

II—THE PROMISED MESSIAH

Why the name the Promised Messiah was given to the *mujaddid* of the fourteenth century Hijrah

There are many who think that Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad's claim of being the Promised Messiah was a later growth upon his claim to *mujaddidiyyat* (renovation), because he claimed to be a *mujaddid* (renovator) in 1300 A.H. (1885 C.E.) and his claim to Messiahship was made in 1308 A.H. It has been concluded from this that he put forth new claims by stages. This is, of course, a great misunderstanding about him. These were, however, not two separate claims as will be seen from the statement about his claim to *mujaddidiyyah*. His claim to Messiahship was in fact another name for his original claim of being a *mujaddid*. And this was related to his activities with regard to the removal of external dangers against Islam which threatened its very existence. Thus in 1300 A.H. when he claimed to be a *mujaddid*, he wrote the following words:

“And the author has been given the knowledge, too, that he is the *mujaddid* of this age and that spiritually his excellences resemble those of Messiah, the son of Mary, and that the one of them bears a very strong resemblance and close affinity to the other.”⁷⁹

In fact the idea underlying this claim was that the *mujaddid* of the fourteenth century Hijrah enjoyed extreme spiritual resemblance to Jesus Christ. He further clarified this point in his book *Ā'īnah Kamālāt Islām* :

“This must be remembered, that the claim of being the Promised Messiah is not in any way greater than the claim of being a recipient of Divine communication (*mulham min Allāh*) or a *mujaddid* from God. It is evident that anybody who enjoys this status of Divine communication, all his names from Allāh, such as the like

79. *Ishṭihār* published 1885 C. E.

of Messiah or the like of Moses, are justified for him. Whosoever attains to the excellence of Divine communication, and is appointed by God for any service in the cause of religion, God Almighty gives him any name in accordance with the need of the time. To give the name Promised Messiah to the *mujaddid* of this age seems to be based on this expediency, that his great task is to overthrow the supremacy of Christianity and counter their attacks, and to shatter with strong arguments their philosophy which is against the Holy Qur'ān and to establish fully the evidence of Islam against them. The greatest trial in this age for Islam is the rational and religious vituperations of Christians against Islam which could not be swept away without Divine support and for this purpose it was essential that someone should be raised by God."⁸⁰

Christianity musters all its resources against Islam

Islam in this age, no doubt, has to contend with almost all the religions of the world and such a situation, more or less, has existed ever since the inception of Islam but never before has Christianity mustered all its resources to crush Islam out of existence. There had been wars on a large scale between Muslim and Christian powers, known as the Crusades, but the great conspiracy to root out Islam as a religion in this age,—the millions of pounds being spent for the purpose of free distribution of large quantities of literature against Islam and for sending armies of Christian missionaries to Muslim lands etc.—is something the like of which cannot be found in history before. Even the Christian missionaries have felt and openly declared that there are many non-Christian religions in the world but Islam is the only religion which is anti-Christian. A cursory glance over world events shows that in spite of Muslim weakness in all walks of life at present, a keen struggle is still going on between the Muslim and the Christian faith. Although it appears that Christianity has the upperhand in this struggle, as far

80. *A'īnah Kamālāt Islām* (26th February, 1893 C.E.), p. 340.

as the outward signs and resources are concerned, but a strange spectacle is also being noticed on the other side, that is, the principles of Islam as such are gaining ground in the world and the principles of Christianity are in fact loosening their hold on the minds of the people. This is, however, what we observe today, but the prophetic eye of the Founder of the Ahmadiyyah Movement saw this phenomenon happening about sixty years back and therefore he devoted his special attention to the Christian world. In 1864 C.E., when he was employed at Siālkot, he constantly engaged himself in controversies with Christian missionaries and later on he also kept writing articles about their doctrines and dogmas. This is, however, strange, that at the time of declaring himself a *mujaddid* he clearly stated that he bore a very strong resemblance to Jesus Christ and in his practical life he also showed the great trend of protecting Islam against the onslaughts of Christian missionaries. And his passion for disseminating the light of Islam in Christendom grew stronger every day with the result that the movement he organized for the defence of Islam predominantly reflected in its activities this strong desire for presenting Islam to the West. In short, he had started his actual work even before he had declared himself to be the Promised Messiah.

The mention of the Messiah in the reports of the Prophet

What is meant by the Promised Messiah and what is its significance according to the *Shari'ah* is the question which we have to deal with first of all.

The coming of Jesus, son of Mary, has been mentioned in the reports (*aḥadīth*) of the Prophet. In *al-Bukhārī* the *ḥadīth* (report) about the descent of Jesus Christ has been narrated by Abū Huraira thrice, i.e., in (1) *Kitāb al-buyū'* 34, (2) *Kitāb al-mazālim* 46 and (3) *Kitāb al-anbiyā* 60. In the reference quoted last the following *ḥadīth* occurs in the chapter entitled "Descent of Jesus, son of Mary" :

"I swear by Him Who holds my life in His hand that the son of Mary will descend among you as Arbiter and Judge and shall break the Cross and kill the swine and postpone the war. Wealth will be multiplied to the

extent that nobody will be there to accept it, that a prostration at that time will be better than this world and whatever is in it.”⁸¹

And then there is another report which says :

