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基督教与伊斯兰教基本教义主要异同初探

**A TENTATIVE COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF
CHRISTIANITY & ISLAM**

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CHRISTIANITY & ISLAM**

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ABSTRACT

Religious issues are equally important to stability and development both for any country and for the whole world. But unfortunately numerous people have various misunderstandings of some religions. Christianity and Islam, as two greatest religions in the world, are two of representative examples. So this thesis is intended to study comparatively fundamental doctrines between Christianity and Islam and thus draw a conclusion that in current situation, on the one hand, it is worthwhile to pay enough attention to religion at home and abroad to improve understanding and guarantee stability, and that, on the other hand, religion must be adapted and contribute to the country's construction.

In order that we can make a comparison between Christianity and Islam from an impartial point of view, two issues about Islam must be clarified first — woman's status and violence in Islam, both of which many people feel very interested in. The role of women in Islam has been misunderstood by most people, even including some Moslems. And what's more, many individuals regard violence as one of characteristics of Islam. All these are because of general ignorance of the Islamic system and way of life as a whole.

Christianity and Islam have many fundamental differences in their basic doctrines. All their doctrines are mainly from their respective Scriptures -- namely, the *Holy Bible* and the *Noble Koran*. According to the *Holy Bible*, the basic doctrines of Christianity are (1) the Trinity, (2) the Divinity of Jesus Christ, (3) the Divine Sonship of Jesus, (4) the Original Sin, and (5) the Atonement. Accordingly, from the *Noble Koran* come the essential doctrines of Islam: (1) the Unity of God, (2) the belief both in the Prophets, including Jesus, raised by God among all the nations of the world and in the Revelations sent down by God to the Prophets to guide human beings to truth and righteousness, (3) the sinlessness of man at birth and his capacity for unlimited moral and spiritual progress (through belief in God and faithful adherence to the inspired teachings of the Prophets), and (4) personal accountability for one's actions.

It seems to people that Christianity and Islam have little in common. They find many contradictions existing between the two religions. Actually, there are more similarities between them than most people think. The most important similarity between them is their concept of God. The most obvious commonness is the legends in the *Holy Bible* and the *Noble Koran*. The last but not the least, there are many positive social and religious regulations and prohibitions in the *Noble Koran*, for example, ban of lechery, of greed, of dirty foods, and encouragement of charity, which can be found similar to the lessons in the *Holy Bible*.

Since our country has provided religion with such a relatively tolerant environment, religion should be suited to socialist economic construction and suited to socialist culture. So whether the purpose is to promote the progress of society or to promote the cultural development, religion is one of the fields that deserve study most. It may be used as a tool to spread superstition, to instigate disruption and sequentially to jeopardize social stabilization and it can contribute to publicizing and exchanging cultures of nationalities, to promoting the unity of nationalities and thus to easing social conflicts. Therefore, what is important now is neither to create conditions for religion development nor to take measures to restrain and eradicate religion. What must be done now is, instead, to reinforce management and lead religion properly to reasonable development so that it can adapt itself to social development.

Key Words: tentative, comparative study, fundamental doctrines, Christianity, Islam

基督教与伊斯兰教基本教义主要异同初探

摘 要

宗教问题对于任何一个国家以及整个世界的稳定和发展来说是至关重要的。然而，很多人对某些宗教误解颇多，世界上的两大宗教基督教和伊斯兰教就是其中最具代表性的例子。而且，二者既有国际性，同时又具有我国自己的特点。本文旨在对两大宗教基本教义进行尝试性对比研究，并在此基础上得出结论：现阶段，必须对宗教问题给予足够的重视；但同时，宗教本身也应该适应并服务于社会主义建设事业。

为了从一个公正的角度来比较基督教和伊斯兰教，澄清许多人感兴趣的关于伊斯兰教的两个问题是很有必要的，即女性问题和暴力问题。很多人甚至包括一些穆斯林都对伊斯兰教中女性的地位存在误解。另外，很多人总是把伊斯兰教和暴力联系在一起，甚至把暴力当作是伊斯兰教的特点之一。这些都是对伊斯兰教认识的误区。

基督教和伊斯兰教在基本教义方面存在着很多不同之处。众所周知，二者的基本教义都主要源于各自的经典——《圣经》和《古兰经》。从《圣经》来看，基督教的基本教义包括：（1）三位一体，（2）耶稣基督的神性，（3）耶稣是上帝之子，（4）原罪说，（5）基督救赎。相应地，从《古兰经》可以看到伊斯兰教的基本教义是：（1）真主的同一性，（2）信仰真主派遣的包括

耶稣在内的所有先知和通过先知们颁降的启示，(3) 人生来是无罪的，(4) 穆斯林自己的罪过需要自己通过对真主虔诚的信仰和敬畏来求得真主的宽恕，别人是无法替代的。

很多人认为，基督教与伊斯兰教似乎没有什么共同点，甚至二者之间似乎还有很多互矛盾之处。但事实是，二者之间的共同点比大多数人想象得要多。首先，二者最重要的相似之处在于对上帝性质的描述。其次，二者最明显的共同点是《圣经》和《古兰经》中的传说故事。再次，也是最不能忽视的一点就是《古兰经》中有很多对社会有益的规约和禁令，如：禁淫乱、禁重利、禁食不洁之物、应施舍济贫等等，都可以在《圣经》中找到类似的经文。

自从新中国成立以来，我国对宗教给予了相对宽松的环境，而宗教也应该适应社会主义经济建设和社会主义文化。无论从社会发展角度还是从文化角度看，宗教都是最值得研究的领域之一。它既有可能成为散布迷信、煽动民族分裂、影响社会稳定的工具，也可能成为加强民族文化交流、促进民族团结、缓解社会矛盾的阵地。因此，目前的当务之急既不是为宗教发展创造有利条件，也不是采取措施根除宗教，而是对宗教加强管理并且积极引导它走上合理发展的道路。

关键词：基督教，伊斯兰教，基本教义，主要异同，初探

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Chapter One Introduction

In the past three years, I have developed a strong interest in the study of religion. After having read some materials on religion, I got some ideas on its nature in religious people's eyes that religion is as natural as social intercourse for them. For the religious believers, on the one hand, the aim of the religion in the world is to bestow the highest blessings upon mankind, and the special way they try to accomplish this is by establishing friendly relations with a Power that is believed stronger than the ordinary course of nature. On the other hand, they believe that the one and only God and Who is the Creator and Sustainer of the world would not leave them to explore in the dark and try to find out the truth. He is believed to be a living God and reveals Himself to his believers and guides them to the right path leading to Him. For them, the religion recognizes man's earnest demand for the highest good, promises full development of the seed of divinity implanted in human nature, to fill their mind and soul with knowledge and love of God, and to bring them close to Him, so that they may live eternally a blessed life of peace and joy in the presence of God. Based on the above positive nature of religion, lots of religions have experienced through so long a human history that they still exist nowadays and some of them even have a more important role in respective cultures and in the world. So every religion, big or small, should deserve our study, which can enhance the understanding among different cultures in different countries. As far as different religions in one country are concerned, they should be paid more attention to some extent, because they have a tight connection with whether the country has a stable environment in which it can develop its economy as much as possible. Let's take China as an example. The whole world has witnessed the high-speed development of China's economy in recent decades, and political and social stability is absolutely one of main reasons that account for this satisfactory situation.

However, there are so many religions in the world that I cannot study them one by one, so I have to narrow down what I want to discuss to Christianity and Islam. As we all know, among the revealed religions, Christianity and Islam are the greatest examples today. Dr. Johnson goes to the extent of saying: "There are two objects of curiosity — the Christian world and the Islamic world; all the rest may be considered as barbarous" (Arberry, 1995:2). These remarks are, of course, a little extreme, but they at least show us how important these two religions are and how they are worth our study. Christianity and Islam have a great deal in common. From their position, they are two greatest religions in the world. And as to the situations in China, I don't need to explain Islam's status too much. Meanwhile no one can ignore Christianity's present development in China. From their doctrines, both Christianity and Islam claim to be revealed religions. Jesus Christ declared that the message he was delivering was not his but God's: "I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should

say, and what I should speak" (*John* 12:49). He described himself as "a man who has told you the truth that I have heard from God" (*John* 8:40). In the same way it is claimed in the *Noble Koran* that the revelation which came to the Prophet Muhammad was from the Lord of the Worlds: "And truly, this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds: with it came down the Spirit of Faith and Truth — to your heart and mind (O Muhammad), that you may be of the warners in the plain Arabic tongue" (26:192-95). The fundamental beliefs about God of the two religions are nearly the same — that He is One, a personal Being, enduring through all time and ruling through all space, All-Wise, All Holy, All-Loving, All-Merciful, Almighty, the Creator, the Preserver, and the Ruler of the world. The condition of pleasing God is to believe in Him, to completely surrender one's will to His will and purpose, and to do good deeds, particularly the service to His creatures. Moreover, both of them claim to be monotheistic faiths. Both believe in the immortality of the soul and the life of the world to come. The moral teachings of the two religions are very similar, too, which, generally speaking, instruct their believers to do good deeds. Moreover, there are many prophets — including Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, etc — who are held in reverence by the followers of Christianity and Islam. Besides the prophets above, both believe in Jesus Christ — the Christians believe in him as the Incarnation and Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind; and the Moslems believe in him as a great prophet and messenger of God. Above all, both of the two bring about a far-reaching influence on the cultures they belong to.

