

**THE BOOKS OF GOD:
From Genesis to the Final Testament**

by
M.F. Rahman

ISBN: 1-58112-896-7

UPUBLISH.COM



1998

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THE BOOKS OF GOD

FROM
GENESIS
TO
THE FINAL TESTAMENT

BY
M.F.RAHMAN

DEDICATED TO
OUR CREATOR
WHO HAS REVEALED HIMSELF
THROUGH HIS BOOKS
OF SCRIPTURE

THE BOOKS OF GOD.

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THE BOOKS OF GOD.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR.

M.F.Rahman is a "Lay-Theologist".

Not having had the benefit of either Theological training or tertiary education, he has been fortunate to have achieved sufficient self taught knowledge to challenge the world of Economics with his work "REVISED NATIONAL ECONOMICS" which propounds a revised yardstick for measuring The Wealth of Nations. This formula has by an unbelievable co-incidence been echoed in the World Bank's publication "Monitoring Environmental Progress" which appeared approximately 18 months after the publication of his own work.

He has always been an orthodox Muslim but adopts non-conformism from the Ulamaic body of thought. He performed the compulsory Hajj at the relatively young age of 32 for Muslims from his part of the world, where this is usually deferred until later in life for obscure reasons.

In addition to his work on Economics, he has published other works "The Dark Side of Business" and "Answers to Questions on Life and Religion" the latter having become incorporated to a great degree in the present work. Other writings which remain unpublished are of a largely religious nature. He wrote a regular weekly column "The Way Of Islam Series" for more than seventy weeks in the major Daily Paper of Trinidad, until a change in editorial policy caused its cessation. A major consequence of his weekly work is his Theory : "The Devolution of Man" appended hereto, which came about after one in his series was challenged by a close friend on the issue of early man's incest.

He has been called disparagingly "The Great Defender of Islam" by resentful non-Muslims in the Press Letter page, yet numbers among his closest friends many sincere Christians of various denominations.

The father of seven grown off-spring, he has a ready springboard for his ideas which are always severely tested before acceptance.

He readily confesses to having been quite disdainful of earlier Scriptures before having properly studied the Bible and the Qur'an in depth.

He no longer invites people to leave their faith, but rather to get to know their faith better through a deeper study of their own Scripture.

For a very long time, his focus and greatest interest has been the establishment of an awareness of the Totality of God's Omnipotence.

He has traveled the Sufi Path for over thirty years and owes a great deal both to his Mentor Shaikh Manzoor Hussain, Sindhee, now buried in Medina, and to his Shaikh's foremost disciple, one Joseph Francis (Yusuf), also deceased, who was a remarkable man by any standard and who taught him The Path for most of those thirty years.

THE BOOKS OF GOD.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD.

It had been my desire for many years now to write something with a view to reconciling the Scriptures, the study of which brought forcefully to me a sincere conviction that all the Books of God had a great deal in common.

Even though I had for quite sometime wanted to do this, I had not set any date, yet as has been the case with so many matters in my life, I found myself precipitated to undertake this work when a young friend brought to me a work by Maulana Imran Nazar Hosein on "The importance of the Prohibition of RIBA." My response to that work forms one of the appendices of this book.

Having responded to that work, I was almost immediately again impelled to address another work "Jihad in Focus" by no less a personage than Shaykh Imam Abdullah Bn Muhammad Humayd, of Makkah. Again, my response is another appendix hereto.

The Organization which published the latter work launched a blistering and scornful attack on my response, and started the whole ball rolling, by blithely deeming Verses of The Holy Qur'an to be abrogated and citing Ibn Abbass and others in support. That Organization is operated by Scholars trained at The University of Madina.

Simultaneously with all of this I became aware of the renewed interest in Genesis at a world level, and as a consequence, having read widely myself such authors as Karen Armstrong and Stephen Hawking, and after years of religious discussions with many sincere Christians, notably my very dear friend Terry Vieira and others, which ensured my careful study of The Holy Bible, I again felt impelled, this time around to undertake this work.

I should like to express my appreciation to all those who would remain un-named, who have contributed to my learning by participating in discussions and responding to my invitations to sit with me very often for in-depth exchange of ideas.

May all of this meet with The Pleasure of God.

M.F.Rahman.
Port of Spain,
Trinidad,
West Indies.
Dec.22, 1996.
11th Shabaan 1417 AH.

786.

PREFACE

While the Cold War has ended and nations have begun to live in virtual peace, to the extent of coming very near to accord on the nuclear question, it is a matter of supreme irony that the area in which one may have expected to have seen reflected the earliest spirit of fraternity continues to remain mired in suspicion and locked in battle. Religion, every one of which is manifestly for God, continues to divide peoples who reject each other's faiths and scriptures.

It appears that the main pastime of religious scholars, particularly in the Christian and Islamic Faiths is to disprove each other's Holy Books. Not only in recent times, we have seen theologians engaging each other in heated public debate openly criticizing each other's scripture. There are even debates and writings on which version of particular scripture is most correct.

The purpose of this book is to attempt to present to the "warring" factions a perspective that may ameliorate respective positions. My own contemplation of The Holy Bible and The Holy Qur'an, together with the reviews of other scriptures that I have been privileged to read, has brought me to a better understanding of the reasons for the various stances of the Faithful, and has made me more sympathetic to their respective positions.

It is my hope that this small effort may, by God's Grace, help to bring peoples closer in heart.

Chapter 1.

SHORT REVIEW OF THE HOLY BIBLE.

The Holy Bible needs no introduction.

Being the most published of all books, and the Scripture of at least one-third of the world's population, available in one edition or another to every nation in perhaps every language, it is the subject of scrutiny, investigation and research by a small army of scholars.

It is also the guide, consolation and inspiration of millions, as well as simultaneously being the object of attack, ridicule and mockery of many otherwise noble, God-fearing and sincere Muslims.

While Muslims in general simply disregard The Holy Bible, preferring to venerate and follow The Holy Qur'an exclusively, a handful of zealous Muslims have meticulously set about to discredit The Holy Bible in order to convince Christians that they should accept The Holy Qur'an instead.

Brother Ahmad Deedat is perhaps foremost in the war being waged against The Holy Bible, and certain Christian scholars both in the past and now at present (eminently among them - Dr. Anis Shorosh) have reciprocated by seeking to discredit The Holy Qur'an as the Word of God.

Some of the specific charges which have been leveled against The Holy Bible are that 1) it is in parts unfit for family reading, containing much lurid language and details, 2) it has been altered by its followers, 3) it is not available in its original form and text, 4) it is very inaccurate in its pronouncements on scientific matters, 5) there is not one single version but several which may differ from each other, 6) it is contradictory in its statements, 7) it paints disparaging portraits of the Prophets of God 8) it has been superseded by later scripture and is no longer necessary.

It has not helped the cause of The Holy Bible that Christian scholarship has also damaged its credibility. Yet none of the above has deterred the sincere Christian from holding on fiercely to his Scripture and from believing in everything which his Pastor or Priest interprets. Whatever desertion of The Holy Bible takes place has little to do with the success of any campaign waged against it. It remains the Sacred Scripture of all Christians, and continues to enrich many lives.

Chapter 2.

INCONSISTENCIES IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SCRIPTURE BY MUSLIMS.

The Creed of Islam requires :- Belief in The One God (Allah by Name), His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, The Day of Judgment, God's absolute Power over good and evil, and life after death in the Hereafter.