كَيْفَ أَنْتُمْ إِذَا أَنْزَلَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ فِيكُمْ وَأَمَّاكُمْ مِنْكُمْ

i.e., *What will be your condition when the son of Mary will descend among you and he will be your imām from among yourselves?*⁸² In the first two references the words are almost the same as found in the quotation from *Kitāb al-anbiyā'* except that Arbiter ('ādil) is replaced by مقسطا (maqsafa) equitable and *he will postpone the war* (yaḍ' al-ḥarb) by *he will postpone the poll-tax* (yaḍ' al-jizyah) and the last part of the report beginning with *that a prostration at that time . . .* has also been omitted. Again in *al-Saḥīḥ* of Muslim reports about the descent of Jesus, son of Mary have been mentioned at various places. At one place the words of the first two reports of *al-Bukhārī* have been repeated and at another place the brief and the last report of *al-Bukhārī* has been mentioned. Still at another place the following words occur :

كَيْفَ أَنْتُمْ إِذَا أَنْزَلَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ فِيكُمْ وَأَمَّاكُمْ

i.e., *What will be your condition when the son of Mary will descend among you and he will be your imām?*⁸³ In another report instead of *fa-amma-kum* we find *fa-amma-kum minkum* (*he will be your imām from among you*). There is also one report by Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh. Similarly many other companions of the Holy Prophet, for instance Ibn 'Umar, Anas, Thaubān have narrated such reports.

The coming Messiah shall appear from among the Muslims

If we look carefully into these reports, to our surprise we find that although the coming of the son of Mary has been described in them, the various words added at the end show that he will be raised from among the Muslims. These words are : *imāmu kum minkum*,

81. *Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-anbiyā'*, 60: 49. See also Muḥammad 'Alī: *A Manual of Hadīth*, pp. 256-257.

82. *Ibid.*

83. *Al-Saḥīḥ* of Muslim as quoted in *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, vol. 7, p. 220.

fa-amma-kum, fa-amma kum minkum

فَأَمَّاكُمْ مِنْكُمْ وَأَمَّاكُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَأَمَّاكُمْ

The words *imāmu kum minkum* (your imām will be from among you), are supposed to refer to someone else who is thought to be the Mahdī. But there are two very strong arguments against this theory : (1) The reports in which these words occur are found in *al-Bukhārī* and *al-Muslim* and the coming of Mahdī has not been mentioned at all in these two books. When *Bukhārī* and *Muslim* do not even believe in the coming of Mahdī, how could they accept the interpretation that he would be the *imām* of Muslims at the time of the descent of Jesus Christ? (2) The *Muslim* has further clarified the point by repeating the words *wa imāmukum minkum* of *al-Bukhārī* on the one hand and adding alternative words on the other which cannot mean anything else except that the coming Messiah shall be raised from this *ummah* of Muḥammad. These words of the *Muslim* are reported in two ways :

(i) كَيْفَ أَنْتُمْ إِذَا أَنْزَلَ فِيكُمْ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ فَأَمَّاكُمْ

“What will be your condition when the son of Mary will descend in you and he will be your *imām*?”

(ii) كَيْفَ أَنْتُمْ إِذَا أَنْزَلَ فِيكُمْ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ فَأَمَّاكُمْ مِنْكُمْ

“What will be your condition when the son of Mary will descend in you and he will be your *imām* from among yourselves?”

Now the expressions *ammakum* and *ammakum minkum* clearly indicate that Jesus son of Mary, whose descent has been mentioned here, is the *imām* of Muslims and shall be from among the nation of Muḥammad and not from any other nation. Perhaps the words *what will be your condition* (*kaifa antum*) which express surprise, have been used to show that people might be expecting the coming of an Israelite Messiah but his appearance from among the Muslims will astonish them. In short, the words *imāmukum minkum* only signify

the appearance of Messiah from this *ummah* and it is he who will be the *imām* of Muslims. Obviously a *mujaddid* is the *imām* of his time. Thus this only refers to his being a *mujaddid*.

The evidence of the Qur'an that the Messiah shall be raised from the nation of Muhammad

1. Reports are only an exposition of the Qur'an, the evidence of the Qur'an being the strongest of them all. When we turn to the Qur'an we find that it mentions the raising of *khalifahs* (successors) of the Prophet Muhammad from among this *ummah*. In the chapter the *Light* we observe :

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ
فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ

i.e. *Allāh has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them successors in the earth as He made successors before them.*"⁸⁴ Here 'before them' refers to the Israelites. As the Prophet has been compared with Moses and called the like of him, —*Surely We have sent to you a Messenger, a witness, against you, as We sent Messenger to Pharaoh*—⁸⁵ similarly his successors have been likened to the successors of Moses. Thus this verse cannot bear the possibility of the appearance of Jesus Christ in person who was a successor of Moses. The logical conclusion is that as in the nation of Moses, the Messiah was raised by God, similarly a like of the Messiah will appear in the nation of Muhammad. In other words this verse implies the coming of the like of the Messiah and not Jesus Christ himself in person.

The second evidence of the Qur'an

2. The second strong evidence is that prophethood has come to an end with Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him!) and Jesus Christ was a prophet according to the Qur'an.

