

# The Basis of Islamic Belief

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### Dilemma of Applying Reason

Almost all of us have been faced with the questioning of a child by repeating one word over and over. He can be very frustrating to us as he asks "Why?" If you put a hand beyond his reach, he wants to know, "Why?" When you explain it is sharp, he asks "Why?" And so you explain, in order to cut fruit, and he asks, "Why?" And so it goes.

It illustrates the dilemma of applying reason. What we have to do when we apply reason is first to set standards of proof. We decide for ourselves, "What will I be satisfied with if I find such and such and so and so that constitutes for me a final proof?" We have to decide on that first.

What happens though, is that on the really important issues, the philosophical matters, thinkers set standards and eventually they may arrive at their standards. They may arrive at the point which they say would constitute a proof. But then they ask for a proof of the proof.

### Setting Standards

The key to avoiding this endless dissatisfaction is to satisfy ourselves about standards first; to satisfy ourselves that such and such are a list of criteria that constitute proof, satisfying proof, and then we test the subjects that we examine. In particular I will apply this to the Qur'an.

Ask a thoughtful Christian why he is Christian, and he will usually reply, "The miracle of Resurrection." The basis for his belief being that about two thousand years ago a man died and he was raised from the dead. That is his miracle, his 'touchstone', because all else depends on that.

Ask a Muslim, "Well, what is your miracle? Why are you a Muslim? Where is your miracle?" and the Muslim can go over and take his miracle off the shelf and hand it over to you because his miracle is still with us today. It is the Qur'an; it is his 'touchstone'.

## **Sign of God**

While all the prophets have their signs, Moses had the competition with the magicians and the Pharaoh, Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead and so on, one sign was given to the last of the prophets. According to the Muslims, this is the Qur'an. And this one Sign is still with us. Does not that after all seem fair, that if prophethood is to end that the last prophet should bring something that stays with us so that, in fact, a Muslim who takes his religion seriously suffers no disadvantage to Muslims who lived fourteen centuries ago?

Those people who kept company with the Prophet had access to no more of the necessary information than we have today. They had the Qur'an. That was the sign for them. It is still a sign to us today, the same miracle.

Well, let us test the Qur'an. Suppose that if I say to a man, "I know your father." Probably he is going to examine the situation and see if it seems likely that I have met his father. If he is not convinced he will start asking me questions like: "You know my father, you say, is he a tall man? Does he have curly hair? Does he wear glasses?" and so on. If I keep giving him the right answers to all these questions, pretty soon he is going to be convinced. "Well I guess this man did meet my father like he said." You see the method.

## **The Big Bang Theory**

Here in the Qur'an we have a book which claims that its author is one who was present at the beginning of the universe, at the beginning of life. So, we have a right to address that author and say, "Well, tell me something prove to me that you were there when the world began, when life began." The Qur'an gives us an interesting statement. It reads:

"Have not the disbelievers seen that the Heavens and the Earth were one piece and we parted them? Will they not then believe?"(21:30)

There are three key points here. First of all it is the disbelievers who are mentioned as being those who would see that the heavens and the earth were one piece and then parted and would see that all life came to be made from water.

As it happens the universally accepted theory of the origin of the universe is now the Big Bang theory. It maintains that at one time all of the heavens and the earth were one piece, the 'monoblock' as it is called. At a particular point in time, this 'monoblock' burst and it continues to expand. This gives us the universe we have today. This was a recent discovery, a recent confirmation.

The Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded only a few years ago to those who confirmed the Big Bang origin of the universe. It was only about two hundred years ago that Leeuwenhoek and others perfected the microscope and discovered for the first time that living cells are composed of about eighty percent water.

Those Nobel Prize winners and the Dutchman who invented the microscope were not Muslims. And yet they confirmed the vital statement that at one time the universe was one piece, that life was made from water, just as this verse says"

"Have not the disbelievers seen that the Heavens and the Earth were one piece and we parted them? Will they not then believe?"(21:30)

Well, this sounds like an answer to the question we stated with when we ask the author: "Tell me something that shows me you were present when the universe began when life began?"