Upholders of The Holy Qur'an who simultaneously denounce The Holy Bible see no anomaly in their position. They believe in one Book of God and reject all other books as spurious, quoting selectively from The Holy Qur'an. In addition, certain particular extracts from The Bible are quoted to show how it vilifies the Prophets of God.

However, the second holiest reference for Muslims is the Ahadith collection - the Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAS) - which itself contains reports unflattering to Patriarchs, yet no less being esteemed nonetheless; to the extent that many Muslim Ulama (learned) hold that the Qur'an cannot stand alone as a perfect guide without the Ahadith. Thus the Ahadith, which Muslims do not consider a "revealed book" by any means, but merely a collection of reports transmitted through various chains of narrators, collected decades after the demise of the Prophet, is held in higher esteem than all other books except The Holy Qur'an, which claim to report God's Words to mankind. Remarkably, during his lifetime, fearful that his own words might be mixed with the Words of God, and God's Message thus diluted, Muhammad (SAS) had prohibited his own words from being recorded, commanding to be recorded only the Verses of the Revelations he received.

And while the Qur'anic text indicates that God Himself would collate, preserve, protect, promulgate and explain The Holy Qur'an (75 : 17 - 19), at no time was anything remotely similar said in respect of the Hadith collection, either in Qur'anic text or in Ahadith literature.

The presumption that God would not permit the words of the Prophet to be corrupted or misreported or tampered with or adjusted by men, or even lost is irreconcilable with the idea that God would permit His Own earlier Words to be so treated. His Words in Islam are always held in higher regard than the words of any Prophet.

Those who insist on scriptural status for Ahadith refer to the Qur'anic text 53 : 3 : - "And he does not speak of his own desire" in order to add authority to Ahadith. However, the Prophet had a will of his own as any man, and he spoke of his own free will in respect of matters outside

of Revelation. And he frequently consulted with his companions before decisions always using Intellect and Conscience as his guides, often adopting the advice of companions.

The above Qur'anic text continues "This is naught but Divine Revelation..." making this all clearly applicable to Revelations and not to Ahadith. Yet for all that, the Prophet never did speak out of his desire, but by a will unaffected by personal desire. Yet his sayings remain non-Divine regardless of transmission reliability. Among the Ahadith, there is a particular class called Hadith Qudsi, which are not merely the sayings of Muhammad (SAS) reported by his companions, but in fact appear to be the Statements of God Himself which, though not meant for inclusion in The Holy Qur'an, were reported by Muhammad (SAS) as having been said by God. These Hadith Qudsi begin with the words : "God Says...." Though weightier than other Hadith , these reports are nevertheless beneath Qur'anic status.

Support for Ahadith authority and validity is also sought in the Qur'anic text at 59:7 :- "That which the messenger gives you take, and that which he does not give you leave it alone." Yet with an unpreserved, unauthorized collection of reported sayings, one will have to admit that we would be taking what the reporters give us, and not from the Messenger, even in the best of circumstances. The truth is that this text is a specific instruction to grumbling companions who were inclined to dis-satisfaction in the division of booty after the conquest of Makkah. The Prophet allocated in such a manner as to reconcile Meccan hearts, and had to ask his companions whether they did not prefer his own company returning to Medina with them. The Divine Text rebukes the grumblers and established the authority of the Prophet, and carries no validation of his reported pronouncements on myriad matters.

However, clear unambiguous Qur'anic Texts exist regarding earlier Scriptures and the followers of these Scriptures - which Muslim Ulama prefer to suppress , disregard and misinterpret in order to discredit The Holy Bible and its adherents' faith in it.

To begin with, Muslims convince themselves that the Christians and Jews of today are not truly the Ahles Kitaab (followers of the Book) whom The Holy Qur'an venerates and elevates to Believer status. Yet there is no basis for this position, since the belief of Christians and Jews are the same today essentially as they had been at the time of Qur'anic Revelation.

Indeed it is dangerous to Islam itself to propagate this false idea of Ahles Kitaab, since if the Christians and Jews are truly Ahles Kitaab, then the Muslims would be denying their Holy Qur'an. And by denying that they are Ahles Kitaab we are saying that our Qur'an gives detailed instructions on irrelevant matters!! All of which is nonsense to contemplate.

And further, while accepting and believing that God did send previous Books to earlier peoples, Muslims generally hold that all such have become so adulterated through human editing as to be totally unreliable in present forms. The Catholic Church's position of supremacy over the Bible which it views as " a translation of a translation of a translation" (Archbishop of T & T) does not help to elevate the Bible, but instead appears to give credence to the Muslims' position. The

general attitude of smaller Churches such as Pentecostal and others, adopt the other extreme of absolute infallibility of The Holy Bible, completely disregarding the textual differences between ensuing editions and denying the idea that their respective Bibles should be best regarded as attempts to transmit what yet remains of originally oral traditions as honestly as possible. As a result, what could easily have been explained as possible Scribal errors are upheld as the pure Truth.

Chapter 3.

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS AND SOME QUR'ANIC STATEMENTS.

The purpose of this work is to bring to the attention of Muslims in particular aspects of The Holy Bible which appear to have been overlooked because of inherent bias and entirely without any authorization of The Holy Qur'an which all Muslims believe they follow. The sole original Authority upon which Muslims must rely is The Holy Qur'an and if full instructions and direction are to be found within its pages on any matter, Muslims are obliged to accept such and to act in accordance with such. It is hoped that followers of the Bible would then appreciate what the Revealer of The Holy Qur'an intends to be the behavior and attitude of Muslims to them, and reciprocal and mutual regard would follow.

The foregoing has been deemed necessary to recite since in the course of this discoursing, what may at first appear to be unflattering to The Holy Bible may need to be said, and it is hoped that no hurt would be caused nor offense taken by the Reader. Indeed, perhaps a similar apology should be also offered in advance to the Muslim readers who perhaps may need to read all of this in its entirety to avoid arriving at wrong conclusions concerning The Holy Qur'an.

To proceed : - While the smaller Churches have taken leave of the Holy Roman Church, all owe a great debt to the latter for having bequeathed the collated Bible and initiated some form of Canon Law upon which to develop. Without the Roman Church, there would not have been anything to break away from or to protest against. The great developments resulting from schisms would never have occurred.

In view of all of this, the view of the Roman Catholic Church, with deference to all the other branches of Christianity, would be taken as the norm for discussion purposes, and as being representative of Christianity - at least by right of majority .

The Catholic Church holds the Bible to be within its own right to interpret, since in its translated versions shades of meanings may have been lost, and the Church sees the Bible not errant, but in danger of being misunderstood by its readers in its present language and form.

Because of this, the Church by its centuries of study and meditations, may indeed be better qualified to determine what texts out of existing translations and versions, best retain the original Divine message and flavor. Considering that the Old Testament started out as Hebrew and then progressed through stages of Latin, Greek and English and thereafter any number of world languages, it would not surprise anyone if the human factor did produce some degree of errant variations within the texts. The New Testament was able to bypass Hebrew, starting off in Greek

by the Gospel writers.

The Old Testament had been inherited from the Jewish peoples and when taken up by the Gentiles was reviewed in the light of the Ministry of Jesus as reported in the Gospels. Such reconciliations as were made to the two Testaments were all part of the continuous development of the Church which could not find itself doing any less than it did to preserve the Word of God.

