TEXTBOOK

HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

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History of Religions

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History of Religions

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CHAPTER I

DEFINITON OF RELIGION, ITS SOURCE, IMPORTANCE AND CLASSIFICATION

THEMES

- DEFINITION OF RELIGION
- THE SOURCE OF THE SENSE OF RELIGION ACCORDING TO ISLAM
- THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION
- THE CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIONS

I-DEFINITION OF RELIGION

The origins of the word *din* comes from Arabic. Literally, it has various meanings such as "path, life style, judgment day, code of law" etc. Muslim scholars have terminologically defined the word *din* as: ***Din* (religion) is a code that has its roots in the revelation brought by the prophets and leads people with their own will to the straight path.** According to this definition, we can list its basic features as follows:

1. **Religion is a divine code:** Religion depends on Allah. It is legislated by Allah. Here, the duty of the prophet is only to convey the messages of the religion, explain them and live in accordance with them in order to become a model for his followers.

2. **Religion invites to eternal happiness.** Religion calls people for the absolute reality, the eternal salvation in both this world and the Hereafter.

3. **Religion is based on the revelation brought by the prophets:** Allah the Exalted reveals His messages to his servants through the messengers that He chooses among people. As expressed in the Holy Qur'an: *"And indeed in Our sight, they are among the chosen and the good."* (Sa'd, 38: 47) Therefore, prophethood is indispensable for a religion. By means of their special communication with Allah, the prophets receive the revelation from Him and convey it to the people without making any change. In this respect, it is stated in the Qur'an: *"O Messenger! Announce what has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not done your duty."* (al-Maidah, 5: 67).

4. **Religion appeals to reason:** The audience that Islam addresses is sane people, for Islam is a religion that can be accepted by reason and intellect. After all, according to Islamic principles, insane people are not responsible in terms of religion.

5. **Religion bestows freedom of faith:** The Qur'an prohibits compulsion in matters of faith. It is stated in the Qur'an: "*There is no compulsion in religion.*" (al-Baqara, 2: 256) and "*To you be your religion, and to me my religion.*" (al-Kafirun, 109: 6). Accordingly, everybody is free to go to their own way however, they will be rewarded or punished in accordance with the way they choose.

II. THE SOURCE OF THE SENSE OF RELIGION ACCORDING TO ISLAM

When the history of humanity is examined, it can be seen that the idea of religion have existed among all people from the most primitive tribes to the most advanced communities. Islam accepts the idea that the sense of faith is an innate characteristic of human beings. According to

Islam, the first religion of humanity was based on the belief in the Oneness and Unity of Allah (principle of *tawhid*). Allah the Exalted is the source of religion. He created the universe, the human beings and sent holy books and messengers. Adam (pbuh) was taught the names of everything and appointed as the first messenger of Allah. He delivered the revelation and inspiration he received from Allah to the people of his time. However, in time, those people forgot the principles of tawhid and began worshipping things other than Allah such as the sun, the moon and the idols they produced with their own hands. Thereupon, Allah sent them other prophets and invited them to the true religion. Thus, first, there was the belief in One God, Allah, in the history of humanity, and then as a result of people's divergence from religion, polytheism and paganism started to emerge. Under such circumstances, Allah sometimes sent people prophets and books to guide them to the true path. In this respect, it is stated in the Qur'an: *"Certainly, We raised in every nation a messenger saying: 'Serve Allah and keep away from the Evil.'..."* (al-Nahl, 16: 36), *"... For every people there is a guide"* (al-Ra'd, 13: 7), and another verse reads as, *"...We never punish until we have sent a messenger."* (al-Isra, 17: 15).

Allah the Exalted expresses the fact that the sense of religion is an innate human characteristic in the following verse: *"So set your face upright towards the religion as a hanif (who worships none but Allah) and the fitrah of (the nature made by) Allah in which He has created men. There is no altering of Allah's creation..."* (al-Rum 30: 30).

In this context, a hadith narrated from Abu Huraira is as follows, *"Every child is born upon the fitrah. Then his or her parents make him or her a Jew, Christian or Zoroastrian."* (Bukhari, Janaiz, 92.) In this hadith, it is stated that the sense of religion is natural and that people who are created as innocent and pure change their beliefs under the influence of their family and environment.

As is seen, according to Islam, the source of religion is divine. Nevertheless, when people went astray in time, Allah the Almighty sent prophets to them in order to lead them to the straight path.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION

Throughout the human history, religion has always existed and will continue to exist in the future. No matter which period of human history one examines, one cannot find non-believing communities even though it is possible to see non-believing individuals. Famous philosopher, Henri Bergson, too, pointed to this fact as follows: *"There have been and there will be human communities deprived of science, art, and philosophy. However, it is not possible to see the existence of any irreligious community."*

Allah the Exalted created human with the ability that they can be inferior to animals in terms of carnal desires and superior to the angels spiritually. People's creation with such ability is for a test. As a result of this test, if the servants do good deeds, they reach the status of "Allah's vicegerent" in this world and will eventually achieve peace and salvation both in this world and in the Hereafter. On the other hand, those who fail the test in this world will be among the losers both in this world and in the Hereafter.

It is only possible for people to succeed in their worldly test by following the obligations and prohibitions of religion. Religion aims to ensure man have a peaceful life both in this world and in the Hereafter. Because religion is a system of life that guides people and leads them to do good deeds at times that the worldly codes and systems could not help them. Religion is the enemy of anarchy, iniquity, injustice and evil. It aims to preserve the social order. Throughout history, there have been economically and materially weak communities, however, it is not often possible to see communities continue their existence when their religious feelings weakened and their spiritual structure collapsed.

The weakening in religious feelings increases the rate of committing moral and legal crimes. Because, when there is no religion, there will be no sanctioning power in ethical matters. When perception of halal and haram disappears, the social order will be shaken up; there will be nothing to stop individuals and groups. Thus, anarchy arises under such circumstances and certain problems begin. However, those who believe in a Creator who controls them everywhere and at all times endeavor to do good deeds and stay away from evil.

People are not scared of death itself, but they are scared of being perished. In Islam, people do not perish after death; but rather death is the beginning of a new and eternal life. This faith leads people try to gain Allah's pleasure. People endeavor to withstand the difficulties and distress of this world. For, people can overcome their loneliness, insecurity, bitterness, hopelessness, etc. only by appealing to a religion. They present their problems to Allah through prayers. Thanks to religion, one can reach spiritual wealth.

The following verse succulently reflects this fact: "*Those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in remembrance of Allah. Verily, hearts find satisfaction in remembrance of Allah.*" (al-Ra'd 13:18)

In societies where the spiritual authority of religion is not dominant, a sick and cruel mentality that "the right belongs to the powerful. The powerful ones should live in comfort, while the weak ones should be oppressed and exploited" becomes widely accepted. In such environment, there cannot be peace. On the other hand, the weak, poor, and unfortunate ones are always protected in societies that are mentally and spiritually attached to the spiritual authority of religion. Thus, they forget about their loneliness. The bond of brotherhood and sisterhood between the wealthy and the poor or the powerful and the weak connects people to each other much more strongly. Prof. Dr. Ferit Kam nicely defines the state of atheists as follows:

"Atheists are continuously shaken in the waves of the ocean of incidents as if they are a ship caught by a storm without a sail or a captain in a dark night. In the end, before reaching the shore of salvation, it crashes on a great rock and is torn into pieces. If being an atheist aims to ensure individuals have their share from all possible pleasures of this world as much as they wish, it should be known for sure that Allah the Exalted does not assent to it. He removes the sense of taste from minds of such people. As soon as the religion is gone, dark glasses are put on their eyes. In their eyes, the world turns into a dungeon of troubles. They start seeing all beings in deep darkness. The

earth and the sky tighten to wrap around their necks like a rope of fire. Their hearts move away from all kinds of human virtues.

When the religion is gone, the building of virtues collapses. Everything related to high feelings in the mind and heart withdraws one by one. The heart starts to be filled with emptiness. It turns into an endless dungeon where one cannot see the edge of his or her nose. This is called disbelief and atheism in darkness, which is something same as the Hell. In this way, Allah the Exalted shows a sample of the great torment of Hell. The following verse points out to this fact, "*We will surely let them taste the nearer punishment prior to the supreme punishment...*" (al-Sajdah, 32: 21). For, in accordance with the meaning of the following verse in the Qur'an: "*Does man think that he is left to wander aimlessly*?" no one is left to wander around the world free and strayed from divine commands. As being subjected to certain physical restrictions and conditions, people are also bounded with some spiritual conditions as well. Because a spiritual force whom we cannot see controls us all the time." (Ferit Kam, *Dini-Felsefi Sohbetler*, Ankara, 1987, p. 48-50)

IV. THE CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIONS

A- TRUE AND DIVINE RELIGIONS (*al-DIN al-HAQ*) AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Muslim scholars classified religions into three categories: true and divine religions, altered religions and false religions. Since the first prophet Adam, people have worshipped Allah who is the One God. While some of them have maintained the pure faith and creed, others have fallen into conflict and gone astray in time. Thereupon, Allah the Exalted sent them His messengers to remind them the truth and the reality. Those who followed the true path instructed by these prophets were able to preserve the true religion and creed, while those who did not follow the prophets remained in darkness and inclined to some superstitions and false beliefs. As a result of these, some altered and false religions have emerged.

First, let's briefly examine the characteristics of true and divine religions:

1. True religion is Allah's law and is based on revelation.

2. It commands to believe in One God, Allah. A religion that is not based on the principle of oneness of Allah is a altered one.

3. It commands to believe in the Hereafter. Believing in Allah becomes complete with the faith in the Hereafter.

4. Among the principles of faith, there is also belief in the prophets. Because the prophets are the ones who deliver the messages of the true religion to people. The prophets are such people that are away from all kinds of evil.

5. True religions are based on a divine book. A book is given to every prophet. However, some of these books have been altered in time. As proven by means of historical documents, only the Holy Qur'an among them has remained to this day without being exposed to any kind of alterations.

6. Belief in angels is also one of the characteristics of true religions.

7. In true religion, worship is done only to Allah.

8. True religion is not in conflict with reason and knowledge. Because both religion and knowledge address to those with intellect.

9. True religion observes the principle of right and justice among people. People are born with equal rights and freedom. Therefore, no one has any superiority over others in terms of their gender, language, homeland and skin colors. Superiority can be achieved only by *taqwa*, in other words by being a good servant to Allah. The Qur'an remarks this fact as follows:

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, All-Knowing, All-Aware." (al-Hujurat, 49: 13)

B- ALTERED RELIGIONS (*al-DIN al-MUHARRAF*)

According to Islam, altered religions are the ones that were initially sent by Allah but were later changed and the originals of their divine books disappeared. In this regard, Judaism and Christianity are accepted as altered religions. The perception of god in these religions drifted away from the creed of *tawhid.* As we will discuss in detail in following pages, there have been a vast scale of additions to, and deletions from Torah, the holy scripture of Judaism, by the religious functionaries. Today Judaism have become a national religion of Jews. Jehovah, the god in Judaism, is considered to be the god of *Bani Israel* (the children of Israel) only. In a similar manner, Jews are accepted as the chosen nation among humanity.

After this distortion in Judaism, Allah the Exalted sent Isa (Jesus) as His messenger as well as Injil (the Gospel) as the Holy Scripture. However, in the course of time, Christians who believed in the prophethood of Isa also developed certain beliefs and creeds incompatible with the divine truths stated in Injil and moved away from the principle of *tawhid* by considering Isa as god and son of god. Moreover, after Isa, they wrote many Injils that are inconsistent with the principles brought by him and contradictory even to each other. In this manner, the church and the clergy played a big role in the distortion of Christianity. After the alterations in Christian faith, Allah the Exalted sent Islam as the last religion. He clearly remarks in the Holy Qur'an that He will not allow people to corrupt and alter Islam because it is the last religion. The fact that Islam is under His own protection is stated in the Qur'an as follows: *"Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian."* (al-Hijr, 15: 9)

C- FALSE RELIGIONS

Religions that have no relation with the principle of *tawhid* in terms of their essence are called false religions. The source of such religions is not revelation but human beings. Even though they consist of some rules that are in accordance with reason, wisdom, and social benefits, these religions do not carry a sacred character because they are not essentially based on Allah the Exalted and one of His prophets. Moreover, it is also argued that these religions have developed their systems by benefitting from the principles of divine religions or emerged as a result of later alterations of religions with divine origin. This argument is supported by the saying of the Prophet

Muhammad indicating that a warner was sent to every nation and that the number of prophets sent to people were in thousands, as well as by the verses that point out to the same issues. However, because there is no clear reference to such religions in the Qur'an, Muslim scholars considered them as false (*batil*) religions. Attributing divinity to certain beings such as animals, elements, spirit of the ancestors etc. is the common characteristic of these religions. Traditional religious systems of certain societies, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Shamanism can be cited as examples of such religions.

1. Traditional African Religions

Before Judaism, Christianity, and Islam entered in Africa, there had been some native tribal religions in the continent. In these religions, it was important to show respect to certain beings in nature like the spirits of the ancestors, the sun, the moon and animals like horse, wolf and lion. The chief of the family and the tribe was at the same time considered as its religious functionary. Sorcery had an important place in these religions. They did not have a written religious text. Their ritual ceremonies were performed accompanied with music and dance. Certain symbols were important, because these symbols were believed to establish a connection between people and spirits. On the other hand, it is observed that certain perceptions indicating the existence of the one Exalted God existed in some ancient African religions. This god was believed to be the creator of all things on earth and in heavens. He was considered to be the greatest king above all other kings. It is argued that the afore-mentioned belief in one omnipotent almighty god has a profound effect in Islam's easily spread throughout the wide regions of Africa. However, the idea existing in traditional African religions that this almighty supreme god inspires the spirits of the ancestors and manifests himself through certain creatures in nature does not fit the dignity and greatness of him.

We can consider such native religions as the altered forms of the essentially divine messages that might have been sent to those societies before and altered in time. In Qur'an, there are many verses indicating that a warner was sent in all regions. Some of these verses read: *"There was no nation without a warner having lived among them."* (al-Fatir, 35: 26), *"And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger (who said): Worship Allah and avoid false gods..."* (al-Nahl, 16: 36), *"... And We never punish until We sent a messenger."* (al-Isra, 17: 15). However, because there is no reference in the Qur'an or in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) regarding the regions of these religions, we mentioned the traditional religions in Africa under the title of "False Religions."

2. Traditional Eastern Religions

Religions called as the Eastern Religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, Taoism, and Sikhism mostly emerged in the Eastern and Far Eastern parts of the world such as Iran, Japan, China and India.

Buddhism: Buddha (563-483 BCE), the founder of Buddhism, was a philosopher who lived in India. Buddha himself did not leave anything written behind, but the books written by his students later have been accepted as holy. Showing respect to the statues of Buddha and visiting the places where he lived are considered among the important acts of worship in Buddhism.

Hinduism: There is no prophet in Hinduism but there are certain books believed to be written in the ancient times. Hindus believe in many gods and worship their statues. They believe that

after biological death of the body, the soul or spirit can begin a new life in a new body, which is called reincarnation. The society is formed from five different castes. It is strictly forbidden to pass from one caste to another.

Zoroastrianism (Magianism): It is a belief system that is said to be founded by Zoroaster and spread in Iran. Zoroastrians consider the fire as holy and worship it. It was gradually marginalized or otherwise absorbed by Islam from the 7th century onwards with the decline of the Sassanid Empire and conquest of Persia by Muslims. Recent estimates place the current number of Zoroastrians at around 2.6 million

Shintoism: It is the traditional religion of Japanese. The most significant characteristic of Shintoism is to worship the souls of the dead. Followers of this religion put food and drink to the graves of dead people in order to please them.

Confucianism: It is one of the traditional Chinese religions. Confucius the founder of this religion lived in 551- 479 BCE. Because there is no perception of god among its principles, it resembles more to a philosophical system rather than a religion. There is also another religion in China called "Taoism".

Sabianism: It is an ancient belief mentioned in the Qur'an. (al-Baqarah, 2: 26; al-Hajj, 22: 17). Sabians were a small group lived along the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris. According to Sabii faith, there is a perception of dual god, which is contrary to the principle of *tawhid*. In this perception of dual god, there is the god of light on the one side and there is the god of darkness on the other.

Sikhism: It is a religious belief founded by Guru Nanak. By spreading in India in the 16th century, Sikhism is a false religion established with the aim of destroying Islam by conjoining it with Hinduism. It does not have an idea of god. Sikhism has adopted certain beliefs of Hinduism without any change.

3. The False Religions from Islamic Point of View

As mentioned above, the common characteristic of false religions is the fact that they are based on polytheistic principles rather than the belief in One Supreme Creator. Even though some of these religions, like Zoroastrianism, used to be with monotheistic character, this characteristic has been changed in time.

Others such as Hinduism and Buddhism, on the other hand, preach excessive asceticism that means complete withdrawal from the world and invite their adherents to practices that are inconsistent with human nature. Islam does not approve to pay attention only to spiritual aspect of human beings and to neglect their physical and bodily needs. Even though Islam gives precedence to the Hereafter, it follows a middle path between the two extremes in accordance with the realities of life. While doing so, Islam does not only give ethical advices but also provides certain guiding provisions, orders and advices related to the issues that people confront in their daily lives. On this matter, a verse in the Qur'an reads as follows: *"Seek, through that which Allah has bestowed upon you, the home of the Hereafter, and do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And don't desire corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters."* (al-Qasas, 28: 77)

On the other hand, some of those religions (like Shintoism) turned the idea of worshipping the spirits of their ancestors into a religion. In such religions, there is no clear perception of god. Therefore, it is getting harder for such religions, which are inconsistent with human reason and neglect human nature and their natural needs, to be embraced in today's world.

Just like the altered religion of Judaism, some of these religions transformed into the religion of particular nation and excluded the others. For instance, Shintoism has become the religion of only the Japanese, while Hinduism has turned into the religion of Hindus only. In other words, such religions developed into local religions in the course of time and lost their characteristic of being universal religions.

Islam, the last divine religion sent to humanity, is grounded on the principle of Oneness of Allah the Exalted (*tawhid*). Islam never approves the perception that god resembles to certain creatures or transforms into their shapes as it is believed in some false religions. According to Islamic creed, the divine power is one with no associate or something similar. He is the Creator and Owner of all beings, whether animate or inanimate. The whole universe continues its existence in accordance with the divine program (sunnatullah) that is created by Him and all beings live in accordance with the divine commands embedded by Him into their nature.

Islam refuses the belief that after the death of a body, the soul returns to earth and continues to live in another body. Because according to Islam, human life ends with death and there is no way to return to the world. The life in this world is a one-time only test given to humanity. This is expressed in the Qur'an with following verse: "*When (finally) death comes to one of them, he says: 'O my Lord! Send me back (to life) so that I may do good in that which I have left behind!' (In response Allah says:) No! It is but a word that he speaks, and before them there is a barrier (barzakh) until the Day when they will be resurrected.*" (al-Mu'minun, 23: 99-100).

As can be seen, these false religions have not been able to clearly draw what the practical responsibilities and duties of their adherents are and could not properly answer people's all kinds of needs. As for their creedal aspect, they are lack of the characteristics of a true religion, because they do not have the basic elements that a religion must have such as one creator god, a holy book, and a prophet who conveys the god's messages to people.

READING TEXT

THE LESSON PROPHET IBRAHIM TAUGHT TO IDOLATERS

Young Ibrahim was unable to get to sleep that night. He got out of home and went towards the mountain. He came by the entrance of a cave in the mountain. Turning his back to the wall, he sat down and fixed his eyes to the sky. As soon as he saw the moon and the stars shining up in the sky, people who worship them came into his mind and a deep sorrow covered his heart.

In his society, some people were worshipping the idols on earth, while some others were worshipping the ones in the sky. He thought of persuasive evidences that may lead them to the straight path. How could he tell people that the stars in the sky cannot be gods? Finally, he made up his mind. He was going to act like one of them and reveal the fact that their thoughts were wrong. He immediately got to work.

He saw a star up in the sky shining brightly. He said to himself:

- Can this shining star be a god?

He watched them until they fade. Ibrahim spoke:

The star faded away and disappeared. My heart cannot love something that disappears. God cannot be something that first appears and then disappears. Then this shining star cannot be a god.

These words had an earthquake effect on the minds of those who worship the stars. Ibrahim continued to follow his plan.

This time the moon rose. Through the clouds, it spread silver lights over the mountains, valleys and villages. Ibrahim asked himself:

- Is it possible for the moon to be god?

He watched the moon until it set. The moon also disappeared, so it cannot be god, either, because the true god should not ever disappear or vanish. It was as if the young Ibrahim was ridiculing with the little minds of those who worshipped the celestial bodies. In the morning, the sun rose in the horizon like a huge ball of light. Ibrahim said:

- The sun is bigger than the moon and the stars that I saw at night. Can the sun be a god? With such thoughts in mind, the young Ibrahim started to wait. After the noon, then the afternoon and then the evening passed and the sun faded and sank into darkness. Just as the moon and the stars, because it too was a mortal and death is an inevitable end for the

mortals. On the other hand, the true god should be immortal and eternal. Ibrahim's lesson to his tribe was brilliant!

Later on Ibrahim was appointed as a prophet. The Exalted One spoke to him:

- Oh Ibrahim!

- Yes my Lord.

- Submit yourself and obey Me.

Ibrahim prostrated and he spoke in tears:

- I submit myself to the Lord of the universes.

The heart of Ibrahim was filled with peace, comfort, and joy. He stayed there in position of prostration until midnight. Then he returned home. Everything was over and he was appointed as a messenger of Allah. A new period began in Ibrahim's life. He was going to guide people who worshipped the idols in the sky and on earth and lead them to the straight Path.

After that, Ibrahim went to his father Azar first and conveyed the message of Allah to his father who worshipped idols. This fact is narrated in the Qur'an in the parable of Ibrahim. Ibrahim spoke to his father Azar gently:

"– Oh my father! Why do you worship things that cannot hear, see or benefit you? I have been given knowledge which is not given to you. Comply with me so that I lead you to the straight Path. Oh my father! Do not worship the Satan. For Satan had been disobedient to al-Rahman (the most Merciful). Oh my father! Surely, I fear that a punishment from al-Rahman should afflict you and you become a friend of the Satan.

Whereupon Azar got angry and said:

"– Do you dislike my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not desist I will certainly stone you. Now leave me for a long time.

However, Ibrahim responded again in a gentle way:

"– Peace be on you! I will pray to my Lord for your forgiveness. Surely He is ever Gracious to me." (Maryam, 19: 42-47)

CHAPTER EVALUATION

A. Answer the Questions Below

1. how did Muslim scholars define religion in a general sense?

2. What is the main source of the sense of religion according to Islamic understanding? Explain in the light of Qur'anic verses and hadiths.

3. Why does religion have a significant place in one's life? Discuss the matter through examples from daily life.

4. How did Muslim scholars classify religions? How many types of religions are there and what are they?

5. Which characteristics of the previous religions of native African societies had an effect in their embracing Islam more easily?

B. Mark the correct answers to the multiple-choice questions below

1. What does the word "*din*" literally mean?

A. Affection, respect

B. Arrogance, haughtiness

C. Way, life style, law

D. Death, resurrection

2. Which one of the following cannot be one of the characteristics of a true religion?

A. It is a divine law.

B. It instructs violence and cruelty

C. It addresses to the reason.

D. It is based on revelation.

3. According to Islamic understanding, what was the original form of religion and what was it based upon?

A. It was idolatry and was based on multiplicity of gods.

B. It was polytheism and was based on the belief in two gods.

C. It was trinity and was based on the belief in three gods.

D. It was *tawhid* and was based on revelation.

4. Which one of the following indicate Muslim scholars' classification of religion correctly?

A. *Haqq* – *Muharraf* – *Batil* Religions

B. *Tawhid* – *Taslis* (Trinity) – *Mushrik* Religions

C. *Haqq* – Not *haqq* – *Muharraf* Religions

D. *Batil* – True – Wrong Religions

5. Which one of the following is not one of Eastern religions?

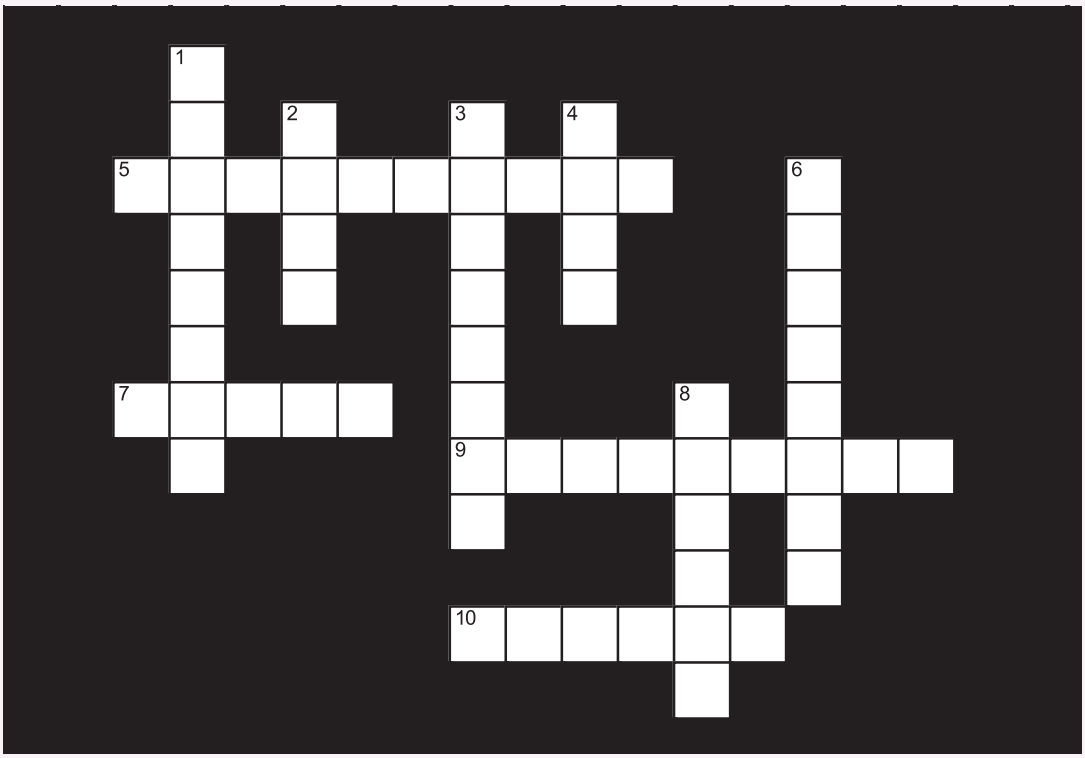
A. Hinduism

B. Traditional African Religions

C. Buddhism

D. Shintoism

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



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5. Literally it means "the people of the book." The term used in the Qur'an for people who believe in a revelation based religion. Jews and Christians are "ahl al-kitab" according to Islamic belief. However, they altered their religions.

7. Wrong, false, opposite of haqq

9. A batil faith that is referred in the Qur'an as a belief system that is inconsistent with tawhid and based on belief in dual god.

10. Trinity. The belief in the union of the Father and Son and Holy Ghost in one Godhead in Christianity.

↓

1. Corrupted, altered, not preserved in its originality

2. All of the commands and prohibitions sent by Allah to his servants.

3. A batil religion which appeared around 2500s BCE in India.

4. True, real, authentic, opposite of batil.

6. A batil faith system appeared 500s BCE in the Far East that gives precedence to excessive asceticism.

8. The Islamic principle of believing in One and Unique Allah

CHAPTER II

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DIVINE RELIGIONS

THEMES

- JUDAISM AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF JUDAISM
- CHRISTIANITY AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY
- ISLAM AND A BRIEF HISTORY

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DIVINE RELIGIONS

Religions sent by Allah the Exalted through prophets in order to guide people from heresy to the straight path are called divine religions. In this sense, Adam is the first man and the first prophet. Allah the Exalted revealed to him a book of 10 pages. After Adam, Allah continued sending many prophets from time to time. This is the unchanging law of Allah.

There are 28 prophet names mentioned in the Qur'an. It is also narrated that the number of those who are mentioned in sayings of the Prophet, while whose names are not included in the Qur'an is around 124 thousand. (Ahmed ibn Hanbal, ***Musnad***, V, 226) Among the ones referred in the Qur'an, the Prophet David was given the Psalm (*Zabur*), the Prophet Moses was given the Torah (*Tawrat*), the Prophet Jesus was given the Gospel (*Injil*) and the last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them) was given the Qur'an. Aforementioned books are called the Four Holy Books. Other than these, there are also some other books named *suhuf* (pages) the 10 pages of which is given to the Prophet Adam, 50 pages to the Prophet Sheeth (Seth), 30 pages to the Prophet Idris (Enoch) and 10 to the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon them).

The Qur'an calls all religions that had been revealed since the Prophet Adam (pbuh) until the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as Islam. Even if there are some distortions in their principles and holy books, Judaism and Christianity are divine religions in their essence. Among the divine religions only Judaism, Christianity and Islam continued their existence. However, Islam is the only religion among them that preserved its original form without being exposed to any distortion or alteration, and represents the characteristic of the true divine religion.

I- JUDAISM AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF JUDAISM

Name of Religion	Judaism
Place of Its Emergence	Palestine
The Date of Birth	13th century BCE
Addressee	A national religion addressing to a certain nation
The special way it follows	Obedience to the law of God Yahweh and Moses
The term used as the name of their God	Yahweh
The Holy Scripture	The Old Testament
Number of its adherents	13 million (0.02 %)
The places where it spread	Israel, USA, Europe, Russia, etc.

Despite being one of the most ancient religions, Judaism is one of the smallest religious societies in the world today. Members of this religion are called "Jew", "Hebrew" and "Israelites (Sons of Israel)." In Judaism, the religion and the nation are intertwined and are hard to separate.

One of the most significant characteristics of Judaism is the belief that Jews made a covenant with their god Jehovah. According to them, the God Jehovah made a covenant with the Jewish nation through Moses at Mount Sinai. In this covenant, Jehovah obtained a promise from them that they would obey His commands and revealed the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) to Moses. However, because Israelites did not keep their promise, they faced many difficulties throughout history.

