Medina these give way to the legislator and warrior who dictates commands for the benefit of the Islamic community rather than for the conversion of the non-believer.¹⁹⁹

Thus one is also able to note that the Meccan and early Medinan passages which deal with the dogmatic truths from which the Islamic Creed was developed were only slightly earlier than the passages in the Qur'ān which deal with such topics as the Bible and Jesus. Both the Islamic Creed and the topics of Christianity are also among those passages which Islam considers as 'solid' with respect to Islamic theology, and therefore for the Muslim they both fall into the category of truths which are regarded as timeless.

10. THE LEGACY OF THE DEBATES ABOUT THE QUR'ĀN ON DIALOGUE

Muir concludes that since the first debate confirmed that 'Uthmān's recension of the Qur'ān faithfully reflects Muhammad's thoughts, the Christian wishing to engage in dialogue based on the Qur'ān is assured of using a source which has the greatest authority for Muslims. Furthermore, this means that concepts endorsed by the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān which are common to the Biblical Scriptures will be respected by the Muslim. Similarly, Goldsack acknowledges that 'Uthmān's recension must be used by the Christian because it has been accepted by Islamic consensus (*ijmā'*) and its authority had long been affirmed by the community of Muslims.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ *Hughes' Dictionary*, s.v. Qur'ān, p. 525.

²⁰⁰ Goldsack, *Qur'ān In Islam*, pp. 13,14.

The second debate concerned the essence of the Qur'ān. Orthodox Muslims concluded that the Qur'ān is eternal and could have no external sources while the Mu'tazilites concluded that only God was eternal and the Qur'ān was created. The evidence of the second debate upholds the theory that the Qur'ān contains external sources. Those passages of the Qur'ān which reflect Jewish and Christian apocryphal sources give the historian insights into the extent to which Islam has effectively contextualized concepts from other religions. Those topics in the Qur'ān which reflect ideas from the Biblical Scriptures provide admitted truths where Muslim-Christian dialogue can be initiated. Foremost among these admitted truths is the high regard for the Biblical Scriptures and the lofty position given to the person of Jesus. In addition to these important mutually shared truths, the Qur'ān also reflects theological truths from the Biblical Scriptures such as: the Divine Unity of God, creation, retribution of good and evil, the need for redemption, the existence of heaven and hell, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, in the light of the aforesaid Christian concepts which are included in the Qur'ān, summed up his appraisal of the two religious faiths:

In the end, the only fundamental difference between the Muslim and the Christian faith is that Christians call Jesus God and render him worship. This is irreconcilable with *tawḥīd* (true monotheism).²⁰¹

The third Islamic debate called attention to the difficulty in using metaphorical interpretation of the Qur'ān, especially for all those involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue. In regard to the study of the effect of abrogation on interpretation, Muir, Khān and Goldsack first note that references to the standard commentaries of the Qur'ān all agree that passages in the Qur'ān about abrogation have no reference to the Bible. On the contrary, they refer solely to the Qur'ān, and to the abrogation of certain Qur'ānic precepts by later ones.²⁰² A study of the chronology of the Qur'ān was important to the person involved in Muslim-

²⁰¹ Khān, *TK*, III, p. 7 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 98.

²⁰² Goldsack, *Bible In Islam*, p. 44.

Christian dialogue during the 19th century for several reasons. Firstly, an accurate chronology of the Qur'anic sūras provides a context for interpretation. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī subscribed to the idea that the Meccan sūras were pre-eminent. This conclusion has had particular implications for Muslim-Christian dialogue since almost all references to Christian concepts in the Qur'ān also occur in the late Meccan and early Medinan sūras. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān contends that the message of the Bible was a witness to the basic message of Islam *as revealed in the Meccan sūras*.²⁰³ His corollary was that the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians which were alluded to at Mecca are entirely trustworthy. He concluded that Muslims find in the Meccan sūras that as followers of Muḥammad, they are also followers of Jesus the Messiah who is their *sardār* (leader).²⁰⁴ Khān believed that those concepts given at Mecca and the early Medinan period were essential to Islamic belief and practice whereas those sūras given later in the Medinan period contained concepts essential to the Islamic theocracy. With the passing of this theocracy, the emphasis returned to the essence of Islamic belief and practice.

Although Goldsack was a scholar who employed critical methods when examining the Qur'ān, few writers of his day spoke more clearly than he did about why Christians needed to conduct Muslim-Christian dialogue on a Qur'ānic axis.

In this regard Goldsack observes:

It is a fact that the Qur'ān, again and again, speaks of both Old and New Testaments as 'the Word of God' and as 'a light and guidance to men.' Their plenary inspiration is constantly assumed, and they are described as 'complete as to whatever is excellent, an explanation of every question, and a direction and a mercy, that men might believe in the meeting of their Lord.'²⁰⁵ It is also a fact that regarding the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ few Muslims have any conception of the high, rather the supreme place given to Him by the Qur'ān! He is there described as 'the Word of God' and 'a Spirit from God.' His miraculous birth, and His miracles are all

²⁰³ Khān, *TK*, III, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 82, 84.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ William Goldsack, "Letter to Rev. H.H. Collins" in *The Southern Baptist*, (date unknown) from the personal files of Gladys Collins held by the Australian Baptist Mission Society, Hawthorne, Victoria.

borne witness to, and He alone of all the Prophets of Islam is the Sinless Prophet.²⁰⁶

Therefore, he concludes:

Surely we are not wrong in making use of such testimony (as the Qur'ān) in urging the Muslim to a closer study of the Person and claims of this Great One (Jesus Christ). The evidence which we put before him is the evidence of his own Qur'ān; evidence which he dare not put lightly aside or neglect as unimportant.²⁰⁷

206 Ibid.

207 Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE
STUDIES OF THE SUNNA
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Goldsack points out that the importance of the Islamic traditions cannot be overestimated. Muslim scholars, he notes, define them as *wahy ghair matlū*, or 'unrecited revelation', and in the theology of Islam they occupy a place second only to the Qur'ān itself.¹ This is reason enough for the study of the Islamic traditions or the Sunna.² However, in popular Islam, he points out, they have an even greater significance than that of the Qur'ān itself. Goldsack further observes that in countries such as India, in which Arabic is not the vernacular of the people, the Qur'ān is almost an unknown book to all except the educated few, while the books of Islamic traditions are read by the masses in vernacular translations.³

It is not within the scope of this thesis to make reference to the large body of research concerning the development of the Islamic traditions to which Muir, Goldsack and Khan made reference. It is more relevant here to analyze how the authors developed their views of the Islamic traditions from the Islamic sources and study the effect which their conclusions have had on Muslim Christian dialogue. Therefore, the emphasis in this thesis will be on how the Islamic traditions were generally perceived in India during the 19th century and in particular on how these three authors used the Islamic traditions in their writings and in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

¹ Goldsack, *The Traditions in Islam: Being an essay on the Origin and Value of Muḥammadan Tradition* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1919), p. v.

² In this thesis, the *Sunna* includes the Islamic traditions and is regarded as literally "a path or way; a manner of life". This term is used here to express the custom or manner of life of a Muslim. It includes both the sayings and doings of Muḥammad and is divided into: *Sunnat al-Fi'l*, or what Muḥammad did; 2) *Sunnat al-Qaul*, or what Muḥammad enjoined and 3) *Sunnat al-Taqrīr*, or that which was done or said in the presence of Muḥammad, and which was not forbidden by him. See *Hughes' Dictionary*, s.v. 'Sunnah', p. 622.

³ *Ibid.*

In this chapter an examination is made of the evaluation and use of the Islamic traditions in early Muslim-Christian dialogue, before turning to the research on the Islamic traditions carried out by the 19th century writers. Firstly, Muir, Khān and Goldsack examined the origins and rise of the Islamic traditions in Islam as well as the reliability of the four major collections of the Islamic traditions. Secondly, they compared the Islamic traditions to the Qur'ān in respect to the degree of inspiration, authenticity, authority and of influence. Thirdly, they evaluated the impact of Christianity on the development of the Islamic traditions. The extent of Christian influence on the Traditions is demonstrated by Goldsack's unpublished study about the "Echoes of Biblical concepts in the Islamic Traditions". Finally, the three authors evaluated how the Islamic traditions could be used in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

2.0 THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS AND EARLY MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

The most prominent early Christian apologist to consider the Islamic traditions was al-Kindī, who referred to them in his *Apology*. Undoubtedly, he gained his knowledge of the Sunna from his research into Islam at the court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833) under whom al-Wāqidi, Ibn Ishāq and al-Madā'inī wrote their biographies of the Prophet.⁴ The early Islamic biographers as well as the collection of traditions influenced al-Kindī. The collection of traditions to which he would have had access was compiled by 'Anas ibn Mālik (d. 179/796) and entitled *al-Muwatta*.⁵ This work also played an influential role in the later collections of traditions compiled by of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875).⁶ The *Muwatta* provided the Islamic scholars at the court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn, including al-Wāqidi, Ibn Ishāq, and al-Madā'inī, with an important

⁴ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xl, xlv.

⁵ Al-Kindī, *Risālah*, trans. by W. Muir as, *The Apology of al-'Abd al-Masīh al-Kindy* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1882), p. 14. Referred to in this thesis as *Al-Kindy*.

⁶ Th. W. Juynboll, s.v. "Ḥadīth", EI-1, pp. 189-194.

insight into the traditions, and it was in their august company that al-Kindī was able to write his *Apology*.⁷

Muir observes that Al-Kindī in his *Apology* confronts the main problems in using the Islamic Traditions which also concerned the 19th century writers.⁸ He notes that the early traditionists and to a greater extent those who came after them were prone to leave the testimony of the Coran and turn to fables and stories in the traditions which supported their preconceived positions.⁹ Gardner cites al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) who, three centuries later, identified this problem as one of the greatest to confront Islamic theologians:

It is the nature of most of those whom I have seen and who are looked upon as learned men, that in the matter of tradition, they have added to the tradition of the sect, the tradition of demonstration; for in their investigation they do not seek the truth, but seek some method of subterfuge to support what they have accepted as the truth by hearsay and tradition. So, if in their investigation they meet with anything which supports their beliefs, they say 'we have got hold of a proof'; and if anything appears to weaken their creed, they say, 'we have come across something doubtful'. Thus they set up the belief grasped and accepted by tradition, as a principle, and call 'doubtful' whatever is contrary to it, and a 'demonstration' whatever agrees with it. But the right way of doing is the contrary of this. For one must have no belief (preconceived ideas) to start with, but must look at the demonstration and call what it demands 'the truth', and what is opposed to it 'the false'.¹⁰

3.0 PERCEPTIONS OF THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY IN INDIA

By the 19th century, the question of the reliability of the collections of the Islamic traditions continued to be a topic of discussion in Islamic Studies. However, their use in Muslim-Christian dialogue posed an even more complex problem because the various Islamic sects in the Indian subcontinent adhered to different collections of traditions. Muir, Khān and Goldsack turned to an historical analysis of the Islamic traditions to determine the probable origins of the traditions and their defined limitations and possible use in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

⁷ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xl, xlv.

⁸ *Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, p. 14.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisad fi'l-Fitiqād*, cited by Gardner, *Christianity and Muhammadanism*, pp. 64, 65.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Muir and Sprenger were two of the most widely read Western writers in the Indian Sub-Continent on the topic of Islamic traditions. Muir defines the Sunna as the practice and precepts of the Prophet which were instrumental in laying down the law and ritual of Islam.¹¹ Muir contends that it was the spirit and system of the Arabian Prophet which developed the Sunna, just as it was the ceremonial element in the Mosaic law which, exaggerated and distorted by the legal spirit of the Jews, led to the mazes of Rabbinical tradition.¹²

Goldsack argues that there was a particularly significant meaning of tradition when applied to a religious tradition, namely the idea of *masānī*, or repetition. This Arabic word comes from a Hebrew concept embodied in the *Mishnah*. The Jewish Law was divided into two parts, the written teaching, that is the Biblical text, and the teaching by word of mouth or tradition. The term used in reading the Biblical text, as in reading the Qur'ān, was "to read" (*qarā'a*). The term used in reciting the Jewish traditions was called "to say" (*shābā*). In the course of time teaching by word of mouth was called *mishnah*, and the collection of this oral teaching was referred to as the whole tradition. Goldsack adds that just as the Jews had used the whole of Jewish teaching to mean the written word and the traditions (*mishnah*), so Muḥammad referred to the whole of Islamic teaching as the Qur'ān and the Islamic traditions (*masānī*).¹³

Goldsack further notes that there was also a cultural significance in Arabia to the term 'tradition'. He pointed out that the pagan Arabs of the *Jāhiliyya* considered it a virtue to follow the '*sunna*' or the custom of one's forefathers.¹⁴ In

¹¹ Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, p. 106.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 107.

¹³ *Ibid*, Cf. Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, pp. 42-43. Cf. *Hughes Dictionary*, s.v. 'Al-Masānī', p. 328.

¹⁴ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 6. Goldsack believes that in the Qur'ān the use of sunna as the custom of the Arabs of old is understood by the term *sunnat al-awwalin*, "the sunna of those of old," as spoken of in sūras viii: 39; xv:13; xviii:53; xxxv:41. This custom is contrasted with *sunnat of Allāh* which is spoken of in sūras xvii:79; xxxiii:62; xxxv:42; and xiviii:23. The

accordance with this belief, it was easy to understand the eagerness with which, after Muḥammad's death, his every word and action was recalled. Those who had been his most intimate companions were never tired of repeating and amplifying his words. Just as Arabs of the *Jāhiliyya* loved to dwell on the narrating of events in poetry, so the Muslim Arabs loved to dwell on the past and to comfort each other with recitals of the words and deeds of the wonderful man who had united the warring tribes of the Arabian desert into one nation.¹⁵ With the coming of Islam, observes Goldsack, it was natural that Muslims adopted the *Sunna* of the Prophet of Islam and made his divinely-guided life, in all its details, their model and pattern.¹⁶ Their desire to imitate Muḥammad, once begun, was carried to great lengths. He notes that the traditions themselves tell us that Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal would not eat watermelons, although he knew that the Prophet ate them, because he could not learn whether he ate them with or without the rind, or whether he broke, bit, or cut them!¹⁷

3.1 THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN THE WRITINGS OF WILLIAM MUIR

Muir evaluates the traditions on the basis of their historical value in describing Islam. He defines Islamic tradition as,

consisting of the sayings of the friends and followers of the prophet, handed down by a real or supposed chain of narrators to the period when they were collected, recorded, and classified. The process of handing down the tradition was for the most part oral.¹⁸

In determining the purpose of the Islamic traditions, he compared them with the Qur'ān, noting that:

former customs, Goldsack believes, are associated with the ancient Arab cultural customs whereas the latter customs are associated with the prophets in general and pre-eminently with the deeds, utterances and unspoken approval of Muḥammad. As to Goldsack's sources in taking this position, he not only referred to the Qur'ān but also frequently to Abū'l-Fidā' when writing about the history of the pre-Islamic Arabs. See Goldsack, *Origins*, p. 10. Khān also, according to Troll, makes frequent reference to Abū'l-Fidā' in his studies of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 127 fn. Both Goldsack and Khān cited G. Sale, who makes extensive use of Abū'l-Fidā' in his *Preliminary Discourse*.

¹⁵ W. Lane: *Modern Egyptians*, vol. i, p. 354, cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 6.

¹⁶ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 6.

¹⁷ W. Lane: *Modern Egyptians*, vol. i, p. 354, cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Vol., I, p. xxviii.

It may be possible to establish from the Coran the salient events of his life but Tradition alone enables us to determine their relative position, and to weave them together with the tissue of intermediate affairs.¹⁹

Muir's ideas about the traditions are to be found in the section on Islamic sources in the first volume of his *Life*. He also wrote a series of articles in the *Calcutta Review* on the use of tradition entitled the "Biographies of Moḥammed for India".²⁰ In these articles, which were reprinted in *The Mohammedan Controversy*, he examines the use of traditions in the genre of literature called the *Mawlūd Sharīf* or "Nativity of Mahomet".²¹

3.2 THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN THE WRITINGS OF SAYYID AḤMAD KHĀN

If Muir evaluates the Islamic traditions for their historical value in weaving together the salient events of Muḥammad's life and Islamic history, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān studies them for their spiritual value. He summarizes the spiritual value of keeping the *Sunna* in the words of a tradition where the Prophet addresses Anas b. Mālīk: "O my son, the one who has cherished my *Sunna* without doubt he has cherished me and he who cherishes me will be with me in paradise."²²

In his early work *Tadhkirah-i ahl-i Dihlī* (1846), Sayyid Aḥmad Khān commends the Muslims of Delhi for wholeheartedly following the *Sunna* of the Prophet. In a later article, *Kalimat al-ḥaqq*, he set forward the role of the *pīr* (religious leader) and the *murīd* (religious follower) as having its foundation in the example of Muḥammad and his followers. At this point, he held to the classical Islamic view of the *Sunna* as the most gracious of God's gifts given to Muḥammad. This view is reflected in his commentary on the above tradition:

¹⁹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xxvii.

²⁰ Muir, "The Biographies of Moḥammed for India", *Calcutta Review*, XVII (Jan.1852), pp. 387-421.

²¹ See, for example, Ghulām Imām Shāhid, *The Ennobled Nativity*, (Lucknow: 1562 A.H., Cawnpore, 1267 A.H. (1845).

²² Khān, *TFA*, I, I, p. 80; P Maq, V, pp. 272-73. C. Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 45.

"Whatever gracious gift (*ni'mat*) there is, it is in the *Sunna* of the Prophet, by God in nothing else, in nothing else, in nothing else!"²³

Prior to 1870, in his assessment of the traditions, Khān held that the *Sunna* was a trustworthy account of Muḥammad's practices because those who collected the traditions were faithful men. At this initial period in his writing, he vigorously rejected Muir's contention that politics played a part in the collection of the *Sunna*.²⁴ Nor did he accept Muir's suggestion that over a period of time the companions and successors of the Prophet had elevated the image of the Prophet to that of a demi-god.²⁵ At this initial stage in his writing, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān held that there were no other means of pleasing God but by an adherence to the practices and precepts of Muḥammad in the *Sunna*.²⁶ However, he gradually became more critical of the Islamic traditions because only the *isnād* (chain of those who related the tradition) had been assessed but not the *matn* (the content of the tradition itself as having come from Muḥammad). When he applied the traditional tests of the *isnād*²⁷, only five ḥadīths could be definitively proved as fully reliable, i.e. they definitely related the very words of Muhammad.²⁸ Furthermore, after 1896, Khān accepted Muir's criticism that the time lag between

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Khān, *TFA*, I, I, p.414/*PMaq*, XI, p. 409. In the face of Muir's criticisms that the collectors of Islamic traditions had political motivations, (Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xl, xli), Khān responded: "the collectors of ḥadīth had nothing to do with the development of the empire and with the whole of politics. These people had focused their whole attention on religion and had collected the prophetic ḥadīths only for religious purposes". Cf. Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 133.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 414/410.

²⁶ Khān, *TFA*, I, I, p. 81/*PMaq*, V, p. 275 Cf. Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 46.

²⁷ Troll notes that according to Khan the *isnād* should have the following five qualities: "1) the transmitter must have stated clearly and unambiguously what the Prophet himself has said or done; 2) the chain of transmitters must be unbroken till the Prophet of God; 3) from the Prophet of God down to the last transmitter, every transmitter must have been famous for his fear of God, constancy in religion and good deeds; 4) every transmitter must have received from his previous transmitter more than one ḥadīth; 5) every transmitter must have been outstanding in scholarly ability and especially in fiqh (jurisprudence) so that one can be certain that he correctly understood the meaning of the ḥadīth transmitted to him, and communicated it equally correctly to others." Khān, *Kutub-i aḥadīth*, *PMaq*, I, pp. 60-64 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 137.

²⁸ *PMaq*, I, p. 77 (1872), cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 138.

Muhammad's life and the "critical" collection of ḥadīths almost two centuries later allowed the accretion of legends around some essential facts.²⁹

After 1896 Khān devised a new method of examining the Islamic traditions so as to include only those which were authentic beyond *critical* doubt.³⁰ After opening the door for criticism of the *matn* (subject matter) of a tradition, Khān was obliged to acknowledge that Muslims need not regard every word and deed of the Prophet as a divine guidance free from error.³¹ Although he never rejected the spiritual value of the *Sunna*, he ultimately concluded as did Muir that only the Qur'ān could be considered a reliable touchstone by which one can define Islam, and "any ḥadīth which is against the Qur'ān or in disharmony with it should be declared unreasonable and rejected."³²

3.3 THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN THE WRITINGS OF WILLIAM GOLDSACK

If Muir studies the Islamic traditions for their historical value and Sayyid Aḥmad Khān reads them for spiritual guidance, Goldsack evaluates the traditions for their descriptive value of culturally appropriate behaviour in an Islamic culture.³³ He contends that the ultimate importance of the Islamic traditions goes well beyond defining practices for the individual Muslim since they also give a particular Islamic 'shape' to each particular Muslim culture.

While acknowledging that the traditions have become binding on Muslims individually and upon the Islamic community corporately, Goldsack questions

²⁹ PMAq, I, p. 25, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 140.

³⁰ Khān, *PMAq*, I, p. 42, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 46.

³¹ Khān, *TFA*, I, II, pp.415-16/PMAq, xi, p. 411, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 47.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Goldsack, in *The Traditions in Islam*, used the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ* extensively. However, he also consulted the following Islamic sources: Al 'Aqdu al-Farid, (Cairo: 1321 A.H.), *Al-Hidāyat*, 4 Vols, (Cairo: 1902), *Al Jāmi'-al-Ṣaghīr*, (Cairo:1321 A.H.), Mālik b.'Anas *Al-Muwatta*, (Cairo), *Al- Ṣirāt al-Ḥalabiyya*, 3 Vol. (Cairo: 1320 A.H.), *Al Jāmi'-al-Tirmidhī*, Ibn Hanbal's *Musnad* 6 Vols. (Cairo: 1313 A.H.), *Qiṣaṣ-al-Anbiyā'*, f2 Vols. (Cawnpore: 1323 A.H.), *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (with commentary), 13 Vols., (Cairo: 1326). In addition Goldsack makes reference to the following 19th century sources: Abdu'l-Haqq's *Commentary on the Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ*, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's *Essay on Mohammedan Tradition*, William Muir's *Life of Mahomet* (London: 1894), Muir's *The Mohammedan Controversy* (Edinburgh, 1897) in which Sprenger's essay on tradition is reviewed, Koelle, *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, (London: 1889). Goldsack, *Traditions in Islam*, Appendix, pp. 101-102.

whether Muḥammad himself conceived of his traditions as binding on the Islamic community. During Goldsack's career, he had an increasing interest in the study of Islam in Bengal through the lens of the Islamic traditions. He also studied the influence of the Gospel record on the traditions and the place of the traditions in Muslim-Christian dialogue. He concludes that, whereas the Qur'ān is a guide to 'admitted truths', the traditions are a guide to 'admitted practices'. The Qur'ānic text provides the key to understanding Islamic orthodoxy and the traditions to understanding Islamic orthopraxy. He notes that in most religions which are based on 'revealed texts,' religious practices are an outgrowth of (and hence secondary to) theology. However, in Islam, systematic practice takes precedence over systematic theology. Therefore, a knowledge of the Islamic traditions, which provide the foundation for Islamic practices, is especially important to Muslim-Christian dialogue.³⁴

Goldsack accords the Islamic traditions an extremely important place in popular Islam and he studied them throughout his lifetime. This study culminated in his translation and publication of an extensive and representative collection of the most authentic traditions from the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh* entitled *Selections from Muhammadan Traditions* (hereafter abbreviated to *Mishkāt*).³⁵

The initial Arabic collection was called *Maṣābīh*, and was compiled by Imām Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusain ibn Mas'ūd al-Firāi' of Baghdad (d. 516 A.H.). The compiler, besides making use of the 'six (correct) books' of traditions also used a few other well-known collections.³⁶ The end result was a representative selection of 4,484 Traditions, of which 2,434 were *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound or authentic) and the rest *ḥasan* (good). In 737 A.H. Shaykh Walī al-Dīn 'Abdallāh Maḥmūd³⁷

³⁴ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. v, preface.

³⁵ Goldsack, tr./ed. *Selections from Muhammadan Traditions: Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, (Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1923).

³⁶ Such as those of al-Dāraqūṭnī, al-Bayhaqī, al-Dārimī and al-Rāzī.

³⁷ Little seems to be known about this compiler but it does not seem that he should be identified with al-Tabrīzī.

revised and enlarged the *Maṣābīh* and this revised edition is known as the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*. As was mentioned in chapter three of this thesis, in spite of the great influence of the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, the only other English translation before Goldsack's was that of Captain Matthews (1809). This work lost much of its value owing to the fact that it omitted the names of the authorities from whose compilations the various traditions were taken. Goldsack's *Selections From Muḥammadan Traditions*, being a more careful translation from Arabic to English than that of Matthews', was based on the Lahore edition of 1321 A.H. and included the names of all the Islamic authorities. Finally, Goldsack's *Selections From Muḥammadan Traditions* was thoroughly representative of the complete *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*.

During his lifetime study of the traditions Goldsack made notes which enabled him to write a series of books which he entitled the *In Islam Series*. These works looked at theological topics from an Islamic perspective based on a study of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. These writings included: *God in Islam*, *Christ in Islam*, *Muḥammad in Islam*, *The Qur'ān in Islam* and, of course, *The Traditions in Islam*. The last work was published in 1919 in both English and Bengali (*Islame Hadis*); it eventually gained such a wide readership that it was translated into Arabic.³⁸ In these published works one finds a distillation of Goldsack's notes on the traditions concerning each of the topics in question.

At the time of Goldsack's death in 1957 a sheaf of unpublished notes on the traditions was found. These deal with the significance of: Muḥammad, prayer, a comparison of male and female spirituality, and echoes of the Old and New Testaments in the Islamic traditions. Whereas Goldsack's earlier work, *The Traditions in Islam*, provides a critical study of the traditions, his later work examines the 'inner' or 'spiritual' significance of the traditions and also examines

³⁸ Goldsack, *Traditions*.

the influence of Christianity on the traditions.³⁹ In this chapter the influence of the New Testament on the Islamic traditions will be set forward.

4.0 THE ORIGINS AND RISE OF THE TRADITIONS IN ISLAM

Muir observes that the rapid growth of tradition is a remarkable feature in the history of Islam. Early in Islamic history, the manufacture of Islamic traditions to support the views of one Islamic faction over another was restricted by the fact that there were people on both sides who recalled the Prophet's practices, precepts and prohibitions. Increasingly, the followers of 'Uthmān and 'Alī anathematised each other and based their denunciations upon traditions allegedly given by the Prophet.⁴⁰

Muir subscribes to Sprenger's view that the task of relating the traditions as a profession was not taken up until about forty years after the Prophet's death.⁴¹ This period, to the end of the first century A.H., Sprenger contended, saw the greatest rise in the number of traditions. Abū Hurayra (d. A.H. 58) collected no fewer than 4000 traditions regarding the Prophet, allegedly from eye-witnesses, but more likely from those who had received them from eye-witnesses.⁴² Sprenger adds that by the end of the first century A.H., the greater part of the traditions of the Muslim world were in the hands of the professional traditionists who cast them into a uniformity of style according to the recognized model in Arabian poetry and recitations. Thus an imperfect fragment would be set in the frame of question and answer; a story would be modified and put into traditional form for ease of recitation.⁴³

³⁹ The present author is grateful to Miss Roselyn Gooden for providing a photocopy of these valuable and hitherto unpublished notes which bring to a conclusion Goldsack's study on the Islamic traditions.

⁴⁰ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xxxvi.

⁴¹ A. Sprenger, "Value of Early Mahometan Historical Sources", from the *Calcutta Review*, 1868 and cited by Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, pp. 109-111.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 110, 111.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Muir observes that the distinguishing feature of the traditions of the first century and well into the second was that they were *oral*. Even if committed to writing, they acquired no new authority from the written record.⁴⁴ Each oral tradition consists of a description of the Prophet's decree or action and his reply constitutes a precedent for all time. It is given in direct speech, on the authority of the Companion who tells the account. This account gives the names in succession of every witness in the whole chain through whom it has been handed down, and who vouch for its authenticity.⁴⁵

4.1 MUIR'S THEORY OF THE RISE OF THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Muir suggests that the first factor which affected the rise of the traditions was the fact that the traditions, being at first purely oral, were not only uncertain but allowed for bias to enter into a determination of which were authoritative. Although a collection of traditions was ordered to be written by the Caliph 'Umar II, about 100 years after the death of Muḥammad,⁴⁶ there is no extant manuscript of traditions from a date earlier than the middle or end of the second Islamic century.⁴⁷ During such a lengthy period of time one would find distortions in transmission attributable to the common frailty of human recollection, the exaggerations as the narrative was repeated orally through many witnesses, and the bias of the narrators.⁴⁸

Muir argues that the second factor which affected the rise of the traditions was exaggeration concerning the Prophet. Over a long period of time his Companions fabricated traditions which invested him with supernatural attributes. Only a few of Muḥammad's earliest Companions survived until the end of the first

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 112.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 109.

⁴⁶ The Caliph 'Umar II (A.H. 100) wrote to Abū Bakr: "Look out for whatever traditions there are of Mahomet, or of the by-gone Sunnat...and commit them to writing". *Kitāb al-Wāqidi*, p. 178, cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xxxiii, fn.

⁴⁷ Ibid, Vol. I, p. xxxiii.

⁴⁸ Ibid, Vol. I, p. xxxvi.

century A.H.⁴⁹ and there are comparatively few traditions from his close friends Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī. Abū Ḥurayra, Ibn 'Abbās, 'Anas ibn Mālik and 'Ā'isha were among the second generation of followers, (tābiyūn) and though they were too young to be eyewitnesses for most of the events in Muḥammad's life, they are nevertheless, the principal sources of most of the traditions.⁵⁰ Muir concludes that the greater the distance in time, the more lofty were the descriptions of Muḥammad.⁵¹

Muir observes that the third factor which affected the rise of the traditions was the fact that the expanding Islamic empire required an enlargement of the Qur'ānic laws to meet the challenges posed by new administrative demands and new religions and cultures.⁵² Muir notes that it was a cardinal principle of early Islam that the standard of law, of theology, and of politics, was the Qur'ān and the Qur'ān alone. But new and unforeseen circumstances arose on which the Qur'ān was silent and this difficulty was resolved by adopting the custom or sunna of Muḥammad in these cases. Muir observes that as Islam increased its boundaries, the need for traditions also increased.⁵³

4.2 SAYYID AḤMAD KHĀN'S THEORY OF THE RISE OF THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

In his writing before 1870, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān denied that the period of time between the death of the Prophet and the collection of the traditions was used to any great extent to fabricate the traditions. Secondly, he did not accept that the rapidly expanding Islamic empire required additional traditions to satisfy legislation which the Qur'ān did not touch upon. Thirdly, he denied that the narrators or the collectors of traditions had anything to do with the political or legal development of

⁴⁹ Sprenger gives the names of the companions of the Prophet who survived the longest. He mentions the last six, who died between the years A.H. 86 and 100. Among these is the famous traditionist, Anas ibn Mālik. Sprenger, *Mohammed*, p. 67, note 3.

⁵⁰ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xxix.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. xxix.

⁵² *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. xxx.

⁵³ *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. xxxii.

the Islamic empire.⁵⁴ Finally, he rejected Muir's suggestion that from the earliest times the traditionists tended to portray him as infallible and denied that Muslims ever regarded every word and deed of the Prophet as of divine guidance and thereby free from error.⁵⁵ All through his life he maintained the view that although the younger Companions were not eye-witnesses, their testimony could nevertheless be accepted because where eye-witness accounts are lacking, the evidence of an uninterrupted succession of faithful reporters (*isnād*) is admissible.⁵⁶ However, in every other respect, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's views about the Islamic traditions changed after 1870.

In his writing after 1870, Khān firstly admits that during the period of time between the death of the Prophet and the written collections of traditions, "many legends developed around a nucleus of facts."⁵⁷ Secondly, he allows that "traditions were forged to advance the objectives of a particular set of people, to strengthen one's peculiar subjective beliefs, or to flatter one's rulers."⁵⁸ By 1896, he reluctantly concedes that people narrating the deeds and the words of the Prophet were encouraged to exaggerate by the honour they enjoyed from those who read their traditions. Even the six received collections he now believes to include overly exalted opinions of the Prophet.⁵⁹

4.3 GOLDSACK'S THEORY OF THE RISE OF THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Before elaborating on his theory as to the rise of the Islamic traditions, Goldsack notes that there are several questions to answer about the traditions in Islam. Firstly, one must answer the question of whether Muḥammad intended his Sunna to be binding on the Islamic community in the same manner as the Qur'ān. The traditions themselves contain contradictory precepts about whether the Islamic

⁵⁴ Khān, *TFA*, I, II, p. 414/ *P Maq*, XI, p. 409, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp.133-135.

⁵⁵ Khān, *TFA*, I,II, pp. 415, 16/ *P Maq*, XI, p. 411, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p.134.

⁵⁶ Khān, *TFA*, I, II, p. 424/*P Maq*, XI, p. 426, Troll, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 135.

⁵⁷ Khān, *P Maq*, I, p. 25, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 140.

⁵⁸ Khān, *P Maq*, I, p. 25, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 141.

⁵⁹ Khān, *P Maq*, I, p. 25, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 140.

traditions should have been transmitted in written form. On the one hand, he notes that Mālik b. 'Anas related that, "The Apostle of God said, 'I have left among you two things, and you will never go astray so long as you hold them fast. The one is the Word of God, and the other is the practice of His prophet.'"⁶⁰ On the other hand, Goldsack cites that according to other Islamic traditions Muḥammad forbade his followers to write down his various utterances and is reported to have said:

Do not write down (anything) from me: and whoever writes down (anything) from me, except the Qur'ān, let him erase it. But narrate from me, for that is not forbidden; and whoever intentionally relates about me falsely, let him find his resting place in the fire.⁶¹

In this regard, Goldsack observes that warnings were given during the Prophet's lifetime about the fabrication of tradition. He notes that Muslim has preserved several traditions to this effect:

There will be in later times deceivers and liars, who will bring you traditions which neither you nor your fathers have heard. Therefore beware of them, that they do not lead you astray nor seduce you.⁶²

In *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḡhīr* it is hinted that the number of such false traditions will not be small, for we read that the Prophet said: "Beware of many traditions (related as) from me."⁶³ Goldsack observes that the Prophet's fears were well-founded for there is evidence that he was scarcely in his grave before spurious traditions began to be circulated.⁶⁴

Goldsack also observes that fear of error withheld the oldest of the Companions of the Prophet from circulating his sayings freely. For instance, it is related of 'Umar that he said "were it not that I feared lest I should add to the facts in relating them or take from them, verily I would tell you."⁶⁵ Still more significant is the remark of Sa'd bin Waqqās, who belonged to the older

⁶⁰ *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, (*Selections From Muhammadan traditions*) translated by Goldsack, p. 14.

⁶¹ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 3.

⁶² *Ṣaḡhīḥ Muslim*, vol. i, p. 6 cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 33.

⁶³ *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḡhīr*, vol. i., p. 6. cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 33.

⁶⁴ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 33.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Companions and survived to a later date. Sa'd bin Waqqās said, "I fear that if I tell you one thing ye will add thereto, as from me, a hundred".⁶⁶

Goldsack observes that no such scruples hampered the giving out of traditions by four of the youngest Companions even though they had not been eye-witnesses to the events reported. Abū Ḥurayra (57/678) was the most prolific narrator of traditions in spite of the fact that he had accompanied Muḥammad for only three years. It was said about Abū Ḥurayra in the traditions that: "he multiplied traditions concerning him (Muḥammad) and lived after him for a period of about fifty years."⁶⁷ Furthermore, al-Bukhārī also relates a tradition to the effect that, "Verily the people say, Abū Ḥurayra relates too much."⁶⁸ Ibn 'Abbas, who became the father of Qur'ānic exegesis, was the second most important narrator of traditions in spite of being only 14 years of age when Muḥammad died. Goldsack, while acknowledging Ibn 'Abbas' keen intellect and mastery of Jewish tradition, questions whether it is credible to believe that one so young could have preserved from Muḥammad the hundreds of traditions dealing with intricate expositions of difficult Qur'ānic texts.⁶⁹ He suggests that either Ibn 'Abbās wrote them in later years, or others attributed the traditions to him. In this regard, he notes that Zayd bin Maimūn and 'Abd al-Kārim are cited by the traditionist Muslim as fabricators of *isnāds* who traced their source to Ibn 'Abbās.⁷⁰ 'Anas bin Malik was the third most prolific narrator of traditions. Ibn Mālīk was a man without any particular standing among the Muslims, was uneducated and was aged 19 at the time of the Prophet's death. The fact that he narrated more traditions than those who had accompanied the Prophet for many years was frequently the subject of criticism by the Companions of the Prophet. Finally, the fourth most prolific

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ *Ta'wīl Mukhtalīf al-Ḥadīth*, p. 48, cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 39.

⁶⁸ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. i, p. 23, cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 42.

⁶⁹ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 44 Cf. Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, p. 131.

⁷⁰ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. i, p. 11, cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 45.

narrator of traditions was 'Ā'isha, the youngest wife of the Prophet, who was aged 19 at the death of Muḥammad. Goldsack observes that the objection against 'Ā'isha's credentials is not on the basis of brevity of companionship, but that she was regarded as passionately partisan. Yet she is stated to have put into circulation over 2000 traditions.⁷¹ Goldsack concludes that it is worthy of note that all the traditions which ascribe miraculous powers to Muḥammad originated with these four narrators.

4.3 1 GOLDSACK'S REASONS FOR THE RISE OF THE TRADITIONS

Goldsack suggests that the first reason which occasioned the rise of tradition in the first Islamic century was an attempt to demonstrate the validity of Muḥammad's prophethood by the attestation of miracle, in spite of clear teaching in the Qur'ān disclaiming Muḥammad's being sent with the ability to do miracles.⁷² Al-Dīnawārī (d. 276 A.H.) wrote a book entitled *Kitāb Ta'wīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*, enumerating the miracles of Muḥammad and in refutation of the enemies of the people of the traditions.⁷³ The Muslim historian al-Wāqidī would have been included in the category of the enemy of the fabulous traditions ascribed to Muḥammad for he states disdainfully:

By some of the more credulous of Muḥammed's followers, there are, it is true, miracles attributed to him as that he clave the moon asunder; that trees went forth to meet him; that water flowed from between his fingers; that the stones saluted him; that a beam groaned to him; that a camel complained to him; and that a shoulder of mutton informed him of its being poisoned; together with other miracles.⁷⁴

Secondly, Goldsack observes that there is a category of traditions which grew out of the need for legislative regulation of the religious, social and political affairs of newly acquired lands and people under Islamic jurisdiction and for which the Qur'ān made no provision.

⁷¹ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 15.

⁷² Sūra xxix (*al-'Ankabūt*): 49 and 50.

⁷³ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. v.

⁷⁴ Al-Wāqidī, cited by William Muir, *The Mohammedan Controversy*, p. 114.

The great theological debates which took place after the death of the Prophet and came to a climax after the 2nd Century A.H. were, Goldsack believes, powerful forces in the selection and fabrication of traditions in support of a particular dogma. He notes that it was stated in the traditions themselves that the Mu'tazilites, Shi'ites, Khārijites and other Islamic sects used the name of Muḥammad "to forge traditions for the spread of their particular parties".⁷⁵ Goldsack notes that 'Abdallā bin La'iḥa candidly admits this: "If we want (to prove) anything, we put it into circulation as a tradition."⁷⁶ Another version is: "If we entertain a (legal) opinion, we make it into a tradition."⁷⁷

Fifthly, Goldsack holds that it is the existence of contradictory traditions which are largely responsible for the great diversity in the religious practices of the various sects within Islam. He observes that the author of the *Hidāya*, a work in four volumes, has given a list of ninety contradictory traditions relating to the various religious duties of Islam.⁷⁸

Sixthly, Goldsack also notes the existence of another set of traditions in which sects which arose long after the death of Muḥammad are represented as being mentioned by him. Thus, for example, there is a tradition attributed to Ibn 'Abbās to the effect that he said: "The Apostle of God said, two sects of my followers will have no part in Islam; the Murji'as and the Qādiriyyas."⁷⁹ Though these aberrant theological sects within Islam were comparatively early, neither came into being earlier than fifty years *after* the Prophet died. Van Ess regards the Murji'ites as the earlier of the two and places their emergence late in the sixth or

⁷⁵ *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, p. 5, cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 17.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Al-Hidāya*, vol. ii, pp. 308-19, cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 18.

⁷⁹ *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ, Kitābu'l-Iman*, cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 19.

early in the seventh century A.D.⁸⁰ Concerning the manufacture and collection of traditions during this period of time, Goldsack observes:

To such an extent was the manufacture (and collection) of spurious traditions carried on for dogmatic and controversial purposes, that it has been shrewdly remarked that these themselves furnish a not unreliable history of the later controversies of Islam.⁸¹

He concludes that in spite of the unanswered questions of whether the traditions were ever intended to be binding on the Islamic Community or whether adequate criteria had ever been established for determining the reliability of the subject matter of the traditions, Muslims throughout the world hold them to be essential to the faith and practice of Islam. Goldsack concludes his study of the authority of the traditions noting that the Prophet's own words of caution, "Beware of imagination, for imagination is the falsest tradition," were forgotten.⁸² In their place, al-Shāfi'i's maxim, "in the exaltation of Muḥammad to exaggerate is lawful", was remembered.⁸³

5.0 STUDIES ABOUT THE FOUR MAJOR COLLECTION OF THE TRADITIONS

Muir observes that the earliest written collections of the Sunna were not to supersede, but only to assist the memorization of tradition, for oral repetition was still the rule.⁸⁴ He notes that "without an oral attestation at each step in the tradition, there would have been absolutely no guarantee whatever against forgery and interpolation (in the written collections)."⁸⁵ Nevertheless, there was a prejudice against written collections which ran so high that instances are given of collectors committing their treasures to the flames or leaving instructions to their executors to destroy them after their death.⁸⁶ Muir holds that there were three

⁸⁰ J. van Ess, "Scepticism in Islamic religious thought", *Abḥāth*, vol. 21 (1968), cited by Michael Cook, *Early Muslim dogma*, p. 44.

⁸¹ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 19.

⁸² *Zubdat al-Bukhārī*, p. 238, cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 7.

⁸³ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, p. 114.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 116.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 115.

successive stages by which the Sunna was formed into written collections: firstly, the traditions were collected as notes or memoranda; secondly, they appeared in collections for schools or colleges; thirdly, the Sunna appeared in regular book format.⁸⁷

Muir notes that Ibn Jurayj and Ibn 'Abī Rabi'a, who both died about the middle of the second century, were the first to write books of Sunna.⁸⁸ Towards the end of the second century many systematic collectors of tradition sprang up with the view of establishing Islamic doctrine. From the beginning of these collections, especially during the early period of 'Abbāsīd rule (from 136-218 A.H.) pressure was increasingly applied to Islamic scholars to support the house of 'Āli in their assumption of power over the entire Muslim community. This problem came into sharp focus under the direct influence of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn (198-218 A.H.) under whom al-Wāqidi, Ibn Ishāq and al-Madā'inī wrote their biographies of the Prophet.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the six standard Sunni collections of the traditions were also compiled exclusively under the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs.

The earliest collection of tradition according to Muir was compiled by Mālik b. 'Anas (d. 179/796), entitled *al-Muwatta*, and upon this early collection al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875) based their collections.⁹⁰ Al-Bukhārī was the first of the general collectors to adopt rules of 'critical selection' which were based upon the completeness of the traditional chain and the character of the witnesses composing it. His collection contains 7,275 separate traditions; or excluding repetitions, somewhere around 4000.⁹¹ The collection of his pupil Muslim contains some 12,000 traditions, but if one excludes the repetitions, there

⁸⁷ Ibid. Muir in this regard uses al-Wāqidi as his source.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid, Vol. I, p. xl, xlv.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid, Vol. I, p. 118.

are almost the same number as that of al-Bukhārī. Muir notes that four other collections of less authority are recognised by Sunnis.⁹²

Muir notes that the criteria by which a tradition was evaluated for entering into a collection allowed for many errors. The collectors made a critical study only of the chain of witnesses (*isnād*) rather than making even the most elementary critical study of the subject matter (*matn*) of the tradition. In this way, if a chain of witnesses regarded as faithful men agreed to a tradition, it was accepted regardless of whether the tradition made sense or not. Each tradition was regarded as a unit to be accepted or rejected as a whole.⁹³

6.0 THE RELATION OF ISLAMIC TRADITION TO THE QUR'AN

It is now possible to compare the Islamic traditions to the Qur'ān in four specific areas with respect to: firstly, the degree of inspiration, secondly, the degree of authenticity, thirdly the degree of authority and fourthly, with respect to influence.⁹⁴

6.1 THE DEGREE OF INSPIRATION

With respect to the degree of inspiration it is observed that there are two main kinds of inspiration, *wahy* and *ilhām*. The first pertains to the Qur'ān alone, and is purely mechanical. The Qur'ān is not the word of a prophet enlightened by God, but is the word of God Himself dictated to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. The personality of Muḥammad has not coloured it in the least.

The second type of inspiration is not considered to be so direct and so is less authoritative. This kind of inspiration is received in the form of ideas. The Muslim traditions are considered to be in this class as well as the Christian

⁹² These he notes are the minor collection of Abū Dāwūd (d.275); al-Tirmidhī (d.279); al-Nasā'ī (d. 303); for the fourth some adopt Ibn Mājah (d. 273); others Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311). Ibid, Vol. I, p. 118.

⁹³ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xlvi.

⁹⁴ Goldsack, *The Traditions in Islam*, pp. 28-50. McLean summarizes Goldsack's arguments in her article "The Traditions Amongst Ordinary Mohammedans", *Missionary Covenant*, Dec.: 1927, pp. 1-8.

Scriptures. To put the matter in a nutshell, as McLean notes: "the Qur'ān contains the words of God Himself, the Islamic traditions contain the words of Muḥammad."⁹⁵

6.2 THE DEGREE OF AUTHENTICITY

As already observed, the need of an official version of the Qur'ān had been early felt and met but at first no attempt was made to preserve the traditions in written form. The Qur'ān tolerated no literature besides itself. There was probably a fear lest such documents should find their way into the sacred text. It was also for a long time a deeply ingrained principle that only oral tradition was of real value. This belief may have come from the Jewish sense of the sacredness of the Oral Law.

It was further pointed out in this chapter that the need to invent traditions occurred to meet the needs of the expanding Islamic empire, and to support the claims of rival theological factions in Islam. The number of traditions, many of them contradictory, multiplied to an incredible extent. The need for an authentic collection was obvious and between the 2nd and 3rd Islamic century the four recognized collections were made. However, the only connection between these written collections and the spoken words of the Prophet was the *isnād* or chain of narrators. Goldsack pointed out that much of the labour expended by the collectors upon verifying their chains of narrators was wasted because their chain breaks at its final link. The reliability of the witness of the four reporters, to whom the bulk of the traditions is credited to have been given, is suspect.

6.3 THE DEGREE OF AUTHORITY

In view of the theory of inspiration previously given, one should expect to find the authority of the traditions less binding than that of the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, Goldsack points out that with most Muslims this is not the case.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ McLean, "The Traditions Amongst Ordinary Mohammedans", p. 1.

⁹⁶ Goldsack, *The Traditions in Islam*, p. 28.

Their reverence for the Prophet makes it incumbent upon them to follow his reputed example and precept just as a Christian endeavours to imitate Christ.

6.4 THE DEGREE OF INFLUENCE

This chapter has pointed out that though the degree of inspiration attributed to the Qur'ān is on a higher plane than that of the Islamic traditions, and though the Qur'ān is accepted as the final authority by every orthodox Muslim, whereas the traditions are not, yet the influence of the Islamic traditions is so much more widespread than that of the Qur'ān that Goldsack writes that: "they have usurped the place of the Qur'ān itself".⁹⁷

7.0 THE INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE ON THE TRADITIONS

Among the three authors being investigated, Goldsack is the only one to have made an in-depth study of the relationship of the Bible to the traditions and to have examined the usefulness of the traditions to Muslim-Christian dialogue. There are brief comments in Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's work entitled *Essay on Mohammedan Tradition*⁹⁸ which deal with topics which are suggestive of how tradition can be used in Muslim-Christian dialogue. Similarly, William Muir, in his *Life of Mahomet* (1894) Vol. I and *The Mohammedan Controversy* (1897) includes topics indicating the limitations of using Islamic traditions in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

If one considers the scope of Goldsack's writings on the traditions, they equalled and perhaps surpassed several other studies written about the relationship between the Biblical records and the Islamic traditions. A few of the more influential studies which predated Goldsack's writings on the traditions were: Koelle's *Mohammed and Mohammedanism Critically Considered*;⁹⁹ Ignaz Goldziher's *Neutestamentliche Elemente in der Traditionslitteratur des Islam*

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. v.

⁹⁸ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Essay on Mohammedan Tradition*, quoted in the *Highes' Dictionary*, s.v. "Tradition", pp. 639-645.

⁹⁹ S.W. Koelle's *Mohammed and Mohammedanism Critically Considered* (London: 1889).

(1902);¹⁰⁰ Gairdner's *Mohammedan Tradition and the Gospel Record*;¹⁰¹ and Zwemer's *The Moslem Christ*.¹⁰²

Goldsack's studies comparing Islamic traditions with parallel passages in the Biblical text focus on immediately recognizable phrases and concepts which he entitled 'Echoes from the Old and New Testaments in the traditions'. He suggests that while it may be argued that the teachings of all religions are replete with a select number of similar themes, the similarity in the style and exact phrasing indicates whether or not there has been borrowing. In determining if one source borrowed from another, Goldsack employed the following criteria.

Firstly, Goldsack looks at whether the increased exposure of Muslims to Judaism and Christianity is reflected in a greater reliance on Biblical concepts in the collections of traditions than in the Qur'ān. Secondly, he investigates whether the traditionists had a motive in borrowing stories from the Biblical Scriptures. Thirdly, he examines the evidence as to whether it was compatible with the aims of the traditionists to borrow from the Biblical Scriptures. Fourthly, Goldsack investigates whether a particular tradition closely reflected in words, figures of speech and ideas a parallel passage in the Biblical Scriptures.¹⁰³

Some of the 'echoes' in the traditions alleged to be from the Bible are closer to the Biblical text than others. Goldsack made a study of Echoes in the Old and New Testament which are found in Islamic traditions. At this point, a few examples of Goldsack's "Echoes of the New Testament in the Islamic Traditions" are presented. The examples given in the text of the thesis are arranged according to the category of New Testament teachings rather than according to their linguistic

¹⁰⁰ Ignaz Goldziher, "Neutestamentliche Elemente in der Traditionslitteratur des Islam," *Oriens Christianus*, II (1902), p. 390 ff.

¹⁰¹ W.H.T. Gairdner, "Moslem Tradition and Gospel Record", *MW* 6 (1916).

¹⁰² S.M. Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ, An Essay on the Life, Character, and Teachings of Jesus Christ according to the Koran and Orthodox Tradition*, (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1912).

¹⁰³ Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 6 Cf. Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, trans. by Young, pp. 20-23.

rank. Traditions which are linguistically close to a New Testament passage are classed as category A. Traditions which are ranked as conceptually close to a New Testament passage are classed as category B. Those which are ranked as suggestive of a New Testament passage are ranked as category C.

7.1 ECHOES OF JESUS' PERSONAL TRAITS IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Descriptions of Jesus' person, character, and actions in the New Testament text are reflected in traditions attributed to Muḥammad. In Goldsack's unpublished notes on the traditions he points out that the Islamic traditions superseded the Qur'ān in their description of the uniqueness of Jesus.

An important aspect of the life of Jesus which is recorded in the New Testament and which is reflected in the Islamic traditions concerns his being given titles which imply his uniqueness, if not even divinity. In the New Testament, Jesus is variously titled the 'Word (which) became flesh and made his dwelling among us (men),'¹⁰⁴ and a 'Life-giving Spirit.'¹⁰⁵ These titles of Jesus, which also occur in Qur'ānic references¹⁰⁶, are further developed in the Islamic traditions. Goldsack observes that in the traditions it is related from 'Ubāda bin al-Ṣāmit that, 'The Apostle of God said,

Whoever bears witness that there is no God but Allāh alone, and that He has no partner, and that Muḥammad is His servant and his Apostle, and that *Jesus is the servant of God* and His Apostle and *the son of His handmaid* and *His Word (Kalimat Allāh)* which he cast into Mary and *a Spirit from him (Rūḥ Allāh)* and (bears witness) that heaven and hell are true, God will take him into paradise in spite of what his works may have been.'" -Muslim, al-Bukhārī,¹⁰⁷ (emphasis added, Category A).

¹⁰⁴ John i:14. The title of Jesus as God's Word (*Kalimat Allāh*) is based on sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):169 *kalimatuhu* ("His Word") which equals *kalimatu 'llāhi* (God's Word); and also on sūra iii (*'Al-'Imrān*): 45 which reads "O Mary, verily God sendeth thee good tidings of the Word (*Kalimat*) from Himself."

¹⁰⁵ I Corinthians xv:45. The title of Jesus as God's Spirit '*Rūḥ Allāh*' is based on sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 169 where it is written: "Verily the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is the Apostle of God, and His Word which He conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit (proceeding) from Him."

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Chapter Eight of this thesis, sections 3.1.6 and 3.1.7.

¹⁰⁷ *Goldsack's Unpublished Notes on the Traditions*, p. 3 cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 3.

A second aspect of the life of Jesus which is recorded in the New Testament and reflected in the Qur'ān and the Islamic traditions concerns his being kept from sin.¹⁰⁸ The Qur'ān echoes that Jesus was kept from 'Satan the stoned', sūra xix (*Maryam*): 20. Similarly in the traditions it is related by Abū Hurayra that, 'The Apostle of God said, "There is no son of Adam born, except Mary and her son, but Satan touches (taints) him when he is born, and he cries out from the touch (taint) of Satan."' -Muslim, al-Bukhārī, (category B).¹⁰⁹

A third aspect which is recorded in the New Testament and is mentioned in the Islamic traditions is Jesus' asking God to forgive those who persecuted him. Goldsack observes that Jesus' request "Father forgive them"¹¹⁰ echoes through the traditions as spoken by one of the prophets. Ibn Mas'ūd related,

It is related by the Apostle of God, One of the prophets whose people beat him and caused the blood to flow wiped the blood from his face and said, 'O God, forgive my people, for verily they know not (what they do),'(Category A).¹¹¹

A fourth aspect of the life of Jesus recorded in the New Testament and echoed in the Islamic traditions concerns prophecies about the last days and Jesus' second coming. In the New Testament account Jesus will come in the last days when there is 'great distress', and 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.'¹¹² Goldsack observes that in the Islamic traditions it is related from Abū Hurayra that the Prophet said:

It (the last days) will never come until you see previous to it, ten signs:...smoke, and Antichrist, and the beast, and the rising of the sun in the West, and the descent of Jesus, Son of Mary" -Muslim, (category A).¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ According to I Peter 1:22 Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9 in that "he committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

¹⁰⁹ *Goldsack's Unpublished Notes on the Traditions*, p. 5 cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 7.

¹¹⁰ "Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."-Luke 23:34.

¹¹¹ *Goldsack's Unpublished Notes on the Traditions*, p. 5 cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 255.

¹¹² Matthew xxiv: 29.

¹¹³ *Goldsack's Unpublished Notes on the Traditions*, p. 5 Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 264.

A fifth aspect of Jesus life recorded in the New Testament and echoed in the Islamic traditions is Jesus being called the 'Faithful and True (Judge) who judges in justice'.¹¹⁴ In the Islamic traditions Jesus is called the Just Judge although the context is different to that in the New Testament. In the traditions it is related by Abū Hurayra that,

The Apostle of God said, "The Son of Mary will descend amongst you as a Just Judge. And he will break the cross in pieces, and will kill the swine and will set aside the poll-tax. And wealth will abound to such an extent that no one will accept it..." -Muslim, al-Bukhārī, (Category C).¹¹⁵

Goldsack also observes that a long story of the last day closes with the words:

Jesus, Son of Mary, will descend to destroy Anti-Christ and act as leader. And when the enemy of God sees him they will melt away as salt melts in water...but God will kill them by the hand of Jesus; and he will show their blood upon his lance.-Muslim, (Category C).¹¹⁶

7.2 ECHOES OF JESUS' PARABLES IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Goldsack observes that there are numerous parables of Jesus in the New Testament which are repeated in the traditions and usually ascribed to Muḥammad, even by some of the earliest traditionists.

One illustration of a parable of Jesus related in the Islamic traditions is preserved by al-Bukhārī and purported to be related by Ibn 'Umar. Goldsack regards this tradition as unquestionably a later Muslim attempt to comment, for controversial purposes, on a well known parable of Christ. In this parable labourers were hired to work in a vineyard at the third hour, sixth hour, ninth hour and the eleventh hour, but all were given only one penny; and those who were hired early in the day complained about those hired later to the owner of the vineyard, saying:

These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a

¹¹⁴ Revelation xix:11.

¹¹⁵ *Goldsack's Unpublished Notes on the Traditions*, p. 5 Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, pp. 261, 262.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

penny? Take that is thine and go thy way. I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.¹¹⁷

Goldsack states: "the parody of this Biblical parable in the Islamic traditions is as follows":

The people of the Taurat were given the Taurat, and they laboured until, when midday appeared, they grew weak, and they were each given one carat. Then the people of the Injil were given the Injil, and they laboured until the afternoon prayer, when they grew weak, and they were each given one carat. After that we were given the Qur'ān, and we worked until the setting of the sun, and we were each given two carats. Therefore the people of the two books (i.e. Jews and Christians) said, O, our Lord, thou hast given these two carats each, but has only given us one carat each, and yet we have laboured more than they. God most high said, Have I dealt unjustly with you in any way in the matter of your reward? They said, No. He said, This is my grace. I give to whom I will.' (Category A).¹¹⁸

A second example of a parable of Jesus related in the Islamic traditions is recognized by the phrase, 'pearls before swine,' where Jesus admonishes: 'Do not throw your pearls before swine. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.'¹¹⁹ In the traditions it is related from Anas that, 'The Apostle of God said, "...the placing knowledge before one who does not appreciate it, is like placing a necklace of pearls, jewels and gold on the necks of swine."-Ibn Mājah, (Category A).¹²⁰

A third illustration of a parable of Jesus related in the Islamic traditions is identified by the phrase, 'faith as small as a grain of mustard seed,' and is used in the context of accomplishing the seemingly impossible by the exercise of even so small an amount of faith as a grain of mustard seed.¹²¹ It is related from Ibn Mas'ūd that, The Apostle of God said, "No one will enter the fire in whose heart is faith equal in weight to a single grain of mustard seed."-Muslim, (Category A).¹²²

¹¹⁷ Matthew xx:1-15.

¹¹⁸ *Zubdat al-Bukhārī*, pp. 35, 36 cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, pp. 68, 69.

¹¹⁹ Matthew vi: 7.

¹²⁰ *Goldsack's Unpublished Notes on the Traditions*, p. 2, cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 18.

¹²¹ 'Jesus replied: "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move." Matthew xvii:20.

¹²² *Goldsack's Unpublished Notes on the Traditions*, p. 3, cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 247.

7.3 ECHOES OF JESUS' TEACHINGS IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Goldsack observes that the first echo of Jesus' teaching related in the Islamic traditions is none other than a striking reproduction in the traditions of the prayer which Jesus taught to His disciples. Jesus' prayer as recorded in the Gospels is this,

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.¹²³

Goldsack observes that Jesus' prayer is attributed to Muḥammad by later traditionists as follows:

Our Lord God, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom is in heaven and on earth. As thy mercy is in heaven, so show thy mercy on earth. Forgive us our debts and our sins. Thou art the Lord of the good. Send down mercy from thy mercy and healing from thy healing on this pain, that it may be healed.-Abū Dāwūd, (Category A).¹²⁴

A second example of a teaching of Jesus related in the Islamic traditions is that of the 'Golden Rule' given by Jesus: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."¹²⁵ Goldsack observes that this teaching was so foreign to the whole spirit of Islam that the commentator al-Nawāwī felt compelled to modify its difficult demands. This he did by declaring that the tradition in question merely meant: "Until he loves for his brother in Islam like that which he loves for himself." (Category B).¹²⁶

A third illustration of a teaching of Jesus related in the Islamic traditions concerns the words of Jesus to his disciple Thomas, who doubted the resurrection of Jesus until he was given evidence. Jesus then said: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have

¹²³ Matthew vi: 9-13.

¹²⁴ Abū Dāwūd, vol. i, p. 101 cited by Goldsack, *The Traditions In Islam*, p. 70.

¹²⁵ Matthew vii: 12.

¹²⁶ Al-Nawāwī in *Shar 'Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. i, p. 439 cited by Goldsack, *Goldsack's Unpublished Notes on the Traditions*, p. 2, cf. Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 67.

believed."¹²⁷ Goldsack observes that a close parallel of the exact phraseology of Christ's words to Thomas occurs in a tradition in which it is related by Abū Hurayra that Muḥammad stated, 'He is once blessed who sees me and believes in me, but he who has not seen me and yet believes in me is seven times blessed,' *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr* (category A).¹²⁸

7.4 THE EFFECT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ON THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Goldsack concludes that phrases from the Biblical text, descriptions of Jesus' person and teaching and theological concepts exerted an important theological influence upon the Muslim traditions.¹²⁹ One motive, he believed, for including Christian concepts in the Islamic traditions was the fact that the Qur'ān did not provide all the rules needed for good governance of the newly acquired Christian lands. Islamic traditions adapted to the Christian environment supplemented the Qur'ān, thereby enabling more effective Islamic governance. Another reason for including traditions based on Christian concepts was that they were useful in establishing the validity of an Islamic argument in Muslim-Christian debate. In this regard, he notes that later narrators of traditions fabricated traditions for polemical purposes and ascribed them to an earlier narrator.¹³⁰ These traditionists, he thought, fabricated traditions about Christianity with *isnād* to match, not infrequently referring to Abū Hurayra as their narrator. Ultimately they were included in the great collections of traditions. Therefore, Goldsack concludes:

When the great work of systematization of the traditions was taken in hand, these Christian expressions, in the form of traditions, with complete *isnāds* to match, were incorporated into the great body of traditions and remain there to the present day.¹³¹

127 John xx: 29.

128 *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr*, vol. ii, p. 47.