Though I am a Party member and don't believe in any religion, I am HUI nationality at the same time. Besides, very often many people would ask: "Why is Christianity developing so fast in China recently?", "Is women's status really so low in Islam?" or "Why is there so much violence in Islamic regions?" and so on. These questions are difficult to answer at one stroke. What made me happy is that *The Bible and Western Culture* is one of our compulsory courses, and it gave me an opportunity to compare the two religions. So I acquired much knowledge and I am eager to share with those who are interested in it. Consequently I may say it is the ignorance and many people's misunderstanding of the two religions that make me try to explain to them by comparing the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and Islam.

For above reasons, a tentative comparative study of these two might be of some help to those who want to have a better understanding of the two religions. Of course, because I am actually a beginner in this field, and my opinions are surely not mature, I am ready to accept any criticism and correction from any one.

Chapter Two Two Issues Concerned Islam

Before I make a comparison between Christianity and Islam, I want to make clear two issues that many persons are interested in, namely, woman's status and violence in Islam. Most people, even including some Moslems, have misunderstood the role of woman in Islam. And what's more, many individuals regard violence as one of Islamic characteristics. All these are because of general ignorance of the Islamic system and way of life as a whole. Perhaps my brief analysis of these two issues can contribute to a better understanding of Islam and thus we all can examine the two religions without any bias.

2.1 Woman's Status in Islam

Now I will sum up the status of woman in society, according to the *Holy Koran*, from its various aspects — spiritually, socially, and economically.

2.1.1 The Spiritual Aspect

Actually the *Koran* provides clear-cut evidence that woman is completely equated with man in the sight of God in terms of her rights and responsibilities. The *Koran* states:

“Every person is a pledge for what he has earned” (*Koran* 74:38).

It also states:

“So their Lord accepted their prayers, (saying), ‘Never will I allow to be lost the work of any of you, whether male or female. You are (members) one of another...’” (*Koran* 3: 195).

“Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him will We give a new life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the their actions” (16:97, 4:124).

Woman is also cleared of the responsibility for the fall of Adam according to the *Koran* that vindicates her honor and dignity. Both were jointly wrong in their disobedience to God, both repented, and both were forgiven. (*Koran* 2:36,7:20-24). In one verse in fact (20:121), Adam specifically, was blamed. It raises the status of woman to make her man's equal. Therefore, Islam gave woman the same rights as those of man:

“And women shall have rights similar to the rights of men over them, according to what is equitable” (2:228).

In terms of religious obligations, such as the Daily Prayers, Fasting, Poor-due, and Pilgrimage, woman is not different from man. In some cases, indeed, woman has certain advantages over man. For example, the woman is exempted from the daily prayers and from fasting during her menstrual periods and forty days after childbirth. She is also exempted from fasting during her pregnancy and when she is nursing her baby if there is any threat to her health or her baby's. If the missed fasting is obligatory (during the month of Ramadan), she can make up for the missed days whenever she can. She does not have to make up for the prayers missed for any of the above reasons. Women can and did go into the mosque during the days of the prophet and from then on attendance at the Friday congregational prayers is optional for them, while it is necessary for men (on Friday).

This is clearly a tender touch of the Islamic teachings, for they are considerate of the fact that a woman may be nursing her baby or caring for men, and thus may be unable to go out to the mosque at the time of the prayers. They also take into account the physiological and psychological changes associated with her natural female functions.

2.1.2 The Social Aspect

2.1.2.1 As a Child and an Adolescent

Despite the social acceptance of female infanticide by some ancient Arabian tribes, the *Koran* forbade this custom, and considered it a crime like any other murder.

“And when the female (infant) buried alive is questioned, for what crime was she killed?”
(*Koran* 81:8-9)

Criticizing the attitudes of such parents who reject their female children, the *Koran* teaches:

“When news is brought to one of them, of (the Birth of) a female (child), his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain her on (sufferance) and contempt, or bury her in the dust? Ah! What an evil (choice) they decide on!” (*Koran* 16:58-59)

Far from saving the girl's life so that she may later suffer injustice and inequality, Islam requires kind and just treatment for her. Among the sayings of Prophet Muhammad in this regard are the following:

“Whosoever has a daughter and he does not bury her alive, does not insult her, and does not favor his son over her; God will enter him into Paradise” (Khan, 1997:167).

Moreover, the right of females to seek knowledge is not different from that of males. Prophet Muhammad said: "Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Moslem." (Khan, 1997:71). Moslem as used here includes both males and females.

2.1.2.2 As a Wife

The *Koran* clearly indicates that marriage is sharing between the two halves of the society, and that its objectives, besides perpetuating human life, are emotional well-being and spiritual harmony. Its bases are love and mercy.

One of the most impressive verses in the *Koran* about marriage is the following:

"And among His signs is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves, that you may find rest, peace of mind in them, and He put between you love and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for people who reflect" (*Koran* 30:21).

According to Islamic Law, women cannot be forced to marry anyone without their consent. Khan (1997:23) reported that a girl came to the Messenger of God, Muhammad, and she said that her father had forced her to marry without her consent. The Messenger of God gave her the choice between accepting the marriage and invalidating it. In another verse, the girl said: "Actually I accept this marriage but I wanted to let women know that parents have no right (to force a husband on them)" (Khan, 1997:26).

Besides all other provisions for her protection at the time of marriage, it was specifically decreed that woman has the full right to her *Mahr*, bridal money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage, which is presented to her by her husband and is included in the nuptial contract, and that such ownership does not transfer to her father or husband. According to the *Koran*, the concept of *Mahr* in Islam is neither an actual or symbolic price for the woman, as was the case in certain cultures, but rather it is a gift symbolizing love and affection.

The rules for married life in Islam are clear and in harmony with upright human nature. In consideration of the physiological and psychological make-up of man and woman, both have equal rights and claims on one another, except for one responsibility, that of leadership. This is a matter which is natural in any collective life and which is consistent with the nature of man.

The *Koran* thus states:

"And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them, and men are a degree (of responsibility) above them" (2:228).

Such degree is maintenance and protection. This refers to that natural difference between the sexes that entitles the weaker sex to protection. It implies no superiority or advantage before the

law. Yet, man's role of leadership in relation to his family does not mean the husband's dictatorship over his wife. Islam emphasizes the importance of taking counsel and mutual agreement in family decisions. The *Koran* gives us an example:

"...If they (husband and wife) desire to wean the child by mutual consent and (after) consultation, there is no blame on them..." (*Koran* 2: 233).

Over and above her basic rights as a wife come the right that is emphasized by the *Koran* and is strongly recommended by the Prophet — kind treatment and companionship.

The *Koran* says:

"...But consort with them in kindness, for if you hate them it may happen that you hate a thing wherein God has placed much good." (*Koran* 4: 19).

Prophet Muhammad said:

"The best of you is the best to his family and I am the best among you to my family" (Khan, 1997:80).

"The most perfect believers are the best in conduct and best of you are those who are best to their wives" (Khan, 1997:86).

As the woman's right to decide about her marriage is recognized, so her right to seek an end for an unsuccessful marriage is recognized. To provide for the stability of the family, however, and in order to protect it from hasty decisions under temporary emotional stress, certain steps and waiting periods should be observed by men and women seeking divorce. Like the man, however, the woman can divorce her husband without resorting to the court.

When the continuation of the marriage relationship is impossible for any reason, men are still taught to seek a gracious end for it.

The *Koran* states about such cases:

"When you divorce women, and they reach their prescribed term, then retain them in kindness and retain them not for injury so that you transgress (the limits)" (*Koran* 2:231, 2:229, 33:49).

