

Islam and Christianity

Similarities and Differences

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Introduction

We ought to view all monotheistic religions (religions which enjoin belief in one God) in the spirit in which St. Peter viewed them when he said, "*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.*" [Acts 10:34,35]

The same is the spirit of the oft-repeated definition of "Muslims" in the Qur'an: "*Those who believe and work righteousness*" (*al-lazina amanu wa amalu-s-salehat*) [Qur'an 2:25, 2:62, 2:25 etc.]. And "*Trust in the Lord and do good,*" as the Psalms say. [Psalms 37:3]

It is essential that any discussion of Islam as a monolithic religion must begin with its very fundamental concept of unity of God (*Tawhid*). In this context, it is also important to note that the creed of Islam is very simple. To become a Muslim, one has only to declare in sincerity, and preferably in the presence of a person already professing Islam, "I testify that there is none worthy of worship (god) but God, and that Muhammad is the Prophet of God". The first part of the Muslim creed is a dialectically rigorous rejection of polytheism in favour of monotheism. It underlies the pivotal Muslim doctrine of divine unity (*Tawhid*), and has historical antecedents in both Judaism and Christianity.

The first part of the creed presupposes a cosmology that includes an invisible as well as a visible world. Underlying the cosmology of this first part of the creed, which is universalistic and acknowledged by all monotheistic faiths, is a concept of prophesy which is particularized and, by demanding recognition of Muhammad as God's Prophet becomes unacceptable to non-Muslims. None of the teachings of prophets who preceded Muhammad are denied. From Adam and Abraham to Solomon and Jesus, the Biblical and even extra-Biblical prophets are affirmed, many of their actions and utterances being lauded in the pages of the Qur'an. For this reason Muslims do not subscribe to the Jewish view which according to Jewish tradition asserts that prophecy ceased about 400 B.C. so that there could be no new scriptures after that time.

Christians maintain, on the contrary, that prophecy continued and that the writings that eventually became the New Testament were also *divinely inspired*. But since Muslims maintain and believe that Muhammad is also the last prophet, the revelations communicated through him supersede, even as they mark the culmination of all earlier SCRIPTURES. The authority of both, Jewish and Christian scriptures is subordinated to the content of Muslim revelation, and the former serve as *atheological*, not merely a chronological, *preamble* to Islam.

It is a well known fact that there is no trace today of the scrolls of Abraham. We are also aware of the sad story of the Torah of Moses and how it was destroyed by Pagans several times. The same fate befell the Psalter. As for Jesus, he had not had the time to compile or dictate what he preached. It was his disciples and their successors who gleaned his utterances and transmitted them to posterity in a number of recensions [a critical revision of the text], of which at least 70 recensions of the Gospels are known, and with the exception of four, all are declared by the Church to be apocryphal.

For such reasons, both the Torah and the Gospels are regarded as corrupted (Arabic term *Tahrif*, which means altering the words or misrepresenting the meaning) in their present form. **Consequently, in these earlier revelations, whatever disagrees with the Qur'an is abrogated by the Qur'an.**

Our presentation of some remarkable points of similarities and differences (set out in chart-form below) is meant to demonstrate and illustrate (as examples of practical application) how this principle of abrogation permeates not only the whole spectrum of Islamic teachings based on the Qur'an and the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad in general, but also underlies the whole Islamic legal system (*Shar'iah* and *Fiqh*). It is because of such application of this principle of abrogation that the Qur'an retells many stories found in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. No doubt the majority of Muslims, therefore, acquire their knowledge of the Bible solely from the Qur'an. Nevertheless, many Muslims have studied and several novelized lives of Jesus have been published in the twentieth century, especially in Egypt.

The Muslim position on this issue is twofold:

a) that the *injl* [Arabic for 'Bible'] like the Qur'an, was a real Scripture -- the original Word of God, sent down from the heavens and transmitted to the human Messenger (Prophet) Jesus on earth, through the medium of the celestial messenger (the angel Gabriel), as the highest form of infallible divine inspiration called *wahy* in Arabic. Christians have *lost* their *injl*, whereas Muslims have managed to meticulously preserve every word of their Qur'an in its original purity. [See Appendix A for an article by Maulana Mohammad Aleem Siddiqui about how the Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions were arranged and compiled.]

God is transcendent and beyond all the physical perceptions of man and also above all the limitations and bounds of language. The Scriptures have been revealed to the Prophets in different languages and at different times according to the needs and circumstances of those times. The phenomenon of Divine Guidance may be explained by using the following metaphor that "the Prophets are like lightbulbs and revelation is the electric current -- when the current contacts the lightbulb, the lightbulb provides light according to its voltage and colour. The mother-tongue of a Prophet is the colour of the lightbulb, whereas the power of the lightbulb, (i.e., the current and other things) are determined by God Himself. The human factor then, is just an instrument of transmission and only an intermediary." [Dr. Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam*]

b) that not only the Prophet Muhammad's p.b.u.h. own words, sayings or utterances, as distinct from God's Words (the Qur'an) but also a record of his actions and tacit approvals, have all been separately preserved. They are known as *Hadith*, Traditions, or *Sunnah*. Muslim scholars maintain that The New Testament, which contains the writings of the **disciples** of Jesus are really more like the *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u.h., whereas the *injl*, which has been lost, was like the Qur'an. Accordingly, since the Qur'an has remained unaltered to the present day, (compared to the other Scriptures) Muslims assert that only the Qur'an contains the *Words of God -- the truth in toto* (i.e., the whole truth and nothing but the truth). Whereas the earlier Scriptures/Books such as The New Testament, The Old Testament, etc. contain only *partial truths* (i.e., much less than the whole truth).