While the Christians adopted and assimilated the earlier Old Testament Books, the original recipients of those Books have rejected entirely the New Testament of the Christians, never having accepted either Jesus Christ or anything of his message. This is not to deny that many Jewish people show courtesies to Christian Scripture. Yet the Old Testament is said by the Church to contain the New testament, and the New is said to reveal the Old.

Interestingly, while the Jews do not recognize nor hold sacred either the New Testament or the Qur'an, both Christians and Muslims are required to and do hold sacred the Old Testament but prefer to disregard and even deny its validity today. And while the Christians hold sacred both Old and New Testaments following only the latter as currently valid, they totally disdain, reject and deny as do the Jews, all aspects of Islam, its Book The Holy Qur'an and its followers' Faith and practices, and its Prophet. The Muslims ,however, hold sacred but do not follow the Old and New Testaments, and believe they follow and live by the Final Testament, The Holy Qur'an. Each people accepts what preceded their scripture, but stoutly rejects whatever followed it. Indeed the Muslims stand ready to deny any and all subsequent claims of Prophethood and Revelations after The Holy Qur'an, drawing conclusive inferences from clear statements in both the Ahadith of the Prophet and in the Qur'anic Text.

Notwithstanding all of the foregoing, it is quite remarkable that should anyone take the time to study the three holy books of Judaism, Christianity and Islam not merely carefully but very objectively, the Old Testament, the New Testament and The Holy Qur'an would all reveal a commonality of objective, method , morality and idealism to a surprising extent.

Indeed, should the follower of each reflect on their respective statements, there would be found cross-references between the three which are only denied by the respective followers on the basis of extreme bias and prejudice. The learned of each Book, armed with a sense of uniqueness and even smugness, disdains any interpretation of his own text which does not exclude every other Book howsoever Divine may be its claims, preferring to hold firmly to interpretations which had been formulated long before the unfolding of events which have clarified misunderstandings so completely that all it requires is a willingness to examine. Almost without exception, most faithful consider it blasphemous to even listen to the words of other Scriptures, convinced that merely to listen constitutes a threat to their faith and a risk of falling into the snares of the devil.

Every Reader of these words may feel a sense of being quite adventurous in a religious sense, and should be heartily congratulated for daring to read anything whatever of alternative scripture. Without realizing, we abandon faith in God Who we feel will not protect us from misguidance in

the form of spurious scripture. We have a deathly fear of exposure to challenge of our faith. In this manner, we seem to believe that we are being true to our own Faith, yet what we are really doing is denying what our own Scripture has pronounced upon and given direction on.

Let us first of all examine the defects of the Muslims' perspective of his own Scripture, The Holy Qur'an.

Ask any Muslim to describe his Holy Scripture, and he would say without hesitation that The Holy Qur'an is the Final Revelation from Almighty God to Man. That it remains perfect in every respect down to every word, syllable and even letter. That it has no error or doubt in it, being unassailable Truth without any crookedness or changes or interpolations by any means. That its message is protected by God Himself. That it remains in the original Arabic of its Revelation.

Then you ask him who does he believe will enter Paradise? He would say in most instances without a blink of the eye "Muslims."

"What about Christians and Jews and Hindus?" "They will all be consigned to Hell" will be his reply.

"But does not The Holy Qur'an describe Christians as 'Ahles Kitaab'?" " Yes, yes, but that was for those people in the time of the Prophet. There no longer exist any true 'Ahles Kitaab'!!" (The term "Ahles Kitaab" means "followers of the Book" i.e. the Torah and the Gospels.)

" But does not The Holy Qur'an specifically mention Christians and Jews as Believers who will have no fear or grief on the Day of Judgment?" " Well you see... those verses of The Holy Qur'an have been abrogated."

"Really? And where in your Holy Qur'an is this abrogation established?" " Well... the learned have said this. Why Ibn 'so and so' clearly stated that those verses were abrogated. And Ibn 'such and such' agreed with him."

"But does the Qur'an confirm this abrogation anywhere in its text?" " No. But we are to obey the rulings of the learned in these matters. "

"But isn't the Qur'an perfect? How can you say it is perfect when it contradicts itself with verses which are conflicting? How can you have verses that no longer apply which are not clearly identified as such?" " No, No. there is no conflict. Those verses do not conflict. One merely abrogates the other."

"So that you are saying that even though the Qur'an states that Christians and Jews shall be safe on Judgment Day, that is not really the case?" " Well... God can have mercy on whoever He likes. You see the Mercy of God is infinite."

"So He would have mercy on Christians?" " No, no. You see Christians associate partners with God, and THAT is the one sin which the Qur'an says He will never forgive."

"And what about Jews? They do not associate partners with God. Will they go to Paradise?"

"Well...you see, the Jews have earned the Wrath of God. It says so in the Qur'an. So they are to be punished."

"So even though the Qur'an says that Jews will have no fear or grief on Judgment Day, they will in fact be punished with Hell?" " Well... it is not we who are saying so. It is God Who says so."

It is easy to see that the Muslim mentality which has already decided that only Muslims shall be safe from the fire of hell, has found a way to accomplish this in his theology by modifying the Holy Word of God in which he believes, and which he believes is perfect, with the "device" of "abrogation", even the while maintaining that this creates no conflict or anomaly with his Faith in Scriptural perfection. Since he truly believes that Christians and Jews are Unbelievers, he accepts the absurd dictum of so-called "learned" even though the Qur'an specifically warns that to obey the mis-interpretations of others instead of the clear Words of God is to regard such others as gods instead of God Himself. This immediately places such a Muslim in the very category he has placed Christians (associating partners with God), and by his own measure he consigns himself to equal perdition.

In order that the Reader might be in no doubt about the Qur'anic position on Believers and who qualifies as a Believer, regardless of what bemused Muslims may think, the following is quoted Sura 2 Verse 62 (usually rendered 2:62) [which is almost exactly repeated at 5:72] reads as follows -:

"Those who believe, and the Jews and the Christians and the Sabians, whosoever believes in Allah (The God) and the Last Day and works righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

That Muslims can dismiss such clear Divine Statements casually as being abrogated, despite the fact that the Qur'an repeats this idea frequently in its verses, and despite the reality that to give credence to such a concept is to destroy the idea of the perfection of The Holy Qur'an is a matter that defies reason and logic.

What the Qur'an claims on its own behalf concerning its verses and their purity and perfection does not permit any such idea of abrogations being retained within its pages. The principle of perfection and impregnability associated with The Holy Qur'an is such an established matter that it ought not to be necessary to quote supporting verses on this issue. Yet for the sake of completeness the following extracts are recited :-

"This for you is The Book in which there is no doubt; a guide to such as fear God." 2:2.

".... and indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it ; It is sent down by one Full of Wisdom, worthy of all praise." 41:41-42.

"...and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a guide, a mercy and glad tidings to those who bow in submission to God." 16:89.

"Verily how excellent is the teaching which He hath given you!..." 4:58.

"Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they

would surely have found therein much discrepancy." 4:82.

"We have without doubt , sent down the message ; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption.) 15:9.

"It is for Us to collect it, and to promulgate it; but when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital. Nay more. It is for Us to explain it." 75:17-19.

"These are the Verses of Revelation of a Qur'an that make things clear." 15:1.