The lineage of the Jews can be traced back to the Prophet Abraham through the Prophet Jacob and his father the Prophet Isaac. Jews settled into Egypt during the time of the Prophet Joseph who was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Yet in the course of time, they were treated as slaves and they faced certain difficulties. The Pharaoh and the copts who were the native population of Egypt treated Jews as if they were slaves. In this period, Allah the Exalted sent Moses to Jews as a prophet and appointed his brother Aaron as a helper to him. Moses saved the Jews from the bondage and oppression of the Pharaoh. Crossing the Red Sea, he brought them to Sinai Peninsula. The Pharaoh, on the other hand, who was following Moses was drowned in the Red Sea along with his soldiers.

Allah the Exalted revealed the Torah to Moses on the Mount Sinai. Israelites spent 40 years with him in the Sinai desert. After Moses passed away, they went to the Promised Land in Palestine under the command of Yeshu (probably the Prophet Yûsha in Islamic narration) and settled there. The issue of Promised Land has always occupied a crucial place throughout the Jewish history. It is indicated in the Old Testament that the region of Canaan was promised by the God Yahweh to Abraham and his offspring. (Genesis, 12:7 ff.) At the present time, comprising Syria and Lebanon in the north, the borders of this area roughly reach the southern frontiers of Turkey. Throughout history, the Jews lived with the dream of obtaining this land.

Jewish people had their heyday during the time of David (1015-975 BCE) and Solomon (970-930 BCE). During the time of David, Jerusalem was conquered and became the capital. And during the time of Solomon, the country reached its widest borders and the holy sanctuary called "al-Masjid al-Aqsa" in Arabic was built in Jerusalem. According to the Torah, after King Solomon's demise, the county was divided into two as the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel. In 721 BCE the Kingdom of Israel and in 586 BCE the Kingdom of Judah collapsed while the Holy Sanctuary was blasted and most of the Jews were exiled. After this exile, the Jewish people returned to Jerusalem with the help of Persians and rebuilt the sanctuary there. However, in 70 CE, they revolted against the state of Rome. Thereupon, the Jews were exiled from Jerusalem for the second time by the Roman emperor Titus. The holy sanctuary was blasted again and have never been rebuilt since then. As a result of this incident, certain acts of worship which were to be held in the sanctuary such as sacrifice became impossible to perform. The small synagogues took the place of the old Sanctuary. After the second banishment, the exile life

of Jewish people that lasted for centuries began and they scattered throughout the world. In the lands they dispersed, for around two thousand years, until the foundation of today's State of Israel, they lived under other nations without a state of their own.

England, France, and Spain banished Jews from their borders. The Jews who had been expelled from everywhere in the world had their most peaceful times in the Muslim lands especially those under the rule of Ottomans. Having once banished the Jews from their lands, the western states had in the end made a contribution to the foundation of a Jewish state by giving the Jews the land which had previously been Ottoman territories and where the Palestinian Muslims lived. As a result, in 1948 the present State of Israel was founded. Today most of the Jewish population live in Israel and the USA.

II- CHRISTIANITY AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

The Name of Religion	Christianity
The Place of Its Emergence	Palestine
The Date of Its Birth	1 CE
The name of Its Prophet	Jesus
Its principle creedal structure	Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
The term used as the name of their God	Father, Son and Holy Spirit
The Holy Scripture	The Gospel (The Old Testament – New Testament)
The Number of its adherents	2 billion (30 %)
The places where it spread	The USA, Europe, Africa, Australia, Russia, etc.

Christianity is the divine religion conveyed by the Prophet Jesus. However, the name Christianity is given later. The term Christian that was used in Antioch (Antakya) for the first time to refer to those who believed in Jesus means "those who show respect to Jesus". Furthermore, Christianity is also named as "Nasara" with regard to the town Nazareth (Nasira) where Jesus was born and the adherents of this religion are called as "Nasrani."

The Holy Scripture of Christianity is the Gospel. Along with the Gospel, which is also called the New Testament, the Christians acknowledge Jews' Holy Scripture namely the Old Testament. However, these two Scriptures were not preserved in their original form until today and faced certain alterations throughout history. For they were not written down on paper at the time they were revealed and thus could not preserve their originality. The Books available today were later compiled along with many additions and subtractions made by people.

According to the Christians, the Prophet Jesus is the son of God and also a god himself. Yet, according to Islam, Jesus is a prophet sent to Israelites. He is miraculously born to Mary without a father. He delivered to the Israelites the message of the Injil which was revealed to him by Allah; however, there had been very few people who believed in him during his lifetime. His opponents

not only refused to believe in him but also tried to kill him. Yet, Allah the Exalted miraculously ascended him to the heavens. While the Israelites killed someone by crucifying whom they assumed to be Jesus and claimed that he was Jesus.

The first followers of Jesus believed and lived in accordance with the rules expressed in the Torah and the Gospel until the time of Paul (49 CE). However, the first alterations in Christianity initiated with the instructions of Paul who used to be an opponent of Jesus during his lifetime but said that he became a believer after his ascension to heavens. After Paul, the history of Christianity entered a new era. The doctrine of trinity and messianism that is the belief that Jesus will save the world as the son of God were introduced. According to this new understanding of Christianity, all people are born as sinners because of the sin that was committed by Adam and Eve. For the salvation of humanity, Jesus sacrificed himself as the son of God and was crucified. From that time on, in order to reach salvation, it has accepted as sufficient for the new converts of Christianity to believe merely in this matter. Accordingly, there is no longer the need to follow the Laws of Moses such as obedience the prohibition of eating pork and practicing the tradition of circumcision or respecting the sanctity of Saturday etc. However, Jesus himself lived in accordance with the Laws of Moses and as mentioned in the Gospel he said, *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5, 17-19). Nevertheless, Christianity, which has been altered despite such words of him, has been shaped in compliance with the principles laid down by Paul inconsistently with the teachings of Jesus. In this manner, Christianity spread for around three centuries in secret and in the end, as result of long struggles, became the official religion of Roman Empire in 380-392 CE.

Because of the fact that Christianity has not been preserved in its original form, in the course of time, various religious councils were held with the participation of ecclesiastics and kings in order to establish the principles of the religion. The first council was organized during the period of Romans in 325 in Nicaea. In this council, the four of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) were chosen and accepted as the official Gospels among hundreds of them. It was also in this council that the creed that Jesus was the son of God was embraced. In the following councils, it was also argued that Mary was the mother of god Jesus. In the Council of Constantinople held in 533, the concept of Holy Spirit was added to the principles of Christianity and thus was the doctrine of Trinity was formed.

The church had its most powerful times during the Middle Ages when the kings showed their utmost support to the Christianity. In those years, the church announced that it would grant remission to the people's sins by selling indulgence documents to them and collected a great deal of money. These documents called indulgence were like the title deed of the land bought from the Heaven in exchange of money and they had significance among the Christians. Thus, in the course of time, the church had become even wealthier than the kings in the medieval European history. With the credo of "there is no truth outside the church," the church sentenced the adherents of other faiths to death after the trials in inquisition courts or subjected them to various tortures such as putting hands and feet into boiling water, beating with hot whips, throwing to the

wild animals in a iron cage, crushing the organs, water torture, mast torture, empaling etc. Historians state that the number of people who were killed, tortured and forced to leave their country throughout the Medieval Ages reaches up to millions. Likewise, some researchers point out the fact that the church treated (people) even more tyrannically and intolerantly than the earlier Roman idolaters. (Ramsay Mac Mullen, ***Christianity and Paganizm in the Forth to Eight Centuries***, New Heaven: Yale Unv. Press, 1997.)

In following periods, the church had to fight against certain domestic problems that arose in it because of religious and political reasons. Finally, in 1054 CE, Christianity split into two branches. According to this split, the Eastern Christians gathered under the authority of Church of Constantinople, and formed the Orthodox Christianity, while the Western Christians gathered under the authority of Roman Church and formed the Catholic Christianity. From that time on, the conflict between these churches continued constantly. During the fourth Crusade, the Catholic Christians who came from Rome seemingly to save Constantinople, help the Orthodox Christians, and protect them from the Muslims entered the city and vandalized it. When Constantinople was besieged by Ottomans, Orthodox Christians who didn't forget this cruelty felt obliged to admit that Muslims were more just and tolerant than their own coreligionists by saying "we prefer seeing Muslims' turban in Constantinople to seeing the cardinal's hat."

In order to reinstate and establish the destroyed unity, gain political and economic power, and capture the holy places such as Jerusalem, the Christians organized several crusades against Muslims. The reason why these expeditions are called crusades is that in those battles the Christians wore on their clothes and weapons the sign of the cross (+) which symbolizes the crucifixion of Jesus. In those battles, thousands of innocent Muslims were killed and Muslim lands were plundered. Hence, after centuries, Roman Catholic Church apologized to Muslim world through the statements of Pope Benedict XVI.

During the crusades, the Christian community had figured out that Muslims were not wild and barbaric people as they had been depicted by the Church; on the contrary at the time Muslims were more civilized and ahead of the Europeans in terms of knowledge and science. By means of these crusades, Christian Europe learned many techniques such as production of paper and using clock from the Muslims. Moreover, Christians had a chance to see the manuscripts of the ancient Greek thought translated into Arabic by Muslims and began to translate them into their own languages whereby they were able to get reacquainted with the philosophers like Aristotle and Plato whom they had forgotten for a while due to the Church's pressures.

As a result of the above mentioned reasons, in 15th-17th centuries, Christian people had lost their confidence in Church and the priests. Thus, the scientists and intellectuals began raising their voice against the impositions of the Church. Thus, the reform activities in Christianity gathered speed and in the end, new religious denominations and national churches emerged. Divisions in Christianity such as Protestantism, the Anglican Church, Calvinist Churches etc. took place during this period. Moreover, because of the disagreements based on religious reasons, Europe witnessed the deathful religious wars that are known as "30 Years War".

Today Christianity continues to exist around the globe with its more than twenty denominations. However, the Church cannot satisfy the religious needs of its members, especially the young ones at the present time. This is why, many Christian convert out of Christianity and em-

brace other religions including Islam as in the first place. Thus, the number of the adherents of the Church decreases day by day. For, various concepts of Christianity such as the doctrine of Trinity which consists of three gods, the priests' authority to forgive sins, the idea of the sinlessness of the priests, the fact that there are various Bibles in the hand of the Christians which are different from each other etc. as well as certain practices that are against human nature do not satisfy most of the people today. In this regard, it is one of the most significant examples that because of the child abuse that took place as a result of the celibacy, a practice which is not in accordance with human nature, some of the churches in Europe and USA were obliged to pay billions of dollars every year to the families of the victims. And in his visits abroad, the Pope has frequently been protested by the victims and their families. (http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,6012334,00.html.16.9.2010)

III-ISLAM AND A BRIEF HISTORY

The Name of Religion	Islam
The Place of Its Emergence	Arabia
The Date of Its Birth	7th century CE
The name of Its Prophet	Muhammad (pbuh)
Its principle creedal structure	Tawhid (Belief in One God)
The term used as the name of their God	Allah
The Holy Scripture	Al-Qur'an al-Karim
The Number of its adherents	1,5 billion (20%)
The places where it spread	Asia, Africa, Europe, USA, Australia etc.

Islam, which literally means "to obey, to be in peace and to surrender", terminologically means "to obey Allah the Exalted and to surrender all the divine commands conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Islam is the common name given all divine religions because of the fact that the content of all divine messages that began with Adam, the first man and the first of the prophets, and continued until the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) the last one of the prophets, is the same. Islam was born in Mecca in Arabian Peninsula in early 7th century CE. It was a period when people were away from the Straight Path, the previous divine Scriptures were corrupted and the concepts of right, law, justice etc. were changed and suppressed. People were in utter ignorance and perversion. For instance, the girls were buried alive; free people were enslaved; women were treated as if they were some kind of property sold and bought in the market; the honor and dignity of people were disregarded, only the powerful ones were considered as right and the rights of weak and orphans were usurped. In such a period of time, Allah the Exalted sent the last prophet, Muhammad (pbuh) as a guide for the salvation of humanity.

The Prophet Muhammad came and honored the world as the son of a noble and pure family in Mecca in 571 CE (April 20, Rabi al-Awwal 12). His father Abdullah had passed away before his birth. He lost his mother Amina when he was six years old whereupon his grandfather Abdulmuttalib took him under his protection. After his grandfather, too, demised, Muhammad (pbuh) started to be protected by the guardianship of his uncle Abu Talib until he got married. In the meantime, he began his business life and at the age of 25, he married Khadija, one of the noble women of Mecca. When he was 40 years old, Muhammad (pbuh) was appointed with the mission of prophethood. He was a popular, respected, and loved person in his community even before he was appointed as a prophet. Believing in his trustworthiness, people of his time would entrust their valuable properties to him. This is why they used to call him (pbuh) **Muhammad al-Amin** (Muhammad the trustworthy). He was known as a person who never worshipped the idols and never lied to others; who protected the orphans and who took care of his relatives.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) began his mission by delivering Islamic message first to his close relatives. This mission of delivering the message of Islam (*tabligh*) lasted for around three years in secret. During this time, the number of Muslims could only reach 40. Then, when the divine command of openly conveying the message revealed, he started to invite publicly everyone to Islam. As a result of open *tabligh*, the prominent people of Mecca who were afraid of losing their status and benefits opposed this invitation violently. They started to oppress both the Prophet and the Muslims. However, none of the believers made any concessions from their faith. This continued for approximately 13 years. In the end, when the oppressions of the polytheists reached unbearable levels, Muslims were forced to migrate. They migrated first to Abyssinia and then to Medina. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) migrated to Medina in 622 and carried on his mission of *tabligh* there.

When the migration took place, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) declared brotherhood between the ones who migrated (*Muhajir*) and the ones who helped them (*Ansar*). He also signed an agreement of citizenship with the Jews living in Medina. The Muslims obtained the opportunity to live Islam and to convey its message in a more peaceful environment after Hijrah. In this respect, during the Medinan period Islam spread rapidly. The Meccan *mushriks* (polytheist) who perceived this as a thread against themselves tried to prevent it spreading by attacking Muslims one after the other in the battles of Badr, Uhud and *Khandaq* (Trench). However, with the help of Allah, the first Muslims who were few in number but very strong in faith overcame the enemy. In these battles, Jews were punished and exiled for violating the conditions of their agreement and stabbing the Muslims in the back. Muslims who gained strength in Medina set off with a large army under the command of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to conquer their homeland Mecca. Meccan opponents who were not able to withstand before this great army surrendered without any resistance. Thus, Muslims victoriously returned their land from which they had been exiled once by force. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) showed mercy and forgave those who exiled him from his homeland and attempted to kill him. In the face of such a mercy, most of the Meccan polytheists reached the honor of embracing Islam.

After he completed his mission of delivering the message of Islam in ten-year Medinan period, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) conveyed his final message to humankind with the Last Sermon in the Farewell Pilgrimage and in the end, in year 632, he was sent off on an eternal journey from this mortal world. During the Prophet's lifetime, the Qur'an was completely revealed, put into writing by the Companions and also memorized by many of them. The Qur'an that we

have today is the exact copy of the original text that was recorded during that period and has been transferred to this day without any change. After the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) demise, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali (may Allah pleased with them), respectively, became the caliphs of the Prophet. This period lasted for about 30 years and the borders of the Muslim land extended over the lands of Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, and India.

Thereafter, the Umayyad State was founded (661-750) and Damascus became the center of the state, the borders of which reached China and India in the east and France in the west. After Umayyads, Abbasids (750-1258) that took over the rule of the Islamic state advocated Islam in Baghdad for about five centuries. During the Abbasid period, Muslims made great progress in science, thought, and art. With the Movement of Translation, they translated numerous books from Greek, Persian and Hebrew into Arabic. Thus, their ancient scholarly tradition was transferred to Islamic civilization and a unique distinctive understanding of Islam in science and thought was established. For this purpose, Nizamiyah Madrasahs (Nizamiyah Colleges) and Bayt al-Hikma (the House of Wisdom) was established in Baghdad and many scientists and intellectuals were raised in these institutions. Soon afterwards, Muslims set foot in Europe upon the conquest of Andalusia (today's Spain) and Andalusia lived one of the brightest eras of Islamic civilization during that period. The Christian world, known as the Crusades in that period, organized many attacks to Muslim land and Muslims had to fight against the Crusades during the eras of Abbasids, Ayyubids and Seljuqids. The Crusades were not able to be victorious in these battles. Upon Turks' conversion to Islam, the borders of Muslim land reached up to the borders of Byzantine Empire.

The Ottoman Empire, which was founded after the Seljuqids, carried the banner of Islam and advocated it for more than six centuries. During Ottoman period, the capital of East Roman Empire and the center of Orthodox Christianity, i.e. Istanbul, was conquered in 1453 by Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, the Conqueror. During the Ottoman period, the Islamic state widely expanded through the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa. The Ottoman Empire took numerous lands under its rule such as Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, etc. in Europe; Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, etc. in the Middle East; Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, etc. in Africa; Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia etc. in Asia and ruled them justly.

Today most of these countries continue their existence as independent Muslim states. However, the Muslims in these countries live in unrest because of the continuous interventions of western states that started in the colonial period. The sufferings to which Muslims subjected in various parts of Muslim world (Bosnia, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, some areas in Africa, etc.) are significant manifestations proving how alone and unguarded the Muslim *ummah,* as a whole, have been left. In this day and age, even though the Muslims around the world live in separate states, they must advance on the path that the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) guided without letting any disorder and mischief emerge among themselves. Thus, they must become stronger and more awake than ever in their history in every field. They must live in peace and unity as the limbs of one body in sharing both their sorrow and joy.

A. THE DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF ISLAM

1. Islam is the youngest one among the divine religions in the world today. In fact, Islam is a quite new religion compared to Judaism that has a history of three thousand years and to Chris-

tianity with a two-thousand-years history. The fact that Islam is a new religion is a proof that the information about it is more accurate and reliable.

2- As well as being the newest religion, Islam is also the last one of the religions. When the world history is examined, it can be understood that no religion has come to world after Islam that has influenced the world as much as Islam has.

3. Above all, Islam is a universal religion. Unlike other religions, Islam is not sent to a particular community or region but as the last and most perfect religion, it is sent to all humanity.

4. Islam covers all aspects of life. Because Islam is not a religion that is based solely on acts of worship, certain moral codes and various miracles.

Judaism is the religion of Jews only. The primary aim of Judaism is to help the Jews gain the land that was promised to them. In this sense, it has a selfish perception. In fact, there is no direct emphasis on the Hereafter anywhere in the Torah, while an excessive mundanity is seen in it.

As to Christianity, in contrast to Judaism, it is not a worldly but a system that is completely oriented to the otherworld. For instance, it is not possible to encounter a judicial system that regulates the relationships among people in any of the Bibles. The source of the law that the Christian world is practicing today is not Christianity but the Roman Law. Christianity tried to fill the deficiency of the Bibles in legal matters with the Church Law introduced by the fathers of the Church. However, such efforts led the Christian codes contradict with the essence of Christianity itself and thus, Christianity was secularized with the efforts of clergy. The fact that the Church tuned into the wealthiest class of the community by means of the lands and fields they obtained throughout the Middle Ages is the most obvious evidence for that.

Compared to Judaism which put a great emphasis on worldly life and Christianity which disregards the life in the world, the balance that Islam maintains between this world and the Hereafter is quite remarkable. Because in addition to domains of faith, acts of worship and ethics, Islam also regulates the people's worldly dealings such as trade, family matters, marriage, eating, and drinking etc. Its purpose is to build a community that benefits from this world properly by meeting its needs through lawful ways, but at the same time by no means disregards the life after death.

5. In accordance with human nature, Islam takes the spiritual, physical and social needs of individuals into consideration and provides them the lawful ways to satisfy such needs. Certain matters that are against human creation such as bearing the sins of others, the clergy's authority to forgive sins, the ban on the priests and nuns' marriage can never be considered in Islam.

6. There is sufficient information and material available today about the last Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). His whole life has been thoroughly recorded. Other than Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), there is no other person in the world history whose life is examined to the slightest detail and is subject to numerous studies by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

He was a human being just like us except that he was a prophet who received revelation. His life has been imprinted in memories and transmitted both in writing and oral form.

The recording of the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) life in such meticulous details increases the trust in the authenticity of the Message he brought. The deficiency of information about Judaism and Christianity and the recording of the available information much later lead certain suspicions about the lives of the Prophet Moses and Jesus. When the suspicions that have been caused by the deficiency of information are taken into account, it is seen that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has a very clear and open life recorded in the stages of history.

7. History that has a great deal of knowledge on Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also possesses accurate and authentic knowledge about the messages he brought. In fact, the Holy Qur'an began to be memorized and written down from the very moment it started to be revealed. Thus, it has come down to this day without any missing parts. No other divine book has been preserved like the Qur'an. This is why neither the Torah as conveyed by the Prophet Moses nor the Gospel as conveyed by the Prophet Jesus is available today. The holy scripture of Islam, i.e. the Qur'an, has always been superior to others in this respect. Because the Qur'an was completed and written down during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad and transmitted to the present day without any change. On the other hand, the Torah and the Gospel were written long after they had been revealed and while being written, they were subjected to changes and could not be preserved in their original forms.

8. Islam is the religion of truest faith and *tawhid*. There are certain Islamic principles of faith and creed that do not vary based on the change in time and place. Unlike other religions, these principles did not emerge later and based on needs but established and took their final forms when the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was still alive. In other words, whatever the Prophet and his Companions believed in, it is what the Muslims today have faith in.

9. Islam is a religion of mercy, compassion, and affection. *Rahman* is the second most important name of Allah the Exalted. It means the One who is merciful to all people in this world no matter whether they are believers or not. However, Allah will have mercy only to believers in the Hereafter.

10. Another remarkable feature of Islam among the world religions today is that it has a strong structure of thought that can confront all kinds of thinking movements. Islam calls those who deny Allah and the authenticity of the Message He sent to Islam by means of rational arguments. It intellectually disproves their arguments and leads them to think by fascinating their minds and sprits.

11. Islam is a religion of knowledge, wisdom, and reason. Islam attaches great importance to knowledge and wisdom and promotes learning from cradle to grave. It preaches that knowledge is the lost property of the believers and they should take it wherever they find it. Other religions, such as Christianity, used to preach that knowledge other than the teachings of the church was not true and put pressure and tried to suppress the knowledge other than those thought by the church. As a result of this, Europe experienced a conflict between the church and science for long years.

12. Islam always takes the human factor into account in all messages it has delivered. This is why the society that Islam aims to establish is not an imaginary and utopic one, but one that has real reflections in real life. The example of the society that Islam targets to establish could be seen in the era of the Prophet and the period of *al-Khulafa al-rashidun* (Rightly Guided Caliphs) which

is called "Asr al-sa'adah" (the Era of Bliss). Because the messages of Islam were applied by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself in his life. As being both a prophet and a human being, he satisfied his needs of human nature by getting married, having children, and engaging in trade. By his attributes, he has become the perfect exemplar (*Uswa al-Hasana*) to all people from all levels.

13. Islam did not abolish the values and principles of the ancient cultures that do not ignore human nature or contradict with the basic principles of Islam. On the contrary, it has protected and developed such cultures. Islam opposes everything that is against human nature. It has brought a new perspective to the local cultures. Muslim societies experienced the desire to live in coexistence with other cultures that has been started to be discovered by Europe only after the beginning of this century. Muslims lived peacefully and in safety with non-Muslims in the same cities and in the same neighborhoods.

READING TEXT

ISLAM IS THE RELIGION OF BALANCE

Islam observes a balance between this world and the Hereafter in the commands and prohibitions it has brought. In this context, Allah's Messenger's (pbuh) following saying nicely sums the matter up. Abdullah ibn Amr (r.a.) narrates:

I decided "by Allah, I will stand up for (prayer) throughout the night and observe fast every day so long as I live." The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) was informed about this decision of mine. Thereupon he (pbuh) asked me:

– *Is it you who said these?* I replied:

– May my mother and father be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allah! Yes, it is I who said that. Thereupon the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said:

- *You are not capable enough to do so. Observe fast and break it; sleep and stand for prayer. Verily, your body has a right on you, your eyes have a right on you, your wife has a right on you, your guests have a right on you and your children have a right on you. And it is sufficient for you to fast three days in a month, as the reward of a good deed is multiplied ten times, so it will be like fasting throughout the year."* (Bukhari, Sawm 55, 56, 57, Tahajjud 7, Anbiya 37, Nikah 89; Muslim, Siyam, 181-193.)

***

Today, Muslims can be role models to others only if they live in accordance with the way prescribed in the Qur'an and the Prophet instructs them and thus they can show the beauties of Islam to them. In this context, it is narrated a true story. A Muslim professor asked Prof. Dr. Rodriguez who was researching about Islam in a Muslim country:

– Why don't you embrace Islam even though you investigate Islam?

Thereupon Prof. Dr. Rodriguez replied:

– Because I cannot observe the same Islam that has been taught to us at school in the streets of Muslims...

Another person (*muhtadi*), who converted from Christianity to Islam, Yusuf Ali warns Muslims in this respect as follows:

"Muslims should know how to act in the presence of a non-Muslim. For **'Actions speak louder than words.'**" (A. Arı - Y. Karabulut, *Neden Müslüman Oldum,* p. 51)

This is why it is essential for Muslims to learn Islam from its sources and represent it properly. They should avoid the extreme actions and behaviors that are not compatible with the spirit of the religion.

CHAPTER EVALUATION

A. Answer the questions below

1. According to Islamic belief, which divine books were sent to which prophets?
2. What is the importance of the prophet Moses in terms of the History of Judaism?
3. What kind of changes in religion did Paul, who assumed the leadership of the old Jews and the new Christians after the Prophet Jesus, do? What is the place of Paul in Christianity?
4. Discuss the hardships that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) faced when carrying out his mission.
5. Mention five of the distinctive characteristics of Islam.

B. Mark the correct answers of the multiple-choice questions below

1. Some information about the pages revealed to some of the prophets is given below. Which one is wrong?

A. The Prophet Adam: 10 pages

B. The Prophet Sheet: 50 pages

C. The Prophet Idris: 30 pages

D. The Prophet Ibrahim: 5 pages.

2. Which one of the following is not a name given to Jews?

A. Israelites

B. Hebrew

C. Palestinians

D. Jewish

3. Which one of the following gives the names of the great denominations of Christianity?

A. Pharisees - Sadducees – Essenes

B. Catholics – the Orthodox – Protestants

C. Conservatives – Modernists – Liberals

D. Shiis – Sunnites – Wahhabis

4. In which one of the following choices are the years of Prophet's birth, migration to Medina, and demise given correctly?

A. 571 – 610 – 632

B. 571 – 622 – 632

C. 571 – 632 – 622

D. 632 – 622 – 571

5. When the history of Islam is examined, in which areas did Islam spread the least?

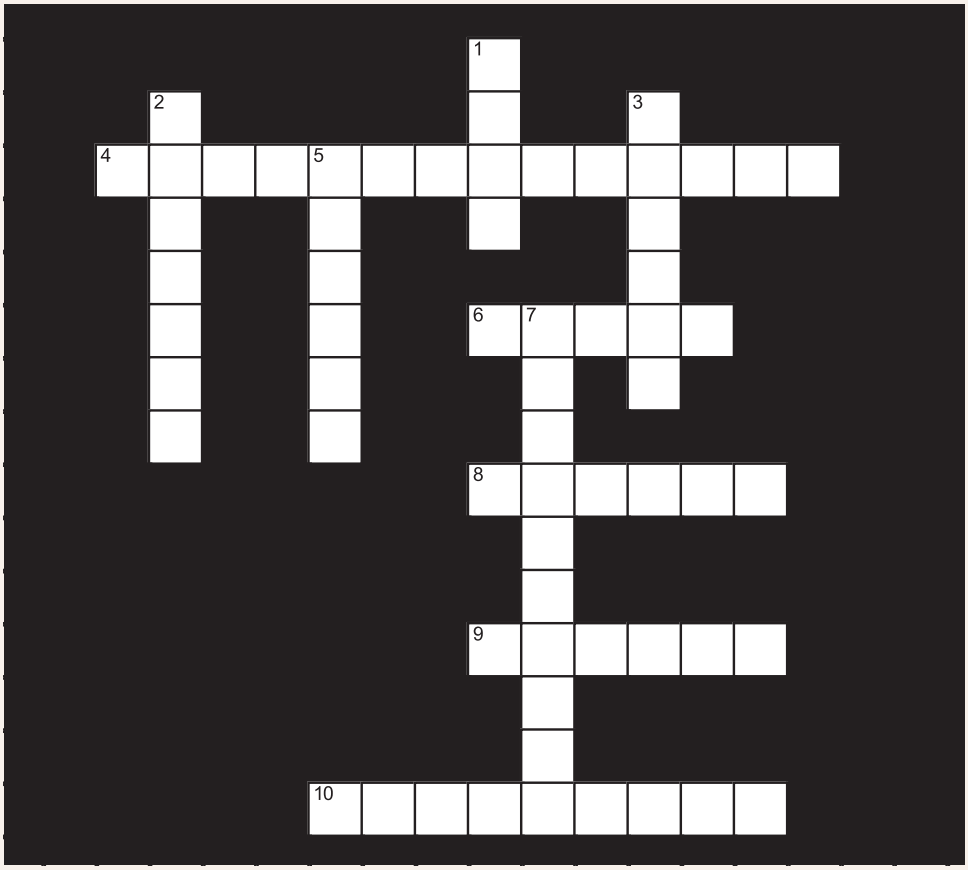
A. Africa – Asia

B. Anatolia – Balkans

C. America – North Europe

D. Caucasus – North Africa

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



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4. Muhammad the trustworthy one. It is the nickname given to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by Meccan polytheists.

6. It means immigration. The migration of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in 622 from Mecca to Medina.

8. The blessed woman who bore the Prophet Jesus miraculously without a father. She is mentioned in the Qur'an as an exemplar of chastity and modesty.

9. Pharaoh or one of the titles given to Egyptian rulers. In the Qur'an, this term is used mostly to refer to the ruler of Egypt who was an enemy to the Prophet Moses.

