Our humble plea to the reader is not to let your prejudice cloud your views towards our Movement but to consider these articles in a cool and dispassionate manner.

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran 16:125)

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith and inter-denomination dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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The main objective of the A.A.I.I.L is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world - Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by great misconceptions and wrong popular notions. Islam seeks to attract the hearts and minds of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d.1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

**International:** It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

**Peaceful:** Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

**Tolerant:** Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practice any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

**Rational:** In all matters, it argues use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

**Inspiring:** Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servant even today as in the past.

**Non-sectarian:** Every person professing Islam by the words La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that no prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, Mujaddids will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.
**MUSLIM·ANGER**

**From ISLAM, PEACE AND TOLERANCE**
By: Zahid Aziz (PART VII)

Islam urges self-control of anger
Recently the subject of Muslim “anger” at the injustices suffered by fellow-Muslims elsewhere in the world has very much been in the forefront of news and discussion. This anger is said to foment extremist groups who vent their rage and frustration by wanton violence with disregard for taking lives of innocent people. If indeed anger is fanning these actions, then the most important question for a Muslim to examine is, what are the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad on how to behave when one is angry. In the Holy Quran the believers are instructed as follows: “And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden, as wide as the heavens and the earth; it is prepared for those who keep their duty, those who give in charity in ease as well as in adversity and those who suppress anger and pardon people. And Allah loves the doers of good to others.” - 3:133–134.

The words translated as “those who suppress anger and pardon people” (al-kāzīmīn al-aḥzāb wa-līfūn ‘an-in-nás) mean literally: “suppressors of anger and pardoners of people”, and the word used for “people” here means mankind in general. This, then, is how Muslims ought to appear in the world, as suppressors of their anger and pardoners of mankind. As the beginning of this passage tells Muslims to rush to seek forgiveness from God, these words indicate that to gain that to forgiveness we must suppress our anger against others, forgive them and in fact do good to them. Have we not done things which would make God angry:

so do we want Him to display His anger towards us? If not, then we must similarly restrain our anger towards those who have wronged us. This passage teaches three degrees of response towards those who have wronged us, and we should rise to the level that is most effective in the circumstances. The least which is required is for us to restrain our anger, and that is the minimum that we must do. Any reaction based on anger is bound to be excessive and unjust, and damaging even to the aggrieved party. Therefore our response must be limited to being proportionate and rational. Beyond suppressing anger, we may forgive those who wrong us rather than seek their punishment. If that would make them recognise their injustices and mend their ways. Finally, we may even proceed to returning good for evil, again if it would turn them away from their wrongdoing. According to this passage, the way to heaven is only through suppressing your anger and forgiving other people. In another place, describing the good qualities that believers ought to strive for, the Quran says: “... and whenever they are angry they forgive. ... And those who, when great wrong afflicts them, defend themselves. And the recom pense of evil is punishment like it; but whoever forgives and amends, his reward is with Allah. ... And whoever is patient and forgives - that surely is an affair of great resolution.” - 42:37.

This also teaches that there can be absolutely no reprisals fuelled by anger, even in the face of “great wrong”. The utmost action can only be “like” or proportionate to the evil, but forgiveness is here recommended three times, including as an antidote to anger. The word translated here as “amends” in the phrase “whoever forgives and amends” is rendered in various translations of the Quran as “makes reconciliation”, “puts things right”, “makes peace” or “is reconciled”.

Justice above hatred
The Quran instructs Muslims:
“Do not let hatred of a people - because they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque - incite you to transgress.” - 5:2 “O you who believe, be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice; and do not let hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just; that is nearer to observance of duty. And keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is aware of what you do.” - 5:8

There may be understandable reasons that make one feel hated and anger towards another people, but these verses teach Muslims unequivocally that they must not let such feelings provoke them to commit acts of excess and transgression of moral and legal limits. Not only must they refrain from wrongdoing out of hatred against another people, but what is more, they must strictly adhere to treating them with equity and justice. This is emphasised here as part of the Muslims’ basic duty to God, from Whom our actions cannot be hidden.

Hadhth on anger
There are several statements reported from the Holy Prophet Muhammad in all the leading books of Hadith strongly cautioning people against acting out of anger. For example:

1. “A man said to the Prophet, ‘Give me some advice.’ The Prophet said, ‘Do not become angry and furious’. The man asked (the same) again and again, and the Prophet said in each case, ‘Do not become angry and furious’.” [Bukhari, book: ‘Good Manners’. In Muhsin Khan translation see 8:73.137]

2. “A judge should not judge between two persons while he is in an angry mood.” [Bukhari, book: ‘Judgments’. In Muhsin Khan translation see 9:89.272]

3. “The strong man is not the one who can wrestle well but the strong man is one who can control himself when he is enraged.” [Sahih Muslim, Kitab-ul-Birr; in A.H. Siddiqui’s translation see book 32, ch. 28, number 6313.]

4. “Anger is from Satan, and Satan is created from fire. Only water can put out fire, so when any of you is angry, he should perform his ablation.” [Mishkat-ul-Masabih, book: ‘Good Manners’, ch. Anger and Pride, reporting from Abu Dawud.]


One of his statements relating specifically to war in this context is as follows:
“A man came to the Prophet and asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, What kind of fighting is in the way of Allah? For some of us fight because of being enraged and angry and some for the sake of one’s pride and haughtiness’. The Prophet ... said: ‘He who fights so that the word of Allah should be uppermost fights in the way of Allah.’” [Bukhari, book: ‘Knowledge’. In Muhsin Khan translation see 1:3.125]

Thus, fighting out of anger is not fighting in the way of Allah. Note that the only fighting allowed in Islam is fighting in self-defence. Therefore fighting “so that the word of Allah should be uppermost” means fighting to repel the enemy who has the aggressive object of destroying Islam and the Muslims and to make the cause of Islam prevail over their aims.
DEATH OF JESUS

From: The Second Coming of Jesus (Part VI)
By: Maulana Muhammad Ali

And I was a witness to them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die Thou wast the Watcher over them. [5:117]

Importance of the question of the death of Jesus
The prophecy about the descent of Jesus has been discussed in detail in the last chapter. However, all the intricacies of this prophecy can be resolved if we accept that Jesus has died. If it is established from the Quran and the authentic Hadith that there is no proof of Jesus going alive into heaven, then, no other interpretation of the prophecy of the descent of Jesus is possible except the one given by me in the last chapter. To understand its true implications we should reflect on the question of the death of Jesus in a cool and calm manner. Most people do not pay attention to this subject because they think that the whole ummah has already agreed on the point that Jesus did not die. But this view in itself is not right. There are clear statements found in some commentaries of the Quran that Jesus did die, though for a limited period of time. One statement says that he remained dead for three hours, the other, that he remained dead for seven hours [Durr-i Mansur under 3:55, p.26] and still another says that he remained dead for three days. [Imam Malik believed that he died absolutely. (qala Malik-un mala). And Malik said: "He (i.e. Jesus) died." Muham- mad Tahir of Gujrat, Majma’ Bihar al-Anwar, (Lakhnow, India, Nawal Kishore Press), vol.1, p.286]. When there is so much difference on this matter we should really go back to the Quran and the authentic Hadith for guidance. I even say that if there was no statement at all in Islamic literature about the death of Jesus, still it was not right to hold a view about his physical ascension into heaven unless it was clearly mentioned in the Quran and the authentic Traditions. Apart from this, we should not forget that in this age, Christians have made it a big issue against Islam. The belief that Jesus is still physically alive in heaven has, in a way, lent support to the wrong doctrines of Christianity relating to Jesus’ divinity. Therefore, in the interest of Islam, it is imperative that we carefully consider the whole issue, because the true principles of Islam cannot support any false doctrine, wherever that doctrine may be found. How is it possible that Islam should teach a doctrine that would support the perilous and un-Islamic creed of Jesus’ divinity? This is itself great proof about the death of Jesus. Apart from this, the question of Jesus being alive is not included in the principles of Islam nor in its branches, but is a separate issue. If it is established from the Quran and the authentic Hadith, then we should accept it, otherwise we believe in the death of other prophets, we should also believe in the death of Jesus Christ as a matter of course.

Onus of proof about Jesus being alive is on those who hold that view
It is however, extremely important to remember while discussing the point of whether Jesus is dead or alive that it is not necessary to offer proof for the death of a prophet, because it is an established fact that whoever is born, dies. In this respect, messengers are just like other human beings, and all of them who appeared in the world have passed away. If, on the contrary, anybody claims that one, or more than one prophet who appeared before the Holy Prophet is still alive, the onus of proof of this extraordinary phenomenon lies on his shoulders, and unless the Quran and authentic Hadith clearly indicate that a prophet has not indeed died and is still alive somewhere, till then, to hold such a belief is against the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. Thus the first question is, what is the historical proof of Jesus being alive? It is not the objective of the Quran to falsify historical facts. We do agree that there is a possibility of error in history, but unless the Quran and the authentic Hadith implicitly nullify some historical fact, we cannot accept it as a religious doctrine of faith. Therefore, we shall first look into those verses of the Quran and the authentic traditions, which supposedly deal with the question of whether Jesus is still alive in the heaven or somewhere else. On this issue, this verse is often quoted as a clear indication that Jesus is alive:

And for their (the Jews) saying: We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah, and they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the Cross, but he (the Messiah) was made to appear to them as such. [4:157]

Negation of Jesus’ death on the Cross or negation of his being slain do not prove that he is alive
This verse negates Jesus’ death by slaying, or his death as a result of being nailed to the Cross and affirms that he was made to appear to them as such. We shall deal with the first part of the statement concerning what is truly meant by the negation of his being slain and the negation of his dying on the Cross. If it is said about a person that five or six hundred years ago he was neither slain nor crucified, it does not mean that he is still alive. Negation of being slain or being crucified does not amount to negation of death (by other natural means). This is clear from the views of some of the commentators of the Quran, that in spite of wa ma qatalu-hu wa ma salabuhu (they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the Cross) they still believed that Jesus remained dead for three or seven hours or for three days. Thus, this verse does not prove that Jesus did not die at all or that he was taken alive into heaven. To argue from this verse that Jesus is still alive is an absolutely futile effort. It is quite possible that a person whose death is not mentioned must be living, but his being alive cannot be accepted - if normal circumstance require his death - unless there is specific and definite proof of his staying alive. In any case, negation of being slain and negation of being crucified (expiring on the cross) do not substantiate the view that the person in question is alive. For his being alive, further clear proof is needed - some words which bear out that he is not dead or which indicate in a distinct and plain manner that he is still living.

The meaning of qatl (slaying) and salb (crucifixion)
Now I shall deal with the meaning of the verse. First of all we shall find out what is meant by qatl and salb. The upholders of the view that Jesus is still alive claim that salb means to hang a person on the cross, and death by hanging on the cross is not the meaning of this word. [For three reasons it is wrong to assume that salb means killing by hanging on the Cross.... If, in any book of lexicon or idioms or verse, salb means killing by hanging on the Cross, it was incumbent on the author to quote such reference.... Remember that no book of lexicon can ever be quoted to support this view." Shahadat al-Quran by Maulavi Ibrahim Stalkot, pp.60-61. The said maulavi was a great opponent of the Ahmadiyya Movement]. They do not mention anything about qatl, whether it also means to attack a person by the sword or inflict some grievous harm to him, and whether to actually cause death by such attack is not a part of qatl; because in the verse under discussion, both qatl and salb have been denied. However, the lexicons tell us a different story. Lisan al-‘Arab says: “He was slain, which means he died by a blow or by stone or by poison or by any other means.”

Taj al-‘Arus says nearly the same thing. In Mufradat it is stated: “The true meaning of qatl is to separate the soul from the body.” As to the meaning of salb, it is mentioned in Lisan al-‘Arab: “Salb means death in a certain well-known manner and
is derived from wadak because ichor mixed with blood of the person so put to death, flowed."

Here salb clearly means qatl (killing in a well-known manner) and it is agreed that qatl is to separate the soul from the body. Similarly Taj al-Arus says: "Salb is wadak which means ichor or watery humour, mixed with blood [ibid] and further on it is stated: "Maslub is called maslub because the ichor mixed with blood of the person so crucified flows, and salb is causing death in a certain well-known manner and is derived from this because the ichor of the person so crucified, flowed."

These are the two famous books of lexicon which do not say at all that salb is just to hang a person on the cross. On the contrary, it has clearly been indicated that salb means qatl (death) in a certain well-known manner and qatl means, to separate the soul from the body. The difference between salb and qatl is that every salb is qatl, but every qatl is not salb. Death by a blow, stoning or poisoning does fall in the category of qatl, but if a person is hit by a blow, or by a stone, and does not die, we cannot say that he has been slain. Similarly, if a person is hung on the staxa (cross) and does not die, we cannot say that he has been crucified. Crucifixion means to be slain in a particular manner. A person who is not slain (maqtul) cannot be called crucified (maslub). Thus, for such a person, the expression that he is neither slain nor crucified is perfectly justifiable, although he may have been attacked by sword, or hit by stone, or may have been hanged on the cross. Salb, as has been proven above, is a kind of qatl. If qatl (slaying) cannot be applied to an incident, then there is no justification for applying the word salb (death by hanging) to that incident.

People of the Book and their concept of crucifixion (salb)
We have seen above the meaning of qatl and salb according to the lexicons of the Arabs. Now we shall discuss the meaning of these words according to the usage of the People of the Book who claim to have slain or crucified Jesus. The word qatl need not detain us here because this word or its synonym denotes the killing of a person by a special method. As to crucifixion, the form it took was that a person was placed on a wooden structure in the shape of a cross and his hands and feet were nailed. In the Encyclopaedia Biblica it is written that the body would remain on the cross till it dried up. [Encyclopaedia Biblica under Crucifixion, col. 959, vol.I, Adam and Charles Black, London MDCCXCXI] This is exactly what the Arab lexicographers have said; drying up the body meant that the bone marrow and the fat flowed out of the body. It is mentioned in the Jewish Encyclopaedia that the real cause of death was hunger and loss of the power of the body, and by the contortion of the body, the person put on the cross suffered great agony and gradually cramped and convulsion took place in it. [Encyclopaedia Judaica under Crucifixion, col. 1134, vol.5, Jerusalem, 1971] Sometimes the body remained on the cross for three days. To cause early death, sometimes the legs were broken. Thus, according to the Arabs, as well as the People of the Book, a person was called "crucified" (maslub) only when he had actually died on the cross and generally his corpse dried up in the process of hanging. If he did not die on the cross, although he may have been put on it, he could not be called maslub (crucified), just as a person could not be called slain (maqtul) if he is wounded by a sword but does not die as a consequence of the attack made on him.

The Quran does not belie the history of the People of the Book, but belies their false doctrine
What has been said above proves that "they crucified him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross." [4:157] It does not mean that Jesus was not put on the Cross. It is important to remember the point that we should not interpret the Quranic words in such a way that belle obvious historical facts. It is quite possible that a person may conclude from the words:

They killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross [ibid]. That Jesus was not subjected to an act like that of qatl (killing) or salb (crucifixion), but this is not a necessary conclusion. When we look at history, the Jews claimed on the one hand that they hanged Jesus on the cross and on the other hand, the followers of Jesus admitted that he was, in fact, put on the cross, and there is no contemporary historical record which shows that Jesus was not at all put on the cross. Now, if after six hundred years, somebody says that Jesus was not put on the cross, who is going to believe it? While interpreting the Quran, it should be kept in mind that if a word can bear two meanings, we should adopt that meaning which is not contrary to historical records. Apart from this, the Quran came to provide conclusive proof against the beliefs of the Jews and the Christians. How would they be silenced? They agree on the fact that Jesus was put on the Cross but we reject their views; and advance another theory, that Jesus was only physically lifted up into heaven. How could we ask them to affirm this view which has no historical testimony to support it? Therefore, we should interpret the Quran in such a way that does not belie their history but only belies their belief. This is what the Quran has done. Without rejecting their history, on which both Jews and Christians agree, the Quran has rejected their erroneous beliefs, the details of which will be discussed a little later.

The question may be raised here that when we accept their history in which both parties agree, then why should we accept their unanimous verdict that Jesus died on the Cross as well? The reason for rejecting this presumption is that not only is it against the express teachings of the Quran but also against historical evidence. Even the events mentioned in the Gospels clearly indicate that although Jesus was put on the Cross, he did not die there.

Evidence from the Gospels: Jesus did not die on the Cross
The following points are established from the Gospels:
1. Jesus remained on the Cross for a few hours only, according to one report, at the most for six hours and according to another, for about two hours. According to Matthew and Mark, it was at about the ninth hour (3 p.m.) that Jesus complained of having been forsaken by God [Mark 15:25] and it was shortly after this that he died. Mark says "it was the third hour (i.e. 9 a.m.) that they crucified him" [John 19:14]. Therefore, according to Mark and Matthew, Jesus was on the Cross for six hours. Luke fixes the sixth hour as the time when Jesus "gave up the ghost". He also mentions that the darkness lasted from the sixth to the ninth hour [Luke 23:44]. On the other hand, according to John, it was about the sixth hour (12 noon) that Pilate sat in judgement over Jesus [John 19:14]. Even if we assume that Jesus was put on the Cross immediately after the sentence, Jesus would not have remained on the Cross for more than three hours. Death by crucifixion was always tardy. In any case, the person who was crucified could not die within two, three or six hours.
2. According to John, the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. [ibid. 19:32]. This was done to cause quick death to the victims. The legs of Jesus were, however, not broken.
3. The two thieves who were crucified with Jesus were still alive when taken off the Cross with him.
4. According to John, "One of the soldiers pierced his (Jesus') side and forthwith there came out blood and water." [ibid. 19:34]. This was a sign of life in him.
5. Even Pilate marvelled that Jesus actually died in so short a time [Mark 15:44].
6. When Jesus was taken off the Cross, he was not treated like ordinary criminals, but was given in the charge of a wealthy disciple of his, Joseph of Aramathea, who lavished care on him and put him in a spacious tomb, hewn
in the side of a rock. ([ibid. 15:46].