129 Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 64.

130 *Ibid.*

131 *Ibid.*

One finally arrives at the question of just how important the traditions are to Muslim-Christian dialogue when compared to the Qur'ān. Muir, Khān and Goldsack are unanimous in concluding that the Islamic traditions do not have sufficient agreement in and of themselves to provide unequivocal support for any particular Biblical concept. Therefore, all three authors conclude that the person involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue is restricted to using the Sunna in a role supportive to statements in the Qur'ān. In this respect, Goldsack cites Rodwell, who states:

The Islamic traditions can never be considered as at all reliable unless they are traceable to some common origin, have descended to us by independent witnesses, and correspond with the statements of the Qur'ān itself, always deducting, of course, such texts as have themselves given rise to the tradition.¹³²

Goldsack concludes that the references to Jesus in the Qur'ān, though approximating more closely to the Apocryphal writings than to the records of the canonical Gospels, are nevertheless reported without prejudice. By contrast he observes that although the Islamic traditions reveal a much more intimate knowledge of Gospel history, some of them are modified in the interests of Muslim dogma and controversy with Christianity. It is for this reason that he considers the Qur'ān to provide a more solid foundation than do the traditions for Muslim-Christian dialogue. There remain three important considerations in using the Islamic traditions in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

Firstly, from the Muslim point of view, Goldsack reminds the reader that while remembering Ibn Qutayba's tradition that no religion has such historical attestations as Islam (*laysa li-ummatin mina 'l-umami asnādun ka asnādihim*); Muslims and Christians alike would do well to remember the tradition of 'Āṣim al-Nabīl (d. 212 A.H.) "In nothing do we see pious men more given to falsehood

¹³² Rodwell, "Introduction to Koran Translation", p. 7 cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. i.

than in tradition" (*lam narā li'l-ṣāliḥīna fī shay'in akdhaba minhum fī 'l-ḥadīth*).¹³³ From Goldsack's point of view, the caricature of Jesus' person and teaching presented in the traditions, must be carefully clarified in dialogue.

Secondly, he reminds the person involved in dialogue that each Islamic school of thought tends to have its own preferred Islamic traditions which can differ from those of the other schools. This lack of uniformity of approval among Muslims concerning the traditions provides a limiting factor to the Christian student of Islam who seeks to make a point in Muslim-Christian dialogue based on traditional evidence alone. Goldsack notes that a good rule is to use the traditions as supporting references to the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān may not be as well understood as the traditions by the average Muslim, but it is still recognized as the final court of appeal by all Muslims.

Lastly, a sympathetic study of the Islamic traditions enables the non-Muslim to understand precepts which influence every aspect of a Muslim's life. In so understanding, this person is enabled to appreciate the rich cultural tapestry which is also part of the Islamic heritage.¹³⁴

¹³³ Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, London, 1907, p. 145 cited by Goldsack, *Traditions*, p. 64.

¹³⁴ McLean, "The Traditions amongst Ordinary Mohammadans", p. 14.

CHAPTER SIX

INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE BIOGRAPHIES OF THE LIFE OF MUḤAMMAD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Muir, Khān and Goldsack examine the early Islamic biographies of the person of Muḥammad in order to write an historically accurate appraisal of their subject. Firstly, they intend that their 'Lives of Muḥammad' based on these early Islamic sources will serve to correct the Muslim popular writing about the Prophet which was based on fanciful myths developed by later Islamic writers. Secondly, they intend their 'Lives' to provide a basis for discussion of Muḥammad's life in Muslim-Christian dialogue. Throughout the history of Muslim-Christian dialogue, Muslims had inquired of Christians whether Muḥammad is mentioned in the Bible and why Christians did not give him the honour which Muslims accord Jesus. At a seminar convened at Tripoli, Libya in 1975 to bring together representatives from the famous Al-Azhar Islamic University in Cairo and the Pontifical Institute in Rome, a Christian participant emphasized this last point.

There is an issue that disturbs Muslims more than any other in their approach to Christians. It is the silence and reserve of Christians regarding Muḥammad. He is for Muslims the last and greatest of the Prophets. Christian reticence on this subject surprises and scandalizes them. They do not understand why we refuse to grant Muḥammad the respect they themselves grant to the person of Jesus.¹

This chapter deals first with the biographies of Muḥammad set forward by Muslim and Christian apologists of the 8th-11th centuries. Secondly, a study will be made of the importance of the biographies of Muḥammad in the writings of Muir, Khān and Goldsack during the 19th century. Thirdly, the effect of these biographies of Muḥammad on Muslim-Christian dialogue in India during the 19th century will be presented. Fourthly, questions about Muḥammad arising from the

¹ Kenneth Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian, A Question of Response*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), p. ix.

study of the early and later biographies of Muḥammad will be discussed. These questions include what Christian writers say about the character of Muḥammad, whether he is mentioned in the Bible, and why the place accorded to Muḥammad in Christianity differs from the place accorded to Jesus in Islam.

2.0 PERCEPTIONS OF MUḤAMMAD IN EARLY MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

The early period of Muslim-Christian dialogue overlapped with the compilation of some of the most well-known biographies of Muḥammad. The same Islamic biographies which influenced the 8th-11th century apologists exerted an equally strong influence on the historiographers in India writing about Muḥammad. This was largely due to the discovery by Sprenger and Muir of copies of the early Islamic biographies of Muḥammad in Syria and India.²

Particularly important to the creation of the 19th century biographies of Muḥammad were the early biographies written by Ibn Ishāq (d.151/767), Ibn Hishām (d.833), al-Wāqidi (d.822) and al-Ṭabarī (d.934).³ Furthermore, the six standard Sunni collections of the traditions were also compiled exclusively under the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs.⁴ The overlap between the writing of these Islamic sources and several important Muslim-Christian dialogues occurred during the Caliphate of al-Ma'mūn (d.833) following the establishment (830) in Baghdad of the famous *Bayt al-ḥikma* (house of wisdom), which was a combination of library, academy and translation bureau.⁵ The study of the traditions and biographies of the Prophet represented the apex of Islamic scholarship conducted by members of al-Ma'mūn's academy. Theodore Abū Qurra and al-Kindī held dialogues at the court of al-

² Ibn Hishām's biography of Muḥammad was set forward by Aḥmad Ibn Ibrāhīm in 707/1307. Then, a copy of al-Wāqidi's *Maghāzi*, or "History of the Wars of the Prophet," was discovered in Syria by Sprenger. Sprenger also discovered in Delhi a copy of al-Wāqidi's *Sirat* which had been copied by a scholar named al-Haqāri, who lived in Damascus (d. 718/1318). Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, pp. xc-ci.

³ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, pp. xc-ci.

⁴ Ibid. Muir and Weil contended that the collections of traditions by al-Bukhārī (d. 256 A.H.) and Muslim (d. 260 A.H.) were strongly influenced by the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs.

⁵ Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London: MacMillan, 1937), 1970 ed. paperback, p. 310.

Ma'mūn in 830 at approximately the same period of time that Ibn Hishām and al-Wāqidī were composing their biographies of Muḥammad under al-Ma'mūn's patronage.

The attention given to the Islamic sources in a few of the Muslim-Christian dialogues during the 8th-11th centuries in Syria and Iraq (primarily those of al-Kindī) was reflected in greater detail in the Muslim-Christian dialogues occurring during the 19th century in India. It is therefore profitable to observe how the early apologists made use of the biographies of Muḥammad at their disposal before examining how the 19th century writers and apologists were influenced by them.

John of Damascus (675-753) may have read the biography of Muḥammad written by Ibn Ishāq who died in 767, but this is doubtful as Ibn Ishāq's work became widely known through the later recension written by Ibn Hishām who died in Egypt (d. 833).⁶ It is more likely that John of Damascus read about Muḥammad in a Syriac work which was written in the 7th century and was available in the libraries of Damascus.⁷ One thing is certain, John of Damascus' opinion of the Prophet was gained through first-hand experience with educated Muslims.

In *De Haeresibus*, John of Damascus makes the following itemized statements about Muḥammad.

1. Since the days of Heraclius until now
2. A pseudo-prophet, named Mamed, has sprung up for them.
3. Happening upon the Old and New Testaments,
4. in likelihood perhaps conversing afterwards with an Arian,
5. he set up a heresy of his own.
6. Having adopted toward the people the appearance of being religious,
7. he gives out that a writing has descended on him from heaven.⁸

⁶ Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 112.

⁷ A. Mingana, *Sources Syriaques*, vol. i. Bar-Penkaye (Leipzig, 1908), p. 146 (text) cited by Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 112.

⁸ John of Damascus, *De Haer.*, Migne, PG, Vol. xciv, 764 cited by Merrill, "Tractate", p. 95.

In this appraisal of Muḥammad one observes that the time element is correct ("since the days of Heraclius⁹ until now"). "Mamed" (item 2) may represent colloquial non-Muslim pronunciation. Merrill observes that is not a transcript of the written Arabic name, for the four consonants m-ḥ-m-d would be unmistakable.¹⁰ Furthermore, the expression "happening on the Old and New Testaments" seemingly ignores the circumstances involved, the questions of language, and MS. copies, and even the ability to read. It seems that John of Damascus assumes that Muḥammad learned much from a Christian friend (see item 4) as indeed the Qur'ān reports that the Meccans charge that he was taught by a teacher (sūra xlv (al-Dukhān): 14 and a foreigner (sūra xvi (al-Naḥl) 103).¹¹ The Nestorian tradition is definite that a Nestorian monk named Sergius was his teacher.¹² One might ask whether John of Damascus, a Greek Orthodox adherent in Syria, heard of this tradition current among the Nestorian "heretics" in Iraq, but was not able to make a positive statement? Again the reader asks why did John consider Muḥammad taught by an Arian? Was it more than the author's inference from his view of Islam as a Christological heresy, with teachings resembling those of the Arians? "Set up a heresy (or a sect?) of his own." Why did John of Damascus brand the religious practices of Muḥammad as pretense (item 6)? These questions about Muḥammad which were posited by John of Damascus were brought forward by Muir and Goldsack in the 19th century.

John attempts to avoid making any derogatory remarks against the person of Muḥammad. He does, however, question Muḥammad's claims to prophethood according to the criteria laid down in the Bible or the Qur'ān. The Damascene observes that the Biblical norm for receiving anyone claiming to be sent from God

⁹ Merrill observes that until the time of Heraclius (610-41) the Arabs of Hijaz (the southern branch of Arabs) were regarded by historians as having "served idols openly," and "worshipped the morning star and Aphrodite." "Tractate", p. 95.

¹⁰ Merrill, "Tractate", p. 95.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., pp. 96.

was that he was required to give evidence usually by performing miracles as well as having the witness of prophecy (foretelling the future). He notes that according to the Qur'ānic rules for receiving a prophetic message, one must inquire of the alleged prophet: "Do you yourself show through witnesses that you are a prophet and that you have come forth from God? And what does Scripture witness concerning you?"¹³ Yet he observes that Muslims have received Muḥammad, the Qur'ān and the Islamic Faith without such evidence.¹⁴

Al-Kindī had greater latitude in forming his assessment of Muḥammad than John of Damascus since he served later under the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma'mūn, rather than at the Umayyad Court. He begins his assessment of Muḥammad's career with knowledge gained from the works of the early Islamic biographers writing at the court of al-Ma'mūn. Though commending the Prophet for his preaching against polytheism and for affirming the unity of God during his ministry at Mecca, al-Kindī censures Muḥammad's actions and teachings given at Medina. Firstly, he points out that at Medina Muḥammad personally commanded and took an active part in raids on people that had done no harm to him. He notes in this regard: "there were twenty-nine campaigns in which thy Master (Muḥammad) engaged in person, besides minor raids and night attacks, and nine pitched battles."¹⁵ Secondly, al-Kindī notes that during the Medinan period Muḥammad gave directions to assassinate certain persons obnoxious to him. Thus he notes that Ibn Rawāha killed 'Usair ibn Zārim, a Jew, and Ibn 'Umayr dispatched Abu Afeq, an aged Jew.¹⁶ Thirdly, he points out that at Medina, Muḥammad received special allowances which other Arabs were not accorded. Perhaps the most remarkable is the Qur'ānic permission in sūra xxxiii (*al-Aḥzāb*)

¹³ John of Damascus, *De Haer.*, Migne, PG, vol. xciv, 764 cited by Voorhis, "John of Damascus on the Moslem Heresy", p. 396.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Al-Kindy*, trans., Muir, p. 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

36,37, for Muḥammad to marry the wife of his adoptive son Zayd.¹⁷ Muir summarizes al-Kindī's treatment of Islam in general and Muḥammad in particular in these words:

He casts aside the prophetic claims of Mahomet, censures some of his actions in the strongest language, reprobates the ordinances of Islam, especially those relating to women, and condemns *jihād* with scathing denunciations. It is difficult to conceive how such plain-speaking was tolerated even at the court of al-Ma'mūn; at any other, the Apology of al-Kindī would have had small chance of seeing the light, or the writer of escaping with his head upon his shoulders. That the work did, as we know, gain currency can only have been due to its appearance at this particular era.¹⁸

In *Kitāb al-dīn wa'l-dawla*, 'Alī Ṭabarī gives a lengthy defence of the prophethood of Muḥammad in which he attempts to refute the main objections raised by Christians. In this regard he observes that Christians do not believe in Muḥammad for the following main reasons: firstly, they believe that no prophet has prophesied about Muḥammad prior to his coming; secondly, they contend that in the Qur'ān no mention is made of a miracle performed by him, and thirdly they state that Christ has said that no prophet will rise after Him.¹⁹ He then sets out to disprove these three assertions allegedly made by Christians of Muḥammad. He uses a different tack than the usual method of dialectic. Here, he claims that his evidence for the prophethood of Muḥammad is based on truths which he contends are admitted by Christianity as well as Islam.

Firstly, he notes that the following Old Testament prophecies indicate that Muḥammad was in fact predicted in the Bible. In the Psalms (45:2-5, 48:1-2 and 50:2,3) the words 'praise' and 'praised' can be translated *ḥamd* and *maḥmūd* which, he contends, refer to the name of Muḥammad. In Isaiah ix:6 one reads that the government shall be on the shoulder of the anointed one (literally "the government shall be on his shoulders"). This, 'Alī Ṭabarī believes, must refer to

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁸ *Al-Kindy*, trans., Muir, p. x.

¹⁹ 'Alī Ṭabarī, *Religion and Empire*, trans. Mingana, pp. 142, 143.

Muḥammad who instituted a government whereas Jesus did not. In Isaiah xxi:1-14, he concludes that the prophecy of one who shall punish Arabia for its ungodliness with a "drawn sword" could only refer to Muḥammad as there is no other record of such a prophet in Arabia.²⁰ In a similar way 'Alī Ṭabarī goes on through the Biblical books of Hosea, Micah, Habbakkuk, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel finding expressions which remind him of Muḥammad's exploits and these he terms 'prophecies'.²¹

Secondly, 'Alī Ṭabarī brings forward the following evidence as proof that Muḥammad was in fact sent with miracles. Among them, he contends, were the Night Journey (to heaven); Abū Lahab being miraculously eaten by a lion at the word of the Prophet; the testimony of a wolf to the prophethood of Muḥammad; trees which walked at his command; and water which was miraculously provided by him. 'Alī Ṭabarī considers that, since Muḥammad was an unlettered man, the giving of the Qur'ān was the pre-eminent miracle.²²

Thirdly, in refuting the statement that no prophet will rise after Jesus he notes that Jesus himself promises the Comforter (*paracletos*) whose name in Greek sounds similar to the Greek transliteration of *aḥmad*, being *periklutos* (the praised one).²³ Furthermore, 'Alī Ṭabarī considers that the importance of Jesus' disciples was to prepare for the coming of Muḥammad. In this regard, he held that the correct interpretation of Simon Peter's statement (I Peter iv:17) : "the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God" refers to the judgment by Muḥammad of the Ka'ba at Mecca rather than the Temple at Jerusalem (about which Christ had already predicted destruction in Matthew xxiv:2).²⁴ Lastly, 'Alī

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I p. 71.

²² Ibid.

²³ John xiv:26 While *paracletos* is found in the Greek New Testament with reference to the Holy Spirit, the term *periklutos* does not occur.

²⁴ 'Alī-Ṭabarī, *Religion and Empire*, trans. Mingana, p. 142.

Tabarī considers that the story of Hagar and Mount Sinai in Arabia (Galatians iv:22-26) alludes to the descendants and birthplace of Muḥammad.²⁵

Paul of Antioch avoids criticism of Muḥammad, confining his statements to that which Christians had heard about him from Muslims.

We heard it said that a man had appeared among the Arabs, by the name of Muḥammad, who was said to be the Messenger of God and he brought a book which he said had descended to him from God on high.²⁶

Paul does not dispute this testimony but argues that according to the Qur'ān, Muḥammad was sent to the Pagan Arabs only, not to Christians. In this respect he cites the Qur'ānic verses concerning the Arabic origin of the Qur'ān in sūra xii (*Yūsuf*) : 2 and Muhammad's having been sent among the Gentiles and among those who did not receive any messenger before (sūra lxii (*al-Jum'a*): 2; sūra xxviii (*al-Qaṣas*) : 46; sūra xxxvi (*Yā Sīn*): 6).²⁷ The force of this argument is that Muḥammad's coming would then be regional rather than universal. Paul of Antioch suggests that Christianity, by contrast to Islam, is universal. He suggests that Christianity is being referred to in sūra i (*al-Fātiḥa*) 6: "guide us according to the path of those upon whom Your favour rests".²⁸

In answering Paul's first argument that the message of Muḥammad was sent only to the Arabs, Ibn Taymiyya contends that the Qur'ān does in fact indicate that Muḥammad was a prophet who was sent to all mankind (sūra vii (*al-A'rāf*): 158; sūra xxxiv (*Saba'*): 28). First he notes that letters were sent by Muḥammad to early Christian leaders, such as the Byzantine emperor Heraclius and the Negus of Ethiopia, summoning them to Islam. Furthermore, he notes the Qur'ānic passages which speak of Muḥammad's being sent "to his own people," and "with an Arabic Qur'ān" do not contradict those which indicate that Muḥammad also had

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Paul of Antioch, *Risāla ilā ba'd aṣḍiqā'ihī al-Muslimīn*, cited by P. Khoury, *Paul d'Antioche*, p. 170

²⁷ Ibid., p. 170 fn.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 170.

a universal message. He finds a parallel here in the mission of Jesus who was sent "only to the sons of Israel," but whose apostles were later sent to the whole world. He concludes that Muḥammad's ultimate ministry was not regional, as Paul of Antioch claimed, but universal.²⁹

In another respect, Ibn Taymiyya rejects Paul of Antioch's interpretation of sūra i (*al-Fātiḥa*): 6 as referring to Christians in these words:

No one with either general or specific knowledge about the religion of Muḥammad and that of his community can dispute that what they received from him by way of declaring Christians unbelieving, ignorant, and wayward, in permitting *jihād* against them, in taking their women as prisoners and seizing their wealth - all this completely contradicts the possibility that Muḥammad and his community could say in every prayer, "O God, guide us according to the path of the Christians."³⁰

Finally, Ibn Taymiyya states that anyone who has insulted Muḥammad should be put to death. He shows from the traditions that a person, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, who had insulted Muḥammad should be executed without recourse to repentance.³¹

Throughout the long history of Muslim-Christian dialogue, the honour accorded to Islam has been equated by Muslims with the honour accorded to Muḥammad. Conversely, the one who dishonours the Prophet dishonours all Muslims. The biographers writing at the time of Caliph al-Ma'mūn were allowed to portray the Prophet realistically but even they were very circumspect about outright criticism of his character. One observes that in al-Ma'mūn's rule, which was comparatively tolerant towards non-Muslim views, many topics could be openly discussed, especially those being debated by Muslim scholars. Among these were: whether the Qur'ān was created or uncreated, whether metaphors could be used in describing God, and whether Jesus was God's Word. However, one topic that was not open to question was the issue of the prophethood of

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Al-Jawab*, 2:82, cited by Michel, *Response*, pp. 249-250.

³¹ *Al-Sarīm al-Maslūl* (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1965), cited by Michel, *Response*, pp. 369-70

Muḥammad. It is for this reason that few of the early apologists apart from al-Kindī dared to discuss it.

3.0 INTRODUCTION TO WRITING ABOUT MUḤAMMAD IN 19TH CENTURY INDIA

During the 19th century, Muir, Khān and Goldsack were three among a number of important Indian and Western biographers in the Indian subcontinent who wrote a life of Muḥammad. These three authors based their research on such newly discovered Islamic sources as al-Wāqidi's biography, which Sprenger and Muir discovered in India, and they benefited from A. Von Kremer's study on al-Wāqidi (1856)³² and G. Weil's (1808-89) biography of "Mohammed" (1843)³³ and his equally important *History of the Caliphs* (1862).³⁴ Muir critically used Weil's life of the Prophet and study of the Caliphate which he acknowledged in his *Caliphate* (1891).³⁵

It is not within the scope of this thesis to analyze the biographies of the Prophet written by Muir, Goldsack and Khān in great detail. It is more relevant here to analyze how the authors developed their views of Muḥammad from the Islamic sources and study the effect which their writings have had on Muslim-Christian dialogue. Therefore, the emphasis in this thesis is on how these three authors used the Islamic sources in the construction of a life of Muḥammad.

The first objective of this investigation will be to examine the range of theories prevalent in 19th century writing by Muslims and non-Muslims concerning the life and character of Muḥammad. An examination of the biographical sketches available in 19th century India suggests several reasons why well-researched biographies of Muḥammad were still needed. The second objective of this chapter is to study how our three authors employed the classical

³² A. Von Kremer (ed.), *History of Muhammad's Campaigns by Aboo Abdallah Mohammad Omar Al-Wāqidy* (London: 1856).

³³ G. Weil, *Mohammed der Prophet, seine Leben und seine Lehre*, (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1843).

³⁴ G Weil, *Geschichte der Chalifen*, 3vols., (Mannheim:1846-1851, rpt. 1862).

³⁵ See Muir, *Caliphate*, preface, p.vii.

Islamic biographies in developing their respective 'Lives of the Prophet'. The third objective is to investigate how each of the three authors applied their respective theories of the Qur'ān, the traditions and the classical Islamic biographies when developing their 'Lives'.

A wide range of views about the character of the Prophet were expressed by Western scholars. At one end of the spectrum was the opinion of Sprenger who depicted Muḥammad as a man of "weak and cunning mind."³⁶ Muir's opinions were in the middle of the spectrum. While observing that at Medina Muḥammad exchanged the mantle of a "Warner-Prophet" for the sword of a "Warrior-Prophet,"³⁷ Muir disallows Sprenger's derogatory assessment of Muḥammad's character on the grounds that "a man so described could never have accomplished the mighty mission which Muḥammad wrought."³⁸ At the other end of the spectrum was R. Bosworth Smith, who in 1874 affirmed: "Muḥammad was a very Prophet of God."³⁹

Muslim scholars were quick to embrace statements by European writers which, like those of Smith, extolled the virtues of the Prophet. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, in his *Essays on the Life of Mohammed*,⁴⁰ includes references to the Prophet from such Western writers as R. Bosworth Smith, Thomas Carlyle's essay on Muhammad as the 'Hero Prophet' and F.D. Maurice's positive assessment of Muḥammad.⁴¹ Khān's work also contains rebuttals of such Western writers as Muir and Sprenger, whom he perceives as unduly critical of

³⁶ A. Sprenger, *The Life and Doctrine of Mahomet*, cited by Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, p. 103.

³⁷ Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, p. 103, 104.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ R. Bosworth Smith, *Mohammad and Mohammadanism* (London: Smith, Elder, 1874, 2nd. ed., 1876. 3rd. ed., 1889), p. 340.

⁴⁰ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *A Series of Essays on the Life of Mohammed*, Vol. I, (London: Trubner, 1869, 1870).

⁴¹ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heriod in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), and F. D. Maurice, *The Religions of the World and their Relations with Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1846), pp. 3,151.

Muḥammad. Nevertheless, in the writings of educated Muslims of India, one can also find a range of views about the personality and teachings of Muḥammad.

On a continuum between rationalist and esoteric Islamic thought about the Prophet, one encounters in India a wide spectrum of Muslim authors. At the rational end of the spectrum, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān emphasizes the humanity of the Prophet, at the same time rebutting false views about the Prophet and about Islam. He stresses that Muḥammad's teachings were not contrary to reason, and that Islam is not contrary to progress. But he also argues that Muḥammad was not infallible, not sent with miracles and that he was preserved from error only when giving the Qur'ān. Next along the spectrum one finds a slightly new approach towards Muḥammad and Islam in the writings of Syed 'Āmir 'Alī.⁴² Whereas Sayyid Aḥmad Khān emphasizes what Islam was not, Syed 'Āmir 'Alī emphasizes what Islam was and is, and dwells specifically upon the perfections of the Prophet. In this regard Syed 'Āmir 'Alī writes about "the sweetness of (Muḥammad's) disposition, the nobility of character, his singular elevation of mind, his extreme delicacy and refinement of feeling, his purity and truth."⁴³ Syed 'Āmir 'Alī describes Islam as the religion which has provided the greatest tolerance in social affairs, the greatest degree of personal freedom to women and slaves and the greatest impetus to the literary and scientific spirit.⁴⁴ Syed 'Āmir 'Alī holds that Muḥammad's teachings were compatible with modern thought.

The mind of this remarkable Teacher was, in its intellectualism and progressive ideals, essentially modern. External 'striving' was in his teachings a necessity of human existence: 'Man cannot exist without constant effort'; the effort is from me, its fulfilment comes from God.⁴⁵

⁴² 'Āmir 'Alī spelled his first name 'Syed', whereas Aḥmad Khān spelled his Sayyid'. These respective conventions are maintained in this thesis.

⁴³ Syed 'Āmir 'Alī, *The Spirit of Islam A History of the Evolution and Ideals of Islam, with a Life of the Prophet* (London: 1890, Calcutta: 1902), p. 59, and 1922 ed. p. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 1922 ed. p. 288.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 1922 ed. p. 121.

However, Syed 'Āmir 'Ālī is actually less liberal in Islamic theology than Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and quotes the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth only to prove that Islam is logically 'rational'. He had no intention of subjecting the Islamic sources to rationalist criticism. In both his first and second editions 'Āmir 'Ālī emphasizes that "excepting for the conception of the sonship of Jesus, there is no fundamental difference between Christianity and Islam,"⁴⁶ However, in his second edition 'Āmir 'Ālī exalts Muḥammad and Islam and is contemptuous of other prophetic leaders and all other religious systems. He attempts to demonstrate by using historical and textual criticism that Christianity, like all other religions except Islam, had become corrupt during its first few centuries.⁴⁷

Further on in the Indian Islamic spectrum of thought about the Prophet, one finds authors who exalt Muḥammad to a greater degree. Shaikh M.H. Kidwai was an important Islamic author in India who, in spite of claiming to be a rationalist, exalted Muḥammad above all other men.⁴⁸ In 1905 he read a paper in London on the 'miracle' of Muḥammad in which he described "the political, social, mental, moral and theological transformation effected by Muḥammad in Arabia".⁴⁹ Still, it is important to note that his exaltation of the Prophet is that of a rationalist.

Miraculous feats have also been attributed to Muhammad, but as he very sensibly refused to make wonder-working the criterion of truth. Muslims do not attach great importance to stories of miraculous performances by him.⁵⁰

All of the above writers were attempting to construct philosophical links between Islam and rationalism. In doing so they may have succeeded in challenging the educated Islamic minority of India to think in new categories. However, the perception of Muḥammad by the majority of the Indian populace

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 282, (1922 ed. p. 179).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1922 ed., p. lii.

⁴⁸ Cf. Shaikh M.H. Kidwai, *The Miracle of Muhammad* (London: Luzac, 1906); *Harem, Purdah or Seclusion* (Lahore: Muslim Book Society, 1920); *Polygamy* (Lahore, Muslim Book Society, 1920); *Pan-Islamism and Bolshevism* (London: Luzac, 1938).

⁴⁹ Kidwai, *The Miracle of Muhammad*, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.37.

was influenced, not by the above-mentioned writers, but by the popular writings about Muḥammad which associated the miraculous with his life and works. Muir observes that such writings as that of Ghulām Imām Shāhid, an officer of standing in the court of Ṣadr Dīwanī, had a great impact on the populace in 19th century India.⁵¹ Shāhid wrote a biographical sketch of the Prophet based on a mass of popular works in a genre of fabled biographies which are called the *Mawlūd Sharīf* ["The Ennobled Nativity" attributed to al-Bakrī (d. 763/1341)].⁵² Ghulām Imām Shāhid's work was first written in Urdu and printed at Lucknow (1843); subsequently it went through eleven large reprints. Muir observes that although this biographical sketch had almost no correlation with the Qur'ān or the classical biographies of the Prophet, but was based on exaggerated legends, it nevertheless became one of the most popular and influential biographical sketches of Muḥammad in India.⁵³ Sprenger also contends that much of the incredible mass of inventions and fabrications of the Islamic traditions of the first sixty years of Islam found its way into the *Mawlūd* literature about Muḥammad.⁵⁴

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān ultimately accepted the view of Muir and Sprenger, as will be discussed below. In his early biographical writing about Muḥammad entitled *Jilā' al-Qulūb* (1842) Khān, while including a few miracles about the Prophet, limits these to a minimum and distances himself from such fantastic lives

⁵¹ Ghulām Imām Shāhid, *Mawlūd Sharīf* (Lucknow, 1843), cited by Muir, *Controversies*, pp. 76, 77.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, pp. 76, 77.

⁵⁴ A. Sprenger, "The Value of Early Mahometan Historical Sources", *Calcutta Review*, 1868, cited by Muir, *Controversies*, pp. 148, 149. In Sprenger's *The Life and Doctrine of Mahomet from Sources hitherto for the most part unused*, he further notes: "Thousands and thousands occupied themselves with handing down traditions. In every Mosque they committed them to memory, and rehearsed them in every social gathering. All such knowledge was the common property of the nation; it was learned by heart, and transmitted orally. The creation of the (early Islamic) period we have been considering influenced the views about (about Muhammad) for millions of our fellow-men (in India). But in tradition we find nothing but the Ideal, Invention, Fancy. Historical facts were trodden underfoot because men wished to remove every barrier which stood in the way of (Islam's) glorification. And, of the thousand inventions which every day gave birth to, only those were recognised as true which most flattered the religious and national pride" A. Sprenger, *The Life and Doctrine of Mahomet from Sources hitherto for the most part unused*, (Berlin:1865), Vol. iii, p. clxxviii

of the Prophet as that written by Ghulām Imām Shāhid.⁵⁵ From 1870 onwards Khān refuses to accept the Mawlūd biographies which presented a fabled account of the life of Muḥammad.⁵⁶ Troll believes that it was Muir's evidence about the miraculous elements in the traditional biographies which contributed greatly to Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's adoption of this radical position.⁵⁷

3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUR'ĀN IN WRITING A LIFE OF MUḤAMMAD

In the midst of this flurry of writing about Muḥammad in 19th century India, Muir, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and Goldsack embarked on their biographies of the Prophet. Their first consideration was to evaluate the Islamic sources on which they would base their biographies of the Prophet. Muir considered the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth to be "the two main treasuries from which may be drawn materials for tracing the life of Muḥammad and the first rise of Islam."⁵⁸ Muir and Khān assess the absolute value which the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth had for the biographies of Muḥammad as well as the comparative value which they had with respect to each other.⁵⁹ Khan held that the traditions were second to the Qur'ān in authority and the interpretation of the traditions was dependent on the Qur'ān.⁶⁰ Muir regarded "every verse in the Coran (as) the genuine and unaltered composition of Mahomet himself."⁶¹ By contrast, he held that "there exist throughout Mahometan tradition abundant indications of actual fabrication."⁶² Therefore, developing his biography, Muir stated that he consulted first the Qur'ān, second the early Islamic biographies (especially that of al-Wāqidī), thirdly, the traditions and lastly the commentaries. To use the Qur'ānic material in constructing a biography, Muir rejected the traditional arrangement of the sūras according to length and re-arranged

⁵⁵ Troll, "Documentary Appendix," VIII, no. 2 of Khān's writings, in *Reinterpretation*, p. 177.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 177.

⁵⁸ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Khān, *Pmaq*, I, p. 32 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 142.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. xxvii.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. xxxv.

them chronologically according to time-period using a modified form of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī's method of classifying the Qur'ānic sūras in his *Itqān*.⁶³ Although Sayyid Aḥmad Khān did not accept Muir's criticism of the chronology of the Qur'ān, he develops his biography of Muḥammad from the same sources. Khān places the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth almost on an equal footing as sources for writing his biography about the Prophet.

Goldsack, in contrast to Muir and Khān, bases his life of Muḥammad primarily on the Islamic biographies and traditions used with reference to the Qur'ān and the commentaries. He maintains that only the biographies provide a sufficient chronological framework within which to use either the traditions or the Qur'ān in the construction of a biography.⁶⁴

3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TRADITIONS IN WRITING A LIFE OF MUḤAMMAD

Muir admits that the traditionists practised "some species of criticism",⁶⁵ but holds that their greatest shortcoming was the fact that they did not allow a criticism of the subject matter (*matn*), but only evaluated the chain of those who recounted the event (*isnād*).⁶⁶ To determine the true traditions from the false, Muir tests the traditions against the Qur'ān. In this test the traditions turn out to contain "a large element of historical truth," but "in matters of simple narration and historical fact," Muir finds "tradition discredited by the Qur'ān".⁶⁷ He cites Alford's maxim that "any tradition, the origin of which is not strictly contemporary with the facts related, is worthless exactly in proportion to the particularity of detail."⁶⁸ Muir concludes that due to the numerous traditions passed down over a long period of time and the superstitious reverence with which they were regarded

⁶³ See Chapter IV, section 8.3 (The importance of the chronology of the Qur'ān to interpretation).

⁶⁴ Goldsack, *Muhammad In Islam*, p. vi.

⁶⁵ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xlv.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. lxxv.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. LI.

⁶⁸ Henry Alford, *Greek Testament*, Prolegomena, p. 56 cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. liv.

by Muslims, the details of these traditions outgrew a realistic appraisal of Muḥammad.⁶⁹

In his written response to Muir's caution about using the traditions to create a biography of Muḥammad, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān acknowledges the need to sift the traditions to be used in such a biography as he concedes that:

All the biographies of Muḥammad whether old or new are like a heap of grain in which pebbles, stones, shells etc. have not yet been sifted, in which all kinds of traditions, the genuine and fabricated, false and true, those with "chain" and the "chainless," the weak and strong, doubtful and ambiguous all are mixed up and in a jumble.⁷⁰

However, he stops short of allowing Muir's suggestion to stand that the traditionists must be viewed with suspicion in their construction of a lofty image of Muḥammad owing to the fact that they lived several generations after the Prophet. Khān considers that the exactness of the many uninterrupted witnesses (*tawātur*) about the Prophet would have ensured a foundation of truthful evidence. However, he does not accept that the most reliable Muslim traditionists regarded every word and deed of the Prophet as free from error, but only those words included in the Qur'ān.⁷¹ He furthermore believes that by a judicious use of the traditions a biographer could create a realistic life of Muḥammad.

Goldsack stresses that the Islamic traditions are a definitive source of information concerning details in the life of Muḥammad which can be placed in chronological order by a judicious use of the biographies.⁷² In addition to the most famous collections, those of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Goldsack also makes reference to the collections of *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* and to the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*. The use of the traditions and the biographies together, he contends, allows the biographer to understand and to place in order the events of Muḥammad's life.⁷³

⁶⁹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. liv.

⁷⁰ Khān, *TFA*, I, II, p. 189/ *Pmaq*, XI, p. 19, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 132.

⁷¹ Khān, *TFA*, I, II, pp. 417/ *Pmaq*, XI, pp.413-14, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 132.

⁷² Goldsack, *Muhammad In Islam*, pp. v, vi.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

He observes that even such a relentless critic of tradition as Muir is forced to admit that without the traditions the relative position of the facts mentioned in the Qur'ān cannot be correctly determined. Thus, Muir concedes that:

It may be possible to establish from the Qur'ān the salient events of his life, but tradition alone enables us to determine their relative position, and to weave them together with the tissue of intermediate affairs.⁷⁴

For this reason Goldsack relies heavily on the Islamic traditionists for his life of Muḥammad, placing these second only to the research of the biographers.

3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BIOGRAPHIES IN WRITING A LIFE OF MUḤAMMAD

In theory Muir claims that "the Qur'ān should become the ground-work and the test for all enquiries into the origin of Islam and the character of its founder."⁷⁵ The reason for this is that Muir believes that the Islamic biographies and collections of Ḥadīth suffered due to political pressure. Muir pointed out that Ibn Ishāq (d. 767 A.D.) compiled his life of the Prophet shortly after the 'Abbāsīd dynasty acceded to the throne. Similarly, al-Wāqīdī, Ibn Hishām and al-Madā'inī lived and wrote during the reign of the Caliph Ma'mūn (813-33 A.D.). Muir contends that these works became "a pseudo-political canon."⁷⁶ In practice, Muir bases his *Life of Mahomet* squarely on the writings of these early Islamic biographies.⁷⁷ He admits that for an adequate biography of Muḥammad to be created, the Qur'ān needed to be followed up by a careful study of the Islamic traditions and the early biographies.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān rejects Muir's contention that the biographers and the collectors of ḥadīth were influenced by politics and that their works became "a pseudo-political canon". He claims that:

⁷⁴ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I p. xxviii.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xli.

⁷⁷ Muir acknowledges: "As we now have free access to their (Islam's) most authentic sources, Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqīdī, ibn Hishām and al-Ṭabarī, we can admit all statements grounded in fact ...and reject those positions which are in error." Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. 88.

The collectors of ḥadīth had nothing to do with the development of the Islamic Empire and with the whole of politics. These people had focused their whole attention on dīn (religion) and had collected prophetic ḥadīths only for religious purposes.⁷⁸

Therefore, Khān was much less sceptical than Muir about accepting their works as credible sources in the writing of a biography of Muḥammad.

Goldsack, while acknowledging the political pressure under which the early Muslim biographers and the collectors of traditions worked, nevertheless concludes that their research is the best available. He regards the biographers as the principal authorities for information regarding the personality of Muḥammad.⁷⁹ Goldsack conducted research into the lives of the early (2nd century) Muslim biographers such as al-Zuhri, Mūsā bin 'Uqba and Abū Mashhūr. He notes that Sprenger held that no complete biography was in existence before A.H. 124. At best, Sprenger believed, there there existed "an immense collection of notes," but no chronological biography as we would know it.⁸⁰ Goldsack questions Sprenger's conclusions and observes that, although none of the writings of the earliest Muslim biographers have come down to us, an idea of their writings could be obtained from Muslim annals and dictionaries such as that compiled by Ibn Khallikān (d. 1406).⁸¹ Goldsack notes that al-Madā'inī, who lived in the last half of the second century A.H., also wrote a biography which has not survived. He also mentions another biographer whose works gained a high place in the esteem of his contemporaries - Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, (d 767 A.D.). His collection of traditions relating to the Prophet no longer exists, but his friend and disciple, Ibn Hishām (d. 834) embodied them in his *Ṣirāt al-Rasūl* or "Life of the Prophet", and this work ably represents the materials collected by Ibn Ishāq.⁸² Muḥammad ibn

⁷⁸ Khān, *TFA*, I, II, p. 414/ *Pmaq*, XI, p. 409, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 133.

⁷⁹ Goldsack, *Muhammad In Islam*, p. vi.

⁸⁰ Sprenger, *Second Notice of al-Wāqidi*, p. 15; cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. lxxxvii, see also Sprenger, *JRAS*, v. 1851, p. 395.

⁸¹ Goldsack, *Qur'ān in Islam*, p.vi.

⁸² *Ibid*, p.vi.

Sa'd (d. 845), the secretary of al-Wāqidi (d. 822), was the author of fifteen treatises, one of which was his famous *Ṣirāt*. Goldsack observes that these biographies, organized according to subject matter rather than chronology, influenced many 19th century biographers including Muir, Khān and Sprenger. He concludes that the earliest biographies of the Prophet were not simply a random collection of notes, but were notes grouped according to subject matter rather than chronology.⁸³

4.0 THE AIMS OF THE 19TH CENTURY BIOGRAPHIES OF MUḤAMMAD

4.1 THE AIMS OF WILLIAM MUIR'S BIOGRAPHY OF MUḤAMMAD

Firstly, Muir's biography was written to replace 17th and 18th century Western biographies such as that of Ludovico Maraci (1612-1700) and of Humphrey Prideaux (1648-1724) which, though important in their time, were based on poor authorities. Such biographies addressed the Muslim in the "language of the West and were received (by Muslims) with contemptuous incredulity."⁸⁴ Muir also felt that a new biography of MuḤammad was needed to correct the tendency of some Western historians who lacked a knowledge of Arabic and consequently drew their conclusions from non-Arabic sources; the result was that their conclusions fell short of accuracy. Muir observes that Washington Irving, in his work the *Life of Mohammed*⁸⁵ provides an example of a Western writer who had woven into his account "the fabricated stories of supernatural and miraculous events, with the pious credulity of later days engrafted on the biography of MuḤammad."⁸⁶

Secondly, Muir wrote his biography of MuḤammad to correct the over-idealized portraits of the Prophet which grew out of Islamic traditions and were

⁸³ Ibid., p.vi, vii.

⁸⁴ Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, pp. 69, 70.

⁸⁵ Washington Irving, *Life of Mahomet* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1850).

⁸⁶ Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, pp. 69, 70. Ultimately, the same criticism was made of Bosworth Smith's *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*.

such an important source for Muslim authors in India. Muir describes the above-mentioned fanciful biography of Muḥammad by Shāhid, which had gone into more than eleven reprints by 1843, as follows:

The work is composed of so-called traditions and stories, each new story being introduced by the words "It is related," or "There is a narrative to the effect that," etc.. It is interspersed with pieces of poetry, generally in Persian, sometimes in Urdu, lauding Muhammed, and appealing to the hearts and affections of devout Muslims. The great bulk of the tales are of late fabrication, to be found nowhere in any early biographies such as those of ibn Hishām and al-Wāqidi.⁸⁷

The core of the problem, according to Muir, was that the biographies of Muḥammad in India were based on Islamic traditions rather than the Qur'ān itself, in spite of the fact that "in matters of simple narration and historical fact, tradition has been discredited by the Qur'ān."⁸⁸ For this reason, Muir not only challenged many of the accepted collections of traditions, but set forward new criteria for analyzing traditions to determine which were spurious and which true. To recapitulate his method, Muir contends that the best traditions have not always been accepted because:

- 1) many narrators have retained a bias regarding the subject of Muḥammad so that false traditions are inclined to be accepted;
- 2) some narrators have had a vested political interest in expressing a particular view of history; and
- 3) still others have not been well placed for personally knowing the facts from the best Islamic sources.

In answering the last of these questions Muir places great importance on the period to which a narration relates, and then the subject of which it treats.⁸⁹ Muir's criteria for analyzing the traditions influenced the thinking of many scholars in 19th century India, especially that of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān.

Thirdly, Muir wrote his biography of the Prophet in order to move the basis for Muslim and Christian debate beyond "the controversialists deep

⁸⁷ Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, pp. 76, 77.

⁸⁸ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. li.

⁸⁹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. liii.

principles of reason and faith, yet which had little reference to the deductions of modern research, to historical evidence".⁹⁰ Muir's emphasis on the use of historical methods was recognized as an improvement in the manner by which Christians appraised Islam. According to Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's biographer, Ḥālī:

Sir William Muir had not adopted the stale methods by which the missionaries criticized Islam and which had never any success...but he argued with historical facts.⁹¹

4.2 THE AIMS OF SAYYID AḤMAD KHĀN'S BIOGRAPHY OF MUḤAMMAD

According to Ḥālī, it was while Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was in London in 1869-70 that he set about writing an essay on the life of Muḥammad. His aims were to present the essence of Islam (*Islām kī aṣṭīyat*) to the Christian audience in England and clarify mistaken ideas which Muir set forward in his *Life of Mahomet*. Following his visit to the West in 1870, Khān adopted a world-view that professed all created reality to be governed by a system of unchangeable natural laws which could be understood by human reason. He came to believe that God had given to all created beings a "nature" (*fiṭra*) capable of understanding aspects of God's world, and that this process was called *wahy* (revelation).⁹² The prophets were those who best exercised this ability, but the ascent to prophethood was itself a natural process. Khān argued that Muḥammad knew better than other men about God's laws and that he had revealed this knowledge in the Qur'ān and the Sunna.⁹³ He concluded that because Muḥammad had such a pure nature, he was better able than anyone before him to convey the revelation of God, although God's essence still remains totally hidden.⁹⁴ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was criticized by orthodox Muslims who contended that, in moving towards a

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁹¹ Ḥayāt, 2, 142-143, cited by J.M.S. Baljon, *Reforms*, p. 88.

⁹² Khān, *Pmaq*, XIII, pp. 109, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 187.

⁹³ Khān, *Pmaq*, XIII, pp. 122-123, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 186.

⁹⁴ Khān, *Pmaq*, III, p. 6, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 186.

view that Islam is primarily a religion of rational action rather than a supernatural religion, he had denied God's omnipotence.⁹⁵

In most of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's writings (as was noted earlier in this chapter that his works about Muḥammad written before 1870, such as his review of the *Jilā' al-qulūb* written in 1842), he allows some miracles in his biography of Muḥammad but is critical of most supernatural events which are in conflict with the laws of nature.⁹⁶ Muir's criticism that in the traditions there was "a tendency to exalt Mahomet, and ascribe to him supernatural attributes"⁹⁷ prompted Khān to argue that virtually all miraculous elements in the biographies of Muḥammad were late accretions.⁹⁸ After 1870 he held that the events which actually took place are those in accordance with the laws of nature. Khān believed the recorded event of Muḥammad being born circumcised to be historical, but regarded such recorded events as the splitting open of his chest in order to purify his heart as being in the category of legend, principally because they violated natural laws, but also because they were not uniformly affirmed by the earliest Islamic historical documents. Both Khān and Muir were in full agreement in their use of this historical-critical principle when assessing the Islamic biographies of Muḥammad.

4.3 THE AIMS OF WILLIAM GOLDSACK'S BIOGRAPHY OF MUḤAMMAD

Goldsack, in his studies about Islam, offers a number of pen-pictures of the life of Muḥammad. These thematic sketches were written subsequent to Goldsack's translation of the Qur'ān from Arabic to Bengali in 1916. In them he wishes to present Islamic evidence in order for the Christian reader to answer the

⁹⁵ 'Alī Bakhsh Khān held that in denying supernatural miracles, especially that of supernatural revelation, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was in fact denying God's omnipotence by restricting His freedom to act at times outside the law of nature. *Tā'id al-Islām*, pp. 26-27, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*.

⁹⁶ In Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's article, *Karamat aur mu'jizah* (1878-79) he observes: "The time of belief in miracles has passed. Islam, as Europe earlier, has entered the epoch of 'ilm aur rōhnī (science and light). No fully civilized people believes in miracles. The true miracles are the events of nature." PMAq, I, p. 127, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 177.

⁹⁷ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, pp. LXII.

⁹⁸ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, KA, p. 618/PMAq, XI, pp. 767 f., cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 177.

age-old question: "In what respect do you acknowledge Muḥammad to be a prophet of God?" The answers given by Christians in Goldsack's day about whether Muḥammad could be considered a prophet can be placed on a continuum. At one end of this continuum were Christian writers who held that Muḥammad was a true prophet. Reginald Bosworth Smith (1839-1908) affirms:

Muḥammad to the end of his life claimed for himself that title only with which he had begun, and which the highest philosophy and the truest Christianity will one day, I venture to believe, agree in yielding to him, that of a Prophet, a very Prophet of God."⁹⁹

At the other end of the continuum, Thomas Patrick Hughes (1838-1911) concludes:

It [the question of Muḥammad's prophethood] might have for ever remained unsolved unless the Prophet himself had not appealed to the standards of the Old and New Testaments in proof of his superseding all the previous prophets including Jesus. In this regard, Muḥammad failed to surpass the greatest of Biblical Prophets, Jesus, as he did not come with miracle nor did his moral authority exceed that of Jesus.¹⁰⁰

Goldsack's views, while not at either extreme, are closer to Hughes' opinions than Smith's. He asserts that during his Meccan years, Muḥammad was a religious reformer with lofty ambitions; at this period of time his message was congruent with other Old Testament prophets who called for the need to return to the worship of the One True God. At Medina, he contends, Muḥammad exchanged the mantle of an Old Testament reformer for the military tunic of a general. Therefore, Goldsack believes that the sūras given at Mecca reflect spiritual beliefs while those given at Medina set out politically expedient admonitions for an Islamic theocracy. Some Western writers, such as R. Bosworth Smith, held that because Muḥammad believed his military exploits to be in line with God's arbitrary will, politically expedient admonitions were justified. Goldsack rejects Smith's conclusion as it reflects an historically unwarranted idealization of Muḥammad. Furthermore, Goldsack contends that the Prophet's

⁹⁹ Smith, *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*, p. 340.

¹⁰⁰ *Hughes' Dictionary*, s.v. 'Muhammad'.

harsh militancy should not be overlooked simply because later writers contend that it was in line with the arbitrary will of God.¹⁰¹

The present author has observed that Goldsack's life sets forward a vivid, thematic character study of Muḥammad based on evidence from the early biographies and the Qur'ān. His objective was to provide a readable life of Muhammad, as realistic as the early Islamic biographies, in order to counter the prevailing Ṣūfī legends about Muḥammad. Goldsack's life contrasts with Muir's and Sprenger's in that it is much shorter, more compact, thematic rather than strictly chronological and yet still written from within the Islamic perspective. As Muir and Goldsack are equally faithful to the Islamic sources they use, the shades of difference in their biographies are more apparent in the notes than in the text. The notes of Goldsack's biography are taken strictly from Islamic sources, while those of Muir include the opinion of a wide range of orientalists and classical Islamic scholars. For that reason Goldsack's life suggests a series of pen-pictures about Muḥammad written from the Islamic perspective. By contrast, Muir's and Sprenger's lives combine a detailed portrait of Muḥammad's life drawn from Islamic sources in the text with an analysis of the sources from the perspective of Orientalism in the notes.

5.0 REFLECTIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF MUḤAMMAD BASED ON THE ISLAMIC SOURCES

5.1 MUIR'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER OF MUḤAMMAD

Muir observes that the change in Muḥammad's behaviour between the Meccan and the Medinan period accentuates his change in roles from prophet to commander. He draws the following conclusions about the character of Muḥammad, contrasting his behaviour at Mecca and Medina. He believes that in

¹⁰¹ Goldsack, *Muhammad In Islam*, p. 114. Cf. W.H.T. Gairdner, *Ecce Homo Arabicus* (Cairo: 1918). In this tract he criticized what he saw as historically unwarranted idealization of Muḥammad. He believes that the truth of the Prophet's militancy should not be obscured because it was directly in line with the arbitrary exaltation of the supreme Will in Islamic theology. Cited by Kenneth Cragg, *Muhammad and The Christian, A Question of Response*, p.3 fn.

the Meccan period of Muḥammad's life there were no personal ends or unworthy motives to dispel the conclusion that he believed his revelations were sent by divine agency.¹⁰² Thus Muir sets forward the idea that in the Meccan period the Prophet was what he professed to be, a simple preacher and a warner. He was the despised and rejected teacher of an obstinate people and he had apparently no ulterior object but their reformation. He concludes that during this period of time, Muḥammad may have mistaken the right means for effecting this end, but that there is no sufficient reason for doubting that he used those means in good faith and with an honest purpose.¹⁰³

However, Muir believes that the scene changes at Medina. There, he notes, the acquisition of temporal power, aggrandisement, and self-glorification mingled with the grand object of the Prophet's previous life; and these earthly gains were sought after and attained by precisely the same means. Messages from heaven were brought forward to justify his political conduct along with his religious precepts. Battles were fought, wholesale executions inflicted, and territories annexed under pretext of the Almighty's sanction.¹⁰⁴ Business rules for the Islamic community were laid down alongside laws concerning murder, war, the Fast of Ramadan and the Pilgrimage.¹⁰⁵ Ultimately, special license was given allowing Muḥammad marriages with the women of his desires. Muir concludes that in stating that the events of the Medinan period were divinely

¹⁰² Muir, *Life*, Vol. IV, p. 317, 318.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ William Thompson, "Muhammad His Life and Person," *MW* 34 (1944), pp. 96-137. Thompson observes that in the Qur'an a sanction was given to those who take up arms when they have suffered outrages" *sūra* viii: 34. They are given the command to "wage war, believers, against the infidels, who are your neighbours. Let them find you stern" (*sūra* ix: 124) "When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads until you have made a great slaughter of them." (*sūra* xlvii:4)

¹⁰⁵ Thompson, "Muhammad His Life and Person," pp. 107,108.

decreed, Muḥammad must have done violence to his judgment and to the better principles of his nature.¹⁰⁶

5.2 SAYYID AḤMAD KHĀN'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER OF MUḤAMMAD

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān in his work *Tarīqah-i Muḥammadiyah* (the Path of the Prophet) portrays Muḥammad as the embodiment of God's law throughout his life. He regards the Prophet as worthy of veneration. In Khān's biography of Muḥammad, *Jilā' al-qulūb* (1842) he includes a section which details a number of miracles wrought by the Prophet. However, the main thrust of this article is to portray Muḥammad as a perfect human being worthy of praise and reverence, the Friend and Beloved of God whom every man must imitate.¹⁰⁷ At this period in his writing, Khān portrays Muḥammad as a well-mannered person who is resolute in the face of adversity and kind towards friends, especially those who also faced adversity. He concludes that to live as a good Muslim is to love and emulate the life of the Prophet. In *Kalimat al-ḥaqq*, Khān states that Muḥammad was the perfect *pīr*, (spiritual father). The disciple's duty to his spiritual father is to obey his law and emulate his example (Sunna).¹⁰⁸ In Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's *Jilā' al-qulūb* and in his *Kalimat al-ḥaqq*, he remains within the traditional popular biography of India. However, he is more interested in the moral excellence of the Prophet in both portraits than in any supernatural event Muḥammad might have caused.

5.3 GOLDSACK'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER OF MUḤAMMAD

Included in Goldsack's unpublished notes on the Muslim traditions is an interesting portrait of the character of the Prophet. Although this portrait is based solely on the Islamic traditions, it assesses all the aspects of the Prophet's character

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 318, 319. For example, sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*), deals with marriage and marital relations, as its title suggests, but also treats of suicide and gaming, of inheritance and alms (p. 108).

¹⁰⁷ Khān, *TFA*, I, I, p. 81/ *Pmaq*, V, p. 275, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

and thereby lays the foundation for a study of Muḥammad's character along an Islamic axis.

Goldsack firstly observes that Muḥammad asked for forgiveness for his sins according to the following traditions: 'when entering and leaving a mosque he would pray, "My Lord forgive me my sins."¹⁰⁹ Similarly, it is related by Abū Hurayra that, 'The Apostle of God said, "By God! I certainly ask pardon of God and repent towards Him more than seventy times a day.'" -al-Bukhārī.¹¹⁰ It is related from 'A'isha that she said, 'I heard the Apostle of God saying in certain of his prayers, "O God, take from me an easy account." I said, "O Prophet of God, what is an easy account? He replied, "That He looks into His book and passes over it.'" -Ibn Ḥanbal.¹¹¹ However, the traditions conclude that Muḥammad will, nevertheless, be able to intercede for Muslims on the day of the resurrection because "his former and latter sins God has forgiven." -Muslim, al-Bukhārī.¹¹²

Secondly, Goldsack observes that in spite of the fact that Muḥammad needed to ask for forgiveness for his own sins, nevertheless, in many traditions he is considered to be the 'Great Intercessor'. Thus it is related from Abū Hurayra that, 'The Apostle of God said, "I shall be chief of the sons of Adam on the day of resurrection, and the first for whom the grave will split open, and the first to intercede, and the first whose intercession will be accepted.'" -Muslim.¹¹³ However, Goldsack observes that this claim to be able to intercede on the day of resurrection contrasts with other traditions such as his statement to Fāṭima: "O Fāṭima, save thyself from the fire, for I cannot gain anything from God on thy

¹⁰⁹ This tradition is related from Fatima bint al-Husain: "When the Apostle of God entered a mosque he ...said, "My Lord, forgive me my sins, and open for me the gates of Thy mercy." And when he went out he ...would say, "My Lord, forgive me my sins, and open for me the gates of Thy favour." (Ibn Mājah, al-Tirmidhī) cited by W. Goldsack, *Unpublished Notes on the Muhammadan Traditions*, p. 1. Cf. Goldsack, *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 31.

¹¹⁰ Goldsack, "Unpublished Notes," Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 115.

¹¹¹ Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 272.

¹¹² Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 273.

¹¹³ Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 285.

behalf, except that I recognise the right of blood-relationship, and will do what I can."-Muslim.¹¹⁴

Thirdly, Goldsack notes that the traditions are unanimous that Muḥammad is the final Prophet and the Seal of the Prophets. He notes that it is related from Tawba that, "The Apostle of God said..."I am the seal of the prophets, and there will be no prophet after me."-Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī.¹¹⁵

Fourthly, Goldsack observes that because of the special status accorded Muḥammad, special allowance was given to his followers and to him personally. Goldsack notes that it is related from Abū Hurayra that, "The Apostle of God said, "plunder was not lawful for anyone before us. That (has been made so for us), because God saw our weakness and helplessness, and so He made it lawful for us."-Muslim. In regard to Muḥammad's special status in receiving from this plunder, 'Abdalla b.'Amrū relates: "The Prophet used to take his fifth (of the plunder) and divide the remainder."-Abū Dāwūd.¹¹⁶

Goldsack points out that Muḥammad also personally received special permission with respect to relations with women. 'A'isha relates: "I do not see thy Lord except He hastens in (the fulfilment of) thy passionate desires."-Muslim, al-Bukhārī.¹¹⁷ The most cited example of this special permission was in Muḥammad's being allowed to marry Zaynab, the wife of his adoptive son, which was prohibited. Sūra xxxiii (*Al-Aḥzāb*) was brought forward to allow this otherwise culturally unacceptable marriage to take place. The Jalālain in their commentary on this passage state: "The Prophet married her (Zaynab) to Zayd. Afterwards, some days later, his gaze fell upon her, and there fell into his heart love of her; but in the heart of Zayd there arose aversion to her."-Jalālain.¹¹⁸

114 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 258.

115 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 259.

116 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 25.

117 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 172.

118 Ibid., Cf. Goldsack, *Muhammad In Islam*, p. 100.

According to the traditions, 'A'isha relates: "Three things of the world pleased the Apostle of God: food and women and perfumes. He obtained women and perfumes, but he did not get food."-Aḥmad.¹¹⁹

Fifthly, in spite of the larger portion of wealth which Muḥammad received, Goldsack notes that the Prophet was generous to the point of impoverishing his own household. It is related from 'Anas that he heard the Prophet say, 'There never remained in the evening with the family of Muḥammad a single measure of wheat or a measure of grain although he had nine wives.'-Al-Bukhārī.¹²⁰ Muḥammad died leaving nothing as 'A'isha stated: "The Apostle of God never left a single dinar, or a single dirham, or a goat, or a camel; nor did he leave anything by will."-Muslim.¹²¹

Sixthly, Goldsack observes that the traditions note that Muḥammad displayed a deep affection for the members of his family and for the Islamic Community. It is related from 'Amr b. Sa'īd by 'Anas that he said, 'I never saw anyone more kind to his family than the Apostle of God.'-Muslim.¹²²

Seventhly, Goldsack observes that the traditions all recount how Muḥammad's kindness for his friends and family contrasted with his intolerance for those who insulted him, to those who caused divisions among the Muslim community and to apostates from Islam. In the first instance, it is related from 'A'ī that 'a Jewess used to revile and insult the Prophet. Then a man strangled her until she died. And the Prophet annulled (payment for) her blood.'-Abū Dāwūd.¹²³ In the second instance it is related from Usāma bin Shariq that, 'The Apostle of God said, "Whatever man comes out to make divisions between my followers, strike off his head."'-al-Nasā'ī.¹²⁴ In the case of apostates it is related from 'Anas that:

119 Ibid., Cf. Goldsack, *Muhammad In Islam*, p. 252.

120 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 252.

121 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 304.

122 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 307.

123 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 185.

124 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 185.

A band of men of the 'Uḳḳal tribe came to the Prophet and embraced Islam, but they apostatized and killed (other Muslims) and fled. Then the Prophet brought them back and cut off their hands and feet and put out their eyes.¹²⁵

Eighthly, Goldsack notes that at Mecca the traditions record that because of Muḥammad's egalitarian leadership he was considered to be first among equals. Goldsack noted that Abū Sa'īd said: "He (Muḥammad) sat in our midst in order to make himself our equal."¹²⁶ Goldsack contrasts Muḥammad being regarded as the "first among equals" at Mecca to the Medinan sūras, which read that the Prophet was the "arbiter of the destiny of Muslims".¹²⁷

Muir observes that the early traditions preserves a picture of Muhammad exercising a prophetic role at Mecca and a military role at Medina.¹²⁸ He notes that while the early traditions claim that Muḥammad was protected against errors when relating the Qur'ān (*'ismah*), they do not deny that he had on occasion done wrong.¹²⁹ Muir further notes that the early traditions support the findings in the Qur'ān that there is a subtle difference in the message which Muḥammad gave at Mecca and at Medina.¹³⁰ In the Meccan sūras, he believes, the message Muḥammad consistently gave is: "Fear God and obey the 'Revelations'", whereas in the Medinan sūras the message Muḥammad frequently gave was: "Fear God and obey me," sūra xxvi (*al Shu'arā'*).¹³¹ This subtle shift in emphasis between the Meccan and Medinan sūras is also reflected in the early traditions about Muḥammad at Mecca and Medina.

