

CHAPTER 8

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY QURAN

The immaculate conception of Jesus, his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, are the essential features of Christianity; but not of Islam. They neither separately nor collectively form any part of the creed of a Muslim, nor do they touch any of the Five Pillars of Islam. But inasmuch as they do constitute an integral part of the Divinity of Jesus, a belief in any one or all of them would be tantamount to and is likely to be construed as a negation of the very basic principle of Islam—the Unity of God.

Christians, having hopelessly failed in establishing these illfounded dogmas from the Gospels, have from time immemorial tried to support them by deliberately misconstruing certain Quranic verses. The Christians of today, in adopting these tactics, merely follow the tracks of their co-religionists of the seventh century. Their object has been, and is, twofold: they wish to deride and belittle the value of the Holy Quran by asserting that, like the Gospels, this Book also supports these absurdities and cannot therefore, be a better guide to humanity; and, secondly, they try to mislead Muslims into believing that the Holy Quran itself proves the truth of the very dogmas, or at least some of them, upon which Christians rest the Divinity of Christ. Rodwell, in the *Preface* to his *Translation of the Koran*, makes the Christian point of view very clear. He says:

A line of argument to be adopted by a Christian missionary in dealing with a Muhammadan should be, not to attack Islam as a mass of error, *but to show that it contains fragments of disjointed truth* — that it is based upon Christianity and Judaism, partially understood, especially upon the latter, without any appreciation of its typical character pointing to Christianity as a final dispensation.¹

In other words, Rodwell advises Christian missionaries to convince Muslims that the Divinity of Christ stands established because, as he imagines, support for Christian dogmas can be found in the Holy Quran.

It is a notorious fact that in the first four centuries of Islam, and after the death of the Holy Prophet, some Jews and Christians deceitfully joined the fold of Islam to undermine its very foundations. It is equally true that the vast majority of Jews and Christians who embraced Islam did so sincerely; but they unwittingly brought their traditions and stories with them, and these are known as *Israeliat*: Every student of Muslim history knows that these two categories of converts introduced, by design or otherwise, the whole mass of their apocryphal literature in the *commentaries* of the Holy Quran. They went further and falsely attributed many of their own fables to the Holy Prophet—either as being events in his life or as his sayings. These tales, stories and spurious traditions have been seized upon by Christian writers on Islam, Sale and

1. Rodwell, *Preface to the Translation of the Koran*, 22 (Italics are mine.)

Muir not excepted, and they have further distorted and fashioned the facts to suit the taste of the Christians of Europe and elsewhere. They were, as Sale confesses, out “to expose” the Holy Quran as a “manifest forgery” and, for this purpose, did not hesitate to change the text (in their translation) of the Book. Mendacity and hypocrisy could go no further! Speaking of Sale, Rodwell says:

Sale has, however, followed Maracci too closely, especially by introducing his paraphrastic comments into the body of the text.¹

But long before Christian missionaries could make any real use of those spurious matters, introduced by their forefathers, Muslim scholars exposed their wicked and mischievous designs. They have, time and again, warned Muslims against accepting these fantastic stories. Ibn-Khaldun, for instance, while discussing some ancient commentators of the Holy Quran in his *Muqaddimah* said:

Their books and their reports contain what is good and what is bad and what may be accepted and what should be rejected, and the reason for this is: when these people (Jews and Christians) embraced Islam, they retained their stories which had no connection with the commandments of the Islamic law, such as the origin of creation, and things relating to the future and the wars etc. . . Commentaries on the Holy Quran were soon filled with these stories of theirs and as these do not deal with the Commandments, so their correctness is not sought after to the extent of acting upon them, and the commentators take them up rather carelessly, and they have thus filled up their comments with them.²

Hazrat Shah Wali Ullah, the *Mujaddid* of the Twelfth Century of Hijra, the saintly author of *Hujjat-Ullah-al-Baligha*, gave the same warning when he wrote:

And it is necessary to know that most of the Israelitish stories that have crept into the commentaries and biographies are copied from the stories of Jews and Christians, and no Commandments or beliefs can be based upon them.³

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal summed up the Muslim point of view and declared that these commentaries and biographies “are not based on any principles.” Among Muslims of recent times the late Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of Aligarh condemned, in his *Khutabat-i-Ahmadiyya*, these commentators and biographers. Maulvi Muhammad Ali is equally emphatic when he says:

No Muslim scholar has attached the same value to the biographical reports. On the other hand all Muslim critics recognize that the biographers never made much effort to sift truth from error. . . . In fact in some of the commentaries the reports cited are puerile nonsense. Even the Commentary of Ibn Jarir, with all its value as a literary production, cannot be relied upon.⁴

1. Rodwell, *Preface to the Translation of the Koran*, 24.

2. *Ibn-Khaldun, Muqaddama*, Vol. 1, 481.

3. Hazrat Shah Wali Ullah, *Hujjat-Ullah-al-Baligha*, 176.

4. M. Muhammad Ali, *The Religion of Islam*, 68. 6th ed.

But although these commentaries and biographies are literary works of considerable merit, yet they express merely the opinions of their authors. We have the two main Islamic sources: the Holy Quran and the *Hadith*, in their pristine purity; and we can test and check the correctness of these commentaries and biographies, and accept or reject them accordingly.

In considering the various verses of the Holy Quran we should not ignore the universally accepted rules of interpretation, which I have already discussed,¹ nor indeed should we overlook the fundamental and basic principles laid down by the Holy Quran itself. I will confine myself here to some of these basic principles which are relevant to the subject under discussion.

All Prophets of God (including Jesus) were human beings

Says the Holy Quran:

And We did not send before you (Muhammad) any but men to whom We had sent revelation. . . . And We did not make their bodies not eating the food, and neither were they to abide (for ever).²

All Prophets according to the Holy Quran were therefore human beings, with human bodies. The reformation of men, according to the Holy Quran, was entrusted to men because only a man could serve as a model for mankind. The Holy Quran, asserts in the clearest possible terms that men only, to whom God revealed His will, were sent as His Messengers, and supports this assertion by pointing out that all Prophets did require and eat food and that they did not live for ever. In response to a question: "What! has Allah raised up a mortal to be an apostle?" the Holy Prophet is made to reply:

Say: Had there been in the earth angels walking about as settlers, We would have sent down to them from heaven an angel as a Messenger.³

In another place the Holy Quran states that Noah was sent from amongst themselves,⁴ that is, from amongst his tribesmen, and it is recorded that the chiefs of his tribes, while addressing their people, raised a similar objection:

This (Noah) is nothing but a mortal like yourselves, eating of what you eat from and drinking of what you drink.⁵

Again, Pharaoh and his chiefs also objected to Moses and Aaron in the same terms:

What, shall we believe in two mortals like ourselves, while their people serve us?⁶

1. *Supra*, pp. 38-42.

2. The Holy Quran, 21 : 7-8.

3. *Ibid.*, 17 : 95.

4. *Ibid.*, 23: 32.

5. *Ibid.*, 23: 33.

6. *Ibid.*, 23: 47.

After referring to these incidents and speaking of the various Prophets of God as mortals, the Holy Quran introduces Jesus in verse 50 of the same chapter. The Book, in many places, asserts the humanity, and challenges the divinity of Jesus. Thus we read:

The Messiah, son of Mary, is but an apostle; apostles before him have indeed passed away, and his mother was a truthful woman, *they both used to eat food*. See how We make the communications clear to them (the Christians), then behold, how they are turned away.¹

The prayer of Jesus: "Give us this day our daily bread"² is alluded to in the Holy Quran in the following terms:

Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Allah, our Lord! send down to us food . . . and grant us means of subsistence and Thou art the Best of providers.³

This verse also proves that Jesus was not the son of God, or an incarnation of God, for he felt the necessity of asking for food for his very subsistence.

All Prophets of God (including Jesus) were servants of God

Says the Holy Quran :

And We did not send before thee any messenger but We revealed to him that there is no God but Me, therefore serve Me. And they say: the Beneficent God has taken to Himself a son; glory be to Him, Nay, they (the Prophets) are *honored servants*. They do not precede Him in speech and (only) according to His commandments do they act.⁴

To emphasize that Jesus was not a son of God the Holy Quran speaks of him as one of the Messengers of God,⁵ an apostle and a servant of God, and makes the position perfectly clear in the following words:

O followers of the Book! do not exceed the limits in your religion, and do not speak (lies) against Allah, but (speak) the truth; the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of Allah and His word which He communicated to Mary and an inspiration from Him. Believe, therefore, in Allah and His apostle and say not Three. Desist, it is better for you; Allah is only One; far be it from His glory that He should have a son; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His and Allah is Sufficient Protector.⁶

Again:

Certainly they disbelieve who say: Surely Allah is the third (person) of the

1. The Holy Quran, V:75. This seems decidedly to point to Matthew, 11 : 19, where Jesus is spoken of as a man who came eating and drinking.

2. *Matt.*, 6 : 11

3. The Holy Quran, 5 : 114.

4. *Ibid.*, 21 : 25-27.

5. *Ibid.*, 4 : 163

6. *Ibid.*, 4 : 171.

Three. And there is no god but One God. And if they desist not from what they say, a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve. . . . The Messiah, son of Mary, is (naught) but an apostle. . . .¹

And again :

And when a description of the son of Mary is given, lo! your people raise a clamour thereat. . . .he was naught but a servant on whom We bestowed favor and We made him an example for the children of Israel.²

Then certain sayings of Jesus are recorded :

He (Jesus) said: Surely, I am, a servant of Allah. He has given me the book and made me a Prophet.³

And finally :

When Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary did thou say to men : Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah, he will say : Glory be to Thee, it did not befit (me) that I should say what I had no right to (say); if I had said, Thou wouldst indeed have known it; Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Thy mind. Surely, Thou art the great Knower of the unseen things. I did not say aught save what Thou didst enjoin me with: That serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord; and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them but when Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wert the Watcher over them, and Thou art Witness of all things.⁴

Thus the Holy Quran proclaims that Jesus was a man, a human being who ate and drank, a mortal who did die. The Book points out these facts to refute his divinity.

Law of Procreation

The Holy Quran repeatedly points out, that the Law of Procreation is the union of a male and a female of the same species, that there is no exception to this rule and that, therefore, the Universal Creator in His All-Wisdom created pairs of all species. Says the Holy Quran :

Glory be to Him who created pairs of all things, of what the earth grows, and of their kind and of what they do not know.⁵

And He Who created pairs of all things.⁶

And of everything We have created pairs that you may be mindful.⁷

1. The Holy Quran, 5 : 73, 75.

2. *Ibid.*, 43 : 57, 59.

3. *Ibid.*, 19 : 30.

4. *Ibid.*, 5 : 116-117.

5. *Ibid.*, 36 : 36.

6. *Ibid.*, 43 : 12.

7. *Ibid.*, 51 : 49.

In these verses the word used is either *zaujain* or *azwajan*. These words signify : kinds, species or pairs. In these verses it is, therefore, asserted that vegetation, minerals, animals, human beings-in fact, the entire creation, was made in pairs. It was only in the beginning of this century that the researches of Sir Jagadish Chandar Bose finally proved that all vegetation, plants and trees included, had two kinds : male and female. But the Holy Quran had disclosed this fact some thirteen hundred years ago in following terms:

And of the fruits He has placed it in pairs (male and female).¹

Again:

Then We have brought forth species of various vegetation.²

Dealing with the animals, the Holy Quran says :

And (of) beasts and cattle are various species of it likewise.³

The Originator of the heavens and the earth : He made males for you from among yourselves; and mates of the cattle too.⁴

Discussing the creation of mankind the Holy Quran states the same principle in very clear terms :

O ye men! surely We have created you of a male and a female and made you tribes and families that you may know each other.⁵

And We created you in pairs.⁶

And that He it is Who created (you) in pairs, the male and the female, from the small life-germ when it is transmitted (into the womb).⁷

Then He made of him two kinds, the male and the female.⁸

And Allah created you of dust, then of the life-germ then He made you (in) pairs.⁹

And among His signs is this : that He created for you mates from among yourselves.¹⁰

The Law of Procreation is made still clear in the following verse:

And God makes for you mates from among your own selves and through your mates He gives you sons and grandsons.¹¹

1. The Holy Quran, 13 : 3.

2. *Ibid.*, 20 : 53. (Translation by Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar). 36 : 36.