"We have not instructed him (the Prophet) in poetry, nor is it meet for him : this is no less than a Message and a Qur'an making things clear." 36:69.

The entire Muslim world concurs with the acceptance of The Holy Qur'an as the perfected and final Revealed Word of God, and this is an understanding born out of repetitious recitation by Muslims worldwide and study of the Words of Qur'an in almost every language. Yet it seems that recitation by rote even in the most stirring of recitals has not prevented distorted ideas from being formed in the minds of its followers who seemingly disregard its clear pronouncements concerning other peoples.

The concept of The Holy Qur'an as an unrelated entity in Book form given by God Almighty specifically to Muslims with no regard being further due to what went before appears to have become the belief of its followers. They see all previous revelations as being irrelevant, errant and now unnecessary in view of the presence of the Perfected and Final Revelation extant in The Holy Qur'an. Yet this viewpoint is quite in conflict with what the Qur'an itself says on the matter, both in respect of itself and in respect of previous Divine Guidance. What is glaringly contradictory in the position of Muslims is their insistence upon the perfection of The Holy Qur'an simultaneously with their refusal to view with seriousness what it clearly states concerning other faiths and peoples and their Scriptures.

"It was We Who revealed the Torah; therein is guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews by the Prophets submissive to Allah, by the Rabbis and the Doctors of Law: For to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto...." 5:47.

"And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary confirming the Law (Torah) that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel (Injeel) : therein is Guidance and Light, and confirmation of the

Law that had come before him: a Guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah." 5:49.

"Moreover, We gave Moses The Book, favoring those who would do right, and explaining all things in detail - a Guide and a Mercy that they might believe in the Meeting with their Lord. And This is a Book which We have revealed as a Blessing :so follow it and be righteous, that ye may receive Mercy: Lest ye should say :'The Book was sent down to two peoples before us ,and for our part we remain

unacquainted with all that they learnt by assiduous study.' Or lest ye should say :'If the Book had only been sent down to us, we should have followed its Guidance better than they.'."6:154 - 157.

Despite all of the foregoing, few Muslims today believe at all that Christians and Jews have a right to hold on to their Scriptures. The general position is that with the advent of Islam, all must now become Muslims or be reconciled to eternal perdition. All of this is contrary to Qur'anic pronouncements as shall be fully discussed and detailed , God Willing, in the following pages.

However, it is interesting to note that the general Christian position is very much the same, in that it is generally held that The Holy Bible ends all that God had to say to Mankind, and that all must now accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior or perish.

In order to understand fully what is truly required of Muslims by God Almighty, we shall have to examine the Qur'anic statements concerning itself vis-a-vis other Scriptures, its statements concerning other peoples, and ultimately the very purpose of Scriptures in the first place. The obligation upon Muslims is that whatever is clearly understood from Qur'an becomes necessary for acceptance and compliance by every Muslim. It is therefore to be hoped that with the authority of Qur'anic Verses, a greater degree of tolerance and even mutual regard and love would develop inter-faiths, as is rightfully to be expected and due.

Chapter 4.

THE QUR'AN ABOUT ITSELF.

In addition to the quotations listed in Chapter 3, The Holy Qur'an makes several explanatory statements concerning its purpose, format, language, authority and position in both general and specific terms. In short, it speaks comprehensively about itself, since it must survive all future questions and challenges to its bona fides as a Divinely Revealed and thus inerrant Scripture.

Examining some of these pronouncements we read at 43:2-4 as follows :-

"By the Book that makes things clear, - We have made it a Qur'an in Arabic, that ye may be able to understand; and verily it is in the Mother of the Book, in Our Presence, high (in dignity), full of wisdom."

And at 41:43-44 , as follows :-

"Nothing is said to thee that was not said to the Apostles before thee: verily thy Lord has at His Command Forgiveness as well as a most grievous Penalty. Had We sent this as a Qur'an in other than Arabic they would have said : 'Why are not its verses explained in detail? What! (a Book) not in Arabic with an Arab (messenger)?.....'"

And again at 13:36 - 40 as follows :-

"Those to whom We have given the Book rejoice at what hath been revealed unto thee : but there are among the clans those who reject a part thereof. **Say : 'I am commanded to worship Allah, and not to join partners with Him.** Unto Him do I call, and unto Him is my return.' Thus have We revealed it to be a judgment of authority in Arabic. Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither protector nor defender against Allah. We did send Apostles before thee, and appointed for them wives and children: and it was never the part of an Apostle to bring a sign except as Allah permitted. For each period is a Book (revealed). Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth : with Him is the Mother of the Book.

Whether We shall show thee part of what We promised them, or take to Ourselves thy soul, thy duty is to make (the message) reach them : it is Our part to call them to account."

A number of logical conclusions may be drawn from the above very clear verses of The Holy Qur'an.

- ▶ That The Qur'an indeed makes things clear.

- ▶ That the Qur'an has necessarily been revealed in Arabic in order to be understood by Arabs, it being sent through an Arab Messenger. It must be noted here in passing, that even where, in the text of The Holy Qur'an verses are revealed pertaining to previous Prophets and their missions, and their speech is being reported in The Holy Qur'an, even though no previous Prophet spoke Arabic, all reported and even direct speech of all prophets and personages are rendered in the **ARABIC LANGUAGE**. This may not seem a matter requiring comment since the Qur'an itself is in Arabic and by the same logic which Allah explains for revealing it in Arabic, one would reasonably expect all of its text to be in Arabic. Yet, consider for a moment, the Jews of the day had with them their Hebrew Scriptural texts. Despite this, since the Arabs could not understand Hebrew, the Qur'an which was sent initially for them was made to contain in effect **ARABIC TRANSLATIONS OF PREVIOUS REVELATIONS FOR THE SINGLE REASON OF NECESSITY TO BE UNDERSTOOD**. The point here being that Translations of Divine Texts are essential if the message of Divine Revelations is to benefit those who are being invited to it. This is extremely important to understand if we are to pay proper regard to such Translations. The general tendency among zealots is to stress the impossibility of any translation being adequate, and despite the flexibility of language to express words, translations are generally held in poor regard. Yet proper translations are both essential and adequate for disseminating Divine Messages and while these may not necessarily be venerated in exactly the same manner as original Texts are, they do deserve regard.

- ▶ **THAT IT IS CONTAINED IN THE MOTHER OF THE BOOK WHICH IS IN GOD'S PRESENCE AND FROM WHENCE HAVE COME ALL PREVIOUS SCRIPTURES GIVEN TO PREVIOUS PEOPLES THROUGH THEIR PROPHETS.**

- ▶ The essence of Religion ("I am commanded to worship Allah and not join partners with Him") is clearly expressed, having been the purpose of every previous Revelation.

- ▶ That for each period is a Book (out of the Mother of the Book), and that Allah abrogates previous regulations as He is pleased so to do. Nowhere does Allah exclude The Holy Qur'an from being subject to later replacement. Indeed, elsewhere He has stated quite clearly that He can replace Mankind with a better race if He wished (4:133; 6:133; 14:19-20; 35:16-17; 70:40-41) . And at 6:67 He says explicitly : "For every message is a limit of time, and soon shall ye know it." The Omnipotent Allah at all times establishes His

Absolute Lordship. Later we shall see that the establishment of the Omnipotence of Allah is the underlying purpose and reason, not merely for the sending of Divine Messages of varying rules and rituals, but The Purpose for the creation of all that exists in the first place.