Moreover, contrary to what most people think, Islam is a religion to put restriction on polygamy. It allows a man to marry more than one wife only in rare circumstances and under conditions which make it an almost impossibility. "If," says the *Koran*, "you fear that you cannot do justice to them, then marry one only" (4:3). And a little later it adds: "You are never able to be

fair and just as between wives, and to love them equally, even if it is your ardent desire" (4:129). From this it is clear that Islam disallows polygamy for people in normal circumstances. However, in abnormal circumstances — as after a devastating war, in which a large number of men have been killed, leaving behind homeless widows and orphans and an excess of female population — Islam allows conditional and limited polygamy. This it does to provide homes to homeless women, to protect them from being exploited by men, and to save the society from moral corruption. On this issue, after complaining against the amount of ignorance and prejudice against Islam in the West, Mrs. Annie Besant (1974:103), the great leader of the Theosophical Society, writes the following:

"You can hear in England today good, kindly people saying of Islam that it denies to women the possession of a soul. You can find others stating that the religion is evil, because it sanctions a limited polygamy. But you do not hear as a rule the criticism that I spoke out one day in a London Hall where I knew that the audience was entirely uninstructed. I pointed out to them that monogamy with a blended mass of prostitution was hypocrisy and more degrading than a limited polygamy. Naturally a statement like that gives offence, but it has to be made, because it must be remembered that the law of Islam in relation to women was until lately, when parts of it have been imitated in England, the most just law, as far as women are concerned, to be found in the world. Dealing with property, dealing with the rights of succession and so on, dealing with the cases of divorce, it was far beyond the law of the West, in the respect which was paid to the rights of women. Those things are forgotten while people are hypnotized by the words Monogamy and Polygamy, and do not look at what lies behind it in the West — the frightful degradation of thousands of women who are thrown into the streets when their first protectors, weary of them, no longer give them any assistance."

2.1.2.3 As a Mother

To impress upon his followers the exalted position of the mother and sacredness of womanhood, the Holy Prophet Muhammad declared: "Paradise lies at the feet of the mother" (Khan, 1997:118).

He said that "the women are the twin halves of men," (Khan, 1997:120) and that men and women come from the same essence and have the same soul. Islam makes no distinction between them as regards their intellectual, moral and spiritual capabilities and rewards:

"The believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular charity, and obey God and His Apostle. On them will God pour His mercy: for God is Exalted in Power, Wise" (*Koran* 9:71).

"Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily him (or her) We will

give a new life, a life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions” (16:97).

“For Moslems, men and women, — for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God’s praise — for them has God prepared forgiveness and a great reward” (33:35).

And also Islam considers kindness to parents next to the worship of God.

“And we have enjoined upon man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship...” (*Koran* 31:14, 46:15, 29:8).

Moreover, the *Koran* has a special recommendation for the good treatment of mothers:

“Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honor” (*Koran* 17:23).

2.1.3 The Economic Aspect

Islam decreed a right of which woman was deprived both before Islam and after it, the right of independent ownership. According to Islamic Law, woman’s right to her money, real estate, or other properties is fully acknowledged. This right undergoes no change whether she is single or married. She retains her full rights to buy, sell, mortgage or lease any or all her properties. It is nowhere suggested in the Law that a woman is a minor simply because she is a female. It is also noteworthy that such right applies to her properties before marriage as well as to whatever she acquires thereafter.

With regard to the woman’s right to seek employment, it should be stated first that Islam regards her role in society as a mother and a wife as the most sacred and essential one. Neither maids nor baby-sitters can possibly take the mother’s place as the educator of an upright, free, and carefully reared children. Such a noble and vital role, which largely shapes the future of nations, cannot be regarded as “idleness”.

However, there is no decree in Islam which forbids woman from seeking employment whenever there is a necessity for it, especially in positions which fit her nature and in which society needs her most. Examples of these professions are nursing, teaching (especially for children), and medicine. Moreover, there is no restriction on benefiting from woman’s exceptional talent in any field. In addition, fourteen hundred years ago, Islam gave woman the

right to inherit the property and wealth of her father and husband and to acquire, own and dispose of wealth, as she liked. Her share is completely hers and no one can make any claim on it, including her father and her husband. The *Noble Koran* says:

“To men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn” (*Koran* 4:32).

“There is a share for men and a share for women from what is left by parents and those nearest related, whether the property be small or large — a legal share.” (4:7).

Her share is one-half the man's share in most cases, with no implication that she is worth half a man! It would seem grossly inconsistent to make such an inference after the overwhelming evidence of woman's equitable treatment in Islam, which was discussed in the preceding pages. This variation in inheritance rights is only consistent with the variations in financial responsibilities of man and woman according to the Islamic Law. Man in Islam is fully responsible for the maintenance of his wife, his children, and in some cases of his needy relatives, especially the females. This responsibility is neither waived nor reduced because of his wife's wealth or because of her access to any personal income gained from work, rent, profit, or any other legal means.

Woman, on the other hand, is far more secure financially and is far less burdened with any claims on her possessions. Her possessions before marriage do not transfer to her husband and she even keeps her maiden name. She has no obligation to spend on her family out of such properties or out of her income after marriage. She is entitled to the “Mahr” which she takes from her husband at the time of marriage. If she is divorced, she may get an alimony from her ex-husband.

An examination of the above aspects within the overall framework of the Islamic Law reveals not only justice but also an abundance of compassion for woman.

2.2 Violence in Islam

Despite the presence of violence in many regions of the world ranging from Ireland to Lebanon and involving many religions from Christianity to Hinduism, many people associate Islam more than any other religion with violence. Moreover, the upheavals of the past few decades in the Middle East and especially movements using the name of Islam and seeking to solve problems of the Moslem world created by conditions and causes beyond the control of Moslems have only reinforced the idea prevalent among many persons that in some special way Islam is related to violence. To understand the nature of Islam and the truth about the assertion often made of Islam's support of violence, it is important to clearly keep in mind that the word “Islam” itself means “peace and submission to God” and that the history of Islam has certainly not been witness to any more violence than one can find in other civilizations.

Actually Islam is a religion that teaches non-violence. According to the *Koran*, God does not

love violence. Basically, violence is that action which results in disruption of the social system, causing huge losses in terms of lives and property. Simultaneously, we can find in the *Koran* with certainty that God loves non-violence. He resents violent activity being indulged in human society, as a result of which people have to pay the price with their possessions and lives. Other statements in the *Koran* support this. For instance, we are told in the *Koran* that peace is one of God's names (59:23). Those who seek to please God are assured by verse 5 of the sixteenth chapter that he will guide them to "the paths of peace". Paradise, which is the final destination of the society of God's choice, is referred to in the *Koran* as "the home of peace" (89:30), etc. In a word, in Islam the use of the sword to subjugate and exploit people or to grab the land of others or to impose one's faith on others has indeed been one of the worst evils of human history.

But, on the other hand, as far as "violence" is concerned, Islam is not completely opposed to its use but rather seeks to control it in the light of the divine Law. This world is one in which force is to be found everywhere, in nature as well as in human society, among men as well as within the human soul. The goal of Islam is to establish equilibrium amidst this field of tension of various forces. The Islamic concept of justice itself is related to equilibrium, the word for justice in Arabic (*al-'adl*) being related in its etymology to the word for equilibrium (*ta'adul*). All force used under the guidance of the divine Law with the aim of re-establishing an equilibrium that is destroyed is accepted and in fact necessary, for it means to carry out and establish justice. Moreover, Islam says that evil in all cases must be repelled. If the evildoer can be reformed and prevented from causing injury by kindness and mercy, then non-resistance would certainly be the best way to deal with him. But if submission to bullies and tyrants will only increase evil and human misery and it will embolden them to exploit and oppress others and increase disorder and injustice, then chastisement in proportion to the crime must be meted out to him. And we can also learn it from the teaching of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" that the *Holy Bible* contains. Under such circumstances, not to use force in such a way is to fall prey to other forces that cannot but increase disequilibria and disorder and result in greater injustice. Whether the use of force in this manner is swift and intense or gentle and mild depends upon the circumstances, but in all cases force can only be used with the aim of establishing equilibrium and harmony and not for personal or sectarian reasons identified with the interests of a person or a particular group and not the whole. Thus there are occasions when the use of the sword to resist aggression and protect the lives and liberty of men becomes a moral necessity. Moslems hold that even professed pacifists would find it difficult to uphold the doctrine of non-resistance when helpless men, women and children are being slaughtered and the freedom to believe in and practice the religion of their own choice is denied to them by fanatics and ruthless tyrants. It was the Prophet Muhammad who showed us how a true soldier of God, the protector of the victims of intolerance and ruthless tyranny, should behave on battlefield and in moments of defeat and triumph. He faithfully acted upon the injunctions of the *Koran*, which says:

“You may fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities; for God likes not aggressors” (*Koran* 2:190).

“And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression” (2:193).

“And why should you not fight in the way of God and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated and oppressed among men, women, and children, whose cry is: ‘Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You one who will protect; and raise for us from You one who will help’” (4:75).

“To those against whom war is made permission is given (to fight) because they are wronged and oppressed; and verily, God is Most Powerful for their aid; — they are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, — for no cause except that they say, ‘our Lord is God’. Did not God check one sect of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure” (22:39-40).