10. A term used to denote to the ones who believe in "Christos", i.e. Jesus.

↓

1. Jerusalem. The city that is considered holy in all of the three divine religions and is occupied by Israel today.

2. Mount Sinai. The place where the Prophet Moses received his first revelation.

3. Hawari means disciple. It is the term used for the earliest people who believed in the Prophet Isa.

5. It is an Arabic term that refers to the followers of the Prophet Moses.

7. It's another name used for Jews meaning the sons of Prophet Jacob. According to the Torah, Jacob's nickname was "Israel" which means "the one who defeated God."

CHAPTER III

RELIGIONS IN AFRICA: FROM PAST TO PRESENT

THEMES

- TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RELIGIONS
- JUDAISM IN AFRICA
- CHRISTIANITY AND MISSIONARY IN AFRICA
- ISLAM IN AFRICA

RELIGIONS IN AFRICA: FROM PAST TO PRESENT

Africa is one of the oldest and most rooted continents in the world. There are many languages spoken on this continent by people from numerous nations and cultures. North Africa has been the cradle of a long Islamic civilization that carries the traces of Barbary and Egyptian influences. East Africa, on the other hand, has been shared between the crescent and the cross, i.e. Islam and Christianity. As one goes down southward, a more-complex religious structure attracts the attention. In this chapter, we will first speak of the old religions on the continent and then the spread of Judaism, Christianity and Islam throughout this continent.

I. TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RELIGIONS

In previous chapters, the local African religions and their common characteristics were briefly mentioned under the title of "False religions". If we are to remember them, in all of these religions, there was the perception of a supreme being that is the greatest king above all other kings. It was possible to reach the supreme being only through certain intermediary spirits which would belong to either people such as the chiefs of a tribe, oracles, and ancestors or to certain objects and animals. (We can say that this perception of a supreme creator might have an influence in the spread of Islam over the continent, because it is close to the understanding of Almighty Allah in Islam.) There was a tradition of offering sacrifices to god accompanied with music and dance. Moreover, magic and sorcery had a significant place in these religions. There were no written religious texts but a tradition of oral transmission was common in transferring the religious beliefs from generation to generation.

The traditional religions in Africa can be examined by classifying them under two geographies namely "Eastern African Religions" and "Western African Religions." The first one of the religions in West Africa is the religion of "Yoruba." Adherents of this religion mostly live in Niger, Ivory Coast, Ghana and neighboring countries. They live under the rule

of their king whom they believe to be appointed by gods. They have polytheistic belief. Another traditional religion in West Africa is the religions of "Akan." The followers of these religions are mostly the groups living under the rule of "Ashanti Kingdom." They believe in "Nyami" as the divine god but there are also other gods. There is an altar in every house to offer sacrifice to this god.

Necromancy and sorcery have an important place in Eastern African traditional religions. The concept of a supreme creator has not been developed very much in those religions. In other religious traditions of South Africa, there is the tradition of male circumcision. The circumcision ceremonies are like the ritual of entering the religion. The bloody sacrifices and dances that usually end up with state of trance are remarkable. In a way, dancing is the means of communicating with god. Sorcery is also another significant characteristic of these religions.

II. JUDAISM IN AFRICA

Conversion to Judaism is not usually possible for people from other nationalities. Because only those who are born to a Jewish mother are considered real Jews. However, Jews today pursue a quite different policy in Africa. They claim that some lost Jewish tribes are found in today's Africa. They accept the existence of African Jews in Ghana, Uganda, Mali and Morocco. Under the influence of Jewish propaganda, members of Lamba tribe who live today in countries located in the southern parts of Africa such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia, and Malawi claim to be the descendants of Solomon. The members of this tribe who circumcise their boys and do not consume pork believe the ruins of Ophir in Zimbabwe to be the remnants of the Solomon's castle who came there to search for gold and built it for the queen of Saba.

Today most of the Jews in Africa live in the Republic of South Africa. Most of them have come there from Europe and are usually engaged in trade of gold and diamond. The number of Jews all across Africa is estimated to be around five hundred thousand today.

III. CHRISTIANITY AND MISSIONARY IN AFRICA

A. ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY TO AFRICA

Christianity began entering Africa in the second century CE as a result of the missionary activities in Abyssinia. However, as a result of Islam's spread in Africa in the seventh century CE, Christianity started to fall behind. It could maintain its existence only in Abyssinia. Islam, on the other hand, was embraced by all communities in North Africa in the one-thousand year long period between its entrance to Africa until the colonialist Europe's arrival to the continent. Between 16th – 18th centuries, Portuguese and Dutchmen reintroduced Christianity to Africa by means of missionary activities. Especially after western powers divided the colonies in Africa as a result of Berlin Conference held in 1884, the activities of Christianization of the area sped up through colonialism and missionary. However, they could not succeed to convert many people to Christianity in certain parts of the continent where Islam has been dominant for long years.

Today, approximately half of the African population is Muslim while this rate reaches more than 80 % of the population in the countries located along the northern coast of Gulf of Guinea. People living in Northern African countries and the whole Somalia in the East are Muslims. In Kenya and Tanzania, most of the Muslims live along the coastal regions, while they live mostly in northern regions in Western African countries. In People's Republic of the Congo and Zambia, on the other hand, the Muslim population is low.

B. MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA

Africa is a rich continent in respect to its underground resources. This whetted the appetite of the Western countries and thus, they began invading and exploiting these resources by using different kinds of methods. While doing so, they also strived to change African people's religion with missionary activities and spread Christianity among them. Above all, they enslaved hundreds of thousands of African people and took them to their own countries and America to make them work in their farms. Most of them died on their way in the wild waves of the Pacific Ocean. For centuries, African people taken to America by Europeans were mistreated and enslaved. Even as late as the beginning of the second half of 20th century, they considered and treated African people as second-class citizens by hanging signs on the doors of some places on which "no dogs or blacks are allowed" was written.

Due to its importance, we would like to examine the missionary activities in the African continent more elaborately. Because the studies carried out about the continent from past to present, are good examples in terms of understanding the purpose and objective of missionary activities. It is known that the Christian western countries used the religion, in other words missionary, as a means to achieve their colonial goals. Their goals have not been only religious but also closely related to their political and economical interests. This fact is summarized with following words of Kamau Kenyatta, the first prime minister of Kenya:

"When the Missionaries arrived, they had the Bible and the Africans had the Land. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, we saw that they had the land and we had the Bible.

Nineteenth century is the period when the missionary activities in the African continent increased. Those years were also the time when colonialism spread around the world. European and American Protestant and Catholic missionaries were the ones who became the leaders of such activities. The missionaries could not be successful very much in the lands that used to be under the ruling of Muslim sultanates. These areas are the entire North Africa and today's Senegal, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan and Somalia which corresponds to two thirds of the continent.

Missionary activities in Africa increased more after the states in the continent gained their independence and the targeted population in this period was mostly Muslims. In almost every place of settlement around Muslim countries, the missionary groups established their churches and began addressing Muslims in them behind the disguise of education, health, fighting with drought, drilling wells, and many other activities. This led to change in the balance between Muslim and Christian population of Africa. For instance, the Muslim population in Mozambique which had previously been over 60 % decreased to 20 %, while it decreased to around 40 % from over 60 % in Malawi according to the unofficial figures. The missionaries supported by Vati-

can have a huge contribution in this change. Especially after the 1970s, it is said that the rate of Catholics increased up to 400 % and approximately 3.5 % of the population of Africa converts to Christianity every year. It is known that the USA and Vatican spend billions of dollars to this end. (Mehmet Efe, http://afrikacilim.blogspot.com/2006/10/afrikada-misyonerlik-afrikada.html)

The method used by the missionaries in Africa in their activities towards Muslims is the method of enculturation that means "acculturation" or "assimilation." This term indicates the delivering the message of Christianity to the communities which are from different religions and cultures, and have a negative approach towards Christianity after interpreting its message in accordance with the religious and cultural values of those communities in order to make them familiarize with Christianity. This is, in a sense, hypocrisy. For instance, even though polygamy is not allowed in Catholic Church, they permit it in accordance with the common acceptance in Africa. Even a Catholic Priest with more than one wife does not constitute a problem in Africa. In order to present Christianity as a nice religion that is close to Islam, they build places of worship carrying Islamic symbols along with Christian figures. Such as, they hang both a crescent and a cross to the entrance of a church. Outside the building, they recite something which is similar to adhan through a microphone and they conduct a rite inside the building. Even though it has no place in Christianity, they take off their shoes while entering the churches just like Muslims do while entering the mosques. In order to become more influential among Muslim societies, they try to do all these by means of Islamic concepts and notions in the hands of certain groups that have emerged with the purpose of distorting Islam. And this reveals how they exploit the moral values and religious emotions of the pure and innocent people in order to achieve their goals.

Today, the missionaries in Africa try to use new methods in order to make their activities more influential. For example, in the 14th Lambeth Assembly held in July, 18 1998, missionary priests in Africa expressed that the foreign debts of African countries reached to a level that is impossible for them to pay as a result of the colonial policies of the institutions of international banking and finance. Then they suggested remitting the debts of these countries as a new missionary strategy. Because in their opinion, Islam's prohibition of interest in addition to its promotion to help the needy by means of alms, charity etc. attracted African people more to Islam in contrast to Christian institutions of finance which exploit the African countries by charging high interest. (www.anglicanjournal.com/124/07/lambeth/ozhtml) The priests who have confessed this fact endeavored to prevent Africans to embrace Islam and get them closer to Christianity by pioneering in the remission of their debts.

IV. ISLAM IN AFRICA

Africa has the largest Muslim population compared to other continents. Islam did not only lead to a change in religious structure in Africa but also contributed to the social, cultural and economical development of the continent. This is clearly observable in North Africa where Islam existed for centuries as a political power.

A- ISLAM IN NORTH AFRICA

Islam's entrance to the continent took place through North Africa. Islam set foot in Africa when Amr ibn al-As conquered Egypt in 641 during the time of Caliph Umar. The arrival of Muslims to the continent continued during the caliphate of Uthman as well. As a result of Uqba ibn Nafi's conquests in North Africa, numerous tribes in the area embraced Islam. The newly converted local tribes also had a significant contribution to the spread of Islam in the region. Islam continued its existence as an important power in the continent during the period of Umayyad and Abbasid States as well. After the establishment of the independent Andalusian Umayyad Dynasty in 756, there were certain Muslim states founded in North Africa among which Idrisid Dynasty (788-985), Aghlabids (800-909), Fatimids (909-1171), Almoravid Dynasty (1056-1147), Almohad Caliphate (1130-1269) can be mentioned. In the middle of 16th century, North Africa came under the rule of Ottomans and a long struggle was fought between the western colonial Christians and Muslim Ottomans. After the decline and eventual collapse of the Ottoman Empire, North Africa was predominated by the western colonial powers and only after 1950s could African states established in the region.

B- ISLAM IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

The conquest of North Africa by Muslim Arabs and spread of Islam there can be considered as the first stage, while Muslim traders' going to Sudan and preaching Islam can be regarded as the second stage. Especially the trade routes in the region played an important role in the Islamization of western Africa. With the rapid increase of Muslim population in the cities on the trade routes, these cities turned into noteworthy centers of knowledge and culture. People's conversion to Islam in these cities had a positive influence on those in the neighboring regions and led to their eventual conversions as well.

After the arrival of Muslim traders, the activities of Almoravids, which had been a powerful state in Western Africa, and the members of certain religious orders in the region, enabled Islam take root in the region. The scholars who were educated in the *madrasahs* (colleges) and *zawiyahs* (dervish lodges) in the cities, and the members of religious orders strived to take Islam to the far most cities and villages, and spread it in those places. As a result of such endeavors, the region witnessed the establishment of some Muslim states beginning from the 8th century. Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Kanem Empires can be mentioned among them. In the same manner, after the Almoravid movement in Africa, Islam had a chance to expand throughout a larger area thanks to the jihad movement initiated by Fulani Islamic State and the servicef of Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Sanusi Sufi orders. They not only fought against the colonial western powers but also undertook effective roles in the spread and establishment of Islamic culture by means of educational activities and institutions.

C. GROWING ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION IN AFRICA

When one thinks about African Muslims, the first person that comes to mind is Bilal the Abyssinian. He served as the Prophet Muhammad's muezzin, who called Muslims to tawhid with his beautiful voice on the walls of Ka'bah. The plates with the expression reading "*Ya Hadrat Bilal Habashi*" hung on the places reserved for the muezzin (mahfals) in big mosques reflects the sentiment in Muslim communities towards Africa. In Islamic viewpoint, what matters is not the color of the skin but the color of the heart. The true color and the dying is the color of Allah. Because for a believer, the color of a black Muslim who is dyed with Allah's color in other words who follows Allah's commands and owns the color of tawhid is the color of Allah. There is no color more beautiful than the color of Allah. This fact is expressed in the Qur'an as follows: *"(Oh believers! Say: our color is) the color of Allah (Islam) and which color can be better than Allah's? And we are His worshippers only*." (al-Baqara, 2: 138). Another verse relevant to this matter reads as "*O mankind! Indeed We have created you from male and female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted*." (al-Hujurat, 49: 13). The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also said, *"As your Lord is same, your father, your religion and your prophet is also same. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab. Likewise, a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white. Superiority is only with taqwa (piety).*" (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, V, 411). This human perspective of Islam was one of the most important factors that affected people's conversion to Islam in Africa.

With the spread of Islam, people in Africa experienced significant developments in their social lives. The narrow familial and tribal bonds were replaced with stronger social and political bonds and the tribes came together to establish big states. Their educational and cultural level improved, important educational and cultural centers were founded and great success was achieved in arts and agriculture.

In addition to the belief of a supreme god in native African religions, other beliefs and practices similar to the ones in Islam such as religious ceremonies, prayers, and sacrifices that they organized in their daily lives such as in the event of birth, marriage, circumcision, death, rain, harvest, etc. became very helpful for Africans to embrace Islam and adapt it into their lives. In this sense, the congregational prayers, *Jumuah* (Friday) and *Eid* (festival) prayers, and sacrifice, circumcision, marriage and funeral ceremonies attracted their attention. With the influence of Islam, certain superstitious beliefs and practices were abandoned and with certain Islamic habits such as ablution, cleanliness, *hijab*, etc. many changes took place in the path to turning into a more civilized society. However, in some rural areas, certain customs related to traditional beliefs and life styles were preserved in addition to Islam (traditional practices related to birth, marriage, funeral, etc.; not to observe modesty in dressing, etc.) On the other hand, the Islamic renewal in North and West Africa as well as preaching of the Sufi orders had a considerable influence among natives on establishment of the real Islamic beliefs and practices.

Intrinsic characteristics of Islam had an important place in its rapid spread in Africa. Islam's giving these people a new perspective, having no ceremony in embracing it, keeping people away from the ideas of *asabiyyah* (tribalism), giving them consciousness of being an *ummah*, especially doing no discrimination based on color, language, and wealth, considering every individual as the

most honored one of all creatures, paying regard to worldly needs as much as the otherworldly needs played a big role in this rapid spread.

Moreover, the colonial movement caused a reaction against the western states and Christianity which accelerated the expansion and strengthening of Islam in Africa. During the period of colonial administrations, Islam became a shelter for Africans in the face of decline of traditional culture and belief system, decrease of respect to the elders and the moral corruptions in the social structure.

Another point, which is worthy of notice here, is that even people in the certain non-Muslim areas are influenced by the Islamic practices. They pray and attend funeral and eid ceremonies as Muslims do. It is a common practice that these people pray by Muslim scholars and religious guides, as well as entrust their children to them for education. On the other hand, in some areas of the continent, Ahmadiyya, a non-Islamic movement from India, which aims to integrate Islam with Christianity carries on its activities and causes misunderstandings about Islam.

READING TEXT

Missionary Activities from the Perspective of An African Religious Leader

About the missionary activities in Africa, Dr. Khalid Sana, one of the leaders of African Muslims living in Burkina Faso spoke in a long interview as follows: "The desolateness of Muslim African communities is at a much more serious level. They are deprived of the educational opportunities to raise their generations that can have a voice in the administration of their countries. They lack of the hospitals to receive medical treatment. In many parts of Burkina Faso, there are not enough number of mosques. Building schools for the education of our children has a great importance for the coming generations. **Because we do not have schools owned by the Muslims, our children have no choice but to go to Christian schools. Of course, this leads to extremely unfortunate results. The moral collapse is the most serious one among them. Our children are lost because they are not equipped with any religious or moral values.** Therefore, in order to rescue our children who are our future, we strive to establish independent schools and madrasahs with the contributions of Muslims. Moreover, the constructions of delivery rooms and hospitals are also vitally important. **Our women have no choice but to deliver their babies either in very unfortunate conditions or in Christian centers. In this kind of health institutions, there are such treatments to Muslim patients that can result in dangerous situations. In such hospitals supported by western countries, Muslim patients are shown two pictures: one of them is the picture of Jesus and the other one of the Prophet Muhammad. They are told that if they continue believing in Muhammad, they will not recover from their illness. And they do not initiate the necessary treatment for their recovery.** (Or they are given some empty capsules and sent away.) **Whenever the patients tell that they started to believe in that "Messiah is the real prophet, And the one who is going to save me from my illness", then they start to the necessary treatment for their illness.** (In other words, they give the patients real medicine instead of empty capsules.) **And as soon as the patient recovers from the illness, the missionaries tell him/her: "You see? Muhammad could not cure you of your disease but Messiah has come to your rescue" and they practice such unbelievable methods to Christianize our people.** Today missionary activities are among the most important problems that threatens African people. More than 60 institutions from Europe and the USA conduct missionary activities just in the city where I live. They work very hard day and night. They provide numerous services and try to steal the minds and beliefs of our people. They provide health services even in the farthest corners of our country. They open hospitals and culture centers. By means of their media organs, they propagate Christianity. As you know, media is the most effective means to gain control over people's minds. They establish schools and deliver incredible amounts of food aid. Let me put this way: There is no village in Burki-

na Faso without a couple of missionary institutions. They surrounded us from everywhere. They do their best to change Africa's identity. However, thank God, despite all their efforts, they have not been able to achieve their goals and inshaallah they will not be able to do it in the future, either. **A missionary woman from the West settled in one of the villages in Burkina Faso and strived hard to convert the people in the area (out of Islam). Even though she lived in that village for 17 years, she could not convince even one person to convert to Christianity until she spread the virus of a disease in the village. When the disease infected people the in the village, she founded an institution where the treatment for the disease was given free of charge with financial support of a western country the name of which I do not want to mention here. That was the time when the situation changed. When she cured a sick child for whom his/her family had no hope and when this news was heard among the entire residents of the village, the entire village converted to Christianity in one night. Our people in articular and all of the African communities in general have the characteristic inclined to Islam. When Christianity entered Africa, believe me that it was because African people were forced to do so, as it was the case in the example given above. They converted to Christianity to survive. In other words, it was not because they believed in it but because they had to do it ...”** (*Altınoluk Dregisi*, 2009 - October, Issue: 284, Page 7 ff.)

CHAPTER EVALUATION

A. Answer the questions below.

1. Which religions lived in Africa before Islam? Tell briefly.
2. What methods did missionaries who aimed to spread Christianity in Africa use? Discuss among yourselves whether or not these methods are ethical.
3. Discuss what is meant with the following statement of the African leader: "*When the Missionaries arrived, they had the Bible and the Africans had the Land. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, we saw that they had the land and we had the Bible.*"
4. When did Islam begin entering Africa for the first time?
5. What kind of changes did Islam bring into the lives of African communities and why was Islam embraced easily in the continent?

B. Mark the correct answers to the multiple-choice questions below.

1. Which one of the following choice show the most common religions in Africa?

A. Judaism – Islam

B. Christianity – Judaism

C. Islam – Christianity

D. African Religions – Sabianism

2. Which one of the following dates is an important one in Africa's division in order to be colonized by the missionaries?

A. 1871 French Revolution

B. 1914 First World War

C. 948 Foundation of the state of Israel

D. 1884 Berlin Conference

3. Under the title of which professional group do the missionaries usually carry out their activities?

A. Business man – Laborer

B. Farmer – Officer

C. Doctor, Nurse – Teacher

D. Reverend – Artist

4. Which one of the following Islamic states are not founded in Africa?

A. Almoravids – Almohads

B. Aghlabids – Idrisids

C. Fatimids – Mamluks

D. Seljuqs – Ottomans

5. **What is the most important reason for Islam's rapid spread among different nations and races?**

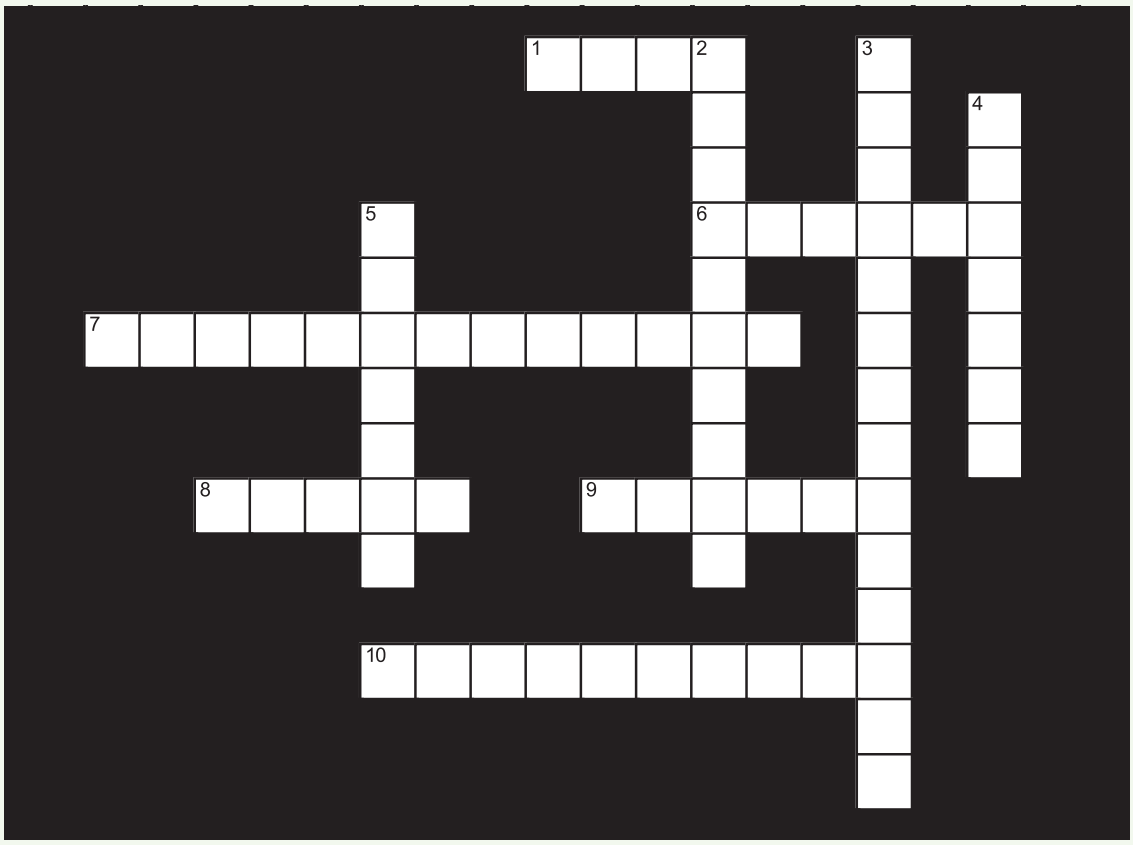
   A. Being based on peace and love

   B. Principle of Justice

   C. Being against discrimination of color, race or language

   D. Principle of helping each other

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



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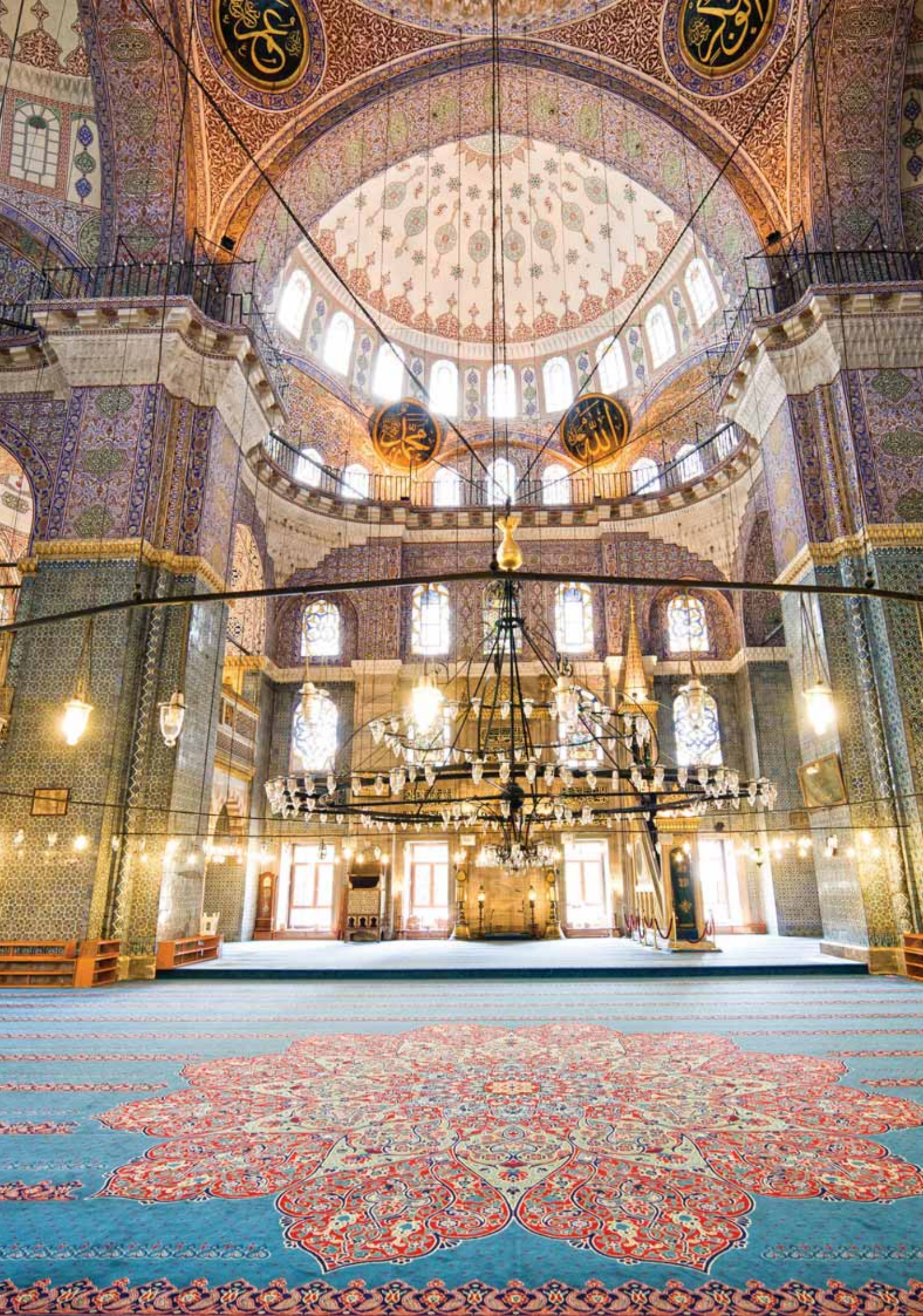
1. A term used to indicate those who are non-Arab.
6. A term which literally means "close friend" and refers to the first Muslims who saw the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).
7. To tell and explain Christianity in accordance with the culture of the people who are being addressed.
8. All kinds of internal struggle given by an individual against his or her self as well as all kinds of external efforts carried out to spread Islam.
9. One of the oldest and largest continents in the world.
10. A prominent Companion of the Prophet Muhammad and the commander of the Islamic army who conquered Egypt in 641 and thus lead to expansion of Islam in Africa.

↓

2. The term used for those who endeavor to spread Christianity.
3. A prominent Companion who was an African and the first *muadhdhin* of the Prophet.
4. The word literally means "deputy". In Islamic History, it indicates mostly the first four Companions who became the leaders of Muslim community after the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The religious representative to whom all Muslims around the world obey is also called "caliph".
5. World's smallest but most efficient religious state that is located in Italy. The Pope, who is the representative of Catholics i.e. the largest denomination of Christianity, is at the same time the head of this state.



CHAPTER IV

THE BELIEF OF GOD IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANIY AND ISLAM

THEMES

- THE BELIEF AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IN JUDAISM
- THE BELIEF OF GOD AND TRINITY IN CHRISTINATIY

I. THE BELIEF AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IN JUDAISM

Judaism was a divine religion sent to the sons of Israel through Prophet Musa in the 13th century BCE. However, after the Prophet Musa, Jews made alterations in the Torah and their religion by the hands of their own Kings. The number of those who knew the original Torah and the Ten Commandments decreased in time. Moreover, the Jews lived as separate tribes in exile for centuries. This was why the determination of Jewish books and principles took place a long time after the revelation of the Torah. The principles of Jewish faith were established by Musa ibn Maimun (Maimonides) in 1180s (Approximately 2000 years after the Prophet Moses) in 13 articles by way of resembling them to the *amantu* (principles of faith) in Islam:

1- God is the Creator of everything.

2- God Jehovah is One and there is no god other than him.

3- Jehovah is the first and last Creator.

4- Worship is done only to Jehovah. No other being can be worshipped.

5- All words of the prophets are true.

6- Moses is the greatest of all prophets.

7- The Torah we have today is revealed to Moses by God Jehovah.

8- The Torah has not been altered neither was it revealed by a being other than God.

9- God knows what people think and do.

10- God rewards those who follow His orders and punishes those who disobey them.

11- God will send the Messiah. Even though it might be late, his arrival is to be waited.

12- The dead will be resurrected by God at a time determined by God.

13- Jehovah has no body. He cannot be likened to anything. It is only Him who can be prayed to.

The religion revealed to Moses by Allah is based on the principle of the Unity and Oneness of God (Tawhid) as it is the case in all other divine religions. However, some parts of the altered Torah contain certain statements that attribute human characteristics to God. Attributing human features to God is against the principle of tawhid that is the essential principle of all divine religions.