84. The Qur'an, 24: 55.

85. Ibid., 73: 15.

It is, therefore, not possible that he should appear after the Prophet Muḥammad. If he does come then Jesus Christ, and not the Prophet Muḥammad, will be the *khātam al-nabiyyīn* (the seal of the prophets). Obviously, prophethood will come to an end with a prophet who comes last of all. The thought, that, although Jesus Christ would appear last of all, as the Prophet Muḥammad was the last in his appointment, therefore he was indeed the last of the prophets, is groundless. If a battle has to be fought and won, only that general would be called the last general who has won it irrespective of the date of his appointment. If A and Z were two generals appointed for this post; A being appointed before Z, and A was still alive when Z died and at last it was he who won the battle, then every wise person would call him the last general. Similarly if Jesus Christ, the prophet of God, would come after Muḥammad and the final victory and dominance of Islam would take place at his hand, then he would be called the last of the prophets. The correct view, therefore, is that no prophet, neither new nor old, shall appear after the Prophet Muḥammad.

Besides this, there is another obstacle in the coming of Jesus Christ. According to the Qur'ān he was a messenger appointed for the Israelites,⁸⁶ therefore he cannot be raised for any other nation. Moreover a prophet is only sent for a prophetic mission. If Jesus Christ, the prophet of God, has to come again, this means that even the work of prophethood was not brought to perfection by the Prophet Muḥammad, and this is absolutely against the clear Qur'ānic verse :

الْيَوْمَ اكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ

i.e. *Today I have perfected your religion for you.*⁸⁷

In view of these difficulties the Muslim scholars are forced to admit that Jesus Christ would not appear as a *messenger* but only in the capacity of a *mujaddid* as has been mentioned in *Fath al-Bayān*: *When he will descend he will act upon the Shari'ah of Muhammad like other*

86. The Qur'ān, 3 : 48.

87. Ibid., 5 : 3.

followers.⁸⁸ And in *Fath al-Bāri* it has been stated: *Jesus will judge according to the rules and regulations of this ummah.*⁸⁹

But here again we are confronted with several difficulties.

It is obviously meaningless that when there is neither a need of prophethood left nor of a prophet, God should, nevertheless, keep a prophet alive for two thousand years to be sent to the world in the later ages. In this case it has to be admitted that neither the prophethood was brought to perfection nor Islam made perfect by the Prophet Muḥammad. If the Messiah has to come he must, by virtue of his previous office, come in the role of a prophet. And if he has to appear as a *mujaddid* it is futile for God to keep a prophet alive simply to fulfil the mission of a *mujaddid*. The second difficulty is that if he would appear as a *mujaddid* his connection with prophethood will naturally be severed. The dismissal of the Messiah from his office of prophethood is also meaningless. To cause a prophet to die is a Divine practice, to bring his period to termination is also intelligible, but his dismissal is absolutely against the principles of Divine religion.

Besides all this there is yet another problem to be solved. If Jesus Christ were to follow the *Shari'ah* of Muḥammad and give decisions according to the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, how would he educate himself for this work? In this respect the Divine law only operates in two ways. Knowledge is either obtained by revelation or by acquisition (*iktisāb*). Now if he would receive the knowledge of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth by revelation, what doubt is left as to his being a prophet? and if he would obtain it by acquisition he shall have to spend several years for the study of the Arabic language and the Islamic *Shari'ah* after his descent from heaven. In short, the appearance of Jesus Christ in person goes against all the clear injunctions of the Qur'ān. The only way out is to interpret it differently.

88. Abu'l Ṭayyib Ṣiddiq ibn Ḥasan, *Fath al-Bayān* (Maṭbah al-Kubrā al-Miriyyah, Egypt) under the verse 5: 3.

89. Imām ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bari fi Sharḥ al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

Evidence of the Qur'an

I have made a detailed discussion about Jesus Christ's death in my book *Masīḥ Mau'ūd (The Promised Messiah)*.⁹⁰ Here I quote a few verses of the Qur'an which clearly establish this point.

(1) *And I was a witness of them as long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die Thou wast the Watcher over them. And Thou art Witness of all things.*⁹¹ This is Jesus a Christ's reply to question by God that: *Didst thou say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allāh?*⁹² The question was about the false doctrine of Jesus's followers who made him a god and his reply was that as long as he was among them he was a witness of their condition and that he did not find them holding the belief in his Divinity but when God caused him to die, then he did not know what false doctrines were introduced in his teachings. This verse clearly indicates that, unless Jesus had died, the doctrine of his Divinity would not have been formulated by his people. Thus if before the revelation of the Qur'an such an alteration had taken place in his teaching, and the Qur'an provides us with a sufficient evidence to that effect, then Jesus must have passed away from this world. It is not possible to deny such a plain conclusion, but a report in *al-Bukhārī* makes the whole issue further clear. It is reported that on the Day of Resurrection the Prophet would be shown some men from among his *ummah* being dragged towards hell. *I would say, the ḥadīth goes on, what the righteous servant (i.e. Jesus Christ) said: I was a witness among them but when Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wast the Watcher over them.*⁹³

90. The English translation of this book is also under preparation. That Jesus Christ is dead is accepted by many orthodox 'ulamā' as is clear from Annexe II. T.

91. The Qur'an, 5 : 117.

92. Ibid., 5 : 116.

93. *Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Tafsīr* under the verse 5 : 117.

(2) *And Muḥammad is but a messenger — messengers have already passed away before him.*⁹⁴ In the word *al-rusul* (the messengers) *al* is of *istighrāq* (استغراق exhaustiveness) and does not yield any other meaning except that *al-rusul* should include all the messengers. It was for this very reason that Abū Bakr argued on the basis of this verse about the death of the Prophet Muḥammad when some of his Companions thought that he was not dead. That is to say, when all the previous prophets had passed away, the demise of the Holy Prophet was also in accordance with the Divine practice. If this verse meant that some of the messengers have in fact died and some were still alive, this argument could not have satisfied the doubters in the Holy Prophet's death.