## **Taking a Stand**

Everyone must be committed to something. You have to put your foot down some place. It is impossible to be neutral all time. There has to be a point of reference in the life of any thinking individual. You have to take a stand somewhere. The question, of course, is to put your foot down in the right place. Since there is no such thing as a proof of a proof and so on, in order to find the right place to put one's foot down, to take a stand, we have to search and find that place and it is by a method that I hope to illustrate here.

It is a question of finding a point of convergence. You see, we search for truth in many places and we begin to know that we are succeeding in finding the truth if all our different paths start to converge; they start to come together at the same point.

If we are examining a book, looking for evidence of divine origin, and we are led to Islam, this is one path. If at the same time we are examining the words of all those who were called prophets and we find ourselves led to Islam, we have a firmly grounded basis for belief. We started looking for truth in two different places and ground ourselves going down the path headed for the same destination.

No one ever proves all things. We have to stop at some point being satisfied with our standards as I have mentioned earlier. The point is, in order to take a stand and to be sure it is in the right place we want to examine all the evidence around us and see where does it lead us and anticipate this point of convergence; to say it looks like all things are pointing to this place. We go to that place and then look at the data around us to see if it fits into place. Does it now make sense? Are we standing in the right place?

## **The Expanding Heavens**

Let me first show more of our examination of the Qur'an, and then an examination of some words of prophets to find this point of convergence. In chapter fifty-one, verse forty seven, it is mentioned that the heavens are expanding. As I mentioned earlier, this is in connection with the 'Big Bang' origin of the universe, as it is usually called, and it was in 1973 that the Nobel Prize was awarded to three men who were confirming that, after all, the universe is expanding.

The comments of Muslims over the centuries on this verse which speaks of the heavens doing exactly that is very interesting. The wisest among them had stated that the words are very clear, that the heavens are expanding, but they could not imagine how that could be so. But they were content to leave the words as they were, to say: "Allah knows best"

## **The City of Iram**

The Qur'an mentions a city by the name of Iram (89:7). The city of Iram has been unknown to history, so unknown that even some Muslim commentators, out of embarrassment for feeling apologetic for their religion, have commented on this mention of the city in the Qur'an as being perhaps figurative, that Iram was possibly a man and not a city.

In 1973 the excavation in Syria at the site of the ancient city of Eblus uncovered the largest collection of cuneiform writings on clay tablets ever assembled. In fact, the library discovered in Eblus contains more clay tablets that are more than four thousand years old than all other tablets combined from all the other sites.

Interestingly enough, you will find the details in the National Geographic of 1978 which confirms that in those tablets the city of Iram is mentioned. The people of Eblus used to do business with the people of Iram. So here in these comes confirmation of the fact that, after all, there really was an ancient city by that name, wherever it was. How did it find its way into the Qur'an, we might ask?

Those Muslims who may have offered their commentary trying to explain away this reference that they were uncomfortable with, were outsmarted by the author of the Qur'an. They would attempt it. Primarily their actions would involve trying to produce evidence that the author of this book had a primitive understanding of the world around us.

## **The Smallest Matter**

For example, there is a word which is translated to usually in Arabic as zarah. This is usually translated 'atom' and it is usually thought of in Arabic as being smallest item available at one time. Perhaps the Arab thought it was an ant or a grain of dust. Today the word usually translated as 'atom'.

Those who would outsmart the author of the Qur'an have insisted that, well, the atom is not after all the smallest piece of matter because in this century it has been discovered that even the atom is made of still smaller of matter. Is it then possible to outsmart the author who chose to use this word? Well, there is an interesting in chapter ten, verse sixty one, which speaks of items the size of a zarah, (atom) or smaller. There is no possibility in this subject someone is going to say a new discovery has outdated the words of the Qur'an on the issue of the size of matter or the ultimate particles. The verse talks about items the size of a zarah (atom) or smaller.

## **Forgiveness**

Speaking of outsmarting the author of the Qur'an, the Islamic point of view is that when a man embraces Islam, his past is forgiven from the very beginning. This has been the invitation to Islam: come to Islam and all is forgiven from the past.

But consider this. There is only one enemy of Muhammad, peace be upon him, who is mentioned by name in the Qur'an: one Abu

Lahab. In a short chapter of this book, he is condemned to punishment for his sins.