A- JEHOVAH IS A NATIONAL GOD

In Judaism, God is called with several names such as Jahveh, Jehovah, Elohim, Adonai, etc. According to the Jews, the Lord has chosen the Jewish nation and esteemed them higher than all other nations. Other people have no value as much as Jews do. Jews are the master community. All other communities that oppose them deserve to die. (Deuteronomy, 7)

In their fight against other tribes, God Jehovah always supports Israelites. They even believe that God commanded Israelites to steal while they exit out of Egypt. This is mentioned in the Torah as follows: *"When you leave Egypt, you won't go away empty-handed. Every woman will ask her neighbor and the guests in her house for their silver and their gold jewelry as well as their clothing. Then you will put it on your sons and daughters, and you will rob the Egyptians."* (Exodus 3:21-22)

Likewise, God Jehovah preached Israelites to kill everybody that stands in their way in order to reach the Promised Land with following words: *"Now listen to the words of the Lord. So go! Attack the Amalekites; put everything that belongs to them under the ban. Spare no one. Kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys."* (1 Samuel 15: 2-3 ; 32-33).

So, as it is seen here, disregarding any religious or moral principles, Jehovah, the God of Israelites supported Israelite people and treated them in a privileged way against other nations. This is why Judaism has been accepted as a religion special to the Jewish nation. In this sense, Judaism is not a religion that embraces all humanity.

B- GOD JEHOVAH HAS CERTAIN HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS

Another characteristic of belief in God in Judaism is that God Jehovah has certain human characteristics. These features of God is interpreted by Jewish scholars metaphorically. They say that because God addresses to people in a way that they can understand, He used such anthropomorphic expressions.

Nevertheless, God's being mentioned with common human features in the Torah presents a feature that disproves the interpretation of Jewish scholars. The anthropomorphic characteristics attributed to God in the sources of Judaism can be listed as follows:

According to the Torah, God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. (Deuteronomy 2:3; Exodus 31:17)

God wrestled with Jacob and Jacob defeated God. Thereupon Jacob was given by God the name "Israel" which means "the one who defeated God". (Deuteronomy 32:22-32)

According to the Torah, God is jealous, avenges himself, is wrathful, holds grudge against his enemy, stamps with rage, rides on a donkey. (Nahum 1: 1-5; Zechariah 9:9)

The god of Jews crouches, undresses, go around naked, howls like weasels, flutter like ostriches. (Micah 1:8; Numbers 24:9)

C- ATTRIBUTING SON TO GOD

Jews heartily revere Ezra and consider him the son of God because he compiled the Torah that was lost during the exile and rewrote it with the command of God. This is clearly remarked in

the Qur'an (al-Tawba, 9: 30). Even though it is not stated explicitly in the altered Torah that Ezra is the son of God, according to Jews, he did a very important task. This is why Jews have glorified him; while some of them referred to him as "the greatest man", some others spoke of him as: "He is the second Moses, he is even more superior." (Ekrem Sarıkçıoğlu, *Başlangıştan Günümüze Dinler Tarihi*, Isparta, 1999, p. 225) And a minority among them went too far and claimed that "he was a superhuman" and even "that he might be the son of God". The Qur'an draws attention to this matter in the Jewish history. Although it is not directly in reference to Ezra, attributing a son to God is seen in the Torah. And the expression of "Sons of God" referring to Jews is also encountered frequently in the Torah (Genesis 4:2-4; Exodus 4:22-23; Deuteronomy 14; Job 1, 6).

To sum up the belief in God in Judaism, God Jehovah is the god of Jews only. He is such a god that he comes down on earth, meets people, eats, drinks water, gets exhausted, rests, smells, washes feet or wrestles and is defeated.

II- THE BELIEF OF GOD AND TRINITY IN CHRISTINATIY

As in the case of Judaism, the principles of Christian faith was also determined in a later date which was 3-4 centuries after Jesus (in the 4th and 5th centuries CE). The principles of Christianity were identified and accepted as the official church belief in the "councils" held with participation of Christian clergy and kings. These principles can be listed as follows:

Faith in

1- the Mighty Father, the God,

2- the Son of God, Jesus,

3- the principle that God Jesus was born to Mary and the Holy Spirit,

4- the principle that Jesus was crucified, died and buried during the time of Pilate, the Roman prefect,

5- the principle that Jesus resurrected on the third day from among the dead,

6- the principle that Jesus who resurrected from death ascended to heavens,

7- the principle that he sat on the right hand side of the Father,

8- the principle that he will return back to earth to judge among people;

9- the Holy Spirit,

10- the Holy Church,

11- the principle that sins will be forgiven,

12- the principle that the dead will be resurrected and there will be an eternal life.

It is quite difficult to comprehend the principles of Christian faith. For it is different from those of Islam and Judaism.

It is the Torah in Judaism and the Qur'an in Islam that constitutes the center of these religions. In other words, the Prophet of each of these religions were not part of the revelation itself. They just conveyed the revelation and interpreted it.

On the other hand, in today's Christianity, Jesus is considered to be the revelation itself in flesh and bones. Jesus himself is God's revelation and His word. According to Christians, Jesus did not bring a Book of revelation like the Torah and the Qur'an. Christian Bible that we have is not a book of Jesus, either. It is written after his death by his disciples in order to narrate his life.

This is why what is more important than the sermons of Jesus is his birth as the son of God, his life as the son of God, his crucifixion, later on his resurrection from among the dead, his ascension and sitting on the right hand side of the God.

These interpretations form the basis for the principles of Christian faith. This is why there are significant differences between Christian perception of Jesus and revelation and Islamic perception of Muhammad (pbuh) and revelation. Because the doctrine of Tawhid is the basis of faith in Islam. The most important principle of this doctrine is the existence of Allah, His Oneness, Uniqueness without any associate, the fact that He does not beget, nor is He begotten, and He is the only Creator.

On the other hand, in Christianity, the belief in God is based on the principle of Trinity that consists of God the Father, God the Son who is Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In this doctrine, certain human characteristics are attributed to god, while divine characteristics are attributed to Jesus who was a human being. And this is quite contrary to the doctrine of Tawhid which constitutes the basis of all divine religions.

Despite the fact that the principles of Christian faith were identified in the 4th and 5th century, the relationship among the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son; their positions among themselves as well as the status of Mary and the number of Bibles have been discussed in length among Christian groups both in the past and the present day. As a result of these discussions, many denominations have emerged within Christianity.

A. THE EMERGENCE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF TRINITY IN CHRISTIANITY

The belief in more than one god also existed in ancient Egyptian, Greek and Far Eastern faiths. Such beliefs were originated as a result of the common thought of divinizing the kings and the religious leaders. Christianity that was left without a leader after the demise of the Prophet Isa (pbuh) and was exposed to certain pressures was under the influence of neighboring cultures and beliefs. Especially, because of their idolater and polytheist background, the newly converted Christians were inclined to adopt the principle of Trinity.

Paul who converted to Christianity after the demise of Jesus and was familiar with Greek philosophy spread the seeds that directed Christianity from the principle of tawhid to the principle of trinity. This situation seemed suitable for the people, because in a general sense, they were not pleased with Judaism due to its fanaticism. They were not pleased with paganism, either, due to its primitiveness. In this way, they found the chance to fulfill their certain longings with this new religious understanding that was not incompatible with polytheism they had inherited from their ancestors.

Through the religious reforms introduced by Paul, the interaction and the cultural exchange between Christianity and previous beliefs was completed. Many scholars of the present time say that the ancient cultures, especially the Greek philosophy, have a great influence on formation of trinity.

The term "trinity" is not mentioned anywhere in the Bibles. It was used for the first time in the history of Christianity by Theophilus, a priest in Antioch, in 180. The term was derived from the following expression in the Gospel of Matthew, which was written after Jesus' demise, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28: 19).

This doctrine of trinity in Christianity is quite difficult to be understood. The Christian scholars also express that it is hard to be understood, that it is a secret, and that it is necessary to believe in it as part of the faith. This belief brings the Oneness of God, His Transcendence and His creating Power into disrepute and is contrary to the principle of *tawhid*. Moreover, attributing a son to God means lowering His level to the level of the creation. This is an expression of incompetence, which does not accord with the attributes of God the Exalted who is the Creator of all beings and free from all human characteristics.

B- THE ELEMENTS OF TRINITY

Trinity, which constitutes the Christian faith, has three fundamental elements: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This belief that did not exist in the original form of Christianity was formed as a result of the decisions taken in the councils held after Jesus by the church fathers.

1- God the Father

According to Christians God the "Father" is the Creator of everything. He is eternal, all-Knowing, Powerful and at the same time Merciful. However, He gave the duty of creating to the Son, Jesus by means of whom the universe was created. In the same vein, being the Master of the Day of Judgment, He gave the authority to judge people to Jesus who will come down from Heaven where He was next to the Father. Jesus is a god born to god. Accordingly, God the Father is also the true father of Jesus.

2- Jesus the Son of God

Christians attribute Jesus more than one characteristic. According to them, because he is the son of the God, he is a god, too. Likewise, because he lived on earth just as human beings do, he is also a human being. Moreover, Christians use to refer Jesus with several terms, such as Lord, Messiah and Word of God. Christians accepted the principle that Jesus is the son of God in the council held in Nicaea in the year 325 CE.

From the perspective of Christians, Jesus is eternal and uncreated by virtue of being the son of God. Nevertheless, Jesus was born to Virgin Mary as a human being by means of the God. However, his life on earth as other human beings does not constitute an impediment for him to be the son of the God.

Since the early years of Christianity, some of the Christian priests advocate that Jesus is not really son of God but he is only a prophet. It was Arius, the Priest of Alexandria (250-336 CE),

pioneered this monotheistic understanding that emerged as early as the early days of Christianity. This view of Arius and his followers was considered heresy by the official Church. Because of that, some of them were executed while some others were sent into exile. Such discussions initiated in the early days of Christian history were continued to exist in the following periods.

Christians also attribute Jesus characteristics of human nature. According to them, as well as being god, Jesus is at the same time a perfect human being. He is born to Virgin Mary and is sinless. He suffered severely both in physical and spiritual sense, was whipped, crucified and in the end really died. Afterwards, he arose from death and ascended next to the Father in the Heaven.

Another term attributed to Jesus is "Lord". Christians believe that the authority of lordship was given to him by God by the time he was risen from death. This term indicates that Jesus is the only intermediary between God and the people. According to Christianity, Jesus will sit on the right side of the God with the authority of lordship and judge people.

Christians also call Jesus Messiah and "the Word of God". According to Christianity, the Word turned into flesh in Jesus and appeared in the form of a human being. With this attribute, Jesus himself represents the revelation. There is no other revelation in Christianity other than Jesus.

The Qur'an also calls the Prophet Isa as the Word of Allah. (al-Baqara, 2: 45; al-Nisa, 4: 171). However, this does not have the same meaning it has in Christian understanding. This expression points out the fact that the Prophet Isa is born miraculously without a father following the command of Allah: "be (kun)." Allah the Exalted informed Maryam through Jabrail that she was going to give birth to a son and in the end Isa was born to her as a result of His command. The message that Allah the Exalted sent to Maryam is called "the Word." According to Islamic understanding, Jesus is only a prophet chosen among the people. He is free from all attributes that indicate divinity such as God, Lord and the son of god.

3- The Holy Spirit

The third element of trinity is "the Holy Spirit." In Christianity, the Holy Spirit is also a divine being. The Holy Spirit is according to some Christians originated from the Father while according to some others it is originated both from the father and the son. The Christian priests concluded in the council held in Constantinople in 381 that the Holy Spirit is also god and thus completed the trinity.

For Christians, the Holy Spirit is everywhere just as the Islamic principle that Allah is omnipresent. He inspires good thoughts into people's minds. He enters inside a person only through baptism and dignifies that person. The Father does all His actions and presents His Power through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit conveys the divine inspiration from God to Christian clergy. He protects the church from errors. In a sense, he is like an assistant to god.

In Christian faith, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each independent beings gathered in a single essence and all three are eternal. However, Christians cannot explain how the Holy Spirit emanated from the Father and the Son or despite originating from one single essence how they appear as three independent personalities and all are eternal. The explanations made so far are far from satisfying. In this respect, the last thing they said consists of following words: *first, believe without questioning, then you will learn the truth through the Holy Spirit.*

The belief in the Holy Spirit in Christianity is quite different from that of in Islam. In the Islamic view, the Holy Spirit is another name of Gabriel, the Angel of revelation. While the being who informed Mary that she was going to give birth to Jesus is the Holy Spirit according to Christianity, while in Islam, it is Gabriel who is one of the greatest angels. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is one of the elements of trinity so he was not created. However, for Muslims, Gabriel is an angel, in other words he is a creation of Allah. He is appointed to deliver the revelation to the prophets.

Consequently, as seen here, the trinity that constitutes the most fundamental doctrine of Christianity was formed by Christian priests approximately three centuries after the death of Jesus. This is an historical reality. The Church first decided that Jesus was the son god in 325, then they added the Holy Spirit and thus completed the concept of trinity in 381. As a result, Christians believe that God, the Father is the Creator, Jesus, the Son is the Savior and the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier (who glory the man and inspire good thoughts into them).

Even this long history in the formation of the concept of trinity clearly reveals how the original Christian faith was distorted in the course of time and that the trinity was invented later. And from these dates on, there have been numerous discussions about the matters of faith among Christians, whereupon the Christian clergy added new views to their creed and claimed to be infallible because of being inspired by the Holy Spirit while making decisions.

C- THE BELIEF IN GOD IN ISLAM AND THE DOCTRINE OF TAWHID

1. Comparing the Doctrine of Tawhid with the Belief in God in Other Religions

The faith in Allah, the Lord of the worlds who is Omnipotent and One true God constitutes the basis of Islamic creed. Allah is the only eternal being who created the heavens, earth, life and death. He is the One who gives sustenance to the living beings and who knows everything in the universe no matter if it is something tiny or tremendous one. He neither begets nor is He born. He is One, Unique and there is nothing that can be compared with Him. The human nature is not capable of comprehending Him fully through five senses. Hence, when the Prophet Musa wanted to see Him, he could not even bear to see His appearance on a mountain for an instant, fainted, and could not see Him with his eyes.

Islamic creed strongly rejects all kind of beliefs arguing that Allah the Exalted can transform into the creatures that He created. As known, the God manifested Himself in Jesus as "Word" and Jesus was accepted as an associate to the Lord in Christianity. Thus, God in Christianity is lowered to the level of human beings while man is risen to the level of God.

In Judaism, too, certain human features such as sitting, standing, getting angry, wrestling and taking revenge are attributed to God. Such an understanding is never accepted by Islamic faith. According to Islamic belief, Allah the Exalted is free from all human characteristics and does not resemble anything that He created.

In Islam, there is no such belief that God is assisted or intervened in His actions by a being like an angel, genie, or another being. In this regard, Allah the Exalted says in the Qur'an: *"Say, (O Muhammad), 'Invoke those you assert (as deities) besides Allah .' They do not possess an atom's weight (of ability) in the heavens or on the earth, and they do not have therein any partnership (with*

Him), nor is there for Him from among them any assistant." (Saba 34:22). *I did not make them witness to the creation of the heavens and the earth or to the creation of themselves, and I would not have taken the misguiders as assistants.*" (al-Kahf, 18: 51).

Islam opposes all views claiming that Allah marries to one or more wives and has children from them as the polytheists do.

Islam also opposes the belief that God needs certain intermediary divine beings or persons as it is accepted in some other religions. In the Islamic understanding, Allah is closer to a person more than he / she is to himself or herself. Allah the Exalted expresses this fact with following expression: *"And indeed We have created man, and We know what his ownself whispers to him. And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.*" (Qaf, 50: 16.)

Islam does not consider the clergy infallible, as it is the case in Christianity. Islam rejects the thought that clergy judge in the name of God and their provisions to be accepted as divine revelations. Such an understanding is regarded in Islam as *shirk*, or associating partners with Allah. A verse in the Qur'an related to this matter reads as follows *"They (Jews and Christians) took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah..."* (al-Tawba, 9: 31) To the Companions who were surprised to hear this verse, the Prophet Muhammad responded as follows: "They made some things unlawful that had been made lawful by Allah and some other things lawful that are made unlawful by Allah. This is what is meant by taking them as Lords and worshipping them." (For further information, see Elmalılı M. Hamdi Yazır, ***Hak Dini Kur'an Dili***, IV, 317.)

Existence of Allah can only be known to the extent that He makes it known; the issues that He does not make known remain as secrets that cannot be comprehended by any one of the creation. Because the human intelligence does not have the capacity and power to comprehend Allah in a complete sense. We, the servants of Allah, can only know Him through His attributes that He informs us.

For a better understanding of the concept of supremacy in Islam, we will first try to examine the Attributes of Allah from the point of Islamic creed. While doing this, we will draw attention to the wrong understandings of the concept of divine in other religions.

The Attributes of Allah the Exalted are in a general sense divided into two categories: *Dhati* (Personal) Attributes and *Thubuti* (Inherent) Attributes. The Personal Attributes of Allah are about His Self and cannot be attributed to any being else than Himself. Whereas His Inherent Attributes are more understandable to human beings. However, still, there is no resemblance between Allah's Inherent Attributes and human attributes. These Attributes help people to understand the existence of Allah better. For instance, Allah the Exalted's attribute of Seeing is not the same as human beings' sense of seeing. Humans need eyes to be able to see. Besides, they lack the ability to see everything. Whereas, Allah the Almighty does not need eyes to be able to see and His seeing is not limited as humans' ability of seeing is.

2. The *Dhati* (Personal) Attributes of Allah

***Wujud* (Necessity of His Existence)**

It means that Allah exists and that His Existence does not need anything. Allah exits and His nonexistence cannot be imagined. Allah the Exalted states this matter in the following verse:

"Allah, there is no deity except Him. He is Hayyum (Ever-Living), Qayyum (the Sustainer of all existence). Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth..." (al-Baqarah, 2: 255)

***Qidam* (Being pre-Eternal)**

It means that Allah is pre-eternal and that there is no time before Him. Concepts like beginning and end indicate time. Whereas, Allah the Exalted is the One who created time. He is beyond time and space. Allah the Exalted says, *"He (Allah) is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate..."* (al-Hadid, 57: 3) However, the expressions of "the First and the Last" mentioned in this verse do not attribute time to Allah. These expressions are used from the perspective of human beings. Because, Allah the Exalted existed before the existence of the creation and will continue to exist after all creation vanish.

As mentioned before, Christians claim on the one hand that Jesus is the son of God. According to this claim, Jesus was a being created by God. On the other hand, in Christianity, Jesus is also considered to be the eternal word of God. And in this case, Jesus must be eternal, which means he is not a created being. These contradictory situations, namely Jesus' characteristics of both being God's created son and being His eternal word, clearly reveal how the belief in God in Christianity contains inconsistencies.

***Baqa* (Being Eternal)**

It means that Allah does not have an end, in other words that He is eternal. Everything that Allah has created, no matter living or non-living, has a certain end and will disappear when their time comes. In this respect, Allah the Exalted remarks in the Qur'an as follows: *"And do not invoke with Allah another deity. There is no deity except Him. Everything will be destroyed except His Face. His is the judgement, and to Him you will be returned."* (al-Qasas, 28: 88) "*Everyone upon the earth will perish, And there will remain the Face of your Lord who is Owner of Majesty and Honor."* (al-Rahman, 55: 26-27)

***Wahdaniyyat* (Oneness)**

According to Islamic creed, Allah is One and Unique. There is no creator other than Him and worship is done only to Him. Islam rejects all kind of beliefs that are against the principle of Oneness of Allah such as trinity and polytheism. There are several verses in the Qur'an that point out His uniqueness. Following are some of them:

"Say: He is Allah the One and Only. He is Eternal and Absolute. He neither begets nor is born. There is no equivalent to Him." (al-Ikhlas, 112: 1-4)

"Allah has not taken any son, nor has there ever been with Him any deity. (If there had been), then each deity would have taken what it created, and some of them would have sought to overcome others. Exalted is Allah above what they describe (concerning Him)." (al-Mu'minun, 23: 91)

The harmony and order in the creation of the universe as well as the continuance of the laws of nature without any devi-

ation are the most important evidences of the fact that the Creator is One and Unique. Allah the Exalted remarks this fact in the following verse, *"If there had been within the heavens and earth gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined..."* (al-Anbiya, 21: 22) Since there is no disorder or deficiency in the heavens and earth, it is a fact that there is only One Creator who is Unique and there is no equivalent to Him.

In the previous chapters, we have mentioned that Jews heartily revere Ezra and consider him the son of God because he recompiled the Torah that was lost during the exile. This matter, which is inconsistent with the principle of tawhid, is expressed in the Qur'an with the following verse:

"The Jews say: 'Ezra is the son of Allah' and the Christians say: 'The Messiah is the son of Allah.' That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved (before them). May Allah destroy them; how deluded they are. They took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah and they (Christians) also took Messiah, son of Maryam, while they were commanded to worship none but One God. There is no god only Allah. He is far from having the partners they associate (with Him)." (al-Tawba, 9: 30-31)

In many verses, the Holy Qur'an rejects the Christians' belief that Jesus is the son of God. Following verses are some examples in this matter,

"They have said, 'Allah has taken a son.' He is Exalted; He is Free of need. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. You have no authority for this (claim). Do you say about Allah that which you do not know? Say: Those who forge a lie against Allah shall not be successful." (Yunus, 10: 68-69)

The notion of trinity is clearly rejected in the Qur'an with the following consecutive verses in chapter al-Maida (5),

"They have certainly disbelieved who say: 'Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary'. However the Messiah has said: 'Oh Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Indeed, who associates others with Allah, Allah has forbidden him Paradise, and his refuge is the Fire. And there there shall be no helpers for the wrongdoers.'"

"They have certainly disbelieved who say: 'Allah is the third of three.' And there is no god except one God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, a painful punishment shall afflict the disbelievers among them."

"So will they not repent to Allah and seek His forgiveness? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

"The Messiah, son of Mary, was not but a messenger. Other messengers have passed away before him. And his mother was a truthful woman. They both used to eat food.(How can someone who needs to eat to survive be a god?) Look how We make clear to them the signs; then look how they are deluded." (al-Maida, 5: 72-76)

These and similar verses indicating that Isa (Jesus) is only a prophet who invited people to the principle of *tawhid*. Other similar verses emphasize Allah's Oneness and that there is no equivalent to Him while decisively opposing the beliefs that are contrary to *tawhid* such as trinity. (See al-Nisa, 4: 171-172; al-Maida, 5: 17-18, 109, 116-117)

In the Bibles, there are expressions that imply that Jesus was crucified unwillingly. For instance, while being brought to be crucified, people insulted, mocked him and spitted at him.

Likewise, the Christians claim that when Jesus was brought to be crucified, he cried out for help from God, the Father, saying: *"Father, Father! Why have you forsaken me"* (Matthew, 27: 30, 46)

Had Jesus had, as was claimed, the attribute of divinity, he would not have been so vulnerable before Jews who were very weak at the time and asked other people's help to be rescued.

While the Christians, on the one hand, attribute divinity to Jesus, they, on the other hand, accept that he was killed. So, after his death, how could the universe be managed in the absence of a god? Or, had the earth and humanity been administered in the absence of a god until he was born?

What is understood from these and other similar expressions, the god of Christians apparently gives an impression of a poor and weak god who could not even protect himself. On the other hand, Islam prescribes Muslims to be extremely sensitive about the principle of *tawhid* and opposes the smallest matters that contradict *tawhid*. In the Islamic history, following incident between the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Christians of Najran is quite interesting with regards to attributing divinity to Jesus. A committee from Christians of Najran came to the Prophet (pbuh) and said, "The Qur'an also accepts that Jesus was born without a father, so he is god then." Thereupon the following verse was revealed:

"Then whoever argues with you about it after (this) knowledge has come to you, say: 'Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then pray sincerely (together) and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars (among us).'" (Al Imran, 3: 61)

When the Messenger of Allah made the offer prescribed in the verse, Najran Christians did not want to do so. Their reaction clearly shows that Jesus cannot be god and even Christians themselves accepted that.

As is understood from the above given explanations, the fundamental basis of Islam is the principle of *tawhid*. And Islam rejects all kinds of beliefs that are contrary to the principle of *tawhid* such as polytheism and trinity. *"And your god is one God. There is no deity except Him. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful"* (al-Baqara, 2: 163)

***Muhalafat lil-hawadis* (Not Resembling any of the Creations)**

Allah the Exalted does not resemble any of His creations. There is nothing that can be associated or become equivalent with Him. He is free from all kinds of human attributes. He is free from the Jewish understanding of god who eats, drinks, gets tired, rests and washes His feet. He is also free from the claims of Christians who attribute a son to Him. By no means does he resemble to His creations.

As a response to the false considerations of god that human beings create in their own imaginations and then believe in, the Holy Qur'an remarks: *"There is nothing like Him."* (al-Shura, 42: 11)

***Qiyam bi nafsih* (Self-Dependence)**

It means that Allah the Exalted does not need anything while the whole creation needs Him. He exists by Himself. He does not need any creator, time or place for His existence. All beings except Allah are in need of Him both to exist and to vanish. Allah the Exalted remarks this fact in the following verses: *"Say: He is Allah the One and Only. He is Eternal and Absolute. He neither*

begets nor is born. There is no equivalent to Him." (al-Ikhlas, 112: 1-4) *"O mankind! you are those in need of Allah , while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.*" (Fatir, 35: 15)

3. The *Thubuti* (Inherent) Attributes of Allah

The inherent attributes are the type of attributes that can be comprehended by people. However, again, there is no similarity between the inherent attributes of Allah and the attributes of the creations. These attributes of Allah only help people to perceive Allah the Exalted better.

***Hayat* (Being Alive)**

It indicates that Allah is alive. He is the One who brings the dead and dry earth and everything to life through His Attribute *of Hayat*. Allah the Exalted says, "*He is the Ever-Living. There is no deity except Him, so call upon Him, (being) sincere to Him in religion. (All) praise is to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.*" (al-Mu'min, 40: 65)

***'Ilm* (Being Omniscience)**

Another attribute of Allah the Exalted is His Omniscience. He is the One who knows everything. He knows whatever happened, is happening or is to happen; the past and the future; the visible and hidden things. His Knowledge is not like that of human beings. It does not increase or decrease. Allah knows everything in the pre-eternity. The opposite of knowledge, ignorance and forgetfulness are impossible about Him. Allah the Exalted expressed this fact as follows: *"Say: 'Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it. And He knows whatever is in the heavens and that which is on the earth. And Allah has power over all things.*" (Ali Imran 3:29) "And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it." (al-An'am, 6: 59)

***Sami'* (Being All-Hearing)**

This is an attribute that indicate the hearing of Allah the Exalted. Allah hears everything spoken openly, secretly, in whisper, and aloud, but He does not need any organs to hear. It is stated in a verse: *"And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me.*" (al-Baqara, 2: 186)

***Basar* (Being All-Seeing)**

It means Allah's seeing. He sees everything no matter it is in the darkness or light; visible or hidden. The opposite of seeing, or blindness, is a deficiency, which is out of question for Allah. A verse related to this fact reads as, "Surely Allah is the Hearing, the Seeing." (al-Mu'min, 40: 20)

The true believers are conscious of these divine attributes in all times and places. They are aware of the fact that they are under the divine control.

***Irada* (His Will)**

Irada means to wish and to want. Nothing happens without Allah's Will. This is stated in the following verses: *"Say: O Allah , Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honor whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is (all) good. Indeed, You are over all things competent.*" (Al Imran, 3: 26) *"His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, "Be," and it is.*" (Yasin, 36: 82)

***Qudrah* (Being All-Powerful)**

Allah the Exalted is Omnipotent. He has the power and authority to do anything He wishes. Allah is powerful enough to call anything to come into existence or disappear it. The clearest evidence for His Omnipotence is the existence of the universe that has an extremely neat and unique order.

Allah the Almighty says, *"Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create even a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose."* (al-Haj, 22: 73) *"You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. then look again, can you see any disorder?"* (al-Mulk, 67: 3-4) *"Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and earth and was not tired in their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Yes. Indeed, He has surely power over all things."* (al-Ahqaf, 46: 33)

In the above given verse, there is also reference to the false belief of Jews who claim that god created the universe within six days and then rested on the seventh day.

***Kalam* (Speaking)**

Through this attribute, Allah the Exalted sent Books to His prophets and the Prophet Musa spoke to Him. The nature of this attribute cannot be comprehended completely by human beings. Allah the Exalted expresses, *"And if all the trees in the earth were pens, and the sea (was ink), with seven more seas to increase it, the words of Allah would not come to an end; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise."* (Luqman, 31: 27) His Word is not formed from sounds and letters. With this Attribute, Allah the Exalted commands, prohibits and sends messages to His servants through His prophets.

***Takwin* (Creation)**

The word *takwin* means to originate and to create out of nothing. Allah the Exalted is the Creator. He created everything He wished by knowing with His eternal Knowledge and through His endless Power. Creating, supplying livelihood, resurrecting, taking lives, etc. are the results of His Attribute of *takwin*. Regarding this, Allah the Exalted says: *"He is Allah , the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise."* (al-Hashr, 59: 24)

READING TEXT

The God of Jews who Wrestle with Humans

In the Torah that the **Jews have today, Yahweh wrestled Jacob and was defeated by him. As a result of the wrestle, God named Jacob as "Israel" which means "The one who defeated God".** This is why **the Jews are called "Children of Israel". The incident is** narrated **in the Torah as follows:**

"...There a man wrestled with Jacob until the breaking of the day. When he understood that he won't be able to defeat Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. And he said, 'Let me go, for the day breaks.' Thereupon Jacob said, 'I won't let you go until you bless me.' The man asked: 'What's your name?' Jacob responded: 'Jacob.' You will not be called as Jacob from now on, you will be called Israel, the man said, because you wrestled people and God, and defeated them. Jacob said: 'Please, tell me your name.' Then the man asked, 'Why do you ask my name?' and then blessed **Jacob. (Having figured out that the man was god) Jacob called the name of the place as 'Penuel'** (the Face of God), for he said, **'I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.' A**s he passed over Penuel, the sun rose upon him and he limped upon his thigh. Therefore, the children of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip that is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day. Because he (God) touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip." (Genesis 32:22-32)

CHAPTER EVALUATION

A. Answer the following questions.

1. What are the basic features of the belief in god in Judaism?

2. In which aspects, does the Christian conception of revelation differ from that of Islam? Discuss the matter.

3. When and by whom were Jesus and the Holy Spirit accepted as gods in Christianity?

4. What are the criticisms of Islam to the Jews and Christians regarding their belief in god? Give examples from the verses.