7. On the third day, when Mary Magdalene and two other women came to the tomb, they saw that the stone from the tomb had been rolled away, ([ibid. 16:4]) which shows that Jesus was taken away after the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, which would not have been the case if there had been a super-natural rising.

8. When Mary Magdalene saw Jesus, she took him "to be the gardener" [John 20:14], which indicates that Jesus had disguised himself as a gardener to escape. Such disguise would not have been needed if he had risen from the dead.

9. After a few days when Jesus' disciples saw him, it was in the same body of flesh that they found him, with marks of nails in his hands, and a wound in his side deep enough for a man to thrust his hand into. ([ibid. 20:27]. In other words, Jesus had not actually died on the Cross.

10. It is clearly established from Luke that when Jesus saw his disciples, it was with a body of flesh. [Luke 24:39] he still felt hunger and ate food, which prove the truth of the Quranic statement:

They both (i.e. Jesus and Mary) used to eat food (when they were alive). [5:75]

Jesus said to his disciples: "Why are you so perturbed? Why do questionings arise in your mind? Look at my hand and feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see; no ghost has flesh and bones as you can see that I have. They were still unconvinced, still wondering for it seemed too good to be true. So he asked them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They offered him a piece of fish they had cooked, which he took and ate before their eyes." [Luke, 24:38-43]

All these incidents prove that Jesus had escaped death on the Cross and that he had contacted his disciples and had also eaten food before their eyes.

11. Jesus undertook a journey to Galilee with two of his disciples walking side by side with him, [Matthew, 28:10] which shows that he was fleeing for refuge; a journey to Galilee was not necessary to rise to heaven.

12. In all the post-crucifixion appearances, Jesus is found hiding himself as if he feared being discovered. A risen Jesus should have made a public appearance and should not have shown any fear of being discovered by the persecuting Jews.

13. Above all this, Jesus prayed for the whole night before his arrest to be saved from the accused death on the Cross, and he also asked his disciples to pray for him: the prayers of a righteous man in distress and affliction are always accepted. He seems to have even received a promise from God to be saved, and it was to this promise that he referred when he cried out on the Cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" [Matthew, 27:46]. Hebrews makes the matter still clearer, for there it is plainly stated that his prayer was accepted: "When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him Who was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared." [Hebrew, 5:7]

All these incidents and references are sufficient to prove, historically, that Jesus was indeed put on the Cross, but did not remain on it long enough for it to have caused his death. His bones were not broken, and in great haste he was taken down from the Cross and placed in a grave, which was actually a spacious place hewn in a rock. His coming out of this tomb, his meeting some women and his disciples, his disguising himself, his walking on foot, his showing his wounds on his hands and side, his feeling hungry and eating food, all point to one fact - that he was finally saved from dying on the Cross. This is something which cannot be rejected light-heartedly. [On this subject, the following remarks by Khwaja Nazir Ahmad in Jesus in Heaven on Earth (pp. 194-195) may be read with interest. (SMT)]

"It may be repeated that the short time that Jesus was on the Cross, three hours at the most, and the uncertain nature and effect of the wound from the spear, and the (coming out) of blood and water from his body leave no room for any doubt that Jesus did not die on the Cross. If the soldiers and others present, in the circumstances already mentioned, thought him to be dead, it was because they could not distinguish between a deep swoon and the rigidity of syncope from real death. There is no ground for the suggestion that amongst them was anyone who was acquainted with medical science, which itself was in a low state at that age."

That there was doubt about Jesus' death at that very time is clear from the Gospels. Dean Farrar also refers to the assertion of the Docetic sect of Gnostics that Jesus only seemed to have died. (Farrar, Life of Christ, p.424). Tertullian had his own doubts, so had Origen, and he had to invoke a miracle to explain so sudden an end. But the fact that people at that very time doubted his death can be gathered from the surprise of Pilate (Mark, 15:44). Besides, the questions put by him to the Centurion show that he wished to silence the doubts of his contemporaries. However, the narrative of Matthew itself mentions an event which puts the matter beyond all doubt. After Jesus' body had been placed in the sepulchre the Pharisees came together to Pilate and asked him:

'Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead. So the last error shall be worse than the first." (Matthew, 27:64).

"The same version is given in the Gospel of Peter, (Gospel of Peter, 2:8). Now, what was this first error? Not that they had accused Jesus and found him guilty of "corruption", not that at their insistence he had been sentenced to death by Pilate; not that he had been put on the Cross. No, they believed Jesus to be a pretender and a false prophet: and, therefore, they could not have had any compassion for him. The first error could not, therefore, be any other than that Jesus had been taken off the Cross much earlier than was necessary, that his bones had not been broken and as a result of these things, Jesus had not been, according to them, in fact "crucified" at all. This and this alone was the first error which would become insignificant if the apprehensions of the Jews should have been materialized. They, therefore, prayed that the sepulchre should be made secure and sealed so that even if buried alive, Jesus should remain there and die of suffocation. They, in fact, in the narrative, express their apprehensions in quite unambiguous terms: 'Lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, he has risen from the dead.' (Matt., 27:64).

"The Pharisees did not believe in his miracles; they did not admit his Divine origin or mission; they did not even acknowledge him as the Messiah. They, therefore, could not attribute a belief to the people that, if the body was stolen and the sepulchre found empty, any one would believe that Jesus had arisen from the dead. To them, with the traditions of the Old Testament regarding the raising of the dead, the securing and sealing of the tomb would have been no safeguard. It is evident, therefore, that the Pharisees and the Elders knew that through unforeseen circumstances Jesus had not died on the Cross and they wanted to ensure his death by sealing and securing the tomb to prevent all possibility of his body being stolen or otherwise removed. Events regarding the burial and the subsequent visits of the women to the sepulchre, to which I will refer in detail shortly, also point to the same conclusion.
"There is one very peculiar feature about the alleged death of Jesus on the Cross. Nowhere in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John is the positive statement of an eye-witness recorded that Jesus had died on the Cross, or that he was dead when they removed him from the Cross or placed him in the tomb. None of the disciples was present on the spot. The Jews, as we have already seen, had their own doubts. The Evangelists clearly felt the weakness of their evidence. They, therefore, were compelled to introduce the women: 'Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him, and many other women which came up with him into Jerusalem' (Mark, 15:41).

"They are supposed to have watched what was happening from afar, but then the real object was to guarantee by their presence the truth of what had already been, and still more of what had to be, added to the description of the scenes at Calvary. The guarantee appears to be singularly fragile as soon as we begin to examine it. No doubt, it becomes less dubious and doubtful when compared with the Johannine scheme where the object of the women, with the unknown beloved disciples, was to receive the last instructions which fell from Jesus (John, 19:25), but it represents the same anxiety to establish a testimony and is, of course, a later addition. As a matter of fact, early tradition, with or without the guarantee of the women, was not in a position to do anything more than assert the essential facts: Jesus was arrested, tried, condemned and put on the Cross; of that alone they were certain. They could not, and did not, in clear and unambiguous terms assert his death on the Cross because the matter was made dubious to them (H.Q. 4:157)."

Subsequent events show that he migrated from that place for afterwards he went to Galilee. And migration (hijrah) is the practice of prophets - when they are persecuted beyond limits at one place, they have to go to another.

The Jews claim that they slew Jesus; the Quran denied that he was slain or that he was crucified

All these incidents show that Jesus was put on the Cross but he did not die there. But the belief of the Jews and the Christians is that he did die on the Cross. The Quran has not rejected their history, but only their belief. How wonderful and full of wisdom is the statement of the Quran! The saying of the Jews recorded therein is: We have killed the Messiah.

In reply the Quran has rejected their claim by saying: They killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross [4:157].

That is to say, slaying (qatl) and crucifixion (sabil) have both been rejected. Death by crucifixion really meant that the victim should die on the cross-bar and his corpse should remain hanging there. But sometimes to cause quick death his legs or bones were broken. As has been shown above, Jesus' body was taken off the Cross in great haste. To cause real death, the other method, that is, breaking the legs, was not resorted to in his case. Therefore, the Quran refuted the Jewish claim that "we slew" him by saying that they neither broke his bones nor did they let him stay hanging on the Cross long enough that he could die through exposure and exhaustion - the usual rigours and tortures of crucifixion. Otherwise, there was no need of using the two words in this connection.

The meaning of wa lakin shubbiba lahum

Now we take up for discussion the words which follow the previous statement. To interpret wa lakin shubbiba lahum, as meaning that someone else was made to resemble Jesus, is totally wrong. The commentators themselves have found it rather an intricate problem. Thus Imam Razi writes: "To whom is shubbiba lahum attributed, that is to say, who is the mushabbah (likened to)? If it is attributed to the Messiah, he is the mushabbah bihi (that to which anything is likened), and not the mushabbah. If it is attributed to the slain (maqtil), then the slain is not mentioned here."

This question has been answered in two ways by Imam Razi: 1. Shubbiba lahum is like (khulfa llah) and thus the meaning rendered is but the incident appeared to them as such. 2. Ma qatalahu (they slew him not) indicates that someone else was slain.

Thus the pronoun him was directed towards someone else. What a feeble manner of reasoning! It is as if during a discussion, the claim itself has been put forward as an argument! Ma qatalahu only shows that the person mentioned in the text (in this case Jesus) has not been slain. How "someone else" is reported to have been slain, according to these words, I fail to understand. If someone says: "Zaid has not been slain," does it mean that "Bakr has been slain." The point that has to be established first is that someone else was killed in place of Jesus. Before settling this issue, a presumption was made and strangely enough then, that presumption was put forward as an argument. An erroneous notion has compelled most of the commentators to take a conjunctural notion as a real incident. The other interpretation that it means, "it happened as they thought it to be," is also mere conjecture and this interpretation cannot be supported by the lexicons. The question was simple. Who was the person who was "likened to" or made mushbah for them? Obviously all the pronouns refer to Jesus; thus Jesus was made mushubah and no one else. Now, with what was he "likened"? The meaning becomes clear by the words: ma qatalahu wa ma salabuhu (They slew him not nor did they crucify him (i.e. caused his death on the Cross).

Jesus was neither slain nor crucified, but his condition became dubious like the one who was slain or crucified. And the historical incidents quoted above from the Gospels clearly support this view. The Quran has also made a reference affirming what has been said in the Gospels.

It is surprising that a simple statement which would have made the whole matter clear has been twisted in such a way as to mean that Jesus was not put on the Cross but someone else of the same appearance, or one who was made to resemble him, was crucified. This is not borne out at all by the words of the Quran or any saying of the Holy Prophet. As has been mentioned above, the pronoun he in shubbiba (he was made to appear as such) refers to Jesus whose mention has previously been made in the same verse. Thus the statement would read like this: wa-lakin shubbiba (islah) lahum (but he (Jesus) was made to appear to them as such).

This is itself an independent and a clear statement; only that thing is omitted to which he was likened. The word lakin (but) is a letter of emendation (istidrak) for removal of a doubt or for the elucidation of a point. The rendering of a statement could only be like this: wa-lakin shubbiba 'islah lahum bil-maslubi wal-maqtil (but Jesus was made to resemble them as if he was crucified and slain), that is, he became like the one who was crucified).

The pronoun he in shubbiba refers to no one who was slain because no maqtil (slain person) has been mentioned afterwards. To get out of this impasse, some people think that the statement should read like this: "They slew him not, nor did they crucify him, but they crucified and killed him who was made to resemble them (like Jesus)."

Obviously it is introducing at will words to the text of the Quran to distort its meaning. Here, after lakin, a complete statement, shubbiba lahum is present, and in shubbiba the verb is clearly indicated. In the presence of a verb, to accept that another verb has been omitted from the statement is against the rules
of grammar. Nevertheless, if the word is omitted (mahzuf) after lakin, in this case the omitted verb from the previous statement should govern the statement that follows. For instance: Zaid did not stand but Umar, should mean that Zaid did not stand, but Umar stood. Although one verb was mentioned after lakin (but), the verb of the previous clause was implied in the clause that followed. The Quran says (literally):

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the messenger of Allah [33:40].

Because there is no verb in the clause wa lakin rasullah, therefore, the verb kana in the beginning of the verse should be considered implied in the subsequent clause which should read: "but he is the messenger of Allah.”

Similarly the Quran says: It is not a narrative which could be forged, but a verification of what is before it [12:111].

Here after wa lakin the verb has been omitted. Therefore, again the verb kana in the beginning of the clause should be considered implied in the clause after wa lakin. This principle is neither something unheard of, nor is there any rule of syntax, that when there is a clear implied verb after wa lakin in a clause, another verb should be forced into the text. It is surprising that people consider a verb omitted in the presence of the verb shubbiba. The Quran is full of such instances where after wa lakin the verb has been clearly indicated, in which case we cannot place the previous verb in the clause which is followed by wa lakin. An obvious example is the following verse: And Allah wronged them not but they wronged themselves. [3:116]

Here after wa lakin the verb is clearly indicated, therefore no other supposedly omitted (mahzuf) verb could be forced in the text after wa lakin. If the construction is adopted in the style of: “but they slew and crucified him who was made to resemble them (like Jesus)” then the above verse should read like this: “And God wronged them not, but God wronged them who wronged themselves.” The fact is that God does not wrong anyone: And your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants. [41:46]. Similar is the position with the verse: Allah knows that you will have them in your minds, but give them not a promise in secret. [2:235]

Here the verb is also found after wa lakin, therefore, no other omitted verb can be added to the text after wa lakin. Again: Yet why did they not, when Our punishment came to them, humble themselves? But their hearts hardened. [6:43]. Here after wa lakin the verb qasat is clearly specified; therefore, no other omitted verb could be introduced after wa lakin. If the previous verb is introduced in the text after wa lakin the statement would read like this: “But those people humbled themselves whose hearts hardened”, which does not make any sense. This would be the case with every statement where, in spite of the presence of a clearly specified verb (fi’l musarrab), another fi’l musarrah is added.

Let us take another instance from the Quran: And if the people of the towns had believed and kept their duty. We would certainly have opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth. But they rejected. [7:96]

Now after “but,” the verb “rejected” has clearly been mentioned and the pronoun they in the verse can only refer to those people who have been mentioned before, that is, the people of the towns, as is the case in 4:157: but he was made to appear to them as such. In this verse too, after but, the verb, “was made to appear” has been explicitly mentioned and the pronoun he can only refer to Jesus who has been mentioned in the earlier part of the verse. If, against all rules of grammar, we introduce an extra verb after “but” and change the construction of a simple statement “he was made to appear to them as such” to read: “they crucified and killed him who was made to resemble to them (like Jesus),” this rendering would be contrary to the text of the Quran. If we change the construction of the verse 7:96 in the same way, it would read like this: “but we opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth, for those who rejected.”

This kind of construction has twisted the whole meaning of the text. Similarly, adding words and changing the construction of words in 4:47 distort the meaning of the verse and this is eventually contrary to the true meaning of the Quranic text.

History verifies the statement of the Quran and rejects the beliefs of the People of the Book

Many illustrations of this nature can be cited. The sum and substance of all these is that when a verb is omitted after wa lakin, the word prior to this clause can be transferred thereafter. But when after wa lakin a verb is clearly mentioned, to introduce a supposedly omitted verb at that place is, in fact, going against all rules of syntax. The whole world knows that the omitted verb (fi’l mahzuk) is placed in the text when it is not there. And when the verb is already there, the text should be interpreted accordingly, and if an extra verb is inserted without any rhyme or reason, the whole meaning will be inverted as has been shown above by the many examples. Thus, according to the rules of grammar, the words can only be interpreted in one way, that they slew Jesus not, nor did they crucify him (caused his death on the Cross) but he, (Jesus) was made mushabbah for them. If anything is omitted, it is only that to which Jesus was made mushabbah. In other words, he was likened to the one who was crucified and slain. References which have been quoted from the Gospels above clearly indicate that, in fact, Jesus appeared as if he were slain or crucified and at the same time the other incidents in the Gospels show that he was not actually slain or killed on the Cross. When his side was pierced, blood rushed out and this was a sure sign of life - blood only rushes out from the living and not from the dead. His legs were not broken so he was not slain. The stone from the tomb where Jesus was laid was removed to take him out of the grave which would not have been the case if there had been a super-natural rising. Then he met his disciples, showed them his wounds, ate fish, talked to them and travelled with them. All these are clear signs of life. Thus the Quran is true in its statement about Jesus and this is confirmed by historical facts, but the belief of the Jews and the Christians is, surprisingly enough, invalidated by their own history.

What was the need of executing someone else who resembled Jesus?