As it happens, the man himself was alive for many years after this revelation. He could therefore have finished Islam very easily. He needed only to go to the Muslims to announce his conversion. They had in their hands the revelation which said that this man is doomed to punishment. He could have gone to Muslims and say: "I accept Islam, am I forgiven or not?"

He could have confused them so much as to finish this small movement because he would have been pointing out to them that they were now in confusion. The policy was instant forgiveness of the past, but their own revealed scripture announced that he was not forgiven. As it was, Abu Lahab died without accepting Islam.

## **Predictions**

In fact, the Qur'an confidently predicted a number of things only a few years before they came to pass. The fall of the Persian Empire, for example, was predicted in spite of the fact that it had just suffered a serious military reverse. The evidence was all to the contrary. But in the chapter entitled Rom, the fall of the Persian Empire who were recently victors over the Romans was predicted.

When all the Muslims in the world could meet in one room, the revelations were already discussing their future successes. In confidence, they were planning for the day when they would be in charge of the city where they were forced at that time to hide for their very lives.

## **Evidence of Divine Origin**

Some people may like to find any number of things in the Qur'an. But an honest method in examining this book, looking for evidence of the Divine origin, is to take things at their value, to look for things that are clear and to look in those places where we are invited to look. Remember the passage that I quoted earlier: "Have not the disbelievers seen..." This a common phrase of the Qur'an: "O Man, Have you not seen." The invitation is to examine the evidence in these places. We are doing the sensible thing if we examine the words used to look for the doubted meaning and to find evidence of the Divine origin.

Each one of us is an expert on something. One does not have to have a degree in a particular subject to decide that now, "I can take my expertise to the Qur'an and see what I can find." We all now something for some from our own experience and life.

I heard a story, several years ago in Toronto, of man who was given the Qur'an to read. The man was a member of the merchant marines who spent his life on the sea. When he read a verse in the Qur'an describing the wave on the ocean, "waves within waves and the darkness between," he was surprised because the description was just what he knew the situation to be. When he returned the Qur'an to the man who gave it to him to read, he asked him (because he was completely ignorant of the origins of Islam): "This Muhammad, was he a sailor?" Well, of course, he was quite surprised to know that the man spent his life in the desert. So he had to ask himself: "From where did he get this knowledge of what looks like on a stormy sea?"

We all know something that we can be confident of and if we can turn to the Qur'an to read what it says about that subject, we are asking for confirmation of our belief in the Divine origin of the book.

## **The Two Phenomena**

A friend of mine from the University of Toronto, had experience of dealing with a man who was doing his doctorate in psychology. He chose as his subject: "The Efficiency of Group Discussion."

He suggested a number of criteria as to what constituted an efficient discussion. He graphed the process; that is achieved a measure of the efficiency of all groups in the discussions according to an index by his system., On his graph he indicated the progress made by the discussion groups of various sizes.

The interesting thing that happened which he did not expect to find when he began his project was that, while there were some difference between the size of an given group and how well they did in discussions, he was surprised to find that groups of two were completely off his scale. In other words, when two people sit down to discuss something, they were so much more efficient than any other size of group that it went completely off his scale of measurement.

When my friend heard about this, something went on at the back of his mind. My friend, being a Muslim, thought there was something familiar here about this idea. The psychology researcher was not a Muslim. He was debating with himself on changing the topic of his thesis. Should he call it 'The Phenomenon of Two' or 'The Two Phenomena'? He was so surprised at his discovery.

Meanwhile, my friend found that there is a verse in the Qur'an, and he found it for himself on the same night, which speaks on discussions and the size of groups and how efficient they are. And maybe we should not be surprised to find that it is the groups that are two in numbers that do the best in achieving results. The verse in the Qur'an reads, concerning discussion groups, that when discussion the Qur'an one should sit alone and reflect on its meaning or discuss it in groups of two.

## **Use and Mention of Words**

For myself, as I said everyone knows something for sure or has an interest and experience in life; my interest is in mathematics and logic. There is a verse in the Qur'an which says:

"This a scripture whose verses are perfected and then expounded."(11:1)

Which tells me that there are no wasted words in the Qur'an; that each verse is perfected and then it is explained. It could not be in a better form. One could not use fewer words to say the same thing or if one uses more words one would only be adding superfluous information.