Consequently, in this connection, the scholars of Islam always seem so intent on bringing home the universal truth relating to change and renewal. It is maintained that this principle of change, revision, and renewal is enshrined in the laws of Nature itself and that such laws permeate the whole Divine Scheme of Guidance. This universal law has been beautifully articulated by Lord Alfred Tennyson in these serene and sombre yet simple words:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways

Finally, the principle of abrogation does NOT mean nor does it operate by seeking the absorption and assimilation of everyone such as Christians, Jews, or other minority groups into the "ruling" Muslim community. Islam protects the interests of all its subjects. Islam welcomes and even encourages every group, Christian, Jewish, Magian or other to have its own tribunals presided over by its own judges, in order to have its own laws applied in all branches of human affairs, civil as well as criminal. This is a characteristic feature of the Quranic legislation which accords judicial autonomy to different minority communities living under the Muslim rule. How faithfully the Muslims of later generations have followed these principles in running their governments is a matter of history. History will also judge Christian, Jewish and other governments of later generations on their adherence to their principles!

Similarities

The Lord's Prayer compared to *Surah Fateha*

We see that both the Lord's prayer in the Bible and the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an (*Sura al-Fateha*), go to the root of all religions ever professed by man. They are truly universal prayers. No man need hesitate to join in the solemn recitation of either.

The Islamic prayer is simpler than the Christian prayer. We do not say that one is good and that the other is bad. No, both are very good indeed, however one seems simpler than the other. Let us compare them.

Islam <i>The Muslim Prayer</i>	Christianity <i>The Christian prayer</i>
The Fateha [The Opening] The Qur'an 1:1-7	The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6:9-13 [The New Testament, King James version]

(a) Adoration Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful. King of the Day of Reckoning.	(a) Adoration Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
(b) Submission Thee only do we worship and of Thee only do we ask aid.	(b) Submission Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
(c) Supplication Guide us unto the right path - the path of those to whom Thou hast been gracious, not the path of those who are the objects of Thy wrath, nor of those who have gone astray. Amen	(c) Supplication Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors [Other translations say: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."] And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, The Power and the Glory. For ever and ever. <i>Amen</i>

If we carefully compare the parts of each prayer which are written above as separate paragraphs (a) (b) and (c), we will observe that there are differences only in language, yet there are no differences whatsoever in meaning. There is in both prayers absolutely the same spirit of **(a) Adoration (b) Submission** and **(c) Supplication**.

It is also of interest to note that a Prophetic Tradition (*Hadith*) that is included in Abu Dawud's collection of Hadith is as follows: "Narrated Abu Darda': I heard the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) say: If any of you is suffering from anything or his brother is suffering, he should say: ***Our Lord is Allah Who is in the heaven, holy is Thy name, Thy command reigns supreme in the heaven and the earth, as Thy mercy in the heaven, make Thy mercy in the earth; forgive us our sins, and our errors; Thou art the Lord of good men; send down mercy from Thy mercy, and remedy, and remedy from Thy remedy on this pain so that it is healed up.***" [Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 28, Number 3883]

*And nearest among them in love
To the Believers wilt thou
Find those who say, [789]
"We are Christians":
Because amongst these are
Men devoted to learning [790]
And men who have renounced
The world, and they
Are not arrogant. Qur'an 5:85 Yusuf Ali Translation*

*Behold! God said:
O Jesus, I will take thee [394]
And raise thee to Myself
And clear thee (of the falsehoods) [395]
Of those who blaspheme;
I will make those
Who follow thee superior [396]
To those who reject faith,
To the Day of Resurrection:
Then shall ye all return unto Me,
And I will judge
Between you of the matters
Wherein ye dispute. [397][Qur'an 3:55 Yusuf Ali
translation]*

What follows here are further points for a comparative study of Christianity and Islam (in simple columnar form) highlighting

similarities and differences. We must also bear in mind the importance of the Qur'an's declaration which requires Muslims to regard Christians as their close friends:

Similarities

Islam <i>Creation</i>	Christianity <i>Creation</i>
<p>Qur'an 35:13 He merges Night into Day, and he merges Day into Night, and he has subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law): each one runs its course for a term appointed. Such is Allah your Lord: to Him belongs all Dominion. And those whom ye invoke besides Him have not the least power.</p>	<p>Genesis 1:14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;</p>
<p>Qur'an 13:2 Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that ye can see is firmly established on the throne (of authority). He has subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law)! Each one runs (its course) for a term appointed. He doth regulate all affairs, explaining the signs in detail, that ye may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord.</p>	<p>Genesis 1:1,2 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.</p>
<p>Qur'an 13:3,4 And it is He who spread out the earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm and (flowing) rivers: and fruit of every kind He made in pairs, two and two: He draweth the night as a veil o'er the Day. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who consider! And in the earth are tracts (diverse though) neighbouring, and gardens of vines and fields sown with corn, and palm trees - growing out of single roots or otherwise: watered with the same water, yet some of them We make more excellent than others to eat. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who understand!</p>	<p>Genesis 1:9-12 Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.</p>
<p>Qur'an 41:37 Among His Signs are the Night and the Day, and the Sun and the Moon. Do not prostrate to the sun and the moon, but prostrate to Allah, Who created them, if it is Him ye wish to serve.</p>	<p>Genesis 1:3-5 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.</p>
<p>Qur'an 41:12 So He completed them as seven firmaments in two Days, and He assigned to each heaven its duty and command. And We adorned the lower heaven with lights, and (provided it) with guard. Such is the Decree of (Him) the Exalted in Might, Full of Knowledge.</p>	<p>Genesis 1:14-18 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.</p>
<p>Qur'an 50:38 We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in Six Days, nor did any sense of weariness touch Us.</p>	<p>Genesis 2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.</p>

<p>Qur'an 15:28,29 Behold! thy Lord said to the angels: "I am about to create man from sounding clay from mud molded into shape; when I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit fall ye down in obeisance unto him.</p>	<p>Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.</p>
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Similarities