- ▶ The duty of the Prophet, and consequently of all of his followers, is not to ensure the acceptance of The Divine Message, but merely to ensure that it is delivered to mankind. God reserves for Himself the right to call to account all who may disregard His Messages. There is to be no compulsion in Religion.(2:256).

Even though the fact of abrogation of Revelations is stated specifically in the Qur'an at 2:106 and at 22:52, at no time is it suggested that prior Scriptures are to be discarded by their original followers to whom they had been sent. Indeed, earlier Scriptures are re-affirmed for their respective peoples repeatedly, while the Qur'an is specifically mentioned as having been sent to a people to whom no prior Warner had been sent (36:6), for presenting in turn to the world.

Its own position as a subsequent Scripture following sequentially those Revelations which had preceded it, is made absolutely clear at 10:94-95 where Allah says to His Prophet in eternal ratification : "If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading The Book before thee." The Book here is none but the same Mother of the Book of which mention is made at 43:4, from which the preceding Books had been revealed viz.: the Torah and the Gospel. Later we shall examine reference to "The Book" made in Isaiah.

Of itself the Qur'an says at 12:111 :- "It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it, - a detailed exposition of all things, and a Guide and a Mercy to any such as believe."

And again quoting 41:43 :- "**Nothing is said to thee that was not said to the Apostles before thee** : that thy Lord has at His Command Forgiveness as well as a most grievous Penalty." In essence, both the Qur'an and earlier Scriptures bring the very same Message of God's Absolute Lordship over us.

There is no attempt within the Message of The Holy Qur'an to displace the Divine Authority established in earlier Scriptures. Indeed we shall see later on, that still extant within earlier Scriptures, despite the claim of many Muslims that those have been hopelessly corrupted, there yet remain clear mention and evidence of the Qur'an and its Messenger. While God confirms that He has abrogated Laws and rituals and rites for subsequent peoples, with the Revelation of succeeding Scriptures, He has never discredited His Own Earlier Words which remain always unassailable.

Indeed, what He says of His earlier Words as attested to in The Holy Qur'an can only be hidden if one is determined to close one's mind and heart from the Truth. Let us examine some extracts

as follows :-

Sura 3:3 - 4 reads :-

"It is He Who sent down to thee in Truth, The **Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down The Torah (the Law) and The Injeel (The Gospel) before this as a Guide to Mankind, and He sent down the Criterion.**"

6:34 reads :- "There is none that can alter the Words of Allah."

6:114 - 115 reads :-"Say : 'Shall I seek for Judge other than Allah? - **when He it is Who hath sent unto you The Book explained in**

detail?' They to whom We have given The Book know full well that it (The Qur'an) hath been sent down from thy Lord in Truth. Never then be of those who doubt. **The Word of thy Lord doth find its fulfillment in truth and in Justice : none can change His Words :** for He is The One Who heareth and knoweth all."

46:12 reads :- "And before this was the Book of Moses as a Guide and a Mercy; and **This Book confirms(it) in the Arabic tongue;** to admonish the unjust, and as glad tidings to those who do right."

Regarding the Status of His Own Words over all others' He says at 9:40 :-

"But the Word of Allah is Exalted to the heights: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Wise."

And reiterating the unassailable nature of His Words, He says at 18:27 :-

"And recite what has been revealed to thee of the Book of Thy Lord : **none can change His Words.**"

From all of the foregoing it must be clear that God's Word remains exalted and even if all the copies of all the Scriptures were to be removed from the face of the earth simultaneously, His Word remains in essence and teaching with us having been "sent down" into our presence at an earlier point in time.

To better understand this, remember that **all extant scripture before their collation and publication, were all in oral form.** Some were transmitted in oral traditions for centuries before being committed to manuscripts, and eventual publication. Indeed, even though the Final Book or Testament , The Holy Qur'an, was revealed more than six hundred years after the Gospel

accounts were first written, the Qur'an was ratified and sealed by the Caliph Othman bin Affan almost seven hundred years before the first collated Bible was finally sealed by the Church in 1546 at the Council of Trent. Despite all of this, it would be entirely improper to suggest that during the time when no completed Book as such, of Scripture was available, that God's Word was not with us. Indeed, the revealed Qur'an at all times refers to itself as a Book in its verses. And it also refers to the previous Scriptures as Books, and its followers as "Followers of The Book." So how can anyone say today that only one Book remains valid while others are invalid? Or that only one is from God when that one itself affirms others as equally from God?

Let us now turn to what The Qur'an says about other Scriptures and the followers of earlier Prophets and their Holy Scriptures.

Chapter 5.

THE BIBLE ACCORDING TO THE QUR'AN.

The term "Bible" has come to mean that Book which is the Scripture of the Christian World. Yet the word "Bible" has come from a Greek word, "*Biblia*", which literally means a library, or collection of books. And in reality, The Holy Bible is in fact precisely that - a collection of books, from Genesis to Revelation, a total of 73 altogether (of which 7 of the Old Testament are disputed by a section of its followers as being apocryphal.)

The Books of the Bible span centuries and report on matters from the First Man , Adam in the Garden, through the Patriarchs and Prophets, with much detail about the Children of Israel and later, reports of the Gospel account and the ministry of Jesus Christ , and the early Church.

Very naturally, with the exception of "Revelation", none of the books appear to have been written at the instant in history in which it is set or in which its recorded events occurred. Instead, accounts having been passed down by oral transmission sometimes for centuries have come to be committed to writing in the fullness of time, when writing paraphernalia became readily available. Very early records which might have been made on primitive material have become lost in antiquity and it is much to the credit of the later writers who of necessity had to have been impelled by a great sense of awe and reverence for God, and indeed perhaps even have been inspired by Him, that they undertook this great task of committing to writing what scarcely could have held promise of material reward.

The New Testament Books, of which there are 27 in number were all reportedly written within the first century of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Yet, the task of determining exactly which books should comprise the collection which was to constitute The Holy Bible took quite a bit more time. Nevertheless, the task was eventually completed, and notwithstanding much difference of views and opinions on the matter, The Holy Bible emerged to stand firm on the horizon of Mankind . Despite continuing reviews and translations, the essential message of the Bible remains - That God is One and is to be worshipped and served through the doing of good.

In these circumstances, the most callous of skeptics must recognize the Hand of God Himself causing to be preserved that which He Willed of the events of His Creation for posterity. Indeed, if one were to deny The Holy Bible completely, it would be imperative to concede that it would have been a difficult task indeed even to begin to establish any claims of the Qur'an to Divine

Authorship, since there would have been no otherwise extant comparative scripture available to the contemporaries of Muhammad (SAS). In the absence of The Torah and The Gospels and their followers, Muhammad (SAS) himself might well have denied the Message, thinking he had lost his mind. The very Qur'an bears testimony to this :

"If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee : the Truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord; so be in no wise of those who doubt, nor be of those who reject the Signs of Allah, or thou shalt be of those who perish." (10 : 94, 95.)