This directed my attention to a particular mathematical subject, a logical subject, and I examined the Qur'an to see if I could find something of what I knew to be the case.

A revolution in logic has occurred in the last one hundred years, primarily over the difference between use and mention of words. A structure of logic seemed to be in danger of collapsing about a hundred years ago because it came to the attention of the people who studied these matters that the structure was not quite sound. The issue involved 'self-reference' and the use and the mention of words which I will explain briefly.

Aristotle's law of the 'excluded middle' was the statement that every statement is either true false. About a hundred years ago, somebody pointed out that the law of the excluded middle is a statement and is therefore not a law after all. It could just as well be false as well as true.

This was a tangled knot for the logicians to untie until they came to understand the difference between the use and the mention of a word.

When we use a word, we consider its meaning. When we mention a word we are discussing the word itself. If I said Toronto is a large city, I mean Toronto, that place, is a large cit. If I say Toronto has seven letters, I am talking about the word 'Toronto'. In the first case I used the word and in the second I mentioned the word. You see distinction.

## **Jesus and Adam**

Connecting these ideas and the idea that the Qur'an composed of verses that are perfected and then expounded for us, consider the verse which says:

"The likeness of Jesus before Allah is as the likeness of Adam." (3:59)

It is very clear that what we have in the statement is an equation. This verse goes on to explain how that is true because they both came under unusual circumstances rather than having a mother and a father in the usual human reproductive way. But more than that, I got to consider the use of the mention of words.

The words are used clearly enough. Jesus is like Adam and by Jesus and Adam, we mean those two men. But what about the mention of the words? Was the author aware of the fact that if we were considering the words as words themselves, this sentence also read that 'Jesus' is something like 'Adam'. Well, they are not spelt with the same letters, how can they be alike in this revelation? The only answer came to me fairly quickly and I took a look at the index of the Qur'an.

The index of the Qur'an has been made available only since 1945. This book was the result of years of work by a man and his students who assembled a book which lists every word in the Qur'an and where it can be found.

So, when we look up the word Isa (Jesus), we find it in the Qur'an twenty-five times. When we look up Adam, we find it in the Qur'an twenty-five times. The point is that they are very much alike in this book. They are equated. So, following up on this idea, I continued to examine the index looking for every case where something was set up as an equation, where the likeness of something was said to be the likeness of some other thing. And in every case, it works. You have to example a verse which reads:

"The likeness of this who reject our signs is as the likeness of the dog." (7:176)

Well, the phrase is Arabic for 'the people who reject our signs' could be found in the Qur'an exactly five times. And so is the Arabic word for 'the dog' (al-kalb). And there are several instances of exactly the same occurrence.

It was some months after I found this for myself that a friend of mine, who is continuing this investigation with me, made a suggestion that there are also some places in the Qur'an where one thing is said to be not like another thing.

As soon as he mentioned this up to me, we both went for the index and had a quick look at several places where one thing is said to be not like another thing and counted their occurrence in the Qur'an. We were surprised and maybe should not have been to find that, after all, they do not match up. But an interesting thing does happen. For example, the Qur'an makes it very clear in the verse that trade is not like interest. The two words will be found six times for one and seven for the other. And so it is in every other case.

When one thing is said to be not like another, they differ by a difference of one time. It would be five of one and four of the other, or seven of one and eight of another.

## **Good and Evil**

There is one interesting verse which, I felt, spoke directly to me from right off the page. It mentions two words in Arabic, al-khabeeth (the evil), and al-taib (the good). The verse reads:

"Say, the evil and the good are not comparable, even though the abundance of evil will surprise you. So be mindful of your duty to Allah, O Man of understanding that you may succeed."(5:100)

Well, I had a look at those two words in Arabic, the evil and the good, and found it in the Qur'an that they both occur seven times. Yet the verse here is saying that they are not comparable. I should not expect to find that they occur the same number of times. But what does the rest of this verse say?

"The evil and the good are not comparable. The abundance of the evil will surprise you" and it did for there were too many of them. But it continues:

"So be mindful of your duty to Allah, O Man of understanding, that you may succeed."