Islam <i>Similar verses to the 10 Biblical Commandments</i>	Christianity <i>The 10 Commandments</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">About the 10 Commandments:</p> <p>Qur'an 2:53 And remember We gave Moses the Scripture and the Criterion (between right and wrong): There was a chance for you to be guided aright.</p> <p>Qur'an 7:145 And We ordained laws for him [Moses] in the tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things, (and said): "Take and hold these with firmness, and enjoin thy people to hold fast by the best in the precepts . . .</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">About the 10 Commandments:</p> <p>Exodus 24:12 The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction." Deuteronomy 4:13 He declared to you His covenant, the Ten Commandments, which He commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets.</p>
<p>Qur'an 17:23 Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him . . .</p> <p>Qur'an 2:163; 2:255; 3:2; 3:6; 3:18; 3:62; 4:87; 5:73; 6:102; 6:106; 7:59; 7:65; 7:73; 7:85; 7:158; 9:31; 9:129; 10:90; 11:14; 11:40; 11:61; 11:84; 13:30; 16:02; 18:110; 20:8; 20:14; 20:98; 21:25; 21:87; 23:23; 23:32; 23:116; 27:26; 28:38; 28:70; 28:88; 35:3; 37:035; 38:65; 39:6; 40:3; 40:62; 40:65; 44:8; 47:19; 64:13; 73:9 <i>La illa ha illa Allah</i> [there is none worthy of worship but God]</p>	<p>Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before Me</p>
<p>Qur'an 22:12 They call on such deities, besides Allah, as can neither hurt nor profit them: that is straying far indeed (from the Way)!</p> <p>Qur'an 22 [Athar Husain translation condensed version] Avoid filthy rites associated with idols and also false invocations, remaining firm in faith towards God, without associating anyone with Him. And whosoever associates aught with God, it is as if he has fallen from on high and the birds snatch him away or the wind blows him to a distant place.</p>	<p>Exodus 20:4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.</p>
<p>Qur'an 7:180 And Allah's are the best names, therefore call on Him thereby, and leave alone those who violate the sanctity of His names; they shall be requited for what they did.</p>	<p>Exodus 20:7 You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, [i.e. in an irreverent or disrespectful manner] for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.</p>
<p>Qur'an 16:124 The Sabbath was only made (strict) for those who disagreed (as to its observance); But Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgement, as to their differences.</p> <p>Qur'an 4:154 And for their covenant we raised over them (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai); and (on another occasion) We said: "Enter the gate with humility"; and (once again) We commanded them: "Transgress not in the matter of the Sabbath." And We took from them a solemn covenant.</p>	<p>Exodus 20:8-11 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.</p>

<p>Qur'an 17:23 Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.</p>	<p>Exodus 20:12 Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gave you.</p>
<p>Qur'an 17:33 Nor take life which Allah has made sacred . . .</p>	<p>Exodus 20:13 You shall not kill</p>
<p>Qur'an 17:32 Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils).</p>	<p>Exodus 20:14 You shall not commit Adultery</p>
<p>Qur'an 60:12 O Prophet! When believing women come to thee to take the oath of fealty to thee, that they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with Allah, that they will not steal, that they will not commit adultery (or fornication), that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood, and that they will not disobey thee in any just matter; then do thou receive their fealty, and pray to Allah for the forgiveness (of their sins): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. [Note: This applies to men as well as women. The Qur'an ordains severe punishment for theft 5:41,42]</p> <p>Qur'an 2:188 And do not eat up unjustly the property of each other among yourselves nor convey their cases to the authorities for devouring unlawfully some portion of the property of the people knowingly. [Commentary by Mufti Shah Ahmad Raza Khan -- this prohibition covers the acquisition of property by all unlawful means, such as theft, robbery, gambling, bribery, backbiting, giving false evidence, and all such other means as bringing a false claim against another or wrongfully influencing authorities to obtain unlawful benefits as a consequence]</p>	<p>Exodus 20:15 You shall not steal.</p>
<p>Qur'an 2:42 And cover not truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know (what it is).</p>	<p>Exodus 20:16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.</p>
<p>Qur'an 4:32 And in no wise covet those things in which Allah Hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others . . .</p>	<p>Exodus 20:17 You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbour.</p>

Similarities

<p>Islam <i>Degrees of affinity and consanguinity prohibiting marriage</i></p>	<p>Christianity <i>Degrees of affinity and consanguinity prohibiting marriage</i></p>
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<p>Qur'an 4:22-24</p> <p>4:22 And marry not women whom your fathers married, except what is past: It was shameful and odious, an abominable custom indeed.</p> <p>4:23 Prohibited to you (for marriage) are: your mothers, daughters, sisters; father's sisters, mother's sisters; brother's daughters, sister's daughters; foster-mothers (who gave you suck); foster-sisters; your wives' mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives to whom ye have gone in, no prohibition if ye have not gone in; (those who have been) wives of your sons proceeding from your loins; and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time, except for what is past; for God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful;</p> <p>4:24 Also (prohibited are) women already married, except those whom your right hands possess. Thus hath God ordained (prohibitions) against you. Except for these, all others are lawful . . . and God is All-knowing, All-wise.</p>	<p>Leviticus 18:6-18</p> <p>6 No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the Lord.</p> <p>7 Do not dishonour your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.</p> <p>8 Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonour your father.</p> <p>9 Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.</p> <p>10 Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonour you.</p> <p>11 Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister.</p> <p>12 Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.</p> <p>13 Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.</p> <p>14 Do not dishonour your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt.</p> <p>15 Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her.</p> <p>16 Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonour your brother.</p> <p>17 Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness.</p> <p>18 Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.</p>
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Similarities

(i) Basic Concepts

Islam	Christianity
Monotheistic -- God (Allah) is recognized as the Creator.	Monotheistic -- God is recognized as the Creator.