(3) *The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger; messengers before him have indeed passed away. And his mother was a truthful woman. They both used to eat food.*⁹⁵ These words, while contradicting the claim of Jesus's Divinity, show that when they were alive, Mary and Jesus both stood in need of food. As Mary is dead, Jesus must have also passed away from this world. Both have been mentioned together, having in common the most elementary characteristics of human beings, i.e., of taking food. They used to eat food when they were alive; as they do not partake of food now, they are not alive any more.

(4) *He has enjoined on me prayer and poor-rate as long as I live.*⁹⁶ Offering prayers and giving of alms have been made obligatory on Jesus Christ. If in the heavens, let us suppose, Jesus has all the facilities of prayers, ablution and purification, for whom could he be offering poor-rate (*zakāh*) which was made essential for him as long as he lived?

(5) *And those whom they call on besides Allāh, created naught, while they are themselves created. Dead (are they), not living. And they know not when they will be raised.*⁹⁷ Evidently here those gods are spoken to who have been taken from among human beings because there is a

94. The Qur'ān, 3 : 143.

95. Ibid., 5 : 75.

96. Ibid., 19 : 31.

97. The Qur'ān, 16 : 20-21.

mention of their being raised after death. And it is said about all of them that they are dead. Jesus Christ stands first among those who are taken for gods. If he is alive the whole argument becomes null and void.⁹⁸ Besides this there are many other verses in the Qur'ān

98. It was in 1896 C.E. when I had not yet joined the Ahmadiyyah Movement that I asked a very prominent *Maulawī* in confidence what he thought the Qur'ān had mentioned about Jesus Christ. He said: "There are some verses which prove his death and there are others which show he is still alive." I was greatly astonished at this reply. How could such a thought be ascribed to the Qur'ān that there existed two contradictory statements in it. But unfortunately many Muslims are suffering from such a confusion. As the idea of the physical ascension of Jesus Christ is prevalent among them, therefore many of them do not pay any attention to even verses which mention his death. Their whole emphasis lies on the point that the Qur'ān refers to his *raf'* (exaltation), therefore he must be alive. Exaltation (*raf'*) of believers is one of the attributes of God and *al-Rāf'* (the Exalter) is one of His names, the meaning of which according to Lane's Lexicon is: *One of the names of God, meaning the exalter of the believer by prospering (him), and of His saints by teaching (them)*. Where the *raf'* of a man to Allāh is spoken of in the Qur'ān or Ḥadīth it is, without a single exception, in the sense of exalting or making him honourable. This meaning is made plain by the prayer which every Muslim repeats daily *i.e.* "Exalt me, O Lord!" (*Allāh humn arfa'ni*) (*al-Bukhārī* vol. 3, p. 22). Of course no one supposes for a moment that such a prayer is meant for raising or elevating his body to the heavens. And in the reports the expression:

مَنْ تَوَاضَعَ لِلَّهِ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ

i.e., Allāh exalts him who lowers down for Allāh. (*Kanz al-'Ummāl*, vol. 2, p. 25). This again does not mean raising of one's body to the heaven. Again it has been stated that

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُرَفِّعُ الْعَدْلَ

i.e., Verily God exalts the just ().

It has also been mentioned in the Qur'ān:

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ عَلِيًّا

i.e., And We raised him to an elevated state (19 : 57). Here in spite of the words *makānan 'aliyya*, *raf'* does not mean uplifting the body to a certain height or place. Another verse of the Qur'ān is:

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ

i.e., and if We had pleased We would have exalted him thereby; but he clings to the earth (7 : 176). There is a clear reference to the earth here but the meaning of *raf'* by

which indicate that Jesus Christ had died like other prophets. But I leave them for brevity's sake. In fact no Muslim can deny the point if it is established even from a single verse of the Qur'an.

Evidence of the Gospels⁹⁹

When we turn to the Gospels we find that:

(1) Jesus remained on the Cross for a few hours only (Mark 15: 25; John 19:14), but death by crucifixion was always tardy. (2) The

all the commentators has been explained here as nearness to God. But, strangely enough, when the question of Jesus Christ comes people care neither for the lexicon nor for the Qur'an and Hadith that in what sense this word has been used. In case of Jesus the context is particularly clear, the exalter is God and the exaltation is towards Him : as, (*I will*) *exalt thee in My presence* (The Qur'an, 3: 54). And as Divine Being is not limited to a certain place, therefore exaltation towards Him could not mean lifting the body to a certain height whether it is to the fourth or the seventh heaven. Again, the Qur'an records a saying of Abraham :

إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي

i.e., surely I flee to my Lord (37 : 99). Fleeing towards Lord does not mean going to Him with this body of clay. Similarly :

رُجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ

i.e., Return to thy Lord (89 : 28) and again :

إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا رُجُوعٌ

i.e., To Him we shall return (2 : 156) only signify spiritual returning. The most astonishing aspect of the story is that the word *raf'* has been used for Jesus Christ after *tuwaffi* or his death such as :

إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ

i.e., I will cause thee to die and exalt thee in My presence (3 : 54) and exaltation after death is always spiritual.