5. Read the detailed interpretations of al-Baqara, 2: 255; al-Ikhlas 114: 1-4; al-Mu'minun, 23: 91 from the books of Qur'anic exegesis.

B. Mark the correct answers to the multiple-choice questions below.

1. Which one of the following is not a feature of god believed in by the Jews?

A. He is the god of only Jews

B. He has certain human features

C. His name is Jehovah

D. He is Merciful to all nations

2. Which one of the following is not one of the elements of trinity?

A. God, the Father

B. God, the son

C. the Holy Spirit

D. Virgin Mary

3. When was it decided that Jesus is god?

A. 381, Council of Constantinople

B. 325, Council of Nicaea

C. 451, Council of Chalcedon

D. 431, Council of Ephesus

4. Which one of the following cannot be a feature of Allah in Islamic creed?

A. Being pre-Eternal and Everlasting

B. Being One and Unique

C. Having a son and daughter

D. Not to resemble to His creations

5. **Which one of the following is not one of the *Dhati* (Personal) attributes of Allah?**

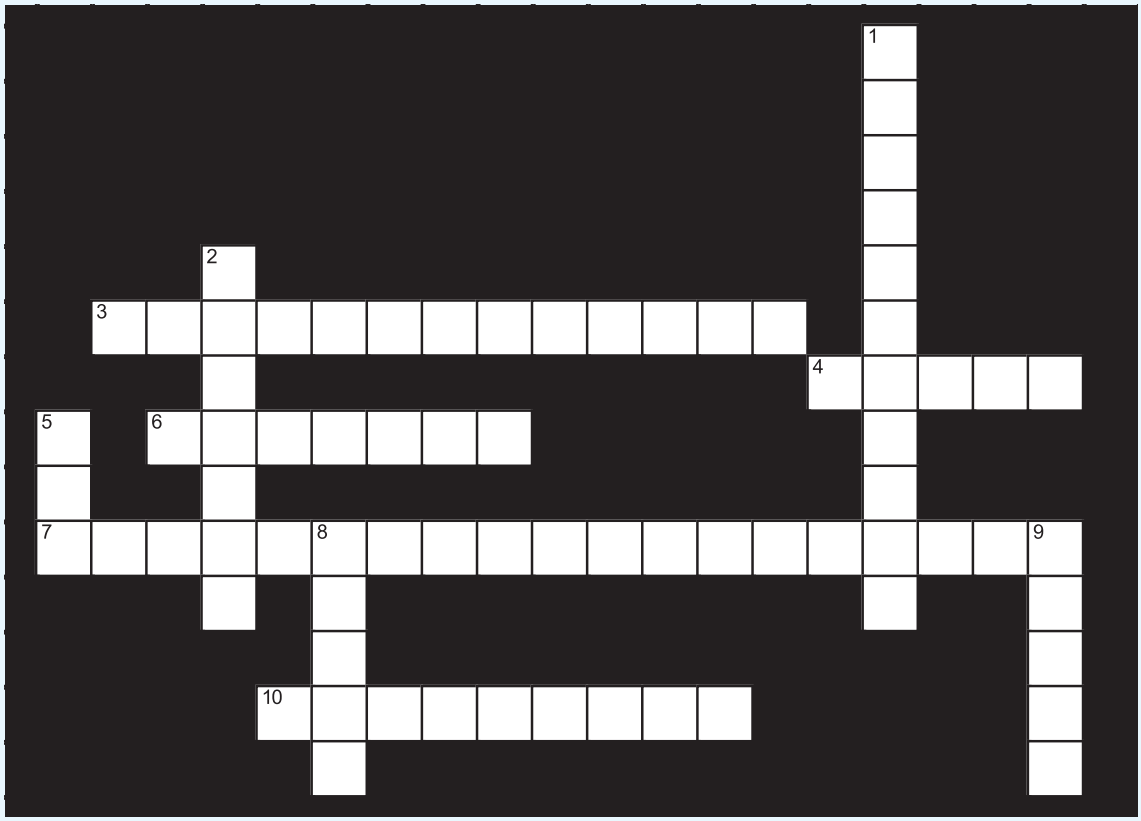
   A. *Wujud – Kidam*

   B. *Baka – Wahdaniyyat*

   C. *Qiyam bi Nafsih – Muhalafat li'l Hawadis*

   D. *Kalam – Taqwin*

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



3. The third god in Christian belief, that is believed to emanated from the Father and the Son. God, the Father fulfills all his actions through him. He is like an assistant to the Father.

4. Pre-eternity of Allah according to Islamic doctrine that means that Allah does not have a beginning and is not a creation.

6. The religious meeting held by high-level priests to take decisions on religious matters. Most of the principles of Christian faith were determined in these councils.

7. Allah does not resemble any of His creations and His being is One and Unique according to Islamic creed.

10. It is the Angel of Revelation, or Gabriel according to Islamic belief that is completely different from the Holy Spirit that is considered by Christians as God.

1. It is one of the *dhati* (Personal) Attributes of Allah. It means that Allah is One and Unique.

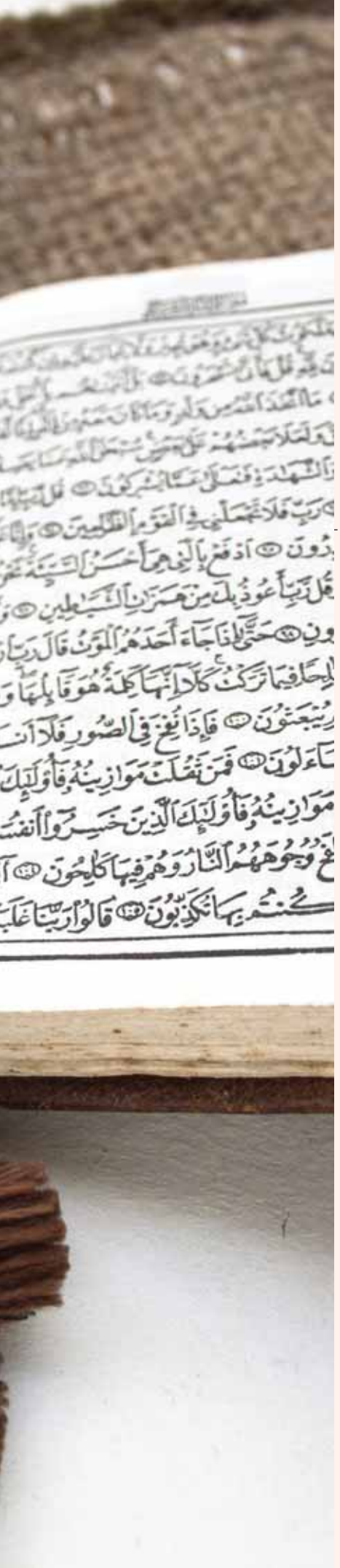
2. One of the names of God in Jewish belief.

5. The literal meaning of the word is "to know". In the Islamic faith, it is one of the *Thubuti* (Inherent) Attributes of Allah. According to this attribute, Allah is the One who knows everything in the past, present and future best; no matter if they are visible or hidden.

8. The Priest of Alexandria (250-336 CE) who rejected the belief that Jesus was god and therefore was excommunicated by the church.

9. it is one of the attributes of Allah that is mentioned in the Qur'an in *chapter al-Ikhlas* (112). It means that everything needs Allah while He does not need anything.

(٢٤) سورة النور مدنية
وآياتها ٦٤ نزلت بعد المجادلة
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
سورة أنزلناها وفرضناها وأنزلنا فيها آيات بينات لعلكم تذكرون



CHAPTER IV

BELIEF IN BOOKS IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

THEMES

- BELIEF IN BOOKS IN JUDAISM
- BELIEF IN BOOKS IN CHRISTIANITY
- BELIEF IN BOOKS IN ISLAM

I. BELIEF IN BOOKS IN JUDAISM

Jews call their Holy Book "Tanach." Tanach consists of three parts: "Torah", "Nevi'im (Prophets)" and "Ketuvim (Books)." Christians and Muslims name Tanach as "the Old Testament."

According to Jews, Torah was sent to Moses. The Torah contains the incidents that took place beginning with the creation of the universe until the death of Moses and the commands sent to Moses. It contains five books, namely Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Nevi'im (Prophets) is the name given to the Books revealed to the Jewish prophets from Moses to Malachi (5th century BCE), the last prophet according to Jewish belief.

Ketuvim (Books) literally means writings and includes the historical information about Jews, the words of wisdom and the poems of Jews.

In addition to the books of Tanach mentioned above, there is also "Talmud" which is the interpretation of these Books. Talmud which consists of the commentaries of Jewish rabbis has a great importance for the Jews. So much so that those who do not accept Talmud are not considered real Jews.

The original text of Jewish Holy Book is not available today. The earliest Hebrew script of Torah available today dates back to the 7th -10th centuries CE. Given the fact that Moses lived in the 12th century BCE, it is obvious that the earliest copy of the Torah available today belongs to a period 2000 years after Moses.

Among the above-mentioned Books, the most important Book is the one given to Moses. Jews believe that the Torah is unalterable and that there is no other book sent by God after it. Therefore, they do not believe in Bibles and the Qur'an. However, Christians believe in the Tanach that we have today. They read it in their churches, but believe in that it has been abrogated with the prophethood of Jesus while its texts still exists.

A- THE TORAH AND THE ISSUE OF ALTERATION

The Holy Qur'an consider the Jews as "*ahl al-kitab* (people of the Book)" and states that they inherited the Tawrat which was revealed to the Prophet Musa. The Qur'an also inform that Zabur (Psalms) was revealed to the Prophet Dawud while it does not speak of the other Books that form the Old Testament. Islam acknowledges the information in the Old Testament that does not contradict with the information given in the Qur'an and the Hadiths, on the other hand proclaims that the reports inconsistent with these two major sources of Islam are corrupted and therefore rejected. The Qur'an states that it was written in the original text of Torah that Muhammad was going to be sent. However, it remarks that Jews altered the original form of the Torah that was the words of Allah and altered the information given by it. (al-Nisa, 4: 46; al-A'raf, 7: 157)

It is indicated in the Qur'an that the alteration in the Tawrat took place through following four ways:

1. *Tabdil*: By replacing its words with the words of others,
2. *Kitman*: By concealing certain parts,
3. *Layy:* By twisting their tongues while reading,
4. *Nisyan:* By forgetting some parts of the Book. Regarding this matter, some verses in the Qur'an read as follows:

"So because of their breaking of the covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their (proper) usages and have forgotten a portion of the Message that was sent to them..." (al-Maida, 5: 13)

"Oh Messenger, don't let them grieve you who hasten into disbelief of those who say, 'We believe' with their mouths, but their hearts have no belief from among which there are the Jews. They distort words beyond their (proper) usages..." (al-Maida, 5: 41)

According to Jews, Moses delivered the first copies of the Torah that were written on tablets to the scholars of the sons of Israel. He then asked them to preserve the tablets in a holy ark called "Ark of Covenant". After the Israelites conquered Jerusalem and built the Solomon's Temple, they took the Ark of Covenant under preservation in one of the rooms in the Temple. When Solomon, who came 300 years after Moses and built the Temple, opened the Ark of Covenant, he found two tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. The other texts of Torah believed to be revealed to Moses were not found in this Ark.

In the course of time, the sons of Israel abandoned their religion many times, worshipped idols and forgot about the Torah. For instance, after Solomon, the Kingdom of Judah in the south converted into idolatry and, as is stated in the Old Testament texts available today, King Ahazia removed the name of God from the Torah and replaced it with names of idols. King Ahaz also forbade reading Torah and had the Torah sealed. King Amon had the Torah burnt. King Manassah also had replaced the name of God with the names of idols. Jeremiah who was one of the prophets of Jews was also accused of not being able to protect the Torah. (Jeremiah 8:8-9) So, in the following years, the sons of Israel could not preserve the texts of Torah and the original texts were lost. (Baki Adam, *Yahudi Kaynaklarına Gore Tevrat*, Pınar Yayinlari, Istanbul 2001, p. 105-111)

Initially, there was only one text of the Torah. It was not memorized and copied. However, it was asked by Moses to be read in every 3 or 7 years in public. In the later periods (586 BCE) the Jews were exiled to Babylon and Solomon's Temple was destroyed. Because of that, the Torah was not found until the time of Ezra. The Jewish and Christian scholars believe that the Torah was written again (700 years after Moses) by Ezra with the inspiration of God.

However, the Solomon's Temple was destroyed again by Romans in the year 70 CE and the texts of the Torah formed by Ezra were destroyed. Because of these incidents, the original form of the Jewish Holy Book could not reach the present day without alterations. The earliest Hebrew manuscripts of the Torah available today were written in the 7th and 10th centuries CE.

There are even certain mistakes done in the writings of the texts of the Torah that we have today. As a matter of fact, some of the rabbis in Israel today informed an institution in Tel Aviv, the

capital of Israel that they encountered some mistakes in the manuscripts of the Torah. As a result of the investigation, it is declared that some mistakes were detected in the 84 % of the texts of Torah composed after the Second World War. (Baki Adam, *Yahudi Kaynaklarına Göre Tevrat*, p. 21, footnote 96)

B. SIGN OF ALTERATION AND CONTRADICTIONS IN THE TORAH

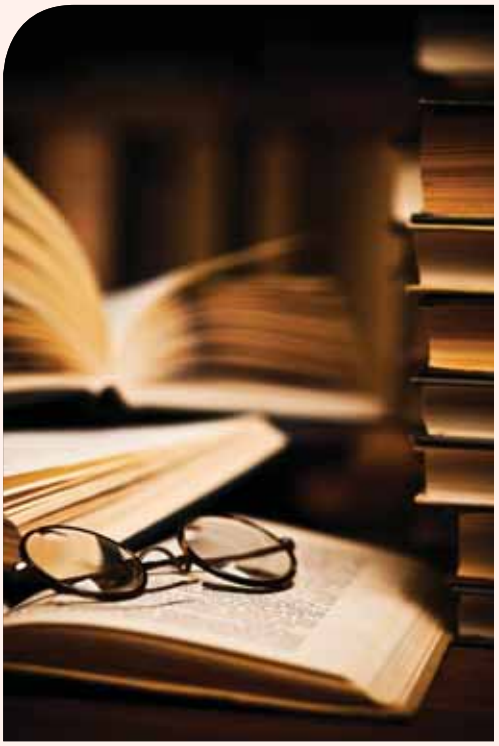
1- In the last chapter of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 34), the death and burial of Moses is narrated. It is not possible for someone to narrate his own death, burial and the later incidents. Therefore, it leaves questions marks in the minds of the readers about that this kind of information is considered part of the revelation sent to Moses.

2- In one place in Genesis, it is reported that Noah's flood lasted for 40 days while in another place it is expressed that it lasted for 150 days. (Genesis, 7: 12, 24-31) Moreover, the number of the animals taken to the ark is presented in one place as two of each species and in another place as seven of each.

3- God is attributed certain human characteristics in the Old Testament. It is reported that God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh; wrestled with Jacob and was defeated by him whereupon he was given the name "Israel". Moreover, it is said that God paid a visit to Abraham, ate and drink there while Abraham negotiated to convince Him not to destroy the people of Lot. (Genesis, 2: 2-3; 12:1013; Chapter 18; 20: 1-3; 26: 6-12)

4- According to the Torah that Jews and Christians accept today, his own daughters made Lot drink wine to intoxicate him and then laid with him. (Exodus, 4:18-23) In the same vein, David, known as the King of the Jews, fornicated with the wife of the army commander Uriah. (Samuel II, Chapter 11)

5- According to the Old Testament, God Jehovah instructed the sons of Israel to rob the Egyptians when they were leaving Egypt, in other words, He openly led them to commit theft. (Genesis, 3: 21-22)



6. It is mentioned in the Torah that when he was offered prophethood, Moses objected and after a long bargaining, he unwillingly accepted the offer in the end. (Exodus 4:10-17) Moreover, he complained to God regarding the troubles that the Jews caused him in the desert. (Numbers, 11: 4-6; 11: 10-15) Therefore, God Jehovah did not forget about this attitude of Moses and in the end, He took his life before he could see the Holy Land promised to the Jews. (Deuteronomy, chapter 34)

7- It is told in the Old Testament that Abraham and Isaac introduced their wives to the Kings as their sisters and lied to them out of fear. (Genesis, 12: 16-20)

8- In the Torah, it is told about the tricks that Jacob did in cooperation with his mother to deceive his blind father Isaac and receive the birthright of his brother Esau. (Genesis, 27th chapter)

9- The Torah mentions the quarrel that broke out between Jacob and his father in law, Laban while grazing Laban's sheep when Jacob in-

creased the number of his own sheep and decreased the number of Laban's sheep. This is claimed to be a grace of God. (Genesis 30: 32-42; 31:7-16)

10. In many places in the Torah, there is information about Noah, Lot, David, Job and Jacob that they drank alcohol and got drunk. (Genesis 27:25, 37. II. Samuel 11: 13; Job, 1: 13)

These and other similar contradictions and immoral expressions existing in the Torah lead the scholars to reach the conclusion that it is not/cannot be an outcome of revelation and that it is not a written by one person. In the west, the Holy Scripture studies carried on since the 17th century have revealed that more than one person have a role in writing the Torah. As a result of these studies and analysis of the Torah, it is accepted that the Torah available today was comprised later in the wake of compilation of various texts.

All of these show that the Old Testament was compiled a long time after its revelation by different people without paying attention to the contradictions in it. As is seen here, the Torah which was revealed by Allah was later altered by people while Gospel was also altered by people and thus these two Books lost their characteristic to lead people to the Straight Path. As a result, Allah the Exalted sent the Qur'an with the purpose of leading humanity to the Straight Path. With the revelation of the Qur'an, the previous divine Books have been abrogated.

II- BELIEF IN BOOKS IN CHRISTIANITY

Christians accept both the Old Testament (Tanakh) and the New Testament. They call them together as the Holy Bible. Even though the Old Testament is the holy book of the Jews, it is also regarded as holy by the Christians. However, the New Testament is accepted as sacred only by the Christians.

According to the Christians, after the first Covenant that God made with Moses, "the Last Covenant" was established between God and Jesus. Therefore, the corpus of texts of the Last Covenant is given the name "the New Testament". The New Testament consists of 27 Books. Four of them are Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, while the remaining twenty-three books are various epistles of the Disciples of Jesus.

Even though the Four Gospels have certain differences among themselves, because there are certain similarities among the first three Gospels, they are called "Synoptic (Similar) Gospels." The Synoptic Gospels are considered to be written in the years between 60-85 CE, while John, the fourth of the Gospels is thought to be written in 100 CE. Mark is the earliest one of the Gospels that is written in the years between 63-70 CE. Considering that the crucifixion of Jesus took place when he was 33 years old, it is understood that the earliest Gospel was written 30 years after Jesus.

According to Christians, Jesus neither wrote the revelation himself nor had them written. He adhered to the Holy Books before him, but acted as a reformist by offering new interpretations on them. He said, *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfill."* (Matthew 5: 17) During the time of Jesus and his Disciples, Christians used the Books they took over from the Jews. For them, because Jesus did not write or did not have anything written, the New Testament or the Gospels did not exist in that period. There was only the oral preaching of Jesus.

After the death of Jesus, believing that he would come back soon, the first Christians did not need to write his words down. However, when the arrival of Messiah delayed and the number of the ones who were with Jesus and comprehended his message decreased, the prominent Christians in various regions began writing the words of Jesus as much as they remembered. Thus, various gospels and epistles that reflect the beliefs and views of every community emerged.

The Christians never accept that Jesus brought a Book or a Gospel. In this respect, they differ from the Islamic belief. According to the Christians, Jesus himself is the Word and Revelation of God. The message of the revelation is the life and preaching of Jesus. The books called Gospels that we have today are not the revelation in the sense that Muslims perceive. These books are the written form of what the early disciples of Jesus heard or saw from him. However, believing that the authors of these books were under the guardianship of God and the Holy Spirit, Christians believe in that they are authentic and the product of revelation.

Because of the fact that the early Christians narrated the sayings of Jesus orally, the authentic Bible revealed to the Prophet Isa by Allah could not be preserved in its original form. On the other hand, Paul who converted into Christianity later wrote his opinions about Jesus and sent to various Christian communities even though he did not see Jesus in person or believe in him in his lifetime. Thus, the epistles of Paul constituted the first written documents of the Books of New Testament and became one of their sources. So these epistles were written even before the Gospels that we have today.

While there had been only one Gospel until the midst of the second century, later numerous other Gospels appeared. For this reason, a council was held in Nicaea in the year 325 in which Jesus was accepted as god, and four Gospels along with 23 Epistles, a total of 27 books, which support the divinity of Jesus were chosen from among tens of gospels and hundreds of epistles. To the council mentioned above, more than two thousand representatives attended among whom those who opposed the divinity of Jesus were forcefully detracted from it because of religious and political reasons. The remaining 318 clergy accepted the divinity of Jesus. Thereby, the Gospels that do not consider Jesus as god were accepted as *Apocrypha*, in other words the authenticity of which is suspicious, and were burnt. (Ömer Faruk Harman, ***Günlük Yaşayış Ansiklopedisi***, "İncil"; Suat Yıldırım, ***Mevcut Kaynaklara Göre Hıristiyanlık***, p. 160-164.)

This situation did not escape from the notice of many Christians throughout history. So with the aim of investigating the contradictions and inconsistencies in the Bible, they developed a method called "Holy Bible Criticism" and examined the texts that are regarded as holy under the light of scholarly data. This criticism method has been applied on both the Old Testament and New Testament. Initially, the Church did not permit this method of criticism because they believed in that the whole Bible was the product of revelation. However, with the Renaissance movement, when the scientific data obtained through natural sciences conflicted with the information about the Holy Bible, the Church became obliged to support this kind of studies in order to interpret the contradictions in the Bible allegorically and to keep this kind of studies done under its control. Especially the western scholars such as Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes and Spinoza examined the Holy Bible critically. As a result, different denominations and movements of ideas in the west developed their own perception of revelation and Holy Book.

A. THE GOSPELS AND THE MATTER OF CONTRADICTIONS

According to Islamic faith, the Injil revealed to the Prophet Isa is one of the Divine Books. This is expressed in the Qur'an as follows: "*He has revealed to you the Book with truth, confirming that which is before it (Tawrat and Injil)*" (Al Imran, 3: 4)

Therefore, the Gospel in its original form was a guide to the True Path just as the Qur'an is. However, as it was mentioned before, the Gospel was corrupted in the course of time by the church and the priests. The most significant indication of corruption manifested itself within doctrinal issues while Christians strayed from the principle of tawhid and embraced the trinity.

The Qur'an speaks of only a single Gospel. Human reason also predicates that the divine truths and information revealed to Jesus should have been collected in a book as it is the case with the Qur'an.

The Qur'an notifies the status of the Gospel with following verses: *"And when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture, (saying), 'You must make it known to the people and not conceal it.' But they threw it away behind their backs and exchanged it for a small price..."* (Ali Imran 3:187) *"And from those who say, 'We are Christians' We took their covenant; but they forgot a portion of that of which they were reminded..."* (al-Ma'idah 5: 14)

It is a significant problem that there are more than one Gospel which narrate the life story of Jesus and contain certain contradictions. As a matter of fact, as early as two centuries after the birth of Christianity, this kind of problems led to the emergence of serious debates. Even though Jesus himself spoke Aramaic, the text of the New Testament is all in Ancient Greek. Moreover, the earliest Ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament dates back to 4th century CE. Followings can be mentioned as instances for the contradictions within the Gospels that caused conflicts:

B. SOME CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

Since Christians acknowledge both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the above-mentioned critiques directed to the Jews should be directed to the Christians as well. Because the texts in which the immoral stories are told are accepted as sacred by the Christians and are recited during the church services today. In addition to them, the Gospels include certain other contradictions.

1. While the Gospels of Mark and John never mention about the genealogy of Jesus, Gospels of Matthew and Luke give information about his lineage. Gospel of Matthew counts 40 people from Jesus to Ibrahim whereas Luke lists 55 people.

2. It is mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew, Marcus and Luke that Jesus was baptized while the Gospel of John never refers to it. (Matthew 3: 17; Mark 1: 9-12; Luke 3: 21-22)

3. According to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus was originally from Galilee according to the Gospel of John, he was from Judea. (Matthew 13: 54-58; Mark 6: 4; Luke 6: 29; Yuhanna 4: 3, 43, 45.)

4. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, it is stated that Jesus was given the mission of prophethood before John the Baptist was put into prison. However, in the Gospel John it is stated

that it was after the imprisonment of John the Baptist. (Matthew 4: 12-17; Mark 1: 14-15; John 3: 22-26, 4: 1-3)

5. According to Gospels of Mathew, Mark and Luke, the prophethood of Jesus lasted for one year, while it was more than two years according to the Gospel of John.

6. The number of generations passed between David and Jesus is 26 according to the Gospel of Matthew while it is 40 according to the Gospel of Luke.

7. While the Gospels of Matthew and Luke include different stories about Jesus' childhood, the Gospel of Mark does not mention his childhood at all.

8. Jesus' coming back to the earth will occur in Galilee according to the Gospel of Matthew but it is stated in the Gospel of Luke that it will take place in Judea.

9. The woman who asked Jesus to heal her daughter when he came to Tyre and Sidon was from Canaan according to the Gospel of Matthew, while she was Greek according to the Gospel of Mark.

10. While Jesus is attributed divinity in certain verses in the Gospels, there are also references to him as human being. How is it possible for someone to be both human and the son of god? (For more detailed information see, Şaban Kuzgun, ***Dört İncil Farklılıkları ve Çelişkileri***, Ankara, 1996)

According to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, at the time of his crucifixion, Jesus spoke as follows,

"My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me!" This expression cannot be used by a prophet, for it means rebellion against Allah.

All of these contradictions are inconsistencies that cannot be accepted even in the man-made books. For the humans who ask for certain evidences from the prophets even though they saw them in person and witnessed their Books to accept and believe in such incoherent Books. These contradictions indicate that the authors of the Gospels wrote them unaware of each other and according to their own wishes. Since such inconsistencies cannot exist in a Book attributed to Allah and a prophet cannot divinize himself or humanize the God, the Holy Books of Christianity lost their feature of divinity according to Islamic belief.

In the recent years, for examining the authenticity of the Bible a new discipline has emerged under the name of "Holy Bible Criticism" in the west. A committee was established for these studies that consists of 200 academics and priests. The committee has investigated since 1986 at which rate the sayings and actions attributed to Jesus are authentic and the results have been published in following studies. One of them is "*The Five Gospel*" (1993). The study sets forth that the 518 sayings which are claimed to belong to Jesus has 1544 versions and only 18 of them might belong to him. The second one is "*The Act of Jesus*" (1998). In this study also only the 16 % of the 176 incidents told in the Gospels are seen possible to belong Jesus while it is remarked that the rest 84 % of them cannot be the acts of him. (See, *İslâmiyat: İsa Özel Sayısı*, III, Ankara 2000, p. 50-57)

As this example also shows, the objective studies based on historical facts support the arguments of the Qur'an about the corruption of the Torah and the Gospel.

III. BELIEF IN BOOKS IN ISLAM

According to Islamic belief, the belief in Books means to believe in that certain Books were revealed to certain Prophets and that these Books are completely true and correct. Allah the Exalted commanded the Prophet to believe in all Books sent by Him and said, *"O you who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Book which He has revealed to His Messenger and the Book which He revealed before; and whoever disbelieves in Allah and His angels, His messengers and the Last Day has certainly gone far astray."* (al-Nisa, 4: 136)

Since the principles of Islamic faith are related to each other, belief in Allah, His Messengers and the Books cannot be separated. Believing in Allah necessitates believing in the Messengers appointed by Allah to guide the humanity and believing in the Messengers necessitates accepting whatever these prophets brought from Allah.

The Holy Books come directly from Allah and are His Words. These Books are prescriptions sent to the humanity in order to save them from perversion and lead them to the True Path. According to Islamic faith, throughout the history, Allah the Exalted sent prophets with some pages or books. Accordingly, the Prophet Dawud (pbuh) was given Zabur, the Prophet Moses (pbuh) was given Tawrat, the Prophet Isa (pbuh) was received Injil; and the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (pbuh), was given the Qur'an. These Books are called the Major Books. Apart from these, there were also certain pages revealed to other prophets. Among them, 10 pages were revealed to the Prophet Adam, 50 to the Prophet Sheeth, 30 to the Prophet Idris and 10 to the Prophet Ibrahim. For Islam, Tawrat, Zabur and Injil from the Major Books are originally based on revelation. However, Muslims believe that these Books were changed and corrupted whereupon Allah the Exalted sent the Last of the Divine Books, i.e. al-Qur'an al-Karim.

A-AL-QUR'AN AL-KARIM AND ITS SUPERIOR FEATURES

Qur'an is the Last Divine Book revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad through Gabriel. The only Book that is preserved in its original form, without any change as Allah the Exalted revealed and will be protected the way it is until the Last Day is the Qur'an. Regarding this fact Allah says: "*Indeed, We have sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian.*" (al-Hijr, 15: 9)

The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad (pbuh) by means of Gabriel, the Angel of Revelation, for the first time in the cave of Hira in 610, in *Laylat al-Qadr* (Night of Power) in the month of Ramadan and the revelation was completed in 22 years, 2 months and 22 days. In the first revealed verses, Allah the Exalted said: *"Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is Most Honorable, Who taught (to write) with the pen. (He is the One who) Taught man what he knew not."* (al-Alaq, 96: 1-5) And the last verse was revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage in the year 632. In this verse, remarking that Islam is the last religion, Allah the Exalted said: *"This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion..."* (al-Ma'idah, 5: 3)

The fact that the Qur'an has not been changed at all to this day is related to the particular diligence shown to its protection since the time it was revealed. For, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had the verses written down as soon as they were revealed by the Scribes of Revelation and the Companions memorized the chapters of the Qur'an and recited them during their prayers. Thus, through memorizing and writing down, the Qur'an could be preserved in the way Allah's Messenger (pbuh) conveyed. The pages on which verses from the Qur'an were written took its final form because the revelation ended after the demise of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and were collected into a Book form during the caliphate of Abu Bakr. With the spread of Islam, the Qur'an was copied during the caliphate of Uthman and the copies were sent to various Muslim countries. These first copies of the Qur'an are still preserved today in Istanbul, Cairo, Tashkent, etc.