The mistake made in interpreting wa lakin shubbiba lahum has been explained by me above. The only plausible meaning of these words is that Jesus was made to appear to them as if he were slain. However, these words can be interpreted in another way, as has been done by some commentators; that is: “the matter was made dubious to them,” or, in other words they kept on doubting whether Jesus had died or not. (See Ruh al-Ma’ani.) And this interpretation is supported by the subsequent statement in the same verse[And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it (4:157)]. But these words cannot bear the interpretation at all that someone else, who resembled Jesus, was executed. Even if these were words which may be interpreted in that sense, we could not accept that meaning because it is against God’s practice (sunnat Allah) and the events mentioned in the Gospels do not support this view, and we do not see any wisdom in God’s execution of such a plan.

The following story, too, is totally absurd, that is, the one which says that Jesus was in the company of twelve or thirteen companions of his when the Jews came to arrest him. At that time, Jesus asked his companions which one of them would
like to be with him in paradise so that he should be made to resemble him (Jesus) and be crucified in his place. A young man (in some reports called Sarjus), offered himself and he was eventually crucified and Jesus was lifted up to heaven. It is surprising that when Jesus knew that he would be physically exalted, then why did he get one of his companions killed unnecessarily? What was the benefit, spiritual or otherwise, behind such a plan? When the Holy Prophet Muhammad left Makkah, Hazrat ‘Ali slept in his bed so that the enemies could not find out that the Holy Prophet had escaped and they could not immediately go after him. At that stage, his enemies could have reached him and killed him. Was Jesus also really worried that if he flew away to heaven without leaving a counter-part of his on earth, that the Jews would follow him up to heaven and bring him down? And was it for this reason that another person was made to appear like Jesus so that the Jews may keep on thinking that they had actually killed Jesus and that they would whip up the idea of following him to the fourth heaven? After all, God’s actions are not devoid of wisdom. What was the wisdom behind this strategy? If Jesus had gone to heaven without making another person look like him, could the Jews cause any harm to him? On the other hand, it would have become a great miracle on Jesus’ part, especially since he was considered an impostor by them. It would have been more impressive if such a miracle were performed in a big assembly of the Jews so that they could all have had faith in him. But the execution of the reported plan looks meaningless and absurd - that Jesus himself escaped by going to heaven but left one of his companions to be unnecessarily killed in a cursed manner - the kind of death which he did not like to suffer himself. Was it lawful for a prophet to take recourse to such action? When it is clearly mentioned in the Torah that “he that is hanged is cursed of God”, [Deuteronomy, 21:23] then why did Jesus choose a cursed death for any one of his friends?

To get out of this muddle, another version of the same incident has been introduced, that is, that one of the companions of Jesus was a traitor and he accepted thirty rupees as a bribe and disclosed to the Roman police the place where Jesus was. At that very moment Jesus was lifted up to heaven and that very person became like Jesus in appearance. The same objection could be raised against the narration of the incident above and one may well ask: Why did there arise such a need that another person like Jesus should fall in the hands of the Jews? Is it God Himself who did not wish that the Jews should have faith in the Messiah? Did He Himself force them to believe that Jesus was actually hanged and killed on the Cross? And according to their belief that “he that is hanged is cursed of God” therefore, did God Himself allow the Jews to be blamed for rejecting him? If we consider the first report concerning Sarjus as a fabrication and accept the second one about a traitor-companion of Jesus as true and make him suffer an accursed death, then another question arises: Why did this traitor not create an uproar that he was not Jesus, that Jesus had gone up to heaven and that he himself was a different person? After all, those who came to arrest Jesus knew that a hypocrite friend of Jesus had accompanied them and he was going inside the house to get Jesus arrested. What happened to him? How is it that none of them made any further inquiry about him? And the wrong culprit never denied his being Jesus? He was led to Pilate and he never protested! He was mockd and a crown of thorns was put on his head and he kept quiet! He was hanged on the Cross and uttered loudly “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” (My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?) [Mark, 15:34; Matthew, 27:46] but did not say a word that he was wrong and unjustly being crucified in Jesus’ place? Then, after being taken off the Cross, he met with his mother and other disciples and never gave a hint that he was someone else and that the real Messiah was sitting in heaven? When even this report was not found suitable, another story was invented in its place that the Jews had surrounded Jesus’ house but when they did not find him there, they became worried that with his disappearance people would accept him as a messenger of God. Therefore, they got hold of somebody from among themselves and crucified him and did not permit people to come near him for fear of his being recognised. Then later on his appearance changed (i.e. he started looking like Jesus). This is how the whole incident is reported in Ruh al-Ma’ani.

One may escape from some of the problems met with in other reports, but new difficulties arise by accepting such a fanciful story. The obvious contradiction is that the Jews caught hold of another person and crucified him as they did not find Jesus at his place and they did not bother to look for him elsewhere - he might have absconded. They immediately understood that he had gone to heaven (there were really clever people!) and then they made one from among themselves agree to play the part of Jesus and told him to keep quiet and not make any fuss! As if there was no Roman Government at that time! One wonders at the imagination and ingenuity of those who invented such historical myths. Let us forget that the Jews crucified such a person and did not allow anyone to come near him. Let us also forget that he was taken to Pilate in the presence of a big assembly, including his mother and other disciples. The trouble is, however, that even God had such regard for the Jews that He produced a miracle for them and the appearance of that person was instantly changed into that of Jesus. God forbid; but was it His intention that Jesus should be proven an impostor? According to this report, the changing of appearance, it seems, was not the miracle of Jesus but of the Jews. The whole narrative is baseless and cannot stand the least rational or historical test. The Quran and the Holy Prophet cannot be held responsible for teaching such fables.

Further evidence from the Quran that Jesus appeared like the one who was crucified

It is indeed true that such a wrong view about Jesus came into Islamic literature through Christian sources and those who have given serious thought to the matter know very well how Jewish and Christian stories have found their way into Islamic literature. With regard to Jesus, the Quran categorically rejects the Jewish and the Christian versions. It verifies that Jesus appeared like one who was crucified - and not that someone else who was crucified looked like Jesus. Thus, after mentioning that Jesus was not actually slain, or crucified, but he appeared to them as such, the Quran says:

And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it [4:157]

It is obvious that those who differed therein are both the Jews and the Christians; therefore, the Jews are not specifically mentioned here. According to the Quran they are both in doubt about it. If the view is accepted that someone else was crucified in place of Jesus, this is not the point of dispute among them, nor is this view supported by the events recorded in history respecting the fate of Jesus. According to the Jews, it was Jesus who was put on the Cross. There was no eyewitness of Jesus’ going to heaven. There were no other special signs to show that he might have gone up there. The person who was put on the Cross made no protest concerning his innocence. His mother and disciples also called him Jesus. However, the incidents narrated in the Gospels - towards which the Quran has made a reference that Jesus was made to appear to them as if he were crucified - do create doubt in the mind of the reader as to the true nature of the fate Jesus suffered at the hands of his enemies. This shows that even those in front of whose eyes these incidents took place were also left groping in the dark. The incidents which have been mentioned above clearly indicate that the Jews were not certain whether Jesus had died on the Cross or not. And the incidents mentioned in the Christian scriptures never conclusively proved that Jesus did die on the Cross. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, a
furious windstorm started, and according to the Gospel, darkness fell over all the land "unto the ninth hour," and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. [Matthew, 27:45,51.] At the same time, preparations for the Sabbath were going on. [Luke, 23:54] so the Jews left Jesus on the cross in those terrible circumstances and Pilate himself was doubtful that Jesus had died so soon when he was told about it as is mentioned in Mark 15:44 [Mark, 15:44] Why would the Jews not doubt his death? Then Jesus left the tomb, after somebody had removed the stone - for a spiritual resurrection this would not have been necessary. His meetings with his disciples, sometimes at night, and sometimes away in the country, show that he had not died on the Cross. There is in existence, even now, a Christian sect which holds a similar view. All these incidents show that friends and foes alike remained in doubt about the death of Jesus on the Cross. The Quran has laid great emphasis on this point because it further states: They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture. [4:157]

It was just their speculation that Jesus had died, otherwise all the events surrounding the crucifixion clearly pointed out that he had not died. The Quran completes the statement thus: And they killed him not for certain. [Ibid]

Here, some commentators have interpreted qata-lu (killed) as ‘alimu (knew). Whatever interpretation is given to the words, the meaning is clear, that they were not certain about Jesus being killed. The denial of certainty (yaqin) and following conjecture (zann) and remaining in doubt (shakk) all indicate that the whole matter had become dubious; some events led them to believe that Jesus had died and others, that he had not actually died. That is why the Quran has used such words while describing this incident and the statements made in the Quran corroborate the statements made in history.

Further explanation of 4:159
The following verse: And there is none of the People of the Book but will believe in this before his death. [4:159] I discussed in the last chapter in which I said that it had nothing to do with the descent of the Messiah. In fact, there is no mention of his descent here at all. Hazrat ibn Abbas had interpreted this verse thus: "At the time of death, the dying person is endowed with a kind of light which makes a Jew or a Christian understand the true nature of Jesus' claim; those who considered him to be an impostor knew that he was true in his claim and those who made him God knew that he was a servant of God and not God." [Ruh al-Ma'ani under 4:159, p.12] But in view of the events mentioned in the text so far, the meanings are plain and clear. It was stated in the above verse that they (the Christians and the Jews) are "in doubt about it" and that "they have no knowledge about it." The pronoun "this" in layu minanna bihi refers to the same matter towards which the pronoun it leads in lafi shakkin minhu and ma lahum bihi min 'ilm. The Quran has here compared the historical facts with the beliefs of the Jews and the Christians and has indicated that the actual events show that Jesus appeared to be as if he were crucified, but he was not crucified and the Jews remained in doubt and they were not sure whether he had really died on the Cross or not.

Past, present and future:
- "We shall certainly make him live" (fa-la-nuhuyiyyanna-hu)...
  (16:97).
- "We will certainly burn it" (la-nuhariqannahu)...
  (20:97).
- "And certainly Allah will help him" (wa la-yansurnalal-hu)...
  (22:40).
- "We shall certainly make them enter" (la-nudkhiilannahu)...
  (29:9).
- "We shall certainly guide them (la-nahdiyayanna-hum) in our ways" (29:69).

Allah has written down: "I shall certainly prevail (la-aqhilana), I and My messengers" (58:21). [SMT] We shall surely cause thee to turn (fa-la-nuwailiyyanna-ka) is the future tense (with lam tahlit and nun thaqalah) but represents the present tense, because the Ka'bah had already been made the gibalh with this order and this was not something which was going to happen at some future date. Still, the Quran used the words fa-la-nuwailiyyanna-ka. Similarly, in 4:159, the expression la yu'minanna was used, that, in spite of the knowledge of history, every one of the People of the Book would have faith in this about which he was in doubt historically. In other words, the Jews and the Christians have been put to shame here: that is, the basis of their faith lies on something the authenticity of
which they are not sure themselves.

The question of exaltation (rafa’)

The words ma qata-luha wa ma salabu-hu (they slew him not nor did they cause his death on the Cross) do not at all support the theory that Jesus had gone up to heaven. However, the supporters of the view of Jesus being alive, apart from this verse, greatly rely on the word rafa’a used in this verse and which has been used to refer to Jesus: And they killed him not for certain: nay, Allah exalted him in His presence[4:157-158]. And in another place it has been mentioned: O Jesus, I will cause thee to die and exalt thee in My presence [3:54].

At both these places rafa’a ilailah (exaltation toward God) is considered to mean that Jesus was physically taken up alive to heaven because rafa’a means to raise or lift something up. Therefore, it is supposed that when God raises a person it should necessarily mean that He raises him up physically from earth and takes him away somewhere else. But it should be borne in mind that in every language, a word may be used in many different senses.

Generally, the use of a word in a particular context indicates in what sense it has been used there. Therefore, first of all we must see whether the word rafa’a in the Arabic language is used in one sense only or more, and then what meaning could be given to it in the context where it has been used. Imam Raghib says:

“Rafa’a is sometimes applied to corporeal things, meaning the raising or elevating of a thing from the resting place thereof... sometimes to a building making it high or lofty... and sometimes exalting of one’s fame... sometimes exaltation in degree of rank or station.” [Mufradat, Imam Raghib under Rafa’a, p.199].

Apart from these, other uses of rafa’a have also been mentioned by Imam Raghib. Taj-ul-Arus has also given various examples of the use of the word rafa’a and has also quoted the statement by Imam Raghib. In another lexicon, Lisan al-Arab, all these meanings have been mentioned with appropriate examples. I will quote a few references from this book. First of all, the following remark has been made while discussing the word rafa’a:

“That is, Al-Rafi’ (One Who exalts) is one of the (attributive) names of God, the Most High. That is, He exalts the believer by making him prosperous (or happy) and by granting His friends (aulia’ya) nearness and that rafa’a is contrary to wada’a (to be abused, to put down) and then it is stated that it is mentioned in the Quran about the Judgement Day; that is, abasing, exalting (56:3).” [Lisan al-Arab, under the word rafa’a (pronounced as Ar-Rafi’)].

About this, Imam Zujaj says that it means that Judgement Day will abase the evil doers and exalt the believers. That is, it will exalt them in rank or station. Another meaning of rafa’a is bringing a thing near one to another and the meaning of nisamerican marfu’at is nisaman mikarramam or women who will be honoured; and rafa’a fulanin ilal hakim means he brought him or presented him or brought him forward to the judge. The meaning of rafa’a al-ba’ira fi al-sair is, he made the camel to exert himself to the full in going or speed or he made him go with the utmost swiftness. And in a tradition, it is said fa rafa’u naqati - I made my she-camel go at a pace termed marfu’ that is, made her go with the utmost swiftness. In the same sense, in another tradition, it is reported: Wa rafa’na matiyatuna wa rafa’ Rasoolullah salallahu alaihi wa saifiyatun khalfahu (We made our animals go in speed and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, also made his animal go in speed and Safia was sitting behind him). And what God said about the house, that they should be exalted - there an turfa’a means that they should be honoured or be exalted in estimation. [It is in houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted (24:36)].

The use of the word rafa’a for Jesus cannot be the basis of the doctrine of his going up to heaven

As has been shown above, the word rafa’a is used in so many different ways. Thus there is nothing more hasty and reckless than to conclude from the verses rafi’uka illaya [3:54] and bal rafa’ahulahul ilaah [4:158] that Jesus has physically gone up to heaven. If, however, for the sake of argument, it is accepted that God’s raising some person towards Him, or some person going up towards God could possibly mean that he has corporally gone up to heaven, nevertheless when rafa’a ilailah in the dictionary means only nearness, as has clearly been mentioned in Lisan al-Arab, or also exaltation in degree of rank and granting of glory or honour, as has been mentioned in Mufradat, Lisan al-Arab, etc., how is it permissible to depend on this word alone and evolve a doctrine about Jesus’ being lifted up physically alive to heaven? (I will later prove that expression rafa’a ilal-lah cannot even lend support to such a doctrine). As this issue is far removed from the ordinary phenomena of life, and there is no parallel of such an instance in God’s law and practice, that a person who had physically entered heaven without tasting death, or that God had helped save any prophet like that in times of distress, therefore, some other words are needed in the Quran to prove that Jesus was actually lifted up to heaven with his body. The expressions rafi’uka illaya and bal rafa’ahulahul ilaah do not lend support to this theory at all. Thus the use of the word rafa’a for Jesus does in no way prove his going to heaven in this body of clay. Now I will show that when God exalts a person (or makes his rafa’) towards Himself, it does not mean that He lifts him up alive physically. Such meanings are absolutely against the Arabic lexicons. It is most important to remember here that in both these verses (3:54 and 4:158) the subject of the verb rafa’a is God Himself and rafa’a is also towards Him, which conclusively prove that rafa’a here does not mean raising up physically but only exaltation in rank or station.

What is the significance of rafa’ (exaltation) of a person towards God?

The first question is, in what manner are human beings exalted by God? In other words, when the subject of the verb rafa’a is God, what is its significance in relation to men? Because Jesus was, after all, a human being. The first and the strongest evidence in this connection is God’s name, Al-Rafi’ (The One Who exalts). This establishes the fact that exaltation (rafa’) of men is a Divine attribute. That is, those persons who prove themselves capable of exaltation are exalted by God. It is, however, obvious that God does not exalt men by lifting them up physically towards the sky but, instead, exaltation is done by granting them honour, dignity, supernatural power or high spiritual rank. If God’s attribute of being Al-Rafi’ was particularly manifested for Jesus alone, it could mean something different. But when this attribute is manifested for all the believers and friends of God (aulia’ya Allah) and this attribute demands that the exaltation (rafta’) of the believers should continue - then the rafa’ of Jesus should also be interpreted in the same manner. To accept a different significance of the use of this word with respect to Jesus means that he has corporally gone up to heaven with his body. But when rafa’a has been granted exaltation in its true sense except Jesus. This amounts to a clear denial of God’s attribute of being Al-Rafi’ because a Divine attribute is manifested over and over. If God’s attributive name is Al-Rafi’, then only that interpretation is possible which fails within the purview of this attribute, the meaning of which has been explained, namely, the bestowing of honour, glory and dignity on a person. This is the first evidence that when God is the subject of the verb rafa’a in relation to a human being, it cannot mean lifting him up alive towards the sky.
Ibn Kathir says in respect of this verse that la rafa‘anahu biha means that We would have raised him above the worldly impurities and filth.” Fath al-Bayan renders it “We would have raised him to the stations of the learned.” In Badawi, similar meanings are given that “We would have raised him to the stations of the doers of good.” Ibn Jarir says that: “Much signification is attached to the word rafa‘. From among them is the exaltation of rank in God’s presence, and the granting of honour and benevolence in the world, and the exaltation of one’s fame. It is permissible to accept that here all these may be applicable, that is, if God willed, he would have all these things.”