3. *Ibid.*, 35 : 28

4. *Ibid.*, 42 : 11

5. *Ibid.*, 49 : 13

6. *Ibid.*, 78 : 8.

7. *Ibid.*, 53 : 45-46

8. *Ibid.*, 75 : 39.

9. *Ibid.*, 35 : 11.

10. *Ibid.*, 30 : 21. See also 4 : 1.

11. *Ibid.*, 16 : 72. Translation by Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar.

This verse, and also the one I will next quote, refers to the wonderful mystery of sex. Children are born of the union of sexes. And it is always the female sex that brings forth the offspring, whether male or female. And the father is as necessary as the mother for bringing forth children. This is explained thus :

And it is He Who has brought you into being from a single kind, then there is a *resting place* and a *repository*: indeed We have made plain the communications for a people who understand.¹

This verse refers to our creation from a *single kind*. The word used is *nafs*; which means a soul, or a thing, or an essence, or a kind. The learned authors of *Taj-al-Arus*, *Tafsir-i-Kabir* and *Bahr-ul-Muhit* explain this word as signifying *min jinseha* : of the same kind. The Arabic words which have been translated as *a resting place* and *a repository* in the verse are *Mustaqarr* and *Mustauda'* respectively. The Imam Asir-ud-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Yusuf bin Ali Abu Hayyan who flourished (654-754 A.H.) in Cordova, in Spain, explains in his well-known commentary, *Bahr-ul-Muhit*, that these words respectively mean *the loins of the father* and *the womb of the mother*;² and thus these words really stand for a male and a female.

It is evident, therefore, that according to the Holy Quran no procreation is possible without male and female agencies. The Holy Quran lays so much stress on this Law of Procreation that it advances this very Law as an argument to refute the Divine sonship of Jesus :

And they falsely attribute to Him sons and daughters without knowledge; Glory be to Him, and highly exalted is He above what they ascribe (to Him.) Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth. *How could He have a son when He has no consort*, and (He) Himself created everything and He is the Knower of all things.³

Again:

And that He—exalted be the Majesty of your Lord—has not taken a consort, nor a son.⁴

The Holy Quran does not leave the matter there. It refers to the uniting of the male and the female, to the intermingling of the male spermatozoon with the female ovum—neither of which can be fertilized without the other. The Book then refers to the development of this admixture in the womb. In the following verses the word *nutf* has been translated as *life-germ*, but it really signifies, the male sperm. Says the Holy Quran:

Does not man see that We have created him from a small life-germ.⁵

1. The Holy Quran, 6 : 98

2. Abu Hayyan, *Bahr-ul-Muhit*, Vol. 4 : 188.

3. The Holy Quran, 6 : 100-101.

4. *Ibid.*, 72 : 3.

5. *Ibid.*, 36 : 77.

Was he not a small life-germ in the seminal elements, then he was a clot of blood, so He created (him), then made (him) perfect.¹

Further, the Holy Quran also makes it clear that in the creation of men the male agency plays a far more important part than the female:

And that He created (you) in pairs, the male and the female, from the small life-germ when it is transmitted (into the womb).²

Surely, We have created man out of the mixture of a (male and female) small life-germ uniting itself.³

Did We not create you from an insignificant water? Then We placed it in a secure resting place (womb) till an appointed time.⁴

Now let man think from what he is created: he is created from a drop emitted, proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs.⁵

Thus, according to the Holy Quran, the birth of a man cannot take place without the uniting and interaction of a pair resulting in the intermixture of the male sperm and the female ovum. To place the matter beyond the remotest possibility of doubt, the Holy Quran gives the elements from which and the numerous physical stages through which man is created. We read:

O people! If you are in doubt about the raising, then surely We created you from dust, then from a small life-germ, then from a clot, then from a lump of flesh (sometimes) complete in making and (sometimes) incomplete, (in order) that We may make clear to you; and We cause what We please to stay in the wombs till the appointed time, then We bring you forth as babies.⁶

In this verse God's creative work, so far as man is concerned, is stated. It explains that inorganic matter becomes organic and living matter; the inorganic constituents of the earth having been absorbed into living matter by way of food, the living matter reproduces itself by means of sperma genitale of the male sex. It is deposited in the ovum and fertilizes it and rests for a time in security in the mother's womb. The first stage in the fertilized ovum is its conversion into a sort of clot of thickly congealed blood; the zygote cells grow by segmentation: then the mass gradually assumes shape in its growth as a foetus. From the lump develop bones and flesh and organs and a nervous system. Then what is called by the Holy Quran; *the breathing of God's spirit or inspiration* into him takes place,⁷ and, after the appointed time, the child is born. The subject is again recapitulated in the following words:

And certainly We created man of extract of clay, then We made a small life-

1. The Holy Quran, 75 : 37-38.

2. *Ibid.*, 53 : 45-46.

3. *Ibid.*, 76 : 2.

4. *Ibid.*, 77 : 20-22.

5. *Ibid.*, 86 : 5-7 Translation, Yusuf Ali.

6. *Ibid.*, 22 : 5.

7. *Ibid.*, 15 : 29.

germ in a firm resting place (womb), then We made the life-germ a clot, then We made this clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the Best to create.¹

Again:

He it is Who created you of dust, then from a small life-germ, then from a clot, then He brings you forth as a child.²

In another place the Holy Quran explains, rather more precisely, how the conception takes place:

He it is Who created you of a single kind and of the same (kind) did He make his mate, that he might incline to her; *so when he covers her* she conceives a light burden, then moves about with it, but when it grows heavy, they both call upon Allah, their Lord: if Thou givest us a good one (child), we shall certainly be of the grateful ones.³

The italicized words make it perfectly clear how conception takes place, to wit, the male agency must play its part. In the beginning the “burden” of the mother is light but with the quickening it becomes heavy. The birth of a child is fraught with hope as well as much suffering and unforeseen risk to the mother herself; and it is explained that the parents in their anxiety turn to their Lord.

All Human Beings Must Die

God has created man and ordained that death shall be his common lot. Life on this planet without death has not been granted to any man. All human beings, according to the Holy Quran, are mortals and must die and die on this earth. Says the Holy Quran:

Every soul shall taste of death.⁴

He (also) said (to man) therein (on earth) you shall live and therein shall you die.⁵

And We did not ordain abiding for any mortals before thee.⁶

And He it is Who has brought you to life, then He will cause you to die.⁷

And He it is Who multiplied you in the earth, and to Him you shall be gathered.⁸

Every one in it (earth) must pass away.⁹

1. The Holy Quran, 23 : 12-14.

2. *Ibid.*, 40 : 67. see also 35 : 11

3. *Ibid.*, 7 : 189.

4. *Ibid.*, 3 : 185. See also 21 : 35. The word *soul* in both these verses stands for man.

5. *Ibid.*, 7 : 25.

6. *Ibid.*, 21 : 34.

7. *Ibid.*, 22 : 66.

8. *Ibid.*, 23 : 79.

9. *Ibid.*, 55 : 26.

Have you considered the life-germ? Is it you that create it or are We the Creator? We have ordained death among you and We are not to be overcome.¹

Of what thing did He create him (man)? Of a small life-germ He created him; then He proportions him, then as for the way He has made it easy (for him), then He causes him to die, then assigns to him a grave.²

And finally:

And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, then We made him a small life-germ in a firm resting place (womb), then We made the life-germ a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation; so blessed be Allah the Best to create. Then after that you will most certainly die.³

In contrast with the life of man which must come to an end on this earth the Holy Quran points out that God alone is “Ever-living, Who dies not.”⁴

Laws of God are Immutable

I have so far set out the various Laws of God mentioned in the Holy Quran which are relevant to the subject under discussion. Does the Holy Quran contemplate any exception to or change in any of these laws? In most emphatic terms the Book itself gives the answer in the negative.

If we look to nature itself we find that the Laws of God are fixed and we do not find any change in its course. On the contrary, a wonderful regularity and uniformity is disclosed all through the universe. To use the words of the Holy Quran, we find that each one of the creations of God pursues its course to an appointed time.⁵ There is no chaos, no disorder, no incongruity. It is obvious that things belonging to the entire creation are subject to, and must follow, the same Laws. It has been well said that our human will may falter or turn away from its course, but God’s Will ever follows its course and cannot be turned away by any cause whatever. In fact this uniformity points to the One Universal Designer, Fashioner and Creator Whose Will is exercised according to, and becomes manifest in, His Laws. Consistency is His Will and His Will is the Law itself and the law unto itself. Says the Holy Quran:

Then set your face upright for religion in the right state—the nature made by Allah in which He made men; there is no altering of Allah’s creation, that is the right religion; but most people do not know.⁶

Again:

You see no incongruity in the creation of the Beneficent God: then look again,

1. The Holy Qur-an, 56-58-60.

2. *Ibid.*, 80 : 18-21.

3. *Ibid.*, 23 : 12-15.

4. *Ibid.*, 25 : 58.

5. *Ibid.*, 13: 2.

6. *Ibid.*, 30 : 30.

can you see any disorder? Then turn back the eye again and again: your look shall come back to you confused while it is fatigued.¹

The immutability of the Laws of God is stressed over and over again in the Holy Quran.

And you shall not find a change in Our course.²

And you shall not find any change in the course of Allah.³

And you shall not find a change in Allah's course.⁴

For you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allah; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah.⁵

If we apply the foregoing basic principles of the Holy Quran to Jesus, we are forced to believe that he has a human being, a mortal, a servant, a Messenger, a Prophet of God, and a *fortiori* he must have been conceived, born and have died on this earth in the normal and usual way. No change in the Laws of God can even be contemplated, much less considered, unless the contrary is stated, in the Holy Quran itself, in very clear and unambiguous terms. It is urged that God Almighty being All-Powerful could have changed His Laws and could have caused the birth of Jesus to be immaculate and He could have spared him an earthly physical death.

I do not for a single moment hesitate to concede this proposition. Undoubtedly God could have done all this, and much more, even beyond our comprehension. To urge otherwise, I frankly admit, would be a sin. But this is really begging the question. Did He do it? Did He violate any of His own Laws? The theories of the immaculate birth and Ascension of Jesus cannot be proved on this theoretical hypothesis. It must be established from the Holy Quran itself that God, having admittedly the absolute unfettered power to do so, did actually do these things or cause these things to happen. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan while discussing this question rightly points out that miracles were wrought to establish the claims of a Prophet of God, and, therefore, miracles before the stage of prophethood, as the immaculate birth of Jesus, would not only be devoid of all significance but they would also fail to achieve the desired result.⁶

I will now discuss the question of the birth of Jesus in the light of the Holy Quran. I have already mentioned that the Christian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus do not form an integral part of the faith of a Muslim.

It cannot too often be repeated that the Holy Quran is not a book of history. Its object is not to narrate history as such. It merely mentions those features and events

1. The Holy Quran, 67 : 3-4.

2. *Ibid.*, 17 : 77.

3. *Ibid.*, 33 : 62.

4. *Ibid.*, 48 : 23.

5. *Ibid.*, 35 : 43.

6. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *Khutabat-i-Ahmadiyya*, Vol, 2 : 24.

of the lives of the Prophets of God which can serve as a guidance and warning to us. With the same object the Book also speaks of the various tribes and nations to whom these Prophets were sent.¹ The main object of these references in the Holy Quran is to affirm, modify or contradict the then existing beliefs about these Prophets of God.