God is omnipotent, omniscient, immanent within His creation yet transcendent.	God is omnipotent, omniscient, immanent within His creation yet transcendent.
God has a unique relationship with humans (master and servant).	God has a unique relationship with humans. (master and servant).
God makes agreements or Covenants with humans.	God makes agreements or Covenants with humans.
Have similar eschatology (pertaining to the last days or the end of the world) -- this world will come to an end someday and no-one knows when.	Have similar eschatology (pertaining to the last days or the end of the world) -- this world will come to an end someday and no-one knows when.
A figure referred to as Satan or Antichrist (dajjal) (a figure of evil) will be defeated at the end of the world.	A figure referred to as Antichrist or Satan (a figure of evil) will be defeated at the end of the world.
After the world has ended, God will judge humans, based on their actions in compliance with a moral code, specified in the Covenant which God makes with us.	At the end of the world, God will judge humans based on their actions in compliance with a moral code, specified in the Covenant which God makes with us.
This judgement will determine one's eternal abode, heaven or hell (bliss or punishment).	This judgement will determine one's eternal abode, heaven or hell (bliss or punishment).
Human beings have a spirit (<i>ruh</i>) which is eternal, continuing its existence after our physical death. As to its origin, the Qur'an says, "When I [God] have fashioned him [Adam] (in due proportions) and breathed into him of My spirit . . ." [Qur'an 15:29]	Human beings have a soul which is eternal, continuing its existence after our physical death
Humans have the ability (free will) to choose between good and evil (obeying or disobeying God, complying with the moral code of the Covenant or transgressing).	Humans have the ability (free will) to choose between good and evil (obeying or disobeying God, complying with the moral code of the Covenant or transgressing)
Angels exist who are the servants, and sometimes messengers of God.	Angels exist who are the servants, and sometimes messengers of God
Satan (Shaytain) exists, as well as evil spirits who follow him; they are the enemies of humanity.	Satan exists, as well as evil spirits who follow him; they are the enemies of humanity.
Divinely revealed scriptures exist which are the primary source of religious knowledge. The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad and it is the final scripture given to man.	Divine scriptures exist which are the primary source of religious knowledge; revelation in this department is finished (there are no more biblical books yet to be revealed)
Miracles occur on occasion.	Miracles occur on occasion.
If a person errs or transgresses, God may forgive them, if they sincerely repent.	If a person errs or transgresses, God may forgive them, if they sincerely repent.
Prophets brought spiritual instruction.	Prophets brought spiritual instruction.
There are similarities between the Quranic and biblical version of many stories, such as Adam and Eve, Moses and the children of Israel, etc.	There are similarities between the Quranic and biblical version of many stories, such as Adam and Eve, Moses and the children of Israel, etc.
At the time of the end of the world, Jesus Christ will come again.	At the time of the end of the world, Jesus Christ will come again.
Jesus Christ was born to the virgin Mary.	Jesus Christ was born to the virgin Mary. (Immaculate Conception).

Similarities

(ii) Moral Code

Islam	Christianity
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Faith without works is useless (it is not enough to simply say "I believe).	Faith without works is useless (it is not enough to simply say "I believe).
God severely punishes the worship of any deity other than God Himself as well as disrespect toward Him.	God severely punishes the worship of any deity other than God Himself, as well as disrespect toward Him.
Humans have rights (hence the prohibitions on murder, theft, lying, violence).	Humans have rights (hence the prohibitions on murder, theft, lying, violence).
Parents have special rights (to be honoured), as do spouses (hence adultery is forbidden).	Parents have special rights (to be honoured), as do spouses (hence adultery is forbidden).
Fornication and lewd behaviour are forbidden.	Fornication and lewd behaviour are forbidden.
Transgressions similar to the Christian "seven deadly sins" (avarice, pride, greed, gluttony; envy, lust, sloth) are all spiritual illnesses.	Transgressions similar to the Catholic "seven deadly sins" (avarice, pride, greed, gluttony; envy, lust, sloth) are all spiritual illnesses..
Society's laws must be obeyed.	Society's laws must be obeyed.
Intoxication is forbidden.	Intoxication is forbidden.
Suicide is forbidden.	Suicide is forbidden.
Homosexuality is forbidden.	Homosexuality is forbidden (as stated in the book of Deuteronomy, as well as in the story of Lot and Sodom and Gomorra).

Similarities

(iii) Practices

Islam	Christianity
Prayer is a means of communicating with God; God hears prayers and sometimes grants requests.	Prayer is a means of communicating with God; God hears prayers and sometimes grants requests.
Special congregational service of worship (salat) once per week on Friday, in a mosque, is an obligation (in addition to five times a day obligatory service of worship (salat) - also preferably in congregation.)	Congregational worship at church once per week on Sunday is an obligation.
Charity and relieving the suffering of others carries spiritual rewards.	Charity and relieving the suffering of others carries spiritual rewards.
Certain standard prayers exist.	Certain standard prayers exist.
Fasting and similar ascetic practises for religious purposes carries spiritual rewards.	Fasting or depriving oneself for religious purposes carries spiritual rewards.
Pilgrimage (hajj) is obligatory.	Pilgrimage still exists, but is not obligatory
Celebrate the advent and birth of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) on the 12th Rabi Awwal (Islamic calendar date)	Celebrate the advent and birth of Jesus Christ, Dec. 25. This is known as Christmas.