Consequently, according to the *Koran*, Moslems were allowed to fight with force (1) to establish religious freedom for all, (2) to protect the houses of worship of all religions, including churches and synagogues, (3) to protect the lives of innocent persons from the fury of tyrants and oppressors, and (4) in self-defense or the defense of one’s country and freedom. The Prophet Muhammad had no love for war. But when the enemy, which had previously plotted to assassinate him and forced him and his followers to leave their homes, was now bent upon destroying the Islamic State of Medina and wiping out Islam and Moslems, and had taken to the war-path for this purpose, the Prophet Muhammad, as the head of the Islamic State, did not shrink from his duty to defend the religious freedom and lives of innocent men, women and children. Here again he proved himself to be a model for all those who have to resort to a defensive war to save their country and people from the destructive fury of fanatics and tyrants. The Prophet Muhammad made war as humane as possible by declaring that in the course of a war against aggressors, “spare the weakness of the female sex; injure no the infant at the breast, or those who are ill in bed. Abstain from demolishing the dwellings of the unresisting inhabitants; destroy not the means of their subsistence, nor their fruit trees, and touch not the palm” (Ali, 2000:86). No one not actually engaged in fighting in the army of the aggressor was to be killed. If the enemy, showed any inclination to bring the hostilities to an end, every effort must be made to stop the war and restore peace, even though the enemy’s intention was to deceive and gain time to renew the attack:

“But if the enemy incline towards peace, you also incline towards peace, and trust in God. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower. And if they intend to deceive you, then verily, God

is All-Sufficient for you. He it is Who has supported you with His Help and with the believers. And moreover He has united their hearts..." (*Koran* 8:61-63).

Chapter Three Some Differences of the Fundamental Doctrines between Christianity & Islam

Now that we have already clarified the most controversial issues in the previous chapter, then we can explore the two religions with a fair basis. But since there are too many aspects in which the two religions differ from each other, and all the doctrines of the two religions, as everybody knows, are from the respective Scriptures — the *Holy Bible* and the *Noble Koran*, I just want to compare their basic doctrines tentatively according to the two Scriptures to show their fundamental differences.

The fundamental doctrines of Christianity are (1) the Trinity, (2) the Divinity of Jesus Christ, (3) the Divine Sonship of Jesus, (4) the Original Sin, and (5) the Atonement.

Compared with Christianity, the religion of Islam has no place in it for any of these dogmas. It believes in the absolute oneness of God instead of the Triune God of Christianity. According to the *Noble Koran*, Jesus was not an incarnation of God but a Prophet or Messenger of God, and, like all other Prophets, including the Prophet Muhammad, he was every bit a human being. Islam also rejects the Divine sonship of Jesus. He may be called a Son of God in the sense in which all righteous human beings may be called the children of God, but not in a literal or unique sense. In the same way Islam rejects the dogmas of the Original Sin and the Atonement as being opposed to the Divinely inspired teaching of Prophet Jesus and God.

Then how about Islam? Here come the fundamental doctrines of Islam: (1) the Unity of God, (2) the belief both in the Prophets, including Jesus, raised by God among all the nations of the world, (3) the belief in the Revelations sent down by God to the Prophets to guide human beings to truth and righteousness, (4) the sinlessness of man at birth and his capacity for unlimited moral and spiritual progress through belief in God and faithful adherence to the inspired teachings of the Prophets, and (5) personal accountability for one's actions. Now I shall analyze them one by one:

3.1 The Trinity of God in Christianity

"Trinity" is a word borrowed from Latin that means "threefoldness". It is the most fundamental doctrine in Christianity, by which God is considered as existing in three coequal and coeternal persons — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. About this, the Athanasian Creed states:

"There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father

uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal... So the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord and the Holy Ghost is Lord; and yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say, there are three Gods or three Lords" (Brantl, 1985:69-70).

The Augsburg Confession of 1530, which is said to formularize the teaching of Christianity, describes the Trinity in these words:

"There is one divine essence which is called and is God, eternal... yet there are three Persons of the same essence and power, who also are co-eternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" (Curtes, 1996:143-44).

3.2 The Unity of God in Islam

However, as far as the Trinity in Christianity is concerned, Islamic views argue that Jesus Christ himself never even mentioned the Trinity. There is nothing in his reported discourses that might lead one to think of God as "three persons in one". And Jesus himself knew nothing at all about there being three Divine Persons in Godhead. His conception of God was in no way different from that of the earlier Israelite Prophets, each one of whom had preached the pure, unadulterated monotheism, and had not said anything that might contain the Trinity. Jesus merely echoed the earlier Prophets when he said:

"The first of all the commandments is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength'..." (*Mark 12:29-30*).

He believed in One divine Person, One God, as is evident from the following saying:

"Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him" (*Matthew 4:10*).

So Islam preaches the pure and simple Unity of God. It affirms the uniqueness of God and says that He has no partner in His Godhead. He is one in Person just as He is one in Substance. He is the Self-sufficient One, on Whom all depend and Who depends not on anyone. He is the Creator and Nourisher of all, the All-Good, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, the

All-Loving, the All-Merciful, the Eternal and the Infinite. Nothing can emanate from Him and become His equal and partner in Godhead. Says the *Noble Koran*:

“Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him” (112).

“And your God is one God; there is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which God sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives there with to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; – here indeed are Signs for a people that are wise” (2:163-64).

“God! There is no god but He, -- the Ever Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on the earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except with His Permission? He knows what happens to them (His creatures) before and after or behind them. Nor shall they compass anything of His knowledge except as He wills. His Throne does extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them, for He is Most High, the Supreme in glory” (2:255).

3.3 The Divinity of Jesus in Christianity

The second point I want to discuss is the divinity of Jesus. The Nicene Creed adopted by First Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.) and revised by First Council of Constantinople (381 C.E.) states:

“I believe in ... one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. Born of the Father before all ages. God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God. Begotten not made; being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made” (Brantl, 1985:175).

Christians (both Roman Catholics and Protestants) believe that Jesus Christ is God from all eternity, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity; that nearly two thousand years ago he chose to appear in a human body and was born of the Virgin Mary, becoming thereby perfect God and perfect Man -- i.e. God-incarnate.

The author of Catholic Teaching asserts the Godhood of Jesus in these words:

“This teaching about Christ’s divinity which is to be found in so many places of Scripture has always been proclaimed by the Church as one of the most important truths of Catholic faith. The Council of Nicaea, which was the first General Council after the persecutions, solemnly

condemned those who contended that Christ was not God but a creature” (Groot, 1993:149).

Now let’s see some proofs of Jesus’ divinity from the *Holy Bible*.

Jesus calls Himself God:

“For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath” (*Matthew* 12:8).

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” (*Matthew* 28:19).

“But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working, and I also am working.’ Therefore the Jews were seeking the more to kill him because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God” (*John* 5:17-18).

Jesus is called God by others or by the *Bible*:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (*Isaiah* 9:6).

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel (“God with us”)” (*Matthew* 1:23).

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood” (*Acts* 20:28).

“For in him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily” (*Colossians* 2:9).

3.4 The Human Nature of Jesus in Islam

Let’s turn to Islam. As does the *Bible*, the *Koran* says that Jesus was born without the aid of a human father. However, this does not imply that Jesus was divine; it simply shows that God, who established the laws of Nature in the first place, is equally able to suspend them at will. Islam presents Jesus as a human who believed in the absolute Unity and Indivisibility of God (*Koran* 3:52). Moslems consider the doctrine of Divinity of Jesus and Trinity as later changes to the teachings of Jesus. The *New Testament* itself furnishes abundant evidence to show that Jesus was only a human being whom God chose for the reformation of His people, and repeatedly contradicts the Divinity of Jesus. Jesus always referred to himself as having been sent by God (*John* 17:3) and his followers, too, considered him a man approved by God (*Koran* 19:37; *Acts* 2:22, *John* 3:2). He was undoubtedly called the Son of God, but this title has only been employed metaphorically and in fact is used for all the chosen ones of God (*Matthew* 5:9, *Exodus* 4:22). The literal connotation of “son of God” as a Divine Being and hence the

subsequent development of Trinity Dogma was the result of Hellenistic influences on Christianity as it spread in the Gentile world. The Semitic usage of “son of God” was misunderstood and forgotten and disputes about the exact status of Jesus erupted, as recorded in the early Church history. Furthermore, Jesus prayed to God like all other God-fearing prophets (*Luke 5:16*), and engaged in spiritual exercises such as fasting (*Matthew 4:2*).

So Islam stands firmly behind the belief Jesus was only a human prophet, divinely inspired by God:

“...Christ Jesus the son of Mary was no more than a Messenger of God...” (*Koran 4:171*).

According to the *Sacred Book* of Islam, Jesus was a Prophet of God – sinless, pure and godly, like all other Prophets — but every bit a human being. The Islamic view is that the Prophets, one and all, were men who, by virtue of their devotion to truth and sinless life, became worthy of being chosen by God as His Messengers, whenever there was need for raising such Messengers. They had made themselves so completely one with God that in everything they said or did they carried out His will. The message which they gave to men was not theirs but God’s. God conveyed His Word to them, so that they might shape their own lives according to it, become models for fellowmen, and guide them to the right path leading to God. The Prophet Muhammad declared:

“I am but a man like you: it is revealed to me by inspiration, that your God is One God: so stand true to Him, and ask for His forgiveness” (*Koran 12:6*).