Goldsack observes that in the early traditions about Muḥammad at Mecca the Qur'ānic revelations are conceived as the final arbiter of the destiny of Muslims.

125 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 185.

126 Ibid., Cf. *Mishkāt, Selections*, p. 103.

127 Ibid.

128 Muir, *Life*, Vol. II, pp. 266-317.

129 Ibid. Cf. Sūras xxxviii:25 and xxviii:15.

130 Ibid. Cf. Goldsack, *Origins of the Qur'ān*, pp. 35-52.

131 Ibid.

In this regard, Goldsack cites a tradition related by Ibn Taymiyya which agrees with the Meccan sūras and reads: "One verse of the Qur'ān is better than Muḥammad and his whole family."¹³² However, he notes that in the early traditions about Muḥammad at Medina, it is noted that Muḥammad conceives of *himself* as the arbiter of the destiny of Muslims.¹³³ In this regard, Goldsack cites a tradition from the Medinan period relates that: "Gabriel is the first who may make intercession on the Day of Judgment, then the Holy Spirit, Moses and Jesus in turn," and that "then the Prophet will arise," and that "no-one on whose behalf he intervenes, will require any further intercession."¹³⁴

6.0 THE QUESTION OF ALLEGED REFERENCES TO MUḤAMMAD IN THE BIBLE

Muir states that the biographies about Muḥammad were increasingly interested in the description of Muḥammad in the Old Testament and the Gospel accounts.¹³⁵ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān followed on from Muir's statement, noting that "no group (*firqah*) of people has existed in which a warner (prophet) has not passed among them".¹³⁶ The basic teaching (*maṭlab*) to all groups was, he held, one and the same, that is to acknowledge the One True God, to adore and serve Him.¹³⁷ He notes that when the people to whom the various prophets were sent corrupted this basic content of belief, there arose another prophet to come and warn them of God's judgment and that this process continued until the coming of the final prophet, Muḥammad.¹³⁸ Therefore, Khān notes that Muslims should search in the previous Scriptures, that is *al-Tawrāt*, *al-Zabūr* and *al-Injīl*, for evidence of precepts of Islam.¹³⁹ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān makes the suggestion that there might also be

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Al-Jāmi' al-Bayān fi'l-Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1231 A.H.), Vol. xv, 91, cited by Goldsack, *The Traditions in Islam*, p. 74ff.

¹³⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Al-Jāmi' al-Bayān fi'l-Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. xv, 91, cited by Goldsack, *The Traditions in Islam*, p. 74ff.

¹³⁵ Muir, *Life*, Vol. IV, p. 325.

¹³⁶ Khān, *Credo*, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 239.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

oblique references to Muḥammad in the Biblical Scriptures, but does not say that there are clear prophecies. While Khān held that references to Muḥammad in the Bible are vague, other Muslims hold that they are clearly evident. All Muslims hold that Muḥammad was the last and greatest Prophet and many believe that after Muḥammad's coming all previous prophetic dispensations have been 'abrogated'. In the case of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, the previous work of the former prophets was "completed" in the work of Muḥammad.¹⁴⁰

Goldsack is the only one of the three authors to study the alleged references to Muḥammad in the Bible. He observes that this search for Muḥammad in the Biblical record predates the biographies and has a precedent in the Qur'ān (sūra lxi (*Al-Ṣaff*): 6) in the traditions and in the earliest biographies of the Prophet. It is for this reason that most Muslims believe that Muḥammad has been foretold in *al-Tawrāt*, *al-Zabūr* and *al-Injīl*.¹⁴¹ Goldsack believes that this expectation goes back to the inception of Islam, when there were Jews who anticipated their Messiah's return and Christians who anticipated the second advent of Christ. He suggests that these hopes were probably fused into a common argument for a coming prophet expected by both Jews and Christians, and foretold in all the Scriptures. It was under just such circumstances, he notes, that Muḥammad described himself in sūra vii (*Al-A'rāf*):156, as the 'unlearned Prophet' or '*ummi*-Prophet' ¹⁴² "whom they (the Jews and Christians) shall find described in *al-Tawrāt*, and *al-Injīl*." In sūra lxi (*Al-Ṣaff*):6, in still more explicit language, it is claimed that Muḥammad is prophesied by name. Thus we read: "And, remember when Jesus the son of Mary said, 'O Children of Israel! of a truth I am God's Apostle to you to confirm the Tawrat which was given before me, and to announce an Apostle that shall come

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Goldsack, *Muḥammad and the Bible* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1915), p. 1.

¹⁴² 'Ummi-Prophet'-Goldsack believed that Muḥammad wished to be thought ignorant in respect of being able to read the texts of the previous Scriptures and thereby raise the elegance of the Qur'ān to a miracle. See Goldsack, *Muḥammad and the Bible*, pp. 4,9,10.

after me, whose name shall be Aḥmad."¹⁴³ Goldsack concludes that given this clear evidence in the Qur'ān, it was perfectly natural for Muslims to search the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments for the prophecies which Muḥammad himself believed were present.¹⁴⁴

Goldsack next examines the most relevant passages which Muslim writers brought before the public in support of the idea that Muḥammad is predicted in the Bible.¹⁴⁵ There is only space here to present several illustrative passages.

From the Old Testament, Goldsack notes that some Muslim scholars have frequently claimed that Muḥammad is the prophet predicted in Deuteronomy xviii:15-21: "like Moses who is raised up from among thy brethren". These Muslim scholars, he notes, contend that the great Prophet whose advent is here foretold, was to arise, not among the Banī-Isrā'īl but amongst "their brethren". These latter were asserted to be the Ishmaelites, from whom was descended Muḥammad.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, Goldsack notes, Muslim apologists find various resemblances between Moses and Muḥammad, such as that they both married and had children, they both wielded the sword, etc. The Christian is then reminded that Jesus did none of these things.¹⁴⁷

After examining the Islamic interpretation of the Biblical passage cited above, Goldsack presents evidence as to how their conclusions are based on a faulty exegesis of the text. He contends that the words "among thy brethren", can mean nothing else than the Jews, for the word "brethren" is most consistently used

¹⁴³ We shall see in this section how Jesus' prediction of one who would come after him (according to John xiv: 26) and be given the title 'The Comforter' (*parakletos* in Greek) was thought to be Muḥammad. *Parakletos* was confused with *periklutos*, another Greek term with a similar sound but a different meaning viz. 'The Praised'. This meaning of *Periklutos* was then translated into Arabic as Aḥmad, which is a title of Muḥammad. It was then a short step to claiming that Muḥammad was prophesied in the Gospels.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 3-5

¹⁴⁵ The indigenous works to which Goldsack responds are: Madhu Miah, *Baibele Muhammad* (Calcutta: 1320/1898), trans. as *The Proof of the Prophet Moḥammad from the Bible* (Lahore: 1920).

¹⁴⁶ Goldsack, *Muhammad and the Bible*, pp. 5,6.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

in Deuteronomy with that meaning.¹⁴⁸ He notes that the Qur'ān contains similar uses of the word "brother" in the context of fellow-tribesman as does the Bible in this passage.¹⁴⁹ Goldsack also questions the Muslim attempt to press details of the likeness between Moses and Muḥammad in accordance with the words of the prophecy, "I will raise them up a Prophet from amongst their brethren like unto thee." He notes that the likeness referred to is spiritual and functional rather than personal. Even so, he notes that insistence on the latter makes the Muslim position untenable. For example: Muslims claim Muḥammad to be an unlettered Prophet whereas Moses, according to the Bible, was "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts vii:22). Goldsack observes that one reads in the Qur'ān that Moses worked many miracles: "Moses came unto you with proofs of his mission"; but the testimony of the Qur'ān is equally clear that Muḥammad worked no miracle. Thus, Muḥammad himself says: "Signs are in the power of God alone, and I am only a plain-spoken warner," sūra xxix (*al-'Ankabūt*):49.¹⁵⁰ Goldsack concludes that exegesis of the Biblical passage in Deuteronomy xviii:15-21 does not reveal a prophecy of Muḥammad.

From the New Testament, Goldsack notes that some Muslim scholars have claimed that Muḥammad is the Paraclete who will come after Jesus and bear witness of him as predicted in The Gospel of John xiv: 26: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you".¹⁵¹ Goldsack

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 7. For example, in Deut. xvii:14,15 the Lord told the Israelites to choose "one from among thy brethren" as king...: (for) thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee, which is not thy brother."

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Thus he cites sūra vii (*al-A'rāf*):84, where we read:--"And (we sent) to Median their brother Shu'ayb. He said, 'O my people'." Goldsack notes that in this passage of the Qur'ān, Shu'ayb is represented as addressing his own tribe as 'my people', and yet God is represented as saying, "(we sent) to Madian their brother Shu'ayb." Hence the words themselves make it obvious that the word 'brother' is used in the sense of fellow-tribesman.

¹⁵⁰ See also sūra xvii (*al-Isrā'il*) 61: "Nothing hindered us from sending (thee, O Muḥammad) with the power of working miracles, except that the peoples of old treated them as lies'. Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 36. Cf. The Gospel of John xv:26 where the Comforter is again promised by Jesus, and xvi: 13.

observes that Muslim scholars claim that "Paraclete" (Greek *parakletos*, Arabic *al-bāraklit*, Persian *fāraqlit*) and variously translated as 'Comforter', 'Advocate', and 'Helper' has the same meaning as Muḥammad or Aḥmad who would come after Jesus. The above-mentioned Biblical passages are said to correlate with the sūra lxi (*Al-Ṣaff*): 6.

When Jesus the son of Mary said, "O children of Israel! of a truth I am God's Apostle to you, to confirm the Law which was given before me, and to announce an apostle that shall come after me, whose name shall be Aḥmad (the praised)."

Goldsack points out that the word *parakletos* does not mean "the Praised," as the name Muḥammad or Aḥmad does, nor does it have any such significance.¹⁵² He notes that the best meanings of *parakletos* are: 1) the Comforter or Sustainer, and 2) the Advocate (Arabic *wakīl*). Moreover he notes that the first of these titles is inapplicable to Muḥammad, while the second is denied to him and to all else but God Himself in the Qur'ān, (sūra xvii (*al-Isrā'īl*):56; and sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):83) since it is declared that "God is sufficient as an Advocate."¹⁵³

Goldsack emphasizes that Muslim scholars have confused the word *parakletos* (comforter) with the word *periklutos* meaning "very renowned" which has nearly the same meaning as 'Aḥmad.' *Periklutos*, while a Greek word, does not occur at all in the New Testament.¹⁵⁴ Nor could the Arabic, *bāraklit* and Persian, *fāraqlit* come from *periklutos*.

Goldsack points out that the reference to the *Paraclete* as being a 'Divine Spirit' is in direct contrast to Muḥammad's assertion of his essential humanity. In the Qur'ān one repeatedly finds the statement "Am I ought but a man?". The eternal nature of the Paraclete as reflected in John xiv:16: "He shall give you

¹⁵² Ibid, pp. 36, 37. See also Tisdall, *Manual of Objections*, pp. 210, 211.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Tisdall points out that it does not occur in various readings nor in the old versions of John xiv-xvi, made long before Muḥammad's time. Hence he concludes that it is certain that Christ did not use it in this passage. Ibid., p. 211

another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever" is in contrast to sūra iii (*al-Imrān*):144, "Muḥammad is no more than an Apostle; other Apostles have already passed away before him: if he die, therefore, or be slain, will ye turn upon your heels."

Furthermore, Goldsack observes that Jesus stated that the work of the Paraclete was to "declare unto you the things that are to come" (John xvi:13). In this respect he notes that the prophetic function of the Paraclete is in contrast to Muḥammad's role according to the Qur'ān: "Neither do I know what will be done with me, or with you," sūra xlvī (*al-Aḥqāf*):10. And again in the Qur'ān, sūra vi (*al-An'ām*): 51, Muḥammad says: "I say not to you, 'In my possession are the treasures of God.' Neither say I, 'I know things secret'." Finally, the Holy Spirit, the *Parakletos*, is recorded in the New Testament (Acts ii) as having come in the lifetime of the immediate disciples of Christ: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts ii:4). Goldsack notes that the assertion by some Muslim scholars that the Paraclete was a man of flesh and blood, seen by thousands, and living in Arabia some six hundred years after the time announced, is in direct contradiction to a plain interpretation of the Biblical record.¹⁵⁵

Goldsack acknowledges that some Islamic scholars of his generation realized that the aforementioned prophecies in the Bible could not be applied to Muḥammad as they stood.¹⁵⁶ For this reason they tended to call into question the text of the Bible itself, alleging that it has been amended to exclude the name of the Prophet of Islam. Goldsack observes that the early Islamic commentaries did not allege that prophecies relating to the coming of Muḥammad had been excised from

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ The Aḥmadiyya movement, founded in 1890 at Rabwah, Pakistan held that Muḥammad and their founder (Muḥammad Qaḍiyān) were prophesied in the Biblical Scriptures. As neither could be found in the existing Biblical text, they claimed that the text itself had been amended. Gaudeul observes that Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935) sets forth this thesis in his *Objections of Christians and Proofs of Islam* (1928). Gaudeul, *Encounters*, Vol. I, p. 269.

the Bible and that passages which teach the divinity of Christ had been interpolated into the Bible. However, two views about the omission of the name of Muḥammad in the Biblical text have been held by Islamic apologists from an early period. The first view is illustrated by 'Aī Ṭabarī who wrote in the *Book of Religion and Empire* that while the Bible foretells Muḥammad in not less than fifty-four texts of the Old Testament and once in the Gospels, these predictions are obscure and need careful interpretation. The second view is illustrated by Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064), who wrote that the Biblical texts which foretold Muḥammad, as mentioned in the Qur'ān, had been altered to exclude these predictions.¹⁵⁷ Goldsack concludes that while both views of the Biblical text were prevalent among early Islamic apologists, he notes that the early Islamic commentators have consistently held to the view that the Biblical text has not been changed, only misinterpreted.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, Khān, in his *Tabyīn al-Kalām* (1862-5), holds that those prophetic references about Muḥammad in the Bible are oblique but have not been omitted and must be understood by careful interpretation.

7.0 EFFECTS OF THE BIOGRAPHIES OF MUḤAMMAD ON MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

The importance of the Prophet, and hence the biographies written about him, in 19th century India was enormous. All Indian Muslims of that era, whether the conservative reformed theologians, those aligned with the Ṣūfī movement, or those from the highly educated classes of liberal Islamic theologians, regarded the Prophet as the ideal man. The culmination of the exaltation of the prophet occurred in 1920 when the '*Sirat* Movement' was initiated.¹⁵⁹ This movement was founded to accomplish two main purposes: first to exalt the Prophet and secondly to counter the critical biographies written about the Prophet. This movement spread from the Punjab into Bengal and the general tenor of the articles was to increase a general

¹⁵⁷ Goldsack, *Muhammad and the Bible*, pp. 5,6.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ W. Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam*, pp. 68, 69.

knowledge of every aspect of the Prophet's life. For the unlettered, *milad* festivals were held in which sermons and teachings about the Prophet were given. In this way it came about that in India Muslims were prepared to allow disputations about Allah. After all, this had been conducted by Islamic scholars since the very beginning of Islam. Indian Muslims also allowed debate about the Qur'ān and the Sunna, for this too had been a subject of debates by Muslims over the centuries. But for a foreigner to disparage the person of Muḥammad was not tolerated by the educated or uneducated Indian Muslim of the 19th century.

The historical studies which Muir, Khān and Goldsack wrote about the person of Muḥammad caused a reaction from all Muslims. As they wrote their 'Lives' from the early Islamic biographies it was not the text but the notes and critical commentary that caused the most objections. Had they allowed the classical Islamic sources to make their points with only minimal comment, their works would very likely have escaped criticism and been more used by Muslims. By contrast, Thomas Carlyle, Boswell Smith and others, without reference to the classical Islamic sources, applauded Muḥammad as a 'hero-prophet'. These writers were not, strictly speaking, historians but historical philosophers. Their works were read and have been repeated by Muslims, not for their erudition (Muslim scholars were well aware of these writers' limitations in using the classical Arabic sources) but for their accommodation to the fundamental beliefs of Islam.

It is questionable whether the biographical works of Muir, Khān and Goldsack were able to correct the view of Muḥammad set forward in popular Islamic writings and based on myths developed by late Islamic writers. It can even be argued that the *Sirat* Movement, started in the 1920's to counteract the lives of

Muḥammad written by orientalists, was more successful in promoting the genre of fanciful biographies of Muḥammad among middle-class Indian Muslims.¹⁶⁰

However, Muir, Khān and Goldsack were more successful in focussing the attention of educated Muslims on a realistic appraisal of the life of Muḥammad. Secondly, their studies highlighted the importance of the Meccan period of the Prophet's life when most of the Islamic religious truths were set forward and truths common to Islam and Christianity were expounded. Thirdly, they addressed the question of whether there existed prophecies about Muḥammad in the Bible. In this regard, Khan believed that if there were such prophecies, they were obscure and needed careful interpretation. However, Goldsack contended that by examining the Bible carefully one could not find any clear evidence of Muḥammad having been prophesied in it. Fourthly, regarding the appraisal of Muḥammad by the Christian, Muir and Goldsack acknowledged that at Mecca, Muḥammad walked in the way of the Old Testament prophets, but at Medina they believed that he did great injustice to his better nature and his prophethood. In comparing the greatness of Muḥammad with that of Jesus, Muir and Goldsack believed that the greatness of Muḥammad as the 'Prophet & Warrior' was qualitatively different to that of Jesus as the 'Prophet and Messiah'.¹⁶¹

The comparison of greatness in the lives of Muḥammad and Jesus is highlighted by the prominence of both great men in the Qur'ān. Muḥammad's greatness, Gardner notes, was ascribed to him by virtue of his being the final and most successful prophet.¹⁶² The faith of Islam is inseparably united with the community of Islam. Muslims note that when Muḥammad witnessed to God and His Unity, his audience initially countered his words, calling him: mad (sūra lxxxi (*al-Takwīr*): 22), a soothsayer (sūra lii (*al-Ṭūr*): 29), a mere poet (sūra xxxvii (*al-*

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Cantwell-Smith vividly portrays the reaction of Indian Muslims against Western scholars' writings about Muḥammad which resulted in the *Sirat* Movement.

¹⁶¹ Goldsack, *Muhammad and the Bible*, pp. 5,6.

¹⁶² Gardner, *Christianity and Muḥammadanism*, p. 22.

Sāffāt): 35], and a copier of old stories (*sūra* lxviii (*al-Qalam*): 15).¹⁶³ Even his followers, they observe, were at times scandalized by some of his actions both in public and private, and were with difficulty persuaded that he had acted rightly. It was only when Muḥammad's striving for spiritual and temporal victory ensured supremacy for both the faith and the religious community of Islam that he was accorded the status of God's Apostle, such that on his tomb at Medina is inscribed:

Peace be upon thee, O Apostle. We witness that thou hast truly delivered the message, that thou hast striven in the way of God until God glorified His religion and perfected it.¹⁶⁴

Jesus' greatness, Gardner observes, is ascribed to him by Muslims by virtue of the purity of his character,¹⁶⁵ a point made in the Qur'ān in *sūra* xix (*Maryam*) 20 which reads: "Jesus was kept from Satan". The Bible records that Jesus could look around Him and ask: "Which of you can convict me of sin" and none dared to raise his voice against Him. When Jesus was finally arrested and condemned, it was not on the grounds of any charge against His personal life but with certain phrases of His teaching which the Jews regarded as blasphemous. The Gentile judge before whom he was brought was compelled by his regard for truth to say, "I find no fault in Him". According to the Biblical records, Jesus' triumphed by his death and resurrection. According to the Qur'ān, Jesus' triumphed because of his 'elevation' to heaven and his return as the living intercessor. Thus the criteria for greatness in the Qur'ān is qualitatively different in the case of Muḥammad and Jesus.

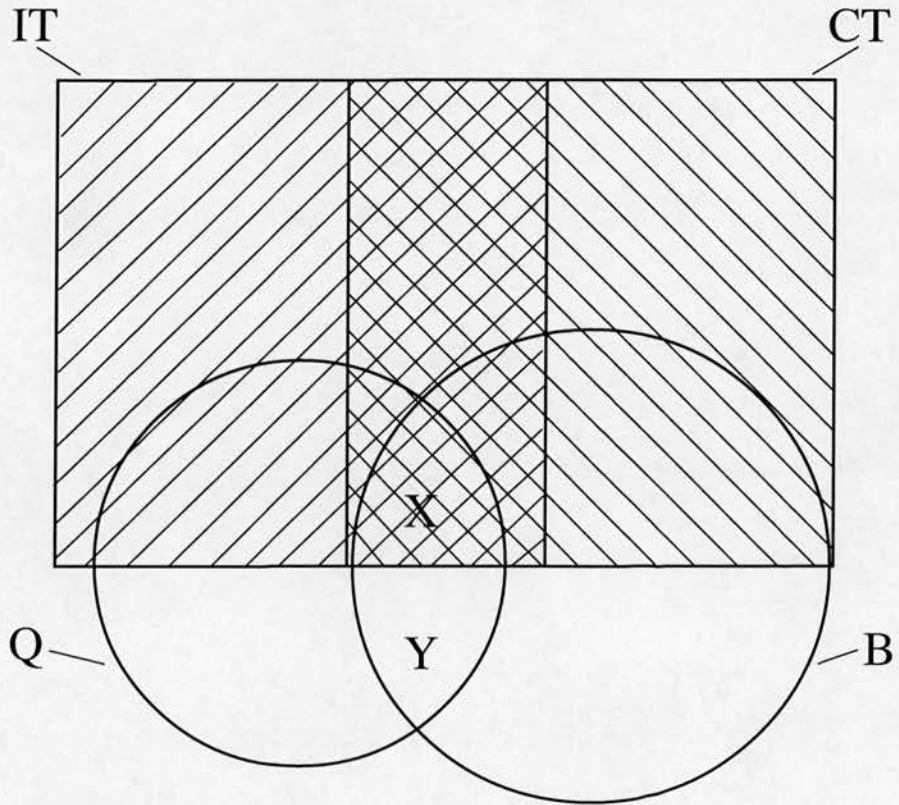
¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 27, 28.

DIAGRAM D

A comparison of Muslim and Christian sources as used by Muir, Khān and Goldsack in a study of the Bible in Islam (Chapter Seven), Jesus in Islam (Chapter Eight) and God in Islam (Chapter Nine).



COMMENTARY

IT and Q represent Islamic traditions and the Qur'ān as in diagram Bi

CT and B represent Christian traditions and the Bible as in diagram Bii

The overlapping areas are teachings shared by Christianity and Islam

Concepts or truths represented by X + Y (what the Bible and the Qur'ān have in common), and X (what the Bible, the Qur'ān, the Islamic traditions and the Christian traditions have in common) became known as admitted truths.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BIBLE IN ISLAM

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The revelation of God through the Bible is one of the great truths admitted in Islam and Christianity. Throughout the history of Muslim-Christian dialogue, references to the Bible in the Islamic sources have assumed a place in Muslim-Christian dialogue second only to that of Jesus. The main questions asked by Muslims about the Bible during the 19th century are explored in this chapter. They are: whether the Biblical text at the time of the Qur'ān, referred to as the "previous scriptures," is the same as the Biblical text which has always been used by Jews and Christians; whether the text of the previous scriptures is regarded as completely reliable in the Qur'ān and by early Islamic commentators; whether the Biblical text had been kept free from corruption of the text itself (*tahrīf al-lafz*); whether the previous scriptures had been abrogated (*naskh*) by the Qur'ān; what purpose the previous scriptures play in Islamic belief and practice; and how these previous scriptures can be used in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

2.0 STUDIES ON THE BIBLE IN ISLAM DURING THE 8TH-11TH CENTURIES

Nineteenth century studies about the place of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures in Islam were indebted to the foundational writings of John of Damascus from the Christian perspective and to Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (810-70) from the Muslim side. In the four centuries following these early studies, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149-1209), a rationalist who ultimately embraced the Ash'arite creed, wrote extensively on the place of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures in Islam. Al-Rāzī's *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb*, commonly called *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, was cited extensively by Sayyid Aḥmad Khān as well as by Muir and

Goldsack.¹ Al-Rāzī was not only the most respected formulator of the new systematic theology of Islam by liberal Muslims in 19th century India, but he was also the most cited Islamic author concerning the place of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.²

The Muslim-Christian dialogues of the 8th-11th centuries also played a significant role in the formulation of opinion concerning the place of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures in Islam. Muir was influenced by the use of dialectic in the literary dialogues between al-Kindī and 'Alī Ṭabarī. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and Goldsack were, by contrast, drawn to the use of admitted truths in the *Risāla* of Paul of Antioch, which received a comprehensive response from Ibn Taymiyya in his *Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*.³ Thus, a brief survey of the place of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures in early Islamic writings is essential to an understanding of how this topic was taken further by writers in 19th century India.

2. 1 THE PLACE OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES IN ISLAM DURING THE 8TH-11TH CENTURIES

The Islamic presuppositions about the Jewish and Christian Scriptures date from Muḥammad's era when the terms "the People of the Book" for Jews and Christians were first employed. It was Muḥammad's belief that the Torah was sent to Moses, and the Gospel to Jesus, while the Qur'ān confirmed the truths written in both. It was pointed out to later Muslims that the Qur'ān was not consistently in agreement with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. As a result of this dilemma, some Muslims held that the original Biblical texts given to Moses and Jesus were pure (containing references to Muḥammad and to Islam), but that in the process of transmission these pure original texts had been lost or changed.⁴

¹ See in particular Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *The Seventh Discourse of the Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*, translated by Joseph Passmore (Madras: S.P.C.K., 1910).

² Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: The University Press, 1979 2nd ed), p. 96.

³ Michel, *Response*, See Chapter One of this thesis.

⁴ Browne, *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*, pp. 35 and 55 ff.

Other Muslim scholars held that the texts of the Jewish and Christians Scriptures had not been changed but rather their interpretation had been distorted. These two positions have been echoed in Islam down through the centuries.

2.2 THE PLACE OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES IN THE WRITINGS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS

John of Damascus' theological edifice was carefully balanced by two opposing counter-weights. The first was a focus on Christ as God's incarnate Word. The second was a focus on the Bible as God's formal Word in writing. Here the Damascene distinguished the incarnate Word (*Logos*) of God, which was uncreated and existed from eternity, from the formal written words (*rhemata*) included within the Bible, which were many and created.⁵

John of Damascus' definition of the written word of God had important implications. Firstly, as this word was from God, it was entirely trustworthy. Secondly, as it was expressed in human language, it should be interpreted, depending on the context, in a literal or figurative manner. When asked then by his Muslim questioner, "What is figurative interpretation and what is literal interpretation?" John of Damascus replies:

Literalness refers to the established and fixed meaning of a thing. Figurative interpretation, however, involves a secondary meaning. So...it was the custom of the prophets to speak figuratively like this: 'The sea saw and fled.' Behold the sea has not eyes, nor is it a living thing.⁶

Thus, John of Damascus concludes that *rhemata*, that is words which are able to be spoken and (formally) expressed, can be interpreted figuratively as in other literature. However, the *Logos* (incarnate Word) is singular and eternal. He commends the Bible to the Muslim because it is the perfect written Word which testifies to the perfect incarnate Word.⁷

⁵ Voorhis, "The Discussion of a Christian and a Saracen", p. 268.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Al-Kindī initially observes that the Old Testament Scriptures have been accepted from the earliest times by Christians as well as Jews, notwithstanding that these two Faiths are opposed on many other points. Turning then to Islam, he sets forward a case for the trustworthiness of the Biblical Scriptures from the Qur'ān itself. He cites evidence that the Old and New Testaments are trustworthy according to sūra x (*Yūnus*): 93, 94: "If thou art in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who read the Book (revealed) from before thee, that verily the truth hath come unto thee from thy Lord, and be not thou among those who doubt." And still more explicitly sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 122: "They to whom we have given the Book read it according to its true reading. These are they that believe therein; and whosoever believeth not therein, they shall be lost." Al-Kindī tells the Muslim that:

Our 'reading' is here asserted to be the right one, and Muḥammad directed that we (that is the Christians) are to be asked concerning the same, and that what we declare in respect of it must be accepted. How then can you accuse us of corruption, or of 'changing the text from its place?' That would be to contradict yourself, and go back from the rule of fair interpretation which we agreed to for the conduct of this argument.⁸

Al-Kindī notes that at the time of the writing of the Qur'ān the Biblical Scriptures were affirmed to be trustworthy. He points out that there were many transcriptions of this same sacred text located in various countries which pre-dated the Qur'ān, and concludes that there could have been no possibility of collusion in corrupting these texts, particularly in a uniform manner.⁹

In *Kitāb al-dīn wa'l-dawla* 'Alī Ṭabarī attempts to demonstrate the deficiency of the doctrinal core of Christian theology by dialectics before setting out the veracity of Islam by the use of admitted truths. In this apologetic scheme it is necessary for him to leave intact a belief in the trustworthiness of the original Biblical Scriptures. His general description of the various portions of the Biblical

⁸ Muir, *al-Kindy*, p. 33.

⁹ Ibid. Ibn Ḥazm and other Muslim apologists have suggested that the Biblical manuscripts were uniformly corrupted so as to exclude prophecies about Muḥammad. Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 87.

text, while containing flaws, is not wholly inaccurate from the Christian perspective.

'Alī Ṭabarī observes that the Torah deals with "the genealogies of the Children of Israel, their exodus from Egypt, the high laws and prescriptions."¹⁰ The Gospel, he affirms, has "the history of the Christ, His birth and His life; and with that it contains good maxims of morality, remarkable advice, sublime wisdom, and excellent parables, in which there are only short and small portions of laws, prescriptions and history."¹¹ The Book of the Psalms, he notes, "contains historical events, praises, and hymns of high beauty and sublime character, but it does not contain any laws and prescriptions."¹² He observes that the Old Testament also includes curses by God on the Jews. By contrast, he states that none of these objections of God towards Muslims are to be found in the Qur'ān.¹³

Some of his criticism of the Bible is directed at the subsequent and less accurate translations of the Biblical manuscripts on which some Christians based their Biblical exegesis. However, most of his criticism is directed at faulty methods of Biblical interpretation which 'Alī Ṭabarī believes accounted for the lack of consistency in the doctrinal positions of Christians. He held that when rightly interpreted these same texts consistently demonstrate the veracity of Islamic doctrine.

As Paul of Antioch's *Risāla* was written for a Muslim background audience, he develops his arguments for the authority of the Biblical Scriptures from the Qur'ān. He notes that in the Qur'ān, the apostles of Jesus are referred to as messengers of God (*rusul Allāh*).¹⁴ Therefore, their writings should be

¹⁰ 'Alī Ṭabarī, *Religion and Empire*, pp. 50-53.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁴ Michel, *Response*, p. 89.

regarded as inerrant and inspired from an Islamic point of view. That the apostles of Jesus are regarded as inspired of God is, he notes, clearly stated in sūra xvi (al-Nahl) 43: "And we have not sent before thee (O Muhammad) any but men whom we inspired; therefore ask ye the people of the *Dhikr*, if ye do not know." Paul of Antioch notes that in this passage and others like it the former prophets of the Jews and Christians are clearly referred to, and the people addressed are told to ask the people of those former Scriptures for a settlement of their doubts. In this respect Gaudeul notes that Paul believes that this is so clear that the Muslim commentators of the Qur'ān are unanimous on the point.¹⁵ Thus, in Paul's comment on this passage 'Abbas, one of the most famous of the exegetes of the Qur'ān, plainly says that the term the people of the *Dhikr* means "the people of the Taurat and Injil".¹⁶ In the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* it is said that the word *Dhikr* means 'the learned men of the Taurat and Injil.' Again in the *Khulasat al-Tafsīr* the phrase is explained thus: 'Ask the learned men, if you do not know, that is, ask the Jews and Christians with whom the heavenly books are found.'¹⁷ Paul of Antioch continues by noting that throughout the Qur'ān the authority of the Old and New Testaments is upheld (sūra iii (*al-Imrān*): 3 and sūra xlii (*al-Shūrā*): 15); this is true to the extent that if a Muslim had any doubt about that which is written in the Qur'ān, he could reliably consult the "previous Scriptures," sūra x (*Yūnus*): 94.¹⁸

Michel points out that Paul of Antioch makes the distinction that in the Qur'ān the word *tahrīf* (corruption of the text) is used in two ways.¹⁹ The first is *tahrīf al-lafz* (actual textual distortion) and the second being *tahrīf al-ma'nā* (literally a corruption of the meaning by false interpretation of a sound text).²⁰ Paul points out that wherever *tahrīf* is used in the Qur'ān (sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 46; sūra v (*al-*

¹⁵ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 168.

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ *Khulasat al-Tafsīr*, (vol. ii, p.543), cited by Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 168.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ Michel, *Response*, p. 89.

²⁰ *Ibid*.

Mā'ida): 13, 41; and sūra ii (al-Baqara): 75) in relation to the Biblical texts, it is used against the Jewish leaders who quoted their Scriptures wrongly out of context and were therefore guilty of *tahrīf al-ma'nā*.²¹ In this respect he cites the Qur'ān itself (sūras v:48; and x:94) which points the Muslim to the confident use of the Bible. Thereby, he notes, such sūras preclude any possibility that *tahrīf al-lafz* (corruption of the Biblical text itself) could have occurred.

Michel observes that Ibn Taymiyya argues that the Christian argument that the Qur'ān attests to the textual reliability of the texts of the Gospels in use among the Christians of Muḥammad's time is based on a false presupposition.²² It is based on the belief that the Gospels attested to in the Qur'ān are the same Gospels that Christians now possess. This, Ibn Taymiyya holds, is false. Rather, he argues that the Qur'ān attests the textual reliability of the Gospels given by Jesus at an earlier date.²³ At any rate, he suggests that one cannot positively prove that no textual alteration occurred in the text of the Bible.²⁴

Ibn Taymiyya admits that although the Qur'ān did not accuse Jews or Christians of *tahrīf al-lafz* (corrupting the text of Scripture), neither is it denied in the Qur'ān that they did so. However they are accused of *tahrīf al-ma'nā* (corrupting the meaning of Scripture). The result, he concludes, is the same as lacking the original uncorrupted texts, as "it is of no value for a people to possess the accurate wording of the Scriptures if they have changed the interpretations, explanation, and legal prescriptions of their sacred books".²⁵

For Ibn Taymiyya, the fact that neither Christians nor Jews can point to an unbroken *isnād* or chain in the transmission of the Biblical text from Jesus himself points to the impossibility of claiming inerrancy for it. Only that which a prophet

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 113.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 114.

²⁵ *Al-Jawab*, 1:363 cited by Michel, *Response*, p. 114.

hands on from God can be known to be revealed, therefore only those statements of Christ which can be attested by successive transmission of textual fidelity to contain the literal teaching of Jesus can be said to express the revealed Gospels.²⁶

Ibn Taymiyya's misunderstanding of the gospel as the teaching of Jesus as a prophet misses the whole essence of the Christian understanding of the gospel as the message of salvation.²⁷ To the Christian, the gospel refers to the good news of salvation which includes the presupposition of Jesus Christ's divinity, atoning death, forgiveness of sins, resurrection etc. This misunderstanding of the meaning of the gospel has been perpetuated by many Muslim scholars down through history.

Between the 8th-11th centuries, Christian apologists appealed to the texts in the Qur'ān by which a Muslim could affirm the trustworthiness of the Bible. Specifically, they focused their study on such passages as sūras xvi (*al-Nahl*) 43, "And we have not sent before thee (Oh Muḥammad) any but men whom we inspired, therefore ask ye the people of the *Dhikr*, if ye do not know," and others like it such as sūras iii:3; x:94; xxxii:15. Furthermore, they had read some of the most famous Islamic commentators on the Qur'ān, such as Ibn 'Abbas, so as to support their claims that their interpretation of the Qur'ān on these verses was valid.

In summary, we observe that the 11th century Christian apologists adopted the following line of reasoning to establish the reliability of the Biblical text in Muslim-Christian dialogue. Firstly, they set forward the position that according to the evidence in the Qur'ān, Muslims can accept that the Biblical Scriptures were trustworthy at the time of the giving of the Qur'ān. Secondly, they observed that there were many copies of both the Old and New Testaments in existence at the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ In this thesis, the term 'Gospels' refers to books written by Jesus' disciples about the life of Jesus, whereas the term 'gospel' refers to the 'good news' of salvation through Jesus.

time of the writing of the Qur'ān which predated the Qur'ān and were in agreement with each other. Thirdly, they argued that corrupting all the Biblical texts located in many different places in a uniform manner would have been impossible. Therefore, they concluded that the Biblical texts in existence after the giving of the Qur'ān were no different from those endorsed by the Qur'ān itself. This method of studying the question of the reliability of the Biblical text along a Qur'ānic axis was reintroduced during the 19th century by Muir and refined by Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and Goldsack.

3.0 STUDIES ON THE BIBLE IN ISLAM DURING THE 19TH CENTURY

The Muslim-Christian dialogues of the 8th-11th century which emphasized truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible played a significant role in formulating a method for studying the reliability of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Muir was influenced by the use of Qur'ānic evidence for the reliability of the Bible employed by al-Kindī which was responded to in a 'literary dialogue' by 'Aḥī Ṭabarī. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and Goldsack were drawn to the use of admitted truths in the *Risāla* of Paul of Antioch, which received a comprehensive response from Ibn Taymiyya in his *Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*. However, the early dialogues also had an impact on the Muslim apologists of the 19th century.

3.1 INFLUENTIAL MUSLIM WRITERS OF THE 19TH CENTURY WHO WROTE ON THE BIBLE IN ISLAM

Among the influential Muslim writers in the 19th century who wrote on the place of the Bible in Islam were two groups of Islamic reformers. The first Islamic group to study the Bible were the conservative Islamic reformers who sought to reform Ṣūfī Islam in India in the direction of a more orthodox theological position. One of the conservative reformist theologians by the name of Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī surprisingly appealed to the methods of higher criticism in his attempt to discredit the Biblical Scriptures. He contended that insofar as higher criticism

demonstrates that the Bible was given with the intervention of human authorship and contains some species of error, it must be said to contain textual corruption (*tahrīf al-lafz*). He stopped short, however, of allowing the method of higher criticism to be used when studying the Qur'ān.²⁸

It should be pointed out that these conservative Islamic reformers reflected a view about the Biblical Scriptures which was established in the 11th and 12 centuries by such conservative theologians as Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064). In his *Kitāb al-fiṣal fī'l-milal wa'l-niḥal*, (*Book of discernment between confessions and sects*) Ibn Ḥazm's measure of reliability for a revealed work is that it must be accepted without any human or subjective interpretation. By using this criterion, he concluded that the text of the Bible had been falsified (*tahrīf al-lafz*) since it had been written by human authors.²⁹ Ibn Ḥazm was followed by al-Juwayni (1028-1085) who wrote an important book on the Bible entitled *Ṣifā' al-jalīl fī bayān mā waq 'a fī'l-tawrāt wa'l-injīl min al-tabdīl* (*Healing of the Thirsty through exposing the alteration that befell the Tawrat and the Gospel*).³⁰ His standard for accuracy was the Qur'ān itself. His interpretation of the sūras vii (*al-A'rāf*): 157 and lxi (*al-Ṣaff*): 6 was that Muḥammad's coming had been announced by the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl*. Not finding a reference to Muḥammad in the Biblical text itself, he claimed that the text had been altered by substitution (*tabdīl*).³¹ Considering the fact that al-Juwayni wrote this work at Nīṣāpūr when lecturing to al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) one should not be surprised if the same opinions were held by this greater theologian. However, al-Ghazālī did not, in any of the works known to have come from him, write against the Biblical Scriptures.³²

²⁸ Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 68, 69.

²⁹ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, pp. 87, 88.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 93.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³² Hava Lazrus-Yafeh, "Etude sur la polemique Islamo-Chretienne", *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, 1969, pp. 219-237, cited by Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 92. Lazrus-Yafeh points out that the apologetic work critical of the Christian sources entitled *Al-Radd al-jamil li-ilāhiyyat 'Isā bi-ṣarīḥ al-Injīl* ("Excellent Refutation of the Divinity of Jesus from the text of the Gospel"),

The second Islamic group to study the Bible were the liberal Islamic reformers in India. They attempted to reform Ṣūfī Islam in India in the direction of modern thought. They perceived that if one employed the methods of higher criticism to discredit the Biblical texts they could also be used to discredit the Qur'ān. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, one of the most noteworthy of these liberal Islamic reformers, dismissed the findings of the higher critics and attempted to show that "historic" Islam and Christianity were in agreement concerning the reliability of the Biblical Scriptures.³³

These liberal Islamic reformers reflected a view about the Biblical Scriptures which was established at an earlier period in Islamic history by al-Bukhārī (d. 870) who, in his commentary on Sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 14: "They shift the words from their places," concluded that "there is no man who could corrupt by changing a single word of God (*tahṛīf al-lafz*). Similarly, in the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* one reads in their commentary on sūra x (*Yūnus*): 94 that the Biblical text is reliable. Al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1143) contended that the Biblical text has not been altered but only the reading, and this view was also reflected by al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286) in his *Tafsīr*.³⁴ However, the greatest influence on the 19th century Islamic liberal reformed scholars was that of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (1149-1209). His work *Mafāṭīḥ al-ghayb*, affirmed the reliability of the Biblical text and confined any corruptions to the reading of the text.³⁵

Thus one observes that there were two streams of thought about the reliability of the Biblical Scriptures which emerged early on in Islamic history. One stream of thought affirming the reliability of the Biblical text was represented by Islamic commentators. The other stream of thought rejecting the reliability of

though credited to be from the pen of Al-Ghazālī by Massignon, is held by others to have been written by a Copt who converted to Islam. Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 92.

³³ Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 58.

³⁴ Goldsack, *The Bible in Islam*, pp. 12, 13.

³⁵ Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 58.

the Biblical text was represented by Islamic apologists. These two streams diverged by the 19th century with Islamic commentators such as Sayyid Aḥmad Khān representing one stream of thought, and with Islamic apologists, such as Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī, representing the other.

3.2 INFLUENTIAL CHRISTIAN WRITERS OF THE 19TH CENTURY WHO WROTE ON THE BIBLE IN ISLAM

Karl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-65) was an influential 19th century writer who focussed on the reliability of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures from the Qur'ānic perspective. In his work *Mīzān al-ḥaqq (Balance of Truth)* he stated: "the Old and New Testaments have never at any time been changed or altered, neither in the time of Muḥammad nor before his time."³⁶ In Pfander's second major work *Miftāḥ al-asrār, (The Key of Mysteries)* he concentrates on the theme that the mystery of God's nature is beyond human reason and is only understood by divine revelation, pre-eminently the Old and New Testaments.³⁷

Muir singles out the "genuineness and integrity" of the Scriptures as the single greatest issue in Muslim-Christian dialogue and emphasizes the trustworthiness of the Biblical Scriptures in the Qur'ān. He wrote a number of works which defended the reliability of the Biblical Scriptures from the Qur'ānic perspective.³⁸ His most comprehensive works addressing this topic were the *Minār al-Ḥaqq (The Beacon of Truth)*, a work written by an Arab Christian which Muir translated to English, and Muir's *Testimony borne by the Coran to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures*, published in 1855. In the last work, he brings together all the Qur'ānic verses containing any mention of or allusion to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. He then arranges them in chronological order and cites

³⁶ Pfander, *Mīzān* (1867), pp. 18, 19.

³⁷ Pfander, *Miftāḥ al-asrar*, trans. Tisdall, pp. 13-15.

³⁸ Muir, *Masīḥī kālīsā kī tārikh* (The History of the Christian Church) (Agra, 1848). Muir also wrote a series of seven tracts entitled *Dīn kī tarīq* (The Path of Religion) (Mirzapur: Mirzapur Mission Press, 1854). Both works include articles on the topic of the reliability of the Biblical Scriptures.

the classical Islamic commentaries on each.³⁹ A representative selection of Muir's articles on the Bible from the Qur'ān with Islamic commentary are presented in a series of charts in appendix A of this thesis.⁴⁰

William St. Clair Tisdall (1859-1928) was an influential 19th century writer who focussed on the reliability of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures from the perspective of historical analysis. Tisdall, a graduate of the University of New Zealand where he gained a first-class degree in Classics in 1878, was ordained a priest in 1883, and taught Hebrew and Classics until he went to India with the CMS. He was a gifted linguist; his Punjabi grammar was published in 1889, followed by a Gujarati grammar in 1892, Persian in 1902 and Hindustani in 1910.⁴¹ In his work *A Manual of the Leading Muḥammadan Objections to Christianity*,⁴² Tisdall compared the (internal) evidence about the Biblical text in the Qur'ān with the (external) evidence about the Bible from historical analysis (lower criticism).

4.0 EVIDENCE ABOUT THE BIBLICAL TEXT ACCORDING TO TEXTUAL (LOWER) CRITICISM⁴³

In the first part of the 19th century, the traditional Islamic view was that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures confirmed by the Qur'ān were the same as those in existence at the time of Muḥammad. This view was adopted by those who, in all other respects, were critical of Christianity, including Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905), a former head of al-Azhar University in Cairo. In his work *Al-Islām wa'l-Naṣrāniyya fī'l-'ilm wa'l-Madaniyya* Muḥammad 'Abduh wrote a collection of

³⁹ Muir, in formulating his chronology of the Qur'ān, adapted the chronological order of the Qur'ān employed by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī in the *Itqān*. Muir, *Coran*, p. 134. (cf. Chapter Four of this thesis).

⁴⁰ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and William Goldsack were among the 19th century writers who were greatly influenced by Muir's research on passages in the Qur'ān and the Islamic commentaries concerning the Biblical text.

⁴¹ Bennett, *Victorian Images of Islam*, pp. 128, 129.

⁴² W. St. Clair Tisdall, *A Manual of the Leading Muḥammadan Objections to Christianity*, (London: S.P.C.K., 1912).

⁴³ The term 'lower criticism', as used in this thesis, is a form of textual criticism which deals with the study of the extant manuscripts of the Scriptures in order to establish facts about the original text. Compare with 'higher criticism' in fn. 172.

articles purporting to prove that Christianity is essentially contrary to science, preaches dogmas that are irrational, invites people to shun the world and condemns science and persecutes scholars. Nevertheless, he concludes that while the interpretations of the Biblical text made by Christian scholars were in error, the actual text of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, which he believed to have been extant at the time of Muḥammad, was available in his day without erroneous glosses. This allowed him to accept the authenticity of the present manuscripts of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures as those endorsed in the Qur'ān.⁴⁴

In the latter part of the 19th century the radical Islamic view, that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures endorsed by the Qur'ān were different from those currently in the hands of Jews and Christians, became prominent. Muḥammad 'Abduh's disciple, Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935) held that the Bible itself had been changed to exclude the place of the Prophet.⁴⁵ In contrast to the Qur'ān, which he noted God preserved from change, the manuscripts of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures of his day were held to be full of interpolations. Therefore, he concluded that the Qur'ān confirmed only the texts of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures which were extant at the time of Muḥammad. Since then errors had crept into these manuscripts.⁴⁶ In determining if Riḍā's statement is true one must ask whether the Scriptures which now exist are the same ones which were used by Christians to define their faith during and before Muḥammad's era. This question must be decided on historical grounds, without any appeal on the one side, or the other, to the documents as 'the Word of God'.

Muir offers evidence that the Scriptures of the time of Muḥammad's prophetic role (610-632) were the identical Scriptures now in the hands of Jews and Christians. In this regard, he notes that the following manuscripts of the

⁴⁴ Muḥammad 'Abduh, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, III, p. 345, cited by Gaudeul, *Encounters*, vol. II, p. 278.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.I, p. 268.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Bible which predated Muḥammad were still those principally used by Biblical scholars in translation:

The *Codex Sinaiticus*, written in the middle of the fourth century, about 270 years before the Hijra of Muḥammad; the *Codex Alexandrinus*, written early in the fifth century more than 200 years before the Hijra; the *Codex Vaticanus*, written early in the fourth century, nearly 300 years before the Hijra; the *Codex Ephraemi*, written early in the fifth century, or about 200 years before the Hijra.⁴⁷

Muir notes that there were also versions of the Old and New Testaments in existence which were translated before Muḥammad's era. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament was executed prior to the Christian era. He noted that there are also remains of the Octapla of Origen, drawn up four centuries before Muḥammad, in which the various versions of the Old Testament were compared in parallel columns.⁴⁸ Of the New Testament, Muir observes that there are the Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian versions, made long before Muḥammad. Lastly, Muir observes that there are quotations from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, and innumerable references to them, contained in the writings of Jews and Christians of ages much earlier than Muḥammad.⁴⁹

Khān also concludes that the Bible in the hands of Christians of the 19th century contained the original text which predated Muḥammad,

except that there remain a few passages that, without any doubt, have not yet been brought back into correspondence with the original texts and others that are still obscure (*mushtabih*) and it is possible that there are some more such passages which we have not yet recognized as such. I think that our views regarding these points cannot fairly be objected to by the Christians; nay, Christian commentators themselves hold the same opinion with us Mohomedans respecting them.⁵⁰

Khān regards those modern Islamic scholars as misguided who contend that Christians excised passages referring to the Prophet. He held to the views of the early commentators such as al-Bukhārī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Bayḍāwī, the Jalālayn

⁴⁷ Tisdall, *Objections*, p. 46, cited by Muir, *Coran* 2nd ed., p. 236. Cf. Goldsack, *Origins*, p.12.

⁴⁸ Muir, *Coran*, 2nd ed., p. 236.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Khān, *TK*, Vol. I, p. 150.

and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī that "there is no man who could corrupt by changing a single word of God" (*tahrīf al-lafz*).⁵¹ He also held as did they that passages in the Bible referring to Muḥammad required careful consideration as they were veiled in opaque language. But the Biblical text available in the 19th century, he claims, was the same as that available in Muḥammad's era.

Goldsack believes that the *Tawrāt*, *Zabūr*, and *Injīl* circulating at the time of Muḥammad were essentially the same as the present day manuscripts. Citing Tisdall's research, Goldsack observes that the versions of the Bible made long before Muḥammad's birth are in essential agreement with the Biblical translations current in the 19th century.⁵² Tisdall notes that the Syriac and Coptic versions of the Bible would have been among those most likely to have been circulating in Arabia at the time of Muḥammad. In this regard, three versions of the New Testament and one of the Old Testament were made into Syriac. The first of these versions of the Bible is called the Curetonian version and was made probably in the second century after Christ. Nestle records that at least 10 Syriac MSS. of the N.T. date from the fifth and 30 from the sixth century.⁵³ The second is the Peshitta made at the latest in the third century, and the third, the Philoxenian version, was also made before Muḥammad's time, in 508 A.D.⁵⁴ Three Coptic versions representing the three chief dialects of ancient Egypt were also influential during Muḥammad's time. The Buḥaric version was made in the second century; the Sahidic and Bashmuric (Middle Egyptian) are probably both of the same date.⁵⁵

Goldsack observes that from the historical evidence available, one could conclude that although the Biblical manuscripts were in monastic communities, at

⁵¹ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 91.

⁵² Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 12.

⁵³ Nestle, *Textual Criticism of the Greek New Testament*, cited by Tisdall, *Objections*, pp. 50, 51.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

least some Christians of Arabia did have access to the early versions of the Bible. If Islamic sources are to be accepted, Christians and Muslims within Arabia at the time of Muḥammad held these Scriptures in the highest esteem. Furthermore, he notes that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures were confirmed by the Islamic sources as being the same as those in current use.⁵⁶

5.0 ISLAMIC QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLICAL TEXT

5.1 THE QUESTION WHETHER AN ARABIC TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE EXISTED IN THE 6TH CENTURY A.D.

Whether Muḥammad had an opportunity to learn directly from the *Tawrāt* and *Injīl* in an Arabic text was a topic of considerable debate during the writing careers of our three authors (late 19th and early 20th centuries). One of the most cogent views of this period on this topic is expressed by W. Barthold who tells us that inscriptions, which may be ascribed to the sixth century A.D., make it clear that Arabic was a language in common use in the Eastern Christian Church.⁵⁷ As no Arabic translation of the Bible dates as far back as the Islamic era, one must look at evidence within the Qur'ān to determine what Biblical literature in Arabic was extant at that early period.

Firstly, Muir observes that there is clear evidence in the Qur'ān of preparatory Jewish and Christian literature written in Arabic whose character and style was known to the Meccans. He notes that the people of Mecca who opposed Muḥammad declined to receive any verse of the Qur'ān until he should bring a revelation resembling the books of the previous prophets. Thus, an indirect reference was made to the Jewish and Christian revelations, the general character and style of which were apparently known amongst the Meccans.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 12.

⁵⁷ W. Barthold, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel-Asien bis zur mongolischen Eroberung*, (Tübingen and Leipzig, 1901), cited by L.E. Browne, *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ *Sūra vi (al-An'ām): 124*, Muir, *Coran*, p. 108.

Secondly, Muir points out that according to the Qur'ānic evidence the giving of the Qur'ān was not to supplant the previous Scriptures but as an Arabic witness to them. For example Sūra vi (*al-An'ām*):155 reads:

And this book (the Qur'ān) We have sent down, - blessed; wherefore follow it, and fear God, if haply ye may find mercy; - lest ye should say, - Verily the Scripture hath been revealed to two people before us, and we are ignorant of their reading; - (Muir's trans.).

Muir notes that al-Bayḍāwī as well as Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī holds that the phrase "Lest ye should say, - verily the Scripture hath been revealed to two people before us"; means to the Jews and Christians. These commentators concur that the object of the Qur'ān is to take away the Meccan excuse that the Scriptures had not been given in their own tongue, Arabic.⁵⁹

Thirdly, Muir observes that "no one can read the Qur'ān attentively without being struck by the numerous occasions on which the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians are referred to."⁶⁰ He notes that in the Qur'ān the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians are variously described as: the Book of God (*Kitāb Allāh*); the Word of God (*Kalām Allāh*); the Torah (*al-Tawrāt*); and the Gospel (*al-Injīl*).⁶¹ They are described as revelations made by God in ages preceding Muḥammad, in such expressions as '*ma bayna yadīhī*' and, '*nā unzila Allāh min qabla*'.⁶²

The Christian Scriptures, Muir observes, are spoken of throughout the Qur'ān not only as extant in the time of Muḥammad, but as being in common use amongst the Jews and Christians. This, he argues, is demonstrated by such phrases as: "the Scripture which is with them" (*ma'ahim*); or "beside them," (*mā'andihim*) and according to sūra x (*Yūnus*): 93: "those that read the book revealed from before thee," (*alladhīna yaqra'ūna*)⁶³; "they hear (are in the habit of

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 218.

⁶¹ Ibid., Cf. Goldsack, *The Bible in Islam*, pp. 6, 7.

⁶² Muir, *Coran*, p. 218.

⁶³ Muir's article no 16 in Muir's charts of Qur'ānic passages in appendix A. William Muir wrote an article on each Qur'ānic passage which dealt with the Biblical Scriptures. These articles included a study of the Qur'ānic passage passage in question from from the perspective the most

hearing) the Word of God".⁶⁴ Muir observes that on one occasion Muḥammad "summoned the Jews to the Book", that is, required an actual reference to their Scriptures in the presence of both parties, before whom the scroll of the Old Testament was to be read; and on another occasion, they were called upon to bring forward the same Scriptures for the settlement of a disputed question.⁶⁵ Muir concludes that both Jews and Christians are exhorted to act and to judge in accordance with their Scriptures, implying the existence in current use among them of copies of (or extensive passages from) the Scriptures, to which they could without difficulty make reference.⁶⁶

Goldsack qualifies Muir's position, contending that there was a limited amount of Biblical literature available to Muḥammad. He admits that Waraqa may have been credited with having translated or copied (he notes that Sprenger qualified the word "translation" to "transcription") some portions of the Gospels into Arabic. He also notes that the regions surrounding Arabia had the Jewish and Christian Scriptures in their own vernaculars. Nevertheless, Goldsack concludes that Arabia did not have a translation of the Biblical Scriptures in Arabic. The main reason influencing Goldsack's conclusion was the internal literary evidence that Qur'ānic concepts are closer to the Jewish Talmud and the Christian Apocryphal writings than to the Bible itself. He also postulates that had there been an Arabic version of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures available for consultation, the concepts and stories in the Qur'ān would have been closer to these Scriptures.⁶⁷

accepted Islamic commentaries. The reader of this thesis is encouraged to refer to these articles. In this thesis, these Muir's articles have been edited and placed in chart form. As not all of Muir's articles have been included in this thesis, the reader will find each article having two numbers (for example 16/XXXIV). The Arabic numbering on the left is that assigned by the author of this thesis to the edited list and the Roman numeral on the right refers to Muir's own numbering system in his original list which was more complete.

⁶⁴ Muir's article no. 47 in appendix A.

⁶⁵ Muir, *Coran*, 2ed., pp. 218, 219. See Muir's article 51, appendix A.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Goldsack, *The Bible in Islam*, p. 12.

In Muir's study of Muḥammad's attitude toward the reliability of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, he seeks "to prove that the believer in the Qur'ān is bound to be equally a believer in the Old and in the New Testament as now extant, so that Muslims may have their attention drawn to their Divine origin, and the inestimable value of their teaching."⁶⁸ In this regard Muir draws attention to Muḥammad's demand that Jews and Christians obey their respective Scriptures as conclusive evidence that these Scriptures were regarded by the Prophet as entirely reliable. Muir concludes that Muḥammad held in high regard those who conscientiously read and kept the 'Previous Scriptures' of the Jews and Christians for the following reasons.

Firstly, Muir notes that according to the Qur'ān, Muḥammad endorsed those who held to the previous Scriptures of the Jews and Christians because he was convinced that they would be witnesses in favour of his mission (in this regard see Muir's arts.3, 6, 7, 13, 21, 23, 24, 25, 28, 30, 36 in appendix A).⁶⁹

Secondly, Muir observes that according to the Qur'ān Muḥammad regarded those who held to the previous Scriptures of the Jews and Christians as pre-Qur'ānic Muslims. Muir notes that Muḥammad advised Jews and Christians to follow the whole of the previous Scripture because in doing so they would be predisposed to understand and accept Islam. A reward is promised to those who "hold fast the Book", which the context shows to be the Old Testament, sūra vii (*al-A'rāf*): 170, (art.29).⁷⁰

Thirdly, Muir argues that according to the Qur'ān Muḥammad stated that those who reject the previous Scriptures wander into error, and punishment is meted out to them. "He that disbelieves in any of the Books of God hath

⁶⁸ Muir, *Coran*, 2nd ed., pp. i, xi.

⁶⁹ Muir, *Coran*, 2nd ed., pp. 224-225.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

wandered into a wide error," sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 135, (art. 43). Muir observes that according to the Qur'ān the result of their rejection of the previous Scriptures is "that those who reject the Book, and that which We have sent Our Messengers with, they shall know; - when the collars shall be on their necks, and the chains by which they shall be dragged into Hell; - they shall be burned in the Fire" - sūra xl (*Ghāfir*): 72 (art.14).⁷¹ Furthermore, Muir notes that the Qur'ān gives injunctions against a belief in only part of God's Word: "the reward of those who believe in part of the book and reject part thereof, shall be none other than disgrace in the present life, and on the day of judgment they shall be cast into a more awful torment"; sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 85, (art. 35). And again the Qur'ān reads: "Verily, they that reject God and His Apostles, and seek to make a distinction between God and His Apostles, and say, 'Some we believe, and some we believe not,' and desire to take a middle way; These! are real infidels (*kāfirūn*) ! and for the infidels have We prepared a shameful punishment." sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 149, (art. 44).⁷²

Fourthly, Muir notes that Muḥammad commanded Jews and Christians to read and obey their Scriptures because they will be judged by them. Muir observes that the Qur'ān teaches that Jews and Christians are not only commanded to observe the law and the Gospel, but they are warned that "their religion will not be grounded upon anything, unless they adhere to both the Tawrat and the Gospel," sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 77, (art.58).⁷³ Furthermore, in legal cases involving them they were to be judged by these books. In one passage of the Qur'ān, the Jews were required, "to bring the Tawrat and read it," in order to settle a disputed point; sūra iii (*al-Imrān*): 23, (art. 47).⁷⁴

Fifthly, Muir observes that although obedience to the previous Scriptures is enjoined in the Qur'ān upon Jews and Christians only, yet all faithful Muslims are

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 225, 226.

⁷² Ibid., p. 226.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 226, 227.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 226, 227.

called upon equally with them to *believe in* those Scriptures; (arts. 12, 14, 26, 39, 43, 44, 45). Moreover, Muir observes that in the Qur'ān the favour of God and a great reward are promised to those Muslims who believe in the complete revelation of His will, including the writings of the Jewish and Christian prophets and apostles (art. 44). Thus, Muir notes that according to Muḥammad's teachings as reflected in the Qur'ān, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures cannot be neglected, much less cast aside by true Muslims.