Differences (i) Basic Concepts

Islam	Christianity
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Do not believe in the Trinity	Christians believe in the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)
God has informed us of only 99 of His beautiful names (Attributes). Many of them depict His beautiful aspects (<i>jamaal</i>), and some of them depict His power, authority and grandeur (<i>jalal</i>).	Christians currently emphasize the beautiful aspects of God (i.e. God is Love)
Jesus is a Prophet and a servant of God. Muhammad is also a Prophet and a servant of God. He was the last Prophet sent by God to guide and teach mankind.	As a member of the Trinity, Jesus is viewed as God Himself.
The Quranic teachings in this regard may be summed up as follows: (1) Christ was neither crucified nor killed by the Jews, notwithstanding certain apparent circumstances which produced that illusion in the minds of some of the enemies; and (2) Jesus was taken up to God (i.e.. God raised him up (rafa'a) to Himself.) [Qur'an 4:157, 158 & 3:55 & 4:157]	Christians believe that Jesus was crucified on a cross.
See above.	Christians believe Jesus was resurrected (raised from the dead) three days after being crucified on a cross (Good Friday to Easter Sunday are the days when Christians remember and celebrate this.) Jesus' crucifixion they believe, redeems Christians of their sins.
Eschatology - Judgement will occur on Judgement Day (the end of the world when God will judge all human beings beginning from Adam and Eve). Persons who have been previously deceased, and are in their graves, are given an indication (via 'windows' in the grave) of what his or her future Judgement may be. The punishment of the grave will begin immediately. Rewards begin immediately too. (This intermediate stage of the grave may be regarded as similar to the Catholic Purgatory, and is called <i>barzakh</i> in Islam). The final abode of either Paradise or Hell will be pronounced on the Day of Judgement.	Eschatology - most Christians believe that judgement takes place, immediately upon death (i.e. they will either go to Heaven or Hell, or as in the case of Catholics, they could also go to Purgatory immediately upon death). Christians also believe that the final Judgement Day is only for all those people who have not died yet and will be for those remaining on earth.
Hell is a place of purification, and is permanent. Paradise as a reward, and Hell as a punishment are but graphic terms to make us understand a state of things which is beyond all our notions of life in that world. Paradise will be eternal. Once meriting it, there can be no question of being ejected from it. As to whether Hell is also eternal for the unbelievers, there are two schools of thought: (1) A great majority of Muslims affirm that God may pardon every sin and every crime except disbelief in God. [Qur'an 4:48,116] (2) Others believe that even the punishment of disbelief may one day terminate by the grace of God. [Qur'an 11:107, etc.] The Qur'an 4:124 declares: " <i>If any do deeds of righteousness - be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Paradise and not the least injustice will be done to them.</i> " In other words no religion has a monopoly on salvation!	Hell is eternal, but Purgatory is not (note: Catholics believe in Purgatory whereas Protestants do not). While Catholics believe that Purgatory is precisely the same as Hell, it is not eternal. They believe it is a place or state of punishment wherein the souls of those who die in God's grace may do penance for past sins and hence become cleansed and fit for heaven. Only Christians can go to heaven.
All mankind is born pure and he/she is responsible for his or her own sins and not someone else's.	Christians believe in Original Sin, (all of mankind is held responsible for the sins of Adam and Eve) which only the sacrament of baptism in the name of Christ can expiate.

<p>Muslims do not believe in vicarious atonement. They believe that each person is responsible for his or her own actions and that no-one else can atone for them. However, you can pray to God for His Mercy and Forgiveness on behalf of another person. The Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u.h. -- and some others (like innocent babies who have passed away) are given the special privilege to intercede on behalf of their parents on the Day of Judgement. This is in accord with the Throne Verse in the Qur'an. So with God's graceful permission, they may have a specially bestowed privilege of pleading on behalf of others and begging for God's forgiveness for them on the Day of Judgement. This is known as intercession (<i>s hafa't</i>).</p>	<p>Christians believe in vicarious atonement -- that another person can extinguish the guilt incurred by another person's sins. Jesus is believed to have died so as to atone vicariously for man's sins. He was considered to be the Lamb of God, which means that Jesus was considered to be the perfect sacrifice by which the hold of Original Sin was broken. Christians believe in intercession and intercessors such as priests and monks.</p>
<p>The holy Qur'an was revealed ('revelation' [<i>wah'i</i>] is the highest form of inspiration with no possibility of error in the message or the conveyance of the message) to the Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u.h. through the angel Gabriel who was carrying out God's precise instructions. This occurred over a period of 23 years. The holy Qur'an is God's Word -- not the word of the Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u.h.</p>	<p>Christians believe that divine inspiration (the Latin word is 'afflatus' which means 'divine wind') inspired the writers of the scripture. Hence they believe that the Gospel of St. Mark (obviously written by St. Mark) or the letters of Paul the Apostle are the "Word of God."</p>
<p>The Qur'an exists today exactly the same as it was revealed to Muhammad, p.b.u.h. There have been absolutely no changes whatsoever made to the wording. Special checks and balances and special means for the preservation of accuracy (.e.g. memorizing of the text by many people, etc. etc.) were put into place so that no error or change could possibly creep into the text.</p>	<p>A council was called, in the early days of Christianity, where the church fathers and elders debated. This was presided over by the Roman (and Christian) Emperor Constantine (circa 324 A.D.). This council codified (systematized) standard Christian belief and gave the New Testament its present form, depriving some books of the status of Scripture (many of which still exist today and are known as the Apocrypha).</p>
<p>All the Prophets, from Adam a.s. to Muhammad p.b.u.h. are pure and sinless/infallible.</p>	<p>In the Old Testament (Jewish scriptures which most Christians regard as authoritative), Prophets are not portrayed as being infallible to say the least.</p>
<p>There are many differences between the Quranic and the Biblical versions in the details of certain Biblical stories.</p>	<p>There are many differences between the Quranic and the Biblical versions in the details of certain Biblical stories.</p>
<p>The first source of Muslim Law, is the Qur'an. The second source of law is the Hadith (Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u.h.). The Hadith literature expounds and explains and interprets the Quranic injunctions and teachings. The Hadith do not contradict the Qur'an in any way.</p>	<p>The source of Christian (or Canon) Law is the scripture, which has been interpreted by the Pope for Catholics; by the Patriarch for members of the Orthodox faith; and by the consensus of the community for other groups. The writings of the church fathers would also be relevant.</p>
<p>For Muslims, Prophets are spiritually advanced and are very pure and sinless. They have been sent by God to guide and teach mankind. There have been 127,000 of them from Adam, a.s. to Muhammad p.b.u.h. who was the last Prophet sent, meaning that no more Prophets will come after him. Hence Muhammad p.b.u.h. was called the "Seal of the Prophets." The Prophets were sent as Messengers of God to people in different countries at different times.</p>	<p>Prophets do not have the same stature in Christianity that they have in Islam.</p>