3.5 The Devine Sonship of Jesus in Christianity

“I believe in one God, the Father Almighty...I believe in...Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father...” (Dunstan, 1986:87)

These expressions are words of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. They make explicit the Trinitarian doctrine of the Church, and with them Christians profess their faith in the Son of God.

God has revealed himself as the Father of an eternal and consubstantial Son. In his turn Jesus has also made known his own divine Sonship by revealing the fatherhood of God. The divine paternity and sonship are strictly correlated with the Triune God. “The Person of the Father is one, another is the Person of the Son, another is the Person of the Holy Spirit; but the divinity of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory, co-eternal in majesty... The Son is not made, not created, but generated by the Father alone” (Hygen, 1990:15). Sometimes the Christians also base the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus on the ground

that in the Gospels he has been described as the Son of God. They believe that Jesus was the Son of God in a unique sense. The Gospel recalls that, after the eight days had passed, the Son of Mary, born in Bethlehem, was given the name Jesus, the name the angel had called him before he was conceived in his Mother's womb (*Luke* 2:21). Thus it was the name given him by the heavenly Father. "God sent forth his Son, born of woman ... so that we might receive adoption as children" (*Galatians* 4:4-5). "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (*Hebrews* 1:1-2). So Christians believe that God has spoken through his Son, through his life and his Gospel. He has spoken to people through his Death and Resurrection, and in a particular way, through his name: Jesus, "God saves". Everything contained in it: his life, his Passion, Death and Resurrection, the Cross and glory.

3.6 The Sonship of Jesus in Islam

Yet in a very forceful language the *Noble Koran* rejects the dogma that Jesus was the Son of God in a literal or unique sense. It says:

"They say: God has begotten a son: Glory be to Him. Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth, everything renders worship to Him" (*Koran* 2:116).

"It is not befitting to (the majesty of) God that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a matter, He only says to it 'Be', and it is" (19:35).

"...For God is One God; glory be to Him. Far exalted is He above having a son..." (4:171).

Moslems respect and revere Jesus as a prophet who is sent to Israel by God. They also consider him one of the greatest of God's messengers to mankind. A Moslem never refers to him simply as "Jesus," but always adds the phrase "peace be upon him." The *Koran* confirms his virgin birth — a chapter of the *Koran* is entitled "Mary" — and Mary is considered the purest woman in creation.

The *Koran* describes the Annunciation as follows:

"Behold!" the Angel said, "God has chosen you, and purified you, and chosen you above the women of all nations. O Mary, God gives you good news of a word from Him, whose name shall be the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, honored in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near to God. He shall speak to the people from his cradle and in maturity, and shall be of the righteous." She said: "O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me?" He said: "Even so; God creates what He will. When He decrees a thing, He says to it, 'Be!' and it is" (3:42-47).

Jesus was born miraculously through the same power that had brought Adam into being

without a father:

“Truly, the likeness of Jesus with God is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust, and then said to him, ‘Be!’ and he was” (*Koran* 3:59).

During his prophetic mission Jesus performed many miracles. The *Koran* tells us that he said:

“I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it and it becomes a bird by God’s leave. And I heal the blind, and the lepers, and I raise the dead by God’s leave.” (3:49).

Besides, Islam also advocates that neither Muhammad nor Jesus came to change the basic doctrine of the belief in One God, brought by earlier prophets, but to confirm and renew it. In the *Koran* Jesus is reported as saying that he came “to attest the law that was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was forbidden you; I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, so fear God and obey me” (3:50). The Prophet Muhammad said: “Whoever believes there is no god but God, alone without partner, that Muhammad is His messenger, that Jesus is the servant and messenger of God, His word breathed into Mary and a spirit emanating from Him, and that Paradise and Hell are true, shall be received by God into Heaven” (Khan, 1997:256).

Here we can see the basic outline of the Moslem doctrine concerning Jesus Christ the Lord. It may be summarized in the following points: (1) Jesus is a man, as Adam, created by the One God, (2) Jesus is a servant and one of the greatest messengers of God, (3) Jesus is a word from God, the only Messiah, and a great prophet, (4) Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary without an earthly father, and (5) Jesus performed many miracles by God’s power.

So in Islam Jesus is believed not to “alter” the prophetic teaching concerning the One God, and he is thus not God’s Son or a divine partner with God in any way.

3.7 The Salvation in Christianity & Islam

The fourth doctrine I shall turn to pertains to the Salvation that ties the Original Sin and the Atonement tightly. So I want to analyze them as a whole.

The *Bible* states that when the Lord God created Adam and his mate, Eve, and placed them in the garden of Eden, He commanded them, saying: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of it: for in the day you eat thereof you shall surely die” (*Genesis* 2:16-17). But Adam disobeyed the command of God, ate the forbidden fruit at the instigation of his wife, and became a sinner. We can also find the same story in the *Koran*. But what follows the story in the respective books are quite different. Now I will show these differences by comparing the Original Sin and the Salvation in

Christianity and Islam.

3.7.1 The Original Sin in Christianity

After Adam and Eve's disobedience to the God, all their children, says Christianity, inherit this original sin of Adam and Eve: every human being is born sinful, with an utterly depraved nature. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (*Romans* 5:12).

Regarding the Original Sin, the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent (1545-63) decreed:

"If anyone asserts that the sin of Adam injured him alone and not his descendents, or that only in regard to himself alone did he lose the holiness and justice which he had from God and did not lose it for us as well; or that stained as he was by the sin of disobedience Adam transmitted death and affliction of the body to all the human race but did not also transmit sin which is the death of soul, let him be anathema; since he contradicts the words of the Apostle, 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' (*Romans* 5:12)" (Bury, 1969:256-57).

The Protestants (the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Methodists, the Baptists, the Salvationists, the Adventists, etc.) are even more emphatic in their affirmation of faith in the doctrine of the Original Sin and the total depravity of human nature. In his famous *Institutions of the Christian Religion*, Calvin wrote:

"Let it stand as an indisputable truth, which no enquiries can shake, that the mind of man is so entirely alienated from the righteousness of God, that he cannot conceive, desire, or design anything but what is wicked, distorted, foul, impure, and iniquitous; that his heart is so thoroughly environed by sin that it can breathe out nothing but corruption and rottenness" (Goguel, 1988:210).

3.7.2 The Sin in Islam

Like several other Christian beliefs mentioned above, Islam figures that the doctrine of the Inherited Sin also finds no support in the words of Jesus or of the Prophets who had come before him. It holds that even the *Holy Bible* contains every man was accountable for his own actions and the children will not be punished for the sins of the father. For instance, it is written in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah:

"In those days they shall no longer say: 'The Fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own sins; the teeth of everyone

who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge" (*Jeremiah* 31:29-30).

Prophet Ezekiel also rejected the dogma of the Original Sin in almost the same words:

"The word of the Lord came to me again: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The Fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all souls are mine: the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die. If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right — if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period, does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, does not take advance or accrued interest, withholds his hand from iniquity, executes true justice between contending parties, follows my statutes, and is careful to observe my ordinances, acting faithfully — such a one is righteous; he shall surely live, says the Lord God... A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor a father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own. But if the wicked turn away from all their sins that they have committed and keep all my statutes and do that what is lawful and right, they shall surely live; he shall not die" (*Ezekiel* 18:1-9, 20-21).

Islam asserts forcefully that even Jesus himself regarded children as innocent and pure, and not as born in sin, as is clear from his reported saying:

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (*Mark* 10:14-15).

Based on the reasons above, Islam repudiates the doctrine of the original sin transmitted through inheritance and regards children as pure and sinless at birth. First of all, it is true that Adam and Eve committed sin by disobeying God. But they were both forgiven by God. Secondly, one man's action cannot be the burden of another man. Every individual is responsible only for his or her actions. Thus, every child is born pure and sinless. The world he sets foot in is also seen as a positive ground for him to cultivate. Not only is he born without sin, but also he is born actually with a set of positive things to help him in his cultivation of the world: God places love and mercy in the hearts of his parents who would nurture him and take care of him until he is grown up and he is given by God an array of fine tools that he can utilize in fulfilling his role on

earth, such as knowledge, wisdom, intellect, conscience, logical deduction, etc. The world, further, is not seen as something evil; rather it is seen as a positive field that is ready for him to cultivate. Thus, in Islam, every child is born with a positive start, which sets foot in a positive world. The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said:

“Every child is born with divinely gifted nature; it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian” (Khan, 1997:177).