When the Bible Student takes up his Bible and seeks the approach to God, if he is not to be utterly confused, he needs to remember that what he is reading was not compiled for a single people, but rather for fifty centuries or more, of Mankind through the ages. As a consequence, he must be prepared to see Laws and Commandments of varying relevance and applicability sent for several very different peoples at different times. Conflicting laws therefore are to be expected, since societies and cultures varied immensely. This is a matter which has been lost to the Muslim critic who points gleefully to contradictions in the Bible as being proof of its lacking in reliability, when he, the Muslim, of all people should know better since his Holy Qur'an makes specific reference to this :-

"To every people have We appointed rites and ceremonies which they must follow, Let them not dispute with thee on the matter, but do thou invite to thy Lord : for thou art assuredly on the Right Way." 22 : 67.

And:

"To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it , and guarding it in safety; so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an open Way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His Plan is) to test you in what He hath given you : so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute." 5 : 51.

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Not only does the Qur'an carefully explain to its followers the reason for the apparent differences in Biblical pronouncements (as above), but it asserts with absolute clarity that several Books preceded The Holy Qur'an; that some, if not all, of those Books were still with the peoples simultaneously with the ongoing Revelation of The Qur'an; that All the Revealed Books of God came out of the Mother of The Book which is with Him; that both the Jewish and Christian

peoples were in truth reading and following the same Book source; that all the Scriptures preached the same Religion; that The Qur'an is but a confirmation of the earlier Scriptures and Divine Message; and that those who had earlier Scriptures should live and judge by their Scriptures unless they preferred to accept the Scripture which Muhammad (SAS) received. In any event by Qur'anic Decree, there was to be no compulsion in Religion. Above all, any diversity to be found among mankind in religious practices was clearly to be attributed to God's Supreme Will and Decree.

The following extracts from The Holy Qur'an will bear testimony to how far Muslims have departed from the Scripture which they sincerely claim to follow by the position they take concerning The Bible and its adherents. Because of how Muslims erroneously view Christians and Jews today, much conflict results, and in place of peace and harmony, we have prevailing instead mistrust, bitterness and even growing terrorism and its consequences.

It is mandatory for Muslims who claim to be Believers above all, to believe in the earlier Scriptures :-

" O ye who believe! Believe in Allah, and His Apostle, and the Scripture which He hath sent to His Apostle, and the Scripture which He sent to those before. And who denieth Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Apostles, and the Day of Judgment, hath gone far, far astray." 4 : 136.

Muslims appear to believe that they have been relieved of responsibility to believe in the previous Scriptures when they deny all claims of the Bible to being Holy Scripture. With the protest that the Torah and the Gospels no longer exist in original form, but only in edited translations, the Bible is dismissed. Yet, there is no hesitation in accepting various Translations of The Holy Qur'an as being adequate for understanding the Message of Islam. It is readily conceded here that Muslims are very particular not to call any Translation the True Qur'an. Though it is interesting to note that many Ulama view the Arabic Text as merely a representation of the Original Qur'an which is with God.

Yet bearing in mind as earlier mentioned, that there was a time when all Scriptures were yet unwritten, though fully with mankind, it is extremely difficult to reconcile denying what claims to be a Translation of that unwritten Message of the "Followers of The Book (Ahles Kitaab)", with the clear injunctions in The Holy Qur'an to believe His (God's) Books. Surely God would not demand belief in a thing non-existent? And, far from any consideration of being non-existent, The Holy Qur'an repeatedly makes references to extant Scriptures of the Jews and Christians.

"All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, except what Israel made unlawful for itself before The Torah was revealed. Say : 'Bring ye The Torah and study it, if ye be men of Truth'." 3 : 93.

Thus was the Torah confirmed (as elsewhere) in the Qur'an as being fully extant and available to the Jews in the time of Muhammad (SAS).

And again :

"But why do they come to thee (Muhammad) for decision when they (the Jews) have with them The Torah in which is the Command of Allah?..." 5 : 46.

And concerning the Christians and their Scripture :

"Let the People of the Gospel (The Injeel) judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by what Allah hath revealed, they are of those who rebel." 5 : 50.

If clarity is desired, consider this :

"Say :O people of the Book! Ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Torah (The Law) and the Injeel (The Gospel), and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord." 5 : 71.

Turning to the common source and origin of all the revealed Books, which to begin with Originate with God Almighty, all being His Books, The Holy Qur'an states with total clarity : -

"We did send Apostles before thee , and appointed for them wives and children. And it was never the part of an Apostle to bring a sign except as Allah permitted. For each period is a book (revealed). Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth : With Him is The Mother of The Book." 13 : 38, 39.

And in a comment on the very Book as being common to both the Jews and the Christians we read at 2 : 113 :-

"The Jews say : ' The Christians have naught (to stand) upon'; and the Christians say : 'The Jews have naught (to stand) upon.' **Yet they study The Book.** Like unto their word is what those say who know not, But Allah will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgment."

The Qur'an does not speak of the earlier books as things of the past, but rather as of the present and extant :

"Has not there come to them a clear evidence of what **is in the former Scriptures?**"
20:133.

"Nay, is he not acquainted with what **is in the Books of Moses?...**" 53 : 36.

"Most surely this **is in the former Scriptures.**" 87:18.

When The Holy Qur'an addresses the Children of Israel at 2:40, it continues in the next verse with the invitation to believe in what is being then revealed with no instruction that they must at all give up their earlier Scriptures :- "**And believe in what I reveal, confirming the Revelation which is with you, and be not the first to reject faith therein...**" And a little further in Verse 44, their studying of the Scripture is acknowledged clearly :- "**Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practice it) yourselves, and yet ye study the Scripture? Will ye not understand?**"

Confirmation of their earlier Scripture is repeatedly mentioned to the Jews as coming in the Holy Qur'an which they persist nevertheless in rejecting :-

"And when there comes to them a Book from Allah, confirming what is with themwhen there comes to them that which they have recognized, they refuse to believe in it..." 2:89.

And while we are here examining the reluctance of the Muslims to appreciate and act in accordance with the dictates of their own Scripture , The Holy Qur'an, in respect of what it says of earlier Scriptures, it is interesting to read 2:91 where the Jews are seen to be practicing that very principle in respect of their own Holy Writ to the exclusion of all others :

"When it is said to them 'Believe in what Allah hath sent down,' they say 'We believe in what was sent down to us ' : yet they reject all besides, even if it be the Truth confirming what is with them ..."

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT AT NO TIME DOES The Holy Qur'an CALL UPON ANY PEOPLE TO ABANDON THEIR OWN SCRIPTURE. BELIEF IN ANOTHER SCRIPTURE MERELY MEANS TO ACCEPT IT AS BEING GENUINELY FROM ALMIGHTY GOD AND NOT TO DENY IT. INDEED THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAST MESSENGER AND THE HOLY QUR'AN, WHILE BEING COMMANDED TO BELIEVE IN ALL THE PREVIOUS BOOKS OF GOD ARE AT NO TIME EXPECTED TO FOLLOW ANY OTHER BOOK OR ITS LAWS EXCEPT THE QUR'AN.

With this clearly understood, it may be easier to appreciate that even though Jews and Christians were called upon by the Qur'an to accept it as Divine Revelation, they were not necessarily required then or now to live by its Message, nor to follow its Prophet. Indeed, the Qur'an itself

clearly states that it was sent to a people to whom no previous Warner had been sent (36:6), and this certainly would not have been applicable either to the Jews or the Christians, but merely to the idolatrous Arabs of the time. In addition, the Qur'an states equally clearly that it would clarify issues of doubt for earlier Believers , and remove the errors which had crept into their beliefs and practices :

"And We sent down The Book to thee for the express purpose that thou shouldst make clear to them those things in which they differ, and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe." 16:64.