Jesus is mentioned in the Holy Quran about thirty times, and certain features of his life are given at some length in Chapters 3 and 19. Chapter 19 is in fact an earlier revelation. At the time of the Holy Prophet two divergent views about Jesus were prevalent among Christians and Jews:

Christian Belief

1. Immaculate Conception.
2. Jesus was the son of God.
3. Jesus was disrespectful to his mother.
4. Jesus died on the cross, resurrected from the dead and ascended to heaven.

Jewish View

1. Illegitimate Birth.
2. Jesus was a false prophet and the progeny of the devil.
3. Mary had disowned Jesus.
4. Jesus was crucified and died the death of an accursed of God.

It need hardly be mentioned that, according to the Holy Quran, both these contradictory views were erroneous and without justification or foundation. It was, therefore, essential for the Holy Quran to expose their falsity and refute these baseless charges and calumnies which had been leveled against Jesus and his mother, Mary, and thus clear their characters and finally to assert and re-establish the humanity of Jesus.

It is convenient here to discuss very briefly the relations of Jesus with his mother and to describe her character from the Quranic point of view. Jesus, we are told, was dutiful to his mother and was not insolent to her.² Mary is described as a human being, who ate and drank; and as a truthful woman.³ She had faith in God,⁴ and was a chosen one of God.⁵ She was an obedient servant of God who guarded her chastity.⁶ Thus the character of Mary, as given in the Holy Quran, is quite contrary to the one depicted by Christians or Jews. The Holy Quran declares in most emphatic terms that the charges made against her were false.

In dealing with the birth of Jesus we must, as I have already pointed out, turn to chapter 19 and chapter 3. These two chapters in fact contain two parallel descriptions of the birth and mission of Jesus, and do not narrate two separate events.⁷

The narrative begins in chapter 19 with a reference to John the Baptist, while in chapter 3 it mentions first the mother of Mary, Hanna.⁸ Then it introduces John the

1. The Holy Quran. 6 : 84-91 ; 21 : 107

2. *Ibid.*, 19: 32. Matthew (12 : 48) relates an incident which shows that Jesus was rude to his mother. The Holy Quran refutes this allegation.

3. *Ibid.*, 5 : 75.

4. *Ibid.*, 3 : 37.

5. *Ibid.*, 3 : 42.

6. *Ibid.*, 66 : 12.

7. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan lays great stress on the point and concludes from it that Mary had but one apparition (*Khutabat-i-Ahmadiyya*, Vol 2 : 34).

8. The Holy Quran does not give the name of the mother of Mary. Her name was Hanna (see *Tafsir Ibn-Jarir*, Vol.3: 144). I will throughout this discussion refer to her by this name, though I will refrain, for obvious reasons, from introducing her name into the Qur-anic text.

Baptist and subsequently continues with some events of the life of Jesus. I will, however, deal with the two incidents separately.

Zacharias, we are told, prayed to God for a son, who might receive and carry on his inheritance and the inheritance of the children of Jacob, and that this son might be one in whom the Lord might be well pleased.¹ The object of this prayer was that there should be someone in the family who might continue to serve God and carry on the work of reformation of the posterity of Jacob. And indeed this was the inheritance to which Zacharias had referred. His prayer was heard and as he stood praying in the sanctuary he had an apparition: an angel appeared to him and conveyed the good news that Yahya (John) would be born to him.² But Zacharias wondered:

My Lord: whence shall there be a son born to me, and old age has already come upon me, and my wife is barren?³

But the angel said:

So shall it be. Thy Lord says: It is easy for Me, and indeed I created thee before when thou wert nothing.⁴

Thereafter God cured the wife of Zacharias and made her fit,⁵ and she gave birth to John.

Regarding the birth of Mary, we learn that on becoming pregnant her mother Hanna:

A woman of (the tribe of) Imran⁶ said, My Lord! surely I vow to Thee what is in my womb, to be devoted (to Thy service); accept therefore from me, surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing.⁷

Hanna, therefore, vowed that her child, and she expected a son, should be devoted to the service of the temple for life,⁸ or in other words become a priest.

Among the Israel of old a vow, an obligation to God, a pledge to do a thing, was undertaken voluntarily to secure Divine aid. It was of a very binding character and its breach was thought to entail tragic consequences; any evasion or subterfuge was, therefore, sternly censured and suppressed. These vows are fully dealt with in the Mosaic dispensation.⁹

By way of illustration, I may mention here the case of the *vestal virgins*. In those days, under the Roman Law, only two classes of people could enter the vestibule next

1. The Holy Quran, 19 : 6; 3 : 38

2. *Ibid.*, 19 : 7; 3 : 38.

3. *Ibid.*, 19 : 8; 3 : 40.

4. *Ibid.*, 19 : 9; 3 : 40.

5. *Ibid.*, 21 : 90.

6. Cf. Luke, 1 : 5 and 1 : 36, Moses had anointed Aaron in accordance with the commands of the Lord (Lev., 8 : 2), and in Ch. 11 of the Book of Moses called Leviticus it is laid down that the

sons of Aaron in this verse merely indicates that Hanna, the mother of Mary, belonged to the priestly tribe of Aaron.

7. The Holy Quran, 3 : 35. A parallel of this prayer is also to be found in the case of another Hanna in I Sam., 1 : 2.

8. Tafsir Ibn-i-Jarir, Vol. 3: 144.

9. Lev., 27 : 1-29. Nu., 30 : 1-15.

to the sanctuary or the sanctuary of the Roman temples—priests or vestal virgins. These vestal virgins had to take oaths of celibacy and were considered to be under the *patria potestas* of the King, who exercised his control over them through the priests. Vestal virgins were treated with the marks of respect usually accorded to royalty: thus in the streets they were preceded by a *lictor* and they were above the law. The functions of the vestal virgins consisted of simple household duties. They looked after the temple fire, received offerings from worshippers, mopped the floors and baked cakes of meal.¹ They also fetched water.² The Jews under the Roman influence, and even before that, had female attendants in their temples. Thus in the *Book of Maccabees* we read that when Heliodorus came to take away the treasures of the temple, the virgins came out of their retirement in the sanctuary, some appeared in the streets, some at the windows and others upon the walls of the temple.³ But inasmuch as it was deemed to be a sin for a Jew or a Jewess to remain unmarried throughout his or her life, it being their sacred duty to raise children for Israel, the priests did marry and Jewish “vestal virgins” also married on attaining puberty.

The priests, however, continued to function as such even after their marriage, of course, subject to certain laws of purification.⁴

But the case of the female attendants was different. They had, on attaining puberty, to leave the sanctuary irrespective of the fact whether they got married or not. The reason is not far to seek. Jews considered every woman to be unclean during her periods of “issues” including menstruation. Likewise a woman was deemed to be unclean after childbirth.⁵ Not only this:

Every bed whereon she lieth. . . and whatsoever she sitteth on shall be unclean. And whosoever toucheth those things shall be unclean.⁶

And further, in such circumstances “the days of the separation for her infirmity” during which she was deemed to be “unclean” were seven after “the issues”⁷ and in the case of childbirth it was extended to thirty-three and sixty-six days according to the sex of the child,⁸ the longer period being for a female.

The idea underlying these prohibitions was that the sanctuary of the Lord should not be defiled. It is true that the word sanctuary has been used to describe that part of the temple which was the most sacred place, the Holy of Holies, in which the Ark of the Covenant was kept and where none but the high priest could enter once in a year; but it is also used generally for the temple itself⁹ and also for the place appointed for the public worship of the Lord, where the worshippers brought their offerings to the Lord.¹⁰

1. Sir James George Frazer, *Garnered Sheaves*, 60-61.

2. Gen., 24 : 43 speaks of Virgins drawing water.

3. 2. Macc., 3 : 19.

4. Lev., 15 : 6-17.

5. Lev., 12 : 4; 15 : 18-28.

6. *Ibid.*, 15 : 26-27

7. *Ibid.*, 15 : 28.

8. *Ibid.*, 12 : 2-5

9. 2 Ch., 20 : 8

10. Ps., 73 : 77.

In most cases the departure of Jewish “vestal virgins” from the temple synchronized with their marriages, because a husband alone could relieve the devotee of her vows:

And if she be married to a husband while the vows are upon her if her husband disallowed her on the day he heard it, then he shall make her vow of none effect.¹

To continue, Hanna having vowed to dedicate her child to the temple for life was disappointed when she realized that she had given birth to a daughter.²

So when she brought it forth, she said: My Lord! surely I have brought forth a female—and Allah knew best what she had brought forth and the male is not like the female—and I have named her Mary, and I commend her and *her offspring* into Thy protection from the accursed devil.³

This incident must have taken place when Mary was a few days old, for she is mentioned by name. The fact that Hanna had given birth to a daughter did not deter her from fulfilling her vow, and she here commends Mary and *her offspring* to the protection of God. It is obvious therefore, that Hanna knew that as a girl Mary could remain in the Temple only for a limited period, and she also knew that after that period Mary would have to marry according to Jewish traditions. That is why Hanna did not commend Mary alone to the Lord, but *her offspring* also.

Zacharias belonged to the priestly tribe of Abijah and, as a Prophet of God, was also the high priest. Now according to the New Testament, Zacharias was living at Bethabara,⁴ on the eastern bank of the Jordan. This place, as traced by modern explorers, lies to the east of Nazareth,⁵ the place to which the parents of Mary belonged. Zacharia’s wife Elisabeth was a cousin of Mary.⁶

It is, therefore, but natural that Mary in her tender years, after the weaning period, should have been entrusted to the care of the spiritual head of the family, Zacharias. The Holy Quran says:

And mention Mary in the Book; when she drew aside from the family to an eastern place.⁷

The words an *eastern place* refer to a place in an eastern direction from her house,⁸ In fact the reference is to the residence of Zacharias which was to the east of Nazareth. This is made clear in the following words:

So her Lord accepted her (Mary) with a good acceptance and made her grow up a good growing and gave her into the charge of Zacharias.⁹

1. Nu., 30: 6-8, R.V. p.202.

2. This is a parenthetical (*jumla mu'tariza*) statement.

3. The Holy Quran, 3 : 36.

4. John, 1 : 28

5. Peake, *Commentary on Bible*, 749.

6. Luke, I: 36

7. The Holy Quran, 19 : 16-17

8. Shahab-ud-Din Abul Fazal Al-Sayed Mahmud-ul-Alusi Al-Baghdadi, *Tafsir Ruh-ul-Ma'ani*, Vol. 5 : 164

9. The Holy Qur'an, 3 : 37

Without referring to any material details of her life at the temple,¹ the Holy Quran suddenly introduces the next important event in her life in the very next verse:

So she took a veil (to screen herself) from them.²

The word translated as *veil* is *hijab*. It also means cover, protection or seclusion. Among the Jews protection was granted by the parents to their daughters, by a sponsor to his ward, by a husband to his wife. Young unmarried women lived in apartments set apart for them which were not visited by men who were strangers to the family or even by male relations beyond certain degrees; and when young women were obliged to go out, they were always veiled and never appeared uncovered. By way of illustration, the case of Amnon, the son of David, may be cited. He conceived a violent passion for Tamar, but he could not even converse with her alone, because she was a virgin and lived in the innermost part of the palace. He had to deceive the King to get permission for Tamar to come out and see him.³ The seclusion of young women is also referred to in the Psalms.

The Quranic reference to Mary having taken a veil really indicates that she had secluded herself and left the temple building as she had attained the age of puberty.