According to Islam, sin does not pass from father to son. It is something that each individual acquires for himself when he does what he should not do and does not do what he should do. It cannot be counted against a person who has not yet committed one. The sin of one man cannot make another man sinful. So, Adam’s sin of disobedience has not and cannot become an integral part of human nature. It cannot condemn from the outset every human being born into this world. At the same time, Moslems claim that it would be injustice to condemn the entire human race for the sin committed thousands of years ago by their first parents of mankind. Sin is a willful transgression of the law of God or the Law of right and wrong. The responsibility and blame for it must lie only on the person committing it and not on his children. There is no proof that sin is or can be transmitted by inheritance. To say that a man is sinful even before he has committed a sin and that every child is born with a depraved nature, inherently and utterly incapable of avoiding sin, would be an aspersion upon the Creator.

To conclude, in Islam, man does not start life with perverted instincts. All his instincts, like the instincts of the animal, are the instruments of the preservation of life; it is only with false knowledge and perverted free will that disorder sets in. If under certain circumstances man displays evil tendencies and does what he should not do, it does not mean that his nature is utterly depraved. For, he is also capable of making great sacrifices for noble causes, of disinterested service to his fellowmen and rising above opportunism or mere expediency and all that is mean and base and wicked. The fact is that man is born with free will, with the inclination and capacity both to do evil and also to fight against it and do good deeds. It is only when, as a grown-up man, capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, he makes a wrong use of his freedom and falls a prey to temptation that sin is born in him. That many men and women have resisted and conquered evil inclinations and lived their lives in complete harmony with the will of God is clear from the sacred records of all nations such as Enoch, Noah, Job, John the Baptist and many others mentioned in the *Bible* itself as being perfect and upright and among those who walked humbly with God and eschewed evil. Good and righteous men are found in all religions and nations.

Since we have already known the Sin in Christianity and Islam respectively, then let us consider the Christian salvation a little further.

3.7.3 The Atonement in Christianity

Sin being an offence or outrage against God, the requirement of God's justice is that expiation or reparation must be made for every sin, whether inherited or acquired, terrible or trivial, before man can be allowed to enter into the Kingdom of God. "God cannot and will not allow a single sin to go unpunished" (Robertson, 1992:14). Now, the only thing that can make atonement for the sinful soul, says Christianity, is blood. As St Paul puts it, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (*Hebrews* 9:22). But this blood, which can make satisfaction for the sins of man, must be perfect, sinless and incorruptible blood; and the blood of all men is sinful because of the Fall. "As the original sin, being directed against God, was of infinite proportion, it demanded infinite recompense" (Robertson, 1992:26). So, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came from heaven and had divine blood in his veins, took upon himself the burden of all the sins of men and died for them on the cross. The death of Christ on the cross is a sacrifice that has reconciled the angry God to sinful humanity. It is also, according to the author of St John's Epistle, a manifestation of God's love: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (*1 John* 4:9-10). By the blood of Christ, shed on the cross, the sins of all those who accept him as their Redeemer are washed away. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (*1 John* 1:7). Just as by the transgression of one man (Adam) all men become sinners, so by the suffering and death of one (Jesus Christ) all those who have faith in him and his atoning sacrifice are purified of their sins and gain Eternal Life. But, as for those who do not believe in his vicarious death and do not accept him as their Savior and Redeemer, they remain sinners all their lives and die in sin. They shall burn forever in the fires of hell. "To the sinner, who dies without accepting God's atonement, God's only remedy for sin (the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ), there awaits in addition the certainty of Eternal Punishment" (Lindsay, 1979:80-81).

So we can draw a conclusion that the belief of the Christian salvation is that Jesus suffered and died on the cross vicariously for the original and other sins of men to give satisfaction to God's outraged justice, and that no one can gain salvation except through belief in him as the Redeemer and Mediator between God and man and in the saving power of his blood (Goldsack, 1995:56). This is what we read in the first Epistle of St Peter:

"You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with precious blood of Christ, like that a lamb without defect or blemish" (*1 Peter* 1:18-19).

And this is what two modern Christians (a Roman Catholic and a Protestant) have written:

“Since Christ, God and man, has taken upon Himself our sins in order to atone for them by giving satisfaction to God’s outraged justice. He is the Mediator between God and man” (Groot, 1993:162).

“We pass on now to the doctrine of the Atonement, which is that Christ’s death was in some sense a sacrifice for sin, and thus reconciled God the Father and sinful man. And though not actually stated in the Creeds, it is implied in the words, was crucified also for us and, who suffered for our salvation” (Turton, 1956:289).

3.7.4 The Atonement in Islam

But again from Islam comes a disagreement. It is believed in Islam that this dogma is not only a denial of the mercy of God but also of His justice. To demand the price of blood in order to forgive the sins of men is to show a complete lack of mercy, and to punish a man who is not guilty for the sins of others, even if the former were willing to become a scapegoat, is the height of injustice. The doctrine of the Atonement, held by Islam, may make the First Person of the Godhead into a God without mercy in order to demonstrate the self-sacrificing love of the Second Person. To a dispassionate critic, Moslems think, the sacrifice of the Second Person appears as much misplaced and meaningless as the demand of the First Person is cruel and sadistic.

Arthur Weigall (1982:35-36) makes the following significant comment on the doctrine of the Atonement:

“We can no longer accept the appalling theological doctrine that for some mystic reason a propitiatory sacrifice was necessary. It outrages either our conception of God as Almighty or else our conception of Him as All-loving. The famous Dr. Cruden believed that for the purpose of this sacrifice ‘Christ suffered dreadful pains inflicted by God’. and this, of course, is a standpoint which nauseates the modern mind and which may well be termed a hideous doctrine, not unconnected with the sadistic tendencies of primitive human nature. Actually, it is of pagan origin, being, indeed, perhaps, the most obvious relic of heathendom in the Faith.”

Besides, Moslems also argues the Christian salvation is not only morally and rationally unsound, but also has no support of the words of Jesus. Jesus may be said to have suffered for the sins of men in the sense that, in order to take them out of darkness into light, he incurred the wrath of the evildoers and was tortured by them, which, unfortunately, has been the experience of nearly every Prophet; but it does not mean that his death was an atonement for the sins of others and that only those who believe in the redeeming power of his blood would be forgiven. Jesus had come to rescue men from sin by his teaching and by the inspiring example of his godly

life, and not by taking the penalty of other men's sins upon himself and deliberately dying for them on the cross to give his own blood to appease the wrath of God and give satisfaction to His outraged justice. So when a young man came to him and asked him: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And he mentioned nothing about his propitiatory sacrifice and believing in the redeeming power of his blood. His reply was the same as that of every other Prophet. For he said:

"Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good but one. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (*Matthew 19:17*).

"Keep the commandments" — that, according to Islam, was the way to eternal life. Salvation could be gained by believing in God, eschewing evil and doing good, and not by making Jesus the scapegoat for one's sins and believing in his blood atonement.

So the dogma of the Atonement is unsound to Moslems, because (1) man is not born in sin, (2) God should not require a price to forgive the sinner, and (3) the idea of vicarious sacrifice is unjust and cruel for everyone. By sinning, humans do not harm God, but human himself. The stain of sin on human souls can be removed, not by the suffering and death of any other person, whether the latter be willing or unwilling, but by human own repentance, turning away from evil and doing good. And so, when Adam, after the act of disobedience, repented and submitted himself completely to God, his sin was forgiven. Neither is the sin of Adam inherited by the children of Adam, nor did it require the suffering and death of Jesus to be forgiven.

Now let's see what Islam tells its believers to do to gain the favor from God. It doesn't support the dogma of the Atonement because of it being a denial of the mercy and justice of God. It declares that the forgiveness of sins cannot be obtained by the suffering and sacrifice of any other person, but by the mercy of God and human own sincere and persistent efforts to fight against evil and do good:

"That no burdened person (with sins) shall bear the burden (sins) of another, and that man can have nothing but what he does, and that his deeds will be seen" (*Koran 53:38-40*).

"Whosoever goes right, then he goes right only for the benefit of his ownself. And whoever goes astray, and then he goes astray to his own loss. No one laden with burdens can bear another's burden. And We never punish until We have sent a Messenger" (*17:15*).

Islam promises salvation, which in the religion of the *Koran* means the manifestation and development of the moral and spiritual potentialities of man and achievement of nearness to God, to all those who believe in God and do good deeds:

"Nay, but whosoever surrenders his purpose to God while doing good, his reward is with his Lord; and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve" (*Koran* 2:112).

Our examination has led us to a clear fact that the doctrines of the Trinity, the Divinity of Jesus, the Divine Sonship of Jesus, the Original Sin and the Atonement are fundamental differences between Christianity and Islam. Moreover, there are many other differences existing between the two. Even so, as to which is better, nobody can tell at one blow. Since they are both the ones that are widely accepted and hold so many followers in the world, they both have positive aspects and so we should esteem them. The religion revealed by God to the Prophets of different nations was the same: the Prophets of them purged souls of all their believers, warned them against doing evils, widened its scope to make it a source of inspiration and guidance to the whole human race, and brought together peoples of all races, colors and nations into universal brotherhood.

Chapter Four Some Similarities of the Moral Teachings of Christianity and Islam

For many who have read what I wrote above, Islam and Christianity maybe seem to have little in common. Even, they may find many contradictions existing between the two religions. But just as I discussed in the introduction, there are more similarities between Christianity and Islam than most people think.