Muir finally points out that the sacred books spoken about in the Qur'ān are the same Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments which were universally acknowledged by the Jews and Christians of Muḥammad's day to be divinely inspired. In other words, it could have been no *different Tawrāt* or *Injīl* to which allusion is constantly made in the Qur'ān. He concludes this because Mecca and Medina were not situated in a corner of the world where Scriptures other than those commonly in use elsewhere could have been intended. Jews and Christians, he notes, "inhabited various parts of Arabia, such as Yemen, Najrān, Taymā' and Duma, and from all quarters they resorted yearly to the fairs at Ocatz, Mujanna, Dzul-Majaz".⁷⁵ Muir concludes: "When Muḥammad attests the reliability of 'the Book' or 'the Scriptures' which the Jews and Christians were in the habit of reading, he means the Old and the New Testaments preserved among the whole body of the Jews and Christians, read in their churches, synagogues, and monasteries, and studied in their private houses".⁷⁶

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's study of Muḥammad's attitude toward the reliability of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures appears in his *Mahomedan Commentary on The Holy Bible (Tabyīn al-kalām)*. In this work, Khān points out that, according to the Qur'ān, Muḥammad affirmed the reliability of the "books of the former prophets" (the Old Testament and parts of the New Testament). In other words,

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 228.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 228, 229.

the criterion for the reliability of Scripture is that it be given by a prophet affirmed in some manner by God. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān notes that according to the Qur'ān all books given by prophets are "all true and correct and have descended from God."⁷⁷ He notes, as does Muir, that Jews and Christians are required to adhere to the Old and New Testament Scriptures and Muslims are required to read and believe in them as well. Khān also accepts that the Old and New Testaments spoken about in the Qur'ān were none other than those which were prominent among Christians in the 19th century.⁷⁸

The essential task of critical research, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān felt, was to prove that a given book is written by a genuine prophet, for:

It is our firm belief that whatever books descended to the Prophets are authentic and genuine gifts from heaven. This is so because their being written by genuine prophets is an assurance of their divine origin.⁷⁹

Not all of the New Testament books would, he observes, be considered by Muslims to have been written by prophets.⁸⁰ For this reason, he set out to define the criterion by which a book of the Bible would be judged to be reliable. The main criterion, Khān suggests, depends on:

the credibility or incredibility of its author. - So, when going to prove a book being authentic, or not, we first look to the alleged author, and if he be known to have been a man eminent for virtue and learning in his day, we should hold that fact to be a strong evidence in favour of the orthodoxy of his book; while the reverse would be equally damaging: - then again, we should expect a connected chain of proofs as to his being really the author.⁸¹

Thus, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's first criterion for accepting a Biblical book as reliable depended on the proof that the author was a man of eminent virtue and secondly upon the external and internal criticism of the text itself. The *isnād* or chain of authorities was used to determine the veracity of the Qur'ān, but for books other

⁷⁷ Khān, *TK*, Vol. I, p. 32.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 39.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp.39, 40.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 58.

than the Qūr'an, there is no isnād. Therefore Khān notes that there is a second rule for establishing the reliability or unreliability of such books, namely fame and acceptance (*shurhrat aur qabūl*).⁸² Khān held that only those books can be regarded as genuine (*ṣaḥīḥ*) where the authors of Biblical Scriptures and the books which they penned are accepted without dispute by reputable scholars of all times.⁸³ In this regard, Khān concludes that the Old and New Testament Scriptures in their present form are reliable.⁸⁴ As was observed earlier in this chapter he contends that the Bible today contains the original text as a whole "except that there remain a few passages that, without any doubt, have not yet been brought back into correspondence with the original texts and others that are still obscure (*mushtabih*)".⁸⁵ Khān also affirms the trustworthiness of the respective parts of the Bible. In reference to the Old Testament Scriptures, he comments on the authorship of the books of the *Tawrāt* (Books of Moses), noting that:

According to our Muslim religion the *Tawrāt* written under divine inspiration by Ezra commands the same respect and dignity as the *Tawrāt* written by Moses himself. We Muslims do not make any difference (in this respect between prophets).⁸⁶

In reference to the New Testament Scriptures, Khān accepts the standard belief in Islam that the *Injīl* was the book which descended upon Jesus alone.

Thus it is that although we Mohomedans acknowledge the apostles of Christ to have been inspired men, and their writings, so true holy and worthy of respect that they may be used as religious guides, we can not still be disposed to include or embody them in the Injeel, for according to our religion the Injeel is held to be that sole revelation of God which was made to Jesus Christ himself.⁸⁷

While Khān refuses to place the writings of the Apostles of Jesus on the same footing with the Prophets of the Old Testament,⁸⁸ he sees no reason to presume

⁸² Ibid., Vol. I, p. 59, Cf. Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 78.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 150. Cf. Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 81.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Khān, *TK*, Vol. II, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Khān, *TK*, Vol. I, p. 30.

⁸⁸ Ibid, Vol. I, pp. 30,31.

that their writings in the New Testament were anything other than the true message of God given to Jesus, which they later wrote.⁸⁹ He furthermore contends that a Muslim could deepen his faith through a reading of all of these authentic pre-Qur'ānic Scriptures.⁹⁰

Goldsack, in his study of Muḥammad's attitude toward the reliability of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, notes that although the Prophet was more critical of the Jews and Christians in the Medinan than in the Meccan period, he nevertheless upheld the reliability of their Scriptures during both periods for four specific reasons.

Firstly, the exalted terms which Muḥammad attributed to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures during both periods emphasized his belief in their reliability. For example, Muḥammad described the *Tawrāt*, *Zabūr* and *Injīl* as 'The Word of God', 'The Book of God', 'A Guide and a Mercy', 'A Light and Direction to Men', 'The Testimony of God', 'Guidance and Light'.⁹¹

Secondly, Goldsack notes that Muḥammad appealed to the *Tawrāt* for the settlement of certain controversies which had arisen between himself and the Jews. On one such occasion, he observes that it is recorded in sūra iii (*'Al-'Imrān*): 94 that Muḥammad commanded the Jews: "Bring ye then the Tawrat and read it, if ye be men of truth." ⁹² On another such occasion Goldsack observes that a discussion arose as to the punishment to be meted out to certain Jews who had been found guilty of adultery. Then, he notes, the tradition proceeds: "The Apostle of God said to them, 'What do you find in the Tawrat in the matter of stoning (adulterers).'"⁹³ The *Tawrāt* was then brought and Goldsack observes

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Goldsack, *The Bible in Islam*, p. 6.

⁹² Ibid, p. 7.

⁹³ Ibid.

that Muḥammad gave judgment according to the Mosaic Law laid down in the *Tawrāt*.

Thirdly, Goldsack observes that the passages in which Muḥammad advises his followers to seek the advice and teaching of the 'People of the Book' when in religious doubt demonstrate his belief in the reliability of the religious texts of the Jews and Christians. For example, one reads in sūra x (*Yūnus*): 93: "If thou art in doubt as to what We have sent down to thee (in the Qur'ān), inquire of those who read the Scriptures before thee" (cf. art. 16).⁹⁴ Another passage which he believes exemplified Muḥammad's confirmation of the reliability of the Scriptures and of the faithfulness of those who gave it is sūra xvi (*al-Naḥl*): 44: "None have we sent before thee but men inspired; ask of those who have the Books of Admonition, if ye know it not." Goldsack cites the Jalālāin who explain the term, "those who have the Books of Admonition" as "the learned men of the *Tawrāt* and *Injīl*."⁹⁵

Fourthly, Goldsack argues that Muḥammad's high esteem of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures can be understood from the Prophet's teaching to the Jews and Christians of his day about the need for them to study and adhere to their religious books. Thus, Goldsack notes that in sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 72 one reads: "O People of the Book, ye have no ground to stand on, until ye observe the Tawrat and the Injīl and that which hath been sent down to you from your Lord."⁹⁶

Goldsack then cites sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 49, 50, which he believes clearly demonstrates that Muḥammad regarded the Bible as neither corrupted nor abrogated.

And in the footsteps of the Prophets caused we Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow, confirming the Tawrat which was before him. And we gave him the Injīl with its guidance and light, confirmatory of its preceding Tawrat: a

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

guidance and warning to those who fear God; and that the people of the Injil may judge according to what God hath sent down therein.

Here, Goldsack observes, the Injil is referred to as a God-given guide, not, he notes, to be superseded by the Qur'ān, but a touchstone by which the Christian contemporaries of Muḥammad were to judge between right and wrong, truth and error. Moreover, he argues that those (Christians) who would not use the Injil to discern right from wrong were denounced as sinners in the sight of God, for the passage continues thus: "And whoso will not judge by what God hath sent down - such are the perverse."⁹⁷

5.3 THE THEOLOGICAL PLACE ASSIGNED TO THE BIBLE IN THE QUR'AN

In his study of the theological place which Muḥammad assigned to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, Muir observes that their divine origin was repeatedly attested by Muḥammad. Muir argues firstly, that plenary inspiration is ascribed by Muḥammad to both the Bible and the Qur'ān.⁹⁸ They have been "sent down," or "revealed," (*nzīl*); God revealed the Scripture in "truth," or "with truth," (*anajal Kitāb bi'l-ḥaqq*); it has been "given" by God, (*awti*); the prophets who delivered it were given the inspiration (*wahy*) of God.⁹⁹ Muir contends that in the Qur'ān the inspiration of Muḥammad is spoken of as the same *in kind* as that of the former prophets; (arts. 11, 27, 45 and 48).¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, he observes that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures are styled in the same descriptive words, indicative of a heavenly origin, as the Qur'ān, e.g.: "the Book of God," *Kitāb Allāh* (arts.37, 47 and 57). In the same sense, he notes that the Biblical Scriptures are also called "the Word of God," *Kalām Allāh* (art. 33); and along with the Qur'ān they are called *al-Furqān* "that which discerns between good and evil". For

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 8, 9.

⁹⁸ Plenary is from the Latin *plēnus* meaning "full". In plenary inspiration the text as to both its words and meanings is regarded as fully inspired by God.

⁹⁹ Muir, *Coran*, 2nd. ed., p. 221.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

these reasons Muir concludes that the contents of the Bible, like the Qur'ān, are cited frequently as containing a divine and decisive authority.¹⁰¹

The Jewish and Christian Scriptures were also considered equal to the Qur'ān with respect to the benefits derived from the study of each. In this respect, Muir firstly observes that both are regarded in the Qur'ān as a "guide and a mercy" (sūra xlvī (*al-Aḥqāf*): 12 (art. 8); "enlightening" books, sūra xlii (*al-Shūra*): 1 (art. 11); and "a guide and an admonition to men of understanding hearts," sūra iii (*al-Imrān*): 184 (art. 53) (art. 13). Secondly, he notes that both they are spoken of in the Qur'ān as a "light and a direction to mankind", sūra vi (*al-An'ām*): 92 (Art. 17). The *Tawrāt* is "complete as to whatever is excellent, and an explanation of every question, and a direction and a mercy, that (men) might believe in the meeting of their Lord," (art 19); "The Gospel, wherein is guidance and light, attesting the Tawrat that preceded it, and a direction and an admonition to the pious," sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 50 (art. 57). Thirdly, in still another respect, both are styled, along with the Qur'ān itself, as the *furqān* (or discerner) It is "the Furqān (or discerner,) a light and an admonition to the pious, those who fear their Lord in secret, and who tremble at the hour of judgment," sūra xxi (*al-Anbiyā'*): 49 (art. 22). And finally, both are regarded in the Qur'ān as promising blessing to the reader. They who believe in the Scriptures revealed aforetime...as well as in the Qur'ān, "these walk according to the direction of their Lord, these are the blessed," sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 1-5 (art. 31).¹⁰²

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's view of the theological place assigned to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures was similar to that of Muir in that he points out that the Qur'ān assigned a high place to both. However, Khān has a different opinion about those books of the Jews and Christians which would be considered authoritative from a Muslim point of view. In this regard, Khān finds the "books

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 222.

¹⁰² Ibid.

of the former prophets" alluded to in the Qur'ān under four different names, viz: *Tawrāt* (Five Books of Moses), *Ṣaḥīfah* (prophetic books of the Prophets of Israel), *Zabūr* (Psalms), and *Injīl* (the book "which relates to the doctrines of Jesus Christ") to be altogether "true and sacred records".¹⁰³ He acknowledges that to the Christian the New Testament comprises "the books written by the apostles of Christ, in which a divine word is included (with that) which descended upon Christ. The books which they collected are called the *Injīl* and include in the Gospel the Epistles, and extraneous accounts recorded by Christ's apostles."¹⁰⁴ However, he observes that Muslims only refer to the Gospels as the *Injīl*. Furthermore, he believes that the content of the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels was revealed to his disciples, content which they expressed in their own language. He regards this mode of inspiration as trustworthy but believes that it differed from that of the Qur'ān.

Before 1870, Khān regarded the Bible and the Qur'ān to be altogether trustworthy. Nevertheless, he also held that the Qur'ānic revelation was different from, and superior to, the revelation of the previous Scriptures of the Jews and Christians. For he understands the revelation of God's will (*wahy*) as consisting of different kinds or methods. One method is the inspiration of God's will to a prophet as dictated verbatim by the angel Gabriel. Khān considered that revelations dictated verbatim to prophets by the angel Gabriel were the surest method of ensuring that the texts were without any sort of scribal error.¹⁰⁵ The revelation of the Qur'ān is an example of just such a method of inspiration. Another method of inspiration of God's Word is from God to "the heart of certain individuals of repute and sanctity".¹⁰⁶ The content of these revelations was then written in the words of the holy person who received the content. Thus to the

¹⁰³ Khān, *TK*, Vol I, p. 32.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 39.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 14; cf. *TK*, Vol. III, p. 87; cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 8.

prophets before Muḥammad *wahy* was granted only in the form of *maḍmūn* (content), which they expressed in their own language.¹⁰⁷ Those revelations revealed conceptually to the heart of 'holy-persons' required this person's interpretation and were therefore subject to error. The New Testament text is an example of this method of inspiration. Before 1870, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān held that the mode of inspiration of the Biblical text was inferior to the Qur'ān because the very words of the latter were divinely dictated.

After 1870, Khān adopted a philosophical position which excluded the probability of divine intervention in the affairs of men and this extended to *wahy* (the revelation of the Qur'ān or the Bible). In this latter period, he described the process of revelation in more rational terms. Muḥammad, he contended, was a person whose nature was perfectly developed so that he was able perfectly to reveal God's wisdom.¹⁰⁸ This, of course, allowed for the possibility of error in the text which the dictation mode of inspiration precluded. Ultimately, he regarded the mode of revelation and inspiration of the Bible and the Qur'ān as the same.

Goldsack's view regarding the theological place assigned to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures by Muḥammad is similar to that of Muir's. Goldsack contends that Muḥammad regarded the inspiration of the Biblical Scriptures as of exactly the same kind as the inspiration of the Qur'ān itself. Goldsack observes that it is stated in sūra xxvi (*Al Shu'arā'*):1 that God revealed his will to Muḥammad in the same way as He did to the prophets before him. Sūra ii (*al-Baqara*: 74 reads: 'We make no distinction between what was sent down to Muḥammad and the prophets before him.'¹⁰⁹ In still another passage, Goldsack goes on to observe that Muḥammad warned men against making any distinctions

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Khān, *PMaq*, Vol.xiii, pp. 71, 121, 22; cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 184, 185.

¹⁰⁹ Goldsack, *The Qur'ān Examined*, p. 11.

between the Qur'ān and those Scriptures which preceded it. Thus, Goldsack notes, Sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):136 reads:

Say ye, we believe in God, and that which hath been sent down to us, and that which hath been sent down to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which hath been given to Moses and to Jesus, and that which was given to the Prophets from their Lord. No difference do we make between any of them; and to God are we resigned.¹¹⁰

As a result of there being no distinctions made between the Scriptures, Goldsack notes that according to the Qur'ān Christians and Muslims have a duty to observe the Law and the Gospel. This is demonstrated in sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*):72, which says, "Ye are not grounded on anything till ye observe the Law and the Gospel."¹¹¹ In addition the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians are acknowledged to have the blessings of giving guidance and light. In particular the *Injīl*, the Gospel given to Jesus Christ, is also acknowledged in the Qur'ān, sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 50 as containing direction and light.¹¹² Also, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures give discernment like the Qur'ān. This, he notes, is implied by the title *al-Furqān*,¹¹³ which is given to both the Bible and the Qur'ān in sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 52.

6.0 QUR'ANIC STUDIES ABOUT THE ALLEGED CORRUPTION (*TAHRIF*) OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

Early Muslims acknowledged that the Torah was sent to Moses and the Gospel to Jesus and the Qur'ān confirmed the truths written in both of them. But when it was pointed out to these early Muslims that the Qur'ān was not in complete agreement with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures they replied that this was due to a corruption in the interpretation of the text, though this did not affect the text itself. During the 19th century some Muslim scholars were prepared to use some

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ A.J. Wensinck notes that *al-Furqān* can mean discrimination, revelation or salvation. In this sense *Furqān* is adopted from the Aramaic *furkana* synonymous with the Hebrew *yeshua* (salvation). EI-1, s.v. *Furqān*, by A.J. Wensinck.

of the results of higher criticism about the Biblical Scriptures in their contention that not only had the meaning of the Biblical text become corrupted but also the text itself.

The question of *tahrīf* or the corruption of the Scriptures was the central point of the debate between Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī and Pfander. Raḥmat Allāh compiled a number of polemical tracts, the most influential among them being *I'jāz-i 'Isawī al-mulaqqab bih mişqalah-i tahrīf* [The purifier of the (teaching of the) corruption of the Scriptures].¹¹⁴ He argues on the basis of higher criticism that the actual text of the Biblical Scriptures had been corrupted (*tahrīf al-lafz*).¹¹⁵ By contrast Pfander argues that although the Qur'ān indicates that the Jews distorted the *meaning* of the Biblical text (*tahrīf al-ma'na*), there is no indication in the Qur'ān or the early Islamic commentaries that the Biblical text itself had been corrupted.¹¹⁶ Significantly, Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī based his argumentation upon statements of the higher critics about the Biblical text whereas Pfander based his discussion of the Bible upon statements in the Qur'ān and the early Islamic commentaries. Pfander's method of marshalling evidence in the Qur'ān which rejected the corruption of the Biblical text and affirmed its reliability was reminiscent of the method of Paul of Antioch in his use of admitted truths. This method was also adapted and refined by Muir, Khān and Goldsack.

In Muir's studies about *tahrīf* in the Qur'ān, he notes that nowhere in the Qur'ān does one find an allusion to Christians or Jews corrupting the Scriptural text itself. There are, Muir notes, many instances in which the Muslims of Muḥammad's era believed that the Jewish interpretation of their Scriptures was prejudiced against their new found Faith and against their Prophet. Muir believed that this distrust between Jews and Gentile Arabs predated Islam. The Arabs, he

114 Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī, *I'jāz-i 'Isawī* (1871) cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 82.

115 Kairānawī, *I'jāz-i 'Isawī*, pp. 5, 230.

116 Pfander, *Mizān*, pp. 17, 21.

notes, considered themselves to be descendants of Ishmael and the Jews were the descendants of Isaac.

Muir argues that the alleged corruption of the meaning of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures was frequently attributed to Jews who misinterpreted the Scriptures to Muḥammad. Muir notes that in sūra lxii (*al-Jum'a*):5, these Jews are compared by Muḥammad to an ass laden with a burden of precious books; - they were charged with a store of divine knowledge, but not at all the wiser for it (art. 40).¹¹⁷ He shows that they misinterpreted it in several ways.

Firstly, Muir observes that Muḥammad charged the Jews of Medina with presenting passages from their Scriptures out of their appropriate context and thereby distorting the true sense of these texts (arts. 32, 42, 55, 56).¹¹⁸ He notes that by using this method of false exegesis they applied to Muḥammad expressions having a double and offensive meaning (art. 49).¹¹⁹ Secondly, the Medinan Jews were accused of having asserted to Muḥammad that their rabbinical or traditional writings had divine authority (arts. 34, and 49).¹²⁰ Thirdly, Muir notes that some Jews were accused of concealing texts or prophecies favourable to Muḥammad and his claims "though (according to the early Islamic sources) God had made them enter into a covenant that they should publish them to mankind."¹²¹ The Medinan Jews' renunciation of Muḥammad's prophethood brought out a latent enmity between them.¹²² Muḥammad, recounts Muir, expatriated two whole Jewish tribes, the Banū Nādir and Banū Qaynuqā', and having slain all the males of a third tribe, the Banū Qurayza, made their women and children captives.¹²³

117 Kairānawī, *Ijāz*, pp. 5, 230.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid, pp. 230, 231.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid., pp. 229, 230.

In spite of the Muslim accusations of the Jews' concealing the true meaning of the text of Scripture, Muir notes that there are no passages in the Qur'ān which indicate that Muḥammad accused the Jews of Medina of corrupting the text itself. There are no accusations of their having excised passages from the text or adding passages to the text or in any other manner altering the manuscripts of their Scriptures. The worst charge laid at the feet of the Christians by the early Islamic sources is that they had "forgotten a part of that whereby they were admonished," i.e., had fallen into erroneous doctrines and practices (art. 55).¹²⁴ The Qur'ān from first to last, Muir notes, is in favour of the genuineness and authority of the Jewish as well as of the Christian Scriptures. Furthermore, the Qur'ān attests to there being honest and faithful Jews and Christians who would not allow their Holy Books to be corrupted:

Amongst the people of the Book, there is an upright race, that read the Signs (or Revelations) of God in the night season, and they bow down worshipping, and command that which is honest, and dissuade from that which is wicked, and hasten forward in good works; these are the virtuous, sūra iii (al-'Imrān) 113 (art. 52).¹²⁵

Elsewhere, observes Muir, the Qur'ān contends that "among them (the Jews and Christians) is a righteous people". These would not only have no interest in falsifying their own Scriptures but would have prevented others from doing so.¹²⁶

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's studies concerning *tahrīf* in the Qur'ān are included in his *Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible* in a comprehensive article entitled *The Seventh Discourse*.¹²⁷ In this work he notes that al-Rāzī defined *tahrīf* (corruption) as follows:

The word *tahrīf* means to change, to alter, to turn aside anything from its truth. Whenever the term is used in relation to Sacred Scriptures, it is understood to imply a wilful corruption of the Word of God from its true and original meaning and intent.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 233.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 233.

¹²⁷ Khān, *The Seventh Discourse* trans. J. Passmore, (Madras: S.P.C.K., 1910).

¹²⁸ Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī *Mafāṭīḥ al-ghayb*, cited by Khan, *The Seventh Discourse*, pp. 5-7.

Therefore, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān interpretes *tahrīf* in the more specific sense of "to twist the divine word *knowingly and deliberately* out of its original meaning and true aim towards something else."¹²⁹ He concludes that this action constitutes a great sin because it is done with "premeditated intent" to interfere with a Holy Book so that the text is "distorted from its true meaning".¹³⁰ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān observes that *tahrīf*, as it is defined in the Qur'ān, can occur in eight different ways:

- I) By the copyist deliberately adding a word or a phrase.
- II) By deliberately striking out existing words or phrases.
- III) By deliberately substituting other words, differing in meaning from those struck out.
- IV) By deliberately making verbal changes while reading, so as to convey to the ear words different from what were written.
- V) By deliberately reading only some passages and omitting others.
- VI) By deliberately instructing the people in a manner contrary to God's teaching in His holy word, and yet making them believe that this instruction is the true word.
- VII) By deliberately adopting an improper meaning of certain words of ambiguous or equivocal interpretation which does not suit the sense intended.
- VIII) By deliberately misinterpreting those passages which are mysterious and allegorical.¹³¹

In this regard, Khān cites the early Islamic commentators who understood textual corruption (*tahrīf al-lafz*) to be categories I-III. He notes that al-Bukhārī defined *tahrīf* as signifying to change a thing from its original nature, but then noted that "there is no man who could corrupt by changing a single word of what has proceeded from God, so that the Jews and Christians could corrupt only by misrepresenting the meaning of the words of God."¹³² Sayyid Aḥmad Khān

¹²⁹ Khān, *The Seventh Discourse*, pp. 5-7.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹³² Ibid., pp. 10, 11.

notes that this is also the view of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, for in his commentary on sūra iii (*Al-‘Imrān*): 78, he asks the rhetorical question: "How was it possible to corrupt the [actual text of the] Old Testament when it was so well known among the people?" Al-Rāzī, he notes, concludes that the actual text was not corrupted but rather the meaning of the text was distorted. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān concurs with al-Rāzī that *tahrīf* occurred when the Jews misinterpreted the text to create doubts in the minds of ignorant hearers about Muḥammad, but nevertheless their actions did not affect the text itself. Thus, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, in his study of *tahrīf al-laḥz* as applied to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, concludes:

It is clearly shown by the preceding authorities, that the learned doctors of the Muslim faith have not held the opinion that the text of the sacred Scriptures has been corrupted in any of the first three categories (*tahrīf al-laḥz*); and they have confuted the arguments advanced by those (Islamic theologians) who maintain that falsification has taken place in the Scriptures, by the description of fraud under notice.¹³³

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān notes that there remain five other categories of *tahrīf* (that is categories IV, V, VI, VII, and VIII mentioned previously). These concern the distortion of the *sense of certain passages* (*tahrīf al-ma'nā*).¹³⁴ An example from each of these categories can be briefly cited.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān gives an example from commentators who studied category IV (that corruption was caused by making verbal changes while reading, so as to convey to the ear words different from what were written is mentioned in them (sūra iii (*Al-‘Imrān*):75).¹³⁵ He notes that al-Rāzī, in commenting on this verse, concludes that the phrase "they read the Scriptures perversely" implies that

¹³³ Ibid. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's statement "those who maintain that falsification had occurred" referred pre-eminently to Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī, who in his *Ijāz* concluded that the Biblical text had undergone textual corruption (*tahrīf al-laḥz*) as well as corruption of the meaning (*tahrīf al-ma'nā*).

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

¹³⁵ Ibid. Cf. Sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 58-91 where it is said that the Jews substituted the word *ḥiṭṭa* (forgiveness) in the reading of the text with *ḥiṭṭa* (wheat). It is clear, he adds, that the alteration was verbal only in reading; and that no liberties were taken with the written text.

the Scripture readers made many perversions and unwarranted alterations in the course of their readings.¹³⁶

Category V, he notes, refers to a corruption of the text which occurs by reading only some passages and omitting others. Sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):174 condemns those who: "conceal any part of the Scriptures which God hath sent down unto them." Sayyid Aḥmad Khān notes that from the verse under consideration one concludes that the Jews were in the habit of concealing the divine precepts, not that they actually made any change in the text.¹³⁷

Khān notes that Category VI of the corruption of the meaning of Scripture occurs when religious leaders instruct the people in a manner contrary to God's teaching in His Holy Word, and yet made them believe that this instruction is the true word. He cites al-Rāzī's commentary on sūra ix (*al-Tawba*):34 in this respect.¹³⁸

Khan notes category VII, that is, the corruption of the meaning of the text by adopting an ambiguous or equivocal interpretation which does not suit the sense intended. In this regard he cites sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):42: "Clothe not the truth with vanity, neither conceal the truth against your own knowledge."¹³⁹ Al-Rāzī states in his commentary that this verse refers to the Jews who denied the rightful interpretation of certain Old Testament verses, but also notes that they were not guilty of mutilating the written text.¹⁴⁰

Khān then studies examples of category VIII, noting that certain writers misinterpreted passages which were mysterious and allegorical and attempted to

¹³⁶ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, cited by Khan, *The Seventh Discourse*, p. 19.

¹³⁷ Ibid. Cf. Khān also cites a well-known Islamic tradition in the collection of al-Bukhārī where it is related by 'Abdallā ibn 'Umar that when it became necessary to refer to the passage in the Pentateuch authorizing the penalty of stoning to death for the crime of adultery, the Jewish Scripture reader concealed the passage with the palm of his hand, and began reading other parts of the page. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān notes that "although the law was 'concealed,' nowhere is it shown or even hinted at, that the law was really struck out of the code where it is found there to this day."

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 26, 27.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

pass off their own writings of these passages as inspired Scripture. He cites such an example recorded in sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):79.

Khān observes that Muir, in his Urdu History of the Christian Church, noted that in the third century there were books which appeared under the names of Apostles but were, in fact, "pious frauds".¹⁴¹ One of the most famous "pious frauds" read in India during the 19th century was the *Gospel according to Barnabas*.¹⁴² Though no manuscripts of this work have been discovered in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek or Latin a copy exists in Italian and Spanish. The author of the Italian version, according to Gaudeul, is a Morisco by the name of Ibrāhīm al-Taybiḷī (Juan Perez) who lived during the 17th century when Muslim minorities in Spain were forced to convert to Christianity.¹⁴³ Khān refers to the article on the *Gospel according to Barnabas* in Sale's "Preliminary Discourse" to his English translation of the Qu'rān (1734).¹⁴⁴ However, Khān concludes: that such 'pious

¹⁴¹ Muir, *Church History*, Part II, chapter iii, cited by Khān, *The Seventh Discourse*, p. 35.

¹⁴² Khān, *The Seventh Discourse*, p. 36.

¹⁴³ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 206. Gaudeul notes that Muslims in Spain, who were forced to convert to Christianity were called Moriscos. They created their own 'Christian literature' which preserved the nucleus of their previous Islamic faith and the Gospel of Barnabas was one such work. It was during the 17th century, he notes, that this fraudulent "gospel" about Jesus began to be circulated in Italian. However, there is no previous history of this gospel and no manuscripts of it exist in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek or Latin. The author, Gaudeul contends was a Morisco writer by the name of Ibrāhīm al-Taybiḷī (Juan Perez) living in Tunisia, who describes the work. Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 206.

¹⁴⁴ Khān, *The Seventh Discourse*, p. 36. Sale in "The Preliminary Discourse" to his translation of *The Korān* observed: The Mohammedans have a Gospel in Arabic attributed to St. Barnabas, wherein the history of Jesus Christ is related in a manner very different from what we find in the true Gospels, and correspondent to those traditions which Mohammed has followed in his Korān. Of this Gospel the Moriscos in Africa have a translation in Spanish; and there is in the library of Prince Eugene of Savoy, a manuscript of some antiquity, containing an Italian translation of the same Gospel. This book appears to be no original forgery of the Mohammedans, though they have no doubt interpolated and altered it since, the better to serve their purpose; and in particular, instead of the (Greek word) *Paraclete* or Comforter, (John xiv:16,26 and xv:26 and xvi:7 compared with Luke xxiv:49) they have in this apocryphal gospel inserted the (Greek word) *Periclyte*, that is the famous or illustrious, by which they pretend their prophet was foretold by name, that being the signification of Moḥammed in Arabic; and this they say to justify that passage of the Korān in Arabic; and this they say to justify that passage of the Koran where Jesus Christ is formally asserted to have foretold his coming, under his other name of Aḥmed; which is derived from the same Arabic root as Moḥammed, and of the same import. From these or some other like forgeries Mohammedans quote several passages, of which there are not in the least like those of the New Testament. But we must not hence infer that the Mohammedans, much less all of them, hold these copies of theirs to be the ancient and genuine Scriptures themselves." "Preliminary Discourse" to *The Koran*, translated by George Sale, (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1734),s p. 38.

frauds' were never considered to be part of the original text of the Bible by the Christian church and therefore cannot be regarded as a 'corruption' of the accepted text itself.¹⁴⁵

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān concludes his discourse noting that according to Muslim belief, the term *tahrīf* when applied to the Biblical text does not imply an actual mutilation of the text, but simply the modifying of words when read to another, or the concealing of passages; or the transgression of the commandments of God; or misinterpreting or misconstruing the words of God.¹⁴⁶ On the basis of this Qur'ānic evidence, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān rejects the possibility of *tahrīf al-lafz* having occurred. He contends that the only evidence of *tahrīf* having occurred with respect to the Biblical text is *tahrīf al-ma'nā* (corruption of the meaning of the text).¹⁴⁷

Goldsack's studies on the corruption of the Bible according to the Qur'ān are found in a chapter of *The Bible In Islam* entitled "Modern charges of corruption based on the Qur'ān."¹⁴⁸ In this chapter Goldsack first juxtaposes the findings of al-Zamakhsharī, al-Bayḍāwī, the Jālalain and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī that the Biblical Scriptures have not been corrupted but misinterpreted with the view of Ibn Ḥazm and al-Juwaynī that both the text and the interpretation have been corrupted. He then compares the conclusions of the aforementioned Islamic commentators who affirm the trustworthiness of the Biblical text with several 19th century Muslim theologians who follow Ibn Ḥazm and al-Juwaynī's thinking and hold that the Biblical text is corrupt.¹⁴⁹ Khan's and Goldsack's studies are important because they compare two different views of the Biblical Scriptures, firstly, those of the early Islamic commentators who allowed reason and metaphor in their

145 Khān, *The Seventh Discourse*, p. 36.

146 Ibid., p. 35.

147 F. Buhl, S.V. "*Tahrīf*", SEI, p. 560.

148 Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, Chapter III, pp. 11-42.

149 Ibid.

interpretation of a religious text and secondly, those of Ibn Ḥazm and al-Juwaynī who did not.

In his study, Goldsack, like Khān, defines *tahrīf* in the words of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī who, in his commentary *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, stated that it meant "to change, to alter, to turn aside anything from its truth".¹⁵⁰ He notes that while the early Islamic commentators accused the Jews of Muḥammad's day of *tahrīf al-ma'nā* or corruption of the meaning of the text, some 19th century Islamic scholars accused them of *tahrīf al-lafz* or the corruption of the text itself.

Goldsack observes that one Qur'ānic text frequently cited by 19th century Islamic scholars to demonstrate that *tahrīf al-lafz* or corruption of the actual text had occurred was the phrase "they shift the words from their places" in sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 14 [cf. Muir's art. 55]¹⁵¹ Goldsack notes that al-Bukhārī, in his *tafsīr Fath al-bari' fī sharḥ al-Bukhārī*, in commenting on this passage says: "They shift, that is remove; but there is no one who could remove a single word from any Book of God, but they shift, that is change its meaning."¹⁵² Goldsack notes that Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, commenting on this passage, states: "From the clause which follows, namely, 'they forgot that which they were admonished'; it is seen that the meaning is, they changed the meaning and purport of the words; not that they changed the actual words."¹⁵³

A second Qur'ānic text frequently cited by 19th century Islamic scholars to demonstrate that *tahrīf al-lafz* or corruption of the actual text had occurred was sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):46:

Among the Jews are those who displace the words and say, 'We have heard, and we have not obeyed. Hear thou, but as one that heareth not; and look at us,' perplexing with their tongues, and wounding the faith by their revilings.

¹⁵⁰ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, cited by Goldsack *Bible in Islam*, p. 11. Cf. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *TK*, Vol. i, p. 64.

¹⁵¹ Muir, *Coran*, p. 198.

¹⁵² Al-Bukhārī, *Fath al-bari' fī sharḥ al-Bukhārī*, cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 12.

¹⁵³ Khān, *TK*, vol. i, p. 67 cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, pp. 12, 13.

Goldsack cites the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* which here comments that in order to ridicule Muḥammad, some of the Jews used to alter certain salutations current among the people. *In this way they twisted the meaning of the Scriptures rather than changing the text itself* (emphasis Goldsack's).¹⁵⁴

A third Qur'ānic text frequently cited by 19th century Islamic scholars to demonstrate that corruption of the actual text had occurred was sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):75 [cf. Muir's art. 32]: "A party of them heard the word of God, and then, after they had understood it, perverted it, and know that they did." Goldsack notes that al-Bayḍāwī, commenting on this passage in his *Tafsīr*, states that the perverting had reference to distorting the reading of the passage in the Bible on stoning. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, further notes that "The clause, 'heard the word of God, and then, after they had understood it, perverted it,' shows that the change was verbal in reading: not that the written words of the text were changed."¹⁵⁵

A fourth Qur'ānic passage, Goldsack notes, which was frequently cited by 19th century Indian Muslims to indicate that the Jews removed passages from their Scriptures, was sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):154:

Those who conceal anything that we have sent down either of clear proof or of guidance, after what we have so clearly shown to men in the Book, God shall curse them, and they who curse shall curse them.

He notes that the 'concealing' here referred to is taken by some 19th century Indian Muslims to mean that the Jews removed certain passages from their Scriptures; but, he notes that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in his *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, states that: "Ibn 'Abbās said a company of Jews concealed certain commands and then was sent down this verse."¹⁵⁶ Goldsack notes that "the accusation of 'concealing' is mentioned a number of times in the Qur'ān, but nowhere does it mean that they cut out or altered the actual words of Scripture."¹⁵⁷

154 Goldsack, *The Bible in Islam*, p. 13.

155 Khān, *TK*, p. 67 cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 15.

156 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 16.

157 Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 17.

Goldsack concludes that there is overwhelming evidence in the Qur'ān and early Islamic commentaries against *tahrīf al-lafz* or the corruption of the actual text of the Bible having occurred. The only charge made of the Jews is that of altering the meaning by false interpretation, *tahrīf al-ma'nā* or of hiding the truth by the concealment of certain passages. In this regard he cites Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, who in his *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān fī 'l-tafsīr al-musnad* states:

It is related by Ibn al-Mandhar and Ibn Abi Ḥātim from Wahb b. al-Munabbih that not a letter has been altered of the Tawrat and Injīl from that which was sent down by God, but they (the Jews) used to lead people astray by changing and altering the meaning. They used also to write books from themselves and then say, "It is from God" when they were not from God. But the (real) Books of God were protected from change, and had not been altered.¹⁵⁸

7.0 QUR'ĀNIC STUDIES ABOUT THE ALLEGED ABROGATION (*NASKH*) OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

In Muir's studies of the concept of abrogation (*naskh*) as described in the Qur'ān he observes that it was applied only to the Qur'ānic text itself and not to any of the 'Previous Scriptures'. In accounting for the necessity of this concept, Muir observes that the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān in parts to suit the varying needs of the hour led eventually to passages which were irreconcilably opposed in their meaning; and that when this happened the earlier was abrogated by the later in accordance with sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):100, "Whatever verses we cancel or cause thee to forget, we give thee better in their stead, or the like thereof".¹⁵⁹

Muir cites a few common examples of passages which were abrogated by others. One of the first passages to be abrogated concerned the period of time which must lapse before a widow can remarry, which was changed from a year to four months and ten days. Secondly, the verse, that "twenty of you if steadfast shall beat two hundred," that is to say, in the proportion of one to ten, was cancelled by another verse which, recognizing that some were weak, lightened the

¹⁵⁸ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān fī 'l-tafsīr al-musnad*, cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. II, pp. 136, 137

burden thus: "If there be one hundred steadfast amongst you, they shall beat two hundred," or in the proportion of one to two. Thirdly, the Ḥaram of Mecca replaced the former Qibla of Jerusalem.¹⁶⁰ Al-Bayḍāwī noted that the response from the Arab Jews to the practice of abrogation was one of surprise:

The Jews and Idolaters said, 'Look at Muhammad; he gives an order to his followers, and then tells them exactly the opposite'; on which this verse was revealed. Cancellation consists either in removing the verse itself or abrogating what it commands, or both together. 'We cancel,' that is We command thee, or Gabriel, in respect of its abrogation, and thou shalt find it cancelled.'¹⁶¹

The Jews, it is noted here, were scandalised at abrogation or cancellation as they had never heard anything of the kind either in the Law or Prophets. Therefore, they looked upon the Qur'ānic laws as expedient, only given in a particular situation and not applicable in any others. They further emphasized that any change or abrogation of God's word would show a defect in his Almighty Power and Knowledge.¹⁶²

Muir holds that the teaching of *naskh* (abrogation) in the Qur'ān applied only to passages in it and contends that there was no suggestion *in the Qur'ān* of one Biblical passage having been abrogated by another nor that the Bible was abrogated by the Qur'ān.¹⁶³ He therefore did not dwell on the question of *naskh* as it applied to the Bible. Khān acknowledged, according to Troll, that the popular opinion in India among Muslims was that according to the Islamic traditions the divinely revealed *Sharī'as* had abrogated one another as they appeared successively in history until the coming of the final *Sharī'a* of Muhammad.¹⁶⁴ For this reason, both Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and Goldsack devoted considerable attention to this question.

160 *Minār*, trans by Muir, pp. 55, 56.

161 *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, cited in *Minār*, trans. Muir, p. 56.

162 *Minār*, trans. Muir, p. 56.

163 *Ibid.*

164 Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 89.

In Khān's studies of the concept of abrogation (*naskh*) as described in the Qur'ān he admits that abrogation embodied the Islamic doctrines of *naskh* (abrogation), *nāsikh* (abrogating) and *mansūkh* (abrogated) as well as the study of precisely how one verse of the Qur'ān abrogated another, called '*lm al-naskh*'.¹⁶⁵ However, Khān questions the implications of the doctrine of *naskh* in the same manner as did the 8th century Mu'tazilites who, in their debates with the Orthodox Islamic scholars pointed out that the doctrine of *naskh* was suspect because it imputed to the Changeless One ('*adam al-taghaiyur*) a change of mind (*badā nadam*).¹⁶⁶ Therefore, Khān strives to limit the applications of abrogation. Furthermore, he does not believe that abrogation applied to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures at all and with respect to the Qur'ān, considers that it occurred in only a carefully defined number of passages.

The prominent Indian scholar, Shāh Walī Allāh, was among those who held that one Sharī'a had replaced another due to its gradually becoming corrupted until the coming of the final Sharī'a of Muḥammad (the *Sharī'a al-Muḥammadiya*).¹⁶⁷ Others, such as Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, followed the tradition of the Mu'tazilites and rejected the idea that the Qur'ān abrogated the Jewish and Christian Scriptures or that Islam abrogated Christianity. Khān rather concludes that the one revealed religion, the *dīn* of all prophets, is to acknowledge and worship the One True God.¹⁶⁸ He regards the sending of different Sharī'as¹⁶⁹ as a divine act expressing the one true and unchanging religion (*dīn*) in different contexts and at different periods of time. Although Sayyid Aḥmad Khān accepted that the Biblical Scriptures were neither corrupted nor abrogated, he did not accept

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Shāh Walī Allāh, *Hujjat*, vol. I, pp. 85-88 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 89.

¹⁶⁸ Khān, TK, I, p. 265, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, fn . p. 90.

¹⁶⁹ By Sharī'as Khān seems to mean those divine laws which came from the Holy Books of the Bible and the Qur'ān and which were in force during different periods of time (*hukms*). According to Troll, Khān apparently adopted this idea from Shāh Walī Allāh's theological work *Hujjat Allāh al-bālagha*, vol. I (Bulaq, 1286 A.H.), pp. 121-22, Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 89, 90.

that they supported some of the doctrines held by Christians (such as the doctrine of the Trinity) because "all Scriptures testify to nothing else but to the true unity (of God) (*waḥdat-i ḥaqīqī*)."¹⁷⁰ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān concludes:

Those who imagine it (abrogation) to be a part of the Muhammadan creed that one law has totally repealed another are utterly mistaken; and we do not believe that the Zabūr (Book of Psalms) abrogated the Tawrāt (Pentateuch), that the Zabūr in turn gave way to the Injīl (New Testament), and that the New Testament was suppressed by the Holy Qur'ān. We hold no such doctrine, and if any ignorant Muḥammadan should assert to the contrary, he simply knows nothing whatever about the doctrines and articles of his faith.¹⁷¹

In Goldsack's studies of the concept of abrogation (*naskh*) as described in the Qur'ān he observes that very few of the early Islamic theologians alleged that the doctrine of abrogation applied to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. In the 19th century, he observed, the Qur'ānic concept of abrogation was applied to the Bible but it was necessarily based on a select number of Qur'ānic passages.

Goldsack observes that one of these key Qur'ānic passages which was alleged to refer to the abrogation of the Biblical text was sūra xvi (*al-Nahl*): 101.

And when we change one verse for another, and God knoweth best what He revealeth, they say, 'Thou art only a fabricator'. Nay, but most of them have no knowledge.

He cites the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* which, in commenting on this verse, reads:

They, that is the infidels, said to the Prophet, on whom by the peace and blessing of God, 'Thou art only a forger, thou speakest (these things) from thyself.' But most of them do not know the truth of the Qur'ān and the benefit of abrogation.¹⁷²

He also observes that in the *Tafsīr al-Qādiriyya*¹⁷³ and the *Tafsīr al-Māddiyya al-Qur'ān*¹⁷⁴ exactly the same explanation is given. He then notes that the exegete al-Bayḍāwī in his *Tafsīr* writes: "They, that is the infidels, said, 'Thou art only a forger, ascribing thy words to God. Thou commandest something, and afterwards

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 43, 179, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 92, 95.

¹⁷¹ Khān, TK, p. 268 cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 50.

¹⁷² *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 44.

¹⁷³ Abd al-Qadir, *Tafsīr al-Qādiriyya*, (vol. ii, p. 581), cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 44.

¹⁷⁴ *Tafsīr al-Māddiyya al-Qur'ān*, p. 280, cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 44.

forbiddest it."¹⁷⁵ Goldsack concludes that all of these early Islamic commentators make it clear that sūra xvi (*al-Naḥl*): 101 refers to the Qur'ān, and has nothing whatever to do with the *Tawrāt* and *Injīl*.¹⁷⁶

Goldsack observes that a second passage in the Qur'ān which was alleged by some 19th century Muslim scholars to refer to the abrogation of the Biblical text by the Qur'ān was sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):100: "Whatever verse we may annul or cause to forget, we will bring a better or its like." Goldsack notes that in the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*¹⁷⁷ one reads that the words of the passage under discussion refer, not to the *Tawrāt* and *Injīl*, but to the words of Muḥammad himself that God would abrogate. Also, al-Bayḍāwī in his *Tafsīr* comments: "This (sūra) came down when the polytheists or the Jews said, 'Do ye not see Muhammad, he commands a certain thing to his followers, and afterwards forbids them it, and commands the very opposite.'"¹⁷⁸ The *Tafsīr al-Qādiriyya* states that the passage means: "Whatever verse we abrogate from the Qur'ān, we will bring a better than such abrogated verse".¹⁷⁹ Therefore, Goldsack notes, it is clear that the early Islamic commentators regarded the passages under discussion to refer explicitly and solely to the abrogation of an earlier sūra in the Qur'ān by a later sūra. They regarded these texts as having no reference whatever to the abrogation of passages in the Bible by those in the Qur'ān.¹⁸⁰ Goldsack observes that far from abrogating the *Tawrat* and the *Injīl*, Muḥammad repeatedly described the Qur'ān as 'confirmatory of what was before it.' On this matter he cites 'Abd al-Ḥakim Khān who stated:

How absurd is the opinion expressed so often by Muslims, and on their authority by Christians, that the Holy Qur'ān abrogates the preceding Scriptures. Nowhere does the Holy Qur'ān contain a single word that may express the abrogation of the Pentateuch or of the Gospel or of other

175 *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, p. 22 cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 44.

176 *Ibid.*

177 *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 45.

178 *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, p. 22, cited by Goldsack, *The Bible in Islam*, p. 46.

179 *Tafsīr al-Qādiriyya*, p. 26, cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 46.

180 Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, pp. 46, 47.

Scriptures; but it repeatedly claims to be a confirmation of their teachings.¹⁸¹

8.0 HIGHER CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE AND MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE¹⁸²

The perception of the Bible by the Christian community in India at the beginning of the 19th century was that the texts of the Old and New Testaments were entirely trustworthy. However, during the 18th and 19th century, rationalistic scholars such as Hume, Voltaire and Lessing cast doubt on whether the Biblical documents were reliable. Higher critics such as David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74),¹⁸³ Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860),¹⁸⁴ and John William Colenso (1814-83)¹⁸⁵ called into question the reliability of both the Old and New Testament books. Their arguments were based on the presupposition that miracles were impossible and prophecy the result of mistaken dating. It was a short step (which these scholars eventually took) to conclude that God, if he existed, did not intrude into the natural order of events. Although, a critical investigation of sources began in the area of Biblical Studies, it had its counterpart in Islamic Studies as well.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ *Tafsīr-'Abd al-Ḥakim Khan*, p. 213, cited by Goldsack, *Bible in Islam*, p. 50.

¹⁸² In this thesis the term 'higher criticism' means the use of scientific techniques of literary criticism to establish the sources of the books of the Bible. Compare with 'lower criticism' in fn. 39.

¹⁸³ D.F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, The Life of Jesus, critically examined*, trans. by Marian Evans (George Eliot) from the 4th German edition, 3 vols. (London: 1846).

¹⁸⁴ Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi* (Stuttgart: 1845). Translated as *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: 1875).

¹⁸⁵ John William Colenso, *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined*, (London: Longman, 1862).

¹⁸⁶ In 1901, J. Wellhausen published his *Die religiöse-politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam*. William Robertson Smith in 1887 gave a series of lectures entitled *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, the Fundamental Institutions*. In these lectures he began investigating the Arab world and applying the methods of higher criticism to the study of the Islamic sources. Also at this time, C.H. Becker proceeded with the same method of study in his *Islamstudien* (1924-32) and L. Caetani, in his *Studia di storia orientale* published in 1914, concluded that in the rise of Islam economic factors were the most decisive ones. See *The Legacy of Islam*, eds. Joseph Schacht with C.E. Bosworth (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 55.

Powell records that Raḥmat Allāh challenged Pfander to a debate on the reliability of the Bible to be held in Delhi during the Easter week of 1854.¹⁸⁷ Raḥmat Allāh based his case against the reliability of the Biblical Scriptures on 19th century Biblical criticism rather than on evidence in the Qur'ān. Raḥmat Allāh's introduction of arguments from higher criticism about the Bible in a debate between Muslims and Christians was unique. In this debate he chose to focus on textual corruption (*tahrīf al-lafz*) of the Bible as the central issue. Pfander's position remained that all errors were those of copyists and furthermore: "there were no corruptions of the text which affected any Christian doctrine".¹⁸⁸ Raḥmat Allāh brought forward the difference of genealogies in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels as evidence that this assumption was not well founded. In spite of Pfander's response that the differences arose because one genealogy applied to Mary and the other to Joseph, this discrepancy of *isnād* was seemingly used to great effect with the Muslim Indian populace.¹⁸⁹

Powel notes that Wazīr Khān, Raḥmat Allāh's second in the debate with Pfander, then brought forward arguments to make the point that there were corruptions in the Biblical text which went well beyond copyists' errors and would constitute *tahrīf al-lafz* (textual corruption).¹⁹⁰ Wazīr Khān's position was based on the views of higher critics mentioned in D.F. Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, first published in Germany in 1835-6 but available since the mid-1840s in English. Powell concludes that Pfander lost the debate with Wazīr Khān and Raḥmat Allāh because he was unaware of the conclusions of higher criticism regarding the Bible.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, pp. 248-250.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., Cf. Bennett, *Victorian Images*, p. 114.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, pp. 248-250.

The present author disagrees with Powell that Pfander lost the debate with Waz̄ir Khān and Raḥmat Allāh because he was unaware of the studies of higher criticism about the Biblical Scriptures. Pfander was educated at a time and in a context in which higher criticism in Germany was at a fever pitch.¹⁹² As an able Biblical scholar in Old Testament and Islamic Studies this is one topic about which he would have read in some depth. Pfander displayed an understanding that higher criticism was directed more against authorship and authenticity than against the content of the text itself.¹⁹³ Also, it appears that Pfander was well aware that Strauss, Baur and Colenso did not argue that the text was corrupt, but only that it was written by people other than those who were purported to be its authors.¹⁹⁴ Thus it is more reasonable to conclude that Pfander did not respond to the arguments alleged to be based on higher criticism because he found it perplexing to know how to attack Strauss' rationalistic presuppositions in front of an audience who did not understand the terminology involved in higher or lower criticism.¹⁹⁵

Waz̄ir Khān, knowing that the chain of authorship or *isnād* of a book was a critical factor for its reliability in the eyes of a Muslim audience, pointed out that according to higher critics the authorship of some books of the Bible was disputed. Although the Indian audience was unable to appreciate fully the differences between higher and lower criticism, they believed that if the authorship was in dispute it must be unreliable. They therefore concluded that the outcome of the

¹⁹² During Pfander's time at seminary at Basle (1820's), Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780-1849) came to lecture at the University of Basel after having been dismissed from the University of Berlin in 1819 for being a rationalist. De Wette was one of the leading German Higher Critics who challenged the authorship and authenticity of the Biblical text. Philip Schaff, *Germany, its Universities, Theology, and Religion* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1857), p. 242.

¹⁹³ A study of the content of the text concerned lower criticism, the relation of the uncial codices such as Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus to the Received Text or *Textus Receptus* which was the established text of 4th century Byzantium.

¹⁹⁴ Pfander, "Auszüge," pp. 194-95; idem, "Kampf mit den Muhammedanern in Indien, in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*," 12 Dez. 1844, pp. 100-106. Cf. D. Eppler, *Karl Gottlieb Pfander, ein Zeuge der Wahrheit unter den Bekennern des Islam* (Basel: Verlag der Missionsbunhandlung, 1888), cited by Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, p. 250.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

debate was a resounding victory for the Islamic opinion that the Biblical text was unreliable.¹⁹⁶

To many Western scholars, however, the arguments from higher criticism employed by the 19th century Muslims were unconvincing because they were used without paying any attention to the accepted literary conventions of this method. Some writers, such as Raḥmat Allāh, cite the higher critics (whom he called *mulhids* or renegades) although disapproving of their method so as to show that the opinions of the higher critics about the Bible outweigh those which Christian scholars offer concerning the Prophet of Islam.¹⁹⁷

Gaudeul notes that others, such as Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935), in his continuation of Muḥammad 'Abduh's (1849-1905) *Tafsīr al-Manār*, cite no references to the modern authors though Riḍā appeals repeatedly to "modern science."¹⁹⁸ Still others, such as Muḥammad Tawfīq Ṣiddiqūī, display a hatred of Christianity in argumentation and go so far as to make attacks against the person of Jesus as portrayed by Christians in order to demonstrate that the 'Christian Jesus' is not the 'real Jesus'.¹⁹⁹

8.2 KHAN'S REJECTION OF HIGHER CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE

The second Islamic group to study the Bible were the liberal Islamic reformers in India. They set forth the idea that the Islam of Muḥammad and of the Qur'ān is without defect and that its principles are in perfect harmony with nature and reason. This school of thought has been variously described as *Necharī* (i.e. according to Nature) and neo-Mu'tazilite.²⁰⁰ In acknowledgment of the Qur'ānic passages exalting the Biblical Scriptures, many liberal Islamic reformers asserted

¹⁹⁶ Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, p. 250.

¹⁹⁷ Raḥmat Allāh, *Fjaz-i 'Isawī* (1871), p. 5; cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 74.

¹⁹⁸ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, Vol. I, p. 268.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ The first name was given because of the extensive use made of the term by Sayyid Aḥmad Khān in his effort to show that Islam, when rightly understood, is of all the religions in the world most in accord with nature and man. M. Titus, *Indian Islam*, p. 208.

that the Biblical texts were reliable and when rightly interpreted would affirm the Qur'ān. They also were astute enough in their studies of higher criticism to conclude that any critique of the Bible would eventually be levelled at the Qur'ān also. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān dismisses the higher criticism of Strauss, Baur and Colenso as an enemy, not only of Christianity but of Islam as well. He cites approvingly such Biblical scholars as George D'Oyly (1778-1846), Richard Mant (1776-1848)²⁰¹ and Nathaniel Lardner (1684-1768),²⁰² who affirmed the reliability of the Old and New Testament Scriptures.²⁰³ In his *Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*, Khān attempted to show that "historic" Islam and Christianity were in agreement concerning the reliability of the Biblical Scriptures.²⁰⁴ He stresses that according to Muslim belief the books designated as the 'Previous Scriptures' were the *Tawrāt* (Five Books of Moses), *Ṣaḥīfah* (prophetic books of the Prophets of Israel), *Zabūr* (Psalms), and *Injīl* (the book of the Lord 'Isā). He claims that on the evidence in the Qur'ān,

all (of these aforementioned Biblical books) are true and correct and have descended from God and the divine word that came down after these is the Glorious Qur'ān which descended on Muhammad the Apostle of God.²⁰⁵

9.0 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN ABOUT THE BIBLE IN ISLAM

Muir, Khān and Goldsack conclude that the evidence from textual criticism confirmed that the Biblical text at the time of the Qur'ān and referred to as the "previous scriptures" was in fact the same as the Biblical text which has always been used by Jews and Christians. They note that the reliability of the Biblical text could also be established by using this method. However, they believed that for the purposes of Muslim-Christian dialogue it was more convincing to the Muslim to affirm the reliability of the Biblical text along a Qur'ānic axis. The three 19th

201 George D'Oyly and R. Mant, *The Holy Bible* (London:1814).

202 Nathaniel Lardner, *The Works of Nathaniel Lardner* (10 vols., London: 1835).

203 Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 73.

204 Ibid, p. 58.

205 Khān, *TK*, Vol. I, p. 32.

century authors are able to point out, much as did the early apologists, that the text of the "Previous Scriptures" is regarded as completely reliable in the Qur'ān, even if the readings and interpretations of it were not. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was the most influential of the three authors in answering the question of whether the Biblical Scriptures had undergone textual corruption (*taḥrīf al-lafz*). He draws his conclusions on the basis of statements by the early Islamic commentators, such as al-Bukhārī, who concluded that "there is no man who could corrupt (*taḥrīf al-lafz*) by changing a single word of God." The Biblical text, Khān concludes, is uncorrupted, and the Jews and Christians could only corrupt the meaning of the text (*taḥrīf al-ma'nā*).²⁰⁶ Furthermore, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān persuasively argues that abrogation (*naskh*) did not apply to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures at all and with respect to the Qur'ān, it occurred in only a carefully defined number of passages.

Regarding the purpose of the previous scriptures in Islamic belief and practice, Muir, Khān and Goldsack all agree that in the Qur'ān they are referred to as offering to all who read and observe their precepts: "guidance and mercy", "light and direction", and "blessings in this life and the hereafter". Therefore, the three authors conclude that the previous scriptures should still play a valid place in the devotional life of the Muslim. In regards to the question as to how the previous scriptures could be used in Muslim-Christian dialogue all three authors observe that one need only cite Meccan sūra x (*Yūnus*): 93:

If thou art in doubt regarding that which We have sent down unto thee, then ask those who read the book (revealed) before thee. Verily the truth hath come unto thee from thy Lord; be not therefore amongst those that doubt.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

Muir observes that in commenting on this verse al-Bayḍāwī states "for verily it (i.e. the Qur'ān) is testified to in *all of the preceding Scriptures* (of Jews and Christians)" (emphasis added).²⁰⁷

Muir concludes that in the appeal to these works for the purpose of allaying the doubts of the Prophet, they are regarded by the Qur'ān as inspired, genuine and pure.²⁰⁸ Concepts raised in the Qur'ān which need further clarification by the Biblical text are supremely the places where Muslim-Christian dialogue can most fruitfully be initiated. Some of these Qur'ānic concepts addressed in the next chapter, are: Jesus' unique titles 'God's Word' and 'His Spirit', Jesus being born of a virgin, Jesus' sinless nature, Jesus healing the blind, the deaf and lepers, the ambiguity surrounding Jesus' crucifixion, and Jesus second coming as just judge.

²⁰⁷ *Minar*, trans. Muir, pp. 100, 101.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

JESUS IN ISLAM

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Jesus' uniqueness is attested to in Islam by his titles ("Word of God" and "His Spirit"), his virgin birth, his sinless life, his miracles and his second coming as just judge. This chapter looks anew at the Qur'ānic evidence in which Jesus and His work is the focus of attention in no less than three of the chapters, namely, that of Aaron's family sūra iii: (*al- 'Imrān*)¹, that of The Table, sūra v: (*al-Mā'ida*) and that of Mary sūra xix: (*Maryam*). The fact that Jesus has a prominent place in Islamic literature and is acknowledged to be a prophet of Islam also invites a comparison between Muḥammad and Jesus. Some of the most important questions on the topic of Jesus in Islam, Muir notes, were those which were posed to a Muslim by the Arab Christian author of the *Minār ul Ḥaqq*:

Who, do you think might have been conceived without an earthly father, and to whom at His birth Satan could find no way of approach?

Who could that have been, named in the Koran "The Word of God a Spirit of God"? For what Being, one would ask, could be greater than the Spirit of God?

Who could that have been who, we are told, spoke to those around Him while yet in the cradle? Who, that could, as al-Bayḏāwī explains, give life to the dead and to the hearts of men (i.e. to their bodies and to their spirits)?²

Muir, Khān and Goldsack studied the evidence of al-Bukhārī, al-Bayḏāwī, al-Zamakhsharī, the Jalālayn, and al-Rāzī, all of whom attempted to describe the Islamic Jesus.

¹ Al-Bayḏāwī attempts to explain the anachronism in sūra xix by stating that (1) Mary is called the sister of Aaron by way of comparison; or (2) or because she was of the Levitical race. *Hughes' Dictionary*, s.v. 'Imrān, p. 206.

² *Minār ul Ḥaqq*, trans. Muir, p. 159.

2.0 PERCEPTIONS OF JESUS IN EARLY MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

Dialogues between Muslims and Christians about the person of Jesus were affected by three distinct influences in theology. Firstly, they were influenced by the Christian theological debates which occurred before the advent of Islam and reflected differing explanations of how, in the person of Christ, one finds a real union between God and man. All these debates ultimately took place in the shadow of the Trinity. If Jesus were God, then the doctrine of the Trinity was a necessity. But if God had no Son in the sense which Christians claimed, then Jesus was an ordinary man. There was therefore a necessary distinction between the Jesus of logical dialectic based on reason alone and the statements about Him contained in the Bible. A second pervasive theological influence on all Muslim-Christian dialogues about Jesus was the Jewish-Christian debates about the person of Jesus which had taken place in Syria immediately before Islam.³ Muslim converts to Islam from Nestorian Christianity used the same subtle arguments which the Jewish scholar Herban employed in his debates against Cyprian and Aphraates.⁴ The third and strongest influence on Muslim-Christian dialogue about the person of Jesus in the 19th century were the Muslim-Christian dialogues which took place during the 8th-11th centuries along the lines of admitted truths.

The place of Jesus in Islam was most fully discussed during the Muslim-Christian dialogues held at the Court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn in Baghdad. This Caliph's espousal of the Mu'tazilite cause led him to view the person of Jesus in a more tolerant manner than many other caliphs. This was due to the fact that certain Mu'tazilites attempted to give Jesus something approaching the place He holds in Christian doctrine. Thus, the author of *Kitāb al-intiṣār* writes:

³ Mingana, *Timothy's Apology*, Vol. ii, 37 (1928), p. 17. Cf. Sweetman, *Theology*, pt. I, Vol. I, p. 71.