This verse, therefore, merely points to her physical condition. We are then told that angels appeared to her and the conversation which took place between Mary and the angels is next recorded. I may mention here that verse 41, beginning with *wa iz qalat-al-malaikatu* (and the angels said) really describes the same event. Therefore, the second *iz qalat*, is a continuation of the first *wa iz qalat* and what is contained in verses 42 and 43 is really parenthetical. Thus Zamakhshari, in his Commentary, while explaining the second *iz qalat*, says that it is explanatory of the first *wa iz qalat*, and goes on to observe that the second is a *badal* (substitution or standing in place) of the first. He puts a question to himself and answers it: "If you ask me with what is connected (the second) *iz qalat*: I say that it is a *badal* of (the first) *wa iz qalat*."⁴ This is of particular importance as we must not read verse 43 as mentioning an event which had taken place before the facts mentioned in verse 44. They really follow them.

I give the relevant portions of the conversation as contained in the two chapters:

1. Some details are given 3 : 37. We are told that whenever Zacharias entered the sanctuary he found food (the offering of worshippers) with Mary. Zacharias on seeing this food used to ask: "O Mary! whence comes this to thee?" And her natural reply was: "It is from Allah: surely Allah gives to whom He pleases without measure." This reply of Mary has been made the subject of a legend which finds support only in Christian sources to which I have already referred in (*Ubi Sup.*, p.133) and which is nowhere supported by the Holy Quran or any authentic saying of the Holy Prophet. Her reply was in fact the reply of any devout person who believes that Allah is the

Sustainer of all, and that all sustenance comes from Him. See *Tafsir-i-Kabir* where this point is made clear under this verse (Vol. 2 : 444-445). Abu Ali Al-Jabai states in his *Tafsir* that Zacharias used to question Mary as he, being her guardian, wanted to be certain that the person who had supplied Mary with food had no improper motives (Vol.2 : 444).

2. The Holy Qur-an, 19 : 17

3. Sam., 13 : 1-22.

4. Zamakhshari, *Tafsir Kashshaf Jarullah*, Vol. 1 :305, see also *Tafsir-i-Baizawi*, Vol.1 : 9 of *Sura Al-i-Imran*.

(*Wa iz qalat-al-Malaikatu*) And when the angels said, surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and selected you as above the women of the world. . .¹ (*Iz qalat-al Malaikatu*) When the angels said: O Mary! surely Allah gives you good news with a word from Him (of one) whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter and (he shall be) of those who are made near (to Allah).²

Then We sent her Our *inspiration* and it appeared there to her like a well-made man.³ . . . He said, I am only a messenger of Thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son.⁴

This conversation, as well as that which follows between the angels and Mary really took place at a time when she had left the temple but was still under the guardianship of Zacharias, and at a time when the question of her second *kifalat* (marriage) was being decided. The sandwiching of this event (verse 43) in between the conversation can lead to no other conclusion. Further, the conversation was in a vision only. The word *tamassala* used in verse 17 of Chapter 19 gives the clue. It signifies *assuming the likeness of another thing*. I am supported in this by the well-known commentator Baizawi who describes the conversation in verses of Chapter 3 as a revelation and says that it was not a direct talk.⁵ Similarly, the conversation recorded in Chapter 19 was an apparition and not a direct talk.⁶ Maulvi Abul Hassan Hossaini of Kakori, while commenting on these verses, says that the angels did not have direct talk with Mary and that the angels talked to her in a vision only.⁷

It is noteworthy that the appearance and talk was of *angels* and not of an angel. I draw attention to this fact because it has been alleged that Mary had conceived supernaturally, through the agency of this angel.

The reaction of Mary on receiving this news was somewhat similar to that of Zacharias. She also pleaded her physical difficulty. She said:

Whence shall I have a boy, and no mortal has yet touched me nor have I been unchaste? He said, *so shall it be*; your Lord says, It is easy for Me.⁸

This doubt of Mary is also expressed in Chapter 3 in the following terms:

My Lord, whence shall there be a son (born) to me, and man has touched me not? He said: Even so (*so shall it be*). Allah creates what He pleases. When He has decreed a matter, He only says to it Be and it is.⁹

The word *Kazalik* (*so shall it be*) is used in two places in both the chapters. In Chapter 19 it is suffixed in both the verses: 9 and 21, with a small *jeem*. This indicates

1. The Holy Quran, 3 : 42.

2. *Ibid.*, 3 : 45.

3. The Holy Quran, 19 : 17.

4. *Ibid.*, 19 : 19. Translation by Yusuf Ali.

5. *Tafsir-i-Baizawi*, Vol.1 : 9 of Sura Āl-i-Imran.

6. *Tafsir Ruh-al-Ma'ani*, Vol. 5 : 166.

7. Abul Hassan Hossaini, *Ahwal-ul-Ambiya-fi-Tazkiratul Azkiya*, Vol.1 : 700.

8. The Holy Quran, 19 : 20-21. (Translation by Yusuf Ali).

9. *Ibid.*, 3 : 47.

that the reader ought to pause here while reciting these verses. It is meant to convey that the sentence has been completed. This small *jeem* is inserted to avoid confusion or intermingling of the preceding words with those that follow. A mere ending of the verse here would not have made this idea prominent. It is for this reason alone that a small *jeem*, a “stop,” was inserted. The insertion of this small *jeem* really indicates that the reply (*so shall it be*) is complete in itself, and the sentence which follows it, is only an elaboration of it. I will presently explain its significance.

I must now refer to Chapter 21, entitled *The Prophets*. It is so called because it mentions the various Prophets and chosen of God who had made certain specific prayers under particular circumstances. The Holy Quran explains in this chapter how their prayers had been granted. For example, we are told that when Abraham had prayed for a son, his wife was given the good news of the birth of Isaac and of a grandson Jacob, she had said:

O, wonder! shall I bring forth a son when I am an extremely old woman, and this my husband an extremely old man?¹

In this chapter we are told that the prayer of Abraham having been heard, her defect was removed, and Isaac was born and then he begat Jacob.²

A little further on the prayer of Zacharias is mentioned. We are told:

And (as to) Zacharias when he cried to his Lord: Leave me not alone (without offspring) and Thou art the Best of those who inherit. Then We responded to him and gave John and we cured his wife for him.³

Let me pause here and remark that according to the Holy Quran the birth of Isaac and John was in no way super-natural. Thus the significance of the answer to Zacharias. “*Kazalik* (so shall it be) as it is easy for Me” does not imply that the physical obstacle mentioned by him had continued to subsist and that in spite of this obstacle John was born. *Kazalik* (so shall it be) was merely meant to convey that the physical obstacle did exist at the time of the conversation, but that it would subsequently be removed as this was an “easy matter” for God. Thus *Kazalik* (so shall it be) in fact indicates that a son would be born in the very manner in which Zacharias contemplated that the birth could take place, or in other words it was meant as a prophetic utterance that the obstacle referred to would be removed. The violation of any natural Law of God was not contemplated nor was a super-natural or immaculate birth foretold: for the way or the means adopted for granting the prayer of Zacharias are clearly indicated in this verse, to wit, *his wife was cured and made fit for him*.

The same phrase *Kazalik* (so shall it be), with a small *jeem* after it, is found in Verse 21 of Chapter 19, and which deals with Mary. The commentator of *Tafsir Ruh-al-*

1. The Holy Quran, 11 : 72

2. *Ibid.*, 21 : 72

3. *Ibid.*, 21 : 89-90. Translation by Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar. The same significance is given in *Tafsir Ruh-al-Ma'ani*.

Ma'ani gives four different meanings of the word *Kazalik*. Dealing with the third meaning, he says that it is a predicate and its subject is *al-amr* which is in fact *mahzuf* (omitted) in the text. With this subject he says the sentence would be *qala al amru Kazalik: And he said, so shall (like what you say) the matter be*. He further states that these words merely assert that the preceding sentences (the obstacles mentioned by Zacharias and Mary) in themselves give the indication how the *matter* shall take place.¹

Thus if we give the same meaning to *Kazalik* (*so shall it be*), to wit, that the physical obstacle mentioned by Mary did exist at that time but that it would be removed, the words *Kazalik* (*so shall it be*) would signify that Mary was to give birth to a son in the very manner, through marriage, in which she knew a son could be born. That is why, while Mary talked in the *present* tense, the angels always spoke in the *future* tense.

The prayer of Hanna regarding Mary and *her offspring* had been granted.² We have, therefore, a right to expect that the Holy Quran should explain how the obstacle mentioned by Mary had been removed. This explanation is again to be found in the chapter entitled: The Prophets (21). In this chapter we are told:

And she (Mary) *who guarded her chastity*, so We breathed into her of Our inspiration and made her and her son a sign for the nations.³

In another place we find another similar passage:

And Mary, daughter of Amran, *who guarded her chastity*, so We breathed into him of Our inspiration and she accepted the truth of the words of her Lord and His Books, and she was of the obedient ones.⁴

The words *allati ahsanat farjaha*, which have been translated in both the verses as *who guarded her chastity*, furnish us with a key to the solution. *Farjaha* merely refers to pudendum. The word *ahsanat* is derived from the root *hasan* meaning a fortress; it also means a virtuous, a chaste or *married woman*.⁵ As a verb *ahsanat* would mean: she was or became continent or chaste, or she abstained from what was unlawful, or indecorous.⁶ Lane, on the authority of the *Mughrib* of El-Mutarrizee, the *Misbah* of El-Feiyomee, the *Sihah* and the *Qamoos* says that *ahsanat* also means "she became married or she had a husband."⁷

The *Lughat-i-Kishori* also gives the same meaning.⁸ The *Lisan-ul-Arab* also states *ahsanat imra'at* means that the woman got married or passed into the protection of her husband.⁹ In *Taj-ul-'Arus* under the word *hasan* the learned author, while dealing with the very words of the Holy Quran which occur in these two verses: *allati ahsanat farjaha*, says:

1. *Tafsir Ruh-al-Ma'ani*, Vol. 1 : 547.

2. The Holy Quran, 3: 37.

3. *Ibid.*, 21 : 91.

4. *Ibid.*, 66 : 12

5. *Lughat-i-Kishori*, 154.

6. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Vol. 1 : 586.

7. *Ibid.*, 1 : 586

8. *Lughat-i-Kishori*, 154.

9. *Lisan-ul-Arab*, Vol. 16 : 275.

In the *Quran-i-Majid* there occurs *allati ahsanat farjaha*: such a woman can be called a chaste woman or a married woman but the real meanings are a continent and a *pregnant woman* because pregnancy protects her from a man going into her.¹

Lane also explains that *allati ahsanat farjaha* means a woman who guarded her pudendum from that which was unlawful or indecorous or one who “*protected her pudendum by marriage.*”²

In the Holy Quran itself the word, *Muhsanat*, which is derived from the same root, has been used for married women.³

Thus by using the word *allati ahsanat farjaha* the Holy Quran clearly conveys that Mary was married subsequently and had *offspring* as prayed for by Hanna, her mother, and thus her prayer was granted.

But apart from the meaning of these words, there is in the Holy Quran another reference to the marriage of Mary. We read:

This is of the announcements relating to the unseen, which We have revealed to you (O Muhammad) and you were not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Mary *in his charge*, and you were not with them when they contended one with the other.⁴

The word *yakfulu* which is translated as *should have in his charge* is derived from *kafeel* which means a person who makes himself responsible for another.⁵ Now Mary, according to the Holy Quran, had already been given “into the charge of Zacharias.”⁶ The question, therefore, of another person being put “in charge” of Mary could not have arisen during his lifetime. But the Holy Quran mentions this second *kifalat* apart from and independent of the guardianship of Zacharias. We know otherwise also that this question did arise a second time while he was alive.⁷ Besides, there must be some reason for her to leave the temple and for Zacharias to have given up of her charge. Zacharias as a high priest could not leave the temple⁸, but Mary on account of her puberty had to leave the place.⁹ Her parents had died and she had no other relations. It was for these reasons that another person, who should be responsible for her, had to be found. I again refer to the author of the *Tafsir Ruh-ul-Ma’ani*. While commenting on this very verse and discussing the question: whether lots were drawn at the time of Mary’s childhood or when she had grown up, he says:

The lots were drawn at the time of her puberty and because (for this reason) Zacharias had been rendered helpless and could not be her guardian (any longer).¹⁰

1. *Taj-ul-'Arus*, Vol. 9 : 179.

2. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Vol., 1 : 586.

3. The Holy Quran, 4 : 24

4. The Holy Quran, 3: 44.

5. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Vol.7 : 3001.

6. The Holy Quran, 3 : 37.

7. *Ubi. Sup.*, p. 134.

8. Lev., 21 : 12.

9. The Gospel of Mary, see Yrjo Hiren, *The Sacred Shrine*, 137, 201. See also *Tafsir Ruh-ul-Ma’ani*, Vol. 1 : 581.

10. *Ubi. Sup.* p. 134.

And why should so many people have “contended one with the other?” The mere fact that a Divine oracle (casting of pens or rods) had to be resorted to, indicates that the occasion was a solemn and religious one.¹ I have already stated that Zacharias himself sent for the bachelors of Israel in the locality and they all contended one with the other² for her hand in marriage as her father was a rich man³ and her parents had died.

Zacharias had to draw lots by invoking the Divine oracle in the usual prescribed manner by means of pens⁴ in or near the river Jordan and the Divine oracle pointed to Joseph, the carpenter, as the only suitable person who should be given of her charge. She was, therefore, married to him. Abu Jafar Muhammad Ibn-i-Jarir At-Tabari⁵ while commenting on this very verse, says that with the passing of time Zacharias had to give up charge of Mary. He consequently sent for the children of Israel and invited them to take over charge of her. Lots had to be drawn. “The lot pointed to one of them who was a carpenter. . . .The charge of Mary was entrusted to him. From hence onwards he used to provide her with sustenance and she lived with him.”⁶ Ibn-i-Jarir cites Muhammad bin Ishaq, one of the most authentic narrators of Hadith, as his authority for these facts.

I now quote once again the same verse:

And she (Mary) who guarded her chastity (by marriage), so We breathed into her of Our *inspiration* and made her and her son a sign for the nations.⁷

With this interpretation, the next incident narrated in the Holy Quran, which deals with her pregnancy, becomes very clear:

So she conceived him; then removed herself with him to a remote place.⁸

Let me quote here a saying of Imam Wahab Ibn-Munabba which is quoted both by Imam Saalabi in his world-famous Commentary the *Arais* and also by Imam Shahab-ud-Din Abu Fazal Al-Syed Mahmud-ul-Alusi Al-Bahgdadi in his *Tafsir-i-Ruh-ul-Ma’ani*:

When Mary became pregnant her cousin (uncle’s son) called Joseph, the carpenter, was with her and they both left for a temple towards Mount Tabor and they were both pious and he was the first to know of her pregnancy and he had not been separated from her for a minute.⁹

The saying of Imam Wahab Ibn-i-Munabba clearly indicates the relationship of Joseph and Mary to be that of a husband and wife.

1. Hos., 4 : 12. See also Isa., 11 : 1.

2. The Holy Quran, 3 : 44.

3. *Tafsir-i-Kabir*, Vol. II: 453.

4. There were different methods of casting lots: by the sacred rods (Hos., 4 : 12) by arrows (Ezek., 21 : 21). The pens here may stand for rods (or reeds) or arrows.

5. *Tafsir Ibn-i-Jarir*, At-Tabri, Vol. 3 : 149.

6. *Tafsir Ibn-i-Jarir*, At-Tabari, Vol. 3 : 152.

7. The Holy Quran, 21 : 91.

8. *Ibid.*, 19 : 22.

9. *Tafsir-i-Ruh-al-Ma’ani*, Vol. 5 : 69. The name of the mountain is given as *Jabal Sa’hun*: which stands for Mt. Tabur. For going to Bethlehem in Galilee from Bethabara they had to cross Mt. Tabor.

The word “conceived” in Arabic is *hamalat*. I have already explained how according to the Holy Quran a conception takes place:

He it is Who created you of a single kind, and of the same (kind) did He make his mate, that he might incline to her; so when he *covers her*, she conceives a light burden.¹

The marriage of Mary and the conception of Jesus thus took place at or near the residence of Zacharias. She had to stay there for some short time as she was charged with the completion of the Dividing Veil,² during which time Joseph took a vow of separation.³ Thereafter she left with Joseph for his village Bethlehem en Nasoriyah in Galilee, “a remote place” from Bethabara.

As the time of delivery approached it was but natural that in keeping with Oriental traditions, Mary should return to Elisabeth her cousin. She had to pass on her way through her own town Nazareth. I have already mentioned that Jesus was born at Nazareth and not at Bethlehem-Judah, as Christians would have us believe. It is obvious, therefore, that her labour must have started as she reached that place. She was but human and suffered the pangs of an expectant mother. She had nowhere to go and must have taken refuge in the grounds of a temple on the hill. The Book says:

And the throes (of child-birth) compelled her to betake herself to the trunk of a palm-tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died before this, and had been a thing quite forgotten! Then (a voice) called out to her: Grieve not, surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you. And shake towards you the trunk of the palm-tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates. So eat and drink and refresh the eye.⁴

The palm-tree stands for food as it was the chief source in that country of sustenance for life.⁵

In those days in Palestine, temples were usually built on hills, and Nazareth was in the time of Jesus on a hill. These temples had palm-trees and springs in their grounds. Thus we read in Ezekiel of a stream flowing out of God’s sanctuary.⁶

These references really indicate that Mary at the time of the birth of Jesus needed sustenance and her husband was comforting her.

These verses are most significant. The utterance of Mary is incompatible with the Virgin Birth theory. Every mother who conceives in the ordinary way is ordained to bring forth her children in sorrow.⁷ The reference to the throes of child-birth clearly establish that an ordinary human child was coming into the world and that no extra-

1. The Holy Quran, 7 : 189.

2. Prot. Jac., 13 : 1; cf. Ex. 26 : 31.

3. *The Gospel of Mary*. See Yrjo Him, *The Sacred Shrine*, 205, cf. Nu., 6.

4. The Holy Quran, 19 : 23-26.

5. Cf. Jd., 4 : 5.

6. Ezek., 47 : 1-2, see also Nu., 19 : 1-12.

7. Gen., 3 : 16.

ordinary circumstances attended the birth of Jesus. If the conception was immaculate the delivery ought to have been without “sorrow”. Besides, if, to her knowledge, the conception was without male agency, and without her volition, her anguish and regrets become incompatible with her character as portrayed in the Holy Quran. Why should she have given vent to such feelings and have wished that she were dead? No, in her moment of extreme trial, she felt like any ordinary human being.

And here ends the Quranic version of the birth of Jesus. Thus according to the Holy Quran Jesus was born of a woman like any other human child.

Christian critics of Islam raise various objections and try to justify their foolish dogmas by wrongly interpreting certain verses by attaching special meaning to the words of the Holy Quran. I will now deal with these objections.

1. Jesus has been described in the Holy Quran as a Kalimah (word) of God and a Ruh, inspiration, revelation or spirit of God and as a sign of God into whom the spirit of God was breathed. It is, therefore, urged that Jesus had no father.

The relevant verses are:

O, followers of the Book: do not exceed the limits in your religion, and do not speak (lies) against Allah, but (speak) the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, is only an apostle of Allah and His *word* which He communicated to Mary and an *inspiration* from Him.¹

The Arabic words are *Kalimah* and *Ruh*. *Kalimah*, a word from Allah, stands for a prophecy of God; and Jesus was born in accordance with a prophecy from God to Mary. This word is frequently used in the Holy Quran to mean a prophecy. Thus the promise given to Zacharias was “*a word* from Allah,”² and John was the verifier of that *word* because his birth brought about the fulfilment of that prophecy. A comparison with another verse makes the position perfectly clear:

And Mary, the daughter of Amran, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into him of Our *inspiration* and she accepted the truth of the *words* of her Lord and His books, and she was of the obedient ones.³

Speaking of Mary the Book says that “she accepted the truth of the words of her Lord.” Thus here Mary is the verifier and not Jesus. The only meaning that can be given to the word *Kalimah* in the verse is the prophetic *words* of her Lord, i.e., the Divine inspiration which she received from God relating to the birth of Jesus. It is noteworthy that the *inspiration* is breathed into *him*, i.e., Jesus.

The Holy Quran in numerous places speaks of the *word* of Allah to indicate Divine revelation, and the context in those places shows that Divine prophecies are

1. The Holy Quran, 4 : 171. See also 19 : 17; 21 : 91.

2. *Ibid.*, 3 : 39.

3. *Ibid.*, 66 : 12. See also 3 : 45.

meant.¹ Further, all creatures have been declared to be *words* of Allah.²

Jesus was spoken of as a “sign” of God as in the case of his birth a difficulty had to be removed. But even so, all prophets of God have been spoken of as “signs” of God because they, like Jesus, bring with them Divine arguments and revelation.³ The creation of the heavens and the earth,⁴ the creation of night and day⁵ and the creation of man himself⁶ have been described as “signs” of God.

I have already explained that the Book speaks of Divine *inspiration* or spirit having been breathed into *him*.⁷ Evidently the word *him* cannot refer to Mary and this personal pronoun has been taken by commentators like Imam Fakhruddin Razi to refer to Jesus.⁸ Therefore the verse means that Mary gave birth to Jesus who received Divine inspiration. It would make no difference if the word *Ruh* is taken to mean *spirit* for we are told that the spirit of God is breathed into every man:

Who made good everything that He has created, and He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract of water held in light estimation. Then He made him complete and *breathed into him of His spirit*, and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts; little it is that you give thanks.⁹

Again speaking of the creation of man the Book says:

And when your Lord said to the angels: surely I am going to create a mortal of the essence of black mud fashioned in shape. So when I have made him complete and *breathed into him of My spirit*, fall down making obeisance to him.¹⁰

These verses indicate that man is made complete only when Divine *inspiration* or *spirit* is breathed into him. Thus if Divine spirit was breathed into Jesus, it does not prove that he was born without a father. In fact Lane says that *breathing of spirit* signifies *quickenning with spirit*.¹¹ In dealing with the relevant verses regarding breathing of spirit into Jesus, Imam Fakhr-ud-Din Razi attaches this very significance to these words.¹² But the real interpretation is inspiration, for Divine revelation has been called *Ruh*¹³ and the Holy Quran itself has also been named as such.¹⁴ The Holy Quran also refers to Jesus being strengthened by *Ruh-ul-Qudus*,¹⁵ but it is not a special attendant of Jesus for the faithful followers of the Holy Prophet were all strengthened and attended by the Divine spirit¹⁶ and we have on record that the Holy Prophet addressing Hasan bin Sabit said:

And Ruh-ul-Qudus is with you.

1. The Holy Quran, 6 : 34, 115; 10 : 64.

2. *Ibid.*, 18 : 109.

3. *Ibid.*, 2 : 87, 253.

4. *Ibid.*, 2 : 164.

5. *Ibid.*, 3 : 190.

6. *Ibid.*, 30 : 20.

7. *Ibid.*, 66 : 12.

8. *Tafsir-i-Kabir*, Vol. 8 : 176.

9. The Holy Quran, 32 : 7-9.

10. The Holy Quran, 15 : 28-29. See also 38 : 71-72.

11. Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon.

12. The Holy Quran, 21 : 91 and 66 : 12. See Imam Fakhr-ud-Din Razi—*Tafsir-i-Kabir*, Vol. 6 : 130 and Vol. 8 : 176.

13. The Holy Quran, 16 : 2; 40 : 15.

14. *Ibid.*, 42 : 52.

15. *Ibid.*, 2 : 87, 253.

16. *Ibid.*, 58 : 22.