The most important similarity between them is their concept of God. What makes Islam differ most from other Arabic ancient religions is that Islam is an absolute monotheism. This progress is closely related with Jehovah — God in Christianity. We can confirm it from descriptions of God in the *Noble Koran* and of God in the *Holy Bible* respectively. Besides the same nature of God that I mentioned in the introduction, in the *Noble Koran*, we can read: “And He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth in six Days” (*Koran* 11:7), “(He is the) Cleaver of the daybreak. He has appointed the night for resting, and the sun and the moon for reckoning... It is Who has set the stars for you...It is Who has created you from a single person...It is Who sends down water from the sky, and with it We bring forth vegetation of all kinds, and out of it We bring forth green stalks, from which bring forth thick clustered grain...” (6:96-99), and “It is He Who produces the cattle for burden and (some are) small (unable to carry burden like sheep and goats — for food, mea, milk and wool)...” (6:142). These statements are nearly the same as how God created everything in *Genesis* in the *Old Testament* in Christianity. Even Muhammad himself admitted: “We believe in the One Who sends His Revelation to us, and also to you. We have the same God as you do” (Amin, 1990:306). So it is not exaggerated to say, in nature, God Himself in Islam is the same as God in Christianity. About this the *Noble Koran* points out clearly: “It is He Who has sent down the *Book (Koran)* to you with truth, confirming what came before it. He sent down the *Taurât* (the *Old Testament*) and the *Injeel* (the *New Testament*), aforetime as a guidance to mankind...” (3:3-4). And Muhammad admitted that Mûsâ (Moses in the *Old Testament*) and ‘Îsâ (Jesus in the *New Testament*) are also the prophets whom God sent down to the earth, and he himself is only the last prophet for the whole mankind.

Then we turn to the legends in the *Noble Koran* and the *Holy Bible*, which is one of the most obvious similarities. There are altogether 6236 verses in the *Noble Koran*, among which the legends amount to more than 1500 verses and most of which can be found in the *Holy Bible*. Although characters' names changed, the contents remained unchanged. There are 28 important historic persons mentioned in the *Noble Koran* and we can discover 24 counterparts in the *Holy Bible*. They are: Âdam (Adam in the *Holy Bible*), Nûh (Noah), Ibrâhîm (Abraham), Ismâ‘îl (Ishmael), Ishâq (Isaac), Lût (Lot), Ya‘qûb (Jacob), Yûsuf (Joseph), Mûsâ (Moses), Dâwûd

(David), Sulaimân (Solomon), Al-Yasa' (Elisha), Ayyûb (Job), Yûnus (Jonah), Zakariyâ (Zachariya), Yahyâ (John the Baptist), 'Îsâ (Jesus), Maryam (Mary), Tâlût (Saul), Âzar (Eliezer), and so on. Many famous legends in the *Old Testament* in the *Holy Bible* can be found in the *Noble Koran*, for example, God's creating Adam, then God's creating Eve by one of Adam's ribs, Adam and Eve's violation of God's will, Adam and Eve's being expelled out of the Garden of Eden, the Great flood, Noah's ark, Moses' escape from Egypt, and the command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, etc. All of these appear repeatedly in the *Noble Koran*. Islamic belief in the Day of Judgment admonishes its believers that when the Doom Day arrives, God will decide whether one should enter the Paradise or the Hell of Fire according to his or her words and deeds. These sermons and the description of the Paradise and the Hell of Fire can find their places in the *Holy Bible*.

The last but not the least, there are many positive social and religious regulations and prohibitions in the *Noble Koran*, for example, ban of lechery, of greed, of dirty foods, and encouragement of charity. These teachings are indeed originally delivered to Arabs, but we may find similar lessons in the *Holy Bible*. So most of their practices and teachings are quite similar, because, according to their respective claims, they are both taught from prophets of God. By reading the key concepts in the *Holy Bible*, the *Noble Koran*, and *Hadiths* (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad), we can see their common points. Therefore, in this chapter I shall bring forward their similarities in the words of respective Scriptures — the *Holy Bible* in Christianity and the *Noble Koran* and *Hadiths* in Islam.

4.1 On Chastity

Both of the two religions value chastity very much.

Christianity: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with in his heart" (*Matthew* 5:27-28).

Islam: "...come not near to shameful deeds, whether committed openly or secretly..." (*Koran* 6:151); "Nor come nigh to adultery (totally abstain from its preliminaries and everything likely to lead thereto), for it is a shameless deed and an evil, opening the road to other evils" (17:32); "The adultery of the eye is to look with an eye of desire on the wife of another; and the adultery of the tongue is to utter what is forbidden" (Khan, 1997:45).

4.2 On Peace

Peace, as a theme of the modern world, is also demonstrated in the both.

Christianity: "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (*Matthew* 10:16); "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (*Matthew* 5:9).

Islam: "If anyone slew a person...it would be as if he slew the whole people; and if anyone

saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" (*Koran* 5:35); "And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, Peace" (25:63); "A Moslem is he from whose tongue and hands people are safe, and a Muhajir is he who forsakes what God has forbidden"; "Shall I inform you of a better act than fasting, alms and prayers? Making peace between one another: enmity and malice tear up heavenly rewards by the roots" (Khan, 1997:37-38).

4.3 On Politeness

Being polite is advocated in nearly every religion and culture, so there is no exception in these two religions.

Christianity: "But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or a sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or a sister, you will be liable to the council, and if you say, 'you fool,' you will be liable to the hell fire" (*Matthew* 5:22).

Islam: "O you who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let some women laugh at others; it may be that the latter are better than former. Nor defame, nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by offensive nickname: ill-seeming is a nickname connoting wickedness, to be used of one after he has believed; and those who do not desist are indeed doing wrong. O you who believe! Avoid suspicion as much as possible: for suspicion in some cases is sin; and spy not at each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs" (*Koran* 49:11-12); "And swell not your cheek (for pride) at men. Nor walk in insolence through the earth, for God loves not any arrogant boaster. And be moderate in your pace, and lower your voice: for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass (31:18-19); "No father has given his child anything better than good manners"; "Verily the most beloved of you by me, and the nearest to me in the next world, are those of good disposition"; "A man cannot be a Moslem until his heart and tongue are so" (Khan, 1997:67).

4.4 On Honesty

Honesty is one of the most treasured virtues of human beings. The two religions hold the same opinion, too.

Christianity: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (*Exodus* 20:17).

Islam: "And in no wise covet those things in which God has bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others: to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn" (*Koran* 4:32); "And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for judges, with intent that you may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of other people's property" (2:188); "give just measure, and cause no loss to others by fraud. And weigh with

scales true and upright. And withhold not things justly due to men, nor do evil in the land, working mischief" (26:181-83); "God commands you to make over the trusts to those worthy of them" (4:58); "On the Day of Resurrection I shall be the adversary in dispute of person...who employs a servant and receives fully the labor due from him, then does not pay his full remuneration" (Khan, 1997:83).

4.5 On Justice and Truth

In every society those who are always ready to help others for a just cause are thought highly of by all members. There is no exception in Christianity and Islam.

Christianity: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (*Exodus* 20:16); "You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you" (*Deuteronomy* 16:19-20).

Islam: "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor: for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts of your hearts, lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily God is well acquainted with all that you do" (*Koran* 4:135); "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others for you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear God. For God is well acquainted with all that you do. To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness has God promised forgiveness and a great reward" (5:9-10); "No man is true in the truest sense of the word but he who is true in word, in deed and in thought" (Khan, 1997:49).

4.6 On Courage and Patience

The importance of perseverance for a person is also mentioned in both Christianity and Islam like this:

Christianity: "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next: for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes... So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in dark, tell in light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but can not kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (*Matthew* 10:21-28).

Islam: "O you who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for God is with those who patiently persevere. And say not of those who are slain in the way of God: 'They are dead.' Nay, they are living, though you perceive it not. Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits of your toil, but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, who say, when afflicted with calamity: 'To God we belong, and to Him is our return': they are those on whom descend blessings from God, and mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance" (*Koran* 2:53-57); "Of those who answered the call of God and the Apostle, even after being wounded those who do good to others and refrain from wrong have a great reward; — men said to them: 'A great army is gathering against you': and frightened them: but it only increased their faith; they said: 'For us God suffices, and He is the best Disposer of affairs.' ... It is only the Evil One that suggests to you the fear of his votaries: be you not afraid of them, but fear Me, if you have faith"(3:171-75).

4.7 On Forgiveness

Christianity and Islam both put enough emphasis on forgiveness and tolerance.

Christianity: "Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times'" (*Matthew* 18:21-22).