Differences (ii) Moral Code

Islam	Christianity
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<p>Islam does not treat law and morality as different things. What is legal/lawful is also moral and conversely what is unlawful/illegal is also immoral. Consequently, Islamic law automatically covers and governs morality -- moral values are not changeable nor are they dependant on the whims of individuals or society. The Islamic legal system combines the two opposites: a) rigid inflexibility and permanency through the <i>Shar'iah</i> (i.e. the divine injunctions of the Qur'an and the <i>Sunnah</i>) and b) the flexibility and fluidity to accommodate man-made legislation with the changing needs of society. There are two forms of legal systems in Islam: i) <i>Fiqh</i> (which cannot be inconsistent with the <i>Shar'iah</i>) and b) the derivative form of legislation which is based on the <i>Shar'iah</i>. Transgressing these two regulations or bounds will make <i>Fiqh</i> (i.e. man-made legislation) <i>ultra vires ab-initio</i> (i.e. absolutely void from the beginning.)</p>	<p>Secular law, and morality are often different things. For example, abortion is considered legal by the government in Canada. Many Protestants have no problem with this law, yet Catholics forbid it for their followers. What is considered moral has tended to change with each generation. The guideposts and/or criteria of what is considered moral or what is considered immoral are interpreted differently depending on the era or the group (Catholic, Protestant, etc.). Church doctrine, while it can change and be altered, doesn't change so often as the church members interpretations of it do. For example, Jesus' commandment "Love thy neighbour as thyself" has differing interpretations on how to carry it out depending on the time and era and generation; also compliance to this commandment has changed substantially from place to place, group to group and time to time.</p>
<p>Muslims believe that while the Scripture and Gospels were originally pure and error free, contradiction and error has crept into them over time and so now the current books are considered to be highly suspect. For example we don't know what are really Jesus', a.s. words from what are the scribes words because there were no checks and balances that were put into place to ensure that such errors did not occur. Hence we see several contradictions in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.</p>	<p>Even though the Old Testament is regarded as Scripture, Christians do not regard themselves as being bound by Jewish law (this thanks to a dream of St. Peter).</p>
<p>Muslims, like Jews do not consume the flesh of swine.</p>	<p>Christians consume the flesh of swine.</p>
<p>Alcohol and/or intoxication is completely forbidden.</p>	<p>Alcohol intoxication is forbidden for Christians, but alcohol consumption is not.</p>
<p>Free-mixing of sexes is discouraged.</p>	<p>Free-mixing of the sexes was historically discouraged, but today this injunction doesn't play the role it used to.</p>

Differences (iii) Practices

Islam	Christianity
<p>Muslims do not believe in the separation of 'church from state' (i.e. secularism). However, it is permissible to separate the functions of government (politics) from religion and be undertaken by different individuals -- politics would still be subject to religion.</p>	<p>Almost all Christian countries have secular governments.</p>
<p>The Muslim daily rituals and practices are clear and detailed (e.g. proper way to use the washroom, specifics of purification for prayer, inheritance, details of <i>Zakat</i>, prescribed punishments, etc.).</p>	<p>Lack the details that Islam holds.</p>
<p>Prayer is very specific and exactly the same no matter which country the Muslim happens to live in. There are five prescribed prayers per day at set times according to the rotation of the earth around the sun. All of these prayers are obligatory on every Muslim. The prescribed prayers are recited in Arabic and are recited exactly the same in all countries of the world. The culture of a person does not influence the performance of prayer (salat). It is the exact prayer that Muhammad, p.b.u.h. taught us to do.</p>	<p>With a few memorized exceptions, like the 'Our Father' and the 'Apostle's Creed,' prayer is an improvised conversation with God; there is no prescribed time for nor daily number of Christian prayers.</p>

Actions may be <i>haram</i> (forbidden), <i>halal</i> (allowed), <i>fard</i> (obligatory), <i>Sunnah</i> (following the ways of the Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u.h.) and so on.	Don't have any specific categories of actions as seen in Muslim law.
Funeral prayers, the birth of a baby (<i>adhan</i>), donations to charity (i.e. Zakat) etc. are ritualized and clearly set out no matter which culture a Muslim belongs to.	Certain rites called sacraments are performed: i.e. Baptism, Confession, the Eucharist, etc.
Hymns and devotional services of worship and supplications are an integral part of all Muslim forms of worship. Zikr ceremonies (chanting a name of God), and sama (religious music) are practised more often among the more devout groups of Muslims such as the Sufis.	Hymns and devotional music play a big role in Christianity.
In Islam, there is no institutionalized "church" nor its hierarchy. There are no monks in Islam either. Religious leaders are not obliged to remain celibate.	Certain sects (i.e. large sects like the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches) condone monkhood. Catholic monks and priests are obliged to remain celibate. Protestant ministers are not obliged to remain celibate.
Muslims are forbidden to put pressure, either directly or indirectly, on another person to convert to Islam. Efforts in this regard have to be through persuasion (i.e. without involving any kind of pressure). The Qur'an clearly lays down the law that the duty and function of all the Prophets and all Muslims is only to convey the message of God. Period.	Christians have an obligation to proselytize. Missionary work is considered very important.
Homosexuality is considered to be a perversion and is forbidden.	Since the prohibition on homosexuality is found in the Old Testament only, some Christian sects say it does not apply (i.e. the United Church ordains homosexual ministers).
Interest (<i>riba</i>) is forbidden to Muslims who live in Islamic countries.	Interest used to be forbidden in Christianity, but it seems that this is no longer the case.
Polygamy is allowed to Muslims. There are strict limitations and prohibitions concerning it so it does not become a method to dominate women.	Polygamy used to be allowed by the Church, but now it is forbidden to all sects but the Mormons.
All games of chance and gambling are forbidden in Islam.	Some sects are very strict about gambling, but others are not strict at all.
Only females are allowed to wear gold	Males and females are allowed to wear gold.

Notes to the Yusuf Ali translation of the Qur'an

[789] The meaning is not that they merely call themselves Christians, but that they are such sincere Christians that they appreciate Muslim virtues, as did the Abyssinians to whom Muslim refugees went during the persecution in Mecca. They would say: "It is true we are Christians, but we understand your point of view, and we know you are good men." **They are Muslims at heart**, whatever their label may be.

[790] **Qissis**: I have translated as "devoted to learning," following the Commentators. It seems to be a foreign word, possibly Abyssinians rather than Syriac as the reference seems to be to the Abyssinian Christians. Their real devotions to learning and the renunciation of the world by the Monastic Orders are contrasted with the hypocrisy and arrogance of the Pharisees and Scribes.