In the above reference, how clearly has the significance of God’s exaltation (rafa‘) been explained! However, about Enoch (Iridis), some commentators have introduced Jewish stories (isra‘ilayt) while interpreting the words wa rafa‘ na-hu makan-an al‘iyaya (We raised him to a lofty place or position). Under the influence of isra‘ilayt, they have expressed the view that Idris had gone alive to heaven, as has been stated in Fath al-Bayan and Ibn Kathir. After Ibn Kathir has quoted a report by Ka‘b al-Ahbar, that an angel carried Idris to the seventh heaven but the angel of death immediately seized his soul there, he says that:

“This is from among the isra‘ilayt. The reports narrated by Ka‘b al-Ahbar and some points therein are questionable.” After mentioning the same report, the author of Fath al-Bayan says: “These are the isra‘ilayt which Ka‘b used to narrate.”

The authoritative view on the subject, however, is that in spite of the use of makanan al‘iyaya, rafa‘ na-hu here means “We honoured him.” In Ruh al-Ma‘ani, it is remarked that: “This rafa‘ to a lofty place means honouring him with prophethood and Divine nearness.”

And it is reported from Hassan concerning makanan al‘iyaya that this rafa‘ was granted to him in paradise because paradise is the loftiest place. In another report it is mentioned (see Ruh al-Ma‘ani) that when this verse was recited:

Baiagnha al-sama‘a majadna wa sana-u-naa. Wa inna la-narjoo fawqa zalika mazharaan. It means: We reached a lofty place and our praise was lofty. And we desired to go above that which was designated for us. And the Holy Prophet asked: “O Abu Laila, towards which place? He said towards paradise (jannah), O Messenger of Allah! (which is above the skies). The Holy Prophet said: Absolutely right.”

The misunderstanding about the Prophet Idris apparently has arisen because the Holy Prophet saw him in the fourth heaven as is stated in the report about the Mi raj (Ascension); but the Holy Prophet saw Noah, Abraham, Moses, John and others, too. As other prophets had reached heaven, similarly Idris and Jesus had also reached there. Thus rafa‘ na-hu makan-an al‘iyaya does not mean anything except the raising of Idris to a high position of dignity.

After mentioning all these reports, Ruh al-Ma‘ani says: “This rafa‘ which requires elevation in dignity and rank is used to indicate high praise, otherwise just putting one on a raised place does not (really) mean anything.”

The meaning of rafa‘ in hadith

Now we turn to the sayings of the Holy Prophet which very often mention God’s exaltation (rafa‘) of the believers. First is the prayer which we recite in our daily prayers between the two prostrations:

“O Allah! grant me protection, and have mercy on me and guide me, and grant me security, and grant me sustenance, and exalt me (warfa‘ ni) and set right my affairs” (Ibn-i Majah, p. 64).
What do we actually mean when we say the prayer, irfa ni (exault me)? Do we for a moment think that God should physically lift us to heaven? When such a thought does not cross our mind at the time of prayer, how could this expression mean something different when God says that He has exalted Jesus? The rafa’ which we desire for ourselves is the same rafa’ which came to the share of Jesus. There is a report mentioned in Tirmidhi:

“People want to disgrace them but God does not want anything for them but their rafa’ (i.e. He wants to honour them).” [Ibn Majah, ch. ma yaqra’ baina sajdatain]. From Hazrat ’Umar a report is mentioned in al-Muslim and Ibn Majah:

“God the Most High will exalt some nations (i.e. give them honour and dignity) on account of this Quran.” [Ibid., ch. Fazl man ta’allama al-Quran, p.20]. In another hadith, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said to Hazrat Abbas: “May God exalt thee, O Uncle.” [Kanzul Ummal, vol. 7, p. 68]. In another it is said: “Show humility; God will exalt you.” [Ibid. vol, 2, p. 25].

There are several ahadith on tawadu’ (humbly, modestly) in which God promises that anyone who shows humility is exalted from by Him. The obvious reason seems to be that rafa’a and wada’a are contrary to each other. Thus, when a person, for the sake of God, lowers himself, God raises him. Lowering oneself does not mean that a person should enter a pit, nor does raising in this context mean that he is lifted up several yards above the ground, but as lowering implies lowering in character, similarly raising is raising in rank or dignity. In some traditions the words rafa’a ila al-sama’a (he raised towards the sky) have been used for the person who shows humility. In one hadith it is said:

“When a person show humility, God lifts him up with a chain towards the seventh heaven.” [Ibid. vol. 2, p. 26].

How clear are the words in this tradition! Rafa’ (raising), sama’ (heaven) and silsilah (chain) could lead us to interpret them literally, but we do not take them literally because God’s exaltation of a person cannot lend support to such meanings. If that were so, everyone showing humility would have been raised to the seventh heaven with a chain. In that case no one could really raise any objection against Jesus’ physically going up to the fourth heaven.

In spite of the Divine promise that a person showing humility is lifted up to the seventh heaven with a chain, no such person has ever gone up that way even to the first heaven. And even the Holy Prophet who had been declared the possessor of sublime morals [68:4] in the Quran, and there was no one who showed humility and modesty like him also, remained on this earth and was not raised up to the seventh heaven. This shows that although God’s rafa’ may be mentioned in the clearest terms, it cannot be interpreted in its literal sense at all. It only means Divine nearness, or raising in rank.

Imam Bukhari has, however, made it exceedingly clear that the meaning of rafa’a ila al-sama’a does not at all mean going upwards with this body of clay. He says: “Rafa’ towards heaven is contrary to wada’ and from this is the prayer: O God, exalt me and disgrace me not. And God exalts whomsoever He wishes and disgraces whomsoever He wishes.” [Ibn-i Majah, p.6].

This statement by Imam Bukhari is decisive proof in relation to the meaning of rafa’a ila al-sama’a that it cannot mean anything else except the raising of a person in dignity and rank. Thus, from the Arabic lexicons, and from the Quran and the Hadith, it is established that God’s exaltation (raf'a) of a person has one meaning alone. This also conclusively proves that the words used about Jesus, raf‘ uka ilayya (I shall exalt thee in My presence: 3:54) and rafa’ hullahu ilaih (Allah exalted him in His presence: 4:158) do not mean anything else concerning Jesus except exalting him in rank. To believe that these words mean the raising of Jesus physically to heaven is absolutely wrong. Not only because God Himself is the cause of Jesus’ rafa’ but in both cases, this rafa’ is towards God. Where the rafa’ of a man to God is spoken of in the Quran, or in the religious literature of Islam, it is always in the sense of exalting or making him honourable. Abraham says in the Quran: Surely I flee to my Lord [37:99].

Although zahhaba means to go, Abraham did not mean that he would be going to his Lord on foot, but that he was leaving his people for the sake of God to attain Divine nearness and pleasure. Although zahhibun (going) is a physical act, the use of the words ila Rabbi (to my Lord) shows that this going towards God was not with this body of clay. Any ambiguity in zahhubin was removed by ila Rabbi which finally decided the true meaning of the verse [37:99]. Whatever was allegorical (mutashabih) was solved by the decisive (muhkam) by the use of the words towards my Lord. As compared to this, in rafi‘ u-ka ilayya and rafa‘ahu illah, the absolute sign was found in rafa‘ahu illah and the second absolute factor was added by the expression ilaih (towards him). In other words, the verses raf‘ uka ilayya and rafa‘ahu illah consist of two parts. The first part is raf‘ uka and raf‘ahu illah where God talks of the exaltation of a person which undoubtedly and decisively means the granting of Divine nearness. The second part is ilayya or ilaih which clarifies that this rafa’ is towards God. And rafa’ towards God or going towards God does not mean going to Him with this body of clay, nor can any example of this fact be found in the Quran or the Hadith. On the contrary, the illustration as quoted above [37:99] in zahhabun ila Rabbi shows that when the ultimate destination is God, it also means Divine nearness and not coming and going with this physical body. Many illustrations of this can be found in the Quran, for example: O soul (nafs) that art at rest, return to thy Lord [88:26-27]. Here nafs may not mislead anyone to believe erroneously that the address here is to man with this body of clay.

Similarly in the following verses: We created you from a single being (nafs), [4:1]. When men (nufus) are united [81:7] and Slay yourselves, [2:54. (Abdul Majid’s translation)] only human beings are mentioned. Therefore, in the above verse, return to thy Lord does not mean that this return is with the physical body but ila Rabbika (towards thy Lord) has made it clear that ruju’ (returning) here only means spiritual nearness. [Similarly in So let him who will, take a way to his Lord (73:18). Here, way (sabt) does not mean an earthly way nor does taking a way mean going somewhere on foot, horse or train; it only means the way of spiritual nearness to God.]

This spiritual nearness is also indicated in the words “raf‘a towards God”, and this view has been accepted by some commentators, although some others, without proper investigation, and thinking that the coming of the son of Mary means the actual coming of Jesus, understand rafa‘ as a physical rafa‘. However, the words ilal-ah (towards God) have diverted the attention of some of them - from the correct significance - that it does not mean lifting him physically towards a place, as Imam Razi says: “We have proved in this book with conclusive arguments at several places that God, the Most High, cannot be confined to a space.”

However, the thought of Jesus being alive was so dominant in their minds that they had to interpret the word ilayya (towards) differently. Sometimes it was interpreted as ila mahalli karamati (towards the place of My reverence), which in other words only means exaltation in rank or granting of nearness. Sometimes it was interpreted this way - that God would carry him to a place where no command will be in operation except that of God as
if God’s command does not operate on earth, which in itself is an absurd thought.

If such were not the case, how could God have saved the Holy Prophet from the hands of his enemies? How could God have saved Abraham? And how could Moses and other prophets have been saved on this earth from the cruel hands of powerful monarchs? Was it only for Jesus that God’s command could not operate on earth? Were the Jews so strong that they would not even let God’s law function here (although they themselves were a disgraced and subjugated nation at that time)? But surprisingly enough (although their belief may be different concerning Jesus), some of the commentators give a correct interpretation of the words under discussion. For instance, Imam Razi says that “I will raise thee towards Me” means: “I will raise thy action towards me.” And then he goes on to illustrate what it is like, as has been mentioned in the verse: To Him do ascend the goodly words [35:10].

Still, with greater clarity he writes in explanation of the verse: And make those who follow thee above those who disbelieve: [3:54], “Placing those who follow Jesus above those who disbelieve” means making them superior in argument and proof, and know that this verse proves that God’s saying, “I will raise thee towards Me” means God’s raising him in rank and station and not raising him to a particular place or to a direction, as the dominance (faqiiyyah) here means the dominance in rank and station also.

The whole matter is very simple to understand. Qurb means nearness, but nearness to God means spiritual and not physical nearness. Similarly, rafa’ towards God is not physical but only spiritual.

Reason for the use of the word rafa’

Only one point needs to be mentioned here concerning rafa’. And that is, why did God mention at two different places the rafa’ of Jesus? In rafu’uka ila yaa (I will raise thee in My presence - 3:54), there is a promise and in rafu’ahillatuhu ilaih (Allah exalted him in His presence - 4:158), that promise has been fulfilled. A few points should be borne in mind here. At the first place the promise was made because in verse 3:53 the plan or plot of the Jesus was mentioned, and God wanted to comfort Jesus by telling him that his enemies were planning against him but would not succeed, and that Jesus would be granted God’s nearness. And at the second place it was intended that the claim of the Jews should be rejected: And for their saying: We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah. [4:157]

It was said in reply: They killed him not for certain. Nay, Allah exalted him in His presence. [4:157-158] Another point which should be mentioned here is that in 3:54 rafu’uka is placed after mutawaffika and in 4:157-158 rafa’ahillah is placed after a denial has been made of Jesus’ being slain or crucified (i.e. death on the Cross), which shows that this rafa’ is such that can be accompanied only by tawaffa (natural death) but not by killing (qatl) or crucifixion (sabil). The meaning of tawaffa will be discussed later. Here it should suffice to say that in Al-Bukhari it is reported from Hazrat Ibn Abbas that mutawaffika means mumitu-ka (I will cause you to die). [Al-Bukhari, kitab al-Tafsr, 65:12]. For this reason, many commentators are of the opinion that Jesus suffered death. Thus, natural death is not contrary to rafa’ (exaltation) according to God, but death by qatl and salb is contrary to rafa’. This also clearly proves that this was not a physical exaltation because physical rafa’ cannot take place with tawaffa (death). Some people think that the verse would better be understood by changing the order of the words in the text (i.e. rafa’uka should be considered as if it occurs before mutawaffika), but there must be some strong reason for this tawaffa (putting the word before) and takhir (putting the word after). If it was mentioned elsewhere in the Quran that Jesus had gone up physically to heaven, then takhir would have been permissible here. Something which needs objective proof itself cannot be established arbitrarily only on the basis of tawaffa and takhir (transposition of words), otherwise a door could be opened for all kinds of wild interpretations of the verses of the Quran. Again, this tawaffa and takhir cannot be of any real value in view of the meaning of rafa’ as explained above.

The point worth mentioning here is, why has God joined tawaffa (death) with rafa’ (exaltation) in 3:54, and at another place (4:157-158) qatl (killing) and salb (death on the cross) have been rejected but rafa’ has been affirmed? To get at the root of the matter, we have to look to the Jewish scriptures. Death on the Cross was an accursed death. An accursed person (mal’un) was he who was expelled or removed from the presence of God (88) and about death on the Cross, it was said: “And if a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he has to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; for he that is hanged is accursed of God.” [Deuteronomy 21:22-23. See The New English Bible, Deut. 21:22-23. (SMT)]

Here hanging on the tree means hanging on the cross or gibbus as is mentioned in John: “Because it was the eve of the Passover, the Jews were anxious that the bodies should not remain on the cross for the coming Sabbath.” [John, 19:31 (NEB Translation)]

And in Galatians it has been made abundantly clear: “Christ brought us freedom from the curse of the law by becoming for our sake an accursed thing: for the Scripture says, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.” [Galatians, 3:13 (NEB)].

All these references show that according to Jewish scriptures anyone who dies on the cross was considered an accursed person. This was the only reason why the Jews were trying hard to cause Jesus’ death on the Cross, otherwise it was not difficult for them to kill him secretly. But all their plans centred round the point that Jesus should be proved an imposter and an accursed (mal’un). Mal’un or one expelled from the presence of God, is the opposite of marfu’ or one who is exalted and honoured in the presence of God. Therefore when the Quran denied Jesus’ dying on the cross, it was explained at the same time that although the Jews wanted him to die an accursed death, God frustraded their plans and honoured him and granted him his nearness. Similarly, when it was said: And (the Jews) planned and Allah (also) planned, [3:53] it was mentioned at the same time: “O Jesus, these people want thee to die an accursed death by hanging thee on the gallows, but I will cause thee to die a natural death and save thee from the death on the Cross and will thus honour thee.”

Other verses analysed

I have already discussed the verse And there is none of the People of the Book (4:159) above. Sometimes it is said that the verse: When I withheld the Children of Israel from thee, [5:110] shows that the Jews would not be able to touch Jesus at all. Such an interpretation of the word kafaa is rather a forced one, apparently for the sake of Jesus alone. Kafaa‘an means to prevent, to turn from, but it does not mean that no one is even able to touch or hurt a person in any way at all. There has been no messenger of God who has not suffered at the hands of his enemies. Why should Jesus be considered an exception above every other messenger, in that his opponents were unable to do the slightest injury to him? When he was arrested, he was after all held by the hands of his captors. Restraining the Children of Israel, in fact, means that God frustrated their plot.

Another verse which is put forward in support of the theory
Jesus being still alive is: And verily he is a sign of the Hour. [43:61 (Translation by 'Abdul Majid). Muhammad Ali translates this verse thus: "And this (revelation) is surely knowledge of the Hour."] There is, however, no proof that the pronoun hu (he, it, this) refers to Jesus. On the contrary, it is reported from Hassan, Qatatah and Jabir that the pronoun in the expression innahu refers to the Quran itself. Undoubtedly, it is the Quran that has given the knowledge of the "Hour" or the "Judgement Day". Some have expressed the opinion that the pronoun here refers to the Holy Prophet. Accordingly, the saying of the Holy Prophet should be understood in this light when he said: "I and the Day of Judgement are joined together like two (close) fingers."

This indicates that after the Holy Prophet, no other prophet will appear till the Day of Judgement. One of the names of the Holy Prophet is Al-Hashir (Timidhi, ch. Names of the Prophet), which means the one who gathers people together on the Day of Judgement. Even if we accept that the pronoun refers to Jesus in the above verse, it does not prove that his return to the world is a sign of the Hour. We have no right to interpret tendentiously a verse of the Quran by adding words to bear out a meaning of our choice from the text. If Jesus is the sign (ilm) of the Hour (al-Sa’ah) then it is the Sa’ah (hour) of the Jewish people when they were deprived of the Divine blessing of prophethood (because of their persistent rejection of truth and opposition to God’s messengers). [Jesus said to the Elders of the Jews: “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matthews 21:43). (SMT)]. When a person dies, the Day of Judgement begins for him. Similarly, when a nation dies, the Day of Judgement starts for it. The commentators who have taken the pronoun (he, it) to refer to Jesus have considered Jesus’ bringing the dead to life, or his allegedly fatherless birth, or his second coming as a “sign of the Hour.” When so many different interpretations are possible, have we any right to give preference to one particular interpretation and insist on its acceptance to the extent that we should believe in a person’s physically ascending to heaven and remaining alive till now - against all Divine practice? In short, such an argument is very weak and absurd.