So press on. Use your understanding and you will succeed. That is what the verse said to me. Well, I found the answer in one verse further on where it reads:

"Allah separates the evil from the good. The evil HE piles one on top of the other, heaping them all together."

Here is the solution to the difficulty. While we have several occurrences of al-taib (the good), according to the principle of this verse, evil is separated from good and is piled one on top of the other and heaped all together. We can not count them as seven separate instances

## **Occurrences of Words**

A favorite difficulty, or supposed difficulty, which critics like to cite or have cited in the past years concerning the Qur'an is that, apparently to their thinking, the author of this book was ignorant because he advised the Muslims to follow the lunar instead of the solar year. The critics say the author was unaware of the difference in the length of years, that if one follows twelve lunar months one loses eleven days every year.

The author of the Qur'an was well aware of the distinction between the length of the solar year and the lunar year. In chapter eighteen, verse nine, it mentions three-hundred years and gives their equivalent as three-hundred and nine years. As it happens, three hundred solar years is equal to three hundred and nine lunar years. Let us go back to my original scheme of the occurrence of words in the Qur'an. The Arabic word for 'month', shahar, will be found twelve times in the Qur'an. There are twelve months in a year. If we find twelve months, how many days should we expect to find? The word in Arabic is yaqum, and as it happens you will find that the word occurs three-hundred and sixty five times in the Qur'an.

As a matter of fact, the original issue which had me interest in looking up the occurrence of months and days was this distinction between the solar year and the lunar year. Well, for twenty-five centuries it has been known that the relative positions of the sun, moon and earth coincide every nineteen years. This was discovered by a Greek by the name of Meton, and it is called the 'Metonic' cycle. Knowing this, I looked again to the index for the word 'year', sanah and found, sure enough, that it occurs in the Qur'an nineteen times.

## **Perfect balance of Words**

Now, what is the point of this perfect balance of words? For myself, it shows the author was well aware of the distinction between using words and mentioning words, a fine logical point. But more than that, it indicates the preservation of this book.

After giving a lecture on the subject of the Qur'an, I touched on some of these subjects and a questionnaire from the audience afterwards said: "How do we know we still have the original Qur'an. Maybe pieces of it have been lost or extra parts been added?" I pointed out to him that we had pretty well covered that point because since these items, the perfect balance of words in the Qur'an, have come to light only in this generation, anybody who would have lost the portion of this book, hidden some of it, or added some of their own would have been unaware of this carefully hidden code in the book. They would have destroyed this perfect balance.

It is interesting to note too that, well, such a thing might be possible to organize today by the use of a computer to coordinate all words so that whatever thought you might have as to a meaning of a sentence or however you might construe an equation out of a sentence, you could check for yourself and the book will always have the balance of words.

If that were possible today, if it were possible fourteen centuries ago, why would it be done and then left hidden and never drawn to the attention of those who first saw this book? Why it would be left with the hope of the author who contrived this, that maybe in many centuries someone will discover it and have a nice surprise? It is a scheme that does not make sense.

## **Best Explanation**

We are told in the Qur'an that no questionnaire will come to the Muslims with the question for which a good answer has not been provided, and the best explanation for whatever his question. This verse says:

"For everything they say we are given something to go back to them and reply." (25:33)

We looked again to the index of the Qur'an and we found the word, qalu (they say), is found three hundred and thirty-two times. Now, what would be the natural counterpart? The Arabic word, qul, which is the command 'say' and you will find at the index it also occurs three hundred and thirty-two times.

## **Origin of the Qur'an**

An interesting feature of the Qur'an is that it replies to critics as to its origin. That is, no one has yet come up with suggestion as to where this book came from which is not commented on within the book itself.

In fact, the new Catholic Encyclopedia, under the heading Qur'an, mentions that over the centuries there has been many theories as to where this book came from. Their conclusion: today, no sensible person believes any of these theories. This leaves the Christians in some difficulty. You see, all the theories suggested so far, according to this encyclopedia, are not really acceptable to anyone sensible today. They are too fantastic.