⁴ See chapter one, section 1.2 of this thesis.

We say, 'Among you (Mu'tazilite) there are some who say that Christ is He who created the world, and He is the Lord of the first and the last things, and He will be the reckoner for the people on the resurrection day, and He will be revealed to them; and it is He to whom the Prophet referred when he said, 'Ye shall see your Lord as ye see the moon, ye shall not be gathered together to see Him'.⁵

This same author describes the sayings of Faḍl and Ibn Ḥāyīṭ who, according to al-Shahrastānī, wrote that they were:

Followers of Al-Nazzām and added to his teaching three heresies. The first was their acceptance of a certain doctrine of divinity with regard to Christ, as the Christians do, according to their belief that Christ is He who will make reckoning with the Christians at the last day...and that Ibn Ḥāyīṭ said that Christ clothed Himself with a material body, and He was the eternal Word who became incarnate as the Christians said.⁶

The views about Jesus held by these Mu'tazilites did not have any permanent influence on mainstream Islam and they were usually regarded as heretics by the Muslim community. The reader will observe later in this chapter that these same Mu'tazilites lent support to the Christian argument for the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ.⁷

2.1 PERCEPTIONS OF JESUS IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHN OF DAMASCUS

In his *Disputatio*, John of Damascus laid the foundations for Muslim-Christian dialogue based on the parallel concepts of the *Divine Logos* as applied to Jesus in the New Testament (John 1:14) and the title *Kalimat Allāh*. The latter Islamic title, he notes, was derived from the Qur'ānic phrases *Kalimatuhu* ("His Word"), sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 167 and "the Word of God", sūra iii (*Al-'Imrān*): 40. When a Christian initiates dialogue about the person of Jesus with a Muslim, John of Damascus advises proceeding along the following line of argumentation. Firstly, the Christian should ask his Muslim friend "What is Christ called in your Scripture?" He suggests that with some prompting the Muslim inquirer will

⁵ *Kitāb al-intiṣār*, p. 148 cited by Browne, *The Eclipse of Christianity In Asia*, p. 130.

⁶ Al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal wa'l-niḥal*, p. 42, Haarbrücker's trans. p. 62, cited by Browne, *Eclipse*, p. 130.

⁷ See section 5.6.1 below.

answer: 'In my Scripture, Christ is called the Spirit and Word of God'".⁸ The Damascene would then pose the question: "In your Scriptures are the Spirit of God and Word of God said to be uncreated or created?" If, on the one hand, the answer was 'created' then John of Damascus suggests that the Christian should ask the Muslim inquirer, "and who created the Spirit and the Word of God?"⁹ Furthermore, if the Muslim inquirer believes that God created the Spirit and Word, the Christian should ask: "Before God created the Spirit and Word did He have neither Spirit nor Word?"¹⁰ At this point in the dialogue, John of Damascus observes: "he will not have anything to answer you on this point, because those who hold that opinion (Mu'tazilites) are considered as heretics by the *Muḥaddithūn*".¹¹ If, on the other hand, the answer of the Muslim is that the Word of God is "uncreated" then John of Damascus would affirm this truth as admitted in the New Testament when speaking of Jesus. (John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.")

John of Damascus used the concept of the Word of God to explain Jesus' humanity and divinity to Muslims with respect to the crucifixion. If Muslims asked 'Did He whom you call God die?'¹² John of Damascus replied in the negative. He noted rather that in Jesus' human nature (as the son of Mary) he experienced suffering and death, but he did not suffer in his divine nature (as God's Word).¹³

It was then a short step, which the Apollinarians took, in stressing that Jesus was not merely a perfect man but a sort of a flesh clothed Logos.¹⁴ The

⁸ Voorhis, "The Discussion of a Christian and a Saracen", pp. 258ff. Cf. Sweetman, *Theology*, Part One, Vol. I, pp. 66, 67.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol I, p. 61.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* The Nestorian position over-emphasized the humanity of Jesus and tended to regard him as only a man who was indwelt by God to the utmost degree. The Nestorian position undoubtedly influenced the Muslim conception of Jesus' nature as being solely human. By

logical conclusion of the Apollinarian position was that the destruction of Christ's humanity on the cross was more apparent than real. This concept may have given rise to the popular Islamic interpretation of sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 156,157 that Jesus only "appeared to die" on the cross but in fact did not and was taken to heaven.¹⁵

2.2 PERCEPTIONS OF JESUS IN THE WRITINGS OF AL-KINDĪ

Al-Kindī emphasizes the statements about Jesus in the Qur'ān quoting at length the accounts of the annunciation of Christ (sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*) 35), the story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist and his being called God's Word (sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*) :40).¹⁶ He then dwells on Jesus' miracles, showing that they were acknowledged in the Qur'ān.¹⁷ Al-Kindī observes that in contrast with the wonderful works done by the Jewish prophets, Jesus performed miracles by his own inherent power, and never failed as did Moses at the waters of Meribah, or as did Jeremiah, whom the Lord refused to hear.¹⁸ Al-Kindī then dwells on the personal traits of Jesus recounted in the Gospels and the Qur'ān, such as his meekness, humility and kindness. He places special stress on his poverty and the absence of any worldly object except to bring salvation to mankind. With respect to the teaching of Jesus recounted in the Gospels and the Qur'ān, al-Kindī focuses on the teaching of Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁹ Lastly, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus are recounted in a very few lines. "Let me add, states Al-Kindī, one of the testimonies of the Qur'ān "(about the death of Christ).²⁰ He then cites sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 54,55:

contrast, the Apollinarian position denied to Christ a rational soul and held that in Christ the place of the rational soul was taken by the Logos. According to the Apollinarians Jesus was thus not a perfect man but sort of flesh-clothed logos. The Apollinarian position may have influenced the Islamic denial of the crucifixion.

¹⁵ *John of Damascus, Controversy Between A Saracene and a Christian*, cited by D.J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam, the "heresy of the Ishmaelites* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1972), p. 149.

¹⁶ *Al-Kindy*, trans. by Muir, p. 56ff.

¹⁷ Sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 87, 254, and sūra iii (*'Al-'Imrān*): 48.

¹⁸ *Al-Kindy*, trans. by Muir, p. 56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Al-Kindī does not refer to sūra iv:156,157, which he considers ambiguous, even though it is the sūra most frequently appealed to by Muslim apologists who deny the crucifixion.

When God said, O Jesus, verily I will cause thee to die, and will raise thee up unto myself, and will deliver thee from the unbelievers; and will make thy followers to be over those that disbelieve even until the day of judgment. Then unto me shall ye return; and I will judge between you, as to that concerning which ye have been at variance.

Al-Kindī's resumé of the Qur'ānic passages about Jesus displays his comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'ān on this topic. He does not accept the Qur'ān as the most adequate source of information about Jesus, but rather as the only source of evidence about Jesus which the Muslim will accept.²¹

2.3 PERCEPTIONS OF JESUS IN THE WRITINGS OF 'ALĪ TABARĪ

'Alī Ṭabarī affirms the Qur'ānic teachings about Jesus' place as a great prophet of Islam but challenges the use of the Qur'ān to attribute divinity to Jesus in any manner. Coming from Nestorianism, which endorsed the idea that Christ had a human and divine nature but that there was not a union of the two natures in essence, 'Alī Ṭabarī eventually affirmed only the human nature of Christ.

Gaudeul observes that in proof of this position he centres his discussion of the person of Jesus around seven theological questions which he regards as 'embarrassing' for Christians to answer.²² Firstly, do Christians accept monotheism or do they believe that Jesus is a second God? Secondly, he asks whether Jesus actually spoke the truth about himself when on the one hand he claims to be sent by God and on the other claims to be God. Thirdly, he queries whether God could actually undergo suffering and death. Fourthly, he asks: If the Christian Creed is true in all its words, how can the Father be acknowledged to be Creator of all while at the same time Jesus is uncreated. Fifthly, he demands that Christians must answer whether Christ is God or man. Sixthly, he asks whether Christ belonged to a particular time and place (while God is outside time and space). Seventhly, he states that Christians must decide whether they believe that

²¹ *Al-Kindy*, trans. by Muir, p. 56.

²² 'Alī Ṭabarī, *Al-radd 'alā'l-Naṣārā*, cited by Gaudeul, *Encounters*, p. 40.

Christ is the Creator or a creature.²³ 'Alī Ṭabarī suggests that truthful answers to these seven questions force the reader to ask one more question, namely: why do Christians make a god of Jesus? He gives an Islamic answer to this question by observing that Jesus himself did not claim to be God, his disciples never said it, the virgin birth does not prove it, and Jesus' miracles are no greater than those of other prophets.²⁴

Mingana observed that 'Alī Ṭabarī considers that the true importance of Jesus and his disciples lies in their being forerunners of Muḥammad and Islam, just as John the Baptist's importance was as a forerunner of Jesus and in a sense Christianity.²⁵ As proof of this thesis 'Alī Ṭabarī uses the argument that John xiv:27: "The Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, whom my father will send in my name, He will teach you everything" has a meaning prefiguring Islam. Here, he regards the "Paraclete" to be Muḥammad and the Qur'ān to be the knowledge that Christ has called "everything".²⁶ He also suggests that the New Testament prophecy found in I Peter iv:17 "The time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God" was fulfilled in the judgment which God exacted on the Ka'ba by Muḥammad at Mecca.²⁷

2.4 PERCEPTIONS OF THE ISLAMIC JESUS IN THE DIALOGUES OF MAR TIMOTHY AND THE CALIPH AL-MAHDĪ

The dialogue between the Nestorian Patriarch Mar Timothy and the Caliph al-Mahdī provides a synopsis of the previous dialogues about Christ and God. The Caliph begins by asking the age-old question: "What then do you say that Christ is"? Mar Timothy replied: "O King, Christ is the Word-God, who appeared in the flesh for the salvation of the world."²⁸ The Caliph then asks: "Do you not

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 41.

²⁵ 'Alī Ṭabarī, *Religion and Empire*, trans Mingana, 140-41.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ 'Alī Ṭabarī denies that this text could refer to judgment on the temple in Jerusalem because Christ had already predicted that (Matthew xxiv:2). 'Alī Ṭabarī, *Religion and Empire*, trans., Mingana, p. 142.

²⁸ *Timothy's Apology*, trans. Mingana, p. 17.

say that Christ is the Son of God." Timothy responds in the affirmative but he qualifies the meaning of the term 'Son of God,' giving it a metaphorical meaning: "but not a son in the flesh as children are born in the carnal way, but an admirable and wonderful Son".²⁹ Timothy then uses an extended simile to explain the term 'Son of God' as: "light is born of the sun and word of the soul, so also Christ who is Word, is born of God, high above time and before all the worlds."³⁰

The Caliph then asks: "Do you not say that He was born of the Virgin Mary?" And Timothy responds: "We say it and confess it. The very same Christ is the Word born of the Father, and a man born of Mary."³¹ In response to the question of the Caliph, as to how the eternal could be born in time, Timothy replies: "It is not in His eternity (divinity) that He was born of Mary, O our King, but in His temporalness and humanity." The Caliph considers that this answer makes Christ two beings, to which Timothy responds that Christ had not two beings but two natures:

Christ is not two beings, O King, nor two Sons, but Son and Christ are one; there are in Him two natures, one of which belongs to the Word and together one which is from Mary.³²

The question of Jesus' death and crucifixion was then raised. Al-Mahdī repeats Herban's question: "Can God die?" Timothy repudiates such a theological position on behalf of his own Nestorian Church.³³ He holds that Jesus in his human nature suffered and died, but not in his divine nature (as God's Word). Timothy then notes that in no book of the prophets or the Gospels do we find that God Himself (Jesus' divine nature) died in the flesh, though one finds in Scripture that the Son and Jesus Christ died in the flesh.³⁴

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid, Cf. Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I, pp. 72, 73.

³³ However Mar Timothy admits that the Jacobites and Melchites falsely state that God suffered and died in the flesh. Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I, pp. 72, 73.

³⁴ *Timothy's Apology*, trans. Mingana, pp. 87-89.

The Caliph sets forward sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):156 as conclusive evidence denying the crucifixion event itself. Timothy suggests, however, that the cumulative evidence in the Qur'ān is ambiguous on the matter of the crucifixion. In proof of this point he observes that although the afore-mentioned sūra has been quoted by some Muslims to deny the crucifixion of Jesus, others have quoted sūras: xix (*Maryam*): 34, iii (*'al-'Imrān*):48, and sūra v: (*al-Mā'ida*): 117 affirming the death of Jesus in the context of the crucifixion. Furthermore, Mar Timothy observes that it is written in the Qur'ān (sūra x (*Yūnus*): 94) that if (a Muslim) has any doubt about a matter written in the Qur'ān he is advised to consult those who have the "Previous Scriptures" i.e. the Jews and Christians. Therefore, the Caliph legitimately can appeal to the Bible in resolving this apparent discrepancy within the Qur'ānic text.³⁵

When the Caliph insists that God made a similitude or substitute for Jesus as it was dishonourable for him to die, Timothy reminds him that other prophets have been slain.³⁶ Regarding a substitute being made by God for Jesus Timothy contends:

It is incongruous to God that He should deceive and show something for another thing. If God deceived them and made a similitude for them, the Apostles who simply wrote what God had shown to them would be innocent of the deception, and the real cause of it would be God. If on the other hand, we say that it is Satan who made such a similitude for the Apostles, what has Satan to do in the economy of God?³⁷

The Caliph then asks if Jesus was crucified willingly or not. His line of reasoning is that if Jesus was willing to be crucified, the Jews who simply accomplished His will should not be cursed and despised. If however, Jesus was not willing to be

³⁵ The Biblical verses which Timothy alludes to as supporting the crucifixion are as follows: Psalm xxii:16-18; Isaiah liii:5; Lamentations iii:4, 30; Daniel ix:26; Zechariah xiii:7; and Jeremiah xi:19. *Timothy's Apology*, trans. Mingana, p. 41.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 42.

crucified and yet he was crucified, then he was weak and the Jews were strong.³⁸

To this argument Timothy replies that:

The Jews did not crucify the Christ because He willed it, but they crucified Him because of their hatred and malice both to Himself and to the One who sent Him. They crucified Him in order that they might destroy Him completely, and He willed to be crucified so that He might live again and rise from the dead, and be to all men the sign and proof of the resurrection of the dead.³⁹

2.5 PERCEPTIONS OF JESUS IN THE WRITINGS OF PAUL OF ANTIOCH

Paul of Antioch uses the method of employing truths admitted by the Qur'ān and the Bible whenever possible to explain Christian concepts to Muslims. He begins his explanation of the person of Christ by referring to Christ's relation to God. In this regard, Paul of Antioch held that in speaking of God one should use three names to express that the one God is an existing being (*shay'*), living (*ḥayy*), and speaking (*nāṭiq*). Firstly, he notes that it is the second of these names (*ḥayy*) that explains the incarnation of the Word who was the complete revelation of the divine nature, which had been previously hidden from mankind.⁴⁰

Secondly, Paul of Antioch argues that the Christian teaching concerning the Word of God, the Word which subsists eternally in God and which became incarnated in Jesus, is not incompatible with the Islamic teaching that the Qur'ān is the eternal and uncreated speech of God, for the eternally divine message can manifest itself in time in a specific individual as well as it could in a sacred book. Paul of Antioch holds that Christ's title of "God's Spirit" as well as "God's Word" in the Qur'ān is further evidence of his union with God (*aqānīm*) and the divine indwelling of God (*ḥulūl*) in him.⁴¹

Thirdly, Paul of Antioch argues that the Word of God incarnate is singular, just as the Qur'ān emphasizes when it states that Jesus is God's Word or His

³⁸ Ibid, p. 43.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 44.

⁴⁰ Paul of Antioch, *Risāla ila Aḥad al-Muslimīn*, 54:79-80, cited by Michel, *Response*, p. 92.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Word, but not "a word of God" i.e. one of many. In support of this the Arabic in sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*) :40 means Christ was 'The Word of God' not merely 'a Word of God.'⁴²

2.6 PERCEPTIONS OF JESUS IN THE WRITINGS OF IBN TAYMIYYA

Michel observes that Ibn Taymiyya rejects Paul of Antioch's arguments, maintaining that this concept of the incarnate Word was not parallel to the Islamic concept of the eternal Word because God has many "Words," of which the Qur'ān is but one. Muslims, he notes, do not differentiate between the Qur'ān, Torah, the Gospel, and the other utterances of God. They are all 'Words' and when Jesus is called the Word of God this indicates merely that he was made by the creative word of God. Neither the statement of Jesus as "a Word" nor his being called in this passage "a Spirit from Him" indicate that anything of the essence of God is united with the human nature of Jesus.⁴³

In another respect, Michel observes, Ibn Taymiyya finds that the Christian theological concept of the hypostatic union (the union of Jesus' divine and human natures) does not have an agreed-upon definition or interpretation by all Christian sects.⁴⁴ Ibn Taymiyya rejects the concepts of the hypostatic union (*aqānīm*) and divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*) of Jesus not only because it is illogical to him but also because he claims that it is against the consistent witness of the prophets who sought to deny any association (essential union) with the Divine Unity.⁴⁵ In this last argument he appeals not to dialectic but to truths admitted by the Old Testament to demonstrate his point.

Michel believes that Ibn Taymiyya holds that only a message which came by a true prophet of God was inerrant. He did not believe that the Christian apostles were prophets of God and therefore he did not regard their messages as

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Al-Jawab* 1:172-73 trans. p. 185, cited by Michel, *Response*, p. 124.

⁴⁴ *Al-Jawab* 2:308-11 trans. pp. 309-312, cited by Michel, *Response*, p. 124.

⁴⁵ *Al-Jawab* 3:125-32 trans. pp. 327-333, cited by Michel, *Response*, p. 125.

innocent. Rather, he argues, the Apostles were charlatans who deceived people by the use of demonic appearances and trickery. A prime example of this, he asserts, was found in the Gospel account of the appearance of Jesus to the apostles after being crucified and buried. It was clear, he declares, that according to the Qur'an Jesus was not crucified nor did he die on the cross; therefore it could not have been the resurrected Christ who appeared to the apostles and must have been an apparition.⁴⁶

3.0 JESUS IN ISLAM: STUDIES BY MUIR, KHAN AND GOLDSACK

From the 12th-17th centuries, the use of admitted truths about Jesus in Muslim-Christian dialogue was replaced, for the most part, by logical dialectic. During the intervening years, marred by the Crusades, Muslim apologists employed logical dialectic in demonstrating that one could not believe in Jesus being the Son of God and be a monotheist.⁴⁷ Christian apologists, among whom the Dominicans were at the forefront, employed logical dialectic when presenting a rejoinder to Muslims about the meaning of the Sonship of Jesus and the reasonableness of the Trinity.⁴⁸ The method of admitted truths in dialogue, apart from its use by Christian scholars at the Abbey of Cluny and in Toledo during the 12th century, was not widely employed until the 19th century. From this period many Christian and Muslim apologists again employed admitted truths on a wider basis in initiating dialogue.⁴⁹ The remainder of this chapter is given over to a

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ The foundations of the new polemic on the Muslim side were laid on the eve of the Crusades by Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064) in his *Kitāb al-fiṣal fī-l-milal wa-l-nihāl*, in which he made an attempt to divorce the supernatural Christ of the Christian faith from the 'historical' Jesus who, in Ibn Ḥazm's opinion, was the Jesus of Islam. Biblical and Qur'anic texts which implied the divinity of Jesus were taken allegorically while those which inferred his humanity were taken literally. Gaudeul, *Encounters*, Vol. I, pp. 87-125.

⁴⁸ Ricoldo Da Montecroce (1243-1320), after studying Arabic and Islamic Religious Sciences at Mustanşirriyya University of Baghdad, wrote *Contra legem Saracenorum*, refuting the claim that Islam was superior to Christianity. While this book reflects a careful knowledge of the Qur'an, it is rooted in Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Gaudeul, *Encounters*, Vol. I, pp. 147-149.

⁴⁹ This thesis does not suggest that during this long gap the method of admitted truths was not used at all but that due to the lack of good-will between Muslims and Christians, it was used only sparingly. It may also be that the method of admitted truths was not widely used because the Muslim apologists, who usually set the agenda for dialogue, preferred to use logical dialectic.

discussion of truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible about the person of Jesus on which Muir, Khān, and Goldsack focussed their studies. These admitted truths about Jesus are also presented in appendix B which presents in chart form the passages in the Qur'ān which describe the person of Jesus and appendix C which presents in chart form the Islamic traditions which describe the person of Jesus.

It has been mentioned in Chapter Two of this thesis that William Muir in the later years of his writing career made a significant methodological change and embraced the use of truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible as the best method of initiating dialogue. In Muir's earlier works on Muslim-Christian dialogue such as "The Mohammedan Controversy" (1845) he contends that neither Islam in general, nor the Qur'ān in particular, could prepare the Muslim to receive Christian truths.⁵⁰ However, by 1855 Muir had changed his stance on this point and advised Christians to employ truths, admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible. At this time he published the first of several works embracing the use of such admitted truths entitled *The Coran: Its Composition and Teaching which uses truths admitted in the Qur'ān to give evidence for the reliability of the Biblical text*.

Muir also endorsed the Arabic works of a protestant Christian from Syria known as 'Atiyah, who was "an accomplished scholar, deeply versed in the Coran and Moslem tradition, and...a most powerful apologist."⁵¹ This writer, in a book entitled *Minār al-Ḥaqq*, set forward evidence in support of the Christian doctrines contained in the Qur'ān. Muir commends the method of 'Atiyah in using as the basis of his studies about Christian doctrine verses taken from the Qur'ān with the corresponding Islamic commentaries. In this respect, Muir notes that the arguments in this work, "while appearing strange to the Western reader steeped in historical criticism, would nevertheless be read carefully by the Muslim who acknowledges

⁵⁰ Muir, "Mohammedan Controversy", *Calcutta Review*, 14 (Dec. 1845), p. 47.

⁵¹ 'Atiyah, *Bakooraḥ Shahiya*, trans. by W. Muir as *Sweet First-Fruits: A Tale of the Nineteenth Century on the Truth and Virtue of the Christian Religion*, (London: Religious Tract Society, 1893), pp. vi, vii.

the Qur'ān as his final court of appeal."⁵² Muir published the Arabic edition of 'Atiyah's *Minār al-Ḥaqq* in 1894 and then translated it for publication in English in 1895 under the title *The Beacon of Truth*.⁵³

Muir's endorsement of employing the Qur'ān to initiate dialogue with Muslims about Jesus tells much about Muir's new found acceptance of the method of admitted truths. In this respect, he observes that the passages in *Minār al-Ḥaqq* focus on the evidence in the Qur'ān about Jesus - his unique birth, unique titles, and unique roles on earth and in heaven. This evidence, he suggests, would compel the thoughtful Muslim to consider that, according to the Qur'ān, Jesus was exalted above all creatures.⁵⁴ Muir's wholehearted endorsement of the *Minār al-Ḥaqq* (1894) represents a substantial change even from his more favourable position in 1855 and contrasts with his earlier position taken in 1845⁵⁵ that neither Islam in general, nor the Qur'ān in particular could prepare the Muslim to receive Christian truths. So enthusiastic had Muir become, by 1895, about using Biblical truths admitted in the Qur'ān that he states of the *Minār al-Ḥaqq* that:

The basis of the argument [in the *Minār al-Ḥaqq*] is the Coran, taken verse by verse, with the commentaries thereon. I am unhesitatingly of the opinion that, taken as a whole, no apology of the Christian faith carrying similar weight and cogency has ever been addressed to the Mahometan world.⁵⁶

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's writings about Jesus are summarized in his *Tabyīn al-kalām* in three parts. The first two parts appeared in a separate edition and the contents of the third part, comprising a commentary on Matthew 1-5, is available in the *Taṣānīf-i Aḥmadiyya* (which is an uncompleted edition of Sayyid Aḥmad

⁵² 'Atiyah, *Minār al-Ḥaqq*, trans. by W. Muir as *The Beacon of Truth: or Testimony of the Coran to the Truth of the Christian Religion*, (London: The Religious tract Society, 1894), pp. 7,8.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Muir, *Mohammedan Controversy*, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Muir, *Minār*, pp. 7,8.

Khān's theological writings in 8 parts).⁵⁷ In the *Tabyīn al-kalām*, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān points out that Christians, who hold to the Trinity, could nevertheless still be regarded as Monotheists. He summarizes his understanding of the Trinity as follows: "Their belief is that God is One and He is Father and outside Him there is no other God."⁵⁸ Khān also summarizes the evidence presented by Christians in their use of the title 'the Son of God' when referring to Jesus.

Creation is one of the essential, eternal attributes of God, and that attribute, the Son (Jesus) issued from the Father since eternity. There is no division (*taqṣīm*) in the essence of the Father and that of the Son. Instead, the essence of the Son is the very essence of the Father. The only difference is that the father possesses His essence originally, i.e. He has not received it from someone else whereas the Son, being eternally caused (*ma'lūl-i- azālī*) has, since eternity, received his essence from the Father as his eternal cause (*illat-i azālī*).⁵⁹

Khān observes that that from the earliest times in Christianity there were groups such as the Ebionites who modified the concept of the Trinity and accepted a doctrine which was closer to Unitarianism.⁶⁰ Khān's own belief about God was influenced by Ibn al-'Arabī, who incorporated into the rigid unitarianism of Islam a trinitarianism of the Neoplatonic variety.⁶¹ He adheres to Ibn al-'Arabī's pantheistic interpretation of these Qur'ānic statements about Jesus and "in this way, he was able to point out the special and very close relationship of Jesus with God without, thereby, abandoning Islamic monotheism or gliding into syncretism."⁶² Thus, Khān could say that the one revealed religion (*dīn*) spoken of by the prophets was the same in Islam and Christianity. However, the Shari'a laws in

⁵⁷ So that part III: 44 ff. of the *TK*, dealing with chapters 1-5 of Matthew corresponds with part 2:44 ff. of the *Taṣānīf-i Aḥmadiyya*, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 97.

⁵⁸ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, pp. 5,6, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 97.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, p. 23, line 13 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 98.

⁶¹ Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. 1, pp. 46, 47. Sweetman observes that: "Even Islam with its rigid unitarianism could not resist the inroads of the trinitarianism of Neoplatonism into its orthodoxy, its Ṣūfism and its philosophical schools. Ideas of emanation and procession prominent in philosophy and theology in both the religions or their unorthodox offshoots have their source in this school. In Islam we may trace them in the works of al-Fārābī in 961, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) in 1037, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (1198), in Ibn 'Arabī, the great mystic and many others." *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁶² Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 97.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam did change. As the Shari'a revealed in the Qur'an is last, it is most in accord with the progress reflected in contemporary society.⁶³ Khān further denies that the teaching of the prophets pointed consistently to Jesus' incarnation, and held, rather, that the concepts of the incarnation of Jesus and the Trinity were aberrations from the teachings of the previous prophets. These had taught that "the Scriptures testify to nothing else but to the true unity (of God) (*wahdat-i haqiqi*)."⁶⁴ Khān concludes that while the Gospel continues to have a moral message for Muslims, Muḥammad more clearly embodied and taught the essence of Christ's teachings.⁶⁵

Goldsack's earliest study of the person of Jesus from the Islamic perspective is summarized in his book *Christ in Islam*.⁶⁶ This work, which examines the Qur'anic texts about Jesus as well as the early Islamic commentary on these texts, appeared five years before Zwemer's influential book entitled *The Moslem Christ*.⁶⁷ Goldsack believes that the use of admitted truths about Jesus in the Qur'an and the Bible gives an insight into the uniqueness of Jesus' person. Therefore, he instructs the Christian holding dialogue with a Muslim as follows:

Let us work up from admitted truths. The miraculous birth, the prophethood and Messiahship of Jesus, His wonderful miracles and not less sublime teachings are all acknowledged in Islam, and are known, more or less to every Muslim. Let us begin with these, and then slowly and almost imperceptibly, our hearers will be led to see, as did the centurion of old, that truly this was the Son of God."⁶⁸

Goldsack's later studies on the person of Jesus from the Islamic perspective focus on Jesus in the Traditions. Goldsack contends that the portrait of Jesus in the Islamic Traditions presents a later picture of Jesus, albeit one which

⁶³ Khān, *TK*, Vol. I, p. 268, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 93.

⁶⁴ Khān, *TK*, Vol. II, p. 43, 179, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 95.

⁶⁵ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, p. 102, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 93.

⁶⁶ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam* (Madras: CLS, 1905).

⁶⁷ S. Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ, An Essay on the Life, Character, and Teachings of Jesus Christ according to the Koran and Orthodox Tradition* (Edinburgh, Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1912).

⁶⁸ Goldsack, "How to Reach and Teach" p. 36.

is further removed from the historical Jesus and therefore less amenable to Muslim-Christian dialogue than is the description of Jesus in the Qur'anic account.

3.1 THE NAMES AND TITLES OF JESUS IN ISLAM

Zwemer observes that among Muslim people great significance is attached to titles. Names and appellatives are attached to people to express something about the character of the person being named.⁶⁹ It is for this reason, as Goldsack observes, that Muslims call Adam *Safī Allāh*, the chosen of God; Noah is styled *Nabī Allāh*, the Prophet of God; Abraham is given the distinction of *Khalīl Allāh*, the Friend of God; Moses is remembered as *Kalīm Allāh*, the Speaker with God; and Muḥammad is distinguished as *Rasūl Allāh*, the Messenger of God.⁷⁰ He further notes that all of the aforementioned terms are considered in the Qur'ān as applicable to human rather than divine nature.

The proper name for Jesus, in the Qur'ān and therefore in Islam, is 'Īsā, this name being generally preceded by the term *nabī* (prophet) and often with the addition of Son of Mary. Jesus has two Qur'anic titles, *Nabī* (prophet) and *Rasūl* (apostle) which are common to other prophets in Islam. In addition to the common titles, Jesus has three Qur'anic titles which are not given to another prophet or indeed to any other human being. These are, *al-Masīḥ* (the Messiah), *Kalimat Allāh* (Word of God), '*Rūḥ Allāh*,' (Spirit of God).

Muir, Khān, and Goldsack were interested in determining whether the unique titles given to Jesus in the Qur'ān and classical Islamic commentaries such as al-Bayḍāwī, al-Zamakhsharī, and the Jalālain also accord him a status above that of other human beings, i.e., the status of divinity. It is on the unique titles accorded to Jesus in the Qur'ān that Muir, Khān and Goldsack focus their studies. Goldsack observes that God's Word and Spirit are inseparable from His Person. Therefore, the focus of his study is to examine whether Jesus' titles, *Kalimat Allāh*

⁶⁹ Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, p. 23,

⁷⁰ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 13, 14.

(Word of God) and *Rūḥ Allāh*, (Spirit of God) suggest that the Qur'ān admits to the idea of a special relationship existing between God and Jesus.⁷¹

In addition to their study of the early Muslim-Christian dialogues on the person of Jesus, Muir, Khān, and Goldsack make reference to the writings of Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm al-Tha'labī (d. 1036). Al-Tha'labī, a Shāfi'īte theologian, wrote about the titles of Jesus, placing a particular emphasis on those titles which Jesus shared with other prophets.⁷² The following sections of the chapter will address: firstly, the origins of Jesus' Qur'ānic name (Īsā); secondly, the Qur'ānic titles of Jesus which were common to other prophets; and thirdly, those Qur'ānic titles which were uniquely used of Jesus.⁷³

3.1.1 ĪSA, JESUS' NAME IN THE QUR'AN

The 19th century Semitic scholar Isidor Loewenthal notes that the name Īsā is used of Jesus in the Qur'ān twenty-five times. In sixteen of these occurrences Īsā is called the son of Mary, in five passages Īsā is coupled with Moses (Mūsā), and in four instances Īsā is used in isolation.⁷⁴ Zwemer suggests that there are several possible derivatives of this name. One, he notes, is that mentioned by al-Bayḍāwī who, in his commentary, considers that Īsā is the same as the Hebrew Yesu'a and that it is derived from the root al-'Ayas, which signifies white mingled with red.⁷⁵ Al-Bayḍāwī does not, however, explain this derivation and Zwemer believes that the term Īsā did not come from Hebrew as one might expect but from an adaptation of the Syriac name Yeshū'. In this regard, he notes that a significant number of Biblical terms and concepts that found their way into

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 14. Cf. Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, pp. 26, 27.

⁷² *Minār*, trans. by Muir, p. 122 fn.

⁷³ Al-Tha'labī in his popular traditional work *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, makes reference to the titles of Jesus.

⁷⁴ Isidor Loewenthal, *The Name 'Isa': An Investigation*, (Calcutta, 1861). Reprinted in *MW* 1 (1910) cited by Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, p. 27.

⁷⁵ Al-Bayḍāwī, *Tafsīr*, Vol. i, p. 96, cited by Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, p. 34.

the Qur'ān came by way of the Syriac translation of the Bible rather than from the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek.

Goldsack also believes that the word 'Īsā represents a phonetic change from the Syriac Yeshū', which was then combined with an imitation of Mūsā (the result being 'Īsā and Mūsā).⁷⁶ For this reason he concludes that the coupling of the name Jesus with that of Moses in the Qur'ān might be the reason for the form of the name, to correspond with other rhymes of that character; e.g. Hābīl (Abel) and Kābīl (Cain) as well as Jālūt (Goliath) and Tālūt (Saul) etc.⁷⁷ For Zwemer the difficulty with this theory is that only in five cases out of twenty-five is the name 'Īsā joined to that of Mūsā in the text of the Qur'ān. In every other case there is no apparent reason for this particular form of the word to be adopted simply because of the rhythm.⁷⁸ Goldsack, however, believes that this explanation of the origins of the name 'Īsā, which accounts for twenty per cent of all usages of this term, is statistically significant even considering such a small sample.⁷⁹

Goldsack then proceeds to address the question of the meaning of the name 'Jesus' given to Christ.⁸⁰ It is ambiguous in the Qur'ān and therefore he believes that one needs to go to the Gospels for the definition. In Matthew i:21 it is stated that the meaning of the word 'Jesus' is 'Saviour': "thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins."

3.1.2 JESUS' TITLE *NABI* (PROPHET)

In the Bible and the Qur'ān one reads that Jesus received the title 'prophet'.⁸¹ In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus was acknowledged by the people who affirmed: "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." (Matthew xxi:11)

⁷⁶ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 1. Cf. Nestle, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, Vol. 1, p. 861.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, p. 33.

⁷⁹ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 1.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 1,2.

⁸¹ Sūra xix (Maryam) 31: "He hath made me a prophet."

When Jesus was first preached to the Jews by the Apostle Peter, he was referred to in terms which the Jews would comprehend as "the Prophet Jesus" (Acts ii:30), "a man credited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs" (Acts ii:22). In the Bible, Jesus is said to have brought prophecy to a climax.

It is on this point, however, that Muslim scholars such as al-Tha'labī would have certainly disagreed. He contends that Muḥammad is not only the greatest prophet and apostle, but the most excellent of all created things.⁸² The title 'prophet', being one which Jesus shares with other prophets according to the Islamic commentators, must be understood from the teaching in the Qur'ān. In sūra xix (*Maryam*):30, Jesus speaks from the cradle, using these words: "Verily, I am the servant of God. He has brought me the Book, and He has made me a prophet, and He has made me blessed wherever I be." In the Islamic traditions the number of prophets and apostles sent by God amounts to 124,000.⁸³ These statements indicate that in Islamic usage the terms 'prophet' and 'apostle,' do not have the same meaning which Christians attribute to them. A prophet, according to al-Tha'labī, is a man inspired by God, but not necessarily sent with a special dispensation or book; while an apostle is one who comes either with a special dispensation or to whom a special book has been revealed.⁸⁴ Therefore, all apostles would be in the category of prophets, but not all prophets would be apostles. In the Qur'ān Jesus was both. Al-Tha'labī states that there were four qualifications of a prophet, namely: 1) faithfulness, that is, during his work he is kept from the commission of any outward sinful act; 2) truthfulness, they spoke the truth; 3) sagacity, or wisdom, thus enabling them to silence objectors or

⁸² Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, p. 33.

⁸³ Others say 240,000 and still others 100,000; Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, p. 30.

⁸⁴ Ibid. The qualities required of a prophet according to one of the Islamic commentators is as follows: "A prophet must be a male person, free, not a slave, of the sons of Adam; of sound mind and without bodily defect or disease, to whom has been revealed a revelation which he himself accepts; nor must he come with a message before he is of age." Al Jawhara, quoted by F.A. Klein, *The Religion of Islam*, (London, 1906), p. 72.

opponents; 4) the delivery of their message was transparent and did not conceal that which had been revealed to them by God.⁸⁵ Because Jesus pre-eminently fulfilled these qualifications as a prophet and because he was also found faithful as an apostle (messenger), he received the power of working miracles.⁸⁶ However, to understand the limitations of the titles, 'prophet' and 'apostle' when ascribed to Jesus, one must remember that in the Qur'ān the highest in rank among the prophets and apostles is said to be Muḥammad because he was the last.

3.1.3 JESUS' TITLE, *RASŪL ALLAH* (APOSTLE OF GOD)

Jesus shares the title of 'Apostle of God' (*rasūl Allāh*) with Muḥammad as well as other prophets. In Muir's translation of sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 169 one reads:

O People of the Book go not beyond just bounds in your religion, and say not regarding God anything but the truth. Verily, Jesus Christ, Son of Mary, is the Apostle of God, and His Word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a Spirit from Him. ⁸⁷

The Christian, unaccustomed to associating the title 'Apostle of God' with Jesus, may be surprised to encounter it in the Islamic accounts. However, in the New Testament the titles of 'apostle (messenger) and prophet of God' are equally relevant when applied to Jesus (Luke 11:49).⁸⁸

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān allows that there is a special relationship between Jesus and the Spirit of God. He notes that due to the fact that the Qur'ān calls Jesus "Spirit of God" (*rūḥ Allāh*) and "Apostle of God" (*rasūl Allāh*), Jesus can also be named "Son of God."⁸⁹ By this Khān means that Jesus uniquely represents God in carrying out His work. Khān stops short of admitting the trinitarian belief that Father, Son and Spirit are, all three of them, God.⁹⁰ He does, however, acknowledge that Jesus' multi-faceted relationship with God was

⁸⁵ Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, p. 31.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁸⁷ *Minar*, trans. Muir, pp. 128, 129.

⁸⁸ Luke 11:49: "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute."(N.I.V.)

⁸⁹ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, pp. 2-15, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 96.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

able to be understood according to the truths admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible.

He notes:

The person that would regard his (Jesus') external form would take him as a mere human being, the person reflecting about the reason for his coming into human form would take him to be a spirit (*rūḥ*) only, and the person having in mind his miracles would acknowledge him as Rasūl Allāh, Kalimat Allāh and Rūḥ Allāh and would recognize all these things as coming from the One God and then he would acknowledge everything as (being) one.⁹¹

Khān argues that the Qur'ānic terms for Jesus, 'Spirit of God' and 'Word of God' mean essentially the same as 'Son of God' found in the Gospels.

3. 1.4 JESUS' TITLE, *AL-MASĪḤ* (THE MESSIAH)

Muir, Khān and Goldsack observe that one of the most prominent of Jesus' special titles in the Qur'ān is *al-Masīḥ* (the Messiah). It is derived from the Hebrew name transliterated in English as Messiah and meaning "the Anointed One". The title, *al-Masīḥ*, which is sometimes joined to that of the name 'Jesus' and at other times used by itself, occurs eight times in the Qur'ān in the following passages: sūra iii:44,45; sūra iv:156, sūra iv: 169, and sūra iv:170, sūra v:19, sūra v:76, sūra v:79, and sūra ix:30.⁹² For example, in sūra iii (*'Al-'Imrān*): 44,45 it is written:

When the Angels said, O Mary, verily God giveth thee good tidings of the Word (proceeding) from Himself; his name Jesus Christ (*Masīḥ*), son of Mary; exalted both in this world and in the world to come, and one of those near the throne. And he shall speak unto men in the cradle, and when he is grown up; and he shall be one of the righteous.

Muir, citing the author of *Minār al-Ḥaqq*, observes that it is probable that the name *al-Masīḥ* was learned from Christians rather than from the Jews. The Biblical Scriptures, he notes, clearly state that Jesus means 'Saviour' while Christ

⁹¹ Here Sayyid Aḥmad Khān is echoing a Sufi concept that all are partakers of God's reality in some measure while it can be said that Jesus partook of it uniquely and supremely. TK, Vol. III, pp. 2-4, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 95, 96.

⁹² Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 10, 11.

(the Messiah) means 'Anointed One,' and so Jesus Christ means 'Anointed Saviour.'⁹³ Muir observes that in the Qur'ān,

Jesus is similarly exalted and given the title the Word of God and is further distinguished by the title of *al-Masīh*, which the commentators interpret as the 'anointed Prince'. The first title (i.e. the divine "Word") is the cause of the second (*al-Masīh*) and the second is descriptive of the first.⁹⁴

Turning to the reasons assigned by the Islamic commentators for the description of *al-Masīh* as "exalted in this life and in the world to come," Muir cites the following:

He was a Prince in this world because of His high prophetic rank; because His prayers were heard and answered; because He raised the dead and performed other wonderful miracles; because he was innocent of the imputations of the Jews. And in the world to come, because of the glorious place assigned in heaven to Him by the Almighty; and because of His acceptance as the Intercessor for His people.⁹⁵

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān holds that Jesus was anointed by God and received the title *al-Masīh* (the Messiah) because he taught people spiritual holiness (*rūḥānī taqadus*) and showed them spiritual light (*rūḥānī rōshnī*). Furthermore, Khān holds that Jesus' role as Messiah was predicated on his being born of the spirit only (*ṣirf rūh sē paidā huā*) and not through any external cause (*kisī zāhirī sahab sē*).⁹⁶

Goldsack believes that the concept of the Messiah being a servant of Jehovah as used in the Old Testament book of Isaiah is reflected in sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 170 which reads:

The Messiah doth surely not disdain to be a servant of God, nor do the angels who are nigh to Him; and whosoever disdains His service and is too proud, He will gather them altogether to Himself.⁹⁷

Zwemer and Goldsack point out that some Islamic commentators, when looking at the concept of the Messiah, came up with inaccurate translations of the

⁹³ *Minār*, trans. Muir, p. 124.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, pp. 2-15, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 95.

⁹⁷ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 1.

title because they attempted to trace all terms and titles back to Arabic roots.⁹⁸ In this regard, some Islamic commentators connect the title *al-Masīh* with the word *Sah* (to wander, to go on pilgrimage), and say it is the intensive form of that root, and that Jesus was the leader of wanderers, "Imām al-sa'yihīn".⁹⁹ An echo of this concept of Jesus as *al-Masīh* being a leader of wanderers without a permanent home is found in the famous inscription over a bridge at Fatehpur Sikri: "Jesus (upon whom be peace) said, 'The world is a bridge; pass over it, but do not build upon it.'"¹⁰⁰ Another Muslim commentator, in an attempt to portray *al-Masīh* as one who was anointed with oil as a consecration of his being a king, explains that "the term *al-Masīh* was given to the infant Jesus because he was rubbed over with oil at His birth."¹⁰¹

Other Islamic commentators, Goldsack notes, are closer to the New Testament meaning of this term. Goldsack cites al-Rāzī, who comments that Jesus was given the title *al-Masīh* because "he was kept clear from the taint of sin."¹⁰² Also, he notes that Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' al-Māzinī states that: "the word 'Messiah' means 'King'. Al-Bayḍāwī, Goldsack observes, states that Jesus was called *al-Masīh* because he was "possessed of a spirit proceeding from the Almighty not mediately, but directly, both as to origin and essence."¹⁰³ Thus, Goldsack concludes that, at the very least, from the aforementioned commentators one can conclude that some of the early Muslim expositors pointed out that the term 'Messiah' conveyed 'great excellence.'¹⁰⁴ Goldsack observes that the high place which the Qur'ān gives to Jesus as Messiah is also elevated even higher in the New

98 Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, p. 33. Cf. Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 1.

99 Ibid.

100 *Church Missionary Review*, July 1910, cited by Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, p. 36.

101 Ibid. Muir notes that it was not with oil (like the kings of Israel at their consecration).

102 Goldsack, *Christ In Islam*, p. 12. Cf. Muir, *Minar*, p. 124.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

Testament where it is written: "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him (Messiah) and gave Him the name which is above every name."¹⁰⁵

3.1.5 JESUS' TITLE, *KALIMAT ALLAH* (GOD'S WORD)

Muir, Khān and Goldsack all mention that in the Islamic commentaries and traditions the second of the special titles of Jesus is *Kalimat Allāh* (Word of God).¹⁰⁶ Firstly, their research on this important Islamic title for Jesus is based on sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 169 and sūra iii (*'al-'Imrān*): 40. Secondly, it is dependent on the three standard commentaries of al-Bayḍāwī, al-Zamakhsharī, and the Jalālayn who state that one of Jesus' unique titles is *Kalimat Allāh*. Finally, they make reference to the traditional work, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* by al-Tha'labī (d. 1036) which gives an account of Jesus and elaborates on this title.¹⁰⁷

Muir and Goldsack also refer to the discussion of the title of *Kalimat Allāh* in the 8th century studies on this topic by John of Damascus.¹⁰⁸ Specifically, they bring forward the following arguments, first used by John of Damascus, that some Qur'ānic passages about Jesus suggest that he is so unique among human beings that his divinity is implied. Firstly, they note that Muslims believe that God has no partners or equals and that nothing can, therefore, be eternal but God alone. Secondly, (orthodox) Muslims also believe the Word of God to be eternal. Thirdly, Muslims believe that God's Word uniquely proceeds from His Essence. Fourthly, Jesus is called God's Word in the Qur'ān, and therefore Jesus must uniquely proceed from God's Essence.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Philippians 2:9 in fulfillment of the prediction of Jesus as the "suffering servant" about whom it is written in Isaiah 52:13: "See, my servant will act wisely, he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted."

¹⁰⁶ Muir, *Minār*, pp. 122, 123; Khān, TK, III, p. 4; Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 14, 15. Cf. the three commentaries of al-Bayḍāwī, al-Zamakhsharī, and the Jalālayn all mention that one of Jesus' unique titles is *Kalimat Allāh*. The popular traditional work, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* by al-Tha'labī also gives an account of Jesus Christ and elaborates on this title. See Zwemer, *Moslem Christ*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ Muir, *Minār*, pp. 122, 123; Khān, TK, III, p. 4; Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 14, 15.

¹⁰⁸ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 14, 15. Cf. Muir, *Minār*, pp. 122, 123.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Cf. Michael Nazir-Ali, *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter*, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1987), p. 32.

3.1.5.1 EXEGETICAL STUDIES ON THE TERM *KALIMAT ALLĀH*.

Muir and Goldsack offer exegetical studies of sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):169 and sūra iii (*'al-'Imrān*):40, while Khān makes a theological study of these passages.

Goldsack in his exegetical study notes that the first of these Qur'ānic passages referring to Jesus' title as "His Word" that is "God's Word" is sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):169 which reads:

Verily the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, is the Apostle of God and His Word which He conveyed into Mary and a Spirit proceeding from Himself.

Arabic:¹¹⁰:

• انما المسيح عيسى ابن مريم رسول الله وكلمته القاها الى مريم

He notes that *kalimatuhu* ("His Word") equals *kalimatu 'llāhi* (God's Word).¹¹¹

Goldsack secondly observes that it is worthy of notice that '*kalām*' (the masculine noun used of the Scriptures of God) is differentiated from *Kalimah* or *Kalimat* (the feminine noun used of Jesus in his title *Kalimat Allāh*).¹¹² Thus the term '*Kalām*' is used of the scriptures of God in sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):74 where it is written that "A part of them heard the word of God (*Kalām*)."¹¹³ Arabic:¹¹⁴

• كان فريق منهم يسمعون كلام الله

Here, Goldsack notes the '*Kalām*' is used of the scriptures of God; but the Qur'ānic word for the 'Word' of God as applied to Christ is '*Kalimat*' never *Kalām*.¹¹⁵

Thirdly, he notes that in sūra iii (*'Al-'Imrān*): 45 one reads "O Mary, verily God sendeth thee good tidings of the Word (*Kalimat*) from Himself."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 14, 15. Cf. Muir, *Minār*, pp. 122, 123. In Rodwell's translation it reads: "The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of God, and his Word which He conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Himself."

¹¹¹ *Christ in Islam*, p. 13.

¹¹² Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 14, 15.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*,

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 14, 15. Cf. *Minār*, trans. Muir, pp. 122, 123.

Arabic :

• يا مريم ان الله يبشرك بكلمة منه •

In his conclusions Goldsack observes that in sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):169, Jesus is called "His Word," that is 'God's Word'. The Arabic, he contends, shows that it means 'The Word of God' not merely 'a Word of God'. Arabic:

(كلمة من كلمات الله not كلمة الله)

In commenting on the significance of these passages, Goldsack observes that the title 'Word of God' means more than that Jesus was created by the command or word of God as some Muslim commentators have suggested. Rather he notes that one need only compare Jesus' title ("God's Word") with the other titles given in the Qur'ān to the other prophets in order to understand how high he stands above them.¹¹⁷ He also concludes that Jesus is the word or expression of God, so that by Him one can understand the mind and will of God.¹¹⁸

Muir, in his translation of *al-Minār*, outlines an exegetical study of the two important passages in the Qur'ān which refer to Jesus as 'Word'. He translates sūra iii (*Al-Imrān*): 44, 45 as follows:

When the Angels said, O Mary, verily God giveth thee good tidings of the Word (proceeding) from Himself; his name Jesus Christ, son of Mary; exalted both in this world and in the world to come, and one of those near the throne. And he shall speak unto men in the cradle, and when he is grown up; and he shall be one of the righteous.

Muir observes that al-Rāzi, in his commentary on the phrase "the Word from him", allows that the subject of the phrase is definite (*the* Word). However, he translates the pronominal suffix (him) as referring back to "the Word" so the sense according to al-Rāzi would be "the Word from the Word."¹¹⁹ In answering why the pronoun is not of the same gender (feminine) as "the Word", al-Rāzi suggests that it is because the person referred to is masculine.¹²⁰ Muir notes that

¹¹⁷ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹⁹ *Minār*, trans. Muir, pp. 122, 123.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

al-Rāzi's view that the masculine pronoun (in the phrase, "the Word from him") refers to the feminine noun "the Word," is inadmissible for grammatical reasons. Muir notes that in the phrase "the Word from himself" (*Kalimat min hu*) the pronoun "hu" or "him" (masculine) means, according to al-Rāzi, the Word (*Kalimat*) feminine whereas the only legitimate construction is "from Himself," i.e. from God.¹²¹ Muir further observes that not only is the grammar incorrect but that it makes no sense. Al-Rāzi's translation would signify that the "Word" (Jesus) was from the Word," i.e. Jesus, as it were the father of Jesus. Muir points out that the meaning is that the son she (Mary) was to bear was "the Word from Him," that is from God. The great significance of this passage, Muir points out, is that, since the *Kalimat* or Word was to be of a nature thus proceeding from God, it obliges the reader to consider the question of what that nature must be.¹²²

In answering this question on the observations in sūra iii (*Al-Imrān*): 44, 45, both Muir and Goldsack observe that in the Qur'ānic expression "the Word from Him," the preposition "*min*" (from) signifies a generic relationship between the noun and the pronominal suffix linked together by it. Therefore, they conclude that "the Word" which proceeds from Him (*hu*) is the same divine and uncreated essence as Him (that is God).¹²³

In evaluating Muir's and Goldsack's interpretation of these two important sūras one makes the following observation. Their rendering of sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):169 as "His Word" meaning God's Word, and their interpretation of this passage has not been seriously contested by Islamic scholars.

However, their rendering of the relevant phrase of sūra iii (*al-Imrān*): 40, as "the Word of God" and their interpretation of it has been contested by Muslim scholars. Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī allows that the subject of the phrase in question is

121 Ibid., p. 123 fn.

122 Ibid., p. 124.

123 Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 13, 14. Cf. Muir, *Minar*, pp. 122, 123.

definite (the Word), even though he then attempts to limit the suggestion that Jesus was admitted to be divine in the Qur'ān by suggesting that the pronominal suffix "from him" refers back to "the Word" rather than to God. Muir and Goldsack agree with his rendering of the subject as being "the Word" but state that the pronominal suffix could only be "from him," that is from God. They are supported in this interpretation of the passage by the translations of the Qur'ān into English by Sale, Rodwell and Palmer. Their interpretation also receives support from a few 19th century Muslim commentators, such as Sayyid Aḥmad Khān. Khān regards the best translation of the phrase under consideration in sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):169 to be "His Word" (that is God's Word) and the phrase under discussion in iii (*al-Imrān*): 40 to be "the Word of God".¹²⁴

However, most modern Islamic exegetes have followed the rendering of al-Bayḍāwī and have rendered the meaning of iii (*al-Imrān*): 40 as "a Word from God".¹²⁵ These exegetes have been supported in their interpretation by the English translations of Pickthall and Arberry.

The present author upholds the view of Muir, Khān and Goldsack that the significance of the title *Kalimat Allāh* for Jesus in the abovementioned Qur'ānic texts indicates more than "Christ was created by the command or word of God."¹²⁶ The present author would agree with Goldsack, that the Qur'ān indicates that Jesus is God's Word, an expression of His will, and he stands above other prophets in this regard.¹²⁷ On the other hand, it seems to the present author that Muir and Goldsack exceed the intent of the Qur'ānic texts when stating that because God's Word proceeds from God, therefore Jesus' divinity is confirmed by these two passages. Both authors fail to note that the Qur'ān quickly follows up sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 169, which demonstrates Jesus' uniqueness, with the caution

¹²⁴ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, p. 5, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 97.

¹²⁵ D.B. McDonald, s.v. 'Īsā, E.I.-1.

¹²⁶ Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, cited by Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 14.

¹²⁷ *Christ in Islam*, p. 13.

to Christians in verse 170: "Say not, there are three Gods," which is evidently intended to deny the place of the divinity of Jesus as well as of Mary. Nevertheless, what can be agreed upon with respect to these two verses is that they point out Jesus' unique relationship to God. This was a point which Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was able to make in his theological study of *kalimat Allāh*, in the *Tabyīn al-kalām*, to which we now turn.

3.1.5.2 KHĀN'S THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE TERM *KALIMAT ALLĀH*

Sayyid Ahmad Khān's theological study of *Kalimat Allāh* was undertaken before 1870 and reflects many of the same ideas which Muir and later Goldsack set forward in their exegetical studies. Khān's study was, however, more widely received by liberal Muslims as an enlightened portrait of Jesus in the Qur'ān. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān can be seen as a 19th century Mu'tazilite theologian except on the important theological doctrine of the Word of God. Unlike other Mu'tazilites, he contends that God's written Word (*kalām Allāh*) and God's incarnate Word (*kālimat Allāh*) were uncreated. He maintained this position until his acceptance of 'naturalism' in 1870, and after this philosophical conversion he reversed his views on this issue contending that both were created.¹²⁸ However, in the *Tabyīn al-kalām* (the Muslim Commentary on the Holy Bible written before 1870) Sayyid Aḥmad Khān observes that according to sūras iv (*al-Nisā'*):169 and iii (*al-Imrān*):40 Jesus is called *kālimat Allāh*, which he translates respectively "God's Word" and "the Word proceeding from God".¹²⁹ He believed that these passages clearly indicate that the person of Jesus was unique and eternal.¹³⁰

At this point in his philosophical quest Khān's statements about Jesus should be considered in the light of his investigation into Ibn al-'Arabī's pantheistic philosophy and mystical view of the prophets. Ibn al-'Arabī accepts that all the

¹²⁸ Khān, *TK.*, Vol. III, p. 5, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 97.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

prophets had a mystical relationship with God. In Khān's assimilation of Ibn al-'Arabī's views, he holds that the titles 'God's Word' and 'God's Spirit' indicate that Jesus' in some unique sense had a special, mystical and eternal relationship with God.¹³¹ However, he allows that there is a difference between the essence of the divine Word and the essence of God. God, he contends, possesses His essence originally whereas Jesus possesses it by virtue of the relationship of the Divine Word to God.¹³²

3.1.6 JESUS' TITLE, *RŪḤ ALLAH* (SPIRIT OF GOD)

Muir, Khān and Goldsack observe that in the Qur'ān the third of the special titles of Jesus is '*Rūḥ Allāh*' (Spirit of God). Thus in sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 169 it is written: "Verily the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is the Apostle of God, and His Word which He conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit (proceeding) from Him."

Al-Rāzī, Muir notes, gives several interpretations of the phrase "a Spirit proceeding from Him" without indicating which he considers correct.¹³³ In the first interpretation al-Rāzī says that the words may signify "the breath of Gabriel," by which the Messiah was brought into existence.¹³⁴ Muir disparages this interpretation, noting:

The Messiah, who is admitted by al-Rāzī to be 'one of the glorious spirits and exalted beyond prophets and apostles', should have been created by the breath of Gabriel, - the very idea is profane!"¹³⁵

Muir notes that there is more to be said for al-Rāzī's interpretation that Jesus is so called from His having "given life to the world in their religions".¹³⁶ In this regard, one can see in the attributes given by the Muslim commentators to the Messiah, such as raising the dead, giving spiritual life to mankind, etc., a strong

131 Ibid.

132 Ibid. (We shall see in this chapter that Khān held the same argument with respect to the Sonship of Christ.)

133 *Minār*, trans. Muir, p. 132.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

resemblance to Jesus' own words in the Gospel: - "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"; and again, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."¹³⁷ Al-Bayḏāwī, Muir observes, is even closer to the Biblical text in his comment that Jesus is called the Spirit emanating from God "because he raised the dead and revived the human heart".¹³⁸ Regarding al-Bayḏāwī's interpretation of Jesus as "the Messiah who is possessed of a Spirit proceeding from the Almighty, not mediately but direct, both as to origin and essence,"¹³⁹ Muir asks, "what is the difference in the teaching that 'the Messiah came forth from God' and that He is the Son of God"?¹⁴⁰

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān believes that the phrase "a Spirit from Him" refers to Jesus being born of the spirit only (*ṣirf rūḥ sē paidā huā*) and not through any external cause (*kisī zāhirī sabab sē*).¹⁴¹ Jesus, Khān held, was born through the Spirit of God alone in order to teach the people *rūḥānī taqaddus* (spiritual holiness) and *rūḥānī rōshnī* (spiritual light).¹⁴² Khān built his interpretation of the phrase "a Spirit from Him" on the interpretation of Ibn al-'Arabī who rejects the idea that Jesus was created from the activity of the breath of Gabriel arguing rather that he was created from the activity of the Spirit of Allah.

(Jesus was) 'a spirit which came from Allāh...and therefore he has raised the dead and created...in order that his origin from his Lord should be authenticated.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Ibid. Cf. John x:10, xi:25.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 133. Goldsack compares the statements of the Muslim exegetes with the words of Jesus as written in the New Testament, John xi:25: "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live", and Romans 5:17 "The first Adam became a living soul. The last Adam (Christ) became a life-giving spirit." Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 20, 21.

¹³⁹ *Minār*, trans. Muir, p. 133.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ *Khān*, TK, Vol. III, p. 2-15 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 95.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibn al-'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, Naṣṣ-i 'Īsawī* (chapter 15), cited by Khān, TK, Vol. III, p. 4, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 95.

Goldsack observes that the high title "Spirit (proceeding) from Him" can be construed to mean that Jesus is unique. This title, he states, contrasts with the titles given to other prophets, such as 'Friend of God,' 'Chosen of God,' 'Prophet of God' which may be applied to beings like ourselves. But the name 'Spirit of God' given to Christ by Muslims hints at a "higher station and a nobler dignity, and witnesses with no uncertain sound to His superiority over all other prophets."¹⁴⁴

Goldsack comes to the conclusion that the Spirit of God must be, like God Himself, eternal. Furthermore, when one reads in the Qur'ān that this Spirit was "breathed into Mary," (sūra xxi (*al-Anbiyā'*): 9), and that, as al-Bayḍāwī comments, it "proceeded" from God, he concludes that the person so described is nothing less than divine, and existed before His entrance into Mary.¹⁴⁵ Goldsack believes that, so interpreted, the concepts surrounding the title "Spirit of God" as applied to Jesus in the Qur'ān agrees with the statements in the New Testament. In John vii:5 one reads that Jesus prayed and said, "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John vii:5).

3.2 THE LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS IN THE QUR'ĀN

Goldsack considers that if the objective were to trace the development of the idea of Jesus in the mind of Muḥammad, the lack of chronology, the contradictions in the Qur'ān, and the reliance on Christian Apocryphal sources might have proved insurmountable problems.¹⁴⁶ His more limited objectives, he allows, are to collect and study all the Qur'ānic passages about Jesus on which common Islamic opinion rests.¹⁴⁷ He groups these passages in the Qur'ān

¹⁴⁴ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 20, 21.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

according to the order of the Gospel history. Goldsack's order is used in the remaining part of this chapter.

3.2.1 THE LINEAGE OF JESUS

Goldsack observes that the Qur'ān shows that Jesus was of the favoured lineage of Isaac and Jacob (Banū Isrā'īl) in which it is written in sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 46: "O, Children of Israel, remember the favour wherewith we have favoured thee, and preferred thee above all the nations."¹⁴⁸ Again, Goldsack notes that in sūra xxix (*al-'Ankabūt*): 26 one reads: "We gave him (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and we placed among his descendants the gift of prophecy and the Scriptures."