99. Muḥammad 'Ali's English Commentary of the Qur'an, p. 231 under 4 : 159.—T

Another argument against the death of Jesus Christ is deduced from the verse : *They killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the Cross* (4 : 157). In fact this

two men crucified along with Jesus were still alive when taken down from the Cross; the presumption is that Jesus too was alive. (3) The breaking of legs was resorted to in the case of the other two criminals, but dispensed with in the case of Jesus (John 19 : 32-3). (4) The side of Jesus being pierced blood rushed out, and this was a certain sign

argument has not at all a leg to stand on. A person not dying or being killed on the Cross does not mean that he has been alive for the last two thousand years. The only logical conclusion of this would be that he did not die by these two methods but died a natural death especially when the promise of his natural death already exists in the Qur'ān in the words "O Jesus, I will cause you to die (3: 54) (a natural death), and the fulfilment of this promise has also been mentioned at another place: *When Thou didst cause me to die (5 : 117)*. These two verses clearly indicate that Jesus Christ escaped death on the Cross and lived on this earth later on dying a natural death. Negation of killing (*qatl*) or crucifixion (*Ṣalb*) has been mentioned here because the Jews said :

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ

i.e., We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary (4 : 157). It must also be borne in mind that *Ṣalb* does not only mean to hang on the cross but as the compilers of Arabic lexicon have also made it clear that it is *one of the types of killing*, therefore negation of killing and crucifixion only means that he did not die of these two methods but it does not mean that an attempt was not made to kill him or cause his death on the Cross. As against *They killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the Cross* the words : *Nay, Allāh exalted him in His presence* have also been mentioned. And God's *raf'* (exaltation) only means spiritual exaltation, as I have discussed before. The reason of special reference to his *raf'* is because according to the Old Testament he that is hanged is accursed of God (*Deut., 21 : 23*). The Jews said that they had killed Jesus Christ on the Cross, therefore he was accursed and could not be called honourable in the presence of God. Christians also because of their erroneous belief in Atonement, thought that unless Jesus was accursed he could not take away the sins of the people as it has been said : *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangeth on the tree (Gal., 1 : 13)*. And for the redemption of their sins Christians believed that Christ descended into hell for three days. The Qur'ān contradicts the belief of Jews as well as of Christians *i.e., neither did they slay him nor cause his death on the Cross but that he was made honourable in the Divine presence.*

The words of the Qur'ān, *And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for sure (4 : 157)* in fact fully apply to the condition of Jesus Christ as mentioned in the Gospels. The evidence of the Gospels has been discussed separately. The verse of the Qur'ān, *but he was made to appear to them as such (Ibid.) Walākin*

of life. (5) Even Pilate did not believe that Jesus actually died in so short a time (Mark 15 : 44). (6) Jesus was not buried like the two criminals, but was given in the charge of a wealthy disciple of his, who lavished care on him and put him in a spacious tomb, hewn in the side of a rock (Ibid., 15 : 46). (7) When the tomb was seen on the third day, the stone was found to have been removed from its mouth (Ibid., 16 : 4) which would not have been the case if there had been a supernatural rising. (8) Mary, when she saw him, took him for the gardener (John 20 : 15) which shows that Jesus had disguised himself as a gardener. (9) Such disguise would not have been needed if Jesus had risen from the dead. (10) It was in the same body of flesh that the disciples saw Jesus and the wounds were still deep there enough for a man to thrust his hand in (John 20 : 25-28). (11) He still felt hunger and ate as his disciples ate (Luke 24 : 39-43). (12) Jesus Christ undertook a journey to Galilee with two of his disciples walking side by side with him (Matt., 28 : 10) which shows that he was fleeing for refuge; a journey

shu'bbiha la-hum may bear two interpretations : *he was made to be like* (it); or *the matter was made dubious or obscure* (Lane's Lexicon). The *Rūh al-Ma'āni* says the meaning may be that *the matter became dubious to them* (Muḥammad 'Alī's English commentary of the Qur'ān, p. 646). The story that some one else was made to resemble Jesus, is not to be found in the Qur'ān or the Hadīth. This is merely a tell-tale which has no foundation at all.

Sometimes the verse :

وَأَنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا يَؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ

i.e., *And there is none of the people of the Book but will believe in this before his death* (4 : 159) is brought forward as an argument and *qabla mawti-hi*, *before his death* is made to refer to the Messiah and the verse is translated thus : *before the death of Jesus Christ all the people of the Book will certainly believe in him*. But for the last two thousand years Jews have been dying without believing in Jesus Christ. Now this is the first principle of commentary that no interpretation should be made which goes against the clear facts of history. Hence this meaning is by no means acceptable. The fact is that the Jews and the Christians were both doubtful whether or not Jesus was killed on the Cross, the evidence of the Gospels is against their alleged belief in his death. After mentioning their dubious belief, the Qur'ān says that in spite of all this they both believe that Jesus had died on the Cross and was accursed (God forbid). A Jew cannot remain a Jew unless he believes in such a

to Galilee was not necessary to rise to heaven. (13) In all the post-crucifixion appearances Jesus is found hiding himself as if he feared being discovered. Arisen Jesus should have made a public appearance and should not have shown any fear of being discovered by the persecuting Jews. (14) Jesus Christ prayed the whole night before his arrest to be saved from the accursed death on the Cross, and he also asked his disciples to pray for him; the prayers of a righteous man in distress and affliction are always accepted. He seems to have even received a promise from God to be saved, and it was to this promise that he referred when he cried out on the Cross: *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!* (Matt., 27: 46). Heb.,

theory and for a Christian the whole doctrine of Atonement rests on the 'accursed death' of Jesus Christ. This meaning is not only incorrect according to the context of the Qur'ān but also according to the historical evidence. This shows how authentic and full of wisdom the statement of the Qur'ān is. Thus the pronoun in *qabla mawtihi* refers to the people of the Book. That this interpretation is correct is borne out by the evidence that another reading of *qabla mawtihi* is *qabla mawtihim* (before their death) (Imām Abū J'afar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, commentary of the Qur'ān, vol. 6, p. 15) in which case the pronoun necessarily refers to the followers of the Book.