It is a known fact that Tawrat, Zabur and Injil which were also revealed by Allah have not been preserved in their original form through the same diligence and their original copies are lost. There are many volumes of books written about doubts about the information provided in the Tawrat. As to Injil, even though it was originally revealed in Aramaic, there is no Aramaic Bible exist today. Hence, in respect to both the information provided in the Qur'an and the way this information is preserved until the present day, the Qur'an is superior to the rest of the Divine Books.

According to Islam, in order to be a Muslim, one needs to believe in the Qur'an, the Prophet (pbuh), and all of the provisions stated in the Qur'an. The six fundamental articles of faith according to Qur'an are as follows: belief in Allah the Exalted, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Day of Judgment, and fate and predestination. The Qur'an also mentions the acts of worship that Muslims are prescribed to do. Some of these acts can be briefly mentioned as follows: to perform the obligatory prayer, to fast, to give charity and to pay alms, to perform pilgrimage, to abstain from the prohibited acts, etc. The details of these acts of worship are explained by the statements (sunnah) of the Prophet (pbuh). In a general sense, Islam accepts all actions done by human beings in order to please Allah as acts of worship. The Qur'an also mentions certain moral behaviors, such as loving all creation and treating them gently, obeying one's parents, etc. It presents the Prophet (pbuh) as the best exemplar regarding these actions. Moreover, the Qur'an introduces certain provisions that regulates the relationship of individuals with each other, with the community, and the government. It brings the principle of justice forward about administration while commanding to respect even the rights of those who do not believe in Islam.

The Distinguishing Features of the Qur'an

It is possible to specify the above-mentioned features of the Qur'an in a list as follows:

1- The Qur'an have been written down and memorized since the beginning of the revelation. Thus, it has been preserved by means of two significant methods: namely writing down and memorizing. Even today, there are hundred of thousands of "*hafizs*" who memorized the whole Qur'an since their young age.

2- It is the revealed Word of God in terms of both wording and meaning.

3- It is transmitted to us by means of successive narration. In other words, it is reported by such a large number of people that they cannot be expected to agree upon a lie.

4- It is under the protection of Allah. Allah the Exalted did not express this assurance for any other previous Book.

5- It is an understandable Book. It is easy to understand and to apply in one's life.

6- It is comprehensive and universal. The Qur'an gave answers to the needs of people since the day it began to be revealed and will continue to do so.

7- It is a miraculous Book. Every Prophet has a miracle. The greatest miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the Qur'an. Its miracle is that there will never be a Book (not even a single chapter) which is similar to it.

8- Unlike the other revelation based Books, which were altered after their revelation, the Holy Qur'an does not consists of any contradiction or a sign of corruption. This fact is expressed in the Qur'an as follows: *"Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from (any) other than Allah, they would have found within it many contradictions."* (al-Nisa, 4: 82)

9- The Qur'an, above all, is a guide to the Right Path. However, besides this, none of the information given in the Qur'an ages ago regarding nature has contradicted with the results obtained by means of the modern sciences today.

10-It is a Book that is distinguished with its rhetoric and laconicism (expressing much with a few words). So much so that the most prominent Arab poets who heard the verses gave up writing poems.

11-The Qur'an challenges the disbelievers and points out that they cannot bring forth not even a single chapter similar to those of the Qur'an. (Hud, 11: 13; al-Baqara, 2: 23; Yunus 10: 38) From the time it was revealed until today, there have never been anybody to respond this challenge of the Qur'an.

12-The Qur'an was revealed to an illiterate prophet with all these features, and has come until today as the greatest miracle of the Prophet (pbuh).

READING TEXT

Information from the Christians' and Jews' own Holy Books about the Issue of Alteration

After the Prophet Musa, Davud and Suleiman, the Jews went astray, forgot the Tawrat, and altered it. This historical fact is mentioned not only in the Qur'an but also in Holy Books of Jews and Christians that we have today. Below are some examples on this matter:

"How can you say, 'We are wise; we possess the Lord's Instruction,' when the lying pen of the scribes (of Jewish scholars) has surely **distorted** it (the Torah)?... Look, they have rejected the Lord's word; what kind of wisdom is that?" (Jeremiah 8: 8-9)

"Manasseh (the King of Israel) did what was evil in the Lord's eyes, imitating the detestable practices of the nations that the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. He rebuilt the shrines (where previously the idols were worshipped), set up altars for Baal (an idol) and made the Asherah (a sacred pole)... He bowed down to all the stars in the sky and worshipped them. He even built altars in the two courtyards of the Lord's temple... He burned his own son alive, consulted sign readers and fortune-tellers, and used mediums and diviners..." (II Kings 21: 2-6)

"Ahaz, the King of Judah (also) burned his own son alive by imitating the detestable customs of other nations... He offered sacrifices in the shrines where idols were worshipped..." (II Kings 16:3-46) The Hebrew text of the part related to King Ahaz in the exegesis of the Torah is as follows: "*Ahaz batal et ha Avoda ve hatam et Ha- Torah*" (**Ahaz rejected offering sacrifices to the Lord and sealed up the Torah**) (Quoted from TB, Sanhedrin, 103b in Baki Adam, *Yahudi Kaynaklarına Göre Tevrat*, Pınar Yayınları, Istanbul 2001, p. 105-111)

"So Jeroboam, the king asked for advice and then made two gold calves. He said to the people, 'It's too far for you to go all the way up to Jerusalem. Look, people of Israel! Here are your gods who brought you out from the land of Egypt.' He put one calf in Bethel, and the other he placed in Dan. The people went to worship before the one calf at Bethel and before the other one as far as Dan. Jeroboam made shrines on the high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people..." (I King 12:28-31)

CHAPTER EVALUATION

A. Answer the following questions.

1. Which parts is the Old Testament (*Tanakh*) constituted from?
2. How did the Jews alter the Torah according to the Qur'an?
3. When and by whom were the Christian Gospels written?
4. What are the contradictions found in the Jewish and Christian Holy Books in a general sense? Discuss whether a Holy Book can contain such contradictions and accusations.
5. What are the most distinguishing features of the Qur'an compared to the Holy Book of Jews, i.e. Old Testament and the Holy Book of Christians, i.e. the New Testament?

B. Mark the correct answers to the multiple-choice questions below.

1. What is the name of the Holy Book revealed to the Prophet Moses?

A. Nevi'im

B. Ketuvim

C. Tawrat (the Torah)

D. Old Testament

2. Which one of the following is not among the books of the New Testament?

A. Matthew – Mark

B. Luke – John

C. Acts – Epistles of Paul

D. Psalms – Song of Solomon

3. When was it decided that the Christian Holy Book is constituted from 27 Books, 4 of which are the Gospels and the remaining 23 of which are the Epistles?

A. 381, Council of Constantinople

B. 325, Council of Nicaea

C. 451, Council of Chalcedon

D. 431, Council of Ephesus

4. Which one of the following Holy Books reached the present time in its original form without any corruption?

A. The Torah

B. Gospels

C. The Qur'an

D. Psalms

5. Which one of the following cannot be among the features of the Qur'an?

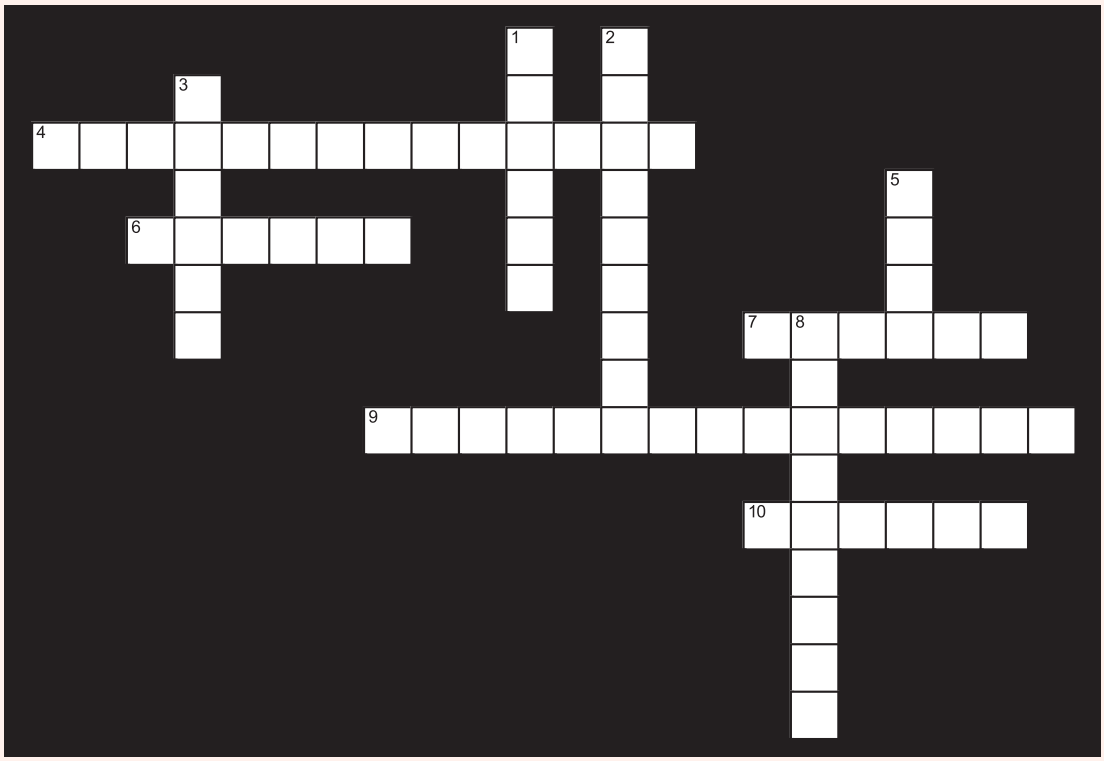
A. It is revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

B. It is the Last of the Holy Books

C. It is written down centuries after its revelation

D. It is a miraculous Book.

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



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4. The masjid built by Muslims on the remains of the Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem and the Prophet Muhammad visited it during the miracle of ascension to heavens *(mi'raj)*.

6. The name of the books of Exegesis written on the Tanakh (the Old Testament), the Jewish Holy Book.

7. Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) which is the second source of Islamic sciences after the Qur'an.

9. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke that are similar in terms of their content are known with this term. The Gospel of John is different from these three and is the one that is written last.

10. The language spoken by Arabs. It is at the same time the common language among Muslims because the Qur'an is revealed in Arabic.

↓

1. The Book given to the Prophet Dawud according to Islamic belief. For Jews, it is a book in the Tanakh.

2. It means covenant. According to Christians, God made covenants with Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Therefore, Christians call the Holy Books of Jews the Old Testament and their own Holy Book the New Testament.

3. The term with which the Jews call their Holy Book. According to Christians, it is called the Old Testament.

5. One who does not know how to read and write, illiterate. It is one of the attributes of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

8. It means being of questionable authenticity, fabricated, false, and absurd. The Christian Church consider all gospels apocrypha except the 27 Books found in the New Testament. For Christians, the Gospel of Barnabas is also among the Apocrypha.

CHAPTER VI

BELIEF IN PROPHETS, ANGELS AND THE HEREAFTER IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

THEMES

- BELIEF IN PROPHETS
- BELIEF IN ANGELS
- BELIEF IN THE HEREAFTER

I. BELIEF IN PROPHETS

A- BELIEF IN PROPHETS IN JUDAISM

Belief in prophets is one of the principles of Jewish faith. Most of the prophets who came to Jews were of Jewish nationality. According to Judaism, the prophets are classified into two groups: the real prophets and the false prophets. The real prophets should call people to worship God and prohibit them from worshipping other deities. Moreover, when the real prophets prophesize something, it should come true. On the other hand, the fake prophets invite people to worship idols, to consume alcohol, to do all kinds of evil and their prophecies do not come true.

According to Judaism, prophethood begins with Abraham. Moses is the greatest of all prophets in Jewish belief. After Moses, during the reigns of King David and King Solomon, several prophets were sent such as Samuel, Nathan, Gad, etc. There are also other prophets mentioned in the Torah who had their own books among whom are Hosea, Jonah, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Malachi (4th century BCE) is accepted as the last one of the prophets. Jews do not believe in the prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad (pbuh). According to Jews, God also sent female prophets such as Deborah and Noadya as well as Miriam, sister of Moses. When the Jewish history is examined, there have been times that several prophets fulfilled the duty of prophethood at the same time.

The belief of prophethood in Judaism is a bit different from that of Islam. The kings and soothsayer have a special status similar to the prophets. For instance, the Prophet David and Solomon are considered to be kings and Aaron is regarded as a soothsayer. While at the same time, it is accepted that they received the revelation of Jehovah even though they are not called prophets. In the Jewish history, sometimes the prophets became more at the forefront while other times the soothsayers or kings were more at the forefront.

The prophets in Judaism are only responsible for delivering the revelation they received from God to the people of Israel. Other than this characteristic, they are not different from other people. Even though fornication, lying, idol worship, etc. are prohibited in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 5: 7-9, 20; 22: 22; Exodus 21: 12), it is stated that even the prophets committed such sins.

Sins Attributed to the Prophets in the Old Testament

According to the Jewish Holy Book, the Old Testament, Noah got drunk, laid naked in his tent and cursed his son Ham who saw him in this position. (Genesis 9:20-25)

And Lot drank wine, got drunk and then committed adultery with his two daughters. (Genesis 19:30-38)

Jacob offered his father wine and deceived him by playing tricks on him together with his mother to introduce himself as his brother Esau and took his brother's birthright for being the firstborn whereupon, believing in his words, his father blessed him. (Genesis, 27th chapter)

David fornicated with the wife of his own army commander Uriah and then with the intention of his death, he made his commander to fight on the forefront of the army and caused him to be killed. (II Samuel 11th chapter)

Aaron built an idol and Solomon worshipped the idols as a result of his wives' deception. (Exodus 32: 1-20; I Kings 11: 1-13)

In many chapters of the Torah, it is mentioned that the Jewish prophets Noah, Lot, David, Job drunk wine and got drunk. (Genesis 27: 25, 37; II Samuel 11:13; Job 1: 13)[1]

As seen in the above given information, despite being regarded as crime, the Prophets are able to commit sins. Therefore, it is not possible for the Jewish prophets to be models for their communities. Moreover, it is reported in the Torah that some of the prophets objected to God Yahweh, accept the duty of prophethood reluctantly, and even argue with God and interrogate Him. (Exodus 4: 10-17) This means attributing incompetence to God, limiting His power, and degrading Him.

As for Islam, the aforementioned prophets are innocent messengers like all other prophets. They are free from the attributions and slanders of Jews. Among the names whom Jews consider prophets, Muslims accept only the ones whose names are clearly mentioned in the Qur'an.

B- THE BELIEF IN PROPHETS IN CHRISTIANITY

Because Christians accept the Old Testament, they believe in all the prophets mentioned there. In fact, the Gospels also refer to these prophets. (Matthew 1: 22; 2: 17; Luke, 4: 27) On the other hand, Christians accept Zachary and John as prophets unlike the Jews who do not consider them prophets.

In two places in the Gospels, Jesus states about himself that he is a prophet. The expression in the Gospel of Mark reads as "Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.'" (Mark 6: 4; Luke 3: 33) The people around Jesus accepted him as a prophet because of the miracles he had shown. Jesus showed various miracles such as raising people from death, healing the blind, tubercular and epileptic people. (Matthew 9: 27-31, 8-5-13; Mark 3: 1-6, 5: 35-43; Luke 11: 14)

In the beginning, Jesus' prophethood mission was directed to the Jews. He expresses in the Gospels that he was charged with the mission of delivering the message of God in order to gather the lost sheep of Israelites, in other words reunite the people of Israel who had been separated and dispersed. He even warned his disciples not to go to other communities to deliver the divine message. However, according to the Christian faith, after Jesus was crucified, raised from death, and appeared to Paul, he called him and other disciples to spread Christianity all over the world. Therefore, Jesus devoted all his lifetime to convey his message to Israelites only.

1. This kind of attributions in a Holy Book are the most important signs of its corrupted. So, because the same subject is also related to the previous chapter titled "Belief in Books", the readers may refer to the sub-title "Signs of Distortion and Contradictions in the Torah" in that chapter.

Unlike Judaism and Islam, the institution of prophethood in Christianity has undergone fundamental changes. Accordingly, Christian understanding of prophethood is quite different from that of Judaism and Islam.

In Christianity, Jesus has a mission that is beyond prophethood. He is regarded as the son of God. As a result of this belief, his disciples have been raised to the position of the prophets of Jesus the god. The disciples who assert themselves to be prophets are stated in the New Testament telling how Jesus charged them with the mission of prophethood. (Acts 22: 6-10)

As a matter of fact, when the relationship between Allah, the prophet and the people in Islam is considered, the change in the status of Jesus and raising him to the position of God do not compromise with the conception of prophethood in the Qur'an. As is the case in the Old Testament, the New Testament also refers to certain female prophets among whom are Anna the daughter of Phanuel and the daughter of Apostle Philip.

According to Islamic faith, Jesus is one of the prophets who received revelation from Allah and were charged with the mission of delivering the divine message (*tabligh*). Allah the Exalted sent him a Book titled as *Injil*, but the Christians run into contradictions about it within the course of time. The Christians exaggerated in honoring and showing respect to Jesus and characterized him as the son of god. Thus, while he was just a messenger of Allah, he was exalted to the position of god.

According to Islamic belief, Jesus was not crucified (the Jews crucified someone who looked like him, probably, Judas Iscariot), but rather was ascended to the Heavens by Allah. This is stated in the following verses of the Qur'an

"*And (because of) their saying, "Indeed, we killed Messiah 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), the Messenger of Allah" (We cursed them). And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but (another one) was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, they only follow an assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain. Rather, Allah raised him up to Himself. And Allah is Ever All-Powerful, All-Wise. And there is none from the People of the Scripture but that he will surely believe in Jesus before his death. And on the Day of Resurrection he will be against them a witness.*" (al-Nisa, 4: 157-159)

It is a clear fact that Allah the Exalted saved Jesus from the Jews who wanted to kill him and raised him to His presence. On the other hand, the nature and the time of his ascension is unclear. According to the interpretation of most of the Muslim scholars, by His Endless Power, Allah the Almighty raised Jesus to a special place in the spiritual heavens.

While Jews do not accept the prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad (pbuh) and Christians do not accept the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh), Muslims believe in all prophets sent by Allah beginning with the Prophet Adam. This can be regarded as the proof of the fact that Islam is the last worldwide, comprehensive, and true religion.

C- THE BELIEF IN THE PROPHETS IN ISLAM

1- Beliving in the Prophets in Islam

To believe in the prophets is one of the principles of Islamic creed. It means to accept that certain people were sent by Allah to guide humanity to the straight path and all information brought by these people is from Allah, authentic, and true. Allah the Exalted prescribed upon every Muslim to believe in all prophets without making any distinction among them. A verse on this matter reads as

"Say, (O believers), 'We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we submit to Him.'" (al-Baqarah, 2: 136.)

As it is expressed in the Qur'an, Allah the Exalted sent messengers for centuries and called people through these distinguished people to accept the truth and live in accordance with it. According to Islamic belief, this call has been delivered to all communities. In other words, there is no community to which a messenger has not been sent. This is mentioned in the Qur'an as follows: "*...for there never was any community but a warner has [lived and] passed away in its midst.*" (Fatir, 35: 24)

a- The Characteristics of the Prophets

According to Islamic creed, the prophets were human beings just like everyone else. However, they were very special servants who were chosen by Allah. They were distinguished people who delivered the revelation that they received from Allah to their people without adding anything to it. In this respect, first they themselves fully obeyed the Divine Message that they conveyed and became exemplars to their people by their way of life. This is why the belief in the prophets in Islam differs from that of Judaism and Christianity. Prophets are not ordinary people who can commit any kind of evil acts as Jews believe. They are not "gods" or "sons of god" either as Christians claim about Jesus. On the contrary to the extreme beliefs of Jews and Christians, Islam characterizes the prophets as very decent people and defines them with proper attributes. The characteristics of the prophets according to Islamic creed are as follows:

1- *Sidq* (Truthfulness)

Prophets are always truthful in their words and actions. It is not possible for them to lie. Their truthfulness are affirmed even by those who do not believe in them. No lies or deceptions that violate their honesty and truthfulness were manifested by the messengers of Allah. Since it is not even appropriate to condone such attributes even for ordinary people, it would never be possible to think of them about the prophets. A prophet who is known by lying does not will have no cogency left before his people, because it will not be possible to know which one of his words are true and which ones are lie.

2- *Amanah* (Trust)

The prophets are the most reliable people of all humanity. Even the non-believers felt endless confidence in the prophets. In fact, even the polytheists used the phrase "*Muhammad al-amin* (Muhammad the trustworthy)" to call the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). They used to entrust their

most valuable belonging to him rather than to their own relatives. When the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was to migrate from Mecca to Medina, he had some goods that had been entrusted to him by the polytheists. Although his life was in danger, he left Ali behind in Mecca to deliver the entrusted goods to their rightful owners, because it was not possible for a prophet to betray the people's trust.

3- *Fatanah* (Intelligence)

Fatanah is an attribute meaning that the prophets are intelligent, wise and meticulous. The antonym of the word, i.e. foolishness, is unthinkable about the prophets. Because they were intelligent and wise, they would easily understand, memorize and preserve the revelations. The following verse attracts our attention to the fact that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) was bestowed with superior intelligence and strong memory by Allah: *"We will make you recite, (O Muhammad), and you will not forget."* This attribute of him could be clearly seen not only in religious matters as a prophet but also in his leadership in worldly issues as a commander and the head of the state.

4- *Tabligh* (Delivering the Divine Message)

Tabligh is another characteristic that the prophets are supposed to have. They are charged with delivering the commands and prohibitions that they received from God to people without any addition or reduction. Every messenger fulfilled his duty of prophethood without fearing from anybody by standing against all kinds of dangers and conveyed all the revelation that they received from God to their *ummah* without making any changes. One of the reasons behind the Prophet Muhammad's being an illiterate person provides a clear evidence for the fact that whatever he delivered was not his own fabrication but he got it directly from a divine source. Because having such deep knowledge by someone who does not know how to read and write can only be explained by the fact that he is a prophet.

When the prophets do not fulfill their duty of delivering the divine message, they fail their duty of prophethood. A verse in this regard reads as follows *"Oh Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you don't do it, then you have not conveyed His message..."* (al-Maidah, 5: 67) While delivering the message of religion, the prophets also fulfill their duty of explaining the religious provisions and principles, educating and purifying his community from inappropriate behaviors.

The prophets were always aware of the fact that they were under the control of the revelation. Despite all kinds of hardships, they did not leave alone those who insisted on disbelief but rather kept reminding them the divine messages. They continued to carry on their mission of *tabligh* with all their sincerity without any expectation of worldly benefits. They rather expressed that they expect their reward only from Allah as it is stated in the following verse: *"And I do not ask you for it any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds."* (al-Sh'uara, 26: 109)

5- *Ismah* (Innocence)

The word *ismah* means that the prophets do not commit sins and are protected from committing sins. The prophets are the messengers of Allah chosen among his servants and prepared especially for this mission. This fact is indicated in the following verse: *"And indeed they are, to Us, among the chosen and outstanding."* (Saad, 38: 47)

Another verse related to this message is as follows: *"And indeed, they were about to tempt you away from that which We revealed to you in order to (make) you fabricate about Us something else; and then they would have taken you as a friend. And if We had not strengthened you, you would have almost inclined to them a little."* (al-Isra, 17: 73-74) Aforementioned verses inform that Allah the Exalted protected the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from inclining to the polytheists and aiding them. It is clearly declared that Allah's Messenger (pbuh) was protected by Allah's prevention and bestowing him the power to persist.

According to Islamic faith, the feature of erring is not entirely taken away from the prophets but they can stay away from the sins by means of their strong self-control that Allah gave them. In other words, the attribute of *ismah* is not a characteristic that prevent the prophets from sinning. As a matter of fact, it is known that the prophets made some minor mistakes called "*zalla.*" For example, the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) turned away from the blind named Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum who came to the Prophet while he was preaching to the people around him. Upon this incident, Allah's Messenger was warned with the verses of chapter Abasa (80). The prophets who were aware of their mistakes immediately turned to Allah and asked for His forgiveness.

According to Muslim scholars, prophets are considered as sinless after they are appointed with the mission of prophethood. However, they had been known as esteemed people and their words and acts had been respected even before their prophethood. They had avoided every kind of discreditable acts that would damage, degrade their personality and harm their mission of *tabligh* in the future.

The prophets are sinless particularly in terms of faith and *tabligh*. There is no doubt about their innocence in respect to these two issues. Never in their lives, did they any kind of action about religious matters which would harm the principle of *tawhid* such as blasphemy, dissension or disobedience to Allah. In that vein, there is also no action seen in them that would be against their mission of tabligh like hindering the revelation, changing, adding or reducing anything from it.

b- Certain Superior Characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

The Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (pbuh) is the last link in the chain of the prophethood. Therefore, he has some obvious characteristics that distinguish him from the previous prophets. Let's remember some of the most significant characteristics of him at the end of the chapter related to the prophethood:

1- The Qur'an, i.e. the compilation of the messages brought by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from Allah the Exalted, has reached the present day without undergoing any changes. It is the greatest miracle of him.

2- While the earlier prophets were sent to certain communities, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was sent to all humanity. Thus, his message is universal. Following verse is related to this point: *"And We have not sent you except as a bringer of good tidings and a warner comprehensively to mankind..."* (al-Saba', 34: 28)

3- His prophethood will continue until the Day of Judgment. The chain of the prophets has come to an end with him which means that there will be no other prophet after him. Following verse states this fact *"...(He is) the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets..."* (al-Ahzab 33: 40)

4- The religion he brought is the last and most perfect one as indicated in the following verse: *"...This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you..."* (al-Maidah, 5: 3)

5- There is sufficient knowledge and information available today about the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). His whole life has been recorded thoroughly and imprinted on the memories both orally and in written form. There is no other person throughout the history of the world other than the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) whose life is examined blow-by-blow and is subject to numerous studies by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

The lack of information about Judaism and Christianity and the fact that the available knowledge was recorded much later than their lifetimes cause certain suspicions about the lives of the Prophet Musa and Isa. There are even discussions today in the West about whether Jesus lived in reality or was a mythical character. When the suspicions in question caused by imperfect information is taken into account, it is seen that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has a very clear and explicit life on the stage of history. The fact that the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) life was meticulously recorded with such details increases the trust to the message he brought. History that has a great deal of information about his life also has true information about the messages he brought.

6- The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the best exemplar (*uswa hasana*) for the humanity. As well as being a prophet, he was a human being, too. Therefore, he fulfilled his needs of human nature by getting married, having children, and engaging with trade. With these attributes, he has become a model to all people of all levels. ın order to realize the aim of the religion, people are in need of a concrete guide and model. One of the reasons of sending the prophets is that they were perfect models for the people.

Being a model to people has reached its perfection with the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as pointed out by the following verse: *"Indeed there is a good example for you in the Messenger of Allah, for all those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much."* (al-Ahzab, 33: 21)

His way of life will continue to provide the best exemplar for the people until the Day of Judgment, because his life was adorned with his supreme morality. Allah the Exalted says in this regard, *"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."* (al-Qalam, 68: 4) Allah's Messenger (pbuh) has been a model by being a religious leader, head of state, commander of the army and as a father of his family. He also has become a model by his *shukr* (showing gratitude) and modesty when he had blessings, by his patience and submission in the hard times, and by his generosity when distributing the war booty. Likewise, he has been a role model by his affection to his family; his mercy to the week, orphans, slaves, etc. and by his forgiveness and toleration to the sinners.

II. BELIEF IN ANGELS

A- THE BELIEF IN ANGELS IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The angels, according to Judaism, are spiritual beings created by God out of fire and are under the command of Him. The archangels are Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael (*Israfil*). Michael is in charge of protecting the Jews and controlling the skies. Gabriel is the angel of revelation and is the protector of fire. Uriel is the warden of the skies and the stars. And Raphael is a miraculous physician. Another angel called Kerubim serves as the gatekeeper of the Heaven with a fire sword. Seraphim is also considered among the archangels. Seraphim is also called the angel of death for taking people's lives.

Some of the angels are under the command of God and serve Him. In Judaism, the angels are imagined as humans with wings. It is thought that this perception has been passed to Jewish thought from the ancient Greek. The angels are in absolute obedience to Jehovah's commands. For instance, in order to carry out the orders of God, one angel destroyed 70,000 people by afflicting them with plague, while another one killed 185,000 people in a single night in the Assyrian camp. (II Kings 19:35; II Samuel 24:15)

In the following periods, with the influence of dualism, the angel of death was regarded as a different manifestation of the Devil who is considered the leader of the evil angels. Especially in Jewish mysticism, all evil is believed to be carried out by the demonic powers. The genies are regarded as the angels who suffer the wrath of God. According to the Jewish faith, the genies and the souls of the dead can enter to the bodies of living beings and take them under control.

Faith in angels is accepted as one of the principles of creed in the Christian denominations of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, while according to the Protestants, it is not. The angels are spirits without bodies that have free will and carry out the commands of God in Christianity. They are beyond time and space. It is narrated in Christian sources that angels are created out of fire and smoke. On the other hand, the Satan and the genies are evil souls that suffer the wrath of God. In Christian art, it is common to paint the angels in addition to the paintings of God and Jesus. There are numerous images of angels in the churches especially in the Orthodox ones. The angels are usually portrayed as protective and helpful women with two wings.