Where did the book come from? Those who have not really examined the Qur'an usually dismissed it as being, they say, a collection of proverbs or aphorisms, saying that one man used to announce from time to time. They imagined that there was a man who, from time to time during the day, will think of some witty little saying and spit it out and those around him will quickly write it down and eventually these were all collected and became the Qur'an.

Those who read the Qur'an will find that it is not anything like that at all. The collection of things said by the Prophet is the subject and the content of the Hadith. But the subjects and contents of the Qur'an are all in a form of a composition and explanation. I cite as an example the chapter, Yusuf, which is an entire story in great detail about one particular episode of one portion of the life of one man. It is a composition.

It is for this reason that virtually all those who have actually examined the Qur'an usually refer to it as being the product of the authorship as attributed to Muhammad and his 'co-adjudicators'. These were supposed to be people who would sit with him and composed the Qur'an. You see they imagined that the Qur'an was composed by a committee.

They acknowledged that there was too much information and it was too well composed for one man to have assembled. So, they imagined that a committee of men used to meet regularly, brought their various sources of information, composed something and then handed to this man and told him, "Go to the people tomorrow, this is your revelation." In other words, it was a fraud concocted by a group of people. But what do we know about fraud? The Qur'an reminds us as it says:

"Saw, now the truth has come, and falsehood neither invents anything nor restores anything." (34:49).

It is hard to translate it into English precisely, but what this verse is telling us is that falsehood is not the source of a new thing. A new and truthful thing cannot come from falsehood and falsehood does not restore, to our minds, the facts. Truth is in agreement with facts. Falsehood is something else. So falsehood is empty. If something is born fraud, it will never bring us new information. It will never endure; it will only collapse over a period of time.

## **Challenge**

Another interesting verse is a challenge which is addressed to those non-believers. It reads:

"Have they not considered the Qur'an, if it came, other than Allah, surely they will find in it many inconsistencies."(4:82)

Here is a challenge to the reader. If you think you have an explanation where this book came from, have another look at the book. Surely you will be able to uncover some inconsistencies to support your case.

Imagine a student submitting a term paper or a final exam and then writing at the bottom of the page a note to his teacher: "You will find no mistakes in this paper. There are no mistakes on this exam." Can you imagine the teacher letting that rest? The teacher would probably not sleep until uncovering some inconsistency after a challenge like that. It is not the way human beings speak. They do not offer challenges like that. But here we have it in the Qur'an, a direct challenge saying: "If you have a better idea as to where this book came from, here's all you need to do. Find some inconsistencies."

There are critics who make the attempt, critics who try to say the Qur'an contains inconsistencies. A publication that came to my attention recently suggested that the Qur'an was contradictory on the subject of marriage, because in one place, it says: "don't marry more than one wife unless you can provide for them all," and in another place it says: "Don't marry more than four." They see this as a contradiction. What they have is a counter-distinction. In one case, the qualification for marrying more than one has been given. In the other case a limitation on how many may be married is given. There is no contradiction.

Critics are too quick to grab hold of something, give it an interpretation, and then offer it as an excuse to escape the reality of this document.

For critics who would attack the Qur'an and insist it contains mistakes, we can use the same method as in our reply to Christians who claim that Jesus is on record as claiming to be equal to God. Remember the three categories of evidence offered. The evidence offered was insufficient, ambiguous or impossible.

You see, if someone cites a verse from the Qur'an, trying to show that it is a mistake, we only need to show that the verse cited is insufficient to establish that there is a mistake or we need to show that the verse cited cannot possibly have the interpretation which the critic is giving it. It will always fall into one of these three categories.

## **Attributing it to the Devil**

I had experience, on one occasion, describing some of the contents in the Qur'an to a man who did not know the book I was talking about. He sat next to me with the cover turned over. I just told him about the book, what it contained and told him it was not the Bible. His conclusion was, the book was miraculous. This man was a minister in a Christian Church. He said, "Yes, that book could not possibly have originated with the man and therefore it must come from the devil, because it's not the Bible."

The Qur'an comments on this suggestion in chapter twenty-six, verse two-hundred and eleven, as to those who would suggest that the book came from the devil. It points out that it does not quite suit him, does it? Is this how the devil misleads people? He tells them, worship none but God, he insists that they fast, that they practice charity. Is this how the devil misleads people?