Muir and Goldsack point out that the Jewish race in which Jesus Christ was born was, according to the Qur'ān, uniquely favoured because prophecy and revelation belong to Banū Isrā'īl.¹⁴⁹ In affirmation of this fact, they note that sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):44 reads: "O Children of Israel! Remember the favour wherewith We have favoured you and preferred you above all nations (or all creatures)." They further observe that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in his comments on this passage, shows that the phrase "the favour (which) preferred the Jews to all nations" in sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 46 is conferred upon the believing Jews with respect to being favoured above:

- 1) "the whole world apart from the Creator", or
- 2) "all existing at that time," (this would exclude Muḥammad from the comparison).
- 3) "other creatures in respect to the favour bestowed upon them (not in anything else)."¹⁵⁰

Both Muir and Goldsack note that al-Rāzī holds that this promise is reserved for the believing part of the nation, whereas the rebellious are cursed. Furthermore,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ *Minār*, pp. 104, 105. Cf. Goldsack, *Christ In Islam*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

al-Rāzī contends that there is nothing to show that the same favour would be continued (to the irreligious), either in this world or in that to come, as there is the solemn warning that follows: "Fear the day on which one soul shall be unable to make satisfaction for another".¹⁵¹ The implication is that rebellion, after great favour, is all the worse and more to be condemned. Muir notes that the Jalālain comment: "Remember with thankfulness and obedience the favour wherewith I have favoured you, that is, your forefathers, beyond all the world of their time."¹⁵²

Goldsack adds that in sūra xxix (*al-'Ankabūt*): 26 one reads that: "We gave him (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and we placed among his descendants the gift of prophecy and the Scriptures." He notes that both of these sūras refer to Jacob (Israel) being favoured because God placed among his descendants those who were blessed with the gift of prophecy and the Scriptures.¹⁵³ Goldsack holds that the Qur'ān agrees with Genesis xxvi:4, which states that God's blessing to the nations would come through one of Isaac's descendants: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed".¹⁵⁴ Goldsack concludes that because Jesus is described in the Qur'ān as being of the tribe of Jacob and given the titles 'God's Word and "A Spirit from Him", he is especially qualified to fulfill the promises that one of Jacob's descendants would be uniquely "favoured" according to the Qur'ān and a "blessing to the nations" according to the Bible.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, in his study of sūra x (*Yūnus*):48 and sūra xvi (*al-Nahl*): 38, points out that God sent an apostle to every nation at the proper moment in their history. Jesus, he observes, was sent of the lineage of Jacob at the beginning of the Christian era in Palestine.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the time in history

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 105. Cf., Goldsack, *Christ In Islam*, pp. 4,5.

¹⁵³ Goldsack, *Christ In Islam*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.4,5.

¹⁵⁵ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, pp. 2-15, cited by Baljon, *Reforms*, pp. 50, 51.

was ripe for Jesus to come because God's precepts given through the former Prophets had been neglected so that the verse in Matthew iii:17 about "the blind leading the blind" could have been applied to the condition of the Jews.¹⁵⁶

3.2.2 THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS

Goldsack notes that the Qur'ān emphasizes that God not only chose Jesus to come from the lineage of the prophets, but also that God considered Jesus' mother Mary to be honoured above all other women. He observes that one reads in sūra iii (*'Imrān*): 42:

O, Mary, verily God hath chosen thee and purified thee, and hath chosen thee above all the women of the earth.¹⁵⁷

Goldsack sees this sūra as harmonizing with the prophetic passage of the Messiah in Genesis xxvi:4: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed".¹⁵⁸

Muir observes that sūra xix (*Maryam*):19-34 speaks of Jesus being born of a virgin. Muir, according to his chronology, suggests that this is the fullest and earliest account of the Gospel in the Qur'ān. Sūra xix (*Maryam*):19-22 reads:

He (Gabriel) answered, Verily, I am the messenger of thy Lord to give thee a holy son. She (Mary) said, How shall I have a son, seeing a man hath not touched me, and I am no harlot? (Gabriel) replied, so (shall it be) : Thy Lord saith, this is easy with me; and that we may ordain him for a sign unto men and a mercy from us: for it is a thing which is decreed. Wherefore she conceived him.

Here the plain reading of the text is that God gives good tidings to Mary of her bearing a virtuous Son miraculously by God's decree. This is borne out by comparing this passage with the parallel passage in sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*):45. Muir notes that in respect to the conception of Jesus, the observations of al-Bayḍāwī and the Jalālayn on sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*):45 speak of Mary as the receptacle of "the Word." Muir observes that since this phrase signifies a person or nature, the commentary of al-Bayḍāwī may be interpreted in the true sense of the Gospel,

¹⁵⁶ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, p. 2, cited by Baljon, *Reforms*, pp. 50, 51.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

namely the descent of the heavenly nature or person into the womb of the Virgin Mary.¹⁵⁹ Muir further notes that al-Bayḍāwī's explanation entirely accords with the text, "God giveth thee (Mary) good tidings of the Word from Him, his name the Messiah." Muir concludes that according to al-Bayḍāwī, the orthodox Islamic belief embraced the idea that "the Word," of which good tidings is here given to Mary, means a Person who existed before the "descent", and that such, in fact, was the cause of the Messiah's birth without a father.¹⁶⁰

Goldsack adds that no other prophet has been thus miraculously born into the world. He notes that some Muslim commentators consider Adam's creation without father and mother also. Nevertheless, he notes that in Adam's case, such an act of creation was necessary in the beginning of the world; but in the case of Jesus one sees God interrupting the course of nature and over-riding the very laws of procreation which he had Himself established, in order that Christ could have a virgin birth.¹⁶¹ In the New Testament, the nature of this relationship is clearly seen in the account of the birth of Jesus given there. Thus one reads that the angel Gabriel came to Mary and said, "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke i:31-32). Goldsack observes that in this verse one sees that because of Jesus' miraculous birth, he is given the high title 'Son of God.'¹⁶² Goldsack also considers that the clear Qur'ānic statement that Jesus was born of a Virgin is the key to understanding the further Qur'ānic affirmations of Jesus' sinless character and His being accorded the status of Honourable Intercessor as well as that of the Righteous Judge at the Day of Judgment.¹⁶³

159 *Minar*, trans. Muir, p. 132.

160 *Ibid.*

161 Goldsack, *Christ In Islam*, p. 7.

162 *Ibid.*

163 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, commenting upon Matthew 1:18 in his work *Tabyīn al-kalām*, holds that Mary conceived Jesus "without the mediation of human practice", and that her pregnancy was miraculous.¹⁶⁴ He notes that before the advent of Jesus, man lacked spiritual holiness (*rūḥānī taqaddus*) and that therefore Jesus came to teach people this precept. Khān held that Jesus could only perfectly understand and teach about spiritual holiness if he himself was holy. He, therefore, postulates that Jesus must have been born of the Holy Spirit in this miraculous way to accomplish his mission on earth.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān held this position about Jesus' birth until 1870, at which time he accepted naturalism. Following this date, he concluded that Islam is a "natural religion" which implied that it does not require a belief in things that "man cannot perform".¹⁶⁵ By the time of the publication of his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (1880-95), he demythologizes the 'truths' in the Qur'ān and the Bible which admit that Jesus was born of a virgin. At this later period, when making reference to sūra xix (*Maryam*): 21 which reads: "And her (i.e. Mary) who kept her maidenhood, and into whom We breathed of Our Spirit" (so that Jesus might be conceived), he rejects his former view that Jesus was born of a virgin by the Holy Spirit. He now re-interprets the phrase "kept her maidenhood" to mean "not that she had no intercourse with any man, but only with her husband (Joseph)".¹⁶⁶

3.2.3 JESUS' SINLESS NATURE

A concept which is an outgrowth of the account of the Virgin Birth of Jesus in the Qur'ān is the concept of Jesus being "kept sinless" from the touch of Satan at birth. Both Muir and Goldsack note that Jesus is represented in the authorities of Islam as far exalted above Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and the other prophets in that He alone is represented as sinless.¹⁶⁷ Goldsack's view,

¹⁶⁴ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, pp. 37ff, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 95 fn.

¹⁶⁵ Khān, *TQ*, Vol. I, p. 85, cited by Baljon, *Reforms*, pp. 50, 51.

¹⁶⁶ Muir, *Life*, vol. II, pp. 22-40.

¹⁶⁷ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 29. Cf. Muir, *Life*, vol. II, p. 280.

though essentially the same as that of Muir on this topic, is more fully developed and is presented here.

Goldsack observes that the sinlessness of Jesus is implied in sūra iii (*al-Imrān*) 36: "and I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to thy protection from Satan the stoned." Al-Bayḍāwī and the Jalālayn emphasize the sinless nature of Jesus in their comment on this sūra as they note: "every new born child is touched by Satan, with the exception of Mary and her Son, between whom and Satan, God interposed a veil."¹⁶⁸ Goldsack adds that Jesus' sinlessness is explicitly stated in sūra xix (*Maryam*):20: "Verily I am the messenger of thy Lord to give thee a holy son."¹⁶⁹

Goldsack notes that everywhere in the writings of Islam Jesus is represented as perfectly sinless, and in neither the Qur'ān nor in the Traditions is a single sin ever imputed to him. On the other hand, Goldsack observes that the Qur'ān abounds in allusions to the sins of other prophets and their prayers for pardon.¹⁷⁰ In sūra vii (*al-A'rāf*): 23, 24 one reads of Adam's sin and his prayer for pardon: "And he (Satan) caused them (Adam and Eve) to fall through deceit...and they said, O Lord, we have dealt unjustly with our souls; if thou forgive us not and be not merciful unto us, we shall be of those who perish." The sin of Abraham, he observes, is recorded in sūra xxi (*al-Anbiyā'*) which records that Abraham broke many of the idols of the idolators but left the largest of them intact. Moses is also represented in the Qur'ān as a sinner. In sūra xxviii (*al-Qaṣaṣ*):15 one reads that Moses, after killing an Egyptian, prayed "'O Lord verily I have injured my own soul, wherefore forgive me.' And He (God) forgave him." David sinned and asked pardon for his sin of adultery, as is recorded in sūra xxxviii (*Ṣād*): 23, 24: "And David perceived that we had tried him, and he asked

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Cf. Rodwell, *The Koran*, p. 426, fn.

¹⁶⁹ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 30.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

pardon of his Lord; and he fell down and bowed himself, and repented. Wherefore we forgave him this (fault)." Finally, Muhammad also repeatedly is told to ask pardon for his sins. Thus one reads in sūra xlvii (*Muḥammad*): 21: "Ask pardon for thy sins (O Muḥammad), and for the believers both men and women." Again in sūra xlviii (*al-Fath*) 1,2 one reads that Muḥammad is to ask pardon: "That God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sin."¹⁷¹ Goldsack concludes that according to the Qur'ān, Adam Abraham, Moses, David and Muḥammad were all sinners and further investigation would reveal the fact that their sins were committed after their call to the prophetic office. However, he notes that: "it is a truth admitted in both the Qur'ān and the Bible that not a single sin was ever imputed to Jesus."¹⁷²

Goldsack observes that the witness of the Islamic traditions in this respect is the same, for although in them it is recorded that all the prophets including Muḥammad asked for pardon for sins yet Jesus did not.¹⁷³ Goldsack notes that on the other hand the traditions about Jesus' birth state clearly that he was held to be sinless from his birth. The virgin birth, he notes, is referred to in the following tradition recorded by Muslim: "Every child of Adam is touched by Satan the day of his birth, with the exception of Mary and her son."¹⁷⁴

Goldsack observes that the testimony of the Qur'ān and the traditions of Islam about the sinlessness of Jesus is fully supported by the New Testament which states that "In him was no sin" (I John iii:5); "He did no sin" (I Peter ii, 22). Christ himself challenged His enemies to point to a single flaw in his character, in these words: "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (John viii:46).¹⁷⁵

171 Ibid., pp. 30, 31.

172 Ibid., p. 31.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid., p. 32.

175 Ibid.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān ultimately dismisses the classical commentaries on sūra iii (*al-‘Imrān*): 36: "and I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to thy protection from Satan the stoned." He rejects the idea that Satan touches all children at birth but rather holds that all children were born sinless and that all prophets were cleansed of whatever sin they had committed so that "they (the prophets) are free from light as well as grave sin".¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, he holds that the sins of any human being has consequences only for themselves and not for others. In this regard, he holds that Adam's sin was an act which had the consequences of removing Adam from the Garden of Eden, but his sinful act did not affect his nature as Adam himself was immediately cleansed so that he became a 'sinless prophet'.¹⁷⁷ This view was inconsistent with the early Islamic commentators on the Qur'ān and Sayyid Aḥmad Khān was required to defend its consistency within the Qur'ān and the early Islamic traditions. Commenting in *Tabyīn al-kalām* on the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve, Khān rejects the idea that Adam's disobedience represented a sin in exactly the same way as we now think of it. The main reason for this is due to the fact that the law of God did not exist at this point in history and man was not yet "put under obligation" to it.¹⁷⁸ Thus we see that Khān does not believe that Adam's sin militated against the ultimate sinless state necessary for a prophet. Furthermore, he held that all prophets are ultimately freed from venial as well as mortal sins by God's cleansing work in their hearts.¹⁷⁹ Khān acknowledges that Jesus' sinless state was unique in one respect. Jesus never committed any sin and therefore never needed to ask for pardon from sin, whereas other prophets did need to do so. At a point before

¹⁷⁶ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's *Credo*, Article xx, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 241.

¹⁷⁷ Khān, *TK*, Vol. II, pp. 173,176,338.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

their prophetic role began, each of the prophets entered into a state of sinless perfection.¹⁸⁰

3.2.4 JESUS' TEACHING AND MIRACLES

The apex of Jesus work in the Gospels is his death and resurrection. In the Qur'ān, however, Jesus' work reaches its climax in his ascetic life, in his prayers and in his miracles. The views of the Ṣūfī writers about Jesus ultimately became accepted by the Islamic community. This was partly attributable to the influence of al-Ghazālī (d.1111 C.E.) one of the greatest of all Muslim writers who, after studying Jesus' prayers in his agony at the garden of Gethsemane, wrote:

Said Jesus (on him be peace) 'O company of disciples, call upon God Most High that he may make light for you this terror, namely death. For I fear death (on the cross) in such a fashion that I stand afraid of the same.'¹⁸¹

However, it was the asceticism of Jesus' life that caught the imagination of the Ṣūfī writers to a far greater extent than his death by crucifixion. On the one hand, the greatest of Ṣūfī poets, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, dismisses the idea of Christians seeking help from the *death of the crucified Christ*:

See the ignorance of the Christian appealing for protection to the Lord who was suspended (on the cross)! Since according to his (the Christian's) belief He was crucified by the Jews, how then can He protect him?¹⁸²

On the other hand, al-Rūmī believed that by following *Christ's ascetic way of life* one's barren soul would be revived and blossom anew. A prose summary of Al-Rūmī's poem about Jesus' ascetic life was translated by Nicholson as follows: "Thyself reckon dead in supplication and poverty [of spirit], that the fresh breath of Jesus may revive thee and make thee fair and blessed as itself."¹⁸³

The Islamic portrayal of Jesus' life as an ascetic is followed up by stories of his teaching and his miracles. Muir states that according to sūra iii (*al-*

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Vol.IV, p.324, cited by Browne, *Eclipse*, p. 133.

¹⁸² Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, *Mathnavi*, Nicholson's translation (in prose), Book II, line 1401, cited by Browne, *Eclipse*, p. 133.

¹⁸³ Ibid, Book I, lines 1547, 1909 cited by by Browne, *Eclipse*, p. 133.

'*Imrān*):43-46 the object of Jesus' teachings to the Jews was to confirm their Scriptures, to modify and lighten some of the burdens of their Law, and to recall them to the true service of God.¹⁸⁴ In iii (*al-'Imrān*):43 one reads that Jesus said: "I will heal the blind, and the leper and by God's permission I will raise the dead". This particular phrase accords with the Biblical account of the miracles which Jesus accomplished.¹⁸⁵ However, many of the Qur'ānic accounts about Jesus' miracles, Muir believes, are taken from the Apocryphal Gospels rather than from the New Testament. In this regard, he notes that the story of Jesus speaking in his cradle is given in chapter one of the Christian apocryphal gospel, *The Gospel of the Infancy*.¹⁸⁶ Also, the story of Jesus creating a bird from clay with the permission of God is repeated verbatim in the Arabic *Evangelium Infantiae*.¹⁸⁷ Goldsack, however, reminds the Biblical scholar that dismissing the Qur'ānic accounts for their reliance on the Apocryphal Gospels rather than on the New Testament obscures the question as to *why* these stories of Jesus' miracles were included in the Qur'ān in the first place. To answer this question he turns to an accepted tradition recorded by Muslim where one reads that Muḥammad said: "There has been no prophet but has been given miracles in order that people might believe on him."¹⁸⁸ In other words, Jesus' miracles were recounted in the Qur'ān to demonstrate the veracity of his teaching. Goldsack observes that although the miracles so recounted in the Qur'ān are from the Apocryphal Gospels, the reason for their being brought forward is the same reason as those mentioned in the

¹⁸⁴ Muir, *Life*, vol. II, p. 283. The numbering in the text is according to Muir's translation. Cf. Rodwell sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 40, 41.

¹⁸⁵ Matthew 11:4: "Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.'"

¹⁸⁶ Muir, *Life*, vol. II, p. 282, fn.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Cf. Rodwell's Koran, p. 554 fn.

¹⁸⁸ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 37. Give Arabic on p. 37 *Christ in Islam*

Canonical Gospels, namely, "in order that people might believe on Jesus" (John ii:23).¹⁸⁹

3.2.5 THE LAST SUPPER OF JESUS WITH HIS DISCIPLES

Muslims, Muir observes, need evidence for the crucifixion of Jesus even more than that of his resurrection. In this regard, Muir contends that the remembrance by Christians of the Last Supper of Jesus with His disciples is an ancient and enduring testimony to the death of Christ. He observes that wherever Christians have gone they have observed the rituals of partaking of bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus' crucifixion and death on the cross. Muir states:

Wherever the traveller goes today, he sees Christians celebrating an ordinance which they call 'The Lord's Supper.' At home or abroad, in lands civilized or barbarous, throughout every quarter of the globe into which the faith has penetrated, by the adherents of every Church, whether Greek, Roman Catholic or Protestant, Syrian, Armenian, Copt, or Ethiopian, - everywhere alike, he finds this rite performed. In some societies more frequently, in others less; in some with elaborate form and ceremony, in others with simplicity, - one way or another, the "Communion of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ" will be witnessed in universal force and prevalence.¹⁹⁰

Muir notes that as the reader looks into past history he finds that the same custom has everywhere and at all times been practised. It is, he contends, an enduring testimony to the death of Christ that the records of each bygone century bear testimony to the observance of the Lord's Supper commemorating the death of Christ among every people professing the Christian faith.¹⁹¹

Furthermore, Muir believes that the last supper of Jesus with his disciples is alluded to in sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*):112-15, which reads in Rodwell's translation:

And remember when the Apostles said - 'O Jesus, Son of Mary! is thy Lord able to send down a furnished Table to us out of the Heaven?' He said - 'Fear God if ye be believers.' They said: 'We desire to eat therefrom, and to have our hearts assured, and to know that thou hast indeed spoken truth to us, and to become witnesses thereof.' Jesus, son of Mary, said - 'O God, our Lord! send down a table to us out of the Heaven,

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ William Muir, *The Lord's Supper, An Abiding Witness to the Death of Christ* (London, 1895), pp. 3,4.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

that it may become a recurring festival to us, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a sign from Thee; and do Thou nourish us, for Thou art the best of nourishers.'

Muir observes that this passage is remarkable, as it enables the reader to see in the supernatural table that descended from heaven a possible allusion to the Lord's Supper.¹⁹² This story, he notes, is probably founded on some "misapprehended tradition regarding the Table of the Lord."¹⁹³ Nevertheless, it recounts the importance of the tradition of the Lord's supper among the early Muslims.

3.2.6 THE ACCOUNT OF JESUS' CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH

James Denny, one of the most famous 19th century Christian theologians to write on the death of Christ, describes the place of the death of Christ in Christian theology with these words:

Throughout the entire New Testament the Cross and the empty tomb dominate everything, they interpret everything, and they put all things in their true relation to each other. The death and resurrection of Christ are the central truths within the New Testament.¹⁹⁴

Furthermore, Denny observes that the Bible is unambiguous as to the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He notes that all of the writers in the New Testament tell of the actual death of Jesus; and not a single voice is heard in all the record of the Books of Acts which records the history of the early church raising any doubt that Jesus was crucified. In this regard:

Peter (the Apostle) addressed the Jews with these words: "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." (Acts. 2:23) And (the Apostle) Paul makes a similar statement: 'He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross' (Philippians 2:8).

Finally, Denny observes that according to Matthew's Gospel, an angel appeared to the women who visited the tomb of Jesus, saying:

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., Muir observes that "The prolific fancy of the Traditionists and Commentators has created a host of miraculous accompaniments to this table: Fruit from the trees of Paradise; Bread; Meats; and Fish, which, though broiled, were still alive, and for the convenience of the guests threw off their scales and bones!" Muir, *Life*, vol. II, p. 285, fn.

¹⁹⁴ James Denny, *The Death of Christ*, (London: 1903), p. 1

I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead." (Matthew 28:5-7)

Thus he concludes that the Bible and church history are clear that Jesus Christ was crucified, that He died on the cross, and that He was raised to life again by the power of God.

Muir notes that the Qur'ān gives Jesus Christ a high place among the prophets and confers on Him names and titles which, if rightly interpreted, would place Him above them all. Yet he notes that the Qur'ān calls into question the crucifixion of Jesus as there are two differing accounts of this event.¹⁹⁵ Sūras iii (*al-Imrān*):47-50, xix (*Maryam*):34 and v (*al-Mā'ida*):117 affirm that God caused Jesus to die. However, three passages contrast with sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):157 which reads: "Yet they slew him not, and they crucified him not, but they had only his likeness." Muir observes that this passage has been interpreted by many Muslim scholars to mean that Jesus was not crucified but rather a substitute for him was placed on the cross. He notes that al-Rāzī adopts this interpretation:

When the Jews designed the death of Jesus, God raised him up to heaven; and the Jewish leaders, fearing a tumult at his escape seized a man and crucified him, spreading the report that it was the Messiah. As the people knew the Messiah only by name, for he mixed little with them, they were satisfied.¹⁹⁶

According to al-Rāzī's interpretation there are four different possibilities in regard to the substitution of Jesus. Firstly, that Titaus, a companion of Yehudza the leader of the Jews, was substituted for Jesus on the cross. Secondly, as Jesus ascended a mountain (Golgotha), under charge of a guard, he was carried up to heaven; and God caused his likeness to fall on the guard, so that he was slain while crying out, "I am not Jesus."¹⁹⁷ Thirdly, Jesus asked of his disciples: "Which of you will purchase Paradise by taking on my likeness?" One of them

¹⁹⁵ *Minar*, trans., Muir, p. 134.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

agreed, so he was taken out and slain, while Jesus ascended to heaven.¹⁹⁸ Fourthly, "as the hypocrite among Jesus' disciples went to the Jews to betray his Master, God cast the similitude of Jesus upon him, and he was crucified in his stead."¹⁹⁹ Concerning which of these possibilities was the correct one, al-Rāzī concludes: "These are the various explanations. The Lord only knoweth the true one."²⁰⁰

Muir, in summarizing these interpretations of *sūra iv (al-Nisā')*:156, 157 notes that they are all contrary to the Gospel accounts and to secular history.²⁰¹ He points out that such a statement as "Jesus was very little among the people and therefore only known by name" is far from the truth considering the Biblical (and even the Qur'ānic) account of Jesus' ministry. Both record that Jesus travelled continually over the land of Judea, its plains, cities and villages preaching the kingdom of God, calling men to repentance and faith and performing many miracles and works of mercy, until "His fame went throughout all Syria."²⁰² Furthermore, Muir observes that the theory that the crucifixion has come down from former generations by only a small number is also outside the account in the Gospels which remark that the crucifixion was preached abroad from the very first, being the essence of the Gospel.²⁰³

3.2.6.1 MUSLIM THEORIES ABOUT THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

Muir observes that for all the Biblical and secular history affirming the death of Jesus on the cross, Muslims have embraced an interpretation of *sūra iv (al-Nisā')*:156, 157, and a line of traditions which have on the one hand affirmed

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid.

200 Ibid.

201 Tacitus, the Roman Historian in his *Annals* (written between A.D. 115 and 117) mentions the fire of Rome (64 A.D.) and Nero's attempt to fasten the blame on the Christians whom he described as: "a class of men who got their name from Christ, who was executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius." Tacitus, *Annals* XV:44 cited in *Minār*, trans., Muir, p. 134.

202 *Minār*, trans., Muir, p.137.

203 Ibid., pp. 138, 139.

the absence of Jesus being crucified on the cross and on the other set forth that there was a substitute made for him.²⁰⁴ Muir notes that not only is the crucifixion of Jesus rejected, but also the sign of the cross and that which it represents.

Not only do Muslims deny the historical fact of the crucifixion, but from the days of Muḥammad until now, they have shown a strange and strong antipathy, even a repugnance, to the very sign of the Cross".²⁰⁵

Al-Wāqīdī, he notes, relates that "Muḥammad had such repugnance to the very form of the cross that he broke everything brought into his house with that figure upon it."²⁰⁶ Muir considers that this may have been "symbolical of his extreme aversion to the doctrine of the Crucifixion."²⁰⁷

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, during his early period of writing (up to 1897), accepted the Muslim tradition concerning the crucifixion that holds that someone was crucified in Jesus' place, that Jesus himself was taken up to heaven before he died, and that he will return to earth as an eschatological figure who will judge and renew the faith of man in God. After 1870, he admits that the historical evidence is compelling that Jesus was in fact crucified. However, he contends that Jesus did not die but was taken down from the cross after three or four hours and then concealed by his disciples, who spread the rumour that he had ascended to heaven.²⁰⁸ Another significant difference between Khān's study of the crucifixion and the Christian perception is that Khān held that Jesus' crucifixion was not necessary to redeem mankind from sin. Adam's sin, Khān held, did not affect the whole human race nor could Jesus' death offer redemption for the whole race. Each man sins of his own accord and each person must do good deeds by which God will judge him worthy or unworthy.²⁰⁹

204 Muir, *Life*, Vol. iii, p. 61.

205 Ibid.

206 Ibid.

207 Ibid.

208 Baljon, *Reforms*, p. 128.

209 Ibid., p. 124.

It is evident that Sayyid Aḥmad Khān took two different positions regarding the crucifixion, one before 1870 and one subsequently. After 1870, he considers himself to be a 'theistic naturalist' and attempts to explain all events according to a modified form of rationalism. He adheres to the law of nature and rejects miracles. This means that even though he considers Jesus to have been crucified according to history, he cannot accept that he was miraculously raised from the dead.²¹⁰ There were other 19th century Muslim scholars who went much further in their criticism of the crucifixion than did Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, some of whom will now be considered.

Halil Halid in his book, *The Crescent versus the Cross*, shows how far even the educated Muslim in the 19th century carried his opposition to the cross. This Honorary M.A. of Cambridge and a Licentiate of the Institute of Law in Constantinople, writes:

Islam also holds different views on the death of Christ. Whether historically correct or not, it does not admit the possibility of the crucifixion of Christ. It advances the theory that someone else must have been crucified by mistake in His place, as it cannot reconcile His lofty position with the alleged form of His Death, a form which, to the Moslem mind, only befits criminals. To the Moslem mind it is not only sacrilegious but also illogical at once to deify Him and make Him suffer such a death. The Christian explanation that 'Christ suffered that painful death for our sins' fails to satisfy the critics of the non-Christian world.²¹¹

Rashīd Riḍā, writing in *Al-Manār*,²¹² devotes twelve pages to a candid inquiry regarding the crucifixion of Christ. He understands that a fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity concerning the person of Jesus lies in the doctrine of the Cross. He therefore summarizes the objections to this doctrine as follows:

1. It is opposed to reason.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Halil Halid, *The Crescent versus the Cross*, p. 36, cited by Zwemer, *Muhammad or Christ*, (London: Seeley, Service & Co., 1916), pp. 233, 234.

²¹² Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Manār*, cited by Zwemer, *Muhammad or Christ*, pp. 236, 237.

2. It is opposed to theism. How can God, who is omnipresent and everlasting, degrade Himself by dwelling in a virgin's womb?
3. It is opposed to God's knowledge; for the plan of salvation - if such it is - was an after-thought.
4. It is opposed to both the mercy and justice of God; to His mercy because He allowed Christ to suffer, being innocent, without delivering Him; and to His justice in allowing those who crucified Him to do it unpunished.
5. It leads to impiety, because if this is the way of salvation, then no matter how wicked a man is he finds deliverance through the cross, and will never be punished for his sins.
6. It is unnecessary. We have never heard it stated by any reasonable person, or those who are learned in law, that the attribute of justice is abrogated by the pardon of a criminal; on the contrary, it is considered a virtue to pardon an offender. Why should not God do so?²¹³

During the 19th and early 20th century, many Muslim writers were not only opposed to the historical fact of the crucifixion, but also to the interpretation of that fact in Christian theology. Following the Reformation, there was a renewed emphasis on the link between the crucifixion and the doctrine of atonement from sin. In 19th century Christian thought the substitutionary death of Jesus and his resurrection were set forward as the centrepiece of the traditional and orthodox Christian faith.

Goldsack and Zwemer were contemporaries, and both had written about the Christian concept of atonement as it might be explained by using truths admitted in Islam and Christianity. Goldsack develops the concept of atonement from the Muslim idea that Jesus is referred to in sūra iii (*al-ʿImrān*):46 as "Honourable in this world and in the world to come". This he notes has been interpreted by al-Bayḍāwī and al-Zamakhsharī to mean that Jesus will be intercessor for sinners in the world to come.²¹⁴ The concept of Jesus' mediation is central to the Christian idea of atonement for sin.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, pp. 24, 25.

Zwemer develops the idea of atonement somewhat differently. Muḥammad, Zwemer believes, was not ignorant of the supreme importance of doctrine of the atonement.²¹⁵ The following well-known tradition, in which Muḥammad describes atonement, was cited by 19th century Muslims:

Muḥammad said: I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form, and He said unto me, 'O Mohammed, knowest thou on what subject the highest angels contend?' I answered, 'Yes, O my Lord, on the subject of atonement, that is to say, on the services and degrees which are the cause of the atonement of sins.' Thereupon the word was addressed to me, 'What is atonement?' I answered, 'Atonement is the remaining in the house of prayer after the service has been performed; the going to the meetings on foot; and the taking an ablution when trials and troubles befall: whoever does these things will live and die well, and be as pure from sin as if he had just been born of his mother.'²¹⁶

Zwemer mentions other traditions which relate how Muḥammad explained the sacrifices at Mecca and especially those performed at the great feast of *Īd al-fīṭr* after the fast of Ramadan as atoning for sin.²¹⁷ He concludes that, from the Christian perspective, the Cross of Christ is the missing link in the Muslim's creed. Hughes concurs and observes that "for we have in Islam the great anomaly of a religion which rejects the doctrine of a sacrifice for sin, while its great central feast is a Feast of Sacrifice."²¹⁸

3.2.6.2 THE PROBLEMS OF REJECTING JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS

An issue for Muir and Goldsack in studying Islamic theories denying the crucifixion of Christ and affirming that a substitute was made for Jesus has been to account for the origin of this notion. Goldsack suggests that Muḥammad gained the idea from Christians of docetic tendencies.²¹⁹ Muir acknowledges that Basilides the Egyptian (A.D. 117-138) had some followers in his day. Basilides denied any essential union between Christ, the spiritual Saviour emanating from the Supreme Being, and the man Jesus. The Christian theologian Irenaeus (A.D.

²¹⁵ Zwemer, *Muhammad or Christ*, pp. 238, 239.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Mishkāt*, xviii:3, cited by Zwemer, *Muhammad or Christ*, pp. 238, 239.

²¹⁸ *Hughes' Dictionary*, p. 233.

²¹⁹ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 35.

130-200) writing against the heretical views of the Gnostics in general, and Basilides in particular, gives the Gnostics' position about the crucifixion of Christ as follows:

Wherefore he did not himself suffer death, but Simon, a certain man of Cyrene, being compelled, bore the cross in his stead, so that this latter being transfigured by him, that he might be thought to be Jesus himself, received the form of Simon, and standing by laughed at them. For since he was an incorporeal power and the Nous (mind) of the unborn Father, he transfigured himself as he pleased, and thus ascended to Him who had sent him.²²⁰

However, Muir points out that Gnosticism seemed to disappear centuries before the appearance of Islam.

The singular correspondence between allusions to the crucifixion in the Koran and the wild speculations of certain early heretics has led some to conjecture that Mahomet derived his notions from a Gnostic source. But Gnosticism had disappeared from Egypt before the sixth century, and there is no reason for supposing that it had at any time a footing in Arabia.²²¹

Muir believes that Islam's denial of the crucifixion and the acceptance of a substitute for Jesus on the cross reflected a desire on Muḥammad's part to placate the Jews of Medina, who were offended at being implicated in the crucifixion of Jesus.²²² Muir further observes that the antipathy in Islam for the cross can be seen in the traditions which describe Jesus breaking the cross at his second coming. In this regard, Muir cites a tradition repeated by Abū Hurayra, that the Prophet said: "I swear by heaven it is near when Jesus the Son of Mary will descend from heaven upon you people, a just King, and he will break the cross and kill the swine."²²³

With regard to the substitution theories Muir questions whether God's transformation of another man's appearance to make him look like Jesus implies that the Supreme Being is fraudulent in misrepresenting one man as another.²²⁴

220 Iraenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I, xxiv, 4, cited by Muir, *Life*, Third edition, 1894, p. 149.

221 Muir, *Life*, Third edition, 1894, p. 149.

222 Ibid.

223 Muir, *Life*, Vol. iii, p. 61.

224 Ibid.

He notes that while asserting that God can do anything, Muslims agree that God is *al-'Ādil* (The Just One) as the meaning of one of his ninety-nine beautiful names requires. Therefore, some Muslims have concluded that if God chose to raise Jesus to heaven and spare him from the cross, it would seem unnecessary for The Just One to satisfy the Jews by victimizing an innocent bystander!²²⁵

Muir concludes that those who recorded the traditions of the Prophet acknowledge that the Qur'ān in one instance (*sūra iv (al-Nisā')*:156, 157) seemingly denies the crucifixion but elsewhere affirms that Jesus died on the cross (*sūra iii (al-Imrān)*: 47-50, *sūra xix (Maryam)*: 34 and *sūra v (al-Mā'ida)*: 117). He notes that *sūra iv (al-Nisā')*: 156, 157 was usually cited by Indian Muslims of the 19th century to imply that Jesus did not die on the cross. In order to unify the teaching of the Qur'ān, Muir notes that the only possible way of escape has been to affirm that He was on the cross for a few hours but that Jesus was not crucified to his death.²²⁶ Muir holds that few if any early Muslim scholars had brought *sūra iv (al-Nisā')*:156, 157 into harmony with the other passages which refer to the crucifixion of Jesus in the Qur'ān nor indeed with the Biblical record. Accordingly, he opted to let the apparent contradiction between the Qur'ānic passages stand.

Goldsack allows that most of the early Islamic interpretations of *sūra iv (al-Nisā')*:156, 157 require a substitute or a simulation for Jesus. However, he believes that there were Muslim scholars who attempted a harmonization of the apparently contradictory passages in the Qur'ān on the topic of Jesus' crucifixion. In this regard, he also observes that one does find evidence of an account of Jesus' crucifixion in the writings of several Muslim writers, most notably al-Mas'ūdī.²²⁷

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ *Minār*, trans., Muir, p. 138.

²²⁷ Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 35.

E.E. Elder, an early 20th century scholar, set forward the opinions of several Muslims who attempted a harmonization of the passages in the Qur'ān on the topic of the crucifixion of Christ.²²⁸ Elder also notes that most, but not quite all, of the early Islamic interpretations of sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):156, 157 require a substitute or a simulation for Jesus. He also notes that one writer, who did not suggest that a substitution for Jesus was made, was al-Mas'ūdī (d. 956), an Islamic historian and geographer who was acquainted with the Gospel account of Jesus as well as with the writings of the Roman historian Tacitus (d. 120 A.D.). Al-Mas'ūdī names, in his work *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-jawāhir*, the four who wrote the Gospels.²²⁹ Al-Mas'ūdī also makes an allusion to the ill treatment given to Jesus by the Jews until Jesus entered into heaven; the account of Jesus' treatment, he contended, is accurately recorded by the Gospel writers.

They have (accurately) preserved the history of the Masih, they have related in it His birth and His baptism by Yahya bin Zakariya, who is called John the Baptist, in the Lake of Tiberias, from which the water runs into the Jordan, the wonders wrought through him, and the miracles with which God honored him, and how the Jews treated him until he ascended into heaven, when he was 33 years of age.²³⁰

In addition to this allusion to the crucifixion by al-Mas'ūdī, Elder also records an unorthodox account of the crucifixion by a 10th century Islamic religious and political association with ultra-Shī'ī tendencies known as the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Brethren of Purity). This group compiled a treatise entitled *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity) which consists of 52 separate articles. In it they address the crucifixion and death of Jesus, affirming

²²⁸ E.E. Elder, "The Crucifixion in the Koran", *MW* 13 (1923), pp. 242, 243.

²²⁹ *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-jawāhir* was first translated into French as *Les prairies d'or (Meadows of Gold)*, Paris, (1871). For a slightly abridged English translation see Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone, *The Meadows of Gold*. (London:Kegan Paul International Limited, 1989). Al-Mas'ūdī was born in Baghdad and after much travelling died in Fuṣṭāṭ (Cairo) in 956. His extensive travels would have enabled him to come in contact with Christians, the Biblical record and in particular the account of the death of Jesus. E.I. 1st. ed., s.v. "Al-Mas'ūdī" by C. Brockelmann.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, Paris edition 1871, p. 123-124, cited by Elder, "The Crucifixion in the Koran", *MW* 13, p. 251.

that the evidence of sūras iii (*al-‘Imrān*):47-50, sūra xix (*Maryam*):34 and sūra v (*al-Mā‘ida*):117 were the most sure. In the *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* one reads:

And when Allah wanted to cause ‘Isa to die, and to raise him up to Himself, then ‘Isa gathered with his brethren and disciples in the *bait al-Maqdas*, in the room of one of his faithful friends. He said, ‘I am about to go from you to my father and yours. And he went forth the next day and appeared to the people and began to call them and remind them and warn them, until he was taken and brought to the King of the children of Israel, who ordered his crucifixion. His two hands were tied to the cross, and he remained crucified from the mid-forenoon (*dahha*) until mid-afternoon (*‘asr*). And he asked for water, and was given vinegar to drink, and he was thrust with a spear, and then buried at the place of the cross.”²³¹

Thus one may see that some of the early Muslim historians recorded the narrative of the crucifixion in a way reasonably close to the account as given in the Gospels while others simply mentioned that both the Qur’ān and the Gospels recorded the event of the crucifixion of Jesus.²³²

Goldsack suggests that in this case of ambiguity in the Qur’ān, the Muslim is advised in Sūra x (*Yūnus*) 94: "And if thou art in doubt, (O Muhammad) of that which we have sent down unto thee, ask those who read the Book before thee". And "those who read the Book before thee" are identified by the commentators as the Jews and Christians.

3.2.7 JESUS, THE HONOURABLE INTERCESSOR AT THE LAST DAY

In Islam as in Christianity, the story of Jesus does not end at the Cross, whether one accepts the Christian view that Jesus endured the Cross and was then taken to heaven after his resurrection or the Islamic view that Jesus did not endure death by crucifixion but was taken to heaven directly. Both Islam and Christianity admit to the central truth that Jesus will be "intercessor" at the Last Day.²³³ Jesus'

²³¹ *Rasā’il*, ed. Dieterici, Berlin 1886, p. 604, cited by Elder, "The Crucifixion in the Koran", cited by Elder, "The Crucifixion in the Koran", *MW* 13, p. 253.

²³² ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, wrote about Jesus' crucifixion in his *Kitāb al-‘Ibar* (Cairo 1284 in 7 vols.), cited by Elder, "The Crucifixion in the Koran", *MW* 13, p. 253.

²³³ Some Muslims, Goldsack acknowledges, see in sūra xvii (*al-Isrā‘īl*):80 a promise that Muḥammad also will be able to intercede for sinners. However, the early Islamic commentators usually do not allow this interpretation because sūra ix (*al-Tawba*):81 clearly reads: "Ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them (it will be equal). If thou (O

being Messiah and Intercessor is inextricably linked in the Qur'ān. Muir observes that the reasons given in the Qur'ān for Jesus receiving the title of Messiah is because His prayers were heard and answered, because He raised the dead and performed other wonderful miracles, because He was innocent of the imputations of the Jews and because in the world to come he will be the Intercessor for His people.²³⁴

Goldsack observes that in the Qur'ān, as in the Bible, Jesus' sinless nature makes it uniquely possible for him to be the "honourable intercessor" at the last day because no sinner can intercede for another sinner.²³⁵ He further observes that the Qur'ān teaches in sūra iii (*al-Imrān*): 46:

O Mary, verily God sendeth thee good tidings of the Word (proceeding) from Himself: His name the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honourable in this world and in the world to come.²³⁶

Goldsack adds that the Islamic commentators on the Qur'ān find in sūra iii (*al-Imrān*):44, 45 evidence that Jesus Christ will intercede for sinners at the Last Day. For example, he notes that al-Bayḍāwī confirms this role for Jesus in his *Tafsīr* which reads: "The illustriousness in this world is the office of a prophet, and that in the next world the office of intercessor."²³⁷ Al-Zamakhsharī in his commentary *al-Kashshāf*, states that Jesus will receive: "The office of prophet and supremacy over men and loftiness of rank in paradise."²³⁸ Al-Bayḍāwī and al-Zamakhsharī hold that in the world to come Jesus will be the intercessor for sinners.

Muḥammad) ask forgiveness for them seventy times, God will by no means forgive them." Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 26.

²³⁴ *Minār*, trans. Muir, p. 125. Muir cites the interpretation of al-Bayḍāwī and al-Zamakhsharī, who comment on Sūra iii (*al-Imrān*) 46 as "Honourable in this world and in the world to come" noting that this passage refers to Jesus' role as intercessor for sinners in the world to come.

²³⁵ *Ibid*.

²³⁶ In Goldsack's translation this verse is numbered 46.

²³⁷ *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, "Nuhtagh Nvobh Xt,N,fkgh hdk6gh Xt Nih[,gh "cited by Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 25.

²³⁸ *Tafsīr al-Zamakhsharī*, cited by Goldsack, *Christ in Islam*, p. 25.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Muir, Goldsack, and Sayyid Aḥmad Khān agree that the truths about the person of Jesus admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible point toward his uniqueness among all the prophets. Khān adds only the proviso that the fundamental difference between the Muslim and the Christian considerations of the person of Jesus is that Christians call Jesus God and render him worship (*Parastish*).²³⁹ Khān considers this to be irreconcilable with *tawḥīd* (true monotheism). Furthermore, according to Khān's view, regarding Jesus as God would also be a departure from the Gospel of Matthew where, in verse 10 of chapter 4, he notes that Jesus cites from the book of Deuteronomy: "You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone!"²⁴⁰ While Khān does not draw the same conclusions about the uniqueness of Jesus as do Muir and Goldsack, he does agree that the person of Jesus was unique among men. Finally, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān argues that the Qur'ānic terms for Jesus, 'Spirit of God' and 'Word of God' mean essentially the same as 'Son of God' found in the Gospels.²⁴¹ In this regard Sayyid Aḥmad Khān relied upon the arguments of the Islamic philosophers and mystics, whose ideas were regarded with extreme caution by the more literally-minded Muslim scholars.²⁴²

Samuel Zwemer also observes that Jesus of Nazareth occupies a large place in Islamic mysticism especially in the foremost mystical poet and author of the *Mathnavi*, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī.²⁴³ Zwemer observes that al-Rūmī draws the great lesson from the life of Christ that Jesus is the Life-giver in a poem about Jesus'

²³⁹ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, pp. 37ff, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 98.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, pp. 37ff, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 96.

²⁴² *Ibid.* In particular, Troll notes that Khān was influenced by Ibn al-'Arabī who in *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* writes: "The person that would regard his (Jesus') external form would take him as a mere human being, the person reflecting about the reason for his coming into human form would take him to be a spirit (rūḥ) only, and the person having in mind his miracles would acknowledge him as *rasūl Allāh*, *Kalimat Allāh* and *rūḥ Allāh* and would recognize all these things as coming from the One God and then he would acknowledge everything as being one." Ibn al-'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, chapter 15, cited by Khān, *TK*, III, p. 4.

²⁴³ *A Moslem Seeker After God*, pp. 292, 293.

ascetic life (*Mathnavi*, Book I, lines 1547, 1909) which Zwemer translated into English verse as follows:

Thyself reckon dead, and then thou shalt fly
Free, free, from the prison of earth to the sky!
Spring may come, but on granite will grow no green thing:
It was barren in winter, 'tis barren in spring;
And granite man's heart is, till grace intervene,
And crushing it, clothe the long barren with green.
When the fresh breath of Jesus shall touch the heart's core,
It will live, it will breathe, it will blossom once more.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, *Mathnavi*, Book I, lines 1547, 1909 trans. (into English verse) by Samuel Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker After God: Showing Islam at its Best in the Life and Teaching of Al-Ghazali, Mystic and Theologian of the Eleventh Century*. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1920), pp. 292, 293. This poem based on lines 1547 and 1909 of the *Mathnavi*. Nicholson translated line 1547 to prose: "Thyself reckon dead in supplication and poverty [of spirit], that the fresh breath of Jesus may revive thee and make thee fair and blessed as itself." *Mathnavi*, trans. by R.A. Nicholson, Book I, line 1547, cited by Browne, *Eclipse*, p. 133.

CHAPTER NINE

GOD IN ISLAM

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This last chapter concerns some fundamental theological questions about the Deity which are at the heart of Muslim-Christian dialogue. The topic of God has been left until last for several reasons. In spite of the fact that both Islam and Christianity are monotheistic faiths, beginning dialogue by discussing the topic of God can raise more divisive questions than providing satisfactory answers. The central question which must be answered at the outset of dialogue is whether the Subject referred to, when Muslims and Christians speak of the Deity, is the same or different. Secondly, the topic of God is presented last because it requires some prior understanding of Islamic and Christian theology. Only then can the most general questions about God be addressed - about how adherents of these two faiths attempt to describe God's Existence, Essence, and Attributes and perceive of God's activity as Creator, Redeemer, and Judge. These are some of the most important questions about God which Muslims and Christians have discussed through the centuries and on which this chapter will seek to shed some light.

2.0 PERCEPTIONS OF GOD IN EARLY MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

The Muslim-Christian dialogues of the 8th-11th centuries on God are important because these exchanges influenced the future of Islamic theology on this topic.¹ The early Christian apologists of the 8th-11th centuries believed that God, the subject of worship by both Muslims and Christians, was the same God. The difference, they held, lay in that which was predicated about this subject by Muslims and Christians. The Islamic understanding of the Divine Unity was

¹ Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, p. 64. Sweetman observes that dialectical theology (called by Muslims *kalām*) was not the invention of Muslim theologians and that there were schools of dialectical theology in Christianity for many centuries before Islam. In John of Damascus' *Dialectica*, he observes that one finds a scheme of dialectic to be applied to theology which appears again and again as the method of dialectical theology in Islam.

regarded by the early Christian apologists as deficient rather than contrary to the Christian conception of God. In fact, John of Damascus holds that Islam should be regarded as an heretical form of Christianity.² The idea that Christians worship an altogether different Deity to that of Muslims seems to be a later theological development which reached its height during the Crusades.

The arguments set forward by John of Damascus for the existence of God were repeated by those Muslim theologians who followed him. The writings of the Damascene are particularly important to the study of God in Islam. In his *De Fide Orthodoxa*³ John of Damascus begins by presenting Biblical evidence to support the concept of the perfection of God.⁴ He then employs an argument from logic termed 'mutual prevention' by which questions are posed which force one to conclude logically that if God is perfect He must be One in essence. For example, the Damascene notes that:

If there are many gods, there must be differences between them. If not they are the same. If there is difference, what becomes of their perfection?...One God would limit the other...How could the world be ruled by many and saved from the dissolution and strife between rulers?⁵

From these considerations he concludes that God must be One. His argument from 'mutual prevention' that God is One was used repeatedly by later Muslim theologians. Aware that his writing on the topic of the unity of God would be scrutinized by Muslims, John of Damascus insists, almost monotonously:

We believe in One God, one Principle, without beginning, uncreated, unbegotten, imperishable, immortal, everlasting, infinite, uncircumscribed, boundless, of infinite power, simple, uncompounded, incorporeal, without flux, passionless, unchangeable, unalterable, unseen...separated from all essence as being super-essential and above all things, and Absolute God.⁶

² J.E. Merrill, "The Tractate of John of Damascus on Islam", *MW* 41 (1951), p. 88. Cf Chapter One of this thesis.

³ *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Book I, Cap. V, Migne, PG, 94, 800f, cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol.I, pp. 64-66.

⁴ Exodus xx:2,3; Deuteronomy vi:4; Isaiah xliii:10 and also John xvii:3.

⁵ *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Book I, Cap. V, Migne, PG, 94, 800f, cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol.I, pp. 64-66.

⁶ *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Book I, Cap. VIII, Migne, PG, 94, 808f, cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol.I, pp. 64-66.

In John of Damascus' writings one also finds a phrase which characterized future Islamic theology, namely that God is "beyond being" emphasizing God's transcendence.⁷ This concept was also important to Islamic theologians due to their intense desire to shield God from association with idols, and they similarly referred to God as altogether transcendent. They also allowed John of Damascus' formulation that although God was "beyond being", he was nevertheless understandable by his Divine Names. Thus, the Mu'tazilite concept of God is built on negation:

God is one, without peer, hearing, seeing. He is not a body, not an object, not a mass, not form nor flesh nor blood, nor person, nor substance, nor accident. He has neither colour, taste, smell, texture, heat, cold, moisture nor dryness, nor length, breadth and depth, nor concourse, nor separation, nor does He move or rest etc. ⁸

Whenever the Islamic belief in the Unity of God is studied, there is also a rejection of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. In his treatment of the concept of the Trinity, John of Damascus is at pains to stress that the Unity of God should not be called into question and that in every divine act there should be understood the working of the Father, through the Son, in and by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, any theory which suggests that there were degrees of Divinity in the Godhead were therefore unacceptable. John emphasizes this point when he states:

There was never a time when the Father was and the Son was not. Nor does one find a point in time when all three did not exist. God cannot be spoken of as 'becoming a Father'. This is the worst form of blasphemy. There is one God because there is one Godhead.⁹

Al-Kindī asserts that the Trinity and the Sonship of the Messiah are misrepresented in the Qur'ān, and that the notion of a female element in the Godhead was borrowed by Muḥammad from the Jews.¹⁰ He denies that Christians, especially those who base their beliefs on the Ecumenical Christian

⁷ *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Book I, Cap. XII, Migne, PG, 94, 845f, cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 64-66.

⁸ Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, i. 155f cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. II, p. 44.

⁹ Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 64-66.

¹⁰ *Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, p. 3.

Creeds,¹¹ entertain the belief that "God is one of Three," or that "there are three Gods." This accusation, al-Kindī contends, rests on the heretical dogmas of sects, like the Marcionites, whom he did not consider worthy of the name 'Christian'.¹² In this regard, al-Kindī appeals to al-Hāshimī's intimate knowledge of Christianity to bear out his testimony as to the true doctrine of the Church, namely, that there is "One God in three Persons."¹³

‘Aī Ṭabarī begins his response to al-Kindī's arguments with a discussion of the Divine Unity and contends that "Muḥammad called his people back to the God of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, to the unity of God, and to that which pious prophets had proclaimed."¹⁴ He cites sūra cxii (*al-Tawḥīd*): "Say, He is God alone; God the Eternal; He begets not and is not begotten, nor is there like unto Him anyone,"¹⁵ and he asks questions about how three substances could be one substance in essence?¹⁶ His critique of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was later repeated by many Muslim apologists. Here we see how Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064) in *Kitāb al-fiṣal fī-'l-milal wa-'l-niḥal* (Book of discernment between confessions and sects) followed ‘Aī Ṭabarī's method of criticizing how three substances could be one in essence.

If the Father is God, and the Son is God, how could the Father be the Son? If the Son sits at the right hand of the Father, is the Father sitting at his own right. If the divine persons have been 'explained' by Christians in terms of the 'Attributes' of God: why should there be only three attributes in number?; how could they be distinct from the essence?; how could there be any speculation on God's nature at all?¹⁷

In the dialogue conducted between Caliph al-Mahdī and the Nestorian Patriarch Mar Timothy one observes the most wide-ranging and open of the early dialogues between an eminent Muslim and Christian about the person of God.

¹¹ The Apostles' Creed, The Nicene Creed and the Definition of Chalcedon.

¹² *Al-Kindy*, trans. Muir, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ ‘Aī-Ṭabarī, *Religion and Empire*, trans. Mingana, p. 20.

¹⁵ Cf. Sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 16, 25.

¹⁶ Gaudeul, *Encounters*, Vol. I, p. 39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 87, 88.

Both men, it should be observed, set forward their case along the lines of logical dialectic. Thus, the Caliph al-Mahdī reveals his deep misunderstanding of the Trinity when he states:

O Catholicos, a man like you who possesses all this knowledge and utters such sublime words concerning God, is not justified in saying about God that he married a woman from whom he begat a son.¹⁸

Timothy denies that any Christian would utter such blasphemy: "And who is he, O God-loving King, who has ever uttered such a blasphemy concerning God?" The Caliph then suggests that Timothy believes in a "vacuous" or hollow God:¹⁹ Timothy again vigorously denies this, answering the Caliph: "O King, I do not believe that God is either vacuous or solid, because both these adjectives denote bodies." When the Caliph asks: "What then do you believe that God is if He is neither vacuous nor solid?" Timothy replies: "God is a Spirit and an incorporeal light, from whom shine and radiate eternally and divinely His Word and his Spirit."²⁰ The conclusion made by Timothy is that God begets as He creates without instruments and by His decree.

Again the Caliph accuses Timothy of tritheism and Timothy replies that while he believes in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he still believes in one God.

The belief in the above three names, consists in the belief in three Persons, and the belief in these three Persons consists in the belief in one God. We believe in Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one God.²¹

Mar Timothy illustrates the concept that three are often thought of as one by reminding the Caliph that his own word and his spirit are not distinguishable and neither are the light and the heat and the sun - three suns but one sun.

¹⁸ *Timothy's Apology*, trans. Mingana, p. 17.

¹⁹ The Caliph's objection bears on the fact that since God begets, something goes out of Him and He is consequently vacuous.

²⁰ *Timothy's Apology*, trans. Mingana, Vol. ii. 37, p. 78.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 22, 23.

God is one God with His Word and His Spirit, and not three Gods, because the Word and the Spirit of God are inseparable from Him. And as the sun with its light and its heat is not called three suns but one sun, so also God with His Word and His Spirit is not three gods but is and is called one God.²²

The Caliph then asks whether the Word and the Spirit are separable from God, and Timothy's reply is in the negative, for if that were so then God would cease to be rational and living. He observes that, as the source and fount of wisdom, God imparts wisdom by His Word. As the source of life to all living beings, He imparts life by means of His Word and Spirit.²³

To Timothy's insistence that he affirms the Unity of God and does not subscribe to three different Godhead;²⁴ the Caliph then asks:

What is the difference between the Son and the Spirit, and how is it that the Son is not the Spirit nor the Spirit the Son? Since you said that God is not composite there should not be any difference with God in the fact that he begets and makes to proceed from Himself.²⁵

Timothy responds:

There is no difference, O King, between the persons in their relation to one another, except that the first is not begotten, and the second is begotten, and the third proceeds; and God consists in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²⁶

The conclusion which Mar Timothy draws on the first day of dialogue with Caliph al-Mahdī is that God is not corporeal and not composite and so one cannot speak of Him as having members or being susceptible to division. His essence is like "reason (which) comes out of the soul, but it comes out of it without any...cleavage, and without the instrumentality of organs."²⁷

Whereas prior to Paul of Antioch (d. 1180) Christian apologists had argued that the Trinity conforms to reason and logic, Paul bases his arguments on the lines of admitted truth. All doctrinal formulations, he declares, are inadequate to

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid. Cf. Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. I, p. 74.

²⁴ *Timothy's Apology*, trans. Mingana, Vol. ii. 37, p. 24.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 25.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

describe the essence of God. The doctrinal formulation of the Trinity, he notes, was no exception, but it was not antithetical to God's person nor did it limit God's person. He holds that the key for Muslims in comprehending the Christian conception of God is the person of Jesus the Messiah.²⁸

Paul of Antioch then embarks on an explanation of the Christian conception of God from a perspective theologically understandable to the Muslim. The term 'hypostasis' was usually translated in Arabic as '*uqnum* (substance). But as Muslim scholars do not apply this term to God, Paul of Antioch replaces the use of '*uqnum* with the theologically more neutral term *ism* (name).²⁹ He then reformulates the Nicene Creed using three names to express that the Divine Unity is an existing Being (*shay'*), a living Being (*ḥayy*), and a speaking Being (*nātiq*).³⁰ He suggests that the doctrine of the Trinity thus expressed conforms to the Qur'ān (sūras iv (*al-Nisā'*):171; and xix (*Maryam*) : 34), and further notes that in the Qur'ān all the names and attributes of God stem from the three substantial attributes (*al-ṣifat al-jawhariyya*) of existence, speech, and life.³¹ The second of these, he holds, explains the incarnation of the Word and the sonship of Christ. Paul of Antioch thus uses traditional Arab analogies of a word which proceeds from the mind as a picture of non-physical generation.³²

Ibn Taymiyya holds that the Christian conception of the Trinity was opposed not only to reason, but also to the Scriptures of Jews, Muslims and even the Christians themselves. The idea of the Word proceeding from, as being begotten by, the Father like speech from the mind seemed to him as irrational as

²⁸ Paul of Antioch, *Risala ila Aḥad al-Muslimīn*, 54:79-80, cited by Michel, *Response*, p. 92.

²⁹ Michel, *Response*, p. 91. Paul of Antioch gathers a number of citations from the Old Testament which speak of God as Father, or speak of individuals such as David as "sons of God", or which refer to the indwelling of the divine spirit in men. He states that just as there was no multiplicity implied in the use of these names, neither is there any fault in Christ or his followers in referring to God by the same names.

³⁰ Ibid. Cf. Harry Austyn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 128, 129. Wolfson observes that the terms *dhat* and *shay'* are commonly used by Muslim theologians in respect to God.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

the idea that Mary was the wife of God. Revelation, he holds, had to be in accord with reason, not beyond it. The analogies of Paul of Antioch about the descriptive attributes of God were to his mind absurd.³³ Christians, who held to such views, he believed, were not following religious knowledge but blind imitation (*taqlīd*). Reason discredited all such analogies based on an interchange of sun, light and heat. The concept of the Trinity in which true belief had been replaced by a false creed (*tabdīl*) certainly reflected the greatest error as such a concept was also totally alien to the prophets.

He notes that the Old Testament prophets emphasize the Divine Unity "hear, the Lord is One" (Deuteronomy 6:4) as the key passage about God. Furthermore, he notes that whenever the prophets spoke about God as "Father," their intent was always to indicate the Lordship of God over creatures. There was nothing to imply any real generation in God or any unique relationship between God and Jesus. When, in the Gospel, Jesus is called "son," Ibn Taymiyya claims that this only means "one who is governed, reared."³⁴

Ibn Taymiyya asserts that the false doctrine of the Trinity came about as the original texts of the New Testament had been changed and that verses used to support the doctrine of the Trinity had been taken out of context and misrepresented. But when rightly interpreted, he declared, these verses would provide evidence for the truth of Islam. For example, by first citing sūra ii (*al-Baqara*):28 in demonstration that the Spirit refers to the angel *Jibril* (Gabriel), he is able to reinterpret such verses as Matthew xxviii:19 which contains the baptismal formula "Baptize people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". According to his interpretation, this verse means that they command people to believe in God and His Prophet which God sent and in the angel by

³³ *Al-Jawab*, 2:96, trans. p. 260, cited by Michel, *Response*, p. 121.

³⁴ *Al-Jawab*, 2:133, trans. p. 277, cited by Michel, *Response*, p. 122.

which God sent down the revelation which he brought. This would be a command for them to believe in God and His angels, books, and messengers.³⁵

During the 8th-11th centuries the questions between Muslims and Christians were mainly concerning the adequacy of the predicates about the Divine Subject set forward by respective members of the two faiths. Christians claimed that the concept of the Trinity within Unity was the more adequate concept to express the nature of God. Muslims contended that the concept of the Trinity was not only unreasonable but unscriptural as well. While Muslims and Christians differed on the predicates ascribed to God, few on either side would have suggested that the Subject worshipped by adherents of the other Faith was, in fact, a different Deity.³⁶

3.0 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE 19TH CENTURY STUDIES OF GOD IN ISLAM

The early Muslim-Christian dialogues emphasized God's Unity, God's relationship to the world in general and God's provision for man and man's destiny in particular. These early theological topics about the concept of God were refined and expanded by 19th century Muslim and Christian scholars. There was, however, an important question in the study of God during the 19th century which was not considered during the 8th-11th centuries. This question focussed on whether the predicates ascribed to God by Muslims and Christians are so different that the Subject being worshipped is a different Deity.

During the careers of Muir, Khān and Goldsack debates about the Islamic concept of God took place along a wide theological spectrum. At one end of this theological spectrum, some modern apologists for Islam sought to identify the idea of Allāh in Islam as imbued with the same characteristics as that of God in

³⁵ *Al-Jawab*, 2:98, trans, p. 262, cited by Michel, *Response*, p. 124.

³⁶ See *De Haeresibus*, Migne: Pat. Graec., Vol. xciv, 764 cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 64, 65. It is significant that John of Damascus included Islam as an heretical sect of Christianity, but one which worshipped the true God. In *De Haeresibus* John writes: "The Qur'an teaches that God is One, the Creator, neither begotten nor begetting." *De Haeresibus*, Migne: Pat. Graec., Vol. xciv, 764 cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 64, 65.