Islam: "Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a garden whose width is that of the whole of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous, — those who spend freely for the benefit of others, whether in prosperity or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon all men; for God loves those who do good to others" (*Koran* 3:133-34); "Quite a number of the People of the Book (i.e. followers of the other revealed religions) wish that they could turn you people back to infidelity after you have believed, from selfish envy, after the truth has become manifest unto them: but forgive and overlook, till God accomplish His purpose: for God has power over all things"(2:109); "So pass over their faults, and ask for God's forgiveness for them, and consul them in affairs of moment"(3:159).

4.8 On Doing Good to Others

Helping those in need is highly appreciated in all civilizations. Let us see how Christianity and Islam say about this.

Christianity: "Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, and beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance there a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took

out two pence, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do likewise'" (*Luke 10:30-37*).

Islam: "All God's creatures are His family, and he is the most beloved of God who tries to do the greatest good to His creatures"; "What actions are the most excellent? To gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, and to remove the wrongs of the injured" (Khan, 1997:96). "Have you seen him who denies the Judgment to come? That is he who repulses the orphan with harshness, and urges not on the feeding of the poor. So woe unto those worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers, those who want but to be seen of men, but refuse to supply even neighborly needs" (*Koran 107*); "The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of God is that of a grain of corn: it grows seven ears, and each ear has a hundred grains. God gives manifold increase to whom He wills. And God cares for all and He knows all things. Those who spend their substance in the cause of God, and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury, — for them their reward is with their Lord: in them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. God is free of all wants, and He is most forbearing. O you who believe! Cancel not your charity by reminders of generosity or by injury, — like those who spend their substance to be seen of men, but believe neither in God nor in the Last Day..." (2:261-64).

4.9 On Love and Sympathy

Both Christianity and Islam instruct their followers to love each other and show sympathy to the weak.

Christianity: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (*Mark 12:31*); "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (*John 13:34-35*).

Islam: "Do you love your Creator? Love your fellow-creatures first"; "No man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself"; "You will see the faithful in their having mercy for one another and their kindness towards one another like the body; when one member of it ails, the entire body ails, one part calling out to the other with sleeplessness and fever" (Khan, 1997:117-19).

From the similarities above, although the disagreement on the doctrines between Christianity and Islam seems irresolvable, most differences are more a matter of emphasis rather than of disagreement. Christianity stresses right belief and faith, but no Christians would deny that they should do good deeds and have good behavior. On the contrary, they "work" hard to please God

because of their faith. Moslems, on the other hand, assuming that faith is necessary, prefer to emphasize the practical side of perfecting their faith via good deeds. Christians and Moslems both agree that faith is necessary and that good works are important. So as far as its fundamental messages and teachings were concerned, Christianity is not different from Islam: They unite all human beings in love and sympathy as brothers. The brotherhood of them transcends all geographical and political barriers and brings together as equals and brothers men of many races, colors and nationalities. The Holy Prophet Muhammad says:

“All God’s creatures are His family, and he is the most beloved of God who tries to do the greatest good to God’s creatures” (Khan, 1997:152).

And Jesus also says:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (*Luke 10:27*).

On the whole both Christianity and Islam want to keep a healthy balance between this world and the so-called next, between spirit and matter, between individualism and collectivism. They both stand for life-fulfillment. Human instincts must not be killed, but wisely controlled, canalized and purposefully used to make the life of man richer and better. This world has a meaning and purpose, and it is only by leading a normal and fruitful life in this world, and by appreciating and enjoying the beautiful gifts of God, that man can come closer to God, be of service to others, and prepare himself for the next world. While on the one hand they make the development of the personality of each individual as one of the prime objectives of its socio-ethical code, on the other hand it awakens in man a sense of social responsibility, organizes human beings in a society and enjoins on the individual to subscribe to the social good. It can explain why these two religions are the two biggest ones in the world and still are growing year by year. This can be of great help to lead to what our world needs badly now: peace and development. Just as the Holy Prophet said: “All mankind is fold, every member of which shall be a keeper or shepherd unto every other, and be accountable for the welfare of the entire fold” (Khan, 1997:101).

It is very clear that both Christianity and Islam exhort men to virtuous deeds and pious life. They condemn selfishness, false-hood, dishonesty, greed, hypocrisy, injustice, cruelty, malice, vindictiveness, treachery, pride, vanity, arrogance, callousness, intemperance, incontinence, hurtful speech and violence. Both enjoin upon their followers faith and trust in God, repentance, truth, purity, courage, justice, charity, sympathy, compassion, mercy, self-control and uprightness. The chief virtues enjoined by Christianity and Islam alike may be grouped under two headings.

Firstly, those that prevent a man from injuring the life, property, freedom and honor of others, such as chastity, honesty, tolerance, peace and politeness. Secondly, those that prompt a man to do good to others, such as mercy, forgiveness, truthfulness, courage, patience, sympathy, kindness and love.

Chapter Five Conclusion

Nowadays the world is in an age in which multipolarization and globalization co-exist. In such an age that is full of changes and challenges, on the one hand, because religion is a kind of phenomenon related to society, history and culture, it is very necessary to strengthen understanding of different religions between different cultures. This can help to eliminate prejudice, ignorance and conflict. But on the other hand, in different cultures exist countless religions that contain so many differences even contradictions in their doctrines and customs that most conflicts all over the world are closely associated with religions, which are always bound up with nationalities issues. So when confronted with religious issues, under the precondition that our sovereignty should be defended we should seek common points while reserving difference. At the same time, as a social ideology, religion must serve the society where it exists. China is a country with a great diversity of religious beliefs including Christianity and Islam. Including HUI and UYGUR, there are altogether ten minority nationalities, out of total fifty-five minority nationalities, which believe in Islam. Though we cannot think about the influence of Christianity according to the number of minority nationalities that believe in it, it is an incontrovertible fact that there are more and more Chinese citizens are becoming Christians and the number of its believers has been increasing rapidly in recent years. According to incomplete statistics, there are over 100 million followers of various religious faiths, more than 85,000 sites for religious activities, some 300,000 clergy and over 3,000 religious organizations throughout China. In addition, there are 74 religious schools and colleges run by religious organizations for training clerical personnel. So it is obvious that our country has put enough emphasis on religious issues. That various religions have developed dramatically should be due to national religious policy that citizens of China might freely choose and express their religious beliefs, and make clear their religious affiliations.

Since our country has provided religion with such a relatively tolerant environment, then what should religion do for the sake of country's development? In my opinion, first, religion should be suited to socialist economic construction. In the course of the country's long history, the various religions in China have become a force not to be ignored in construction during different stages. It is traditional for Chinese religious believers to love their country and religions. The Chinese government supports and encourages the religious circles to unite the religious believers to actively participate in the construction of the country. The various religions all advocate serving the society and promoting people's well-being, such as the Buddhists' "honoring the country and benefiting the people," the Christians' "glorifying God and benefiting the people," the Taoists' "being benevolent, peaceful and harmonious, saving the world and benefiting the people," and the Islam's "praying to God to give great reward in this world and

hereafter". All these make positive contributions to our country's economic development in the primary stage of socialism. Because of our backward productive forces and people's low living standard, we need to create wealth continuously and improve productive forces. Religious economic moral principles, especially of Christianity and Islam, encourage people to become rich through sweat and toil, to build up our country industriously and frugally, and to do their bit for the construction of the motherland. All these methods deserve recommendation to do benefit to the construction of socialist material civilization.

Secondly, religion should be suited to socialist culture. Religion is not only an issue of belief, but also a manifestation of culture. As a social ideology, religion contains much cultural heritage, which is so closely linked to ethics, philosophy, literature, art, architecture, sculpture, education and custom of Chinese people that religious culture is a component part of Chinese culture. Scriptures of each religion including The Holy Bible in Christianity and the Noble Koran in Islam are indeed encyclopedias, and are of great help to study Chinese ancient culture. Temples, churches and mosques are places where religion is publicized, and at the same time they are all art museums, which provide people with artistic treat and also provide inspiration for artists. As I mentioned in Part Three, many religious teachings accord with reasonable sections in Chinese traditional morality, which play a positive role to punish evil-doers, encourage people to do good and stabilize our society. They may contribute the construction of socialist spiritual civilization.

So whether the purpose is to promote the progress of society or to promote the cultural development, religion is one of the fields that deserve study most. It may be used as a tool to spread superstition, to instigate disruption and sequentially to jeopardize social stabilization and it can contribute to publicizing and exchanging cultures of nationalities, to promoting the unity of nationalities and thus to easing social conflicts. Therefore, what matters now for us is neither to create conditions for religion development nor to take measures to restrain and eradicate religion. What must be done now is, instead, to reinforce management and lead religion properly to virtuous development so that it can adapt itself to social development.

At last, I would like to quote what the former Chinese President Jiang Zemin (1999) said to end my thesis: "In order to comprehend the world, we must comprehend religion first." Only by comprehending religions, are communication and admission of different nationalities in our country and different cultures in the world possible and then it can provide a platform for the exchanges among nationalities in China and among all the countries in the world on politics, economics and culture.

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