And again at 27:76 we read :

"Verily this Qur'an doth explain to the Children of Israel most of the matters in which they disagree."

The Qur'an does not at any time demand of earlier Believers that they should apostate from their faiths. Nevertheless, it certainly invites all peoples to the worship of The One God at all times, and Islam which was perfected at the completion of the Qur'an's Revelation,(5:4), while having been forcefully established among the hitherto idolatrous and heathen Arabs, always remained only an option and never a compulsion (2:256), for all others who Believe and worship The One God. We have already seen the Qur'anic quotations of 5:51 and 22:67 which confirm the Will of God in the diversity of faiths, all of which He has thereby validated.

Now, see again how clearly the Qur'an leaves the earlier Believers to their Scriptures and Faith:-

"Say : 'O people of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and Patrons other than Allah....!'" 3:64.

There are certain Verses of The Holy Qur'an which, despite the clear pronouncements which have already been quoted, upon a superficial reading have been interpreted by some Muslims to mean that the earlier Scriptures are to be discarded. Reading 2:75 ...:"Can ye entertain the hope that they will believe in you?-seeing that *a party of them* heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it." But this truly refers to the attempts of only some recalcitrant Jews who sought to distort words which they had heard and understood clearly from The Holy Qur'an, and not their own Scriptures which they respected even though they may have failed to follow their own Laws.

And at 2:79, we read : "Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say :'This is from Allah', to traffic with it for a miserable price!- woe to them for what their hands do write, and the gain they make thereby." Yet this is a Warning not only to earlier Believers, but to peoples of all times, including Muslims who may be equally inclined to such evil. This does not in any way compromise the Inviolable Words of God which have been repeatedly re-affirmed again

and again throughout The Holy Qur'an. The Prophet himself warned of 40 great Liars to rise before the Last Day, any of whom would be capable of such heresies.

And if we read very carefully 3:78, we would see that none of this Verse discredits any part of earlier Scriptures :

"There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues: you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of The Book; and they say :'That is from Allah', but it is not from Allah: it is they who tell a lie against Allah, and they know it."

These distortions **in the recitation** of earlier Scriptures are corrected in the explicit refutations contained in The Holy Qur'an, and even though Muslims may believe that such errors remain in the current editions of earlier Scriptures, even at this Verse 3:78, the Qur'an does not instruct Muslims to deny earlier Scriptures on this or on any other basis.

It is very painful to realize that Muslim Ulama (learned men) themselves take Words of The Holy Qur'an and distort meanings in order to support their Legal Interpretations. Much more will be discussed of this in later pages I.A. Indeed, the very matter we are now discussing - the real status of earlier Scriptures and their followers as clearly defined in The Holy Qur'an - is breezily distorted by Muslim Ulama and is indictment enough.

Muslims have been as guilty as every other Religious grouping in the propagation of the concept of exclusive salvation. But perhaps upon reflection, they may be the most guilty since by the terms of their own Scripture, only they have been bestowed perfected Religion. And to whom much has been given, much is expected.

The Holy Qur'an refutes this idea of exclusive salvation. "And they say :'None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian.' Those are their (vain) desires. Say :'Produce your proof if ye are truthful.' **Nay, - whoever submits his whole self turning his face towards Allah, and is a doer of good, - he will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.**" 2:111,112.

Muslims themselves can produce no proof for any claim to exclusive salvation, and the need for proof is no less expected from any who may make such a claim.

Chapter 6.

THE QUR'AN ON THE FOLLOWERS OF EARLIER SCRIPTURES.

We have seen from all of the foregoing that The Holy Qur'an does not claim to be a compulsory replacement for earlier Scriptures **any more that the Injeel (New Testament) could claim by the Qur'an to be a replacement either for the Torah (The Book of Moses) or the Zaboor (The Psalms or Book of David)**. Throughout the Messengership of The Prophet, all of the earlier Scriptures were repeatedly referred to individually in a continuing status of validity. At no time either in the Qur'an or in the Ahadith collection can be found any suggestion that any Book of earlier peoples was to be considered obsolete, invalid or irrelevant.

It would have been extremely embarrassing to the Qur'an if it were to have declared any earlier Scripture which foretold its future existence and its Messenger, to be spurious or false. Any such declaration would certainly have compromised its own status and claim to Divine authorship.

The Holy Qur'an instead claims always to be a **confirmation of all earlier scriptures** sent for mankind, with itself as having been sent through a people to whom no previous Scripture had been sent. Mankind remains free without compulsion, to accept The Qur'an in its Finality, or alternatively to hold fast to any earlier Divine Message which promotes the worship of The One God to the satisfaction of its follower's faith.

Muslims therefore have no right to condemn the Scripture of earlier Messengers, nor should the Scripture of Islam suffer similar censure. We shall see later where both the Old and New Testaments equally invite their followers to pay regard to the Qur'an, even as does the Qur'an show regard for the former Books. It would be left to the various peoples who adhere to these Divine Books to arrive at true fellowship and fraternity if this is seen to be true.

We would now examine some of what the Qur'an specifically and unambiguously states about Jews and Christians in its instructions to Muslims and what properly is the Qur'anic definition of a Believer.

First of all we would look at some of the uncomplimentary statements in this regard lest it appear that the objective is merely to sanitize for ecumenical purposes.

One of the most oft quoted verses by those who refuse to regard Jews and Christians as anything but unbelievers to be rejected and confronted, is to be found at **5:54** and reads as follows :-

"O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends;

they are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust."

Yet a casual reading of this verse even out of context as presented above does not suggest to a rational mind any idea of unbelief being attached to either Jews or Christians. In addition, while the learned are very fond of referring to the circumstances of Revelations when they are seeking to derive complex laws from clear verses, no such attempts are made to examine either the textual or the historical context of this Verse.

The preceding Verses 5: 46-53 are a resounding affirmation of the earlier Scriptures of the Jews and the Christians as well as of the obligation of those two peoples to follow explicitly their respective Prophets and Religious precepts in their daily lives and legal affairs. There is not the slightest hint of any characterization of those peoples either as Unbelievers or Eternal enemies of the Muslims. Shortly we shall see overwhelming mitigation of Verse 5:54 which remains in The Holy Qur'an in an Historical context.

At the time of the Revelation of The Holy Qur'an, thousands of years had passed since the Message of Moses had been delivered, and taken root. The Jewish Peoples had endured many checkered years of varying experiences, and had within the last six hundred years totally rejected the Messiah who others believe had come specifically for them. Even though Jesus Christ had himself been of their people, and they had indeed been awaiting the return of Elijah as well as their Promised Messiah and later a Very Particular Prophet, they had rejected The Messiah Jesus and his Message, and now were equally determined to reject The Prophet Muhammad and his Message. Yet, despite their earlier rejection of The Messiah Jesus, The Holy Qur'an never stripped them of their status of Believer nor canceled one jot of their Divine Guidance. The Jews of Mecca had a vested interest in exploiting the idolatry of the pagan Arabs since the very sustenance of that city relied largely upon the then pilgrim trade. They disliked even more the interference of any new Message in the economic system they controlled in the City of Yathrib (later to be known as Medina, or the City of The Prophet.) Clearly The Prophet Muhammad (SAS) would have sought their friendship in vain. Indeed, their later breaching of treaties and continuous opposition to Islam as a tribe, despite the conversion of many among them who readily accepted the Message of Islam, led to their expulsion in part, and execution in part after judgment by one of their own.