Besides this, misunderstanding also prevails about the word *tuwaffā*. *Tuwaffā-hu Allāh* according to *Lisān al-'Arab* signifies *Allāh took his soul or caused him to die*. And according to *Tāj al-'Arūs* it means : He took his soul. *Tuwaffā-hu Allāh* does not convey any other significance than this in the Qur'ān, *Ḥadīth* or the Arabic lexicon. This word has been used in the same significance in the Qur'ān as in the verse :

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَازِلِهَا

i.e., Allāh takes the (men's) souls at the time of their death, and those that die not, during their sleep (39 : 42). *Tuwaffā* whether at the time of death or sleep, however, means taking away of soul and does not signify taking away of body or taking away of soul and body together. In *al-Bukhārī* Ibn 'Abbās is reported to have said *mutawaffī-ka mumitu-ka i.e., the significance of mutawaffī is I will cause you to die*, which makes the meaning of *tuwaffā* clear beyond the shadow of doubt. Because of the presupposed conception of Jesus being alive this word has been translated by some commentators as *taking away of body or taking in full measure*; this meaning is against the clear verses of the Qur'ān that have been quoted above. It has not been mentioned in any *ḥadīth* as well that Jesus Christ is still alive or that he was taken alive to heaven with his body of clay.

5: 7 makes the matter still more clear, for there it is plainly stated that his prayer was accepted : *when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him Who was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared.*

Evidence of *Hadīth* and other sources

There is no mention of the physical ascension of Jesus Christ in any of the authentic reports (*ahadīth*). On the contrary, there are reports which show that Jesus Christ is dead. The report about the Ascension (*Mi'rāj*) itself proves this point. According to this the Prophet Muḥammad saw Jesus and John at one and the same place.¹⁰⁰ Now the death of John is agreed upon by all, and of course there are separate conditions and places for the living and the dead. There is not a single version of the report about the Ascension where Jesus is shown in a different condition than that of the other prophets. Besides this it has also been mentioned in a report that :

لَوْ كَانَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى حَيًّا لَمَا وَسِعَهُمَا إِلَّا اتِّبَاعِي (أَوْ لَكَانَا مِنْ أَتْبَاعِهِ)

i.e., *Had Moses and Jesus been alive they would have but followed me*¹⁰¹ (or they would have been his i.e., the Prophet's followers). The conclusion from these words is obvious. The Holy Prophet considered Moses and Jesus to have passed away from this world. Again, there is another report to the similar effect :

إِنَّ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ عَاشَ عَشْرِينَ وَمِائَةَ سَنَةٍ

i.e., *'Isā son of Mary lived for a hundred and twenty years.*¹⁰² This is yet another proof that Jesus Christ is dead and his death occurred at the age of one hundred and twenty years. About this report it has been stated in *Zurqānī* that : *this report, whose narrators are trustworthy,*

100. *Al-Bukhārī*, 63 : 42.

101. Abu'l Fidā Ismā'il Ibn Kathīr, *Commentary of the Qur'ān* (Miriyyah Press, Cairo), vol. 2, p. 246; *al-Yawāqit wal-Jawāhīr*, vol. 2, p. 22; *Zurqānī*, vol. 6, p. 376.

102. Abu'l Fidā Ismā'il Ibn Kathīr, *Commentary of the Qur'ān*, vol. 2, p. 242; *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, vol. 6, p. 160.

has been mentioned by *Tibrānī* in the ḥabīr with an authority from 'Āishā,¹⁰³ and in the beginning of this report it has been ascribed to 'Āishā that she said that this matter was talked over to Fātimah by the Prophet Muḥammad during his last illness. The last part of the report mentions that he (*i.e.*, the Prophet) was going to leave the world at the end of sixty years. It is obvious that such reports could not be mere fabrications because they mentioned of Jesus Christ's death who was generally supposed to be alive at that time.

From among the four *Imāms*, *Imām Mālik* believed in the death of Jesus Christ as is mentioned in *Majma' Biḥār al-Anwār* under the

explanation of the word *ḥakam* : وَقَالَ مَالِكٌ مَاتَ (qāla Mālikun

māta—*i.e.*, (*Imām*) *Mālik* said: *Jesus Christ* died.¹⁰⁴ And *Imām ibn Ḥazm* also believed the same as is mentioned in *Jalālain ma' Kamālain* that:

وَتَمَسَّكَ ابْنُ حَزْمٍ بِظَاهِرِ الْآيَةِ وَقَالَ بِمَوْتِهِ

i.e., *Ibn Ḥazm* accepted the apparent meaning of the verse (*i.e.*, (يعيسى انى متوفيك) and believed in the death of *Jesus Christ*.¹⁰⁵ The belief of *Muḥiyy al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī* about the descent of the son of *Mary* was that:

وَجَبَّ نُزُولُهُ فِي آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ بِتَعَلُّقِهِ بِبَدَنِ آخِرٍ

i.e. His descent in later ages will be with a different body.¹⁰⁶ This appearance in the terminology of the mystics is called *barūz* (manifestation) as the following quotation would make it clear:

بعضے بر آند کہ روح عیسیٰ در مہدی بروز کند و نزول عبارت

ازین بروز است

i.e., Some believe that the soul of *Jesus* will manifest in *Mahdī* and the

103. See also *Hujaj al-Kirāmah*, p. 423.

104. *Imām Muḥammad Ṭāhir* of Gujrāt, *Majma' Biḥār al-Anwār* (Lucknow, India, Nawal Kishor Press) vol. 1, p. 286.

105. *Jalālain ma' Kamālain* (Delhi, India, Mujtabāi Press), p. 109, footnote.

106. *Tafsīr 'Arā'is al-Bayān* (Lucknow—India, Nawal Kishor Press) vol. 1, p. 262.

descent only means this *barūz*.¹⁰⁷ Both these statements make the point about Jesus' descent abundantly clear.

The descent of Messiah means the appearance of another person

It is evident from the above references that some Muslim saints had also previously held the belief that the descent (*nuzūl*)¹⁰⁸ of Jesus Christ, as mentioned in the reports, is to be a spiritual manifestation *i.e.*, the spirituality of Jesus will be transformed in another person. In reports quoted earlier the words *imāmu-kum minkum* and *amma-kum minkum* point out that the coming Messiah will be the *imām* of Muslims, being one of them. And the clear mention of the death of Jesus Christ in the Qur'ān is yet another proof that the coming Messiah is not Jesus Christ himself but a person, having his spiritual characteristics, who would be raised from among this nation of Muḥammad. Other reports which are also mentioned in *al-Bukhārī* confirm the same view, for instance, the complexion of Jesus Christ and of the coming Messiah are different although the name is the same. It has been stated in *al-Bukhārī* in the *ḥadīth* about the Ascension that:

وَلَقِيْتُ عِيسَى فَمَعْتَهُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ رَبُّ بَعَثَهُ أَخْرَجَهُ

107. *Shaiḫh* Muḥammad Akram Sābrī, *Iqtabās al-Anwār* (Lahore 1897 C.E., Islāmiyyah Press), p. 52.

108. The word *nuzūl* should not be misunderstood here as it is used in a very wide sense in the Arabic language. "We have indeed sent down (*anzalnā 'alaikum*) to you clothing to cover your shame," says the Qur'ān (7 : 26), although our clothes are made of cotton which is a product of land. Again: "And He has sent down for you (*wa anzala lakum*) cattle" (39 : 6), and "We sent down iron (*anzaia l-ḥadid*)" (57 : 25). Now cattle and iron are not literally sent down from heaven. Even for the appointment of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad the Qur'ān has used the word *anzala* :

قَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا وَالرُّسُلَ أَنْتَلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ

i.e., "Allāh has indeed revealed to you (*qad anzal-Allāhu ilaikum*) a reminder, a Messenger who recites to you the clear messages of Allāh" (65 : 10, 11). Hence the *nuzūl* of the son of Mary simply means his coming and not necessarily his descent from above.

*i.e., I met 'Isā... he was of fair complexion.*¹⁰⁹ Again in the report of ibn 'Umar, Jesus Christ has been described as having a *white complexion, curly hair and broad chest.*¹¹⁰ Further when the Messiah, son of Mary has been described with *Masiḥ al-Dajjāl* the words are: *tonight (in dream) I found myself near the Ka'bah. I saw a man of wheatish complexion, very fair from among the people of wheatish colour, the hair of his head rested on his shoulders below his ears and he had straight flowing hair. I enquired who was he? They said, it was the Messiah, son of Mary.*¹¹¹ Along with it the other report reads as follows: *in a state of dream I found myself going round the Ka'bah and there was a person of wheatish complexion having straight flowing hair...; I asked who he was? 'It was the son of Mary,' they said.*¹¹²

In the first two reports quoted above in connection with the Ascension, the Messiah in the company of the prophets has been described as having white complexion and curly hair. In the latter two reports which mention his going round the Ka'bah with the Antichrist (Dajjāl), he is of a wheatish complexion with long hair, which shows that this refers to the Messiah of this *ummah*. Thus according to the Qur'ān and the *Hadīth* the Messiah, son of Mary and the Promised Messiah are two different persons. A common name has been given to both of them to show their spiritual resemblance and affinity.