B- THE BELIEF IN ANGEL IN ISLAM

One of the principles of Islamic faith is to believe in the angels. Because Allah the Exalted revealed His message to His Prophets through angels. Denying the existence of the angels means denial of the messages brought by the prophets. In this regard, Allah the Exalted says in the Qur'an, *"... And whoever disbelieves in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day has certainly gone far astray."* (al-Nisa, 4: 136)

During the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh), Abdullah b. Suriya, one of the rabbis in the town of Fadak, argued with him and asked who delivered the revelation to him. Allah's Messenger told him that it was Gabriel who brought him the message. Then the rabbi said, "Gabriel is our enemy. We would believe in you, if someone else brought you the revelation." (Ibn Kathir, ***Tafsir***, I, 133 ff)

Upon this incident, the following verse was revealed: *"Say: Whoever is the enemy of Jibril - for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's command, verifying that which is before it and guidance and good news for the believers. Whoever is the enemy of Allah and His angels and His apostles and Jibril and Mikael, so surely Allah is the enemy of the unbelievers."* (al-Baqarah, 2: 97-98)

According to Islamic faith, angels are created from light. They cannot be seen; however, they can appear to people in different shapes with the permission of Allah. They do not act following their own desires. They absolutely obey the commands of Allah They do not eat, drink, get married or have children. They do not get exhausted or bored. The angels bring revelation, help believers in their good actions, lead them to the straight path and pray for their forgiveness. They also record the good and bad acts of human being.

In the Islamic faith, the archangels are Jibril, Mikael, Israfil and Azrail. Jibril delivers revelation to the prophets. Mikael is in charge of nature. Israfil is responsible to blow the trumpet to announce the end of the world. Azrail takes the life of those whose lifetime ends. Apart from these, there are also other angels: the *hafazah* angels that protect people, *kiraman katibin* angels that record everything people do and the *munkar* and *nakr* angels that question the dead in the grave. It is considered *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) in Islam to attribute divinity to the angels. And it is against Islam to identify them as sons or daughters of God. Islam also opposes to imagine the angels as female beings, as it is done in Christianity.

Islamic perception of angels is somewhat different from that of Judaism and Christianity. While angels in Islam are believed to be beings in absolute obedience to Allah, in Judaism and Christianity they are beings with free will and the ability to object God. According to the latter two religions, Devil is an angel who opposed God. However, in Islam, Devil is created from fire and thus is from the species of genies. Before he disobeyed Allah, he used to worship Him along with the angels. Then he got jealous for the creation of Adam and disobeyed the divine command and thus he was eternally cursed by Allah.

In the Islamic faith, angels are considered an example of innocence for human beings. A person can aim to be like an angel by spiritually improving oneself, maturing his or her morals and getting purified from the sins.

One commits certain crimes thinking that no one sees him or her. So, the angels have a dissuasive role in regards to commit sins. By means of believing in the existence of angels, one stays away from evil and turns towards the good deeds. In this matter, Allah the Exalted says, "*The two receivers (angels) receive, sitting on the right and on the left. Man does not utter any word except that there is an observer prepared (to record).*" (Qaf, 50: 17-18)

According to Islamic creed, genies are also created to worship Allah. There are good genies as well as bad ones. In other words there are believers and disbelievers among them as well. Allah created them from fire. Just as human beings, genies will also be held accountable for whatever they do. All of them under the control of Allah, so that they cannot do anything unless Allah permits. Allah the Exalted has given them certain amount of free will, which means they too are subject to test.

III. BELIEF IN THE HEREAFTER

A- BELIEF IN THE HEREAFTER IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

According to the available sources, there is no certain information about existence of belief in the Hereafter in the early times of Jewish faith. Because no clear verse is found in the Torah about eternal life and the Hereafter. However, some parts of the Old Testament imply the belief in the Hereafter (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2-3).

In the early Judaism, it was believed that every person, no matter they were good or bad, would go to a place called *sheol* where they would continue their existence and their souls would remain in the grave. Later, during the Babylonian captivity, it is seen that certain beliefs regarding resurrection and the Hereafter emerged among Jews under the influence of Persia. In fact, in later periods, the belief in the Hereafter was included among the 13 principles of Jewish faith that was compiled by Maimonides. The subjects regarding afterlife such as the heaven, hell, resurrection, etc. are mostly cited in Talmud, which is the interpretation of the Old Testament.

The belief in the Hereafter in Christianity is closely related to baptism and confession of the sins. Because, in a way, people are freed from the responsibility of being held accountable in the Hereafter by these two actions. In Christianity, every person is born with original sin. Acording to this understanding, everyone are responsible for the sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Paradise. (Genesis 3: 24) In order to save the humanity from the original sin, God sent his son Jesus to the earth and, Jesus freed people from the original sin by giving his life on the cross. In other words, God sacrificed his only son Jesus as a redemption for the sin of humankind. Today those who convert into Christianity and newborn infants are baptized. Baptism means to cleanse a person by immersing him/her into water or by pouring water over him/her. This is also one of the most important sacraments in Christianity. Through baptism, people are considered to be freed from the original sin. One who dies without being baptized is believed to leave this world with the original sin because he or she is not freed from it.

The confession of the sins in Christianity should also be evaluated within the context of punishment and the belief in the Hereafter. According to this belief, a sinner confesses his or her sins whereupon the priest absolves his or her sins in the name of the Church that has the authority to absolve the sins. Thus, the person regains his or her baptized state which he or she had lost by sinning. The priests base their authority of absolving sins on the following words that Jesus said to his disciples: "If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you don't forgive them, they aren't forgiven." (John 20: 23)

Because Christians believe that Jesus will come back to the earth, they establish all their beliefs regarding the Hereafter on this belief. For them, the Messiah who revived from death and ascended to the Heaven will return to earth in a time close to the Day of Judgment. They also believe that the state of the Messiah will be established in Palestine and this will be regarded as the beginning of the Day of Judgment. Jesus will return, according to Christians, on Sunday and start the life of Hereafter. Because of this belief, numerous messianic movements have emerged throughout history that give dates about coming of Jesus.

Christians believe in the existence of Heaven and Hell. However, the children who die in early ages are believed to be somewhere between the Heaven and Hell. As to those who do not repent properly, they will be cleansed in a place called "Purgatory". For the sinners, there will be an eternal torture in the Hell. In the same vein, those who do not believe in Jesus will also be subjected to this eternal torture.

It is also believed that before the Day of Judgment, there will be a period of chaos in the world ruled by the Antichrist after which the Messiah will come on earth, chain up the Antichrist and in the end the believing Christians will reign for a thousand years. It is also believed that before the Day of Judgment, wars will break out; epidemic illnesses, natural disasters and moral corruption will increase. On the Day of Judgment, Jesus will come back to earth, judge the people and so, the good people will go to the Heaven while the evil-doers will go to the Hell. Christians claim that the life of this world will be six thousand years. Two thousand years of which is emptiness, the other two thousand years will be the rule under religious law (*sharia*), and the remaining two thousand years will be the reign of the Messiah.

B- THE BELIEF IN THE HEREAFTER IN ISLAM

Belief in the Hereafter is one of the principles of Islamic faith and is mentioned generally together with belief in Allah. One who does not believe in the Hereafter converts out of Islam because of rejecting some of the verses of the Qur'an such as the following one: "*... And whosoever disbelieves in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, then indeed he has strayed far away.*"(al-Nisa 4: 136)

Our source of information about the Hereafter are the verses of the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet. Muslims learn about the facts related to the Hereafter such as blowing of the trumpet, recording of the deeds, measuring the deeds, etc. from these sources. According to Islamic faith, this world is a place of test. The place where the final accounts will be settled is the Hereafter and there, everybody will have the punishment for the sins they did in this world. Nothing will remain unknown in the Hereafter, everyone will face the consequences of their deeds. While the evil people will be punished with the Hell, the good ones will be rewarded with the Paradise by Allah. However, Allah the Exalted may forgive His slaves who deserve to be punished, if He wishes so, as a manifestation of His mercy.

With people's death, their life of Hereafter begins. In a hadith, it is stated that the grave is the first one among the stops of the Hereafter. (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 5) The life in the grave will continue until the Day of Judgment. The life in the Hereafter will then continue with all people's gathering in a place called *mahshar*. Then people will be judged for their deeds they did in this world which will be followed by the eternal life in the Hereafter. No one except Allah knows when the Day of Judgment will take place. However, there are certain major and minor signs of the Day of Judgment mentioned in the sayings of the Prophet.

Islam does not acknowledge the false beliefs that exist in other religions such as spirit of dead that wander freely in the world and haunt people as ghosts or zombies. According to Islamic belief, people's books in which their good and bad deeds are recorded is closed with their death. However, the recording of those who raise good children, leave behind useful knowledge and build something useful for the people, their good deeds will continue to be recorded in their book

of deeds as *sadaqa jariya* (continuous charity). In the same vein, those who open a way of sin will be considered still committing the sin as long as there are people who sin through the path they opened. This will continue to be recorded down on their book of deeds as well.

According to Islamic faith, there is no way for people to return to the world after their death. This is expressed in the Qur'an as follows: *"(In the end) when death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord, send me back. So that I may do good there (the world) which I have left. (Allah says) By no means! It is a (mere) word he speaks; and before them is a barzakh (barrier) until the day they are raised."* (al-Mu'minun, 23: 99-100) The word "*barzakh*" mentioned in the verse is a term denoting to the period between death and resurrection.

Comparison of the Belief in the Hereafter in Islam with the Belief of the Hereafter in Other Religions

Islam does not accept the belief of reincarnation, which claims that people's souls enter into other bodies after leaving their own bodies. The belief of reincarnation is usually found in far eastern religion. This type of beliefs are absolutely rejected as remarked in the above given verse (al-Mu'minun, 23: 99-100)

In Islam, there is no concept of original sin as there is in Christianity. Every child is born innocent in the state of *fitrah*. Unlike Christianity, Islam does not accept the belief of Jesus' self-sacrifice for the humanity. From the perspective of the Qur'an, Jesus is another prophet like others. He was born miraculously without a father and carried out his mission of delivering the divine message. Those who thought to have crucified him actually crucified another person. Because, Allah raised him up to Himself as stated in the following verses of the Qur'an: *"And (We cursed them) for their disbelief and their great slander against Mary. And (because of) their saying, 'Indeed, we killed Messiah 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), the Messenger of Allah' (We cursed them). And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but (another one) was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, they only follow an assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain. Rather, Allah raised him up to Himself. And Allah is Ever All-Powerful, All-Wise. And there is none from the People of the Scripture but that he will surely believe in Jesus before his death. And on the Day of Resurrection he will be against them a witness."* (al-Nisa, 4: 156-159)

According to Islam, everybody is responsible for his or her own sins. No one can bear the fault of others. This is remarked in the following verse: *"Whoever goes right, then he goes right only for the benefit of his ownself. And whoever goes astray, then he goes astray to his own loss. And no one will bear the burden of another."* (al-Isra, 17: 15)

The way of getting cleansed from sins in Islam is to repent for them (*tawbah*). If Allah wishes, He accepts one's repentance. In other words, no one is responsible for the sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Paradise. Individuals will be brought to account only for the sins that they committed. Likewise, Jesus' self-sacrifice as a redemption for the sins of people and saving

them from the responsibility is not accepted by Islam. As a matter of fact, the incident of crucifixion of Jesus did not take place at all.

Moreover, in Islam, no person can interfere to absolve the people from their sins. Everybody is responsible for his or her sins and no one is sinless. Therefore, the concept of absolution, i.e. priests' authority of forgiving the people's sins and considering themselves sinless, does not match with the Islamic perception of responsibility. In fact, when considered in terms of reason and logic, everybody should be responsible for their own faults. For this is more appropriate for justice and morality.

In Islam, it is not believed that the sinners will stay in the Hell forever. After they are punished for their sins in the Hell, they will enter Paradise as a result of forgiveness of Allah. On the other hand, for disbelievers the punishment in the Hell is eternal. However, in Christianity, sinners are believed to be tortured in the Hell eternally that is not in accordance with the Islamic faith.

It is reported in the *hadith*s of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that Jesus will be sent before the Day of Judgment to call people to the True Path and act according to the *sharia* of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Muslims believe in this, but they do not accept the concept of "Christ the redeemer" attributed to Jesus by Christians. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) is reported to spoke in a *hadith* narrated by Abu Hurairah as follows: *"... The coming of Jesus among you is close. He will break the cross, kill the swine, abolish the jizya (poll tax) and distribute the goods."* (Bukhari, Buyu', 102; Tirmidhi, Fitan, 54) The arrival of Jesus is not very important for Muslims, because he will not bring anything new, but rather act in accordance with the *shari'a* of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Because another *hadith* informs us that Jesus will follow the leader of Muslim believers and perform prayer behind him. (Bukhari, Anbiya, 49; Muslim, Iman, 249) In other words, because he will not bring anything new, his coming will not be so crucial for Muslims. The prophethood came to an end with the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Islam is the last religion, so there is no need to wait for something new.

One of the differences with regards to faith in the Hereafter between Christianity and Islam is that while Christians claim most of the Muslims to be among the ones who will eternally suffer in the Hell, the Qur'an informs that the ones who believe in Allah and the Hereafter among Jews and Christians before Islam will be saved from the Hell. However, after Allah the Exalted sent Islam, He commanded people to believe in it and said that He will not accept any other religion other than Islam. This is a result of Islam's being the last and universal religion. This fact is remarked in the verse that reads: *"And whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers."*(Al 'Imran, 3: 85)

READING TEXT

The Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) Good Character and Morality

- He was created with perfect morality. He was a virtuous person.
- He was sincere in his faith, acts of worship, attitudes and dealings with others. There was not any insincerity in none of his actions.
- He would live and dress in a modest way.
- He would not surrender himself to his worldly desires. He would only benefit from the lawful things. He would never go to extremes. He did not like to live in luxury. He would proscribe his followers to plunge into worldly pleasures out of his concerns that such pleasures might prevent them from doing good things.
- Purity was an inseparable part of his life. He was very careful about cleanliness of his hair, beard, clothes, home, etc.
- He would not hold this world and worldly materials dear. He would consider himself as a traveler in this world. He would never ask from others but rather provide his own livelihood by his own effort.
- All he had in his house was a mattress made of leather, a cedar, a mat, and an earthen pitcher.
- He would eat and sleep little. He would not speak unless it was necessary. And whenever he spoke, he would speak of good and beneficial things and stay away from idle talk.
- At nights, he would sleep little and keep himself busy with worship to Allah. He would fast a lot even in days other than Ramadan. He would read the Qur'an much and listen to it from his Companions.
- He would begin eating with basmala and end with praising Allah. He never was picky about his meals. He would eat a meal if he liked and if not, he would not look for excuses to refuse it. He would wash his hands before and after the meal. He would also recommend this to his Companions.
- In his meals, he would not have foods that leave bad smell in the mouth. He would always clean his teeth and attentive about cleanliness of his hair and beard.
- He would never waste his time and ignore people's matters.

- He loved people. He would always respect them and treat them gently. He was a smiling and smooth-speaking person. He would not laugh loudly but rather would only smile.

- He would be the first to greet when he encountered others and the first to offer shaking hands when necessary.

- He would never interrupt someone while talking but he would wait until the speaker finishes his words. He would not speak loudly or shout. He would speak clearly.

- When people came to visit him, he would welcome them kindly with a smiling face, treat them and see them off in the same way.

- When he walked, he would walk fast and would turn his whole body when he were to turn to somewhere.

- When he was sitting with his friends, he would not choose place; he would sit any space he found without disturbing anyone or making them stand up. He would not extend or cross his legs. He would tell his Companions not to stand up when he came. He would not make anyone kiss his hands.

- He would neither quarrel with anyone nor criticize, reprehend, or insult them. He would respect people's honor and dignity.

- He would not try learning about or search for people's mistakes, faults, deficiencies or their secrets. He would never gossip about people and prevent the ones who wanted to do so.

- He hated lying and liars. He was upright about everything and would always ground on righteousness.

- When he was treated with rudeness or was insulted, he would not respond but keep silent and act patiently. This attitude of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had such a great impact on Abdullah ibn Salam, a Jewish scholar, that he converted to Islam.

- He did not like people to praise him or listen to people's praising him.

- Never in his life did he treat any person or animal badly. He did not think of taking revenge against those who mistreated him but forgave them.

- He would always protect the poor, the orphan, the slave, the helpless, and the weak. He would share people's joy and sadness.

- He was very careful, attentive and uncompromising about fulfilling Allah's commands. He would always pay attention to justice.

- Those who saw him for the first time would tremble in the face of his grandeur and dignity. However, when they got acquainted with him and become friends with him, they would understand how kind-hearted, merciful, sincere he was and heartily attach themselves to him. One day, someone who came to the presence of the Prophet (pbuh) for the first time began trembling. Thereupon Allah's Messenger told him: "Calm down, my friend. I am not a king. I am only the son of a Quraishi woman who used to eat dried meat."

- Our Prophet (pbuh) was a very generous person. He would not send anyone who asked for something empty-handed if it was possible for him to give something. In his modest meal, he would always have a poor to share the food and send others to his companions. Even during the drought times, he would try to feed the poor even though he himself was hungry. He would never accept sadaqa, but accept presents. However, whenever he received something, he would take it and give it to others.

- He would encourage people to work and not to beg. He would not stay away from doing the things that he could do. When his clothes was unstitched or his button was lost, he would repair it himself. He was helpful to his wives with the housework.

- He would visit people, listen to their problems, if they have any, and try to solve them. He loves children very much. He would fondle the children he encountered on the street and caress their hair.

CHAPTER EVALUATION

A. Answer the questions below.

1. What kind of moral weaknesses and sins are attributed to the prophets in the Old Testament? Compare these with Islamic conception of prophethood.

2. Make a comparison between the conceptions of prophethood in Christianity and in Islam under the light of the characteristics attributed to the prophets in Islam.

3. What are the most important characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)? Mention them as a list.

4. Explain the concept of original sin in Christianity by comparing it with the concept of responsibility in Islam.

5. What are the basic principles of the conception of Hereafter in Islam?

B. Mark the correct answers of the multiple-choice questions below.

1. Which one of the followings cannot be one of the characteristics of Jewish prophets?

A. They receive revelation.

B. There can be more than one prophet at the same time.

C. They do not sin.

D. There are female prophets.

2. Which one of the followings is not accepted as a prophet by Christians?

A. The Prophet Musa

B. The Prophet Yahya

C. Prophet Zakariyya

D. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

3. Which one of the followings cannot among the features of angels according to Islamic faith?

A. They are created from light.

B. They continuously worship Allah

C. They are male and female.

D. They have special duties.

4. Which one of the followings is not among the duties of Christian men of cloth?

A. They constitute the class of clergy.

B. They do not get married.

C. They can absolve people's sins.

D. They do not intervene between God and His servants.

5. Which one of the followings cannot among the features of the conception of Hereafter according to Islam?

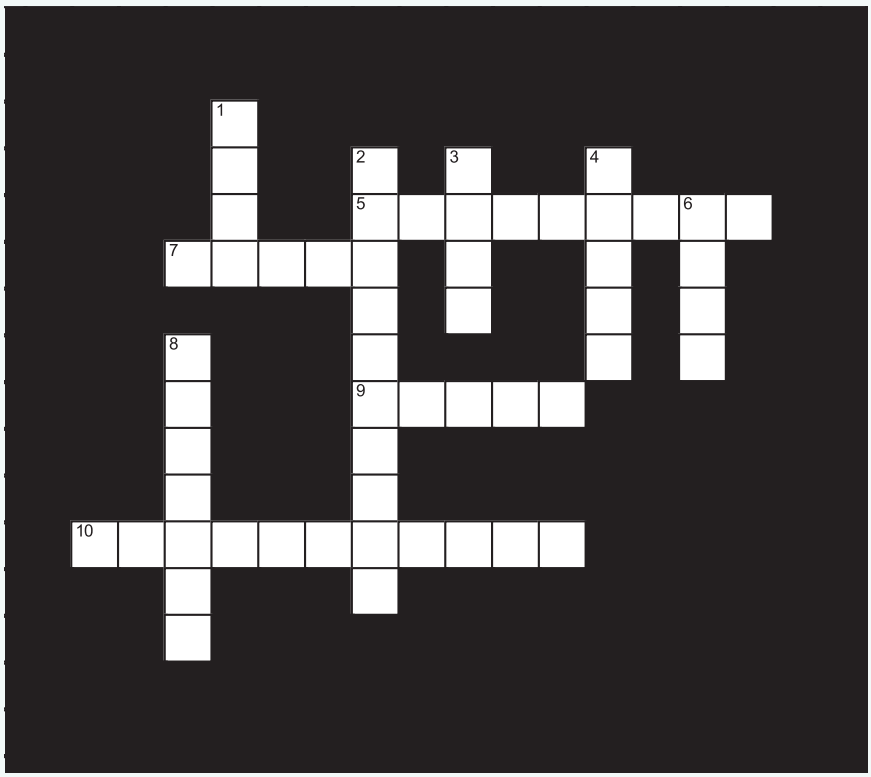
A. Individual responsibility is essential.

B. There are rewards and punishments in the Hereafter.

C. Every person is accepted as innately sinner.

D. There will be questioning for the deeds done in this world

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



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5. The good deeds from which Allah the Exalted is pleased according to Islam.
7. The holy sign in Christianity on which Jesus was crucified and his blood dropped.
9. The concept of prophets' not committing sin and being protected.
10. According to Christian belief, the sin committed by Adam and Eve as a result of eating the forbidden fruit and caused them to be dismissed from the Heaven and inherited by every individual.

↓

1. Means to deny, to oppose. The one who denies Islam is called kafir.
2. To be protected, not committing sin.
3. A Prophet who is not given a Book but act in accordance with the law of the previous prophet.
4. A Prophet who is given a Book and Law according to Islam.
6. An object that is attributed holiness and is worshipped.
8. A name given to Jesus which means blessed and baptized.

CHAPTER VII

WORSHIP IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

THEMES

- ACTS OF WORSHIP IN JUDAISM
- SACRAMENTS AND OTHER ACTS OF WORSHIP IN CHRISTIANITY
- ACTS OF WORSHIP IN ISLAM

WORSHIP IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

Since their creation, human beings have felt that they are under the control of a superior and exalted being to which they needed to worship. Thus, the divine religions regulated in various ways this innate need of worshipping a superior and exalted creator.

As the last of the divine religions, Islam perfectly regulated this innate desire of worshipping and considered acts of worship as a requisition of being a servant. This is expressed in the Qur'an as follows: *"And I have not created the jinn (genes) and the people except that they should serve Me."* (al-Dhariyat, 51: 56)

Even though they are different from each other in terms of form and way of doing, the acts of worship in various religions are close to each other in respect to their ultimate purpose. While discussing the acts of worship below, we will mention the fundamental acts of worship in Islam: prayer, invocation, fast, *zakat* (obligatory alms) and *hajj* (pilgrimage). We will try to deal with them by comparing them with the forms of worship in other religions.

I- ACTS OF WORSHIP IN JUDAISM

Sacrifice

The acts of worship in Judaism is in general limited to sacrifice. Sacrifice in Judaism is offered for the atonement for the sins and as an expression of gratitude. The animals offered as a sacrifice are usually from the cattle, sheep, goat, pigeon, collared dove or certain wild animals.

In the Torah, there is also reference to human sacrifice. (Exodus 13: 1-2, 11-15, 22: 28-29, 34:19-20; Genesis 22: 2) Again, the Torah mentions about the first-born children. Even though the child sacrifice was prohibited with the Law of Moses, it is seen that some people continued this tradition. (Leviticus 18: 21; Kings II 16: 3; Judges 11: 30-31) Initially, the sacrifices were offered in gathering tents and slaughterhouses but later they started to be offered in Solomon's Temple. However, after the destruction of the Temple, the act of sacrifice was abandoned and replaced with praying.

Invocation / Prayer

There is no clear expression that obligate ritual prayer in the Jewish Holy Book that we have today. Rather than ritual prayer, saying invocations has become prominent in Judaism and saying invocations is regarded a kind of ritual prayer. Mostly, some parts of the Psalms in the Old Testament are recited as invocations. Today, there are three times of saying invocations in a day: morning, afternoon and evening.

As weekly services, Jews attend ***Shabbat*** service in synagogues on Saturdays. The weekly service is considered as one of the Ten Commandments. The *Shabbat* in Judaism represents God Jehovah's creating the earth in six days and resting on the seventh that was a Saturday. In this day, God prohibited Jews from working and declared that He will punish those who violate this prohibition.

Jews celebrate monthly ***Rosh Chodesh*** that means the new month, annually ***Rosh Hashanah*** as the New Year feast, ***Yom Kippur*** as the Day of Atonement and repentance and ***Passover*** that symbolizes Jews' exodus from Egypt. There are also other feasts called ***Shavuot*** symbolizing Moses' receiving the Ten Commandment and ***Sukkot*** referring to the life of the Jews in the desert after the Exodus (Going out of Egypt). In these feasts, Jews recite parts from their Holy Book, pray and sing hymns.

Fast and Prescribed Alms

The fast commanded in the Torah is the one fulfilled on Yom Kippur that is celebrated as the Day of Atonement. This fast lasts from one sun sent to the sun set on the following day. This kind of fasting, which is not limited to daytime, are called "major fasts" while the ones fasted only in the daytime are called "minor fasts". In the major fast, eating, drinking, having a shower, applying oil, wearing shoes and having sexual intercourse is forbidden. On the other hand, in the minor one, only eating and drinking is forbidden. In the course of time, fasting underwent certain changes; in some periods, fasting transformed into a diet as abstaining from meat, alcohol or confining oneself to a less amount of food.

For Judaism, it is obligatory for every Jew to give the one-tenth (tithe) of their property. One-tenth of agricultural products, herds of cattle and sheep should be given as prescribed alms. The prescribed alms is given to Levites (descendants of Aaron), the poor, orphan, weak, widows and the Jewish priests who are called *kohen.* It is also recommended to give nonobligatory alms in Judaism.

Pilgrimage

It is obligatory in Judaism to go on pilgrimage three times in a year. Pilgrimage is performed in the Jewish feasts such as *Passover* and *Shavuot*. The places of pilgrimage are Jerusalem and its surroundings being in the first place, the tombs of Jewish prophets, kings and religious elders. Pilgrimage is obligatory only to men. After the destruction of Solomon's Temple (70 CE), the acts of worship related to the Temple such as pilgrimage and sacrifice could not be performed. In the present time, Jews visit the last remnants of Solomon's Temple known as "the Wailing Wall" or "the West Bank" and weep in memory of the tragedies. The Jews who had not been able to go to Jerusalem during the Christian reign regained the opportunity to go on pilgrimage there with the conquest of Jerusalem by Salahaddin Ayyubi. Many of the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492 and took refuge in the Ottoman Empire were also able to visit Jerusalem freely.

The Temple in Judaism

The Temple that is the religious center of Jews has a crucial place in the Jewish history. Solomon's Temple, the holiest place of worship for Jews, was destroyed during the Babylonian exile and later rebuilt when the Jews returned. However, after the second exile (70 CE), the Temple was completely destroyed and could not be rebuilt again. Therefore, the Jews still live in hope of

rebuilding this temple. For this purpose, they plan to rebuild their Temple on the place of Masjid al-Aqsa that is in the hands of Muslims now.

Jews do their congregational services in synagogues today. Because the state of Israel is a religious state today, in Israel sanctuaries are built in hospitals, universities, etc.

II- SACRAMENTS AND OTHER ACTS OF WORSHIP IN CHRISTIANITY

A- SACRAMENTS

The acts of worship in Christianity are called "sacrament." The number of the sacraments that are believed to be established by Jesus is seven, which are Baptism, Eucharist, Penance, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders and Anointing of the Sick. All Christians are responsible to follow and perform these sacraments. However, Protestants acknowledge only two of them, Baptism and Eucharist. We will explain only three of the sacraments here.

Baptism: It is performed by either dipping the person completely into water or sprinkling water over him or her. Baptism is a requisite to become a Christian. It is also necessary when changing from one Christian denomination to another. The sacrament of baptism is done in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is believed that with baptism, one joins the spiritual body of Jesus and is cleansed from original sin. And if someone dies without being baptized, he or she is considered to have passed away as a sinner.

Eucharist: (Bread and Wine Sacrament): This sacrament is performed in the church on Sunday. The priest offers those who are present in the church a piece of bread dipped into wine. In this sacrament, wine represents the blood of Jesus and the bread represents his flesh. By means of Eucharist, Christians believe that they commune with the body of Christ. This rite symbolizes the Last Supper that Jesus ate with his disciples before his crucifixion. As notified in the New Testament, Jesus offered his disciples bread by dipping into wine and told them that the bread symbolizes his flesh and the wine his blood. (Matthew 26: 26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22: 15-20; John 6: 13-17)

Penance: Because of the fact that the church is the highest authority in Christianity, it has the authority to absolve the sins. According to the Gospels, this authorization is given to the Priests by Jesus Christ. (John 20: 21-23) It is believed that one is forgiven by God when he or she makes confession of his or her sins and when the Priest accepts his or her confession. At least once in their lifetime, Christians must go to Church, confess their sins and repent. Only the adherents of Protestant Church do not accept this sacrament.

B- OTHER ACTS OF WORSHIP

In addition to the seven sacraments mentioned above, there are other acts of worships performed by the Christians. These are religious practices such as rites, feasts, fasting and pilgrimage performed daily, weekly or annually.

Prayers and Rites

There is no act of worship in the Christian Holy Book prescribed by Jesus. The prayers and rites in Christianity were established in the Council of Nicaea in 325. Various denominations of Christianity, especially Catholics and Protestants, from time to time made some changes in respect to prayers and rites. As these rites can be performed in the church, they can also be performed individually in the form of a prayer. The "Peter's Prayer" which is attributed to Jesus is important in Christianity. By means of this prayer, one praises God and ask for help from Him. The acts of worship in Christianity are divided into three types: daily, weekly and annual acts of worship.

Daily Rites: They are performed twice a day, in the morning and evening. They are not obligatory, and mostly performed by the Priests during which they recite parts from the Gospels. They can be performed either in the church or individually.