The Muslim scholars who believed in the death of Jesus I have taken into consideration almost all the verses which are put forward in support of the view that Jesus is still alive with this body of clay in heaven and have proven that there is not a single verse which can truly be the basis of such a belief. No doubt, traditions do mention the descent of the son of Mary but I have explained this point in detail earlier (see Chapter IV) to the effect that a mistake has been committed in understanding the word nuzul (descent). In any case, even the word nuzul does not establish the point that Jesus is still alive. There have been many people among Muslims who have held the view that Jesus did not die, but there have been others who have held the contrary view that he did die, although for three hours, or seven hours or for three days. Imam Malik believed in Jesus’ absolute death. It is mentioned in Majma‘ al-Bihar under the word hakam:

“He (Jesus) will descend as a judge; that is to say, he will judge according to this Shar’iah (Law) (and) he will not be a prophet. The majority think that Jesus did not die but (Imam) Malik said that he died.”

The view of those who believed that Jesus died is based on the clear testimony of the Quran and the thought of his being alive is only the product of the wrong interpretation of prophecies about his descent (nuzul). Prophecies are, in a way, ambiguous, and sometimes couched in metaphors, the true meanings of which become clear at a later stage. Therefore, there is a possibility of committing a mistake in understanding them because their fulfilment. The truth of the matter is that a prophecy, which is of the nature of an allegory, should not be the basis of any doctrine of our belief. Our belief should be based on something which is decisive. As a mistake was going to be committed on this question by many persons in this ummah, therefore, many clear verses on the death of Jesus have been revealed in the Quran and these I shall discuss presently.

The meaning of tawaffa
Tawaffa is from the root wafa, meaning to fulfill. Tawaffa is from bab tafa’il. A change occurs in the meaning of a word in every bab, therefore we need not discuss these various meanings because we are concerned with the word tawaffa only. The other point to be borne in mind here is that sometimes words occurring in a different context and idiom convey special meanings. As I have shown above that in the Arabic idiom and dictionary God’s exaltation (rafa’ ) of human beings towards Himself means something different, and no one has a right to alter the meanings at will, similar is the case with the word tawaffa. The lexicologists have mentioned the phrase tawaffahu-lahu (God caused him to die) separately. Thus in Taj ul-Arus it has been mentioned: “When tawaffahu is spoken of by God. Exalted and Magnified (be His Name) about a person, it means He seized his life (nafs), and in al-Sihah it is mentioned He seized his soul (ruh).”

The same meanings are given in Lisan al’Arab, that is, He (God) seized his life (nafs). Thus when the lexicologists have explained the meaning of tawaffahullah in one way, we have no right to alter these meanings and put forward the argument that because the root of tawaffa is wafa, therefore it could mean something different. Lexicons do not depend on pre-suppositions (qiyas); if they did, there would be much confusion all around. The basis of lexicons is sama’ (hearing) whether a particular word has been used in that sense or not. The question is whether tawaffahullah has been used in any other sense than seizure of life or seizure of soul. The two great Arabic lexicons clearly indicate that tawaffahullah does not mean anything except that God seized his life, or soul. It could indeed be said that lexicologists could also commit mistakes, but to prove this point we would have to cite illustrations that at a particular place tawaffahu-lahu meant something different. Unless there is clear and undisputed proof against the lexicologists, that is, a clear example of the use of a word in a different way from that indicated by them, we have to submit to the authority of the lexicologists. Three questions arise at this stage:

1. Have the lexicologists mentioned tawaffahu-lahu as a separate phrase, separate from the root of the word and its derivatives? The answer is in the affirmative.

2. Have the lexicologists given a different meaning of tawaffahu-lahu except seizure of life or soul? The answer is clearly in the negative.

3. (3) Contrary to the evidence of the lexicologists, can we find any example in the Arabic language, where the Arab linguists have accepted a different meaning of tawaffahullah than what has been mentioned above?

The answer to this question is also in the negative - that tawaffahullah only means that God seized his soul, or life, or caused him to die. All the Arabic poetry, of the Days of Ignorance as well as the Quran and all the Hadith literature, and all the other vast amount of Arabic literature that came into existence after the Holy Prophet, give only one meaning to the phrase tawaffahu-lahu.

If the lexicologists had not separated the phrase tawaffahu-lahu, if they had given a different meaning other than seizure of the soul, and if they had used this phrase in a different sense, there was a possibility of some hair-splitting argument about the word, that is, that because its root is wafa, which means to fulfill one’s engagement, to fulfill, etc., therefore it could mean
to raise up a person bodily with his shoes, turban and clothes, all together. However, when the evidence of the lexicologists is clearly against such a meaning, and no example at all can be cited against it from Arabic literature, to argue that on account of its root being wafa' that it could mean something different, is like introducing one's own conjecture and opinion into the meaning of the word.

There is clear evidence in the Quran itself that tawaffahu-llahu only means that God took his life. Says the Quran: Allah takes (men's) souls at the time of their death, and those that die not, during their sleep. Then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and send the others back till an appointed term. (39:42). In this verse Allah has explained the method of tawaffa or how He takes away the human soul. It is taken away in two ways, either during sleep or at the time of death. At both these occasions it is the soul that is taken away and not the body. There is no third way of tawaffa or taking away the human soul mentioned anywhere in Quran. The Hadith also mentioned that tawaffa means causing of death. Similarly, where the word mutawaffika has been used with regard to Jesus it has been explained as mumituka by Ibn Abbas in Bukhari, which means "I will cause thee to die." The question could, of course, be asked, how could tawaffahu-llahu mean God seized his soul? The lexicologists have advanced several reasons for this. For instance, the deceased person's days which he has to spend in this world are complet ed and at the time of sleep, conscious life undergoes cessation (although temporarily), [Taj al- Arus] or, at the time of death, the soul, which, in other words, is life and movement, is completely taken away and during sleep the discriminating intellect is fully seized. [Majma' al-Bihar]. But these explanations do not affect the usage of the word at all. Although in the lexicons the word tawaffa has been used in the sense of to receive full payment of a due, that is a separate phrase. In Taj al- Arus it is said: "I received fully payment of my due from him."

Here the subject (fs'il) of tawaffa is not God, nor is an animate being the object (maf ul). God does not cause tawaffa of a person in the sense that He receives full payment of His due from him by carrying him from one place to another. Then it should also be remembered that as tawaffa means seizure of the soul, similarly wafat means death. Because the root of the word implies "to receive in full" (one's due), it does not mean that when we say that a particular person has suffered wafat (death) that the person in question has gone somewhere in one piece. When we go from one place to another we do not leave our hands and feet, or shoes and clothes, behind. Nobody has applied the word wafat to our going somewhere in this way.

If these meanings were applicable, then day in and day out we would undergo wafat. Similarly, tawaffatu-hu does not mean that I have taken him whole with this body of clay. When police take a criminal away, they take all of him but nobody has used the expression yatatawaffa-hu for that occasion. A mother carries her child in one piece but has anyone used the word tawaffa for such an act? When a maulavi arrives at a certain place - without leaving his hands, feet, shoes, etc. behind, or if he is carried away by horse or by train from one town to another, would it be right to say that the maulvi has undergone wafat (death)? If according to some, the use of the word tawaffa is permissible for lifting the body upwards, would it be right to say, for persons who travel by aeroplanes, that they have undergone wafat (death)? When such an expression cannot be used on all occasions, why should it be used in this particular sense in the case of Jesus?

Proof of the death of Jesus from the verse inni mutawaffika (3:54)
After understanding the meaning of tawaffahu-llahu (God caused him to die), the question of the life and death of Jesus can easily be settled. God says in the Quran: O Jesus, I will cause thee to die and exalt thee in My presence and clear thee of those who disbelieve and make those who follow thee above those who disbelieve to the day of Resurrection [3:54].

(According to Ibn 'Abbas, the significance of mutawaffika is mumituka, that is, I will cause thee to die.) [Al-Bukhari, kitab al-Tafsir, ch. 5:103]

The whole statement is clear. Death comes first and then rafa' that is exaltation in rank, because it is granted only after death, as is the case with a believer who is granted rafa' after death. Then the verse talks of the clearing of Jesus from the charges of the disbelieving people, so that his mission may be generally accepted. Last of all has been mentioned the dominance of his followers against the disbelieving people, something that will continue to the Day of Resurrection. Sometimes it is said that the statements made in the above verse have not been mentioned in a chronological order because waw (and) in the Arabic language does not always mean enumeration of facts in a particular order; thus in the above verse it is suggested that exaltation comes before death (i.e. death will take place later, after Jesus descends from heaven). I admit that waw does not always indicate an order of things in time, but when a person narrates a few incidents, it is generally understood that he is doing so in a chronological order, unless there is strong evidence against this classification in the text. The question is, what is the evidence in the above verse which is forcing us to alter the order of the words? A little thought makes it clear that, in fact, there is no such evidence except the pre-supposed belief that Jesus is still alive; therefore, according to this belief, the verse has to be interpreted in such a way as to prove this hypothesis to be correct! In other words, the assumption that Jesus was alive, which had yet to be proven, was made the basis of this argument of the change in the order of the words. This method of reasoning is false and futile. For the sake of argument, if we do want to change the order of the words in the above verse, what other order should we adopt? One order is given by the Quran, that is, death first, exaltation later, then the clearing of charges and last of all, the dominance of Jesus' followers over his opponents. If we change the order, where shall we place mutawaffika (I will cause thee to die)? Between exaltation and clearing of charges? If that is the case, it means that unless Jesus dies, the clearing of charges against him has not taken place, and this is not true. If mutawaffika is placed between the clearing of charges and the dominance of his followers, this means that unless Jesus dies, his followers will not become dominant, and this, too, is wrong. And if mutawaffika is placed at the end of the verse it would read like this:

"O Jesus, I will exalt thee in My presence and clear thee of those who disbelieve and make those who follow thee above those who disbelieve to the day of Resurrection and I will cause thee to die."

According to this arrangement of the text, Jesus will die after the day of Resurrection! The truth of the matter is that the order of words in the Quran is correct and there is no evidence in the text which necessitates such a change. And, in fact, no other order of words seems to be right.

Proof of the death of Jesus from the verse fa-lamma tawaffati (5:116)
On the question of the death of Jesus, the verse at the end of chapter 5 of the Quran (Al-Maidah) explains the whole point with great clarity. Jesus is asked: O Jesus, son of Mary, dost thou say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah? [5:116].

The reply which Jesus gave was: Glory be to Thee! It was not
for me to say what I had no right to (say) [ibid]. Thus he ex- empted himself from such a charge. He further affirmed: I said to them: Behold thou except as Thou didst command me: Serve Al- lah, my Lord and your Lord [5:117]. Here, also, Jesus told what kind of teaching he gave to his people: he did not teach them anything wrong, he taught them about the Unity of Godhead. Then he said: And I was a witness of them as long as I was among them [ibid]. In other words, Jesus was clarifying the po- sition of his companions too, that he was a guardian over them in respect of their beliefs as long as he was among them. In the above verses, firstly he denied giving his followers wrong teachings, secondly, he affirmed the imparting of right teach- ings to them and thirdly, his disciples followed the right teach- ings as long as he was among them. The question, however, that he did nothing against the free doctrine of taking Jesus and his mother as two gods besides Allah, and about which Jesus said: But when Thou didst cause me to die Thou wast the Watcher over them [ibid].

The main objective of the statement is that his followers went astray in their beliefs after his death. Therefore, Jesus further remarked: If Thou chastise them, surely they are Thy servants [5:118]. This verse clearly shows that after the death of Jesus, his followers perverted his teachings. If the teachings have been perverted, it means that Jesus is dead, and if he is not dead then his teachings here also not perverted. The mean- ings of the above verses are very clear and need no further interpretation. The Holy Prophet has, however, also given an explanation of this verse (5:117) and all believers should bow their heads before it. I quote the relevant part from al-Bukhari:

"It is reported from Ibn 'Abbas that the Holy Prophet gave a sermon and said: O people, you will be gathered together to- wards God (on the day of Resurrection). And a few men of my ummah will be brought and will be driven towards the left side (i.e. hell), then I will say: O Lord, they are my companions. It will be said: You do not know what new things they invented after you. Then I would say what the righteous servant (Jesus) said: I was a witness of them as long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wast the Watcher over them." [Al-Bukhari, kitab al-Anbiya, ch.4:125]. Here the Holy Prophet says exactly what Jesus is reported to have said in the Quran about his people. The words, what new things they invented after you, clearly indicate that it was after the death of the Holy Prophet that these people perverted the teachings of Islam. That is why the Holy Prophet said that as long as he was among them he was a guardian over them and did not find them straying from the right path but when God caused him to die then God was the Watcher over them. This shows that Je- sus, also, meant exactly the same thing, that during his lifetime his followers did not go astray but when God caused him to die they perverted his teachings. This is the true significance of the above verse and nobody who has any respect in his heart for the Holy Prophet can deny such an interpretation.

Enjoining the payment of zakat on Jesus shows that he is not alive

Many other verses can be cited in this connection but I do not want to lengthen this chapter. I will only quote a few more vers- es on the subject. At one place in the Quran, Jesus is reported to have said: And He has enjoined on me prayer and poor- rate (zakat) as long as I live [19:31]. Now, God would not give commands which a person is unable to fulfil. The condition, as long as I live, shows that as long as Jesus is alive prayer and alms-giving are obligatory on him. If he is able to say his prayers in heaven, how and to whom is he distributing alms there? Is zakat obligatory on him now, or not? If it is, what kind of wealth is in his possession in heaven and who are the recipi- ents of alms? And if he does not possess any wealth and God, the Knower of the Unseen, knew that after paying zakat in the world for a few years Jesus would not be able to fulfil this com- mand for a few thousand years, why did Jesus say that as long as he lived God had enjoined the payment of alms on him?

Partaking of food by Jesus is another proof that he is not alive

The Quran says about Jesus and his mother: They both used to eat food. [5:75]

At another place in respect of messengers, it is said: Nor did We give them bodies not eating food, nor did they abide. [21:8].

Khalid in the Arabic language is that which is unalterable. Imam Raghib says:

"Khalud is a thing which is free from becoming decrepit, and it stays perpetually in the same condition and from which alteration and corruption stay away; Arabs describe it as khudur. [Al-Mufradat under the word khudur]

Thus the Quranic verse: wil-danum mukhalladun, means youths never altering in age. [56:17; 76:19. See also al-Mufra- dat]. While explaining it further, Imam Raghib says it means to remain in its original condition where change from one condi- tion to another condition will not take place.

The Quran also indicates that Jesus’ body stood in need of food which means that his physical system was not free from urinary and bowel movements. The reference in the verse they both used to eat food (5:117), in fact, negates the conception of Jesus’ divinity. It has also been mentioned that there had been no messengers who did not stand in need of food (21:8) and whose bodies did not undergo alterations. When no mes- senger could remain alive without food, the same principle ap- plies to Jesus as well. Thus, Jesus stood in need of food, and alteration kept taking place in his body as happens with all other mortal bodies.

Now, if we believe that he was taken up alive to heaven with the same body of clay which he had on this earth, it necessarily follows that it needs food to sustain itself, and that physical al- terations, similar to those of other mortals in this world, keep on taking place in his body as well. If that is so, shall we presume that there are kitchens and other sanitary facilities provided for Jesus up in the heavens too? If he is above the needs of drink- ing and eating, it goes contrary to what the Quran has said about him and his mother and about the other messengers. Sometimes it is said, in reply, that Jesus has been given a dif- ferent body like that of the inmates of paradise, but the inmates of paradise receive this body after death. And those who be- lieve in the life of Jesus believe in his physical ascension with this body of clay and that he will return with the same body. If God did not mention Jesus’ partaking of food, perhaps those who believe him to be alive could say that he was given right from the beginning a different body which did not undergo any change and which did not stand in need of food. But as it has clearly been stated in the Quran that he ate food, therefore it is no use advancing such an argument. Jesus, after all, was born as a baby and he grew up to be a young man after undergoing physical changes in his body. As the process of growth takes place in a body up to a certain stage, similarly, the process of decay starts under the natural law of change after a certain period. The Quran says: Whomsoever We cause to live long, We reduce to an abject state in creation [36:68].

This shows that a human being does not keep on growing all the time, nor does he stay in one condition, but after a period, weakness and decay start in his body. If Jesus were still alive for the last two thousand years he would have become an old man incapable of doing anything. The more one ponders on the subject the more one is convinced that the thought of Je- sus’ being alive is absolutely irrational and against the teaching of the Quran. If he is still alive, he is more than a human being,
different from, and superior to all other messengers, and a possessor of divine powers and attributes.

All those who are taken for gods besides Allah are dead
Another point to remember in this connection is what the Quran says about all those persons who are taken for gods: And those whom they call on besides Allah created naught, while they are themselves created. Dead (are they), not living. And they know not when they will be raised [16:20-21].

These two verses show conclusively that neither Jesus nor any other person who is taken for a god was alive at the time of the revelation of the Quran: Dead (are they), not living. The following statement that they do not even know when they will be raised shows that the verse speaks of men taken for gods, or at any rate, includes them.