Prophecy of the descent or second advent in previous scriptures

Another strong evidence in support of what has been stated above is that the descent or the second advent of a person, mentioned in the previous scriptures, does not mean the coming of the same person but only the appearance of another person in the power and the spirit of the person prophesied for. There is no instance mentioned in the previous books about the actual reappearance of the same person. There is a prophecy in one of the books of the Bible that the prophet Elijah would reappear before the advent

109. *Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Mī'rāj.*

110. *Ibid.*

111. *Ibid.*

112. *Ibid., Kitāb al-Anbiyā, 46.*

of Christ : *behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*¹¹³ The Jews held the belief that Elijah was taken up alive to the heavens and that he would reappear before the advent of Christ.¹¹⁴ When Jesus claimed to be the Messiah the Jews raised this objection against him :

“And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. . . . Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.”¹¹⁵

This incident is described in almost similar words at another place in *Mark*.¹¹⁶ In *Luke* the following words occur about John: *and he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias.*¹¹⁷ The Synoptics are thus agreed that there was a prophecy about the reappearance of Elias in the Old Testament. This could not be rejected as a case of alteration because there is a strong evidence of the Old as well as the New Testament on this point. Moreover, this record could not have been altered by Christians for the matter stood as an objection against the claims of Jesus Christ. By adopting this explanation there remains not the least difficulty in connection with the prophecies of the second advent of Jesus Christ himself, for his own explanation settles the point beyond all doubt. And this is another testimony besides the testimonies of the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth* that the second advent means the appearance of another person. The coming of Jesus Christ therefore only means the raising of a *mujaddid* in this *ummah* in the power and spirit of Jesus Christ. When the Founder laid claim to be the *mujaddid* of the fourteenth century *Hijrah* his words implied his claim to be the Promised Messiah as well, though the actual position dawned on

113. *Malachi*, 4 : 3.

114. *2 Kings*, 3 : 1.

115. *Matt.*, 17 : 10-13.

116. *Mark*, 8 : 11-13.

117. *Luke*, 1 : 17.

him after a few years. The following words of his are worthy of note :

“The author has been given the knowledge that he is the *mujaddid* of this age and that spiritually his excellences resemble those of Messiah, son of Mary, and that the one of them bears a very strong resemblance and close affinity to the other.”¹¹⁸

Metaphors in prophecies

These arguments are too strong to be put aside lightly but it is sometimes said that when Jesus son of Mary is clearly spoken of in the reports why should his name be interpreted metaphorically and applied to a person possessing his spiritual characteristics? The reason is obvious. When a statement does not yield to literal interpretation we must take it metaphorically. The literal meaning does not collaborate with the Qur’ān, Hadīth, nor even with the reports about his descent, therefore we are forced to interpret it metaphorically. If we reflect a little deeply we find that the very words of these reports cannot be explained otherwise. It has been mentioned that Jesus son of Mary will break the Cross and kill the

swine يَكْسِرُ الصَّلِيبَ وَيَقْتُلُ الْخِنْزِيرَ . If the apparent significance

is accepted, does it mean that after his descent Jesus will break all crosses in the world and slaughter all swines? No prophet or saint or *mujaddid* has ever been entrusted with such a bewildering task. If God appoints a prophet or a *mujaddid*, he is assigned the task of reforming his people. Thus we cannot but take the metaphorical meaning of these two characteristics of the coming Messiah. The Cross is a symbol of Christianity, and swine, dirty animal as it is, stands for the impure habits of a nation. Killing the swine means removal of such habits. Otherwise the sole mission of breaking the Cross and hunting the swine is simply against the dignity of a prophet or a *mujaddid*, or even of an ordinary religious leader. Has God Almighty kept Jesus alive for this ‘sacred’ task for the last two thousand years? The fact is that metaphors and similes often form a

118. Ishtihār, published 1885 C.E.

part and parcel of prophecies. Similar is the case about the prophecy regarding the appearance of the Messiah where expressions such as *Jesus son of Mary, breaking the Cross and killing of the swine* have been used metaphorically. Any person who insists on taking the literal meaning of this prophecy does not only assign a meaningless task to an appointed one of God but also invites the world's ridicule and censure for this office.

If the prophecy about the Promised Messiah is not interpreted metaphorically, that would only prove the unreliability of *aḥādīth*

If these expressions are not taken metaphorically we cannot but consider a large portion of the reports as pure fabrications. This particular report about the descent of Jesus Christ is interrelated with quite a number of *aḥādīth* such as reports concerning Antichrist, Gog and Magog, downfall of Muslims and so forth. Some of the trials mentioned therein with which Muslims will be faced, refer to the present age and there are prophecies which have been fulfilled so clearly that even Muslims who have not joined the Aḥmadiyyah Movement also accept their truth. If these prophecies have come true, it necessarily follows that the prophecy about the advent of Jesus Christ has also been fulfilled. These reports are found in books of *Ḥādīth* such as *al-Bukhārī* and *al-Muslim*, and have been traced back to as many as fourteen different companions of the Holy Prophet. To shelve these reports is no light matter for a person who believes in God and His Messenger. There may be hundreds of differences in matters of minor importance: one may disagree with one report on the authority of another, this being only the question of accepting one *ḥādīth* and rejecting the other. But reports about the descent of Jesus Christ are intertwined with a host of other subjects such as the appearance of Antichrist, feats of Gog and Magog, trials of Muslims, reports about the signs of the Last Day etc. There are only two possibilities. Either they should be accepted as a whole or rejected as a whole. Accepting them entirely does not mean that every word should be taken literally. These may be accepted literally or metaphorically according to the context or the

canons of testing the Ḥadīth. If we entirely reject them it would amount to the belief that all the reports mentioned above are a collection of lies and falsehoods. No Muslim who believes in God and His Messenger can dare go to such an extent ! Moreover such an unreasonable attitude would also set at naught the whole evidence of history and nothing would remain trustworthy in the world. This would be a great injustice to Islam that all the prophecies which have been fulfilled in their real or metaphorical sense and which would have gone to increase the knowledge and faith of Muslims should only be rejected because, otherwise, the descent of Jesus, son of Mary, has to be admitted.