2. *The Holy Quran does not mention the name of the father of Jesus.*

I have already stated that the Holy Quran is not a book of history. There was no necessity for Joseph's name to have been mentioned. The name of Zacharias's wife is omitted. There are other Prophets of God, Moses for instance, whose fathers' names have not been mentioned. The name of the father of the Holy prophet is not mentioned.

The reference to Jesus as son of Mary was really to indicate: firstly, that Mary was a chosen one of God and thus her character was cleared of the allegations made against her: and secondly, to indicate that Jesus was born of woman. This in itself established that Jesus was neither God, nor son of God, for one born of a woman can never be God.¹ There was yet another reason. For purposes of identification, the Jews used to couple a man's name with that of his father. But in this case they were faced with a difficulty. *Joshuah* (Jesus) was a very common name among the Jews and so was *Yusuf* (Joseph.) Thus *Joshuah ben Yusuf*—Jesus, son of Joseph— would have failed to achieve the desired result. I give but one instance. Barabbas who is mentioned by Pilate in the trial proceedings was also named Jesus.² The name of his father was also Joseph, the Teacher. To avoid confusion, Pilate referred to him as Barabbas (son of a teacher). It is because of these peculiar circumstances that Renan in his *Life of Jesus* says:

Joseph had died before his son had assumed any public position. Mary remained in a manner the head of the family and this explains why Jesus, where it was desired to distinguish him from others of the same name, was most frequently called *Son of Mary*.³

I may mention that the *Fatimids* are called after Hazrat Fatimah, the daughter of the Holy Prophet, and not after her husband Hazrat Ali for similar reasons.

3. *There is no mention in the Holy Quran that Jesus had a father.*

Those that urge this objection, really expose their ignorance of the Holy Quran. The Book says:

And this was Our argument which We gave to Abraham against his people; We exalt in dignity whom We please. Surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing.

And We gave him Isaac and Jacob, each did We guide, and Noah did We guide before and of his descendants, David and Solomon and Job, and Joseph and Moses, and Aaron, and thus do We reward those who do good (to others).

And Zacharias and John and Jesus and Elias; every one was of the good;

And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot and every one We made to excel (in) the world.

1. Job, 25 : 4.

2. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*,

716. See also Peake's *Commentary on the Bible*, 772.

3. Renan, *Life of Jesus*, 42.

And from among *their fathers* and *their descendants* and their brethren, and We chose them and guided them into the right way.¹

Jesus, among other Prophets of God, is spoken of as a descendant of Abraham. Without a father he could not be styled as such. But this is not all. Some eighteen Prophets have been mentioned by name in these verses and *their fathers* are also mentioned. The last verse (88), which deals with their fathers, must be taken “to refer back to all the four groups.”² If Jesus according to the Holy Quran had no father, his name ought not to have been included in any of these groups— for the Holy Quran refers to the fathers of all the eighteen Prophets mentioned in these verses. It is contended that the word *Aba‘him* means paternal grandfathers, and not fathers. This is incorrect, but in any case it would be to argue the ridiculous, for there can be no paternal grandfather without a father.

4. *The following verses of the Holy Quran are relied upon to prove that Jesus had no father:*

Then with him (Jesus) she (Mary) came to her people *carrying him* (with her). They said: O Mary! surely thou hast brought a great evil. O sister of Aaron! thy father was not a bad man, nor was thy mother an unchaste (woman). Thereupon she *pointed towards him*. They said, How can we speak to one who *was* a child in the cradle? He said: Surely I am the servant of God, He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I be, and He has ordered me prayer and (to give) alms (poor-rate) so long as I live, and (He has) made me good to my mother, and He has not made me *rebellious*, unhappy.³

It is urged that these verses, follow, as they do, the reference to the birth of Jesus, indicate that when Mary came to her people *carrying him* in her arms, they charged her with adultery because she had given birth to Jesus while she was unmarried. If such had been the case, it is surprising indeed that neither Mary nor Jesus refuted this charge. Besides, as a result of this accusation Mary should have been stoned to death. The fact that she was not, conclusively establishes that they had not charged her with adultery.

To begin with, the word *tahmilahu* (carrying him) does not mean “carrying him in her arms.” It means “carrying him on an animal.”⁴ Lane relying on the *Misbah* of El Feiyoomee translates it as carrying or mounting him on a beast.⁵ If we turn to the Holy Quran itself, we find that the same word occurs twice in another place. Some of the Companions of the Holy Prophet wanted to join an expedition. They had neither horses nor camels to ride on and came to the Holy Prophet and requested him to provide them with some animals for that purpose. The Holy Prophet could not do so and the

1. The Holy Quran, 6 : 83-87.

2. Yusuf Ali, *Translation and Commentary of the Holy Quran*, page 313, n. 207.

3. The Holy Quran, 19 : 27-32. Translation by

Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar.

4. *Lisan-ul-Arab*, Vol. 13 : 185. See also *Taj-ul-Arus*, Vol. 7 : 28.

5. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Vol. 2 : 647.

Book exonerated them from any responsibility:

Nor in those who when they came to you that you might *carry them* you said: I cannot find that on which to *carry you*.¹

This verse does not mean that the Holy Prophet was to carry them in his arms, “but rather had to take them with him, carrying them on animals.”

The verses in question really point to the fact that when Jesus entered Jerusalem he was riding on an ass;² and that Mary, with other women of Galilee, was with him.³

But the question whether Mary was carrying Jesus in her arms or on an animal can be conclusively settled if the period to which these verses refer can be determined. For this purpose we should compare these verses with verses 9 to 12 of the same chapter which deal with John. In both cases there is a gap of time, and it is evident that the Book does not mention all the details of the lives of John and Jesus. In verse 9 the news of John is conveyed. Verses 10 and 11 speak of certain instructions given to Zacharias, and in verse 12, all of a sudden the Holy Quran, directs John to “take hold of the Book,” thus indicating that in the meantime he had reached the age of prophethood. The same sequence is maintained in the case of Jesus. Verses 23 to 25 relate to the birth of Jesus; verse 26 contains directions to Mary which are somewhat similar to those which had been given to Zacharias, and verse 30 suddenly represents Jesus as saying: “He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet.” Thus both verses 12 and 30 refer to a period when John and Jesus had respectively been made Prophets of God. Jesus could have stated: “He has made me Prophet” only when he had been entrusted with the mission, and he must have already reached the age of prophethood. In any case Jesus could not have been ordered to say his prayers soon after his birth. Even if it be conceded that every child prays to God irrespective of his age, can it be urged that a child could also have been enjoined to pay the poor-rate (alms)? To comply with this command he must have had some independent means of income or must have owned some property in his own name or right. That Jesus, during his ministry in Palestine, had funds is evident from the fact that he had appointed Judas Iscariot as treasurer, or as one who, in the words of John, “had the bag.”⁴ Further Jesus said: “(He has) made me good to my mother.” How could he have been good to his mother if he was an infant? No child of that age can be of any help to himself, much less to his mother.

No, the incident mentioned in the Holy Quran refers to a period when Jesus had already become a Prophet of God, and had in fact been entrusted with the mission. He was then over forty years,⁵ or at least thirty years old as mentioned by Luke.⁶ That is why Jesus referred to himself as a servant of God in the *present* tense. But throughout the remaining part of his speech he spoke in the *past* tense. It is for these reasons that

1. The Holy Quran. 9 : 92.

2. Matt., 21 : 7; Mark, 11 : 17; Luke, 19 : 35.

3. Matt., 27 : 55-57; Mark, 15 : 40-41. Luke, 23 : 49.

4. John, 12 : 6.

5. *Ubi. Sup.*, pp. 86-87.

6. Luke, 3 : 24.

Maulvi Muhammad Ali in his Commentary¹ and also the learned author of *Tafsir Ruh-ul-Ma'ani*² state that the reference to Jesus as being “one who *was* a child in the cradle” related back to a past event and that Jesus was not a child in the cradle at the time when this conversation took place. It is therefore wrong to allege that Mary was carrying Jesus in her arms at that time.

The ministry of Jesus in Palestine, according to Matthew and Luke, lasted for one year. It was during this time that Jesus went to the temple in Jerusalem and had a talk with the Scribes and Pharisees. He then realized the impossibility of any argument or reconciliation with these authoritative exponents and leaders of Judaism. He was shocked at their shortcomings and wrongdoings and gave vent to his indignation. The violence of his language overreached all bounds, for he called them fools and blind hypocrites, serpents and vipers,³ and described them as the children of the devil.⁴ They, therefore, decided to try him and kill him.

The Sanhedrin under the Roman Law had the power to try all Jews, but it could not impose the capital sentence⁵ and it had to be confirmed by Pilate. The offence they had charged Jesus with was:

We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is an annointed king.⁶

In John the charge against Jesus is explained thus:

Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.⁷

No doubt, the charge was so framed, on false allegations, as to give Pilate his jurisdiction to impose the capital sentence. The procedure laid down in the Talmud for establishing the guilt of an accused person required that he should be questioned first. If he did not plead to the charge or admit his guilt, two witnesses had to depose to his guilt. Jesus was accordingly questioned:

The High priest then asked Jesus of his *disciples* and of his *doctrine*. Jesus answered him, “I spoke openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why asketh thou me? *Ask them which heard me*. What I have said unto them: behold they knew what I said.”⁸

It is obvious that his disciples were not present and the elders had to question Jesus about them and “his doctrine” but Jesus “held his peace”⁹ and refused to plead to the charge. Then as was required by Law:

1. Muhammad Ali, *Translation of the Holy Quran*, p.614, 19 : 29.

2. *Tafsir Ruh-ul-Ma'ani*, Vol. 5 : 174.

3. Matt., 23 : 15 : 33.

4. John, 8 : 44.

5. John, 18 : 31.

6. Luke, 23 : 2; R. V. p.1163 discloses another Christian forgery. The word *Christ* was inserted later on.

7. John, 19 : 12.

8. John, 18 : 19-21.

9. Matt., 26 : 63; Mark, 14 : 61.

The chief priests and all the council sought for witnesses against Jesus to put him to death, and found none.¹

The high priest and the elders then tried to persuade the blind man, whom Jesus had cured, to testify against him. They asked him:

What sayest thou of him; that he hath opened thine eyes? He said: *He is a prophet.*²

The blind man was thus of no help to them, and they next questioned his parents,³ but they also would not, or could not, give the desired testimony. In the absence of the other disciples of Jesus, who had all fled,⁴ they questioned Peter, through three different persons. Peter not only denied on oath his connections with Jesus but even cursed him.⁵ All this took place, as required by Law, in the presence of Jesus:

And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter and Peter went out and wept bitterly.⁶

The only person left was Mary. Speaking of the atrocities of the Sanhedrin on this occasion, Dean Milman says that they maltreated all partisans of Jesus with the terrible threats of excommunication and the timid believers and his relatives, including Mary, were put before this awful tribunal, and when questioned refrained from saying anything, lest their testimony should be used against Jesus; but they one and all referred it to Jesus himself for information.⁷

It is to this incident that the Holy Quran next refers:

They said O Mary! surely thou hast brought a great evil, O sister of Aaron, your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman.⁸

The mention of Mary as sister of Aaron had a far deeper significance. It was meant as an appeal to her high lineage, to her better sense of justice; for Aaron, whose descendant she was, had been the first in the line, the fountainhead of the Israelite priesthood: a saintly man bound by the Law. It was an appeal to Mary to do her duty, to uphold the Law and to support and side with the Pharisees who “sat in Moses’ seat,” even though her so doing would set her up against her own son. She was also reminded that she belonged to a noble family, the pride of Israel, and that her parents had also been virtuous and noble; and that, therefore, she was expected and ought to give the required testimony against the “great evil” which she had unwittingly brought into the world. They did not refer to Joseph intentionally. Firstly, because he was dead at that time,⁹ and, secondly, even a mention of him would have by itself suggested a defence which would have disproved the charge of Jesus being a “King of the Jews” as Joseph

1. Mark, 14 : 55 cf. Matt., 26 : 59.

2. John, 9 : 17

3. John, 9 : 18-22.

4. Matt., 26 :56: Mark,14 : 50.

5. Matt., 26 : 70-74; Luke, 22 : 56-60.

6. Luke, 22 : 61-62.

7. Dean Milman, *History of Christianity*, 272.

8. The Holy Quran, 19 : 27-28.

9. For the lamentations of Jesus at the death of his father Joseph, see *Ubi. Sup.*, p. 113.

was a “son of David”¹ and the Messiah, whom the Jews expected to be their king, redeemer and deliverer, had to be “born of the seed of the loins of David.”