[394] Read this along with Quranic verse 4:157, where just like that it is said that the Jews neither crucified nor killed Jesus, but that another was killed in his likeness. The guilt of the Jews remained, but Jesus was eventually taken up to God.

[395] Jesus was charged by the Jews with blasphemy as claiming to be God or the Son of God. The Christians, (except a few early sects which were annihilated by persecution, and the Unitarians [in Yusuf Ali's time] who are almost Muslims) adopted the substance of the claim and made it the cornerstone of their faith. God clears Jesus of such a charge of claim.

[396] The Muslims are the true Christians, for they follow (or should follow) the **true teachings** of Christ, which did not include the blasphemy that he was God or the Son of God in the literal sense. But there is a large body of men, who by birth inherit such teaching nominally, but their hearts do not consent to it. Their real Muslim virtues (which from their point of view they call Christian virtues) entitle them to be called Christians, and to receive the leading position which they at present occupy in the world of men.

[397] All the controversies about dogma and faith will disappear when we appear before God. He will judge not by what we profess, but by what we are.

Appendix A

Preservation, Arrangement and Compilation of the Holy Qur'an

*Excerpted from:- The History of the Codification of Islamic Law by His Eminence Maulana
Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqui Al-Qadri Published by: Haji Mohammed Ibrahim
©1950 as Ch. 2: "Arrangement and Compilation of the Holy Qur'an" (pp. 15-18)*

You might have heard that the Holy Qur'an was not delivered to the Holy Prophet just once as a complete book, but was revealed to him bit by bit and piece by piece, through the Archangel Gabriel (peace be with him!).

The Holy Prophet (God bless him!), had completed forty years of his age and was engaged in a special form of communion with God in the solitude of the Cave of Hira, when the angel first appeared before him and delivered to him the first revelation which reads:

*"Read! in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created, created man, out of a (mere) clot of
congealed blood:
Read! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, Who taught (the use of) the Pen, taught man that which he knew
not." [Qur'an 96:1-5]*

After an interval, came the second revelation:

*"O thou wrapped up (in the mantle)! Arise and deliver thy warning! And thy Lord do thou magnify! And
thy garments keep free from stain! And all abomination shun! Nor expect in giving, and increase (for
thyself)!" [Qur'an 74:1-6]*

Thereafter commenced the general preaching and [the] invitation went forth to accept the Divine Message. The members of the powerful tribe of the Quraish were invited to assemble and to hear the Holy Prophet's first sermon on the Mount. The message of the Unity of God was proclaimed aloud, and polytheism and infidelity were condemned in the most unambiguous terms.

In the meantime, revelations continued to come. The Holy Prophet would remember them himself and would teach them to his Companions, like Khadija, Abu Bakr and Ali (God be pleased with them!), so that they could remember them by heart.

A race of illiterates as the Arabs were, there were very few in Mecca who could read or write. There was no paper, and the pen and the ink pot were scarce. It was, indeed, a most difficult task to get the revelations written down as they came. But the arrangement was made. A few of those who knew the art of writing embraced Islam. The verses of the Holy Qur'an were inscribed on palm leaves and leather sheets. Some of the Companions were specially charged with the duty of learning the portions of the Qur'an as they were revealed. Persons were specially selected from among the Companions who would take lessons from the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!), each lesson consisting of ten verses of the Holy Qur'an. They would learn those verses by heart and learn their meanings and interpretations as taught by the Holy Prophet, and teach the same to others.

Then came the time of the Migration to Medina. The Muslim group had been growing gradually. At Medina it was knit into a functioning community. Among other things, the Holy Prophet made the arrangements whereby a larger number of Companions could learn to read and write. The work of writing down the revelations of the Qur'an continued with the fullest exertion. Its compilation in the form of a scripture was attended to. Zaid bin Thabit, who was a freed slave, was one of those Companions who were entrusted with the task of writing down the Qur'an. The revelations continued to come, and they were not only preserved in writing, but the Holy Prophet, under Divine guidance, would fix up the chapters and would instruct the scribes to insert a certain revelation at a certain place in a certain chapter.

Gradually, the delivery of the Word of God reached compilation and, at the Farewell Pilgrimage, in the plain of Arafat, came the revelation:

*"This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you and have chosen for
you Islam as your religion." [Qur'an 5:4]*

Not only the arrangement of the verses and the fixing up of chapters was done by the Holy Prophet, but he also fixed up the serial arrangement of the chapters, and all that he did under Divine instructions. To carry the work to its logical finish, Abu Bakr the Truthful, Islam's first Caliph, rendered the service of giving the separately written chapters the form of a consolidated compilation.

Different portions of the Qur'an written by different people continued to remain, however, in their possession. The people of different

places also continued to follow their local pronunciations of Quranic verses.

Then came the period of the third Caliph, Osman (God be pleased with him!). Islam was no more confined to Mecca and Medina, but had crossed the boundaries of the Arabian peninsula and had entered Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Iran. People were entering the fold of Islam in ever-growing numbers. The interest in Quranic recitation was becoming universal. Large numbers of people had only portions of the Qur'an in their possession. Misunderstandings could arise that only such and such a portion formed the whole Qur'an, and that the others portions were not part of it. Hence, Caliph Osman got several copies made of the manuscript compiled during Caliph Abu Bakr's regime and sent those copies to the different centres of the Islamic empire. The copy which Caliph Osman himself used for study and on which, it is said, the drops of his blood fell at the time of his martyrdom, remained preserved first at Medina and was later transferred from there to the Imperial library at Istanbul by the Turkish Sultans.

All the copies of the Holy Qur'an which exist in the world today are true copies of that manuscript, and, not only the Muslims, but also the opponents of Islam, find themselves compelled to admit that the Holy Qur'an has maintained the original purity of its text, even to a letter.