3:143 proves that Jesus is dead
I do not want to prolong this discussion and will only quote one more verse from the Quran on the subject. When the news of the demise of the Holy Prophet spread, Hazrat ‘Umar stood up and threatened to kill anybody who said that the Holy Prophet had died. At that stage, Hazrat Abu Bakr addressed the gathering and recited this verse of the Quran: And Muhammad Is but a messenger; messengers have already passed away before him [3:143]. It must also be remembered that after this incident Hazrat Abu Bakr wrote several letters to various tribes and in each one of them he quoted the same verse (3:143) to demonstrate the point about the death of the Holy Prophet (SMT). On the basis of this verse, Hazrat Abu Bakr argued that the Holy Prophet had died and all the companions of the Holy Prophet, including Hazrat ‘Umar, bowed their heads before what Hazrat Abu Bakr had said. This verse could only be advanced to prove the death of the Holy Prophet because all the previous messengers had died before him. If some messengers were still alive, it could not prove the point that the Holy Prophet had really died. When the opponents said: And they say: What a messenger is this? He eats food and goes about in the markets. [25:7]

God, in reply, said: And We did not send before thee any messengers but they surely ate food and went about in the markets. [25:20]. This argument would not have been correct if there was one messenger who did not eat food or walked about in the markets. Similarly, the point that the Holy Prophet should have remained alive was resolved by the question of how was it possible for him to remain alive when all the previous messengers had passed away before him. If there were some messengers who had not passed away and were still alive, then the case in point could not be proved. The acceptance of Hazrat Abu Bakr’s statement convinced them of the truth of that statement. If it is said that the word khalat does not always mean death, I say that the crux of the argument was against any messenger being alive and if any messenger were alive, the argument itself was not correct. Besides that, a similar statement was made elsewhere in the Quran: The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger; messengers before him had indeed passed away. [5:75]. In this connection, another significant but less known historical incident is narrated in Tarikh of Tabari which further clarifies this point:

Acceptance of Islam by the tribe of Abdul Qais
"Soon after the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed away, his (i.e. Jarud’s - SMT) tribe, ‘Abdul Qais said: ‘If Muhammad was a prophet, he would not have died.’ And they all turned away from Islam. When Jarud came to know of it he gathered them together and said:

‘O tribe of Abdul Qais! I want to ask you something. If you have knowledge of it, then tell me, and if you do not know about it, then do not tell me.’ They said: ‘Ask any question you like.’

Jarud said: ‘You know, prophets of God have appeared in previous times.’ They replied: ‘Yes.’ Jarud again questioned: ‘Do you only know about them, or have you personally seen them?’

They replied: ‘No, we have not seen them, but we know (about) them: ‘What happened after that?’ Jarud asked. ‘They died,’ they said.

Jarud then told them that likewise the Holy Prophet had also died. I proclaim that there is but One God and surely Muhammad is His servant and messenger. His tribesmen repeated the same words and added: ‘We accept you as our elder and leader.’ It was thus that they remained steadfast in Islam.” (Jarir Tabari, Tarikh vol.2, ch v, pp.122-123, Urdu edition. Published by Nafis Academy, Karachi, Pakistan).

The above questions and answers are very significant indeed. It may be noted here that none of them said that if Jesus Christ could go up to heaven and remain alive then how could the Holy Prophet die? All prophets before the Holy Prophet had died, they all agreed. This is what the Quran also says: And Muhammad is but a messenger - (all) messengers have already passed away before him (3:143). And Jesus Christ was no exception. (SMT.)

The difference in the two verse (3:143 and 5:75) is that in one verse the Holy Prophet Muhammad is mentioned and in the other, the Messiah, son of Mary. The former bears testimony to the death of the Holy Prophet and the latter to the death of Jesus. If verse 5:75 does not prove the death of Jesus, then verse 3:143 cannot prove the death of the Holy Prophet. The event mentioned above shows that there was a consensus of opinion among the companions of the Holy Prophet on the death of Jesus.

Proof about the death of Jesus from the Hadith
There are several traditions which also serve to prove the death of Jesus. There are two authentic traditions about the different descriptions of the Isra’elite Messiah and the coming Messiah which prove that the former Messiah has died. A discussion has been made about these traditions in the last chapter. Similarly, the hadith in explanation of the verse 5:117 where the Holy Prophet said: “Then I would say what the righteous servant (Jesus) said” proves Jesus’ death. The hadith about the Ascension of the Holy Prophet also proves that Jesus is dead because the Holy Prophet saw Jesus in the same heaven where the Prophet John was. If Jesus were alive, he could not be included among those who were dead.

When God’s prophets pass away from this world, they enter paradise, but a person who is still alive and has to return to this world cannot enter paradise, and if he does enter paradise, he cannot come out of it, according to the Quranic statement: Nor will they be ejected therefrom (i.e. paradise). [15:48]

Thus, Jesus being in the company of John shows that both are in one condition, and as John is unanimously accepted as dead Jesus should also be placed in the same category.

Sometimes it is said that the Holy Prophet was there too. This kind of reasoning does not hold ground because that was a vision that the Holy Prophet saw; he was not actually included among them.

There are several other traditions but I will quote only one and end this discussion. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: “Had Moses and Jesus been alive there was no other way out for them except to follow me.” [Zurqani, vol.vi. p.374; Tafsir, Ibn Kathir, vol. 2, p.246 under the verse 3:80; Al-Yawaqi’ wa’l-Jawahir, p.24 by Abdul Wahab Sha’rani, etc].
This shows that both Moses and Jesus are not alive. This hadith cannot be a fabricated one because in the period when traditions were being fabricated the thought of Jesus being alive was prevalent, and if any tradition had to be fabricated, it would have been fabricated in support of the prevalent view and not against it. Moreover, this hadith is in conformity with the Quran and other authentic traditions.

By: Maulana Muhammad Ali

Saum
The primary signification of saum is abstaining, in an absolute sense [Al-imsaku ‘an-‘I-fl], which includes abstaining from eating or speaking or moving about. Thus a horse that abstains from moving about, or from fodder, is said to be sa’im, and wind is said to be saum when it abates, and the day when it reaches the midpoint (R.). In the sense of abstaining from speech, the word is used in the Quran in the early Makka revelation: “Say, I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent God, so I shall not speak to any man today” (19:26). In the technical language of the Islamic law, saum and siyam signify fasting or abstaining from food and drink and sexual intercourse from dawn till sunset.

Institution of Fasting in Islam
The institution of fasting in Islam came after the institution of prayer. It was in Madinah in the second year of Hijrah that fasting was made obligatory, and the month of Ramadanz (Note by the webmaster: The ninth lunar month of the Islamic calendar) was set apart for this purpose. Before that the Prophet used to fast, as an optional devotion, on the tenth day of Muharram, and he also ordered his followers to fast on that day, it being a fasting day for the Qurashi as well, according to ‘Ala’ishah (Bu. 30:1). The origin of fasting in Islam may thus be traced to the time when the Prophet was still at Makkah; but, according to Ibn ‘Abbas, it was after his flight to Madinah that he saw the Jews fasting on the tenth day of Muharram; and being told that Moses had kept a fast on that day in commemoration of the delivery of the Israelites from Pharaoh, he remarked that they (Muslims) were nearer to Moses than the Jews and ordered that day to be observed as a day of fasting (Bu. 30:69).

A Universal Institution
In the Quran, the subject of fasting is dealt with only in one place, that is, in the 23rd section of the second chapter; though there is mention on other occasions of fasting by way of expiation (fiyadh) in certain cases. This section opens with the remark that the institution of fasting is a universal one. “O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil” (2:183). The truth of the statement made here — that fasting “was prescribed for those before you” — is borne out by a reference to religious history. The practice of fasting has been recognised well-nigh universally in all the higher, revealed religions, though the same stress is not laid on it in all, and the forms and motives vary. “Its modes and motives vary considerably according to climate, race, civilisation and other circumstances; but it would be difficult to name any religious system of any description in which it is wholly unrecognised” (En. Br., art. Fasting). Confucianism, according to the writer in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, is the only exception. Zoroastranism, which is sometimes mentioned as another exception, is stated as enjoining, “Upon the priesthood at least, no fewer than five yearly fasts.” Present-day Christianity may not attach much value to religious devotions of this sort, but not only did the Founder of Christianity himself keep a fast for forty days and observe fasting on the Day of Atonement like a true Jew, but also commended fasting to his disciples: “Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance . . . But thou, when you fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face” (Mt. 6:16, 17). It appears that his disciples did fast, but not as often as did those of the Baptist, and when questioned on that point, his reply was that they would fast more frequently when he was taken away (Lk. 5:33-35). The early Christians are also spoken of as fasting (Acts 13:2; 3; 14:23). Even St. Paul fasted (II Cor. 6:5; 11:27).

New Meaning Introduced by Islam
Cruden’s remark in his Bible Concordance that fasting in all nations was resorted to “in times of mourning, sorrow and afflictions” is borne out by the facts. Among the Jews, generally, fasting was observed as a sign of grief or mourning. Thus, David is mentioned as fasting for seven days during the illness of his infant son (II Sam. 12:16-18); and, as a sign of mourning, fasting is mentioned in I Sam. 31:13 and elsewhere. Besides the Day of Atonement, which was prescribed by the Mosaic law as a day of fasting (Lev. 16:29) — the people being required to “afflict” their souls while the priest made an atonement for them to cleanse them of their sins — various other fast-days came into vogue after the Exile “in sorrowful commemoration of the various sad events which had issued in the downfall of the kingdom of Judah” (En. Br.). Four of these became regular fasting-days, “commemorating the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, the capture of the city, the destruction of the temple, and the assassination of Gedaliah” (ibid.). Thus it was generally some trouble or sad event of which the memory was kept up by a fast. Moses’s fasting for forty days — which example was later followed by Jesus Christ — seems to be the only exception, and the fast, in this case, was kept preparatory to receiving a revelation. Christianity did not introduce any new meaning into the fast; Christ’s words that his disciples would fast often when he was taken away from their midst, only lend support to the Jewish conception of the fast, as connected with national grief or mourning.

The idea underlying this voluntary suffering in the form of a fast in times of sorrow and affliction seems to have been to propitiate an angry Deity and excite compassion in Him. The idea that fasting was a act of penitence seems gradually to have developed from this as an affliction or calamity was considered to be due to sin, and fasting thus became an outward expression of the change of heart brought about by repentance. It was in Islam that the practice received a highly developed significance. It rejected in toto the idea of appeasing Divine wrath, or exciting Divine compassion through voluntary suffering and introduced in its place regular and continuous fasting, irrespective of the condition of the individual or the nation, as a means, like prayer, to the development of the inner faculties of man. Though the Quran speaks of expiatory or compensatory fasts in certain cases of violation of the Divine law, yet these are quite distinct from the obligatory fasting in the month of Ramadan, and are mentioned only as an alternative to an act of charity, such as the feeding of the poor or freeing of a slave. Fasting, as an institution, is here made a spiritual, moral and physical discipline of the highest order, and this is made clear by changing both the form and the motive. By making the institution permanent, all ideas of distress, affliction and sin are dissociated from it, while its true object is made plain, which is “that you may guard (tattaqun).” The word ittika from which tattaqun is derived, means the guarding of a thing from what harms or injures it, or the guarding of self against that of which the evil consequences may be feared (R.). But besides this, the word has been freely used in the Quran in the sense of fulfillment of duties, as in 4:1 where arham (ties of relationship) occurs as an object of ittaku, or, as generally in ittakul-lah where Allah is the object of ittaku, and therefore the significance of
ittiq in all these cases is a fulfilment of obligations. In fact, in the language of the Quran, to be a muttaqi is to attain to the highest stage of spiritual development. “Allah is the friend of the muttaqin” (45:19); “Allah loves the muttaqin” (3:75; 9:4; 7); “Allah is with the muttaqin” (2:194; 9:36; 123); “The good end is for the muttaqin” (7:128; 11:49; 28:83); “For the muttaqin is an excellent resort” (38:49) — these and numerous similar passages show clearly that the muttaqin, according to the Quran, is the man who has attained to the highest stage of spiritual development. And as the object of fasting is to be a muttaqin, the conclusion is evident that the Quran enjoins fasting with the object of making man ascend the spiritual heights.

A Spiritual Discipline

Fasting, according to Islam, is primarily a spiritual discipline: On two occasions in Quran (9:112; 66:5), those who fast are called sa’ih (from saha meaning he travelled) or spiritual wayfarers; and according to one authority, when a person refrains, not only from food and drink but from all kinds of evil, he is called a sa’ih (R.). While speaking of Ramadan, the month in which fasting is ordained, the Quran specially refers to nearness to God, as if its attainment were an aim in fasting, and then adds: “So they should hear My call (by fasting) and believe in Me, that they may walk in the right way” (2:186). In Tradition too, special stress is laid on the fact that the seeking of Divine pleasure should be the ultimate object in fasting: “Whoever fasts during Ramadan, having faith in Me and seeking My pleasure” (Bu. 2:28). The Prophet said, “Fasting is a shield, so the faster should not indulge in foul speech... and surely the breath of a fasting man is pleasant to Allah than the odour of musk: he refrains from food and drink and other desires to seek My pleasure: fasting is for Me only” (Bu. 30:2). No temptation is greater than the temptation of satisfying one’s thirst and hunger when drink and food are in one’s possession, yet this temptation is overcome not once or twice, as if it were by chance, but day after day regularly for a whole month, with a set purpose of drawing closer and closer to the Divine Being. A man can avail himself of the best diet, yet he prefers to remain hungry; he has the cool drink in his possession, yet he is parching with thirst; he touches neither food nor drink, simply because he thinks that it is the commandment of God that he should not do so. In the inner recesses, there is none to see him if he pours down his dry and burning throat a glass of delicious drink, yet there has developed in him the sense of the nearness to God to such an extent that he would not put a drop of it on his tongue. Whenever a new temptation comes before him, he overcomes it, because, just at the critical moment, there is an inner voice “God is with me.” “God sees me.” Not the deepest devotion can lift to the depth that sense of nearness to God and of His presence everywhere, which fasting day after day for a whole month does. The Divine presence, which may be a matter of faith to others, becomes a reality for him, and this is made possible by the spiritual discipline underlying fasting. A new consciousness of a higher life, a life above that which is maintained by eating and drinking, has been awakened in him, and this is the life spiritual.

A Moral Discipline

There is also a moral discipline underlying fasting, for it is the training ground where man is taught the greatest moral lesson of his life — the lesson that he should be prepared to suffer the greatest privation and undergo the hardest trial rather than indulge in that which is not permitted to him. That lesson is repeated from day to day for a whole month, and just as physical exercise strengthens man physically, moral exercise through fasting, the exercise of abstaining from everything that is not allowed, strengthens the moral side of his life. The idea that everything unlawful must be eschewed and that evil must be hated is thus developed through fasting. Another aspect of the moral development of man by this means is that he is thus taught to conquer his physical desires. He takes his food at regular intervals and that is no doubt a desirable rule of life, but fasting for one month in the year teaches him the higher lesson that, instead of being the slave of his appetites and desires, he should be their master, being able to change the course of his life if he wills it. The man who is able to rule his desires, to make them work as he likes, in whom will-power is so developed that he can command himself, is the man who has attained to true moral greatness.

Social Value of Fasting

In addition to its spiritual and moral values, fasting as prescribed in the Quran has also a social value, more effective than that which is realized through prayer. Rich and poor, great and small, residents of the same vicinity are brought together five times daily in the mosque on terms of perfect equality, and thus healthy social relations are established through prayer. But the commencement of the month of Ramadan is a signal for a mass movement towards equality which is not limited to one vicinity or even one country but affects the whole Muslim world. The rich and the poor may stand shoulder to shoulder in one row in the mosque, but in their homes they live in different environments. The rich sit down on tables laden with dainties and with these they load their stomachs four, even six, times daily; while the poor cannot find sufficient food with which to satisfy their hunger even twice a day. The latter often feel the pangs of hunger to which the former are utter strangers; how can the one feel for the other and sympathise with him? A great social barrier thus exists between the two classes in their homes, and this barrier is removed only when the rich are made to feel the pangs of hunger like their poorer brethren and go without food throughout the day, and this experience has to be gone through, not for a day or two, but for a whole month. The rich and the poor are thus, throughout the Muslim world, brought on the same level in that they are both allowed only two meals a day, and though these meals may not be exactly the same, the rich have perforce to shorten their menu and to adopt a simpler fare and thus come closer to their poorer brethren. This course undoubtedly awakens sympathy for the poor in the hearts of the rich, and it is for this reason that the helping of the poor is specially enjoined in the month of Ramadan.

Physical Value of Fasting

Refraining from food during stated intervals does no physical harm to a healthy person. On the contrary, it does some good. But fasting has yet another, and a more important, physical value. The man who cannot face the hardships of life, who is not able to live, at times, without his usual comforts, cannot be said to be even physically fit for life on this earth. The moment such a man is involved in difficulty or distress, as he must be every now and again, his strength is liable to give way. Fasting accustoms him to face the hardships of life, being in itself a practical lesson to that end, and increases his powers of resistance.