Yet all of this must be relegated properly to the Historical context, and not be seen as any permanent regulation regarding either ethnic or religious relationships. There is in fact a totally altered context in which other faiths are treated after the establishment of Islam, the Religion of Peace, and following its early history.

Yet, notwithstanding all of the above, if one were to insist upon an enduring application of this Verse ex- historical context with a view to prejudicing the Islamic / Judeo/Christian accord, one may say that purely from a religious perspective, since Jews and Christians share a common extant Scripture in the Old Testament, as well as a common disdain of The Holy Qur'an, Muslims would

be well advised of their genuinely founded mutual friendship and the futility of blandishments to either.

Unfortunately, the Middle East problem of Palestine and the Client State status enjoyed by Israel vis-a-vis the West, generally at the alienation of Arab/Islamic peoples, supports the view of radical

Muslim "fundamentalists" who seek to settle affairs through war rather than peace. So one sees that this Verse may endure with varying interpretations, yet the evidence is overwhelming that by no means is enmity intended against either Christians or Jews. Supporting Verses would be seen when we come to examine positive statements in the Qur'an concerning Christians and Jews.

Let us examine some further Verses that may appear negative :-

"Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: 'The Guidance of Allah, - that is the Guidance.'" 2 : 120.

" Say : Will ye dispute with us about Allah, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord; that we are responsible for our doings and ye for yours; and we are sincere to Him? Or do ye say that Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say : Do ye know better than Allah? Ah! who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah? But Allah is not unmindful of what ye do!" 2 : 139,140.

"Even if thou wert to bring to the People of the Book all the Signs, they would not follow thy Qibla (direction for Prayer); nor art thou going to follow their Qibla; nor indeed will they follow each other's Qibla....The People of the Book know this as they know their own sons; but some of them conceal the Truth which they themselves know." 2 : 145,146.

"Strongest among men in enmity to the Believers wilt thou find the Jews and the Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the Believers wilt thou find those who say 'We are Christians' :Because amongst these are men devoted to learning, and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant." 5 : 85.

The above Verses in no way compromise the Jews or Christians from being Followers of the earlier Scriptures and being fully Believers, except such as do evil and forego the doing of good. Indeed even full-fledged Muslim will jeopardize their Believer Status by flagrantly disobedient behavior. Satan who fully believed in Allah before his fall became an Unbeliever by open disobedience to the Command of Allah to bow before Adam. 2 : 34.

The attitude of Jews and Christians as described in these Verses conforms fully with what one would expect from peoples who wished to hold on to their own faiths and invite others to come over to their Beliefs. Muslims are themselves quite keen on bringing over to Islam as many converts as possible from all faiths, and the open Evangelisation which proceeds today over the Airwaves and Satellite TV is an indication if anything, of a sincere preoccupation with God.

No one would care to contest that there is very little love between Jewish Israel and Muslim Arab States in today's world. It might be too much to hope that this work would serve to bridge any chasms. Yet, despite the tensions, the Divinely authorized religious status of Jews and Christians cannot be legitimately disputed on any Qur'anic grounds.

And the very startling words contained in The Holy Qur'an since its Revelation 1400 years ago concerning the love of Christians for Muslims is fulfilled completely in the welcome given by Western Christian Nations to Muslim settlers and refugees from all over the world in this 20th century. In addition, the role of the West in halting Saddam Hussain's expansionist aims in 1990 with the co-operation of Muslim States in the main, as well as the other major interventionist acts to keep the Peace and feed the Somalians in their famine all confirm the eternal words of the Qur'an. Despite the years of suffering of the Muslims of Bosnia, the West, after much soul searching and agonizing, finally turned courageously upon the Serb aggressors and brought relief again to Muslims. Even Muslim Nations did not do anything near equal while the war raged.

When one reads The Holy Qur'an with an unbiased mind, unaffected by personal prejudices, he must see nobility in the actions of the West particularly in the resolution of this Bosnian tragedy.

At 49:9 of The Holy Qur'an Allah says :-

"If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the Command of Allah; but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair : for Allah loves those who are fair (and just)."

In this historic barbarity just concluded, the West behaved albeit belatedly, in a manner that can only be described as quintessentially Qur'anic despite our prejudices.

But this event of Bosnia must be seen in a far greater context. For the Prophet of Islam had said to his companions :- "The Jews are your brothers, and you should wish them well. For you should know that whatever befalls them shall befall you, to the extent that if one of them sleeps with his mother, then one of you would sleep with your mother." When one remembers the Holocaust of our Jewish Brothers, at the hands of Hitler's Nazi forces, it was just a matter of time before a similar tragedy would strike the Muslims somewhere if the words of God's Prophet were to come true. The brutality and savagery endured by women, children and also men was of such a

magnitude that Jewish hearts could not stay detached but cried out with the rest of the world for a stop to the carnage.

Now we must hope that healing would take place in that land by God's Grace.

In the meanwhile, Islam as a Religion is not merely tolerated in Western lands, but is permitted every opportunity to grow, which it is doing at a tremendous rate. And the tolerance with which Islam is treated remains undiminished despite the extreme militancy of several of its factions in Western lands. Fortunately many converts from Judeo/Christian background enter Islam bringing with them much of their open-mindedness and less-confined vision of the World.

It is indisputable that Muslims in Western lands, while being culturally challenged by the open nature of society, would have opportunities not otherwise available to Muslims in more closed societies in the traditional Muslim lands.

While it often happens that Western converts to Islam become wholly assimilated into Islamic orthodoxy, frequently becoming more conventional in their practice than born-into- Islam Muslims, particularly with regard to obedience to Islam's varied spectrum of sectarianism, led by a multitude of "learned" Doctors of Law, it is nevertheless a matter of great refreshment that new perspectives are brought to Islam by their entry.

Indeed, very many great works of Islamic scholarship have been produced in this century by such new converts to Islam, shedding light on Islam for the great benefit of all English speaking Muslims all over the world. Notable among these have been, The Honorable Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall whose tremendous contribution in the wonderful translation of The Holy Qur'an into English has enlightened this writer and so many others; Martin Lings whose work on the life of The Prophet of Islam is almost a lived experience for its readers; Ahmad von Denffer's "Ulum ul Qur'an" is also a most valuable work, and reflects the position of antecedent views and commentaries; Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips whose work "The Evolution of Fiqh" was of extreme importance to this writer - all of these and so many more have been opening up the treasure house of Islamic Excellence in ways which could never have been accomplished by traditional Islamic scholars.

Those who had been given the legacy of Islam earlier had not been moved to investigate Islam nor to present it to the world other than by happenstance. Islam's guardians were occupied with inwardness being satisfied with their legacy. They could only see Islam as a religion under siege by colonizers of its lands. In fact, Islam was more a curiosity rather than an attraction to non-Muslims, except in rare instances. Military dominance of Muslim lands was more an accident of world politics than a conscious policy of territorial expansionism. Muslim lands were more desert than attractive deserts, and much trouble to hold. Before oil became the Wealth of the Middle East, and vital to Western interests, Muslim lands were de-occupied, and Muslim states left to wrangle among themselves.