As regards the vowels, it is customary in the Arabic language not to mention them in writing, because they are only symbolic and are not expressed in the letter form. But when Islam spread among the non-Arab populations, those non-Arab Muslims experienced difficulty in reading the Qur'an. Hence under the orders of Hajjaj bin Yusuf, the vowel symbols were included in written copies according to the universal form in which thousands of Muslims had learnt the Quranic text by heart, and which form had been transferred by the "Preservers" (i.e., *Huffaz*) from generation to generation. The seven styles of intonation which the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!) was himself taught by God, were taught to the people by qualified teachers. All those styles have been preserved down to the present day by hundreds of thousands of people, though there is one style which is more universal than the rest.

Thus, it is clear as daylight that the Qur'an exists in the world today in its absolute original purity, and that, not only as a written text, but also in the brains of hundreds of thousands of Muslims which makes it impossible for anyone to effect the change even of a dot.

Ch. 3: Compilation of Prophetic Traditions and Biographies of Reporters

It has been proved in the foregoing that the basis of understanding the Holy Qur'an is the interpretation given by the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be with him!). The verses of the Qur'an mean that which the Holy Prophet understood and made us to understand, whether through action or through saying. Consequently, the Companions of the Holy Prophet were always extremely attentive to every word that he said and tried to remember it to the very letter. They were so cautious in the matter that if they were ever apprehended that they had forgotten some actual word and had only remembered its synonym, they would always point it out while narrating a certain Prophetic Tradition (or *Hadith*). Thus not only was the Holy Prophet's Life account preserved for us, but also the solutions of the various problems of religion and law which the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!) gave.

When it was emphasized that the Holy Qur'an should be written down, and arrangements were made accordingly, some of the Companions thought of putting down the Traditions of the Holy Prophet also in writing. But, because Islam was still in its early stage, the Holy Prophet feared that if his Traditions were committed to writing side by side with the Qur'an, people might get confused and might mix up both things. Hence he forbade them in the beginning from doing so. However, when that danger had passed away and people were sufficiently trained to distinguish the Qur'an from the *Hadith*, he allowed them to write down his Sayings. In fact, he himself got them written as, for instance, when he dictated the rules of *Zakat*, etc., to Ali.

Among the Companions there were some who would pass their whole time, so to say, at the feet of the Holy Prophet. Close to the Holy Prophets residential room and the mosque, there is a raised platform which is called "*Suffa*". A party of students used to occupy this platform permanently. Their work was to learn by heart whatever they heard from the Holy Prophet. One of these "*people of Suffa*" was Abu Huraira, who was endowed with a powerful memory and who remembered a large number of the Holy Prophets Traditions and reported them.

This I have related with a view to make you understand that, just as arrangements were made to preserve the Holy Qur'an by means of writing and learning by heart, similarly did the Companions of the Holy Prophet exert themselves to preserve the Prophets Traditions. Their method consisted in learning them by heart and reporting them with all the care which the sacredness of the task and their devotion to the Holy Prophet and Islam demanded. One person reported to another, one generation reported to the other succeeding it. Thus a continuous chain of reporters was built – a continuous chain through which passed the most valuable treasure of the Holy Prophets Sayings and Actions.

Now, the way in which this "chain of reporters" was built up and the extremely critical method which gave lustre to it, has made this chain one of the glories of Islamic history. The fact is, that the experts of historical science cannot produce another instance in world's history

where those critical historical standards were observed which have gone to make the Hadith literature such an authentic record as it is.

If, today, I am asked to narrate a Hadith to some scholar of that science, it will not be enough for me to recite its text. Rather, I will have to report my authority and I will have to prove that my chain of reporters is faultless and ends at the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!). Indeed, those who were responsible for the compilation of Hadith literature, observed a measure of care beyond which human endeavour could not go. In the case of each and every Hadith that reached them, they examined its authenticity thoroughly. They tested the chain of reporters through which it was transmitted. They enquired whether a certain reporter had seen and met the other reporter from whom he claimed to have received the *Hadith*. They saw whether the reporters were persons of good and reliable memory. They investigated piety and fear of God in the lives of the reporters. In short, they employed all conceivable standards for assessing the true worth of every *Hadith* reported and accepted it only after they had been thoroughly satisfied.

This brings us to the fact that there were, and there are, Traditions (i.e. *Ahadith*) of different grades in accordance with their measure of authenticity. This grading was done on the basis of different factors. Various, the considerations were: (1) the moral condition of the reporters and the level of their piety; (2) the powers of memory which the reporters were found to possess; (3) intelligence and capacity to grasp religious truths; (4) consideration of the fact whether the report had come through one channel only or different channels; so on and so forth. When the details of the Islamic law were deduced, these factors governing the worth of different Traditions were always kept in view.

In connection with the extreme caution which the compilers of *Hadith* observed, I may mention here an incident of the life of Imam Mohammad Bin Ismail Al-Bukhari, the leader of all compilers. The compendium of *Hadith* which this great scholar has given to the world is the result of a most thorough sifting of *Hadith* literature. His sense of respect which he had for the work he had in hand, and his piety and Godliness, can be judged from the fact that when he was writing the *Sahih-al-Bukhari*, he made fresh ablution and offered two *rak'ats* of prayer before writing each individual *Hadith*.

This great Imam once heard that at a long distance from his place there was some person who knew certain Sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!). The Imam undertook the arduous journey on foot in order to obtain from him the Sayings in question. When he at last arrived in the village where the man lived, he enquired his whereabouts. Someone pointed him out nearby. The man was busy calling his horse who had fled from him. He had a fodder can in his hand which he was showing to the horse from a distance in order to attract him. Imam Bukhari went towards the man and the first thing he did was to cast a glance at the fodder can, which he found to be empty. At once the Imam retraced his steps. The man noticed it and was bewildered. He left the chase of the horse, ran towards the Imam, and requested him to explain the incident to him. The Imam replied: "I had heard that you related Traditions of the Holy Prophet, and had therefore come after a long journey to meet you. But when I saw you calling the horse with an empty fodder can in your hand, I concluded that a person who can cheat a horse, is also capable of cheating men. I cannot accept any *Hadith* reported by such a person."