The Month of Ramadan

With some exceptions, which will be mentioned later on, Muslims are required to fast for 29 or 30 days of the month of Ramadhan. The exact number depends on the appearance of the moon which may be after 29 or 30 days. Fasting commences with the new moon of Ramadan and ends on the appearance of the new moon of Shawwal (Note by the master). The tenth lunar month of the Islamic calendar. The Prophet is reported to have said: “We are a people who neither write nor do we keep account; the month is thus and thus, showing (by his fingers) once twenty-nine and again thirty” (Bu. 30:13). Another tradition says: “The Prophet mentioned Ramadan and said, “Do not fast until you see the new moon and do not break fasting until you see it (again), and if it is cloudy, calculate its appearance” (Bu. 30:11; M. 13:2). Another says that if it is cloudy, thirty days should be completed (Bu. 30:11). To begin and end
by the actual appearance of the new moon [The actual appearance of the moon may be established by the evidence of a single man if he be trustworthy. It is related that on a certain occasion the people of Madinah were doubtful about the appearance of the new moon of Ramadzan and they had decided not to fast, when a man came from the desert and gave evidence that he had seen the new moon. And the Prophet accepted his evidence and directed the people to fast (AD. 14:14)] was the easier method for a "people who did not know writing, and did not keep account," and it is still the easier method for the vast masses living in villages and distant places, but the tradition quoted above also allows that the appearance of the moon may be judged by computation. There is however an express prohibition against fasting when the appearance of the moon is doubtful (yayam al-shakk) (AD. 14:10).

Choice of Ramadzan

The injunction laid down in the Quran, relating to fasting in the month of Ramadzan, runs as follows: "The month of Ramadzan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of guidance and the Criterion. So whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast therein" (2:185). It will be seen from the words of the injunction that the choice of this particular month for fasting is not without a reason. It has been chosen because it is the month in which the Quran was revealed. It is well-known that the Quran was revealed piecemeal during a period of twenty-three years; therefore by its revelation in the month of Ramadzan is meant that its revelation first began in that month. And this is historically true. The first revelation came to the Prophet on the 24th night of the month of Ramadzan when he was in the cave of Hira (Lu-C. 2:185). It was therefore in Ramadzan that the first ray of Divine light fell on the Prophet's mind, and the angel Gabriel made his appearance with the great Divine message. The month which witnessed the greatest spiritual experience of the Prophet was thus considered to be the most suitable month for the spiritual discipline of the Muslim community, which was to be effected through fasting.

There are evident reasons for choosing a lunar month. The advantages and disadvantages of the particular season in which it falls are shared by the whole world. A solar month would have given the advantages of shorter days and cooler weather to one part of the world, and burdened the other with the disadvantages of longer days of hotter weather. The lunar month is more in consonance with the universal nature of teachings of Islam, and all people have the advantages and disadvantages equally distributed. On the other hand, if a particular time had not been specified the discipline would have lost all its value. It is due to the choice of a particular month, that with its advent the whole Muslim world is, as it were, moved by one current from one end to the other. The movement effected by the advent of Ramadzan in the Muslim world is the greatest mass movement on the face of the earth. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the master and the servant, the ruler and the ruled, the black and the white, the Eastern and the Western, from one end of the earth to the other, suddenly change the course of their lives when they witness the tiny crescent of Ramadzan making its appearance on the western horizon. There is no other example of a mass movement on this scale on the face of the earth, and this is due to the specification of a particular month.

Persons who may not Fast

The injunction to fast is laid down only for those who witness the coming of the month, man shahida min-kum al-shahara. The verb shahida is from the infinitive shahada, which means the bearing of witness; so the injunction to fast is laid upon those only who witness the coming of the month. Evidently all people who live in places where the division into twelve months does not exist, are excluded from the purview of the injunction. Fast-

ing is not compulsory in their case.

People who are exempted are specially mentioned either in the Quran or in the Tradition. The Quran mentions the sick and those on journey in the following words: "But there is no harm among you is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a like number of other days." And those who find it extremely hard [The Arabic word is yutiqna-hu, which is generally interpreted as meaning those who are able to do it. If this interpretation be adopted, the significance would be that invalids and travellers may either fast afterwards when they are not under such disability, or they may effect a redemption by feeding a poor man for every day of fasting. But I prefer the other interpretation which some commentators have accepted, viz., that yutiqna-hu means those who find it hard to keep the fast even afterwards; only such as are allowed to effect a redemption by feeding a poor man. This interpretation is supported by a different reading yutayqaqna-hu which means those on whom a hard task is imposed. Ibn 'Abbas' reading yutaywaquna-hu (Bu. 65: surah 2, ch. 25) carries a similar significance, and he interprets these words as relating to very old people who are unable to fast may effect redemption by feeding a poor man" (2:184). This is not an absolute exemption for the sick man and the traveller, they are required to fast afterwards, when the sickness has gone or when the journey ends, but there may be cases of protracted illness or constant journeying, and such people are allowed to effect a redemption by feeding a poor man for every fast missed. Those who may fast may extend the period of forgiveness or make up the day for any physical disability, are not able to fast. It is related of Anas that he used to feed a poor man when he grew too old to fast (Bu. 65, surah 2, ch. 25), and Ibn 'Abbas is reported to have held that the words "those who find it hard to do so may effect a redemption" relate to the old man and old woman and the pregnant woman and the woman that suckles a child, and that all of them are allowed to break the fast. -- the latter two, only if they fear for the child -- and feed a poor man instead (AD. 14:3). This view was also held by Hasan and Ibrahim (Bu. 65, surah 2, ch. 25). It will be seen that the underlying idea is that a burden should not be placed on any one, which is unable to bear. The case of old people who have become enfeebled by age is very clear while in the case of pregnant and nursing women, the permission to effect a redemption is due to the fact that fasting may cause harm to the unborn baby, or the baby that is being nursed, as well as the woman herself; and as she is likely to remain in this condition for a sufficiently long time, she is given the benefit of the relaxation. Sickly people and those who are too weak to bear the burden would be dealt with as sick. Ibn Taimiyah further extends the principle that the fast may be deferred in cases of hardship, and holds that those engaged in war may fast, though they may not be journeying, for, he adds, the hardships of war are greater than the hardships of travel (ZM. 1, pp. 165, 166). From this it may be argued that, in unavoidable cases of very hard labour, the choice of postponing the fast may be given to those who are engaged in such labour.

To define the limits of sickness or travel is rather difficult. 'Ata was of opinion that whatever the ailment, great or small, it entitled a person to the benefit of the exception (Bu. 65, surah 2, ch. 25). But generally it has been held that only such sickness as is likely to cause harm comes under the exception. As regards travel, there is nothing on record from the Prophet as to its limit (ZM. 1, p. 166). A certain Companion, Dhiyaa, is reported to have travelled to a village which was about three miles distant from his own place and to have broken the fast, and some people followed his example but others did not (AD. 14:46). But it has been held that the proposed journey must be one that extends over more than a day, i.e., twenty-four hours; according to others, it must extend over two days; and others still think it necessary that it should extend over three days at
least. But when the journey is actually started, the fast may be broken, whatever the distance travelled over may be. Thus of Abu Basra Gifhari, a Companion of the Prophet, it is related that he took a boat from Fustat to Alexandria, and broke the fast while yet the buildings of Fustat had not disappeared (AD. 14:45). I would interpret the exceptional relating to sickness and travelling as meaning a sickness or journey which causes inconvenience to the subject of it, as the exception is followed by the words, “Allah desires ease for you, and He desires not hardship for you” (2:185).

The permission to break the fast for sickness or journey is meant for the convenience of the person who is under an obligation to keep the fast, as the words quoted above show. There is, however, a strong opinion that the permission granted by God must be made use of, just as in the case of prayer the traveller must shorten his prayer. The case of prayer and fasting do not, however, stand on a par, because, if the fasts are broken, the number of days must be completed afterwards, while in the case of prayer, there remains no obligation upon the traveller when the journey is over. The sick person and the traveller have therefore the option of keeping the fast if they do not find it hard, or of availing themselves of the permission and breaking the fast. The permissive nature of the words of the Quran is reflected in many of the most reliable traditions. There are reports showing that the Prophet himself kept a fast while on a journey (Bu. 30:33). In one tradition it is stated that on a certain journey on a very hot day, only the Prophet and Ibn Rawahah kept the fast (Bu. 30:35). There are other traditions showing that when a certain person questioned the Prophet whether he should or not should break the fast, when on a journey, his own inclination being for fasting, the Prophet replied: “Keep the fast if thou likest, and break it if thou likest” (Bu. 30:33). Anas relates that they used to travel with the Prophet, and those who kept the fast did not find fault with those who broke it, nor did those who broke the fast find fault with those who kept it (Bu. 30:37). There is not doubt, a saying of the Prophet to the effect that “it is not a virtue to fast when journeying,” but these words were spoken to a person who was in severe distress on account of the fast, and around whom people had gathered to provide shade for him (Bu. 30:36). Bukhari’s hearing of this chapter is significant: “The Prophet’s saying to him who was protected with a shade and the heat was severe. It is not a virtue to fast when journeying,” the meaning evidently being that one should not fast when one finds it hard. There is a very large number of traditions on this subject, and some of these seem to contradict others, but the weight of evidence lies on the side that one is given the option of keeping the fast or breaking it.

Who is Bound to Fast?
The commandments of the Quran are meant for those who are fully-grown, and so is the injunction relating to fasts. According to Imam Malik, minors should not fast, but the Caliph Umar is quoted as saying “Even our children are fasting” (Bu. 30:47). Probably this may have been done when the weather was not too hot, and the object may have been to habituate the children to fasting. From what has been stated above, it would further appear that only such people are bound to fast as are physically fit. The jurists lay down three conditions, viz., that of being baligh (one who has reached the age of majority), qadhr (physically fit) and ‘aqil (sane). Women are bound to fast if they are free from menstruation (Bu. 30:41). But while the woman who has the menstruation on is freed from the obligation of prayer completely, she is bound to make good the fasts that she has not kept and complete the number of days after Ramadzan, being treated in this respect like a sick person. The bleeding of childbirth [note by the webmaster: lochia meant here] is considered as menstruation with this difference, that if the mother is nursing the baby, she can effect a redemption by feeding a poor man. In all cases in which fasts have to be recovered, whether it is the case of a sick person or a traveller or a menstruating woman, a person is at liberty to do it when he or she likes, before the coming of the next Ramadzan (Bu. 30:40).

Voluntary Fasts
In all the four principal ordinances of Islam – prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage – there is an obligatory part (fardz) and a voluntary part (nafa). But there are some restrictions imposed on voluntary fasting, for, if carried to an extreme, it would weaken the constitution. The following tradition is illustrative of how far voluntary fasting may be resorted to: “Ibn Umar says that the Prophet was informed of my resolve to fast in the day and keep awake in the night so long as I lived. (On being questioned) I said that that is what I had said so. The Prophet said, ‘You must not bear this, therefore keep the fast and break it and keep awake and have sleep, and keep (voluntary) fast for three days in the month, for virtue has a tenfold reward, and this would be like your fasting every day. I said, I can bear more than this. The Prophet said, Then fast for one day and break the fast for two days. I said, I can bear more than this. He said, Then keep the fast for one day and break it for one day, and such was the fasting of David, on whom be peace, and this is the best of voluntary fasts. I said, I can bear more than this. The Prophet said, ‘There is nothing better than this” (Bu. 30:56). This tradition shows that what the Prophet really recommended was voluntary fasting for three days in the month, but on no account shall the voluntary fast be continuous. There are traditions in which it is stated that the Prophet especially recommended for voluntary fasting the last days of Shaban (Bu. 30:62; AD. 14:56) or the ayyam al-bid, that is the 13th, 14th and 15th of the lunar month [Bu. 30:60; Ah. IV, p. 165.] or Monday and Thursday [AD. 14:59.] or the Arafah day, that is, one day before the ‘Id al-Adzha [Tr. 8:45]. There is a hadith showing that a cup of milk was sent to the Prophet on the ‘Arafah day by Umm al-Fadl to settle the question, and the Prophet drank it (Bu. 30:65), or the first six days of Shawwal [AD. 14:57], or Muhrarah [AD. 14:55], or the Tashriq days, that is, 11th, 12th and 13th of Dhu-l-Hijja [Bu. 30:68], or the ‘Ashura’, that is, 10th Muhrarah [Bu. 30:69]. The tenth of Muhrarah was particularly observed as a fasting day before the fasting of Ramadzan was made obligatory, but afterwards it was voluntary (Bu. 30:1); but his own practice was that he never specified any particular day or days for voluntary fasting, as the following tradition shows: “Ashahah was asked, Did the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, specify any days (for fasting). She said, No” (Bu. 30:64).

Restrictions on Voluntary Fasting
Voluntary fasting is particularly prohibited on the two ‘Id days (Bu. 30:66). It is also forbidden that Friday should be specially chosen for voluntary fasting (Bu. 30:63). Nor should a day or two before Ramadzan be specially selected (Bu. 30:14). Oth-er restrictions are that it should not be resorted to if it is likely to interfere with other duties. There is no asceticism in Islam, and no one is allowed to go to the length of neglecting his worldly duties for the sake of religious exercises. Religion is meant to enable a man to live a better life, and voluntary fasting should be undertaken only if the aim is to enable a man to achieve this objective. This is made clear in the story of Abu Darda’ and Salman, between whom brotherhood had been established by the Prophet. Salman paid a visit to Abu Darda’ and saw his wife in a neglected condition (mutabadhdiha). Being asked the reason she replied that Abu Darda’ had become an ascetic. When Abu Darda’ came home and the meals were served, Abu Darda’ refused to eat because he was fasting. Salman said that he would not take any food until Abu Darda’ took it, so he ate (and broke the fast). When the night came Abu Darda’ woke up after a little rest, Salman asked him to remain sleeping, and when it was the latter part of the night, they both said there Tahajjud prayers. Then Salman said to Abu Darda’¸ “Ver-ly thou owest a duty to thy Lord, and thou owest a duty to thy-
self, and thou owest a duty to thy wife and children. “When this was mentioned to the Prophet, he approved of what Salman had said and done (Bu. 30: 51). Here, therefore the husband was forbidden to fast, for the sake of the wife. Similarly the wife should not resort to voluntary fasting without the permission of her husband (Bu. 67: 85). And as the host in the instance cited above broke the fast on account of his guest, there is a tradition stating that the guest should not undertake a voluntary fast, without the permission of the host (Tr. 8: 69).

Expiatory Fasts
Fasts are also recommended as an expiation for breaking certain commandments. The expiatory fasts mentioned in the Quran are:

1. two months’ successive fasting when a Muslim has killed a Muslim by mistake and the killer has not the means sufficient to free a slave (4: 92);
2. two months’ successive fasting when the husband resorts to practice called zihar (putting away of the wife by saying, Thou art to me as the back of my mother), and he has not the means to free a slave (58: 3, 4);
3. three days’ fasting as an expiation for taking an oath by which one deprives oneself of something lawful when one is unable to free a slave or feed ten poor men (5: 88);
4. fasting as decided on by two judges, as an expiation for killing game while one is on pilgrimage as an alternative to feeding the poor (5: 95).

Tradition mentions two months’ successive fasting by way of expiation when a fast during Ramadan is broken intentionally (Bu. 30: 30). This was the case of a man who had sexual intercourse with his wife while fasting in Ramadan, and the Prophet told him to free a slave. On being told that he was too poor for that, he was asked if he could fast for two months successively, and he replied in the negative. Then he was asked if he could feed sixty poor men, and he again said, No. Thereupon the Prophet waited till there came a sack of dates to be given in charity, and the Prophet gave this away to the breaker of the fast, telling him to give it in charity. He said that there was no one in Madinah poorer than himself, upon which the Prophet laughed heartily and allowed him to take away the sack of dates for his own use. This would show that the keeping of expiatory fasts for two months was only meant to make the violator feel contrite for his offence. Abu Hurairah was, however, of opinion that the act of not fasting one day in Ramadan cannot be expiated, even if the man fasts all his life; others (Sha'b, Ibn Jubair, Qatada, etc.) have held that the expiation for not fasting for one day is simply one day’s fast to be kept afterwards (Bu. 30: 29).

Compensatory Fasts
Fasting is also mentioned as being resorted to by way of effecting redemption (fidya, that is to say, as a compensation for not being able to do some act. Thus the case of pilgrims who, for some reason, cannot observe fully the requirements of ihram, compensatory fasting (for three days) is mentioned as an alternative to giving away something in charity and sacrificing an animal (2: 195); and in the case of pilgrims who may in consequence of having hajj (or ‘umra) get out of the condition of ihram in the interval between the two, three days’ fasting during the pilgrimage and seven days’ after returning from the pilgrimage (2: 196).

Fasting in Fulfilment of a Vow
An instance of a vow to take a fast is mentioned in the Quran where Mary the mother of Jesus says: “Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent God, so I shall not speak to any man today” (19: 26). This however appears to be only a fast to keep silent and not to talk with any person; a similar fast of silence is spoken of in the case of Zacharias: “Thy sign is that thou shouldst not speak to man for three days except by signs, and remember thy Lord much and glorify Him in the evening by signs, and remember thy Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and the morning” (3: 40). The case of Zacharias shows that the object of the fast of silence was the remembrance of God. From certain traditions it appears that if one has vowed to keep a fast, the vow must be fulfilled (Bu. 30: 42), while in one report it is stated that a woman came to the Prophet and spoke of her mother who died; and she had taken a vow to fast for a certain number of days and the Prophet told her to fulfil the vow (ibid.). But there is no tradition recommending the taking of such vows.