Christianity. Sayyid 'Āmir 'Ālī made this concept into a dominant theme in his work entitled *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammed*.³⁷ This book formed the basis of his more famous work entitled *The Spirit of Islam*.³⁸ These early works found significant coherence between Islam and liberal Christianity (especially Unitarianism) regarding the concept of God. In fact, Sayyid 'Āmir 'Ālī affirmed that Unitarianism was a manifestation of the theological orthodoxy of Islam without the rigour of its discipline. He argues that "discipline is needed for 'the common folk', for whom preaching by itself is not enough".³⁹ However, he concludes that "it is probable that should the creed of the Arabian Prophet receive acceptance among the European communities, much of the rigid formalism which has been imparted to it by the lawyers of Central Asia and Iraq would have to be abandoned".⁴⁰

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān also identifies the Muslim concept of Allāh with the Christian conception of God. He rejects the notion that Christians, in holding to the Trinity, believe in three gods. He states: "Their belief is this: 'God is One and he is Father and outside him there is no other God.'"⁴¹ Thus, he believes that God and Allāh are the same Subject. The error of Christians lies in their predicating Father, Son and Holy Spirit to God's Essence.⁴² Khān interprets the Son (i.e. Jesus) and the Spirit (Holy Spirit) as "attributes of God issuing from the Father since eternity".⁴³ Therefore, the existence of the Son and the Spirit is dependent on the Father but the existence of the Father is in no way dependent on the Son or the Spirit.

³⁷ Sayyid 'Āmir 'Ālī, *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammad* (London: 1873).

³⁸ Sayyid 'Āmir 'Ālī, *The Spirit of Islam: A History of the Evolution and Ideals of Islam, with a Life of the Prophet*, (Calcutta, 1890, revised ed. 1922).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.viii-ix.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, pp. 5,6, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 97.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

At the opposite end of the spectrum most conservative Muslims and some conservative Christians have regarded the God of the Bible and the Allāh of the Qur'ān as employing such different predicates that the Subject to which these predicates refer is manifestly different. Thus, the Christian theologian and Islamicist, Johannes Hauri, in his classical study on Islam during Goldsack's era concludes:

What Muhammed tells of God's omnipotence, omniscience, justice, goodness, and mercy sounds, for the most part, very well indeed and might easily awaken the idea that there is no real difference between his God and that of Christianity. But Muhammad's monotheism was just as much a departure from true monotheism as the polytheistic ideas prevalent in the corrupt oriental Churches. Muhammad's idea of God is deistic. God and the world are in exclusive, external, and eternal opposition.⁴⁴

Hauri's premise is that the predicates which Muslims employ when describing God are so radically different to those predicates which Christians employ when describing God that the Subject in question (God Himself) is, in fact, different.⁴⁵

There was a third position which could be placed along the spectrum closer to the end affirming coherence between the concept of God in Islam and Christianity. Those holding this position allow that although Muslims and Christians employed differing predicates about God, they nevertheless held to a core of fundamental predicates pointing to the same subject. Here there was considerable coherence between the Christian, Jewish and Islamic conceptions of God. Among the adherents to this third opinion, the present author includes Muir, Goldsack, Zwemer, Gardner and Sell. Muir notes that God, while revealing Himself supremely and finally in Jesus Christ, had spoken in earlier times "unto the Fathers by the prophets at many times and in various ways" (Hebrews 1:1). Muir observes that God spoke to Abraham and to Hagar, Ishmael's mother so that

⁴⁴ Johannes Hauri, *Der Islam in seinem Einfluss* (Leiden: 1881), p. 44, cited by Zwemer, *The Moslem Doctrine of God*, pp. 21, 22.

⁴⁵ Christians following Hauri's logic frequently note that when the person of Christ, who is regarded in the Bible as God's perfect revelation of Himself, is rejected then the God which Muslims postulate on any other basis must be patently false. Cf. Hendrick Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House, 1938), pp. 102, 103.

the knowledge of the one true God was prevalent from Abraham and his descendants onward.⁴⁶ Similarly, Jethro and Job were also regarded as monotheists who worshipped the One True God. This third Christian view holds that Arab monotheism is derived from Jewish sources and Muḥammad called the Arabs back to the worship of the One True God of Abraham. The aforementioned Christian students of Islam affirmed that although Islam is post-Christian in time it is pre-Christian in thought.⁴⁷

3.1 A STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ISLAMIC NAMES FOR GOD

It was observed in Chapter Four of this thesis that the name of God, 'Allāh' is the most important religious term shared by the Qur'ān and the literature of the pre-Islamic period. Allāh may be an Arabic rendering of the Hebrew אֱל (el), and the unused root אָל (ūl) "to be strong", or from אֱלֹהָ (Eloha) the singular form of אֱלֹהִים (Elohīm). Therefore, the studies of etymology of the term 'Allāh' indicate that it was borrowed from Judaism or Abrahamic Monotheism at a very early date.⁴⁸

Muir also examines the historical context of the term 'Allāh'. He observes that during the pre-Islamic period, *Ilāh* was the name used for any god, but '*Al-Ilāh*' is contracted to *Allah* as the name of the Supreme Deity.⁴⁹ He believes that the origin of the name 'Allāh' stretches back to its use by a branch of Abrahamic tribes which settled in Mecca. Jews, he adds, later settled in Northern Arabia and used El for the Deity.⁵⁰ The Old Testament name for God and beliefs about God were superimposed upon the pagan beliefs of Arabia.

⁴⁶ Muir, *Life*, vol. I, pp. ccxvi, ccxvii.

⁴⁷ See chapter IV, section 6.0 "Evidence concerning external sources in the Qur'an".

⁴⁸ See chapter IV, above.

⁴⁹ *Al-Ilāh* is the name for God with the definite article prefixed, so that Allah is the exact equivalent of the Greek '*Ho Theos*'. Muir, *Life*, vol. I, pp. ccxvi, ccxvii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. ccxvi.

Muir concludes that while Christians and Muslims use different predicates in describing the Deity, they are referring to the same Subject. He notes that this is borne out etymologically by the fact that the Arabic 'Al' is a cognate of 'El' in Hebrew and historically by the fact that the use of Allāh stretches back to its use by a branch of Abrahamic tribes which settled in Mecca and tribes of Jews (descendants of Jacob) which settled in Northern Arabia.⁵¹ Thus, in all of Muir's translated works he uses 'God' for the term 'Allāh'.⁵²

Muir, however, did not make a comparative theological study between the Qur'ān and the Bible about God. Nevertheless, one can draw three conclusions from his writings. Firstly, he states repeatedly that the misconception of the Trinity in the Qur'ān as Tri-Theism must be dismissed and the Unity of God affirmed. He notes that in sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*):77 the Qur'ān condemns what Muḥammad understood from the testimony of a group of Syriac monks to be the doctrine of the Trinity. Here it states: "Verily now they have blasphemed who say, 'God is a third of three,'" Sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 116 adds "And when God shall say, 'O Jesus, Son of Mary, hast Thou said unto men, take me and my mother as two Gods, beside God?'" Muir notes that the background to this verse is recorded by Ibn Ishāq who observes that an embassy from the Christians of Najrān was sent to Muḥammad at Medīna to explain the Christian Faith. Ibn Ishāq states: "Like all the Christians, they said, 'Jesus is God, the Son of God and, and the third of

⁵¹ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. ccxviii, fn. Here Muir notes: "It is to Abraham that one may trace the Arab doctrine of a Supreme Being, to whom their gods and idols were subordinate. The title of *Allāh Tāāla*, The Most High God, was commonly used long before Mahomet to designate this conception. But in some tribes, the idea had become so materialized that a portion of their votive offerings was assigned to the Great God, just as a portion was allotted to their idols." (On this point, Muir cites M.C. de Perceval, vol. i., p. 113 and Sale's Preliminary Discourse, p. 18). Muir continues: "The notion of a Supreme Divinity to be represented by no sensible symbol, is clearly not cognate with any of the indigenous forms of Arab superstition. It was borrowed directly from the Jews, or from some other Abrahamic race among whom contact with the Jews had preserved or revived the knowledge of the "God of Abraham." Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. ccxviii, fn.

⁵² See *Minār*, trans. Muir, in its use of God for Allāh throughout.

Three.⁵³ ...They proved further He is the third of three, namely God, Christ, and Mary." Muir concludes that "the monks of Syria forced upon the earnest enquirer the worship of Mary in so gross a form as to leave the impression upon the mind of Mahomet that she was held to be a god, if not the third Person and the consort of the Deity."⁵⁴ Muir further observes that sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): v: 77, 116 became the foundation for the Islamic position against the so-called Christian "orthodox" party, who styled Mary as *theotokos* "the Mother of God." The position in Islam, Muir notes, is not unlike the Nestorian condemnation of the use of *theotokos* as a title for Mary.⁵⁵

Secondly, one can infer from Muir's comments in the *Minār* that God is best understood by a study of the person of Jesus who is called "the Word of God" and "a Spirit proceeding from God" according to the Qur'ān.⁵⁶ Thirdly, it is clear from Muir's translated works in which he always translated 'God' for 'Allāh' that he believed that the nature of God was not a question which could be made explicit.⁵⁷ Since both Muslims and Christians share the same term, Muir holds that little by little the concept would be made clear from the context in which it is

⁵³ Ibn Ishāq, *Ṣirāt Rasūl Allāh*, cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. II, pp. 19. Cf. A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad, A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Karachi, The Oxford University Press, 1955, paper, 1978), pp. 270, 271. In Guillaume's translation, Ibn Ishāq writes: "A deputation from Christians from Najran came to the apostle. They were Christians according to the Byzantine rite, though they differed among themselves in some points, saying He (Jesus) is God; and He is the son of God; and He is the third person of the Trinity, which is the doctrine of Christianity. They argue that he is God because he used to raise the dead, and heal the sick, and declare the unseen; and make clay birds and breathe into them so that they flew away; and all this was by the command of God Almighty, (sūra iii (al-'Imrān):43, "We will make him a sign to men" (sūra xix (Maryam):21). They argue that he is the son of God in that they say he had no known father; and he spoke in the cradle and this is something that no child of Adam has ever done. They argue that he is the third of three in that God says: We have done, We have commanded, We have created and We have decreed, and they say, If He were one he would have said I have created, and soon, but He is He and Jesus and Mary," (i.e. God the Father, Jesus and Mary formed the Trinity).

⁵⁴ Ibn Ishāq, *Ṣirāt Rasūl Allāh*, cited by Muir, *Life*, Vol. II, pp. 19.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Nestorius in A.D. 428 stated: "Let no one call Mary *Theotokos*; for Mary was but a woman, and it was impossible that God should be born of a woman." F.J. Foakes-Jackson, *History of the Christian Church to A.D. 461* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1891), pp. 458, 459.

⁵⁶ *Minār*, trans. Muir, p. 124.

⁵⁷ Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. ccxviii, fn.

used.⁵⁸ For example, almost all Biblical translations from the original Hebrew Old Testament to Muslim language vernaculars employ the term 'Allāh' for Yahweh. The meaning of the 'Allāh' of the Old Testament would be made clear by the context in which it is used just as the meaning of the 'Allāh' of the Qur'ān was made clear by the context in which it is used.

5.0 KHĀN'S AND GOLDSACK'S STUDIES OF THE ISLAMIC DOCTRINE OF GOD

One needs to be reminded that Muir did not make a study of the theological conceptions of God in Islam. Khān's theological study of God in Islam is expressed in his *Credo*⁵⁹ and Goldsack's in his work *God in Islam*.⁶⁰ Their respective studies encompass the Islamic arguments for God's existence, God's essence and attributes, God's unity, God's pre-ordination of events, God's provision of salvation and God's judgement of mankind. The remainder of this chapter will focus primarily on a comparative study of the opinions of Khān and Goldsack on these theological topics. Using Khān's *Credo*, to which Goldsack responds, the reader will have access to a brief theological comparison of the nature of God by two scholars of Indian Islam writing in the 19th century.

5.1 STUDIES ON THE ISLAMIC DOCTRINE OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

In Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's *Tabyīn al-kalām* (published in 1862), he states that "God had explicitly brought everything into existence out of nothing".⁶¹ However, after 1897, he declared that the doctrine of God must be approached from a scientific starting point. Noting that a prime mover was necessary, he held that because of the arguments from cause and design, God must be this prime mover.⁶²

⁵⁸ *Minār*, trans. Muir, p. 124.

⁵⁹ Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Credo*, translated into English from Urdu by Troll as a Documentary Appendix to his *Reinterpretation*, pp. 194-222.

⁶⁰ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, p. ix.

⁶¹ Khān, *TK*, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 201.

⁶² *Ibid.*

The first proof of God's existence which Sayyid Aḥmad Khān brings forward is the evidence that God was the first cause (the cosmological argument). Khān, like Ibn Sīnā, subscribes to the theory that the universe is governed by the law of cause and effect. He considers himself to be a 'theistic naturalist' for he believes in God's existence and tries to demonstrate this belief to be altogether in accord with reason. Khān writes:

All that exists and that we can, in some way, understand or imagine, is linked by a connecting chain. By necessity this chain ends up in a final Being or Cause or Reason - the Creator and God and the Lord of the worlds.⁶³

The second proof of God's existence, Khān believes, is based on a study of 'primary matter' consisting of atoms from which all existing things are made. In this respect, he argues that the things which make up primary matter change, and that these changes are proof that primary matter is caused in its existence, since it cannot be itself the cause for change.⁶⁴ Khān brings forward a third proof for the existence of God on the lines of the argument from design (the teleological argument). He notes that the wonderful arrangement of the primary particles in creation presuppose the existence of an all-knowing and all-wise creator.⁶⁵

Goldsack also observes that while Muḥammad does not attempt to prove the existence of God, he brings forward many references to the evidences of His existence and of His providential government of the world. He notes that "in the earlier passages of the Qur'ān, in eloquent and impassioned verse, Muḥammad calls his Arab countrymen to the contemplation and worship of the great Cause of all causes; and the dominant note in the earlier sūras of the Qur'ān is the matchless power and transcendent wisdom of the Almighty."⁶⁶

⁶³ Khān, *PMak*, vol. iii, p. 241 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 195.

⁶⁴ Khān, *PMak*, vol. iii, p. 246 cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 196.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, p. vii.

Before the question of God's essence and attributes could be addressed in Islamic thought, the criteria concerning the language used to describe God were debated by Muslims. Orthodox Muslim exegetes, believing that each stanza, verse and letter was divinely given, insisted that passages of the Qur'ān should be interpreted literally. The Mu'tazilites feared that in making literal (and possibly anthropomorphic) interpretations, they would commit the grave sin of associating a physical object with the Divine Unity. Therefore they concluded that a metaphorical interpretation must be allowed in some passages. The example most often cited is sūra vii (*Al-A'rāf*): 54 "*thumma istiwa' 'alā'l-'arsh*" (then He sat down upon the throne). Sayyid Aḥmad Khān interprets the "throne of God" verse metaphorically as representing God's majesty and power. In this interpretation, he reflects the reasoning and influence of al-Zamakhsharī (1074-1143).⁶⁷

Goldsack notes that while the Mu'tazilite method of interpretation is probably the better, the literal interpretation of the Qur'ān employed by orthodox Muslims has prevailed over it.⁶⁸ He observes that in the interpretation of the aforementioned verse the orthodox Muslim's doctrine of *tanzīl* or descent of a literal book, which was written upon a literal table in heaven, seems to demand a literal throne as its depository. Goldsack suggests: "once let a literal throne be posited, and it becomes manifestly, only a step to the idea of a corporeal Deity."⁶⁹ He concludes this to be the case because:

The Qur'ān contains many passages which have carried the same literalism (in its description of the creation) into the descriptions of the Deity Himself. Thus the Qur'ān contains many passages which speak of God's face (ii:109, iv:27), hands (v:69; xxiii:90) and eyes (xi:39; xxiii:27), and represent Him as sitting upon a throne (sūra 7:54), which, says the commentator Hussain, "has 8000 pillars, and the distance between each pillar is 3,000,000 miles."⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Khān, TQ, II, pp. 1-9/ Pmaq, xii, pp. 151,56.

⁶⁸ Goldsack, *God in Islam*, p. 14.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

In this regard, the orthodox Muslim exegete, 'Anas ibn Mālik remarked: "God's sitting upon the throne is known; how it is done is unknown; it must be believed; and questions about it are an innovation."⁷¹

The importance of this preliminary study cannot be overestimated. As was previously mentioned, the orthodox Islamic scholars insisted on a literal interpretation of the Qur'ān when using language about the person of God. The Mu'tazilite scholars, by contrast, feared that in making literal (and possibly anthropomorphic) interpretations of the Qur'ān they would commit the sin of associating a physical object with the Divine Unity.

The Ash'arīte school of theology, to which most of Khān's opponents adhered, held that God's attributes such as knowledge, power and will were separate or distinct from His essence. In Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's earlier writing he held that an understanding of God's attributes is the only way by which man can apprehend something of His essence. Furthermore, he notes "it is impossible that there should be in Him any attribute which is not His very essence".⁷²

In his writing after 1870, following his 'conversion' to a form of theistic naturalism, Khān strips all attributes from the concept of God with the exception of causality. All of the attributes of God he had considered previously were subsumed into this category. For example, in his explanation of the 'key' divine attribute of speech (*kalām; takallum*) Khān states that God must be considered as the final Cause of what we call "speaking," or "communicating".⁷³ Therefore, in his later writings the key attributes of God are considered as part of God's being the Cause of causes.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Credo*, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 202.

⁷³ Ibid.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān then considers a few key attributes predicated of God, the final cause, attributes illustrated by the 99 excellent names of God. Among them are *al-Ḥayy* (the Living One), *al-‘Azīz* (the Mighty One), *al-Khāliq* (the Creator), *al-‘Alīm* (the Knower) and *al-Qādir* (The Powerful). These 'excellent names of God' form the basis for his understanding of God's essence. Khān concludes that while nature and reason give some indication of God's essence, man cannot apprehend the inner truth of God's existence apart from the attributes of God. However, while there is the outworking of the attributes of the Cause of causes which man can observe, man cannot know the essential reality of these attributes in the same way that he knows them in created beings.⁷⁴ One sees in Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's excursus his desire to describe the attributes of God according to nature and reason but his need to avoid the danger of *tashbīh* or likening God to creatures. This problem of the use of anthropomorphic language when referring to God dates from the inception of Islam.

Goldsack observes that the essential name of God, or *Ismu al-dhāt* as it is called, is Allāh.⁷⁵ All other titles of God are called *Asmā'u al-Ṣifāt* or "attributes" of the Divine Being. These attributes are also called *al-Asmā'u'l-ḥusnā*, or the "excellent names". Goldsack notes that while some Muslims hold that the name of Allāh should be recited either at the beginning or the end of the list thus completing the number of one hundred names, strictly speaking, it is not included in the list of ninety-nine names. The excellent names of God are divided into two classes and called by most Muslims the names describing the glorious attributes (*‘Ism al-jalāliyah*) and the names describing the terrible attributes (*‘Ism al-jamaliyah*)⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 345, 346.

⁷⁵ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, pp. 10, 11. Cf. *Hughes Dictionary of Islam*, S.V. God.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Literally, *Jumālī* means "strong, firm, robust," in this case, *Jumālī*, translated 'terrible', conveys the idea that God is terrible to those who challenge His Divine Sovereignty. For example, towards such people He is the Abaser (*al-mudhill*), the Withholder (*al-māni*) and the Distresser (*al-dārr*). Cf. Sweetman, *Theology*, Part One, Vol. II, p. 22. Cf. EI-1&2, sv. Allāh.

Goldsack observes that these names explain themselves; thus the name *al-Raḥīm*, the Merciful, belongs to the first class while the name *al-Mustaqīm*, the Avenger, takes its place in the second. Goldsack believes that the names of God are foundational to understanding the character and attributes of God in Islam. Furthermore, he notes, so meritorious is the act of repeating these excellent names of God that the *Mishkāt* reads "Whoever repeats them will go to heaven".⁷⁷

Goldsack examines some of the attributes predicated of God which are illustrated by the 99 beautiful names of God.⁷⁸ He observes that an important attribute predicated of God is "being the rightful sovereign" over all creation and is illustrated by the excellent name *al-Ḥaqq* (The Truth).⁷⁹ He notes that in sūra xx (*Tā Hā*):113 one reads: "Exalted then be God the King the Truth (the rightful King)." He alone possesses a right over his creatures. The term signifies that the nature of God is the 'true' God as opposed to 'false' gods.

Goldsack observes that another important attribute predicated of God is the immutable One, which is illustrated by the excellent name *al-Qayyim* (the Self-subsisting). According to sūra xl (*al-Mu'min*):19, God is unchanging through time, having no needs, not susceptible to pain or injury, inexpressible by images or language. He is unable to be completely defined by His attributes and is simply pure Being. Goldsack believes that this definition leaves God alone as the 'self-subsisting', and everything besides Him subsists by Him.⁸⁰

Goldsack also illustrates the isolation in which God exists from the work of two of the most eminent Islamic theologians to write on this topic. Al-Ghazālī, in his *Ihyā'* vol. i: 71-74⁸¹, and Muḥammad al-Baghawī, in his book on the seven

⁷⁷ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, pp. 10, 11.

⁷⁸ *Hughes' Dictionary*, s.v. God, p. 146.

⁷⁹ Goldsack, *God in Islam*, p. 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 4 vols. (Cairo: A.H.1289), vol. i: pp. 71-74, cited by Goldsack, pp. 10, 11.

chief attributes of God, use language that leaves no doubt of his idea of what the Qur'an teaches. Al-Baghawī, concludes:

Allah can annihilate the universe if it seems good to Him and recreate it in an instant. He receives neither profit nor loss from whatever happens. If all the infidels became believers and all the wicked pious He would gain nothing. And if all believers became infidels it would not cause Him loss. He can annihilate even heaven itself. He sees all things, even the steps of a black ant on a black rock in a dark night.⁸²

Goldsack questions whether this seemingly sterile portrayal of God's essence derived from the name *al-Qayyim* contradicts the description of God's nature conveyed by other excellent names for God in Islam. For the name *al-Wadūd* ("The Lover") to have meaning, Goldsack notes that God must have had within His own personality, and without any dependence on anything outside of Himself, all things necessary for the fullest expression of His own perfections.⁸³ In this case God must have within His own nature the object of His eternal love. Therefore, Goldsack argues that according to some Qur'ānic verses as well as many of the excellent names, God must have within His nature a plurality.⁸⁴ However, he observes that this plurality within unity in describing God's Essence is denied in orthodox Islamic thought. Rather, the essence of God in orthodox Islam is utterly transcendent and has veered off into deism.⁸⁵ He cites William G. Palgrave's characterization of God in Islam:

In Islam God, sterile in His inaccessible height, neither loving nor enjoying aught save his own self-measured decree, without son, companion or counsellor, is no less barren for Himself than for His creatures.⁸⁶

Goldsack believes that Islam errs not so much in what it affirms of God's essence as in what it ignores. Apart from the mention of God as *al-Raḥmān* "the Merciful" in every chapter of the Qur'ān, one finds only two sūras in which it is

⁸² Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Maṣābiḥ al-sunna*, 2 vol. (Cairo: A.H. 1294), cited by Goldsack, pp. 10, 11. Cf. *Hughes' Dictionary*, s.v. God, p. 146.

⁸³ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, p. 8

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.8-10.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ William G. Palgrave, *Narrative of a Year's Journey Through Central and Eastern Arabia*, vol. I, (London, 1863) p. 366, cited by Goldsack, *God In Islam*, p. 8.

mentioned that Allāh is Holy and Truthful. The "terrible attributes" of God are both more numerous and more strongly emphasized than His "glorious" attributes. Goldsack believes that while God's holiness and justice do play a role in the Islamic concept of God, they are spoken of in the Qur'ān as though they are relegated to a place after His power, majesty and unchangeableness.⁸⁷

Christian theologians, like Goldsack, who criticize Islam for an over-emphasis on the transcendent aspects of God's nature, tend to forget that the same criticism has been levelled at Christianity and Judaism at various times in history. Clement of Alexandria stated that God is self-contained and beyond all relations in the following words: "God is one. He is unbegotten and incorruptible, possessing no form, having no needs, beyond time and space. He alone possesses real being."⁸⁸ The nature of God portrayed by Clement is beyond all the characteristics of created existence, allowing no affinity between Himself and man. To arrive at a knowledge of his Being he postulates a process of abstraction involving the stripping off from the idea of God all the physical properties of bodies, divesting Deity of all dimensions. One then can come to a point having position but no magnitude, which Clement called a Monad. Then, by going one step further and removing position he arrived at the Monad alone.⁸⁹ Thus the Alexandrian school of theology influenced by Clement speaks of God as a Monad whose nature is comprehended by the process of negating what he is not (much as did the Mu'tazilites).⁹⁰ The present author believes that the Alexandrian position is as severe as any divesting of the attributes in a conception of God (*ta'fīl*) ever devised by Islam.

⁸⁷ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, p. 12.

⁸⁸ Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. II, p. 40.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Mu'tazilites held that "God is one, without a peer, hearing, seeing. He is not a body, not an object, not a mass, not form nor flesh nor blood, nor person, nor substance, nor accident. etc. etc." Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, i. 155f. cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. II, p. 20.

Having set out the study of several key attributes of God, the Cause of causes, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān then studies the meaning of the Unity of God. Khān follows the '*via negativa*' in studying the meaning of the Unity of God. He undoubtedly appropriates this method from early Mu'tazilite theologians who had in turn adopted the theological method of John of Damascus.⁹¹ Khān concludes that God is one in number as He is single, alone; He is one in kind, because he is incomparable and finally He is one and simple because he is not complex.⁹² However, Khān emphasizes that one can never fully understand God's essence and he feels that it is important to preserve the transcendence and 'otherness' of God's nature from man's reason.

In studying the Islamic conception of the unity of God, Goldsack focusses initially on those passages in the Qur'ān which demonstrate that the unity of design in creation gives evidence of the oneness of the Creator (eg. sūras: vi:96-100; xvi:3-22; xxi:31-36). He then notes that the Qur'ān "abounds in passages, some of rare beauty, which teach the unity of God from the unity of creation."⁹³ By way of illustration he again quotes sūra cxii (*al-Tawḥīd*) which in the context of God's created grandeur reads as follows: "Say, He is God alone. God the Eternal. He begets not, and is not begotten; nor is there any one like unto Him." Goldsack points out that the created order is used in these sūras to demonstrate God's existence and His unity.

He notes that "Muḥammad's denunciation of idolatry was unsparing, and with the exception of one temporary lapse, consistent."⁹⁴ Goldsack believes that

⁹¹ John of Damascus asserts the *via negativa* in his *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Bk. I, Cap IV, pp. 94,797. The reason for the use of the *via negativa* when giving evidence for the nature of God is because, unlike all other evidence, those propositions about God are not founded on positive affirmations. Cited by Sweetman, *Theology*, Pt. I, Vol. I, pp. 111-113.

⁹² DA (Documentary Appendix), trans. Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 197. The DA forms Part Two of Troll's *Reinterpretation* and is a translation of texts relating to Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's *Credo*.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 2,3.

Muhammad's emphasis on God's transcendent nature was the result of the Prophet's desire to separate from the surrounding polytheistic beliefs. However, Goldsack believes that Muḥammad's great achievement in combating idolatry and polytheism by emphasizing the transcendental nature of God laid the foundations for defining God in monistic terms. By the 9th century, the school of al-Ash'arī portrayed God as existing from all eternity in solitary oneness.⁹⁵

5.5 STUDIES ON THE ISLAMIC PERCEPTION OF THE TRINITY

The most quoted Qur'ānic passage about that which Muḥammad understood from the testimony of a group of Syriac monks to be the doctrine of the Trinity is sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*):77. In this passage one reads: "Verily now they have blasphemed who say, 'God is a third of three'" And this theme continues in sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*):116: "And when God shall say, 'O Jesus , Son of Mary, hast Thou said unto men, take me and my mother as two Gods, beside God?'" The conventional Muslim interpretation of these passages about the so-called Trinity has been to accuse Christians of tritheism.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān did not repeat this conventional Muslim interpretation of the Trinity. Rather he states that Christians, like Muslims, acknowledge God as One. "Their belief is this: God is One and he is Father and outside him there is no other God."⁹⁶ He then notes that since "creation" is one of the essential, eternal attributes of God, "that attribute, the Son, i.e. Christ, issued from the Father since eternity."⁹⁷ Troll observes that Khān concludes:

There is division in the essence of the Father and that of the Son. Instead, the essence of the Son is the very essence of the Father. The only difference is that the Father possesses His essence originally, i.e. He has not received it from someone else whereas the Son being eternally caused has, since eternity, received his essence from the Father as his eternal cause.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 2,3,6.

⁹⁶ Khān, *TK*, Vol. III, p. 5,6, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 97.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Christians are in error, according to Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, in that they claim the Divine essence existed originally in the Son as well as the Father. Khān notes that only the Father possesses His essence originally, and maintains that the Son received his essence from the Father.

Goldsack believes that Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's position on the Trinity is significantly removed from such orthodox Islamic theological positions as that of al-Ash'arī.⁹⁹ The Ash'arīte theologians contended that according to sūra ix (*al-Tauba*):30, the Jews were accused of deifying Ezra, even though there is no record, either Scriptural or secular, to indicate that orthodox Jews ever deified him.¹⁰⁰ In a similar manner, Ash'arīte theologians contended that according to sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*):77, Christians are condemned for their belief in the Trinity, which the Ash'arīte theologians interpret as tritheism, even though there is no record, either Scriptural or secular, to indicate that orthodox Christians ever believed in the Trinity as three gods.¹⁰¹

Goldsack contrasts the orthodox Islamic position with the Christian conception of God, which he notes is based upon the words used by Jesus Christ, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29). This belief, Goldsack maintains, involves a triune conception of the one true God, not a belief in three Gods.

5.6 STUDIES ON THE ISLAMIC PERCEPTION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE 'SON OF GOD'

When Jesus is referred to as 'Son of God' at the outset of dialogue, Bailey observes, there sweeps across the minds of those assembled a picture of an oriental harem, and the blasphemous conception of the Almighty as having a wife and children.¹⁰² However, he suggests that if the subject is brought up by the inquirer

⁹⁹ Goldsack, *God in Islam*, pp. 1-9.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Bailey, "Work Among Illiterate Moslems", *Methods of Mission Work Among Moslems*, p. 53.

who may well ask: "Was Jesus the Son of God?", the answer from the Christian should be "In the sense you mean He was not"; or this, "In the sense in which you and I are the sons of our fathers He was not", and then he mentions that one may go on to explain what the Christian means by the Sonship of Jesus.¹⁰³ Goldsack strongly believes that with respect to the title of 'Son of God' used for Jesus, that it is best to be a deduction made about Jesus in much the same way as the Centurion and those that stood at the foot of the cross did saying: "surely this man was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).¹⁰⁴

5.7 STUDIES ON THE ISLAMIC DOCTRINE OF PRE-DESTINATION

One of the greatest problems in Islamic theology has been to reconcile the Qur'ānic statements of God's pre-ordination with man's freewill. From the 8th century, the Mu'tazilites, who were exponents of man's freewill, attempted to preserve reason as the basis for Qur'ānic interpretation. Other Islamic sects, such as the Jahmites founded by Jahm b. Ṣafwan (d.A.D.748), were extreme predestinarians.¹⁰⁵ Al-Ash'arī, (b.873) is supposed to have been the author of a compromise between these two factions. But the Ash'arīte doctrine can hardly be said to have been a compromise at all, but rather expresses uncompromising absolutism in its doctrine of the pre-ordination of God and the limitation of man's freewill.¹⁰⁶ The compromise al-Ash'arī brought forward is in the introduction of the doctrine of *kasb*, the human acquisition of acts which have already been created by God.¹⁰⁷

As God is the Cause of all causes, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān concludes that man is created with a nature which does not change. Nevertheless, within this created nature man is free to explore all the possibilities with which he was created

¹⁰³ Goldsack, *How to Reach and Teach*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁴ Goldsack, "How to Reach and Teach", *Methods of Mission Work Among Moslems*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁵ Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. 2, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

by God. This means that since God is the Creator, the Cause of causes, He has created all events. Nevertheless, man has a free choice to act within the range of his created nature. Thus, Khān concludes that man is free to choose within a limited range of action. He reinterprets the "deterministic" verses in the Qur'ān to mean that God's will is for voluntary human action.¹⁰⁸ Khān interprets 41 verses of the Qur'ān which refer to determinism but he believes that they are misinterpreted if they are taken to contradict man's acting freely within his created limitations. Man, he notes, is placed under the Law (*Shari'a*) to freely obey or reject it.

Goldsack acknowledges that the Mu'tazilite theological position emphasizes man's free will while the orthodox Islamic position emphasizes the dominant will of God. However, Goldsack contends that when these two positions are sought in the Qur'ān, God's determination of man is clearly the dominant teaching. He notes that the orthodox Islamic position was anchored on more numerous and clearer Qur'ānic passages such as sūra lxxxix (*al-Takwīr*):28 where one reads: "It is but a reminder to the worlds to whomsoever of you chooses to go straight; but ye will not choose, except God, the Lord of the World, should choose." The outworking of this Islamic predestinarian view, he believes, tends towards fatalism.

Goldsack supports his deductions on the subject of predestination in Islam by the writings of two leading Islamic theologians. The first quotation is from the writings of Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī and runs as follows:

It is necessary to confess that good and evil take place by the predestination and pre-determination of God; that all that has been and all that will be are decreed from eternity and written upon the preserved table; that the faith of the believer and piety of the pious and good actions are foreseen, willed, pre-destinated, decreed by the writing on the *preserved table*, produced and approved by God; that the unbelief of the unbeliever, the impiety of the impious and bad actions come to pass with the foreknowledge, will, pre-destination and decree of God, but not with His

¹⁰⁸ Khān, *P.Maq*, Vol. III, pp. 188-198.

satisfaction and approval. Should any ask why God willeth and produceth evil, we can only reply that He may have wise ends in view which we cannot comprehend.¹⁰⁹

Goldsack next quotes from the *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā* by al-Ghazālī, who writes the following statement about predestination:

He, praised be His name, doth will those things to be that are, and disposes of all accidents. Nothing passes in the empire, nor the kingdom, neither little nor much, small nor great, nor good nor evil, nor profitable nor hurtful, nor faith nor infidelity, nor knowledge nor ignorance, nor prosperity nor adversity, nor increase nor decrease, nor obedience nor rebellion but by His determinate counsel and decree, and his definite sentence and will; ...there is no reversing His decree nor delaying what he hath determined.¹¹⁰

The Qur'ān also gives evidence of God ordering the events of creation, not indiscriminately, but according to his divine foreknowledge. In the Qur'ān God's knowledge is spoken of as infinite in sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 27: 'He knoweth all things.'¹¹¹ The Qur'ān also goes on to emphasize that the smallest of his creations are not forgotten by Him, nor does His infinite knowledge overlook them; sūra xi (*Hūd*):8 reads: "There is no moving thing on the earth whose nourishment does not depend on God; He knows its haunts and final resting place; all is in the clear Book."¹¹² Thus any study of predestination in the Qur'ān must first allow for God's foreknowledge and the conception of God as a caring Creator and Sustainer.

5.8 STUDIES ON THE ISLAMIC DOCTRINE OF SIN AND SALVATION

The topic of God's pre-ordination of events is followed by God's response to man's sin in both Islam and Christian theology. Theologians of the Eastern Church tradition emphasized the concept of the freewill of man and viewed sin as an action

¹⁰⁹ Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Maṣābiḥ al-sunna*, 2 vol. (Cairo: A.H. 1294), cited by Goldsack, *God In Islam*, pp. 28.

¹¹⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā* (Cairo: A.H. 1322), cited by Goldsack, *God In Islam*, pp. 28, 29.

¹¹¹ W. R. W. Gardner, *The Qur'ānic Doctrine of God*, (Madras: CLS, 1916), p. 76. See also sūra ii (*al-Baqara*) 101.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

stemming from the will of man rather than from his nature.¹¹³ Both orthodox Islamic scholars and Mu'tazilite scholars concurred with the Eastern Church tradition that man's sin is the result of his intentional choices which were wrong rather than from an evil nature. The difference between the orthodox Islamic perspective and the Mu'tazilite perspective lay in a fine definition over whether the 'wrong choice' made was intentional or absolutely intentional.¹¹⁴ When commenting on sin, the orthodox Islamic theologians followed one set of criteria, the Mu'tazilites another, while ultimately the Ṣūfīs followed a third.

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, commenting on sin in the *Tabyīn al-Kalām*, rejects the view that the fall of Adam and Eve constituted a sin in the sense of a disobedience to God's command because the 'Law' (*Sharī'a*) did not exist and man was not yet under obligation to keep it. The fall of Adam and Eve he regards as the moment when evil was discerned from good. From this point onward man became responsible to choose the way of salvation or punishment.¹¹⁵ The struggle of mankind, he believes, is to subdue those desires that lead to deviation from the Law. Repentance (*tawba*), he believes, means being truly sorry for one's sin and resolving not to do it again while punishment (*'adhāb*) he believes to be the eternal misery of the soul.¹¹⁶

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān distinguishes between sin as a violation of the law (*gunāh-i Sharī'a*) and sin which affects one's personal relationship with God (*gunāh-'irfānī*).¹¹⁷ He notes that the ethical teaching of Jesus is more radical than a violation of the Jewish law. Jesus, he notes, taught that one needed to follow the Law in an internal way. Thus in Khān's Commentary on Matthew 5 (The Sermon on the Mount) he tries to show how Jesus' concern with following the 'spirit of

113 Sweetman, *Theology*, Part I, Vol. 2, p. 188.

114 *Ibid.*

115 Khān, *TK*, Vol. II, p. 173, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, pp. 208, 209.

116 Khān, *Pmaq*, pp. 203,215, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 209.

117 Khān, *TK*, Vol. II, p. 162, cited by Troll, *Reinterpretation*, p. 208.

the Law' agreed with Muslim teaching in general and with the writings of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* in particular.¹¹⁸

Goldsack observes that after examining the Qur'ānic evidence supporting predestination, one would expect no doctrine of sin or plan of salvation in Islam. He notes that if all human actions have been decreed and necessitated ages before the creation, then logically all distinctions between virtue and vice are at an end, and that the terms of reward and punishment would cease to have any meaning. However, he concludes that it is a paradox within Islam that it holds on the one hand to a doctrine of predestination and on the other to a detailed doctrine of sin and an elaborate scheme of rewards and punishments.¹¹⁹

Put another way, Goldsack affirms that in Islamic thought, 'sinfulness' is a trait acquired by wrong actions rather than a state into which men are born. He asserts that in Islam original sin is denied and each person begins life with the potential to merit God's favour. The *Sharī'a* sets forward an elaborate scheme of rewards for those who keep it and punishments for those who do not. Islam, he believes, presents a paradox in that it rejects the idea that mankind is adversely affected by Adam's sin but is so affected by predestination.¹²⁰ 'Umar Khayyām noted this paradox in the *Rubāiyāt*:

O Thou, who didst with pitfall and with jinn
Beset the road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with predestined evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my fall to sin.¹²¹

Goldsack observes that there are several differing views expressed in the Islamic sources about sin and salvation. First, he notes that there are some Qur'ānic texts setting forward the concept that salvation will be administered on a strict basis of justice, when man's every act will be weighed in the scales and judgment given

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, p. 31.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ 'Umar Khayyām, *Rubāiyāt*, cited by Goldsack, *God in Islam*, p. 31.

accordingly.¹²² Other Qur'ānic texts teach just as unequivocally that each person's salvation, Muḥammad's included, depends absolutely upon the mercy of God.¹²³ By contrast, some Islamic traditions emphasize that ceremonial purity as the primary basis for salvation overshadows the need for righteous actions as stressed in the Qur'ān.¹²⁴ He observes that in some of the Islamic traditions the intercession of Muḥammad is allowed to be the great hope for sinners.¹²⁵ Goldsack contends that there is the important doctrine admitted in both the Qur'ān and the Traditions, which nullifies all others on this topic, namely, that the final destiny of every man for heaven or for hell was decreed and fixed long before the creation of the world.¹²⁶

Goldsack notes that among Muslims in India the emphasis on keeping Islamic devotions in a ritually correct manner became the accepted basis on which God will grant salvation. He states that according to traditional Islam, the emphasis on inner sanctification is not urged on a devotee so much as the performance of allotted works in a ritually correct manner.¹²⁷ For example, he cites a collection of the traditions known as the *Hidāyah* or the *Fatāwā Alamgīrī* that: "God accepts no prayer without ablution, and he who leaves the place of the hairs impure and does not wash them it will be done for him in like manner with the fire (of hell)."¹²⁸ And again he notes that in numerous places in the *Mishkāt*

¹²² Sūras 2:44-45; 2:116-117; 3:126 all warn the men to "guard themselves against God's wrath" which will not be lax or lenient when He administers judgement based on their carefully weighed acts.

¹²³ Sūra 2:69 "(Oh Prophet!) Verily, We have given thee an obvious victory that God may pardon thee thy former and later sin, and may fulfill His favour upon thee and guide thee in a right way." The Qur'an teaches, "Fear a day in which a soul shall not avail for a soul at all, nor shall any intercession be accepted from them, nor shall any ransom be taken, nor any help afforded them." And in sūra xvii:81 intercession is limited to God Himself.

¹²⁴ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, p. 34.

¹²⁵ Sūra xvii:81, "Thy Lord will raise thee (Muhammad) to a laudable station " and xciii:5, "And in the end thy Lord will give thee", have been advanced in support of the intercession of the Prophet on the Last Day.

¹²⁶ Goldsack, *God in Islam*, pp. 35, 36. See also Goldsack's reference to such sūras as xvi:95 "He leads astray whom He will, and guides whom He will." and sūra vii:180 "We have created for hell many of the jinn and of mankind." and sūra xxxii:13 "Had we pleased we would have given to everything its guidance; but the sentence was due from me; --I will surely fill hell with the jinns and with men all together." *God In Islam*, p. 25

¹²⁷ Goldsack, *God in Islam*, p. 32

¹²⁸ *Fatāwā Alamgīrī*, cited by Goldsack, *God In Islam*, p. 32.

al-Maṣābīh, it is suggested that water will wash away sin. In the chapter on bathing (*Ghusl*), in the *Kitāb al-Ṭahārat*, part I, it is stated: "When a Muslim believer performs his ablutions and washes...he comes forth cleansed from (his) sins."¹²⁹

Goldsack draws the conclusion that the failure in Islam to recognize the true character of sin may be directly traceable to the lack of a correct view of God within these sources. He notes that al-Tirmidhī and al-Nisā'ī relate that the Prophet said: "Whoever recites (the words) 'say, He is one God' two hundred times each day, the sins of fifty years will be blotted out from him," (*Kitāb Fazā'il al-Qur'ān*). He concludes that the doctrine is repeatedly taught that the performance of certain ceremonial works will blot out sin and a pilgrimage to Mecca is a certain passport to heaven.¹³⁰

Goldsack then notes that one of the main issues which divides Muslims and Christians when talking about sin is the question of who it is that man's sin affects.¹³¹ He notes that the Hebrew Scriptures assume that unless otherwise mentioned, the sinning was against God (Psalm 51:4,5 categorically points out: "against Thee, Thee only I have sinned and done what is evil in Thy sight"). Christianity emphasizes that a man's sins are against God. By contrast, Goldsack comes to the conclusion that sin in the Qur'ān is not so much the violation of an eternal moral law of righteousness as the infraction of some arbitrary command.¹³²

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān believes that man's sins are against himself alone. In the Islamic sources the question is really whom does a man's sin harm? In one sense, the Islamic evidence is correct which notes that unbelievers and sinners by their sin do God no 'harm'. God remains perfectly Holy even though man sins. It is also true that human wrong-doing is committed against men, others and

¹²⁹ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, p. 34.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, pp. 36, 37.

¹³² Ibid., p. 32.

themselves, and for that reason the Qur'ān speaks primarily about the adverse effects it has on one's fellowman. However, one must not presume that because the Qur'ān concludes that sinners do God no *harm*, that it equally concludes they have done God no wrong. Kenneth Cragg, writing under the name of 'Abd al-Tafāhum, observes that the phrase *Istagfir Allāh* ("seek forgiveness of God") is one of the most common Islamic expressions because to seek God's forgiveness is necessary as evil matters to God and He is wronged more than the person who was sinned against.¹³³

6.0. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD TO MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

An understanding of the doctrine of God is critically important for several reasons. Firstly, the existence of God is one of the great metaphysical truths to be discussed and agreed upon by Muslims and Christians. God's existence, in both Islam and Christianity, is demonstrated by His being the First Cause and by the argument from design.

Secondly, both Islam and Christianity subscribe to God's essence as unity, in spite of the fact that neither can logically explain this concept. The Christian cannot logically explain how God can be three separate Persons and yet One Deity. The Muslim cannot logically explain why, if a human being can exist as three parts (body, soul and spirit) - the Divine Unity, who is a much higher order of Being, cannot exist in a trinity of different Persons. Muir was correct in his observation that logic and analogy from nature fail to answer this question and that both faiths accept the mystery of God's essence.

Thirdly, in comprehending God's attributes, Muslims and Christians appeal to two qualitatively different types of evidence. Islam suggests that God's attributes can be understood best by the ninety-nine beautiful names of God

¹³³ 'Abd al-Tafāhum, "Seek Forgiveness of God", *MW* 47, 1957, pp. 239-40.

described in the Qur'ān and the Sunna.¹³⁴ Christianity states that the best understanding of God's attributes is in the person of Christ as he is described in the Bible.

Fourthly, God's determination of events in the life of man is clearly a dominant teaching in Islam, but it is based on God's foreknowledge of events. It is a paradox within Islam that it holds on the one hand to a doctrine of predestination and on the other to a detailed doctrine of sins and an elaborate scheme of rewards and punishments. The escape from Hell depends on a person's acceptance of Islam by stating the *shahāda*, and keeping the *Sharī'a*, God's Law, to the standard of al-'Adl, the Just God.

In conclusion, Muir, Khān and Goldsack were able to arrive at an answer to the question of whether Muslims and Christians are referring to the same subject and they all concluded that although there is some disparity between that which is predicated about God, in the Qur'ān and the Bible, nevertheless the subject referred to in both is the same.

Goldsack, however, believes that while the subject of belief is the same in Islam and Christianity, the Islamic doctrine of God has the following deficiencies: it lacks an emphasis on redeeming love; God's power overshadows His justice; there is a lack of harmony in its description of God by the 99 excellent names, and the anthropomorphic conceptions of God create a negative conception of Him.¹³⁵ Zwemer qualifies Goldsack's criticism. Comparing the best Islamic theism with some modern Christian theology Zwemer concludes:

¹³⁴ In using the attributes about God in dialogue it should be remembered that the Mu'tazilites argue for a metaphorical interpretation of all language about God while the orthodox Muslims argue that the Qur'ānic phrases about God must be taken literally.

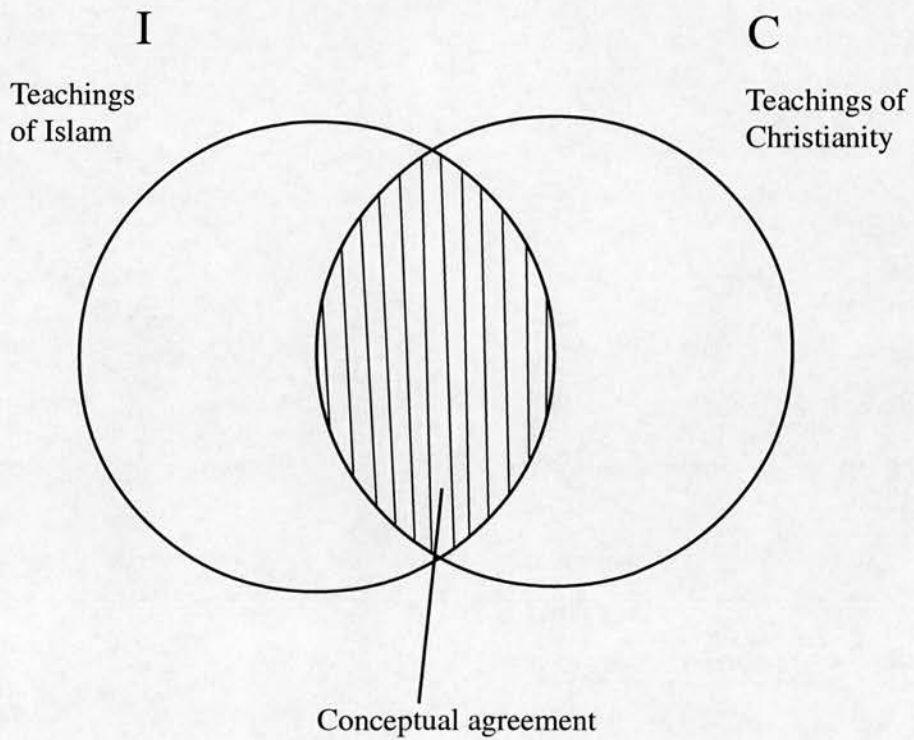
¹³⁵ Goldsack, *God In Islam*, pp. 11-13.

Islamic theism is so great and so strong that it often puts Western theism (timid of transcendence, shy of miracles, and confined to second causes) to shame....No one doubts that Islam has no true, deep sense of sin, no real soteriology, no adequate anthropology, and a very carnal eschatology. But as for its theology in a narrow sense - well, read al-Ghazālī or al-Sha'rānī, and be humble.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Samuel Zwemer, "The Allah of Islam and The God Revealed in Jesus Christ", *MW* 36 (1946), p. 307.

DIAGRAM E

A comparison of Muslim and Christian ethical and social concepts



COMMENTARY:

Ethical and social concepts held in common between Islam and Christianity are represented by the shaded area where the circles intersect.

Ethical and social concepts demonstrating the differences between Islam and Christianity are represented by the area where the circles do not intersect.

Diagram E pertains to the Epilogue.

EPILOGUE

THE PARAMETERS OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

1.0 A SUMMARY OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS

This thesis has explored the history of Muslim-Christian dialogue in 19th century India through the writings of William Muir, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, and William Goldsack. It has pursued this theme in the context of the wider history of Muslim-Christian dialogue as exemplified by the writings of John of Damascus at the Umayyad Court in the 7th century, the dialogue of Mar Timothy with Caliph al-Mahdī (775-785), the dialogue of al-Kindī with Ibn Ismā'īl al-Hāshimī at the court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833), as well as by considering the arguments of Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) who conducted a 'literary dialogue' with the earlier writings of Paul of Antioch (d. 1180).

It has been found that it is possible to analyze dialogue by identifying two main approaches - logical dialectic and admitted truths. Logical dialectic seeks to prove one position true and the other false by demonstrating the irreconcilable differences between the two positions. Admitted truth seeks to open up the possibility of gaining an adherent to one's own position by demonstrating that which the two positions have in common before pointing out differences. This thesis focuses, primarily, on the basis for and the use of admitted truths in the writings of Muir, Khān and Goldsack during the 19th century in India.

These three authors, one Muslim and two Christians from different continents and with differing backgrounds, converge on the use of admitted truth as the preferred method of dialogue as well as on many theological conclusions which resulted from dialogue. Having said that, it is important to acknowledge that they, like the apologists of the 8th-11th centuries, were convinced that their faith was *true*, and that the other, however much truth there is in common, was to

some degree *false*. Their writings reflect that there is a time and an occasion to use the method of admitted truths and a time and an occasion to use the method of logical dialectic.

2.0 TOWARDS A CONSENSUS ON ADMITTED TRUTHS IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

As was observed in Chapter Three, section 3.4.11, some Christian apologists focused too narrowly on Qur'anic parallels which did not have the full approbation of Islamic scholars. The primary question which must precede dialogue is that of which admitted truths can be accepted by Muslims and Christians as being based on the Qur'ān and the Bible. Is it possible to reach a consensus about this? From this study of the investigations of Muir, Khān and Goldsack, the present author suggests the following truths as being clearly taught in the Qur'ān and the Bible.

1. The existence of the supreme Being and the unity and divine nature of His essence.
2. The Creation of the universe by this Divine Being.
3. The existence of Angels as being created by God to accomplish his purposes.
4. The existence of Satan.
5. The existence of heaven and hell.
6. That the Scriptures of the Jews and the Christians were accepted both by Muḥammad and in the Qur'ān as being a trustworthy revelation of God.
7. The historical existence of Jesus as a Prophet.
8. Jesus being known and designated as Messiah, Word of God and His Spirit.
9. Jesus' birth from a Virgin.
10. Jesus uniquely acknowledged to be sinless from birth and to have lived a sinless life.
11. Jesus' teachings were to confirm the Scriptures, explain the Law, and recall men to God.
12. Jesus performed miracles of healing the blind and the leper and raising the dead in order that people might believe on him.

13. Jesus was taken up to heaven by God.

14. Jesus will come again at the end of the world to destroy the Anti-Christ and Satan and act as just judge and intercessor for the righteous.

3.0 TOWARDS A CONSENSUS ON INTERPRETING ADMITTED TRUTHS

Although these truths are admitted in both the Qur'an and the Bible, one must also establish the interpretation to be placed on these truths. In the pursuit of dialogue between the two faiths based on admitted truths, questions of interpretation will come to the fore whose parameters must then be discussed. With reference to the above, these might include the following considerations:

1. The existence of a supreme, eternal Being and the essence of this Being as One are two truths behind which every Muslim and Christian may unite, even though the criteria for determining the nature of God and the Unity of His divine essence would still have to be discussed.

2. The second truth admitted by Muslims and Christians is that the universe was created by God.¹ It did not evolve by itself from nothing.

3. The third truth is that both the Qur'an and the Bible affirm that God created angels to glorify Him in heaven and accomplish His purposes among men.² Although created inferior to human beings,³ they are assigned to aid man as guardian angels.⁴

4. Both the Qur'an and the Bible affirm the existence of a spiritual power of evil called Satan who stands over against and opposed to God. This is demonstrated in that his name in the Qur'an is *Shaitān* meaning "one who opposes [God]". In the Bible, Satan is a fallen angel, although in the Qur'an, Satan and the demons are a different species to the angels.

¹ Sūra vii (*al-A'rāf*): 52: "Verily your Lord is God, who created heavens and the earth."

² Sūra xliiii (*al-Zukhruf*): 3: "The angels celebrate the praise of their Lord, and intercede for the dwellers on earth."

³ Sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 32.

⁴ Sūra xliiii (*al-Ra'd*): 12: "each [person] hath a succession of angels before him and behind him, who watch over him by God's behest."

5. The fifth truth admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible is the existence of a literal hell and heaven. The concept of hell in both books is spoken about as a place of torment, *al-Nār*, "the fire" or *Jahannam* (hell).⁵ The concept of heaven (*Firdaus*) is a place of bliss.⁶

6. The sixth truth admitted by Muslims and Christians is that the Deity revealed His will to man through the written Word. It is clear that the Scriptures of the Jews and the Christians were accepted both by Muḥammad and in the Qur'ān as being a trustworthy revelation of God and that these Scriptures may be accepted by the Muslim today as being trustworthy. Furthermore, the Qur'ān affirms that the previous scriptures of the Jews and Christians are guides to the truth and to true belief.⁷

7. The seventh truth admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible is the historical existence of Jesus as a prophet, although the precise definition of a prophet would still have to be clarified.⁸

8. The eighth truth acknowledged in the Qur'ān and the Bible is that Jesus is known and designated as Messiah,⁹ God's Word¹⁰ and His Spirit¹¹. According to Christians this indicates a divine unity with God; the meaning of these texts from the Muslim point of view would still need clarification.

9. The ninth truth acknowledged in the Qur'ān and the Bible is that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. The significance of the birth of a human being from a virgin, that is with no male participation in the conception, would still have to be

⁵ Sūra xv (*al-Hijr*): 44 reads: "verily hell (*Jahannam*) is promised to all (who follow Satan)".

⁶ The Qur'ānic concept of heaven is *Firdaus*, or Paradise, the abodes of bliss. However, the Qur'ānic concept of heaven emphasizes physical gratification whereas the Biblical picture of heaven emphasizes spiritual gratification.

⁷ Sūra x (*Yūnus*): 94 indicates that the Biblical Scriptures are regarded as trustworthy. Cf. Chapter Seven, Section 5.3.

⁸ Sūra xix (*Maryam*): 31: "He hath made me a prophet." Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.1.2.

⁹ Sūra sūra iii (*'al-Imrān*): 44,45; sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 156, 169. Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.1.4.

¹⁰ Sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):169 and sūra iii (*'al-Imrān*):40. Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.1.5.

¹¹ Sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 169. Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.1.6.

discussed. Also the question would need to be addressed of whether, if the birth of Jesus was unique, this would point to his being of a higher essence and status than other men.¹²

10. The tenth truth admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible is that Jesus was sinless from his birth and lived a sinless life. It is said of no other person that he was born sinless. Furthermore, it is important to discuss whether the Qur'ānic and the Biblical assertion that Jesus never asks pardon or forgiveness means that he possesses a higher authority than a repentant sinner who does ask pardon out of humility.¹³

11. The eleventh truth admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible is that the object of Jesus' teachings to the Jews was to confirm their Scriptures, to explain how the Law was fulfilled, and to recall them to the true service of God.¹⁴

12. The twelfth truth admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible is that Jesus performed the miracles of healing the blind and the leper and raising the dead".¹⁵ Furthermore, in the Islamic Traditions and the Bible, he did these miracles "in order that people might believe on him."¹⁶

13. Both the Qur'ān and the Bible agree that Jesus was taken up to heaven whereas Muhammad was buried in a grave. One might ask what the Qur'ānic text implies regarding the statement "the living and the dead are not equal," (sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 35. Goldsack raised the question of whether length of life in heaven necessarily conferred a higher status.

According to the Bible, Jesus was taken to heaven after his crucifixion and resurrection.¹⁷ Three passages in the Qur'ān seemingly agree with the Bible regarding Jesus being taken to heaven after his death by crucifixion; they are sūras

¹² Sūra xix (*Maryam*):19-22. Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.2.2.

¹³ Sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*) 36. Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.2.3.

¹⁴ Sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*):43-46. Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.2.4.

¹⁵ Sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*):43. Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.2.4.

¹⁶ Muslim. Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.2.4.

¹⁷ Luke 23, 24.

iii (*al-'Imrān*):47-50, xix (*Maryam*):34 and v (*al-Mā'ida*):117. However, these passages contrast with sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):157 which reads: "Yet they slew him not, and they crucified him not, but they had only his likeness."¹⁸ In this important matter one can only say that in questions of ambiguity in the Qur'ān, Muslims are allowed to consult the Bible according to (sūra x (Yūnus) 94.

14. Both the Qur'ān and the Bible state that Christ is to return at the end of time as the intercessor for the righteous.¹⁹ The Islamic Traditions further hold in agreement with the Bible that Jesus will return as just judge and destroy the anti-Christ and Satan.²⁰ In contrast to the Bible, the Islamic traditions go on to state that Christ will then embrace Islam.²¹ The question in this matter is the degree of authority which is to be accorded to the Islamic traditions.

4.0 PARAMETERS IN THE USE OF THE METHODS OF DIALOGUE CONSIDERED

What has now become clear is that in dialogue there are certain parameters in the use of any method. Common to all methods of dialogue, however, is the need to put a concern for truth above the concerns of one's own religious affiliations. Also, in the use of any method of dialogue it must be borne in mind that the primary sources of the other faith must be treated with scrupulous integrity, for a text cannot rise up and argue: "I have been misinterpreted"²². Accepting these general parameters of dialogue, one then observes that the method of logical dialectic and that of admitted truth have different limitations. The apologist must therefore be aware of the limitations specific to each method.

¹⁸ Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.2.6.

¹⁹ Islamic commentators on the Qur'ān find in sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*):44, 45 evidence that Jesus Christ will intercede for sinners at the Last Day. Cf. Chapter Eight, Section 3.2.7.

²⁰ *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, book xxiii. ch. ii states: Jesus Son of Mary will come and God will kill the Anti-Christ (*al-Dajjāl*) by the hand of Jesus, cited by *Hughes' Dictionary*, s.v. '*al-Masīhu al-Dajjal*'.

²¹ *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, book xxiii. ch. vi, cited by *Hughes' Dictionary*, s.v. 'Jesus Christ'.

²² See Kenneth Cragg, "*Tafsīr and Istiṣār in the Qur'ān*", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 8 (1977), p. 309.

4.1 THE PARAMETERS OF THE METHOD OF LOGICAL DIALECTIC

The value of logical dialectic is that it is a clearly defined method for achieving the objective of proving one position true and the other false. However, the method has the primary limitation of focusing on the theological *differences* between the two faiths. There are also secondary problems which are not intrinsic to the method itself but have presented limitations to its effective use. The use of logical dialectic has, in times of communal conflict between the two faiths, been employed to prove Islam false out of a negative attitude towards it²³ and has been reduced to a 'forensic sport' in which arguments, long ossified, were brought forward by contestants more concerned with presentation than substance and more focused on winning a victory than gaining an adherent. In this process it is recorded that: "neither side was supposed to change his mind during the debate and ...opponents shook hands and congratulated one another at the end of 'the game'."²⁴ However, attitudinal problems are not an intrinsic limitation to the method of logical dialectic and played little, if any, part in the writings and debates set forward by many Christian apologists who used this method, including al-Kindī during the early 9th century, Raymund of Peñafort (1118-1275) during the Crusades and Henry Martyn and Pfander during the 19th century.

4.2 THE PARAMETERS OF THE METHOD OF ADMITTED TRUTH

The value of using the method of admitted truth is that it opens the possibility of gaining an adherent to one's position. However, a problem associated with this method is that there is a tendency of a person using it to interpret the primary sources of the other faith in a biased manner. As was

²³ Ricolda Da Montecroce (1243-1320) employed logical dialectic in an attempt to expose the weaknesses of the Islamic sources after having observed many of his Dominican colleagues perish after Akka (Acre) fell to the Muslims in 1291. Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), as a child, had to flee the Mongol invasion and take refuge in Syria where he witnessed the end of one of the Crusades. His writings, employing logical dialectic, warned Muslims against that which he believed was the false nature of Christianity. Gaudeul, *Encounters*, pp. 147, 170, 171.