The background of this form of address is purely Oriental. Jesus was spoken of as an “evil” because his deeds appeared to the Pharisees to be against the Law; it had nothing to do with the birth of Jesus.

Mary, however, quite naturally refused to answer and “pointed to him” for a reply. But the elders wanted her testimony. They had, only a short while before the trial, when Jesus was talking of Abraham, taunted him: “Thou art not yet fifty years old.”² The elders, therefore, goaded her to speak and pointed out to her in the same Oriental strain that they could not speak in her presence to one who “*was* a child in the cradle.” There was nothing extraordinary for the elders to speak of Jesus in these terms. It is noteworthy that they referred to him as one who *was* and not *is* “a child in the cradle.” They had in their own Oriental way tried to appeal to Mary once again and had applied this phraseology, a subterfuge, to induce her to speak.

Jesus realized the awkward position in which his mother had been placed. He already knew that her refusal might expose her to maltreatment by the Sanhedrin. To spare her the ordeal and suffering, and to be true to the character of being “good to his mother,” he decided to and did address the elders himself. This address was both a memorable speech and a masterpiece of advocacy.³ It is this address of Jesus which is reproduced in the Holy Quran in the verses under discussion.⁴ Had the question in issue been his legitimacy, or the conduct of Mary herself, Mary, and Mary alone, could have thrown light on it. In any case, Jesus ought to have referred to this matter in his reply. But he said nothing of the kind. The reply of Jesus becomes intelligible only if we consider it in the light of the charge which the Pharisees and elders had framed against him. They wanted to know of his “doctrine” and the charge was that he was a rebel against Caesar as he claimed to be a “King of the Jews.” Jesus, in his address explained his “doctrine” and then concluded it by refuting the specific charge. He said:

Surely I am the servant of God. He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. . . .He has not made me *rebellious*.⁵

It is, therefore, abundantly clear that Jesus was forty or at least thirty years old, and his mission had already been entrusted to him when the incident mentioned in the Holy Quran took place and that the only charge against him was that he had rebelled against Caesar; and that the chastity of Mary or the birth of Jesus was not being challenged by the Jews. These verses of the Holy Quran do not, therefore, discuss or deal with the chastity of Mary.

1. Matt., 1 : 20.

2. John, 8 : 57.

3. Lawrence, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 201.

4. The Holy Quran, 29 : 30-33.

5. *Ibid.*, 19 : 30-33, Translation by Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar: See Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon*, Vol. 2 : 375.

5. *Christian critics of Islam refer to another verse of the Holy Quran wherein it is stated that the Jews had been guilty of a great slander against Mary, and urge that the Jews could not have accused Mary of anything if Jesus had been born in the usual normal manner. They, therefore, say that it was because Jesus had no father that Jews felt compelled to question the chastity of Mary.*

The verse runs:

And for their disbelief and their saying against Mary a great slander (*buhtanan azeema*).¹

This verse (156) occurs in Ch. 4 which deals with the iniquities of the Jews generally both before and after the Ministry of Jesus in Palestine. It refers to their transgressions and recapitulates various salient incidents of Jewish refractoriness: their breach of the Covenant of Mount Sinai, their arrogance when humility was enjoined on them and their transgression of the Sabbath.² The crescendo, if that word be permitted, in the Quranic argument is remarkable. In the very next verse, we are told, that the Jews incurred Divine displeasure for their breach of the Covenant, their rejection of Allah's guidance as conveyed to them in His signs, their killing of His Messengers and their arrogantly imagining themselves to be above the Law.³ Then begins another series of their iniquities from a different point of view: that they rejected the faith, they made false charges against Mary,⁴ who was a chosen of God, and they boasted of having killed Jesus when they were in fact victims of their own hallucinations for they had neither killed nor crucified him.⁵ The Holy Quran then speaks of their punishment and the termination of His favours on them:

The coupling of the three events and the nature of their punishment speak for themselves for they show that the Holy Quran is mentioning the Jewish allegations prevalent at the time the Holy Quran was revealed and in any case to events after the termination of the Ministry of Jesus in Palestine. The Jews could only be punished for their disbelief in Jesus after the termination of his Ministry in Palestine. That they did not accuse Mary of adultery before or during the Ministry of Jesus in Palestine is a fact of history and that is why the Holy Quran speaks of it with those events which took place *after* his Ministry in Palestine.

It is worthwhile to mention here the attitude of the Jews of his time regarding the birth of Jesus. To them Jesus was a Jew born under the Law. They knew his parents, his brothers and sisters, and there are numerous references in the Gospels to both of his parents. The Jews of his time did not accept his Divine Mission. They could not dream of his immaculate conception. To them either he was a legitimate son of Joseph and Mary or he was illegitimate.

1. The Holy Qur'an, 4 : 156, Translation by Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar.

2. *Ibid.*, 4 : 154.

3. *Ibid.*, 4 : 155.

4. The Holy Quran, 4 : 156.

5. *Ibid.*, 4 : 157.

A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.¹

But Jesus not only entered the synagogues but constantly preached in them. Could the Jews of his time have suffered him to do so if they had not believed him to be a legitimate son born in wedlock under the Law? The Samaritan Chronicles disclose that the Jews of his time took Jesus to be the son of Joseph and Mary.² The Talmudic expression that “Jesus was a carpenter, son of a carpenter”³ finds support in the Rabbinical saying:

Jesus was as legitimate as any other Jewish child of Galilee.⁴

Whiston in his Dissertation I to the works of Josephus says:

All the believing Jews and all the rest of the Nazarene Jews esteemed Jesus with one consent, as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary.⁵

Hastings also says:

It is quite clear that Jesus was popularly looked upon by his contemporaries as Joseph’s son by natural generation.⁶

After taking into consideration the contemporary writing and other Rabbinical literature, the compilers of the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, say:

The Jews, who are represented as inimical to Jesus in the Canonical Gospels, took him to be legitimate and born in the ordinary natural way.⁷

The compilers of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, in discussing the birth of Jesus, say that “it is true that this (Luke 4:22) was early understood to mean the son of Joseph,” and cite Origen, who wrote his Commentary on Matthew as saying that the citizens of Nazareth believed that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary.⁸

It is obvious that the Jews among whom Jesus lived and preached did not question his legitimacy at all. They could not have, therefore, accused Mary of unchastity during his Ministry in Palestine. So long as Christians did not assert the virgin birth of Jesus, Jews did not challenge his legitimacy. It was in the second century of the Christian era that the virgin birth theory was first put forward by Christians in support of the claim that Jesus was the son of God. The pagans and Jews then retorted with their charge of illegitimacy.

The Holy Quran is only referring to this later charge, for such a charge was never made during the life-time of Jesus.

1. Deut., 23 : 2.

2. *Journal Asiatique*, (1869) 2 : 439.

3. *J. Yaban*, 3 : 2.

4. *Ab. Zar*, 3b.

5. Vol. 3 : 276.

6. Hastings: *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, 808.

7. *Jewish Ency.*, Vol. 7 : 170.

8. *Ency. Bib.*, Col. 3598.

This verse cannot, therefore, be cited in support of the virgin-birth theory.

6. *The last objection of the Christians is that the Holy Quran cites the case of Adam as a parallel to that of Jesus; therefore, Jesus, like Adam, was without a father. They urge that Jesus was created, like Adam, by a Divine Command: kun fa yakoon.*

In this connection Christian critics of Islam refer to the following Quranic verse:

Surely the likeness of Jesus is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was. (This is) the truth from your Lord, so be not of the disputers.¹

All Commentators of the Holy Quran, ancient and modern, agree that these verses, along with some others, were revealed when the Holy Prophet was having a discussion with the Christians of Najran in the tenth year of the Hijra.² This deputation consisted of sixty men and was headed by Abdul Masih, the chief of the Christians of Najran.

The discussion took place in the Mosque of the Holy Prophet where the visitors had been lodged and permitted to hold their own prayers. In *Sirat-ul-Halabi*,³ the visit of this deputation is described in full detail. The point at issue was the divinity of Jesus. Abdul Masih, the leader of the Christians, opened the discussion and enquired from the Holy Prophet:

They⁴ said: "What do you think of our Lord (*Sahib*)?"

The Messenger of God enquired: "Who is your Lord?"

They replied: "Isa. Do you take him to be a servant of God?"

The Messenger of God said: "Yes."

They then asked: "Have you seen any one like him, or have you been informed of a man like him? He is God because he had no father, he raised the dead, he gave information of the unseen, he cured lepers and made birds from clay. Consider this superiority. Do you still call him a servant of God?"

The Holy Prophet did not answer at once for at that very moment came the Divine revelation and one of the verses revealed was:

Surely the likeness of Jesus is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said, Be, and he was.⁵

1. The Holy Quran, 3: 59-60.

2. Most of the Commentators say that verses 1 to 63 of Chapter 3 were revealed at that time: some say that verses 1 to 84 were revealed at that occasion.

3. Allama Burhan-ud-Din Halabi, *Sirat-ul-Halabi*,

Vol. 3 : 4. See also *Asrar-ul-Muhammadiyah* of Ahmad Zeeni, Vol. 2 : 211.

4. The plural pronoun was used throughout to indicate that Abdul Masih was speaking on behalf of himself and his companions.

5. The Holy Quran, 3 : 59.

It may be noticed that the verse does not say that the creation of Jesus was like that of Adam. I now quote the discussion from *Tafsir Ibn Jarir at-Tabari* where it is recorded in full detail under this very verse:¹

They questioned: “Who was his father?”²

The Messenger of God replied: “*Don’t you know that no child is born but has a likeness to its father in form and appearance?*”

They said: “Yes, we know.”

The Messenger of God said: “*Don’t you know that our God is alive and will never die and Jesus had to die?*”

They said: “Yes, we know.”

The Messenger of God replied: “Don’t you know that our God is One to Whom everything submits? He is the Custodian and Guardian of all and He gives sustenance to everyone?”

They replied: “Yes, we know.”

The Messenger of God questioned: “Was Jesus possessed of any of these powers?”

They replied: “No.”

The Messenger of God then asked: “Did Jesus know of any of these things except those of which God gave him knowledge?”

They answered: “No.”

The Messenger of God said: “Don’t you know that Our God neither eats, nor drinks, nor does He answer the calls of nature?”

They said, “Yes, we know.”

Then said the Messenger of God: “*Don’t you know that Jesus was conceived by a woman just as any other woman conceives a child, then she gave birth to him like every other woman gives birth to a child, he was then reared up like other children, then he used to eat and drink and answer the calls of nature like other human beings?*”

They said: “Yes, we know.”

The Messenger of God then enquired: “How can Messiah be the One you take him to be (i.e., God)?”

1. *Tafsir Ibn-i-Jarir at-Tabari*, Vol. 3: 100-101.

2. The Christians, and the like of them, even to-day put the same question to the Muslims.

Rabi narrates that the Christians could not reply to this question, but would not agree either and insisted on their false belief. As a last resort the Holy Prophet invited them in the terms of the revelation:

But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: Come! let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women, and our people and your people, then let us be earnest in prayer and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars.¹

The Christians wanted time to consider the challenge and on the next day Abdul Masih and two of his companions informed the Holy Prophet that they had decided not to accept it, and that they would not pray against him nor invite him to pray against them. Thereupon an agreement was entered into whereby they were made free to practise their religion.