Limits of the Fast
The limits of a fast are clearly laid down in the Quran: “And eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct from the blackness of the night at dawn (al-fajr), then complete the fast till night (al-lail)” (2: 187). Lail (night) begins when the sun sets, and hence the fast in the terminology of Islam is kept from the first appearance of dawn, which is generally about an hour and a half before sunrise, till sunset. Wisol (lit., joining together) is fasting, or continuing the fast throughout the night and then the next day so that there is no break, is definitely prohibited (Bu. 30: 48, 49). But one tradition permits continuity of fast till daybreak (Bu. 30: 50). This would mean that a man may not, if he chooses, break the fast at sunset but must take the morning meal for fasting for the next day; in other words, he must take a meal once in twenty-four hours at least. Wisol was prohibited lest people should, in trying continuous fast, impair their health or make themselves unfit for worldly work, for it appears that the Prophet himself sometimes kept a continuous fast (Bu. 30: 48, 49); but, for how many days, is not definitely known. Only on one occasion, when some of the Companions joined with the Prophet in keeping a continuous fast, it was continued for three successive days, and being the close of the month, the moon appeared on the evening of the third day, the Prophet adding that if the moon had not appeared, he would have continued the fast. When some one asked him, why he forbade wisol to others, when he himself kept continuous fasts, he replied: “I pass the night while my Lord gives me food and makes me drink” (Bu. 30: 49). He referred of course to the spiritual food which sometimes makes a man bear hunger and thirst in an extraordinary way, thus, in a sense, taking the place of food and drink. But all men had not the same spiritual sustenance, and, moreover, continuity of fast, if allowed generally, would have given rise to ascetic practices which Islam does not encourage. It should be noted in this connection that fasting, according to the Quran, meant abstaining from food as well as from drink, and three days’ continual suffering of hunger and thirst, in a hot country like Arabia, shows the extraordinary power of endurance which the Companions of the Prophet had developed, while his own power of endurance was much greater. This endurance was no doubt due to extraordinary spiritual powers.

In this connection it may be further noted that, though the taking of a morning meal is not made obligatory, yet special stress is laid on it, and it is said to be a source of blessing, because it enables a man the better to cope with the fast of the fast. The Prophet is reported to have said: “Take the morning meal, for there is blessing in the morning meal (suhur)” (Bu. 30: 20). This meal was taken very near the break of dawn. One Companion relates that, after taking the morning meal, he hastened to the mosque so that he might be able to join the morning prayer. Another states that the interval between the finishing of the morning meal and the beginning of prayer in congregation was such that hardly fifty verses could be recited in it (Bu. 9: 27). It is even recommended that the morning meal should be taken as near the break of dawn as possible (Ah. V, p. 147). In one tradition it is stated that the adhan [Call for morning prayers, signifying break of dawn] of Bilal should not lead you to give up the morning meal, for, it is added, he utters the adhan while yet it is night, so that the man who is saying
his Tahajjud prayers may finish his prayers and the one who is sleeping may get up from his sleep (Bu. 10 : 13). And according to another, the morning meal was to be continued till Ibn Umm Mak tum gave the call to prayer, for he was a blind man and he did not give the call till (dawn became so clear and well established that) "people called out to him, the dawn has broken, the dawn has broken" (Bu. 10 : 11). And even if the adhan is called out when the dawn has fully appeared, and a man has a cup in his hand ready to drink, he need not put it away and may drink it up (AD. 14 : 18).

As it is recommended in the case of the morning meal that it should be as late as possible, it is recommended that the breaking of the fast should be as early as possible. The Prophet is reported to have said that when the sun is set, the fast should be broken (Bu. 30 : 45). And according to another tradition: "People will have the good so long as they hasten in breaking the fast" (Bu. 30 : 45). Some wait to break the fast till they see the stars, thinking that the night does not set in till darkness is spread, but there is no authority for this.

The Niyah
A good deal of misunderstanding prevails on the question of niyayah in the observance of fasts. The niyayah really means intention, aim or purpose in the doing of a thing; but it is wrongly supposed that the niyayah consists in the repetition of certain words stating that one intends to do so and so. Bukhari shows the true significance of niyayah when he gives as the heading to one of his chapters: "He who fasts during Ramadan having faith (in God) (iman-an) and seeking His pleasure (ihtisab-an) and having an aim or purpose (niyayat-an)" (Bu. 30 : 8). And he adds a portion of a tradition reported by 'Aishah in which it is stated that "people will be raised up (on the Judgement Day) and will be asked to their niyayah" (Ala niyayat-him). The very first tradition which Bukhari opens his book is an example of what niyayah means: "(Good) actions shall be judged only by their aims [I have translated the word a'mal as meaning good actions]. A reference to what follows in the report makes it clear, for the example of actions given there is hijra, the flight of a man for the sake of his principles which is an action of the highest value, but as the report tells us, if the hijra is undertaken with a bad aim in view, to attain worldly wealth or for the love of a woman, it loses all its value. That there can be no question of a good aim in evil actions is self-evident, and hence by a'mal in this report are meant good actions] - innama-l-a'malul hi-niyayat." Hence if a good action is done with a bad aim, it shall not benefit a doer. Exactly the same object is in view in the statement that there must be a niyayah in fasting, as Bukhari says: that is, the man who fasts must have an aim or purpose before him. The aim or purpose of fasting has already been stated, being, according to the Quran, the attainment of taqwa, to make the fast a spiritual discipline, to attain nearness to God and to seek His pleasure in all one's actions, and to make it a moral discipline, to shun all evil. It is in this sense alone that the niyayah is of the essence of fasting, as it is in fact of the essence of all good actions.

"Formulating the niyayah," or the expression on one's intention in set words, is unknown to the Quran and the Tradition, and is in fact meaningless, for a man will not fast unless he intends to do it. Only in the case of voluntary fasting, it is stated in a tradition, that the Prophet sent a scribe to inform the people on the day of 'Asuhr, in daytime that people who had not eaten anything up to that time may fast. And of Abu Darda', it is related that he used to ask his wife if there was any food, and if none was found, he used to keep the fast (Bu. 30 : 21). According to 'Aishah, the Prophet used to ask if there was any food in the house, and when none was found he would fast (AD. 14 : 70). In the case of voluntary fasts one can understand the making up of mind in daytime, but there is no question of such intention in the month of Ramadan, when everybody knows that he must fast.

What Breaks the Fast
The word for breaking the fast is iftar, from fatir meaning to cleave or split a thing lengthwise (R.), and the things which break a fast are called mutairat, pl. of mutair. The three things which one should abstain from in fasting being eaten, drinking, and having sexual intercourse, these three, if resorted to of free will [Therefore anything done under compulsion or involuntarily does not break the fast.] and intentionally, between day-break and sunset, would break the fast, but if done through forgetfulness or inadvertently, the fast remains and must be completed (Bu. 30 : 26). Rinsing the mouth with water or with a toothbrush, gargling or sniffing the water into the nostrils, even if a little water passes into the throat unintentionally, does not break the fast (Bu. 30 : 25, 26, 27, 28). Nor does taking a bath or keeping a wet cloth on the head or pouring water on the head break the fast, even though done intentionally to relieve the severity of thirst (Bu. 30 : 25; MM. 7 : 4-ii). Cupping after having also do not break the fast, for as Ibn 'Abbas and ‘Ikrama say, a fast is broken by that which goes into the body, not by that which comes out (Bu. 30 : 32) [Note: There is a difference of opinion on some of these minor points, but what has been said here is based on weightier authority]. It is related that the Prophet would kiss his wife when fasting (Bu. 30 : 23). There is a difference of opinion regarding the punishment for breaking a fast intentionally before its time, as shown under the heading "Expiatory fasts." The Quran is silent on this point, while Tradition only shows that it is sufficient that the violator should be sincerely repentant. If fast is broken on a cloudy day, under the impression that the sun has set, and the sun then appears, then the fast should be completed (Bu. 30 : 46). If a man is fasting and then undertakes a journey, the fast may be broken (Bu. 30 : 34). The same rule may be followed in the case of sickness. In the case of voluntary fast, a man is at liberty to break the fast on account of a guest or the persistence of a friend (Bu. 30 : 51).

Ethical Side of Fasting
What has been said hitherto relates only to the external side of the fast but, as stated in the beginning, the essence of the fast is its moral and spiritual value, and the Quran and Tradition have laid special stress on this. "Whoever does not give up," says one tradition "lying and acting falsely, Allah does not stand in need of his giving up food and drink" (Bu. 30 : 8). This is true of all the Islamic injunctions. A man who says his prayers and does not keep in view their inner meaning, the object of prayer, is condemned in clear words: "Woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of (the object of) their prayers" (107 : 4, 5). In another tradition, the ethical side of the fast is shown in the following words: "Fasting is a shield, so let the man who fasts not indulge in any foul speech or do any evil deed (la yajhal), and if any one fights or quarrels with him or abuses him, he shall say, I am fasting, by Him Who holds my soul in His hand, the breath of the faster is pleasanter with Allah than the scent of musk" (Bu. 30 : 2). It is not refraining from food that makes the breath of the faster so sweet; it is refraining from foul speech and abuse and evil works and deeds of all kinds, so much so that he does not even utter an offensive word by way of retaliation. Thus a fasting person undergoes not only a physical discipline by curbing his carnal desires, the craving for food and drink, and the sex appetite, but he is actually required to undergo a direct moral discipline by avoiding all kinds of evil words an evil deeds. It is not only a training on the physical side, which has a moral value; it is a direct training on the spiritual side as well. In the sight of God, as plainly stated in these traditions, the fast loses its value not only by taking food or drink but also by telling a lie, using foul language, acting unfaithfully, or doing an evil deed.
The moral value of the fasting discipline is further enhanced by laying stress on the doing of good to humanity in the month of Ramadan. The example of the Prophet is quoted in this connection in a tradition. “The Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was the most bountiful of all people, and he exceeded his own bounty in the month of Ramadan” (Bu. 30 : 7). Another tradition describes the month of Ramadan as “a month in which the sufferers of the poor and the hungry must be attended to” (MM. 7 : I-iii).

These injunctions make clear the significance of the tradition which says that when the month of Ramadan commences, “the doors of Heaven are opened and the doors of Hell are closed and the devils are put into chains” (Bu. 30 : 5). This is true of the man who keeps the fast, both physically and morally. The devils are chained in his case because he curbs and conquers the lower passions, by exciting which the devil makes a man fall into evil. The doors of Hell are closed on him because he shuns all evil which is man’s hell. The doors of Heaven are opened for him because he rises above physical desires and devotes himself to the service of humanity. In one tradition, fasting is described as bringing about a forgiveness of sins “for him who fasts having faith (in God) and to seek His pleasure and having an aim or purpose” (Bu. 2 : 28; 30 : 6). There is not the least doubt that fasting as qualified here, that is, when it is kept having true faith in God and when the person fasting resorts to it as a discipline for seeking the pleasure of God, is practical repentance of the highest value; and when a man sincerely repents of sins, his previous sins are forgiven, because the course of his life has been changed.

There is, however, yet another sense in which the doors of Heaven are opened to a fasting person in the month of Ramadan. It is specially suited for spiritual advancement, for attaining nearness to God. Speaking of Ramadan, the Quran says: “And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, surely I am nigh; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me” (2 : 186). The ways of attaining nearness to God are here spoken of as being specially opened in Ramadan, and this nearness is to be sought through prayer. It is for this reason that the Prophet used to have special regard for Tahajjud prayers in the month of Ramadan. And he also recommended that his followers should, during this month, awake at night for prayers (Bu. 2 : 27).

`Itikaf
`Itikaf [`itkaf is derived from `akafa `alai-hi, meaning he kept, or clove, to it constantly or perseveringly (LL.)] means literally to stay in a place; technically it is staying in a mosque for a certain number of days, especially the last ten days of the month of Ramadan. Bukhari has devoted a whole book to `Itikaf (book 33), showing the practice of the Prophet in this connection. During these days, the man who enters the state of `Itikaf (mu`takif) dissociates himself from all worldly affairs, and he does not leave the mosque unless there is necessity (hajah), such as evacuation, or having a bath, etc. (Bu. 33 : 3, 4). Usually a tent was pitched for the Prophet in the yard of the mosque (Bu. 33 : 7). Women are also allowed to enter a state of `Itikaf (Bu. 33 : 6). The mu`takif may be visited by other people or by his wife (Bu. 33 : 11). According to one tradition, he may visit a sick person (AD. 14 : 78) [Note: There are other traditions showing that he should not visit the sick, not assist at a burial, but evidently such deeds fall within the meaning of hajah]. An `Itikaf may be performed in other days (AD. 15 : 75), but the last ten days of Ramadan are specially mentioned in traditions and `Itikaf is spoken of in the Quran in connection with Ramadan.

Lailat al-Qadr
One of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan is called Lailat al-Qadr, the night of grandeur or majesty. In the Quran, it is spoken of in two places. In ch. 97, it is mentioned thrice as lailat al-Qadr: “Surely We revealed it on lailat al-Qadr. And what will make you comprehend what lailat al-Qadr is? Lailat al-Qadr is better than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord — for every affair — Peace! it is till the break of morning.” Here this night is spoken of as the night in which the Quran was revealed, and it is further stated that it is the night on which angels and the Spirit descend. It is also mentioned in ch. 44 where it is called a blessed night (laila mubarakah): “By the Book that makes manifest (the truth)! We revealed it on a blessed night — truly We are ever-warring. Therein is made clear every affair — full of wisdom — a command from Us” (44 : 2-5). It will be seen that, in both places, the Quran is spoken of as having been revealed on this night, and elsewhere it is stated that the Quran was revealed in the month of Ramadan, which shows that this night occurs in the month of Ramadan. The revelation of the Quran on this night means that its revelation began on that night; in other words, the first revelation came to the Prophet on this night. It is called a blessed night or the grand night because in it was laid the basis of a new revelation to the world which contains every commandment (amr) full of wisdom and knowledge (hakim). The lailat al-Qadr is, therefore, as it were, the anniversary of the revelation of the Quran.

As shown above, the last ten days of Ramadan are specially observed as days of devotion, so much so that, though Islam discourages asceticism, yet in these ten days, a Muslim is allowed to lead an ascetic life, by keeping himself to the mosque and giving up all worldly affairs. There are various traditions showing that the Muslims should look for this night as one of the odd nights in the last ten nights of Ramadan (Bu. 32 : 3) or in the last seven nights (Bu. 32 : 2). According to some traditions it is the twenty-fifth or twenty-seventh or twenty-ninth night of Ramadan. One tradition says that some of the Companions of the Prophet were shown lailat al-Qadr in their dreams in the last seven nights (MM. 7 : 9-i). It should be borne in mind that lailat al-Qadr is a spiritual experience, as it was the spiritual, not the physical, experience of the Prophet, and as the last-quoted tradition shows, it was the spiritual experience of the Companions, and therefore it is an error to think that it can be beheld as a physical experience, or that any physical change is witnessed on that night. It is the spiritual experience of the man who exerts himself in Ramadan to seek nearness to the Divine Being.
"The main difference of beliefs between the two sections are as follows";

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<tr>
<th>Lahore Section</th>
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<td>1. Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is khatam al-Nabiyyin, the interpretation of which is that he is the greatest though not last of all the prophets.</td>
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<td>2. The Holy Quran is the final Shariah (code) for the world.</td>
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<td>2. The same.</td>
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<td>3. No prophet, whether new or old, shall come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad.</td>
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<td>3. Prophets may come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad.</td>
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<td>4. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian was not a prophet but a Mujaddid (Reformer) and Promised Messiah and Mahdi in Islam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Mirza Ghulam Ahmrd was a prophet as well as Promised Messiah and Mahdi in Islam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad never changed claim, views or definition of prophet hood in in 1901 with the Publication of EK GHALATI KA IZALA.</td>
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<td>5. The first written evidence of the change of the belief with regard to prophet hood was the poster EK GHALTI KA IZALA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Belief in the advent of Mirza Sahib as a Mujaddid is not essential for becoming Muslim but his acceptance is necessary in the interest of progressive Islam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Belief in the mission of Mirza sahib as a prophet is essential for becoming Muslim.</td>
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<td>7. Any one who profess faith in the Kalima-LAHILA illa Ilahu Muhammad ur Rasul Allah (there is only one God and Muhammad is His Apostle) - is a Muslim and not a Kafir.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Any one, who does not believe Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian to be a Prophet, is a kafir.</td>
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<td>8. It is permitted to say prayers behind any Muslim Imam provided he is not guilty of dubbing other Muslims.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. It is not permitted to say prayers behind any Imam who does not recognize Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Marriage relations with non-Ahmadis are permitted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Marriage relations with non-Ahmadis are not permitted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. After the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Wahi-e-Nabuwat has ceased, only Wahi-e-Walayat (Saintly revelation) is continued. Hazrat Mirza Sahib's revelation was Wahi-e-Walayat and not Wahi-e-Nabuwat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. After the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Wahi-e-Nabuwat is continued. Hazrat Mirza Sahib's revelation was Wahi-e-Nabuwat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. The Founder of the Lahore Section was Maulana Muhammad Ali, M.A.L.L.B. Translator of the Holy Quran into English, a companion and disciple of the Founder of the Movement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. The Founder of the Qadian Section was Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, who was the son of the Founder of the Movement and was a youngman in his teens at the time of his noble father's death.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. The members of this section call themselves Ahmadis, and are generally known also as Ahmadis or Ahmadis of Lahore Movement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. The members of this section call themselves Ahmadis, but are generally known as Qadianis.</td>
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