²⁴ This comment was registered about a debate which took place at Aleppo in 1217 between Anbā Jirjī, a Christian monk, and three Muslim scholars. Gaudeul, *Encounters*, pp. 162, 163.

observed in Chapter Three of this thesis, Goldsack believed that the Christian author of the tractate employing admitted truths had, on several points, gone beyond an accepted Islamic interpretation of the Qur'ān and given a Christian interpretation. In the use of any truth admitted by the Qur'ān and the Bible there can be no accurate *tafsīr* (interpretation) without a prior *istifsār* (enquiry) into how the Qur'ānic verse in question has been interpreted by established Islamic theologians. Therefore, questions of the Qur'ānic sources, of the authority of the Islamic traditions, of doctrinal formulations and, above all, of their interpretations, can only be resolved by careful research and discussion. Only by continuing enquiry and dialogue will a greater appreciation of the arguments dividing the two historic faiths be achieved. This is a demanding process requiring great sensitivity in examining and interpreting the sources of the other faith. However, the problem of a biased interpretation of the Qur'ān is not an intrinsic limitation to the method of admitted truth and played little, if any, part in the writings and dialogues of Mar Timothy during the early 9th century, of Peter the Venerable (1094-1156) and John of Segovia (1400-1458) and of Muir and Goldsack during the 19th and 20th centuries.

5.0 NEW HORIZONS IN ADMITTED TRUTHS

This thesis has focused on central theological truths admitted in both the Bible and the Qur'ān from the Christian perspective. There is also a pressing need for works done on admitted truths from the Islamic perspective. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's *Muslim Commentary on the Holy Bible* was written with this idea in mind. He wished to make a Muslim commentary on the Biblical Scriptures to examine truths admitted in the Bible which were also acknowledged in the Qur'ān. Khān was not able to fulfil his goal of writing a commentary on the whole Bible from the Islamic perspective although he had planned such.²⁵ Between 1862 and 1865 he

²⁵ Khān, *TK*, I, pp. 63, 150, 153, 324 indicate that Khān had planned a full commentary on the Bible.

published two volumes on the text of Genesis in Urdu and English. The first volume contains ten "discourses" and two "appendices" which were intended to establish, from the Muslim point of view, that the Bible was trustworthy and to point out its place in Islam. The second volume begins his Islamic commentary on the first eleven chapters of Genesis in the Old Testament. Based primarily on an Islamic axis, Khan sets forward an introduction to the Old Testament, a classification of the Books of the Old Testament, a study of the authorship of the first five books of the Old Testament (Pentateuch), a refutation of objections raised against the genuineness of the Pentateuch, an introduction to the Books of Genesis and a commentary on the first eleven chapters. The commentary is laid out in two columns. The first column contains the Biblical text printed in the Hebrew original, along with an interlinear Urdu translation. This is followed by an English rendering. The opposite column contain parallel texts from the Qur'ān and Hadith. Qur'ānic concepts about topics in the Biblical text are set forward in the commentary. In this manner, Khān's unique work compares the Qur'ān with the book of Genesis and then interprets Genesis in the light of the Qur'ān. Khān also wrote a commentary on Matthew (chapters 1-5) which can be accessed only by reading *Tasānīf-i-Ahmadiyah* (1887).²⁶ Khān's attempt to set forward his views of the Biblical text and of the person of Jesus represented an attempt to be faithful to the Islamic sources and at the same time to be compatible with historic Christian theology. His study provides an excellent example of the use of truths admitted in the Bible and the Qur'ān from the Islamic perspective. It is hoped that this thesis will encourage more of this type of careful research of truths admitted in the Bible and the Qur'ān from the Muslim point of view.

There are also truths and concepts admitted in the Qur'ān and the Bible pertaining to social and ethical areas which also need to be studied. Muslims and

²⁶ Christian Troll has translated the most relevant portions of this text in his *Reinterpretation*, pp. xv, xvii, 72ff.

Christians reside in the same countries and share systems of jurisprudence, politics, education, and health-care. There is much which Muslims and Christians hold in common which should be stressed at this point in history. The Islamic Law (*Shari'a*) has its roots in the Moral Law (Decalogue) as interpreted in the Old Testament. Western Law traces its roots to a New Testament interpretation of the Moral Law, as well as to the influence of Roman law which was codified under the Emperor Justinian I between 527-565. Nevertheless, the Moral Law is foundational to both forms of jurisprudence. Therefore, judicial concepts derived from the Moral Law and from the Islamic Law (*Shari'a*) provide a basis for establishing social and political laws for good governance in predominantly Muslim, Christian and Jewish societies. A study of social precepts admitted in Islam and Christianity would be useful in discussing contemporary issues such as: conserving natural resources, protecting children (especially the unborn child), including the evidence for the Divine Creator within school curricula, returning to an emphasis on the Moral Law in jurisprudence, and establishing higher standards of morality in the media. Many Muslims and Christians are united in support of these measures on the basis of truths admitted in the Qur'an and the Bible.

6.0 THE FINAL CHALLENGE IN USING THE METHOD OF ADMITTED TRUTH

This thesis has pointed out that a return to the use of admitted truth in dialogue is based on the philosophical presupposition that all truth is God's truth wherever it is found; this underlies every form of knowledge and is normative to all. A corollary of the presupposition that all truth is God's truth is that truths admitted in the Qur'an and the Bible are the places for Muslims and Christians to begin theological dialogue. There will, of course, be areas of disagreement, but these can and should be discussed so as better to understand each other's points of view. It has been the aim of this thesis to study the sources of Islam and then to delineate, in some measure, the areas of truth shared by both Islam and

Christianity and finally to indicate the parameters of interpretation which these truths involve.

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¹ A Many articles on the life of William Goldsack were found within mission journals. These were obtained from the files of the Australian Baptist Missionary Society, Moore Potter House, Victoria, Australia and from Regent College, Oxford. The journals consulted included:

1) *Our Bond, News and Notes of the Australasian Baptist Missions* which was an official monthly magazine of the Australian Baptist Missionary Society. This source from the years (1901-1922) provides the best description of Goldsack's work until he retired in 1923.

2) *The Missionary Echo* was a monthly paper for the South Australian Furreedpore Mission dealing with work in Pabna and Fureedpore.

3) *Truth and Progress* was a monthly paper for the Australian Baptist Mission Society printed between 1868-1894. It contains reports which include Goldsack as contributor and subject of reference.

4) *The Southern Baptist* was also a monthly paper for the Australian Baptist Mission Society (A.B.M.S.) which replaced *Truth and Progress* in 1895.

5) *The Federal Baptist* is a publication which combined reports from Baptist journals printed in all regions of Australia. It began publication in 1913.

6) *The B.M.S. Monthly News Letter* was a monthly paper for the Baptist Missionary Society (B.M.S.).

7) The Christian Literature Society for India (CLS), of which William Goldsack became the Bengal editor, had a number of important reports (such as the "CLS India Annual Review " et. al.) to which Goldsack contributed.

B Letters between Goldsack and colleagues provide insight into his life & work.

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2) From the years 1913-1923 when Goldsack was with the Baptist Missionary Society there were a number of letters between Goldsack and colleagues which appeared in "The B.M.S. Monthly Newsletter" which was obtained from the files of Regent College, Oxford.

C. Other unpublished literature relevant to the life of William Goldsack include:

1) Mrs. Jeanne Whitney compiled a book of the Goldsack family history entitled *The Goldsack Story*. It records the background and the life of Redman Goldsack (1813-1883) and Stephen Goldsack (1817-1880) after their arrival in South Australia in 1844 and 1838 respectively, and of the lives of their descendants. Although this particular book has but a brief sketch of William Goldsack it is nevertheless helpful in showing the cultural background of the Goldsacks and their influence in Australia.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE APPENDICES

The thesis is complete with main body of the text. The appendices include additional material in chart form which it is felt will be useful for the researcher on Muslim-Christian dialogue. The topics in these appendices include:

Appendix A, which sets forward in chart form an edited version of William Muir's study of the Qur'ānic passages, with Islamic commentary, which refer to the Bible.

Appendix B, which combines in chart form Muir's and Goldsack's research on the principal Qur'ānic passages, with Islamic commentary, which pertain to the person of Jesus.

APPENDIX A

CHART OF SIR WILLIAM MUIR'S RESEARCH ON:

THE TESTIMONY OF THE QUR'AN TO THE BIBLE

WITH ISLAMIC COMMENTARY

Appendix A sets forward in chart form an edited version of William Muir's comprehensive study of the Qur'anic passages which refer to the Bible. He wrote a separate article on each of the Qur'anic passages and included the opinions of the most accepted Islamic commentators and traditionists. Muir differentiated the Qur'anic passages into those thought to have originated at Mecca and those which seem to be of a later date and which originated at Medina. In this thesis, Muir's articles have been edited and the reader will find each article having two numbers (for example 16/XXXIV). The Arabic numbering on the left is that assigned by the author of this thesis to the edited list, whereas the Roman numeral on the right refers to Muir's own numbering system of his original list which is more complete.

1.1 THE TESTIMONY TO THE BIBLE OF QUR'ANIC PASSAGES REVEALED AT MECCA

The Qur'ān

Art. 1/I

An early Meccan passage #1 containing a reference to the Bible is Sūra lxxxvii (*al-A'lā*): 18: "Verily this is in the former pages of Abraham and Moses."

Art. 2/IV

Meccan passage #2 is sūra xxxii (*al-Sajda*): 24: "And verily We gave Moses the book: wherefore be not in doubt as to the reception thereof, and We made it a direction to the Israelites. Verily thy Lord, he will judge between them on the day of resurrection as to that concerning which they disagree."

Art. 3/VII

Meccan passage #3 is sūra xxxiv (*Saba'*): 6: "And those, to whom knowledge hath been given, see that what hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord, is truth, and guideth unto the straight and blessed way."

Art. 4/VIII

Meccan passage #4 is sūra xxxiv (*Saba'*): 31: "And the unbelievers say: -We will not believe in this Qur'aḥn, nor in that (which was revealed) before it."

Art. 5/XII

Meccan passage #5 is sūra xxxvii (*al-Saffāt*): 114: "And verily We were gracious to Moses and Aaron...and We gave them the perspicuous book, and directed them into the right way."

Art. 6/XIII

Meccan passage #6 is sūra xxvi (*al-Shu'arā'*): 191: "Verily it is a revelation from the Lord of creation; The faithful Spirit hath caused it to descend On thy heart, that thou mightest be one of the warners, In the plain Arabic tongue. And verily it is in the former Scriptures. What! is it not a sign unto them that the wise men of the Children of israel recognize it?"

The Commentaries (Tafsīr)

In the commentary of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī one reads: "*Verily this*, i.e. the prosperity of the good, and their well-being in a future world, *is in the former books* i.e. pre-the Qur'ānic.¹

Muir notes that Bayḍāwī interprets the passage as signifying that Muḥammad is not to be in doubt as to the reception by Moses of the Pentateuch. Furthermore, Bayḍāwī notes that "The Jewish people, in earlier times were constant in the right belief of the Revelation. But they fell away from this Faith in later periods." He implies that the Scriptures were preserved and handed down in purity among the Jews, although errors and differences in interpretation emerged.²

Muir cites Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī who notes that "the knowledge", means acquaintance with the previous Revelations. " Those to whom knowledge hath been given," i.e., believers from amongst the Jews and Christians."³

Muir cites Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī who notes that *The Scriptures* refer to the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl*.⁴

Muir observes that both al-Bayḍāwī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī interpret "The perspicuous Book" to be the *Tawrāt*.⁵

Muir notes that the Islamic commentators state that in proof that the Qur'ān is a true Revelation Muḥammad, asserts that "it is in the former Scriptures";-that is, as being mentioned therein, or more probably, as containing a Revelation of similar importance. Al-Bayḍāwī states: "Verily the mention of it (the Qur'ān) is in the preceding Scriptures." Al-Suyūfī states that these are "the Jewish and Christian revelations."⁶

1 *Minār*, trans. Muir, p. 72.

2 *Ibid*, pp. 74, 75.

3 *Ibid*, p. 77.

4 *Ibid*, p. 78.

5 *Ibid*, pp. 80, 81.

6 *Ibid*, pp. 81, 82.

1.1 THE TESTIMONY TO THE BIBLE OF QUR'ANIC PASSAGES REVEALED AT MECCA
CONTINUED

The Qur'ān

The Commentaries (Tafsīr)

Art. 7/XV

Meccan passage #7 is sūra xlvi (*al-Aḥqāf*): 10: "If (this Revelation) be from God, and ye reject it, and a witness from amongst the children of Israel testify to the like thereof and believe; and ye proudly despise it. Verily God doth not guide the erring people."

Muir observes that al-Bayḍāwī states in his commentary that "To the like-thereof", i.e. like the Qur'ān, and the meaning is that the contents of the Tawrat attest to the Qur'ān as resembling it and thereby prove its being from God.¹

Art. 8/XVI

Meccan passage #8 which contains a reference to the Bible is sūra xlvi (*al-Aḥqāf*): 12: "And when they refuse to be guided thereby, they say;-this is an antiquated lie. Yet preceding it there is the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy; and this Qur'ān is a book attesting (previous Revelation), in the Arabic tongue, to warn the transgressors, and glad tidings to the righteous."

Muir observes that the Islamic commentators contended that the Qur'ān was like the Book of Moses, which all acknowledge to be "a Guide and a Mercy". Thus, al-Bayḍāwī states in his commentary that one of the main objects of the Qur'ān was "to provide the Arabs in their own language with a confirmation of the previous revelation."²

Art. 9/XVII

Meccan passage #9 is sūra xlvi (*al-Aḥqāf*): 30: "They said,-Oh our people! verily we have heard a book revealed after Moses, attesting the revelation that precedeth it; it leadeth to the truth, and unto the straight path."

Muir observes that the Islamic commentators consider "Attesting that which is before it," to refer to the preceding Scriptures of the Jews and Christians. Thus Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī notes that "attesting that which is before it, refers to the *Tawrāt* (Pentateuch)."³

Art. 10/XX

Meccan passage #10 is sūra xix (*Maryam*): 11: "Oh John! take the book with power; and We gave him wisdom while a child."

Muir notes that al-Bayḍāwī as well as Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī state that the phrase "the book" means "the *Tawrāt*" and the phrase "with power" is an acknowledgment that the Jewish Scriptures existed in the time of John and Jesus, genuine and uncorrupted as a source of guidance and wisdom, and power.⁴

Art. 11/XXII

Meccan passage #11 is sūra xlii (*al-Shūra*): 1: "Thus doth God, the glorious and the wise, communicate inspiration unto thee, as he did unto those that preceded thee."

Muir observes that as to the style and mode of inspiration, the Qur'ān is here put in the same category with the Revelations to former prophets. Thus the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, being revealed in the same way as the Qur'ān, receive a similar reverence by the Commentators.⁵

1 Ibid, pp. 83, 84.

2 Ibid, pp. 85, 86.

3 Ibid, pp. 86, 87.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

1.1 THE TESTIMONY TO THE BIBLE OF QUR'ĀNIC PASSAGES REVEALED AT MECCA
CONTINUED

The Qur'ān	The Commentaries (Tafsīr)
<p>Art. 12/XXIV Meccan passage #12 is sūra xlii (<i>al-Shūrā</i>): 14,15: "And verily they that have inherited the book after them are in a perplexing doubt respecting the same."</p>	<p>Muir observes that al-Bayḍāwī as well as Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī state that the phrase "Those that have inherited the book after them, refers to the Jews and Christians at the time of the Prophet". And the phrase "Are in doubt regarding the same, i.e. regarding their book means that they did not know its real purpose, or not believing in it with a true faith."⁶</p>
<p>Art. 13/XXV Meccan passage #13 is sūra xl (<i>Ghāfir</i>): 55,56: "And verily We gave unto Moses guidance, and We caused the Children of Israel to inherit the book,-a guide and an admonition unto people of understanding hearts."</p>	<p>Muir observes that the Islamic commentators agree that the Book here meant is the <i>Tawrāt</i>. The books of the Old Testament were inherited by the Israelites as "a guide and admonition to the earnest enquirers."⁷</p>
<p>Art. 14/XXVI Meccan passage #14 is sūra xl (<i>Ghāfir</i>): 72: "They who reject the book, and that which We have sent our messengers with,-they shall know; when the collars shall be on their necks, and the chains by which they shall be dragged into hell;-and shall be burned in the fire."</p>	<p>Muir notes that the commentators concur that these awful punishments are threatened not only against the rejectors of the Qur'ān, but against the rejectors of God's previous revelations, i.e. the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. He concludes that the danger of their rejection is the same.⁸</p>
<p>Art.15/XXIX Meccan passage #15 which contains a reference to the Bible is sūra xliii (<i>al-Zukhruf</i>): 43: "And ask those of Our Apostles whom We have sent before thee, whether We have appointed any besides the Merciful, as a God whom they should worship."</p>	<p>Muir notes that Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī states that the phrase "Ask those of Our Apostles whom we have sent before thee," to be "the people from amongst those of the two Books," i.e. Jews and Christians. Jalāl al-Dīn concludes that the command of God, that Muḥammad should ask this question, is a mode of expression equivalent to assuring the idolatrous Meccans that none of the former prophets, or their inspired writings, countenanced the worship of any other besides the One true God.⁹</p>

⁶ Ibid, p. 91.

⁷ Ibid, p. 93.

⁸ Ibid, p. 94.

⁹ Ibid, p. 97.

1.1 THE TESTIMONY TO THE BIBLE OF QUR'ĀNIC PASSAGES REVEALED AT MECCA
CONTINUED

Art. 16/XXXIV

Meccan passage #16 is sūra x (*Yūnus*): 93: "If thou art in doubt regarding that which We have sent down unto thee, then ask those who read the book (revealed) before thee. Verily the truth hath come unto thee from thy Lord; be not therefore amongst those that doubt."

Muir observes that "The Book revealed before Muḥammad," is explained by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī to mean the Pentateuch. Muir also notes that other commentators refer to "the book" in the widest sense of the Scriptures in use among Christians as well as Jews. Thus al-Bayḏāwī states "for verily it (i.e. the Qur'ān) is testified to in *all of the preceding Scriptures (of Jews and Christians)*." Muir concludes that in the appeal to these works for the purpose of allaying the doubts of the Prophet, they are regarded by the Qur'ān as inspired, genuine and pure.¹⁰

Art.17/XXXVII

Meccan passage #17 is sūra vi (*al-An'ām*): 92: "Say (to the Jews) who sent down the book, which Moses brought as a light and a direction to mankind? They make (or transcribe) it upon sheets of paper which they show, and they conceal much: and ye are taught that which ye knew not, neither did your fathers. "

(Art. 18 not included in this chart)

Muir observes that the passage is thus explained by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī "They", (the Jews), transcribe the text upon sheets of paper, i.e. write it in separate parts," When Muḥammad asked questions "they then showed that which they desired to appear thereof," "but they concealed much, viz, of that which is in it."¹¹

Art. 19/XLI

Meccan passage #19 is sūra vi (*al-'An'ām*) 154: "We gave Moses the book complete as to whatever is excellent, and an explanation of every matter, a direction and a mercy..."

Muir observes that the previous Scriptures are referred to in the text and in the commentaries as complete and perfect in all that is excellent, they are an explanation of every matter, -a guide to salvation and a mercy.¹²

Art. 20/XLIII

Meccan passage #20 which contains a reference to the Bible is sūra xxviii (*al-Qaṣaṣ*): 44: "And verily We gave Moses the book, after We had destroyed the former generations, -an enlightenment unto mankind, and a direction, and a mercy, if haply they might be admonished."

Muir observes that here the commentators allow that the Pentateuch is of value as a light to lighten the Gentiles -all "mankind"; -a guide, and a mercy to admonish and direct them.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 100, 101.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 105, 106.

¹² Ibid, p. 109.

¹³ Ibid, p. 110.

1.1 THE TESTIMONY TO THE BIBLE OF QUR'ANIC PASSAGES REVEALED AT MECCA
CONTINUED

Art. 21/XLV

Meccan passage #21 is sūra xxviii (*al-Qaṣaṣ*): 53: "Those to whom We have given the Scripture before it (i.e. before the Qur'ān) believe therein; and when it (the Qur'ān) is read unto them, they say, -We believe in it; verily it is the truth from our Lord, surely we were Moslems from before."

Muir observes that these portions of the Qur'ān recited to, or read by, certain Jews or Christians, are supposed in this text to have been so much like their own Scriptures, that they expressed their conviction that they were exactly the same as their own which they had held before. "Surely we were Moslems already".¹⁴

Art. 22/XLVIII

Meccan passage #22 is sūra xxi (*al-Anbiyā'*): 49: "And verily We gave Moses and Aaron the distinction (*al-Furqān*): and a light, and an admonition to the pious, -those who fear their Lord in secret, and who tremble for the hour (of Judgment). This blessed admonition also We have sent down; will ye therefore deny it?"

Muir observes that the Books of Moses are here named the *Furqān* (that which discriminates the true from the false), and are spoken of as a light to lighten the faithful and an admonition to the pious, -those who fear God, and stand in awe of the hour of judgment. The name "*al-Furqān*" is in the Qur'ān equally applied as a distinctive title to the Qur'ān itself, as to the Pentateuch.¹⁵

Art. 23/LIV

Meccan passage #23 is sūra xvii (*al-Isrā'īl*): 108: "Believe in it (the Qur'ān) or believe not: verily they unto whom the knowledge (of Divine Revelation) hath been given anterior to it, when they hear it recited unto them, fall down upon their faces worshipping..."

Muir cites al-Bayḏāwī who notes that "Those unto whom the knowledge of Divine Revelation hath been given anterior to it" were the learned who read the preceding Scriptures and recognized the reality of Muḥammad's inspiration."

Muir notes that this accords with passages in the Qur'ān who speak of certain people of the Book which acknowledged Islam from their comparing the Qur'ān with the contents of their Scriptures.¹⁶

Art. 24/LVI

Meccan passage #24 is sūra xiii (*Al-Ra'd*): 39: "And those to whom We have given the book, rejoice for that which hath been sent down unto thee; but of the Confederates, there are those that deny a part thereof."

Muir observes that according to al-Suyūṭī "They rejoice, because of its correspondence with that which is with them." That is, they rejoice on account of its conformity with their own Scriptures.¹⁷

Art. 25/LVII

Meccan passage #25 is sūra xiii (*Al-Ra'd*): 45: "And those who disbelieve say, -Thou art not sent (by God); -say, -God sufficeth for a witness between me and between you, and also he with whom is the knowledge of the book."

Muir cites al-Suyūṭī who states that "And also he with whom is the knowledge of the Book" to mean "those from amongst the believers of the Jews and Christians."¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 114.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 116.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 120, 121.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 122, 123.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 123.

1.1 THE TESTIMONY TO THE BIBLE OF QUR'ANIC PASSAGES REVEALED AT MECCA
CONTINUED

Art. 26/LIX

Meccan passage #26 which contains a reference to the Bible is sūra xxix (*al-'Ankabūt*): 46: "And contend not with the people of the Book but in a generous manner, excepting those of them who act wickedly; and say,-We believe in that which hath been revealed to us, and in that which hath been revealed to you: and your God and our God is one, and we are to Him resigned."

Muir observes that this text shows the manner in which, at the Meccan period, Muḥammad addressed the Jews and Christians rather in the style of one identifying himself with their respective religions, than of one commissioned to supersede them.¹⁹

Art. 27/LX

Meccan passage #27 is sūra xxix (*al-'Ankabūt*): "And thus have We sent down to thee the book (the Qur'ān,) and those to whom We have given the Scripture believe in it.

Muir observes that according to al-Suyūṭī "'The Book' refers to the Pentateuch". And the phrase "Thus we have revealed unto thee the Book" i.e. the Qur'ān, means that it was revealed in the same manner as the Pentateuch. Al-Bayḍāwī contends that the people referred to are Abdallāh, son of Salām and his companions; or those of the people of the two Books (the Old and New Testaments) who survived to the time of the Prophet".²⁰

Art. 28/LXI

Meccan passage #28 is sūra vii (*al-A'rāf*): 158: "And I will shortly write down it (i.e. my mercy,) for those who fear the Lord and give alms, and those who believe in our signs: those who follow the apostle,-the illiterate prophet,-whom they find written (i.e. described) in the Pentateuch and in the Gospel.

Muir observes that this passage is introduced as a prophetic announcement to Moses of the Prophet that was to arise in the latter days. Al-Bayḍāwī and al-Suyūṭī contend that in this prophecy, God is represented as saying that his people would "find him (Muḥammad) written," i.e. would find a description of him, "in the Pentateuch and Gospel."²¹

Art. 29/LXIV

Meccan passage #29 is sūra vii (*al-A'rāf*): 170: "But the next life is better (than the present) for those that fear the Lord; then why will ye not comprehend? and (the reward of the next life) is for those who hold fast by the Book, and observe prayer; verily We shall not detract from the reward of the righteous."

Muir observes that the Commentators hold that this passage is addressed to the Jews, and not only demonstrates the existence of the inspired Scripture in common use amongst them, but conveys the exhortation from God that the Jews are to hold fast by it. It implies, moreover, that those who do so shall obtain a full reward in the life to come. Al-Suyūṭī notes that Abdallāh b. Salām was of these pious Jews.²²

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 124, 125.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 126

²¹ Ibid, p. 127.

²² Ibid, pp. 131, 132.

1.1 THE TESTIMONY TO THE BIBLE OF QUR'ANIC PASSAGES REVEALED AT MECCA
CONCLUDED

Art. 30/LXV

Meccan passage #30 is sūra lxxiv (*al-Muddaththir*): 30: "Over it (Hell) are nineteen angels...in order that those to whom We have given the book may firmly believe, and that they who believe may increase in faith; and that those to whom We have given the book may not doubt, nor the believers."

Muir contends that this passage is a Meccan sūra, but the text is believed to have been added to it after Muḥammad went to Medina. Al-Bayḏāwī contends that it is included "that they (the people of the Book) might gain faith in the mission of Muḥammad' and in the truth of the Qur'ān, when they saw it in their own Scriptures."²³

²³ Ibid, pp. 132, 133.

The Qur'an

Art. 31/LXVI

Medinan passage #1 (in this list selected from Muir's article) which contains a reference to the Bible is sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 1-5: "This is the book in which there is no doubt,-a guide to the pious;...they who believe in that which hath been revealed unto thee, and that which hath been revealed before thee...These walk according to the direction of their Lord, and these are the blessed."

Art. 32/LXIX

Medinan passage #2 is sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 75: "Ah! do ye indeed earnestly desire that they should believe in you, and verily a party amongst them hear the word of God; they they pervert it after they have understood it, knowingly."

Art. 33/LXX

Medinan passage #3 is sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 76: "And when they (the Jews of Medina,) meet the believers, they say,-We believe; but when they retire privately one with the other, they say,-Why do ye acquaint them with what God hath revealed to you, that they may therewith dispute with you before your Lord? What do ye not understand? Do they not know that God knoweth what they conceal as well as that which they make public?"

Art. 34/LXXII

Medinan passage #4 is sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 79: "Wherefore, woe unto those that write the Book (or the Writing) with their hands, and then say,-This is from God; for they may sell it for a small price. Woe unto them for that which their hands have written, and woe unto them for that which they gain!"

The Commentaries (*Tafsīr*)

Muir observes that al-Suyūfī regarded the phrase "That which hath been revealed before thee," to be the Pentateuch and the Gospel. Muir observes that according to this passage they who are "blessed," and "walk according to the direction of their Lord," are those who believe not in the Qur'an only, but also in the Scriptures revealed before the Qur'an.¹

Muir observes that the commentators conclude that the people spoken of are the Children of Israel. Thus, al-Suyūfī notes the phrase "that they should believe, refers to the Jews". And "they hear the Word of God, in the Pentateuch." Al-Bayḍāwī notes that the phrase "They hear the word of God and then they pervert it" means they hear the Pentateuch and then when interpreting it for Muḥammad pervert its meaning."²

Muir cites al-Bayḍāwī and al-Suyūfī who regard the phrase "What God hat revealed to You" means "made manifest to you in the Pentateuch regarding the description of Muḥammad." These commentators concur that the last part of the passage refers to one party of Jews who asked another: "Why do ye acquaint them (Muslims) with passages from the Old Testament, which they may turn against you in their arguments of Islam?"³

Muir observes that the commentators refer to "those that write the Writing and sell it for a small price" refers to those who wrote out Rabbinical glosses or Talmudic traditions and tried to pass them off to Muḥammad as though they were divine Scripture. An example of this is given by al-Bayḍāwī who notes: "the Jews wrote out of commentaries (or interpretations) about the punishment of an adulteress (rather than going to the Tawrāt)."⁴

¹ Ibid, pp. 134,135.

² Ibid, pp. 137, 138.

³ Ibid, pp. 139, 140.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 141, 142.

Art. 35/LXXIII

Medinan passage #5 is sūra ii (*al-Baqara*) 85: "What do ye believe in part of the Book, and reject part thereof? But whosoever amongst you doeth this, his reward shall be none other than disgrace in the present life, and in the Day of Judgment they shall be cast into a more awful torment."

Art. 36/LXXV

Medinan passage #6 which contains a reference to the Bible is sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 89: "And when a Book (i.e. the Qur'an) came into them from God, attesting the truth of that (Scripture) which is with them, (although they had from before been praying for victory over those who disbelieve;) yet when that came unto them which they recognized, they rejected the same."

Art. 37/LXXIX

Medinan passage #7 is sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 101: "And when a prophet came unto them from God, attesting that (Scripture) which is with them, a part of those who have received the Scripture cast the Book of God behind their backs, as if they knew it not."

Art. 38/LXXXI

Medinan passage #8 is sūra ii (*al-Baqara*) 137: "Say,-We believe in God, and in what hath been revealed unto us, and in what hath been revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes; and in what hath been given unto Moses and unto Jesus, and in what hath been given unto the prophets from their Lord:we make no distinction between any of them; and unto Him we are resigned."

Muir observes that the commentators regard this passage as addressed to the Jews of Medina after they had fought against one another in spite of injunctions in the Old Testament. There then came this passage which accuses the Jews of believing in one part of the Old Testament and rejecting other parts. This treatment of the unity of this authoritative Book is here condemned.⁵

Muir observes that al-Bayḍāwī and al-Suyūfī consider this passage to be addressed to the Jews of Medina. The Qur'an is spoken of as attesting that which the Jews had "with" their Scripture. This passage also alludes to the manner in which, before Muḥammad's advent, the Jews at Medina prophesied of the Messiah who would come and give victory. However, Muḥammad observed that when he came, giving the Qur'an and victory, they did not recognize him or it.⁶

Muir cites al-Suyūfī who notes that "A prophet" is Muḥammad. "The Book of God" has reference according to both al-Bayḍāwī and al-Suyūfī to The Pentateuch. They give testimony to the divine origin and authority of "the Book of God". They note that Muḥammad came to the Jews, attesting their Scriptures and professing to be the prophet foretold in them. Yet the Jews rejected him-thus "casting the Book of God behind their backs".⁷

Muir observes that the expression "revealed to the Patriarchs" is different from "given" or delivered to the prophets and that what was given to Moses, to Jesus, and to the prophets from their Lord," was used equally with the Qur'an. And Muslims are to make no distinction between them. But Muslims are to honour, reverence and obey all because because they are held in the Qur'an to be equally the Word of God.⁸

⁵ Ibid, pp. 144,145.

⁶ Ibid, pp. 146, 147.

⁷ Ibid, p. 149.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 140, 141.

Art. 39/LXXXII

Medinan passage #9 is sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 141: "Will ye say that Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes, were Jews or Christians-say, What! are ye more knowing than God? and who is more unjust than he who hideth the evidence which he hath received from God; and God is not unmindful of that which ye do."

Muir cites al-Suyūfī who regards this passage as indicting the Jews for regarding Abraham's being a Jew and denying that the faith of Abraham belonged to the faith of Islam also. While there is no reference to the Jews tampering with their Scriptures, they are accused by this Commentator of "hiding the testimony which they had received from God."⁹

Art. 40/XCIII

Medinan passage #10 is sūra lxii (*al-Jumu'*): 5: "The likeness of those who are charged with the Law (The Tawrat), and do not discharge (the obligations of) it, is as the likeness of the Ass laden with books. Evil is the likeness of the people which rejecteth the signs of God: and God doth not guide the unjust people."

Muir, citing the Islamic commentators, observes that as an ass, laden with the most valuable books, is unconscious of their use or value, just so the Jews, though the constituted custodians of the inspired Scriptures, were unconscious of their sacred contents. Though they possessed the pure Word of God, they were not obedient to it.¹⁰

Art. 41/XCV

Medinan passage #11 which contains a reference to the Bible is sūra lxi (*al-Şaff*): 6: "And when Jesus, the Son of Mary, said;-Oh children of Israel, verily I am an Apostle of God unto you, attesting that which is before me of the *Tawrāt*, and giving glad tidings of an apostle that shall come after me, whose name is Ahmed (the praised)."

Muir observes that this verse admits the purity and the authority of the Jewish Scripture as extant in the time of Jesus. The use of "*Tawrāt*" spoken of in the Qur'an is the entire Old Testament; the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, as used and acknowledged in the time of Jesus. The passage also seems to refer to the promise by Jesus of the Paraclete or comforter; which being read *Periklutos* is thus appropriated by Muḥammad as a prophecy of himself.¹¹

Art. 42/XCVI

Medinan passage #12 is sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 43: "Hast thou not seen those to whom We have given a portion of the Scripture? they buy error, and desire that ye may err from the way:...of those who profess Judaism there are those that dislocate words from their places, and say-"we have heard,-and have disobeyed" and, twisting with their tongues, and reviling the faith..."

Muir notes that the Islamic commentators hold that this passage is addressed to the Jews of Medina who used perverse sayings, words of double or equivocal meaning, expressions in another than their ordinary sense, and passages dislocated from their context, in such a manner as to turn Muḥammad into ridicule and revile the faith, while they sheltered themselves behind the other and harmless meaning of what they said.¹²

⁹ Ibid, pp. 151, 152.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 164, 165.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 166, 167.

¹² Ibid, pp. 168, 169.

The Qur'ān

Art. 43/CI-
Medinan passage #13 is sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):
135: "Oh ye that believe! believe in God and
in His prophet, and in the book which He
hath revealed to His prophet, and in the book
which He revealed from before; and whoever
disbelieves in God, and in His angels, and in
His books, and in His prophets, and in the
last day, verily he hath wandered into a wide
error."

Art. 44/CII
Medinan passage #14 is sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):
149: "Verily they that reject God and His
apostles, and seek to make a distinction
between God and his apostles; and say,-We
believe in a part, and we reject a part; and
seek to take a (middle) path between the
same; these are infidels in reality..."

Art. 45/CIII
Medinan passage #15 is sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*):
161: "But those of them that are grounded in
knowledge, and the faithful, believe in that
which hath been revealed unto thee, and in
that which hath been revealed before
thee...Verily We have revealed our will unto
thee, as We our will unto Abraham, and
Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes,
and Jesus, and Job, and Jonas, and Aaron, and
Solomon, and We gave unto David the
Psalms; and Apostles...and God spake with
Moses in open discourse."

Art. 46/CV
Medinan passage #16 which contains a
reference to the Bible is sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*):
2: "God! The Eternal...He caused to descend
upon thee the Scripture in truth, attesting
that (Scripture) which is before it: and He
sent down the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl* from
before for the guidance of mankind: and He
sent down the *Furqān*. Verily, they that reject
the signs (Revelations) of God shall be
fearful punishment."

The Commentaries (Tafsīr)

Muir cites al-Bayḏāwī who states "Believe in
God and in His Prophet, and in the Book
which He hath revealed to his prophet, and in
the Book which He revealed from before; that
is, Be steadfast in the faith thereof, rest
thereupon, and believe in it with your hearts as
ye believe in it with your lips; or believe with
a comprehensive faith which shall embrace all
the Scriptures and Apostles, for partial faith is
no faith at all."¹³

Muir observes that this passage is similar in
purpose to the last. Though the Islamic
commentators state that it is primarily
addressed to the Jews who rejected the Gospel,
its warning is equally applicable to the
Muslim, who, while acknowledging with his
lips belief in the *Tawrāt* and *Injīl*, really rejects
those Divine books.¹⁴

Firstly, Muir notes that the passage is
addressed to Jews but is equally applicable to
Muslims. It is to those who believe not only
in the Qur'ān, but also in that which was
revealed before it, that a "great reward" is here
promised. Secondly, the mode of
Muḥammad's inspiration is declared to be the
same as that of former prophets. Thirdly,
indefinite specification of prophets to whom
God revealed His will contrasts with the
definite manner in which the "Scriptures" are
always spoken of as having been "given" or
delivered.¹⁵

Muir observes that the commentators allow
that the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl* were sent by God
as 'a guide to mankind' before sending the
Qur'ān (here described as the *Furqān*).
Immediately after the enumeration of these
Scriptures, they note that it is added that for
those who reject the signs (i.e. revelations) of
God, there is in store a fearful punishment.¹⁶

13 Ibid, pp. 173-175.

14 Ibid, pp. 176, 177.

15 Ibid, pp. 177, 178.

16 Ibid, pp. 180, 181.

1.2 THE TESTIMONY TO THE BIBLE OF QUR'ĀNIC PASSAGES REVEALED AT MEDINA
CONTINUED

Art. 47/CVII

Medinan passage #17 is sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 23: "Seest thou not those to whom a portion of the Scripture hath been given? They were called unto the Book of God, that it might decide between them. Then a party of them turned away, and went aside.

Muir note that the Commentators relate that as there existed a difference of opinion between Muḥammad the Jews, the Prophet proposed to the latter to determine the question by actual reference to their Scriptures (The Book of God); which, it is said, some of the Jews refused to do, and went away. Thus, Muḥammad appealed to the Jewish Scriptures as a final authority.¹⁷

Art. 48/CX

Medinan passage #18 is sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 68: "A party of the People of the Book desire to cause thee to go astray...Oh People of the Book! why do ye clothe the truth with that which is false, and hide the truth, while ye know (it)? And a party of the people of the Book say,-Believe in that which is sent down unto those that believe, in the early part of the day; and reject it, in the latter part thereof..."

Muir notes that all the Islamic commentators relate that it is addressed to the Jews of Medina, who opposed Muḥammad. It opens with impugning the erroneous doctrines which they endeavoured to inculcate upon Muḥammad and his followers. It was the erroneous interpretation and application of their Scriptures, for which Muḥammad reprimanded the Jews "clothe the truth with that which is false". The Scriptures themselves were pure; but they misinterpreted their meaning.¹⁸

Art. 49/CXI

Medinan passage #19 is sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 77: "And verily amongst them is a party that twist their tongues in (reading) the book, that ye may think it is out of the book, though it is not out of the book; and they say,-'it is from God,' and it is not from God; and they speak a falsehood concerning God, knowingly".

Muir notes that the commentators hold that the Jews of Medina are here reprimanded for attempting to have pretended that certain passages which they read to Muḥammad or his followers were from the Scriptures, while in reality they were not from the Scriptures. This they did by "twisting their tongues," that is, by a fraudulent, or equivocal manner of speech.¹⁹

Art. 50/CXIII

Medinan passage #20 is sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 80: "And (call to mind) when God made a covenant with the prophets, (saying) This verily is the book and the wisdom which I have given unto you; thereafter shall come an Apostle attesting the truth of that (Scripture) which is with you; ye shall surely believe in him, and assist him."

Muir observes that the commentators note that Muḥammad is described as "the Apostle who should attest that (Scripture) which they had with them." The great mark by which Jews and Christians were to recognize the coming prophet was that he would give his attestation to the Divine Scriptures "with them," i.e. then extant in their hands. Al-Suyūfī writes: "One (meaning Muḥammad) who attests that which is with you of the Book and Wisdom."²⁰

17 Ibid, pp. 181-182.

18 Ibid, pp. 185, 186.

19 Ibid, pp. 187,188.

20 Ibid, p. 190.

Art. 51/CXV

Medinan passage #21 which contains a reference to the Bible is sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 93: "All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, excepting that which Israel made unlawful to himself, before the Tawrat was revealed. Say,-Bring hither the Tawrat, and read it, if ye be true. And whoever contriveth a lie concerning God after that, surely they are the transgressors."

Art 52/CXVII

Medinan passage #22 is sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 113: "They are not all alike. Amongst the People of the Book there is an upright race that read the signs (or revelations) of God in the night season, and they bow down worshipping. they believe in God and the last day, and command that which is just, and dissuade from that which is wicked, and they make haste in doing good works. These are the virtuous ones."

Art 53/CXIX

Medinan passage #23 is sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 184: ...Verily apostles have come unto you before me, with evident demonstrations ...(that is) the Scriptures, and the enlightening Book.

Art 54/CXXI

Medinan passage # 24 is sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 199: "And verily of the People of the Book there are those who believe in God, and in that which hath been revealed to you, and in that which hath been revealed to them, submissive unto God; they sell not the signs of God for a small price. These are they who have their reward with their Lord..."

Muir cites the Islamic commentators who note that in a discussion with the Jews of Medina as to the eating of certain kinds of flesh forbidden by the Jewish Law, (the commentators suppose that it was camels' flesh). Muhammad, to prove his position, stated "bring the *Tawrāt* and read it". Thus, Muḥammad appealed to the *Tawrāt* as an unimpeachable test of this disputed fact.²¹

Muir notes that the text, which occurs after a passage upbraiding the Jews for killing their prophets, intimates that there were, in the time of Muḥammad, honest and good Jews, who regularly read the Scriptures and prayed. Muir observes that it cannot be imagined that these righteous Jews would have allowed the Old Testament to be altered much less to have altered it themselves.²²

Muir notes that the Islamic commentators state that the Scriptures thus praised are the inspired books of the Jews and Christians. For this reason, al-Suyūfī states the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl* are enlightening and perspicuous.²³

Muir observes that al-Suyūfī relates "That which hath been revealed to them, refers to the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl*. The same commentator adds: "They sell not the signs of God, those namely, which they have by them in the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl* containing the description of the prophet (Muḥammad). "For a small price", that is of worldly advantage in order to conceal it." Muir observes that other "good Jews and Christians" would have taken care to see that these books were handed down unadulterated.²⁴

21 Ibid, pp. 191,192.

22 Ibid, pp. 194,195.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid, pp. 196, 197.

Art. 55/CXXII

Medinan passage #25 is sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 14-16: "And for that they have broken their covenant, We have cursed them, and We have made their hearts hard; they dislocate the word from its place, and they have forgotten a part of that whereby they were admonished. Thou wilt not cease to discover deceit in them, excepting a few of them. But pardon them, and forgive, for God loveth the beneficent. "

Art. 56/CXXIII

Medinan passage #26 which contains a reference to the Bible is sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 47: "O thou apostle! let not those grieve thee who make haste after infidelity from amongst them...They dislocate the word from out of its place. They say, "If this be given you, then receive it-but if it be not given you, then beware."

Art. 57/CXXIV

Medinan passage #27 is sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 50: "And how will they make thee their judge, since they have beside the *Tawrāt*, in which is the command of God? Then they will turn their back after that, and these are not believers. Verily We have revealed the *Tawrāt*, therein is guidance and light. ...

And We caused Jesus, the Son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, attesting the Scripture of the *Tawrāt* which preceded Him; and We gave Him the Gospel, wherein is guidance and light, which attests the *Tawrāt* that preceded it, and a direction and an admonition to the pious; that the people of the Gospel might judge according to that which God hath revealed therein...

And We have revealed unto thee the book in truth, attesting that (Scripture) which precedeth it, and a custodian (or witness) thereof."

Muir observes that the Islamic commentators note that here there is the same accusation of having dislocated the word from its place that was mentioned in previous passages. Muir observes that "dislocating words", misinterpreting, or perverting the sense of Scripture is specifically confined to the Jews and never mentioned of Christians. However, the accusation in the text does not, even as regards the Jews, impute any tampering with the copies of their Scriptures but rather has to do with misinterpretation.²⁵

Muir notes that the commentators relate that in this passage the Jews were classed with the hypocritical or disaffected citizens of Medina. They are accused of misrepresenting Muḥammad's words to other people: also (as previously noticed) of dislocating passages from their proper places.²⁶

Muir observes that this passage contains clear evidence that, according to the Qur'ān, the Scriptures, in current use amongst the Jews and the Christians in Muhammad's time, had been "sent down" or revealed by God himself; that they were, in their then extant form, authentic and genuine, and were to be held an indisputable rule of judgment. Muir then cites al-Bayḍāwī who relates that the Qur'ān, besides attesting the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, is here further declared to be itself their "custodian" or "witness". This commentator states that it is "a custodian over it" that is, a keeper over the whole of the (sacred) books, such as shall preserve them from change, and witness to their truth and authority." Thus, Muir observes that this commentator infers that the Qur'ān has preserved in their integrity the same Scriptures, which were historically possessed by Jews and Christians.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 198, 199.

²⁶ Ibid, pp. 201, 202.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 203-205.

1.2 THE TESTIMONY TO THE BIBLE OF QUR'ĀNIC PASSAGES REVEALED AT MEDINA
CONCLUDED

Art. 58/CXXVII

Medinan passage #28 is sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*):
77: "Oh ye People of the Book! ye are not
grounded upon anything, until ye set up (or
observe) the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl*, and that
which hath been revealed unto you from your
Lord."

Muir observes that this passage may have been
addressed to the Jews, as a tradition in Ibn
Ishāq's Biography supposes; or, generally,
both to Jews and Christians. In either case the
Islamic commentators regard its intent as
requiring those addressed, not only the
acceptance of the Qur'ān, but the belief in
observance of the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl*
likewise. It was, according to this passage,
foundational that both Jews and Christians
should obey the sacred books as preserved
amongst them, i.e. the Old and New
Testaments.²⁸

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 208, 209.

APPENDIX B

A CHART OF THE RESEARCH OF WILLIAM MUIR AND WILLIAM GOLDSACK ON JESUS IN THE QUR'AN AND THE ISLAMIC COMMENTARIES

Appendix B combines, in chart form, Muir's and Goldsack's research on Qur'anic passages which pertain to the person of Jesus. The two writers included the opinions of the most accepted Islamic commentators and traditionists who commented on these passages in the Qur'an.

1.1 JESUS DESCRIBED AS BEING IN THE BLESSED LINEAGE OF JACOB

QUR'AN AND COMMENTARIES

Sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 46:

"O, Children of Israel, remember the favour wherewith we have favoured thee, and preferred thee above all the nations."

Sūra xxix (*al-'Ankabūt*): 26:

"We gave him (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and we placed among his descendants the gift of prophecy and the Scriptures." Al-Rāzī comments that the phrase "the favour (which) preferred the Jews to all nations" in sūra ii (*al-Baqara*): 46 is conferred upon the believing Jews with respect to being favoured above: 1) "the whole world apart from the Creator", or 2) "all existing at that time," or 3) "other creatures in respect to the favour bestowed upon them."

Sūra xxi (*al-Anbiyā'*): 69,70:

"And we bestowed on him (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob as an additional gift; and We made all of them righteous persons; We made them also leaders, that they might guide others by Our command. And We inspired them to do good works, the observance of prayer, and the giving of alms; and they served Us." Al-Rāzī comments that when Abraham prayed, "O God bestow on me a righteous son," the Lord answered his prayer, and gave him Isaac, and Jacob also as an "additional gift"; and all were made prophets and messengers, doing His will, virtuous and holy. "And they served Me"; that is, as God fulfilled His promise, so they fulfilled their part in obedience and worship. Al-Bayḍāwī similarly notes that when Abraham despaired of progeny on account of his age Isaac and Jacob were "given" the latter as an "additional" child. Thus the commentators noted that the blessings bestowed on Abraham and his descendants Isaac and Jacob were; 1) God guided them aright, 2) God made them prophets, God committed to their progeny the gift of prophecy and the Scriptures (which culminated in the Messiah); 4) and all of them God made righteous. Al-Bayḍāwī also comments that the Messiah who came through Isaac and Jacob would then be "the Quickener of the hearts and souls of mankind. Al-Rāzī comments that the Messiah would be "One that giveth life to the world".¹

BIBLE AND COMMENTARIES

Genesis xxvi:4:

In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"

¹ Muir, *The Beacon of Truth*, pp. 104-121.

1.2 JESUS' WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN

Sūra iii ('Al-'Imrān): 44-47:

"When the angels said, O Mary, Verily God giveth thee good tidings of the Word, proceeding from Himself; his name Jesus, the Messiah, son of Mary, exalted both in this world and in the world to come, and one of those near the Throne. And he shall speak unto Me in the Cradle, and when he is grown up; and he shall be one of the righteous-she said, O Lord, how shall there be a son to me, and no man hath touched me? He answered, Even so, God createth that which He pleaseth. When He decreeth a thing, He but saith unto it, Be, and it is."

Cf. Sūra xix (*Marayam*): 19-22: "It is written: "He (Gabriel) answered, Verily, I am the messenger of thy Lord to give thee a holy son. She (Mary) said, How shall I have a son, seeing a man hath not touched me, and I am no harlot? (Gabriel) replied, so (shall it be): Thy Lord saith, this is easy with me; and that we may ordain him for a sign unto men and a mercy from us: for it is a thing which is decreed. Wherefore she conceived him."

Cf. Sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 167:

"He shall give thee (Mary) good tidings of the Word from Himself and His Word which He conveyed into Mary.

Commentary: Al-Bayḍāwī comments: "Conveyed into Mary, or placed in her womb"

New Testament, Luke i:26-35:

"And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

1.3 JESUS DESCRIBED AS *MASĪḤ* ("MESSIAH")

In sūra iii ('Al-'Imrān): 44,45 it is written: "When the Angels said, O Mary, verily God giveth thee good tidings of the Word (proceeding) from Himself; his name Jesus Christ (*Masīḥ*), son of Mary; exalted both in this world and in the world to come, and one of those near the throne. And he shall speak unto men in the cradle, and when he is grown up; and he shall be one of the righteous."

Al-Rāzī comments that Jesus was given the title *Masīḥ* "Messiah," because "He was kept clear from the taint of sin." Abu Amr ibn al-Ala says that the word *Masīḥ* means King,² while Al-Bayḍāwī comments that Jesus was called *Masīḥ* as possessed of a Spirit proceeding from the Almighty not mediately, but direct, both as to origin and essence."

Old Testament, Isaiah, vii: 14:

"It is written concerning the Messiah, 'The Lord Himself shall give you a sign, Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel' ". Cf. Mk. 8:29 and Mt. 26:63

Muir points out that the term Messiah comes from anointed (*masaha*) because God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit to be the Prince of Eternal Life. This is due to the Scriptural evidence that in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, he became the means by which God gave life eternal.²

² Ibid., p. 124.

1.4 JESUS DESCRIBED AS *KALIMAT ALLĀH* ("GOD'S WORD")

Kalimatuhu (His Word), that is God's Word- Cf. In sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 169 one reads: "Verily the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, is the Apostle of God and His Word (*Kalimatuhu*) which He conveyed into Mary."³

New Testament, John i:14:

"The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and Truth."

In sūra iii (*'Al-'Imrān*): 40 one reads: "Remember when the angel said, "O Mary! Verily God announceth to thee the Word from Him: His name shall be, Messiah Jesus the son of Mary, illustrious in this world and in the next, and one of those who have near access to God."

Al-Rāzī comments: "The Word," i.e. he came forth by the word of God and His command, without other cause or any human origin."

Al-Bayḍāwī speaks of Mary as the receptacle of "the Word" which signifies a person or nature. Thus, al-Bayḍāwī's commentary speaks of the descent of the heavenly nature or person into the womb of the Virgin. Al-Bayḍāwī concludes: "God giveth thee (Mary) good tidings of the Word from Him, his name being the Messiah."

1.5 JESUS DESCRIBED AS *RŪḤ ALLĀH* (SPIRIT OF GOD)

'*Rūh Allāh*' or 'the Spirit of God.' Thus in sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 169, it is written: "Verily the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is the Apostle of God, and His Word which He conveyed into Mary, and a Spirit (proceeding) from Him."

In the New Testament, John xi:25, Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John xi, 25).

New Testament, I Corinthians xv:45: "The first Adam became a living soul. The last Adam (Christ) became a life-giving Spirit." I Cor. 15:45

Al-Bayḍāwī comments: "(Jesus is) a spirit from Him"; possessed of a spirit proceeding from Him, not mediately but direct, both as to origin and essence. Or "a Spirit" because he giveth life to the dead, and to the hearts of men.

³ Ibid., Muir contends that the Arabic in this passage and the next is important because it means Christ was 'His Word', that is 'God's word.' He also interpreted the Arabic to mean 'The Word of God' not merely 'a Word of God.' Cf. Tisdall's *Muhammadan Objections*, p. 162.

1.5 JESUS DESCRIBED AS RŪḤ ALLAH (SPIRIT OF GOD) CONCLUDED

Al-Rāzī comments: "A Spirit from Him or His Spirit": several meanings given. 1) A spirit from Gabriel's breath; "from Him," i.e. honorific, as you would say, "a gift from God." 2) From His Being "the giver of life to the world in their religions." or 3) being "mercy from Him," i.e. sent to guide the world to the truth in their life, religious and secular. 4) there is a hidden meaning in the word, signifying that the Messiah is one of the glorious and blessed spirits; "from Him," added by way of exaltation; yet nevertheless he is but one of the prophets of God; "wherefore believe in him, as ye do in the other prophets, and make him not a god."

1.6 JESUS DESCRIBED AS "THE HONORABLE ONE"

In sūra iii (*al-ʿImrān*): 46, it is written: "O Mary, verily God sendeth thee good tidings of the Word (proceeding) from Himself: His name the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honourable in this world and in the world to come."

Al-Bayḍāwī comments: "The illustriousness in this world is the office of a prophet, and that in the next world the office of intercessor." "In this world," because he was cleared from the imputations of the Jews here below, and because his prayers were answered.

New Testament, Hebrews iii:3

"Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself."

New Testament, John viii:46, Jesus said:

"Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"

New Testament, John xix:4:

"Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him."

1.7 JESUS' DESCRIBED AS "THE SINLESS ONE"

Sūra xix (*Maryam*): 20 where it is written: "I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to thy protection from Satan the stoned." Cf. Sūra iii (*al-ʿImrān*): 36. Tradition of Muslim. "Every child of Adam is touched by Satan the day of his birth, with the exception of Mary and her son."

New Testament, I John iii:5: "In Him was no sin," and I Peter ii:22: "He did no sin"

(Christ Himself challenged His enemies to point to a single flaw in His character in these words: "Which of you convicts me of sin?")

New Testament, John viii:46.

1.8 JESUS' WORK, AFFIRMED OF GOD BY MIRACLES

Sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 109, 110: "When God said, O Jesus, son of Mary, remember my favour towards thee and towards thy mother, when I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit that thou shouldst speak unto men in the cradle, and when thou art of middle age; and when I taught thee scripture and wisdom and the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl*, and when thou didst create of clay as it were the figure of a bird by my permission, and didst breathe thereon and it became a bird by my permission, and thou didst heal one blind from his birth and the leper by my permission, and when thou didst bring forth the dead from their graves by my permission.⁴ Al-Rāzī comments that the miracles which Jesus was strengthened by *Rūh al-Quds* to accomplish "had not been given to any prophet before Jesus nor (were they given to any) after him."⁵

Jn 9: 1-7 (healing of the blind man)
 Luke 7:11-17 (Jesus raises a widow's son)
 Luke 8:22-24 (Jesus calms the sea)
 Luke 9:10 (Jesus feeds the five thousand)
 Jn. 11:1-43 (Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead). The New Testament says that all things were created through Christ, (Colossians i: 16; and John i: 3) and in accordance with the will and permission of God (John v: 19; vii:28).

1.9 THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING JESUS' CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH

One verse in the Qur'an seemingly denies the death of Christ on the cross. Sūra iv (*al-Nisā'*): 156, 157 which states: "And for their unbelief, and for their having spoken against Mary a grievous calumny,--And for their saying, "Verily we have slain the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, an Apostle of God".⁶....Yet they slew him not, and they crucified him not, but they had only his likeness.⁷ And verily they who differed about him were in doubt concerning him; No sure knowledge had they about him, but followed only an opinion, and they did not really slay him, but God took him up to Himself: And God is Mighty, Wise!"

Jesus predicted his death according to Matthew xxvi: 1.2: "Jesus said to his disciples, 'as you know, the Passover is two days away - and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.'"

Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested according to Matthew xxvi: 47, 50: "While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him."

⁴ Muir, *The Beacon of Truth*, p. 126. In sūra iii (*al-Imrān*): 43, Jesus is represented as saying, "Verily I create" (*inni akhlaqu*). The act of creating *al Khalq* is usually regarded in the Qu'rān as an act peculiar to God. Cf. Clair Tisdall, *Objections*, pp.134-35.

⁵ *Minar*, trans. Muir, p. 127 Al-Rāzī wonders how the Messiah, who is identified as the "Glorious Spirit", needs to be strengthened by another spirit ("*Rūh al-Quds*"). Muir suggests that this conundrum could only be solved by understanding that the Messiah had two natures, one from God, i.e. divine, the other human. In this way God's Divine Spirit was given to aid Jesus' human spirit. *Minar*, trans. Muir, p. 128.

⁶ Rodwell's Translation suggests that we should supply, "we have cursed them".

⁷ Literally, one was made to appear to them like (Jesus).

1.9 THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING JESUS' CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH CONTINUED

Al-Rāzī, commenting on this verse, gives two explanations after cautioning not to employ any interpretation suggesting that God simulated Jesus' person:

- 1) When the Jews designed the death of Jesus, God raised Jesus up to heaven and the Jewish leaders, fearing a tumult, seized another man and crucified him.
- 2) The Almighty caused a simulation in that a person named Titaus, who was commanded to crucify Jesus, was instead made to look like Jesus and was crucified in Jesus' place.

Three verses in the Qur'ān seemingly affirm the death of Christ on the cross.

Sūra iii (*Al-'Imrān*): 47-50: But they (the Jews) were crafty, and God was crafty, for God is the best of crafty ones! When God said, 'O Jesus! I will make thee die and take thee up again to me, and will clear thee of those who misbelieve, and will make those who follow thee above those who misbelieve, at the day of judgment, then to me is your return. I will decide between you concerning that wherein ye disagree. And as for those who misbelieve, I will punish them with grievous punishment in this world and the next, and they shall have none to help them.' But as for those who believe and do what is right, He will pay them their reward, for God loves not the unjust.

Sūra xix (*Maryam*): 34 reads: "And peace upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised up alive"

Sūra v (*al-Mā'ida*): 117: "And I was a witness against them so long as I was amongst them, but when Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wert the Watcher over them, for Thou art witness over all"

Jesus was accused by the Jewish religious leaders of blasphemy because he professed to be the Son of God, according to Matthew xxvi: 57, 59,63, 64, 65, 66: "The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any. The High Priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' 'Yes, it is as you say,' Jesus replied. 'In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his clothes and said [to those assembled] 'he has spoken blasphemy!' They replied 'he is worthy of death.'"

Jesus was tried by the Roman governor Pilate who stated, according to Matthew xxvii:24, 26: 'I am innocent of this man's blood'. He then had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Jesus was prepared for crucifixion by the Roman soldiers who, according to Matthew xxvii: 28, 29, 31, "stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head ...and mocked him. Then they led him away to crucify him."

Jesus was then crucified by the Roman soldiers according to Matthew xxvii:32, 35, 36: "They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). When they crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'"

1.9 THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING JESUS' CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH CONCLUDED

Commenting on these verses the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' write: "And when Allah wanted to cause 'Isa to die, and to raise him up to Himself, then 'Isa gathered with his brethren and disciples in the *bait al-Maqdas*, in the room of one of his faithful friends. He said, 'I am about to go from you to my father and yours. And he went forth the next day and appeared to the people and began to call them and remind them and warn them, until he was taken and brought to the King of the children of Israel, who ordered his crucifixion. His two hands were tied to the cross, and he remained crucified from the mid-forenoon (*dahha*) until mid-afternoon (*asr*). And he asked water, and was given vinegar to drink, and he was thrust with a spear, and then buried at the place of the cross."⁸

Jesus died on the cross according to Matthew xxvii:45, 46, 50, 51, 54: "About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' - which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit." "The earth shook and the rocks split." "The centurion and those who were guarding Jesus were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'"

According to Matthew xxvii 57, 62 Jesus was buried in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea. A Roman guard was placed in front of his tomb as Pilate commanded: "Take a guard and make it as sure as you can."

According to Matthew xxviii:1, 2, 6 Jesus was raised from the dead. "There was a violent earthquake for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb rolled back the stone. The angel said "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."

1.10 JESUS, THE "HONOURABLE INTERCESSOR" AT THE LAST DAY

Sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 46:

O Mary, verily God sendeth thee good tidings of the Word (proceeding) from Himself: His name the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honourable in this world and in the world to come.

Islamic commentators on the Qur'ān find in sūra iii (*al-'Imrān*): 44, 45 evidence that Jesus Christ will intercede for sinners at the Last Day. Al-Bayḍāwī confirms this role for Jesus in his *Tafsīr* which reads: "The illustriousness in this world is the office of a prophet, and that in the next world the office of intercessor." Al-Zamakhsharī in his commentary *al-Kashshāf* states that Jesus will receive: "The office of prophet and supremacy over men and loftiness of rank in paradise."

In the New Testament:

Romans viii:34 one reads: "Jesus...who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Again in Hebrews vii:25 one reads: He (Jesus) ever liveth to make intercession for them," while in Hebrews ix:24 it is written, "Christ entered...into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us."

⁸ E.E. Elder, *Ibid*, p.253.