I have quoted this discussion verbatim to show how the Holy Prophet understood and explained “the likeness of Jesus is with Allah as the likeness of Adam,” and how he illustrated his interpretation of the verse by referring to two very singular facts in the life of any man: Likeness of a child with his father in form and appearance and similarity in the conception and birth of every human child. These illustrations and the likeness with “Adam” would be inapplicable if “Adam” is taken to mean the Adam of the Bible who had neither a father nor a mother. According to the Bible he was not conceived by a mother.

Besides, the verse in question is universally relied upon by Muslims to refute the divinity of Jesus. But it cannot serve this purpose if Jesus was in fact compared with the Biblical Adam, i.e., if his birth was without a father, No, the word ‘Adam’ in this verse means nothing more than a *man*. Hazrat Ibn-i-Abbas interpreted the word *Adam* in the verse as *man* for he said that man and not *Adam* (as a distinct entity) was created from dust. This verse, he said, could only be an argument against the Christians if by *Adam* is meant man.¹

It also may be mentioned that the Holy Quran does not accept the Biblical theory of the creation of Adam. Indeed, the Book does not state at all when and how Adam was born.

Imam Baqir, the great Muslim divine, is reported to have said: “Millions of Adams had passed away before our father Adam. Ibn Arabi, the great Sufi, writes in his wonderful work, *The Fatuhat*, that forty thousand years before our Adam, there was another Adam.

Again, the creation of Adam is nowhere stated in the Holy Quran. The Book does not say how he was made. Nowhere in the Holy Quran is it stated that God created *Adam* from *turab* (dust) except in the verse under discussion, and there *Adam* stands

1. The Holy Quran, 3 : 61.

2. *Tafsir Ibn-i-Hisham*, Vol.3 : 203.

for *man*. In fact, the word *turab* (dust) is used exclusively in connection with the creation of *man*.¹ Again, the creation of man alone, and not that of *Adam*, from clay (*teen*) is mentioned in the Holy Quran.² Further, the term *salsal kalfakhkhar* (sounding clay, brittle like pottery) is also exclusively mentioned in connection with the creation of *man* and not that of *Adam*.³

It is obvious, therefore, that these stages of matter through which man is to pass in its evolution of creation refer to *man* alone.

The Holy Quran speaks of *Adam* as being made a vicegerent of God on earth to whom *Iblis* refused to make obeisance.⁴ In chapter 2 the word *Adam* is used throughout,⁵ yet all commentators take it as referring to man,⁶ for man has been addressed as God's vicegerent on earth.

And He it is who has made you successors in the land.⁷

And God made all things on earth subservient to man.⁸

The following verses make it perfectly clear that in the terminology of the Holy Quran *Adam* means *man*:

And certainly We created *you*; then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: make obeisance to *Adam*.⁹

And certainly We created man (*insan*) of clay (*salsal*) that gives forth sound, of black mud fashioned in shape. . . . And when your Lord said to the angels: Surely I am going to create a mortal (*bashar*) of the essence of black mud fashioned in shape. So when I have made him complete and *breathed into him of My spirit*, fall down making obeisance to him.¹⁰

When your Lord said to the angels: Surely I am going to create a mortal (*bashar*) from dust (*teen*). So when I have made him complete and *breathed into him of My spirit*, then fall down making obeisance to him.¹¹

I may mention here that man being the vicegerent of God on earth, it is but natural that God's creation should bow before him. But according to the Holy Quran *Iblis* (*Satan*), who represents our evil inclinations, did not. *Iblis* really is the root idea of desperateness, rebellion, perversity or enmity, or, in other words, our baser passions, which lead us to do wrong and commit sin. It is also noteworthy that according to these verses the spirit of God is breathed into every man,¹² and it is this spirit which enables man to distinguish between right and wrong, and which really stands for

1. The Holy Quran, 22 : 5; 23 : 35, 82; 27 : 67;

30 : 20; 35 : 11; 40 : 67; 50 : 3; 56 : 47; 78 : 40.

2. *Ibid.*, 6 : 2; 7 : 12; 17 : 61; 23 : 12; 32 : 7; 37 : 11.

3. *Ibid.*, 15 : 26-33.

4. *Ibid.*, 2 : 30-36; 18 : 50; 20 : 116.

5. *Ibid.*, 2 : 31-37.

6. See translation by Yusuf Ali, p. 24: n. 47;

Muhammad Ali, p. 23, n. 449 / 3 : 73a..

7. *Ibid.*, 6 : 165.

8. *Ibid.*, 13 : 2; 14 : 32-34; 16 : 10-19; 22 : 65; 31 : 20; 45 : 12-13.

9. *Ibid.*, 7 : 11.

10. *Ibid.*, 15 : 26-29.

11. The Holy Quran, 38 : 71-72.

12. *Ibid.*,

knowledge and reasoning and which makes us superior to all other creations of God.

The verse which I have just quoted narrate the same events, about the creation of man and the refusal of *Iblis* to bow before him. If we compare these verses with those of Chapter 2 : 36-39, we are led to the irresistible conclusion that *Adam* and *man* are interchangeable terms and that *Adam* stands for *man*,¹ generally or as it has been said *Adam* is a symbol for *man*.² Ibn-i-Jarir also explains that “*like Adam*” means the *likeness of or like a man*.³

Therefore, when in Chapter 3: 59 God spoke of the likeness of Jesus to be like that of Adam, the reference was to man as such who had been created of *turab* (dust). In this light the Quranic verse clearly indicates that Jesus was like any other human being: and since this verse follows the events concerning the birth of Jesus, they clearly point out, in the words of the Holy Prophet, that “Jesus was conceived by a woman just as any other woman conceives a child” through a male agency.

The verse in question speaks of creation from *turab* (dust). It is the real term for or name of dust. It is a generic term which covers all its stages—dust itself, clay (*teen lazib*) and *salsal kalfakhkhar* (mud which is brittle like pottery)—the material, the physical and the spiritual stage which is reached after the Divine Spirit has been breathed into it. The reference to *turab* (dust) is really to indicate the low origin, the humility and the humanity of man, for the life-germ is one of the products of dust in the living man. The Holy Quran, therefore, uses this very term in connection with Jesus to show that like any other man he, too, was human and not Divine.⁴

The only other matter which needs consideration is the oft-recurring phrase: *kun fa yakoon*. This phrase refers to two independent stages: *kun* stands, so to say, for *amr*: command, which is premeasurement; and *yakoon* for actual creation or completion. God decides on an *amr* or in other words He commands it by saying *kun* (Be). Thus if we can postulate the primeval matter, it owes its origin to God Who is responsible for the first basis of existence “the Cause of all causes.” *Kun* is merely the commanding stage. It is a single thing unrelated to time. The next stage commences in the twinkling of an eye.⁵ There is no interposition of time or condition between the Will and its consequence, for with the command the process of creation starts to which the term *khalaqa* is to be applied.⁶ This again involves the idea of measuring and fitting into a scheme already ordained. It means that function of creation, in case of man, which is laid down in the Holy Quran itself; that is the function whereby the germ holds and gradually becomes a clot, flesh and bones and then takes the shape of man.⁷ Thus with *kun* the process of creation starts and this is represented by *fa yakoon* (and it is). But although the process of creation starts at once, yet it does not mean that it is also

1. The Holy Quran, 18 : 50; 20 : 116-126; 16 : 61-65.

2. Yusuf Ali, Translation of the Holy Quran, p. 643, n. 1968.

3. *Tafsir Ibn-i-Jarir*, Vol. 3 : 189.

4. Imam Fakhr-ud-Din Razi, *Tafsir-i-Kabir*, Vol.2 : 469. See also *Ruh-ul-Ma'ani*, Vol.1 : 585.

5. The Holy Quran, 54 : 50.

6. *Ibid.*, 7 : 54; 10 : 3; 11 : 7.

7. *Ibid.*, 23 : 12-14.

completed immediately. The Holy Quran speaks of the creation of the heavens and earth in six periods or stages.¹ Even if the word *yaum* is translated as *day* it cannot be styled as *immediate* yet *kun fa yakun* has been rightly applied to their creation; for after the command, the creation started immediately and became completed in due course of time appointed by God.² Similarly in the creation of all that we find on the earth six stages are mentioned: water,³ earth,⁴ vegetation,⁵ worms, insects, reptiles, animals,⁶ and finally man.⁷ The Book, in fact points the final evolution of man from the animal stage. The Holy Quran says:

There is no animal that walks upon the earth. . . . but (they are) genera like you.⁸

The Holy Quran also mentions six parallel stages in the physical evolution of man: dust, life-germ, clot, flesh, bones and breathing of the spirit of God in making man perfect.⁹

After the command of *kun*, the process of creation starts but the stages of creation have to be completed in due course of time.

In the case of Jesus, the *amr* or command was that Mary should give birth to Jesus. The process of creation started at once and she got married and conceived him. And after the appointed time, during which she travelled to different places, she gave birth to Jesus. *Kun fa yakoon* in her case did not and could not mean that God commanded and Jesus was born forthwith, for the Book itself speaks of his being conceived by Mary and also of the different stages of her pregnancy. That is why the Quranic reference to the second *kifalat*, which is really an indication of the marriage of Mary, is sandwiched in between the talk of the angels with Mary and the birth of Jesus.¹⁰ It is thus made clear that *Kun* was followed by *fa yakoon* or in other words as soon as the command of God to Mary is mentioned the Book itself indicates how the process of *fa yakoon* started immediately in her case by drawing up lots for the selection of a husband for Mary.

To sum up, God could have created Jesus without a father but according to the Holy Quran He did not do so and Jesus was born in the normal way. He was the son of Mary and Joseph the Carpenter.

1. The Holy Quran, 7 : 54.

2. Translation of Muhammad Ali, n.163 / 2 : 117

3. *Ibid.*, 21 : 30.

4. *Ibid.*, 18 : 37, 30 : 22 etc. (Dust) 6 : 2; 7 : 11-12 etc. (Clay) 15 : 26, 28; etc. (Black Mud).

5. *Ibid.*, 6 : 99; 10 : 24; 13 : 45; 20 : 54; 27 : 60-66.

6. *Ibid.*, 2 : 164

7. *Ibid.*, 31 : 10, etc.

8. *Ibid.*, 6 : 38. The Holy Quran also mentions that as a punishment for their insolence certain men were degraded to the next lower stage of animality i.e. commanded "Be ye apes." See *Ibid.*, 2 : 65; 7 : 166.

9. *Ibid.*, 22 : 5; 35 : 11-12.

10. The Holy Quran, 3 : 44.

ཏུམ་ལྷོ་མ་མམ་ཅུ་གམ་པའི།

མེ་གོ་པ་ལོ། མམ་ཏེ་གར་རྩ་རྩོམ་པ་ལྟར་གྲ་ལེ་འདེད་བྱེད་པ་
 སྒྲིག་པ་ ཡི་གེ་རྩིས་པའི་རྩོམ་པའི་འགྲེལ་བཤེས་པའི་རྩིས་པའི་ལེ་
 ལས་འབྲེལ་། ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་ལེ་བཤེས་པའི་ལྷན་ཁྲིམ་ལྷན་ཁྲིམ་
 བས་དེ་མཚུངས་ལོ་འགྲེལ་བཤེས་པ་། སྒྲིག་པའི་རྩིས་པའི་རྩོམ་
 འགྲེལ་བཤེས་པའི་རྩིས་པའི་རྩོམ་པའི་ལེ་བཤེས་པའི་
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The Tibetan manuscript about Jesus.
 (See Chapter 22)