Compare the attitude of someone like this, to the attitude of the Jews who knew Jesus and opposed him until the very end. There is an episode reported in the Bible where Jesus raised a man from the dead, one Lazarus, who had been dead for four days. When Lazarus came out of the tomb, alive again those Jews who were watching, what did they do? Did they suddenly say that this man is a true prophet and become believers? No, the Bible says they immediately discussed among themselves that "since this man is working on his signs soon everyone will believe in him. We've got to find a way to kill him," and they attributed his miraculous powers to the devil. He raised that man by the power of the devil.

Now, the Christians who read that episode will feel very sorry for those Jews who had clear evidence right before their very eyes and attribute the miracles to the devil. Does it not appear that they may be doing the same thing when we illustrate what we have in

the Qur'an and their final excuse is only: "It originated with the devil."

## **A Different Story**

There are those who insist that the Qur'an was copied, that it originated in Christian and Jewish sources. As a matter of fact, a book published in recent years called *Worshipping the Wrong God* has stated, as though it were a fact, that after the first revelation of the Qur'an came to Muhammad, peace be upon him, that his wife died and so he quickly married a Jew and a Christian, and this is where he drew the rest of his sources for his book.

Well, they have the facts partly right. It was ten years after the first revelation of the Qur'an that his wife died, and it was another ten years after that when the Qur'an was virtually completed that he married a Jew and a Christian.

Did he copy from Jewish and Christian sources? In the Qur'an, the ruler of Egypt who opposed Moses is known as Fir'aun, not Pharaoh. The Jews and Christians have always said 'Pharaoh'. It is easy for an Arab to say 'Pharaoh'. But in the Qur'an, it is Fir'aun, with an 'n'. Why? Surely the Jews must have teased them about that and said: "You've got the word wrong. It's 'Pharaoh' and not Fir'aun." But they insisted on it and it continues that way in the Qur'an, Fir'aun.

As it happens, this historical writings of Herodotus, the Greek historian, exist to this day, and Herodotus comments on the ruler of Egypt, being in his day and in the centuries before him, one man who went by the title of Fir'aun.

Did the book copy from the Christians sources? The Qur'an insists that Jesus was not crucified, that this was only an illusion, but that the Jews who thought they crucified Jesus were mistaken because it was not really so. Christians would have no part of that. As it happens, the idea that Jesus was not really crucified is really very ancient and can be traced back to the first century. But Christians who believed that were eliminated as heretics within the first two-hundred years after the time of Jesus and they were not teaching this doctrine anywhere around the Arabian Peninsula fourteen centuries ago.

Could the author of the Qur'an have been copying from Christian sources when he says that Jesus spoke to man as a babe (3:46) and in later life? The Arabic word used indicates that he was still speaking to man and teaching to them in the forties. The Christians have always maintained that Jesus was gone by the time he was thirty-three. It indicates that there could have been no copying. In fact, a man would have to be stubborn and insists on the points as explained in the Qur'an in the face of Christian opposition who would have said: "No! No! I wasn't like that. We tell the story differently."

## **House Cleaning**

Now we go to the words of the prophets themselves, which represent another path that leads to Islam. In the Persian scriptures, which have been around for thousands of years, we read:

"When the Persians should sink so low in mortality, a man will be born in Arabia whose followers will upset their throne, religion and everything. The mighty stiff-necked ones will be overpowered. The house which was built and in which many idols have been placed will be purged of idols and people will say their prayers facing towards it. His followers will capture the towns of the Farsi, Entaus and Balkh, and other big places round about. People will embroil with one another. The wise men of Persia and others will join his followers." (Desature no.14)

The Muslims recognize this very quickly because the Ka'bah, the building which all Muslims face in prayers everyday, was at one time filled with idols and it was part of the mission of Muhammad, peace be upon him, to purge the house of idols till today. It was in the next generation, after the time of the Prophet that the wise men of Persia and others did join his followers.

## **A Prophet Like Moses**

In the Bible, in Deuteronomy chapter eighteen, we have the words of Moses who reports that God told him that H would raise up a prophet, from among the brothers of the Israelites, like Moses.

Christians wish to apply this to Jesus, to say he was the prophet like Moses. It is uncomfortable for them to recognize, however that Jesus was not very much like Moses and Jesus had no father, no wife, no children; he did not die of old age, and he did not lead a nation; all these things Moses had or did. But they say, well, Jesus will return; he will return as a victorious person, and so he will be more like Moses. Do they really expect he will return to also acquire a father and children and then die of old age? Not usually. Moreover, Jesus was an Israelite. The passage of scripture says that this prophet that was foretold would be raised up among the brothers of the Israelites, not from the Israelites.

In the third chapter of Acts, the disciple Peter speaks to a crowd of people and explains that Jesus has been take up and he is in

heaven. He will remain in Heaven and he cannot return until all the things that were promised but God come to pass. So what are we still waiting for, does he tell the crowd? He quotes this very saying of Moses saying:

"For God will raise up a prophet from among the brothers of the Israelites like Moses..."

The point is very clear. Christians like to see this prophet as being Jesus. But read carefully Acts chapter three, what it says is that Jesus awaits a return. He cannot return until the fulfillment of this prophecy, that another prophet has to come. Jesus spoke of it himself and the words survived, just barely, but they survived in the bible. Jesus spoke of God sending another 'Paraclete'.

## **Paraclete**

There is a lot of argument over the meaning of this word 'Paraclete'. For now we can leave that aside. What is a 'Paraclete'? It does not matter. The first letter of John shows that Jesus was a 'Paraclete'. He is called a 'Paraclete' and we have Jesus promising another 'Paraclete' is going to be sent. We lose a lot by this word 'another' in English because it is ambiguous. If someone's car breaks down, and it is a Toyota, and I say, "I'll go get you another car," maybe I mean, "I'll go and get you another Toyota because this one you have is broken," or maybe I mean, "Forget Toyota, they're no good; I'll go and get you a Datsun." It is an ambiguous word. But the Greeks had a word for it. When they meant 'another' of the same kind, they said *aloes*. When they meant another of a different kind, they said *heteroes*. The important thing there is that when Jesus, who was himself a Paraclete, said "God will send you another Paraclete" he used the word *aloes*, not *heteroes*.

Christians want to say that this other 'Paraclete' that has been sent was different from Jesus. It was not a man, it was a spirit. What Jesus said was: God will send you another one like me, another man." Muslims believe that Muhammad is the fulfillment of this prophecy by Jesus. The Qur'an says that this man is mentioned in the scriptures of the Jews and the Christians (see 7:157).

Christians came to expect that the return of Jesus because of a Jewish misunderstanding. 'Messiah' and 'Son of Man' have been given special significance by the Jews, even though many people were called by this same name as in the Bible. The Jews came to expect a victorious leader. When Jesus did not turn out to be quite what many expected, they hatched the idea that he would return some day and fulfill all these prophecies.

## **Follower of Jesus**

Suppose that someone observed Jesus two-thousand years ago, and he left this planet, or he went to sleep for two-thousand years and returned today to look for the followers of Jesus, who would he find? Who would he recognize? Christians? I conclude with just this food for thought: the Bible says very clearly that Jesus used to fast. Do Christians fast? Muslims fast; it is obligatory on month every year. The Bible says that Jesus prayed by touching his forehead to the ground. Do Christians pray in this manner? Muslims do. It is characteristic of their prayer and no one on earth is probably ignorant of that fact.

According to Jesus, he told his disciples to greet one another with the expression, "Peace be with you." Do the Christians do that? Muslims do, universally, whether they speak Arabic or not. The greeting for one to another is *Assalamu'alaikum* (peace be with you).

The brother of Jesus in the Book of James, stated that no man should suggest what he is about to do of highlight his plans for the next few days in anyway without adding the phrase "if God wills." Do not say "I will go here and there do this and that" without adding the phrase "if God wills." Do Christians do that? Muslims do, whether they speak Arabic or not. If they so much as suggest they are going downtown to pick up some groceries, they will add *Insha-Allah*, which in Arabic means, "If God wills."

These conclude my thoughts on this subject. May Allah guide us always closer to the truth.