Weekly Rite: It is performed on Sundays twice, one in the morning and another in the evening in the church. Given that Sunday is the following day of Jesus' crucifixion, it an important day for Christians. It is obligatory to attend the Sunday worship according to Catholics, while it is not in other denominations. Eucharist is also performed in the church on Sundays.

Annual Rites: The most important one among the annual rites is the one performed in **Christmas** that is celebrated for the memory of Jesus' birth. During the Christmas week, pine trees are decorated, turkeys are cooked and Santa Claus who represents Saint Nicolas distributes presents to children. Because the date of Jesus' birth is not known for certain, the Catholics celebrate Christmas on December 24th – 25th, while some of the Eastern Churches such as Armenian Church celebrate it on January 6. As for Protestants, they do not celebrate Christmas because the exact date is not mentioned in the Holy Books.

Easter is also one of the important annual rites. It is a feast celebrated in memory of the day that Jesus was raised from death 3 days after his crucifixion. This feast is celebrated in the midst of the spring on one Sunday and lasts for a week during which passages from Gospels about the pain from which Jesus suffered are recited.

Feast of the Cross is another annual rite in Christianity which is usually celebrated in the midst of September. The cross has a significant place in Christianity. Because Jesus was crucified on a cross-shaped tree and his blood flowed over the cross. This is why the cross is considered holy. It is found in the churches, and on the church buildings, graves, altars, and worn by the devout Christians. There were some Christian military expeditions in the history called "Crusades" because the soldiers who attended those expeditions wore clothes and weapons with cross and fought to capture the holy places back from Muslims.

Fasting

Fasting in Christianity lasts for 40 days. This fasting which is called Lent (Latin Quadragesima) is performed in a flexible way and is like a diet. During the fast, Christians can eat two-third of their regular daily food. No meat is consumed other than fish. Every person performs fasting in accordance with

his or her own circumstances. Some only reduce smoking and alcohol while some others say that they fast by doing his own work better or respect people and help the needy.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage in Christianity is to visit the places where there are memories of Jesus and where the tombs of Christian saints are found. Bethlehem, the place where Jesus was born, as well as Jerusalem and surrounding area where he spent his life are the most important places of pilgrimage. Rome where the tombs of Saint Peter and Saint Paul are located is also an important place of pilgrimage.

Alms and sacrifice

It is not possible to find a clear expression of obligatory alms in Christianity today, as is the case in Judaism. In the same vein, in Christianity, there is not enough explanation and evidence about sacrifice. Christians believe that Jesus the Son of God who was crucified is a sacrifice for all the humanity.

Temple in Christianity

There were no temples in the early times of Christianity. As a matter of fact, Jesus and his first followers used the Jewish Temple for worship. Later on when Christianity separated from Judaism and began spreading among large masses, churches began to be built. The churches are considered the houses of God and has a great significance in Christianity.

In addition to being a place of worship, church is also an organization that represents the class of Christian priests called "clergy." The church, i.e. the clergy, are regarded as the spiritual agent of Jesus. The words of the church and priests in the church are therefore binding. The Catholic, Orthodox and Protestants have their own churches. The churches where there were no pictures and icons in the early days of the history of church have later been decorated with figures of Cross, Jesus and Mary; pictures of angels and saints and imaginary paintings of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. However, Protestants oppose these kind of images.

III- ACTS OF WORSHIP IN ISLAM

In Islam, Allah is the only being to be worshipped. Allah the Exalted remarked this in the Qur'an as follows: *"And I have not created the jinn (genes) and the people except that they should serve Me."* (al-Dhariyah, 51: 56) Allah does not need His servants' acts of worship, but the servants certainly need them. The acts of worship are the greatest means to get closer to Allah. They dignify the spirit, cleanse from sins and lead one to moral maturity. In Islam, there are three kinds of acts of worship: the ones that are performed only bodily such as obligatory prayer and fasting, those that are performed by financial means like *zakat* and sacrifice, and the acts of worship that are performed both bodily and monetarily such as pilgrimage.

A. Ritual Prayer (*Salah*) and Invocation (*Du'a*)

Ritual prayer, which is the most important fundamental principle of Islam after *kalima shahadah,* was prescribed upon Muslims as five times a day in the Night of Ascension (*al-Mi'raj*).

Ritual prayer is regarded as the core of all acts of worship. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) stated this fact as follows: *"Prayer is the pillar of religion"* (Tirmidhi, Iman, 8; Ahmed ibn Hanbal, V, 231, 237), and described the prostration (*sajda*) as "the position in which a servant becomes closest to Allah" (Muslim, Salat, 215; Nasai, Mawaqit, 35) Given the fact that it is the most important way of closeness to Allah, ritual prayer is regarded as "the ascension of believer".

To neglect the ritual prayer (intentionally) is a major sin. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) informed Muslims that prayer is the first act about which a believer will be asked in the Hereafter. (Tirmidhi, Salat 188) Ritual prayer is a means of spiritual and material purity. Because in order to perform prayer, believers need to purify their body from material impurities through minor or major ablution. At the same time, the clothes of the person and the place where prayer will be performed must also be clean.

And in terms of spiritual purity, ritual prayer is a way of cleansing from sins. In a general sense, ritual prayer prevents believers from committing sins as remarked in the following verse: "*Recite the Book which has been revealed to you and keep up (ritual) prayer; indeed, prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest, and Allah knows what you do.*" (al-Ankabut, 29: 45)

The core of ritual prayer is to keep the heart in peace, awe, and submission. This is why Allah the Exalted says, "*...keep up prayer for My remembrance*" and warned the ones who do not perform prayer properly and show off with the following verse: "*So woe to the praying ones Who are unmindful of their prayers.*" (al-Maun, 107: 4-5) so that they pray in the best way.

In addition to the obligatory prayers, such as five daily prayers and Friday prayer, there are also compulsory and recommended prayers in Islam.

The Qur'an informs that prayer was prescribed upon the previous nations as well. (Al Imran, 3: 43; al-Anbiya, 21: 73) Allah the Exalted notified through the following verse that Jews were also obliged to perform prayer: *"And when We made a covenant with the children of Israel for keeping up prayer and pay the obligatory alms..."* (al-Baqara, 2: 83) In another verse, the Prophet Isa is reported to have said: *"And He has made me blessed wherever I may be and He has enjoined on me prayer and obligatory alms so long as I live."* (Maryam, 19: 31) It is known that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), used to perform prayer two times a day as a continuation of this practice, once in the morning and once in the evening, before the five daily prayers were prescribed.

As is also understood from the above given verses, prayer was prescribed upon both Jews and Christians but in the course of time they neglected this act of worship or altered it. In today's Judaism, there is no clear provision about ritual prayer. Therefore, it is not possible to arrive a conclusion about the prayer of Jews. Today, invocation is more prominent in Judaism rather than ritual prayer and it is implied a kind of ritual prayer with invocation. Some parts of the Psalms from the Old Testament are mostly recited as invocation. In the Gospels that are available today, we find no act of worship advised by Jesus but it is recommended by Jesus in the Holy Book to invoke God heartily.

There is no conception of ritual prayer in Judaism and Christianity as comprehensive and regular as there is in Islam. This is why the ritual prayer in Islam is quite different from that of other religions. From this aspect, ritual prayer is an act of worship pertained to Islam. Allah the Exalted remarked: "*...Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times.*"

(al-Nisa, 4: 103) Hence, the notion of time has not been so decisive and disciplined in any other religion as it is in Islam.

The believer who confronts the Lord five times a day accounts to Him for the time that passes between two prayer times. This continuation of the prayers within a definite periods of time helps the believer achieve a spiritual discipline and entails him or her prepare to the following prayer bodily and spiritually.

Along with ritual prayer, invocation has a significant place in Islam. Invocation is one's comprehending own weakness before Allah's superiority, asking Him for His grace and help and praying Him to grant welfare and goodness. As the Prophet (pbuh) notified, invocation is the core of the act of worship. In the following verse, Allah the Exalted pronounces that He is ready to answer the sincere call of His servants and wants His servants to invoke Him on every occasion. Following verses remarks the importance of invocation: "*Call upon Me and I will answer you*" (Mu'min 40:60), *"And when My servants ask you about Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me*" (al-Baqara, 2: 186), *"What would my Lord care for you if not for your supplication?"* (al-Furqan, 25: 77) There is a definite time or place for invocation in Islam; one can raise his / her hands and expresses his or her problems whenever he or she wishes. Nevertheless, the invocations done in certain times are more likely to be accepted. For instance, the innovations at dawns, between the recitation of adhan and iqamat, while fasting, in the blessed days and nights are more worthy to be accepted.

B- Fasting

Fasting is one of the obligatory acts of worship in Islam. Fasting is to abstain from eating, drinking and having sexual intercourse for the duration between dawn and sunset in the month of Ramadan. Fasting is prescribed in the following verse: "*Oh you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you for a certain number of days...*" (al-Baqara, 2: 183-184)

Fasting has numerous benefits, both material and spiritual; individual and social. Hence, when the statistics are checked in the Islamic countries in the month of Ramadan, it is seen that the rate of crimes drops to a large extent. Because, as it is remarked in a hadith, fasting is like a shield protecting from evil. (Bukhari, Sawm, 9; Muslim, Siyam, 30) In addition to fasting in Ramadan, there are also supererogatory fasts performed in other days.

The Qur'an notifies in the verse given above that fasting was prescribed for the previous communities as well. However, in the course of time, these religions strayed away from the true fasting and mixed it up with their own custom and traditions. For instance, even though the Prophet Musa and Isa are known to have fasted for 40 days, such a fasting is not found in today's Judaism and Christianity. Although there is a 40-day fasting period before Easter[2] in Christianity, it is not obligatory and is more like a practice of diet.

Fasting appears in Judaism as suppressing the desires (*nafs*) and torturing it. It is notified that a fasting person cannot do any work no matter being a traveler or settler. (Leviticus 16:29-31; Numbers 29:7) In Judaism, fasting is regarded as memories of mourning and historical disasters;

2. A Christian feast celebrated in the midst of the spring in the memory of the day when Jesus raised from death 3 days after his crucifixion.

so it is approached within an ominous and dark framework. Because Jews remember the worst days of their history through fasting. The fasts performed in the memory of the capture of Jerusalem by the enemy and the destruction of the Temple are examples for this case. On the other hand, in Islam, fasting is considered as an enthusiastic period of time in which hopefulness prevail; brightness, relief and abundance comes down and which ends with a feast that all Muslims welcome with joy.

As for Christianity, fasting is not considered as an obligatory act of worship. It is rather performed as a diet by reducing certain food and meals. While some Christians abstain from eating eggs and fruits, others content themselves with eating only dry bread. And some others fast by not consuming meat products but eat only vegetables. Initially, fasting was performed as a rather difficult practice but in the course of time, it is eased and reduced by the church. The duration of fasting differs among Christian denominations such as the 40 days fasting before Easter is performed as 50 days in the Orthodox and Armenian Churches while most of the Protestants refuse it totally.

Compared to other religions, the time, conditions and rules of fasting in Islam is clearer. Unlike the church in Christianity, no organization or religious community has the authority to make any alterations about the rules (and general principles in Islam), form and time of fasting in Islam. Fasting in Islam is ascertained with the Book and the *Sunnah* while in other religions the beginning and ending of fasting is not certain because it is not dealt with in a discipline of acts of worship that includes binding rules for everybody. However, Islam has established a certain discipline and order regarding fasting, and thus protected it from the arbitrary treatments of people, shaped it in the best way and regulated as a spiritually beneficial act of worship to both individuals and the community.

By annihilating all unnecessary condition and rules, Allah made it a means for closeness to Him, rather than a punishment or torture for the self. Islam has prescribed fasting to everyone who is sane and has reached the age of puberty. It has excluded the sick and travelling ones. Moreover, Islam has permitted the fasting person to rest if necessary and carry on the daily routines.

C- *Zakat* (Obligatory Alms)

Zakat, one of the most important obligations in Islam, is an act of worship that is performed with money. It is to give a certain amount of one's property to poor and needy in accordance with certain conditions. It is given once a year and rather than a discretional act, it is an obligatory act for the rich. The *zakat* given to the poor by the rich is not a favor but a natural right for the poor. Regarding this, Allah the Exalted says, "*And from their (the rich) properties there is right of the needy and the deprived.*" (al-Dhariyat, 51: 19)

Zakat is a tool for social solidarity. *Zakat* and other forms of helping each other ensures the peace in society by eliminating the possible imbalances that arise as a result of the economical gap between the rich and the poor. The lexical meaning of the term *zakat* is to clean. So as well as cleaning the property of rich people, it also cleans their heart and leads to being purified from sins while developing the sense of giving and helping. By stating the following, "*... Whatever you spend (in the Cause of Allah), He will compensate it.*" (Saba 34:39), Allah the Exalted notifies in the Qur'an that He is the one who will reward the charities.

Islam embraces the society as a whole. In this context, the rich are obliged to think of the poor, help them and worry about their problems. In return, the poor should pray for the welfare

of the rich and for the increase of the number of generous Muslims; for them to earn lawful and abundant income and to be protected from harms. Thus, the members of Muslim society know each other and the bounds of brotherhood are strengthened. According to Islam, zakat is given out of the properties excluding the fundamental needs such as house, car, etc. after a lunar year passes over their possession. It is paid as 2.5 % (1/40).

Even though there is no practice of obligatory alms similar to that of Islam found in today's Judaism, there are certain financial responsibilities. In Judaism, certain amount of the property is donated to the Holy Home and to cover the expenses of its visitors. Some part is given to the descendants of Aaron (i.e. the Leviticus) and some is given to those who have a religious position. Allah the Exalted states in the Holy Qur'an that He got a promise from the Jews that they would perform prayer properly and pay the alms but most of them turned away from this. (al-Baqara, 2: 83) As reported in the Islamic sources, when the Jews were reminded to give alms and charity during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), they attributed Allah poverty and claimed that He wanted to confiscate the alms with force. They claimed that Allah is stingy by saying: "*Allah is poor while we are rich...*" (Ali Imran 3:181) and "*The hand of Allah is tied up...*" (Maidah 5:64). In the verse that follows the verse given above, Allah says that the Jews deserve torment for what they attributed to Him.

In Christianity, obligatory alms like the one in Islam is not found. There are only some recommendations that are not more than spiritual and moral guidance. No explanation is provided about what to or how much to give the alms. On the other hand, the information about the rate of *zakat*, whom it should be given, and out of what should be given are clearly expressed in the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet and the books of Islamic law. Having revealed the truth about the law prescribed to Jews and Christians, the Qur'an reminds believers the following fact: *"Oh you who believe! Most surely many of the (Jewish) scholars and the (Christian) monks devour the wealth of people unjustly and avert (them) from the way of Allah. And those who accumulate gold and silver and don't spend it in the way of Allah, announce them a painful punishment."* (al-Tawba, 9: 34)

D- Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)

Pilgrimage in Islam is to visit the Ka'bah located in the city of Mecca during a certain time of the year, to spent a certain amount of time in the plain of Arafat and to wear the clothes called *ihram*. Through the verse which reads: "*...pilgrimage to the Ka'bah is obligatory upon people for the sake of Allah...*" (Al Imran, 3: 97) pilgrimage is prescribed upon the wealthy Muslims once in a lifetime. However, the Muslims who are able to can perform supererogatory pilgrimages in addition to the obligatory one as many times as they wish.

The place of Islamic pilgrimage is Mecca in which the specific place to be visited is the House of Allah (Ka'bah). The city of Mecca carries the memories of the Prophet Ibrahim who is known and acknowledged by all three divine religions. There are also other places considered holy and visited by Muslims such as Medina and Jerusalem[3] (*al-Quds*). In Medina, Muslims visit *al-Rawda al-Mutahhara* (the Purified Garden) in which the tomb of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is located

3. Jerusalem is also holy for Jews and Christians. It is holy for Jews because it is the place where Solomon's Temple is built and the remnants of the Temple (the Wailing Wall) is in this city where they recite the Torah and pray while wailing. As to Christians, they believe it to be holy because it has the memories of Jesus who lived in Jerusalem.

while in Jerusalem, Muslims visit *al-Masjid al-Aqsa*, believers' first direction of qiblah and the place from which the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) ascended to heavens. However, these visits are not among the requirements of the obligatory pilgrimage.

The most important meaning in pilgrimage is that it reminds believers the resurrection in the Hereafter. Many Muslims from various areas, languages and cultures who have different levels of social status and financial state come together wearing the same color of clothes and being in same status with the purpose of worshipping which remind the Day of Reckoning and gathering in the presence of Allah in the Hereafter. The same clothing symbolizes equality of people when their worldly differences, egoism and ambitions are removed. This visit helps Muslims feel the experience of death and the Hereafter before dying.

Pilgrimage conduces to building a sense of solidarity among Muslims from all over the world. It is like an international fair where transfer of information and culture among Muslims can take place. This can also be liken to an **annual assembly** where Muslims can express their problems, find solutions, develop projects and realize them. **For, in none of the religions all over the world is it possible to find an organization which can annually gather millions of people at the same time and in the same place with the intention of worshipping.**

Jews and Christians exaggerated the pilgrimage and visiting the holy places. This led them to go too far about sanctification and reverence that ended up with polytheism. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) informed the believers that Jews and Christians turned the graves of their prophets and saints into places of worship and told the Muslims not to turn his grave into a place of worship. He (pbuh) is reported to say: *"Those who came before you used to take the graves of their prophets and righteous men as places of worship. Don't take graves as places of worship, I forbid you to do that."* (Muslim, Masajid, 23) There is also another hadith regarding this matter that reads: *"May Allah curse the Jews and the Christians, for they took the graves of their prophets as places of worship."* (Bukhari, Salah, 54; Muslim, Masajid, 20)

E- Sacrifice

Sacrifice in Islam is to slaughter an animal that has certain conditions in a definite period of time with the intention of worshipping Allah. Allah the Exalted informs that he commanded the practice of sacrifice to all communities with the following verse that reads: *"And to every nation We appointed practice of sacrifice so that they mention the name of Allah on what He has provided for them of (sacrificial) animals."* (al-Hajj, 22: 34) The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) pointed out the significance of this act of worship as follows: "Whoever doesn't offer sacrifice even though he/she is financially able to do so should not come close to our masjid." (Ahmed ibn Hanbal, II, 321)

Sacrifice is a compulsory act of worship upon the Muslims who are financially able to do so. The sacrificial animal can be cattle, sheep, goat, cow and camel. Each of these animals need to carry certain conditions. The practice of sacrifice is one of the important acts of worships that keep the spirit of brotherhood and unity within the Islamic society alive. Especially in the areas where poor people who cannot afford to buy meat live, the practice of sacrifice has a crucial social

mission. The Muslim who sacrifices demonstrates his or her obedience to Allah and His commands as the Prophet Ibrahim did. It means that the person is ready for all kind of sacrifices to please Allah. As it is in every act of worship, the main objective in sacrifice is good intention and sincerity. Allah the Exalted remarks in the Qur'an as follows: *"Neither their meat nor their blood reaches Allah, but what reaches him is the piety from you."* (al-Hajj, 22: 37)

Throughout the human history, almost every religion has had the act of sacrifice. However, the animal to be sacrificed, the way of offering it, and the intention with it varies from religion to religion. In Judaism and Christianity, the two religions with a divine origin other that Islam, there are different perceptions and practices about sacrifice. There is also reference to human sacrifice in Judaism (Exodus, 13: 1-2, 22: 28-29, 34: 19-20; Genesis, 22: 2) Even though the child sacrifice was prohibited with the Law of Moses, it is seen that some people continued this tradition. (Leviticus, 18: 21; Kings II, 16: 3; Judges, 11: 30-31) After Moses, with the destruction of the Temple, sacrifice was abandoned and replaced with praying. In Christianity, the concept of sacrifice has gained a new and different meaning with the crucifixion of Jesus. For as a redemption to the innate sin of humankind, God let his son to be crucified, which means that he sacrificed his son. This belief of Christianity brings to mind that a person can be sacrificed for another person.

F- Places of Worship (*Masjid* - Mosque) in Islam

The places where Muslims perform acts of worship is called *masjid* or mosque in Islam. It is notified in the Qur'an that the first masjid built on earth is the Ka'bah in Mecca. (Al Imran, 3: 96) The Ka'bah was built for the first time by the Prophet Ibrahim and his son the Prophet Ismail. Allah the Exalted remarks this in following verse: *"And while Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the House, (they said) Our Lord! Accept this from us; Indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing."* (al-Baqara, 2: 127)

Other than the Ka'bah, there are two other *masjids* in Islam that are regarded more holy than the rest of the *masjids*: one is *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* which is built on the remnants of the Prophet Suleiman's Temple and from where the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) ascended to heavens and the other one is *al-Masjid al-Nabawi* in Medina where the Prophet Muhammad's grave (pbuh) is located. Because of the fact that *masjids* are like branches of the Ka'bah which is the symbol of *tawhid,* only Allah can be worshipped in them.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) remarked that the most pleasant places in the sight of Allah are the *masjids* in which Allah is remembered. (Muslim, Masajid, 52) Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said that "The earth has been made for me a *masjid*" (Bukhari, Tayammum, 1, Salah 56; Muslim, Mesajid, 3-5) and thus stated that worshipping Allah in Islam is not limited to certain places. Therefore, a Muslim can perform prayer in every clean places, such as in a garden, orchard, office or house.

The main function of *masjids* is to be the places for congregational prayers. On the other hand, during the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), *masjids* were used as centers of education and as places where many administrative activities were carried out. In this respect, *masjids* have had important functions in terms of educational, judicial, administrative, social and cultural activities. People who build *masjids* are praised while it is reported that the ones who damage them and prevent others from worshipping in them will be punished. Regarding this, Allah the Exalted says: *"And who are more unjust than those who prevent the name of Allah from being mentioned in*

His mosques and strive for their destruction... There is disgrace for them in this world and they will have a great punishment in the Hereafter." (al-Baqara, 2: 114)

In Judaism, the places of worship are regarded as places of congregational worship and conversation. The practices performed in those places do not have a discipline as those of Islam. While in Christianity, the churches are the places where certain routine practices such as masses and confession to the priest are performed. There are icons of Jesus, Mary, angels and saints; pictures and crosses in the churches while the Protestant churches are simpler.

As to Islam, pictures or statues are not approved in the mosques because they remind of idol worship and such an implementation is not seen throughout the history. Given the fact that *masjids* are the places where Muslims worship Allah with a peaceful heart, all kinds of obstacles that may distract people's attraction or break the peace in them are eliminated and the mosques are decorated in a simple and modest way.

The Jews use horns in their synagogues to call people to worship, while Christians ring a bell to invite believers to the church. In Islam, *adhan* is recited to call people to prayer. It is a fact that compared to horn and bell, *adhan* carries important meanings. Because the words of *adhan* summarizes the core principle of Islam, i.e. *tawhid*. Moreover, its recitation in a keen and beautiful way has an influence on people. It is also known that there are people who embraced Islam with the influence of beautifully recited *adhan*.

READING TEXT

Signs of Ritual Prayer (*Salah*) In Other Religions

Muhammad Ikbal, a great Muslim thinker speaks as follows:

"In principle, revelation is one and only. Two times two is four in everywhere. No matter if it is written in Aztec alphabet or Chinese or Arabic; all numbers refer to the one and same truth." (Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch, *İslâm'ın Güleryüzü*, p. 30)

Because of the fact that there is one true religion, there are of course certain similarities among divine religions. For instance, as Islam has prescribed ritual prayer, there are such expressions in the Bible referring to the ritual prayer as follows:

"Come, let's worship and bow down! Let's kneel before the Lord, our maker!" (Psalms, 95: 6)

"And they (Moses and Aaron) fell on their faces (*sajda*)..." (Numbers, 16: 20-22)

"At once Moses bowed to the ground and worshipped..." (Exodus, 34: 8)

"Then he ... fell on his face and prayed..." (Matthew, 26: 39)

"... the disciples fell on their faces ..." (Matthew, 17: 6)

It is stated in the Qur'an that previous prophets, especially the Prophet Musa and the Prophet Isa were also commanded to perform prayer and give alms. (al-Bayyinah, 98: 4-5; Yunus 10: 87; Maryam 19: 31, 55, 58-59; Ibrahim 14:37; al-Hajj, 22: 26; al-Shu'ara 26: 46)

As a matter of fact, when Allah the Almighty made the Prophet Musa approach Him and spoke to him, He commanded him prayer right after *tawhid*. (Taha, 20: 14)

CHAPTER EVALUATION

A. Answer the questions below.

1. What is the holy day of the week for Jews? How do day spend this day?

2. What are the two most important sacraments in Christianity that are acknowledged by all denominations? What is their importance?

3. Was a prayer similar to that of Islam prescribed upon Jews and Christians as well? What information does the Qur'an provide us about this?

4. Evaluate the practice of hajj in Islam in terms of its social aspects.

5. Other than being a place of prayer, what kind of social functions did *masjids* have in the Muslim communities?

B. Mark the correct answers to the multiple-choice questions below.

1. Which one of the following is among the religious feasts of Jews?

A. Shabbat

B. Yom Kippur

C. Passover

D. Baptism

2. What is the name of the holy feast of Christians when they celebrate the birth of Jesus?

A. Easter

B. Christmas

C. Baptism

D. Eucharist

3. Where can Muslims perform prayer?

A. In houses

B. In mosques

C. In schools

D. In every clean place

4. Which one of the following cities is considered holy for all three divine religions?

A. Mecca

B. Medina

C. Jerusalem

D. Istanbul

5. **Which one of the following is not among the obligatory acts of worship in Islam?**

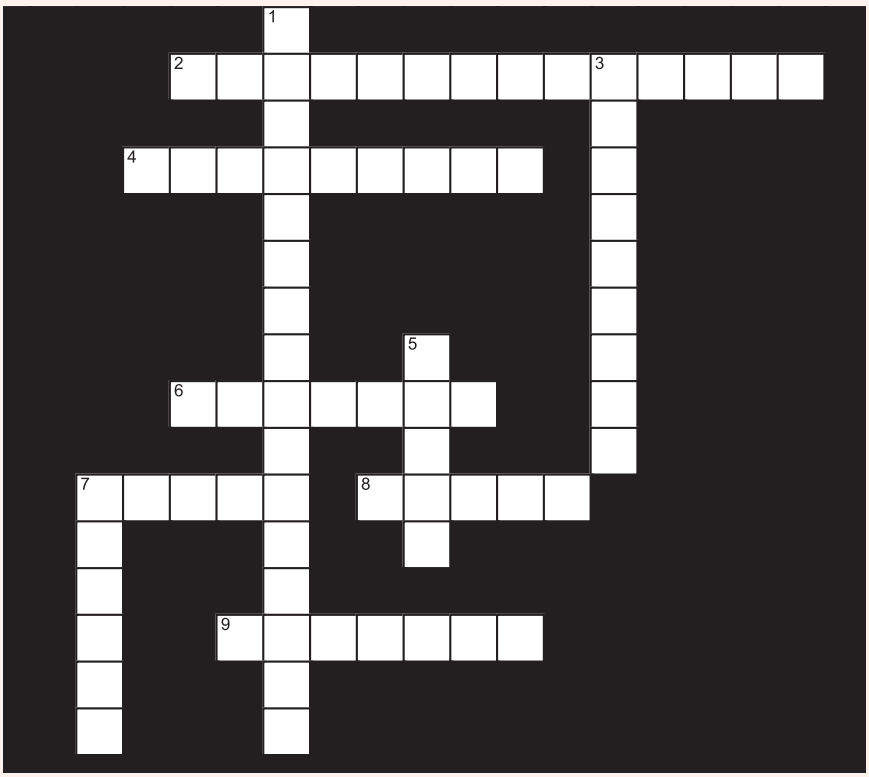
   A. *Zakat*

   B. Sacrifice

   C. Hajj

   D. Ritual Prayer

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



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2. The temple built by the Prophet Suleiman and is the most holy place for the Jews. It was destructed by Romans in 70 CE. Today Jews want to rebuilt Solomon's Temple on the area where al-Masjid al-Aqsa is.
4. The holy places where Jews worship.
6. The day of Saturday, that is the most holy day for Jews.
7. The name given to Jewish rabbis.
8. Place of worship, Places like mosque, synagogue, church
9. The practice of benediction performed when someone converts to Christianity.

↓

1. The masjid in Medina where the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) grave is located.
3. The holy sacrament carried out with bread and wine in the church on Sundays.
5. The most holy place for Muslims built by the Prophet Ibrahim and the Prophet Ismail.
7. The holy place where Christians perform their rites in mass. Besides, it is also the name given to the administrative class that constitutes the clergy.

CHAPTER VIII

MISSIONARY

THEMES

- DEFINITION OF MISSIONARY AND ITS AIMS
- TRAINING MISSIONARIES AND THEIR METHODS OF ACTIVITIES
- THE NEW MISSIONARY METHODS USED IN RECENT YEARS
- THINGS THAT SHOULD BE DONE IN THE FACE OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES

I. DEFINITION OF MISSIONARY AND ITS AIMS

Today, when one says missionary, Christianity comes to mind. Because the expression of "mission" is a notion mentioned in the Gospels and is identified with Christianity. It is reported in the Gospels that Jesus charged his disciples with the mission of spreading Christianity with following words: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you..." (Matthew 28: 19-20) On the grounds of this expression, all Christians throughout history have endeavored to spread their religion to people. Thus, missionary is used as a general name for all works done for the purpose of spreading Christianity.

The first aim of missionary is to Christianize everyone who is not a Christian. If they fail in this aim, their second aim is to confuse the minds of members of other religions by raising doubts about their own religion and thus convert them from their religion by means of the coming generations. Their third aim is to keep the converts of Christianity together through missionary activities. And their fourth aim is to break people off their own cultures by spreading the values and cultures of Christian western imperialism and thus pave the way to exploit them both materially and spiritually.

After Christianity dominated Europe, Christians aimed to Christianize people all over the world through their administrative power. For this purpose, the Crusades (wars to spread Christianity) were done between 1095-1270. These expeditions went firstly towards Muslim world. Because the only rival that could stop Christianity that aimed to predominate the world was Islam and the Muslims. Islam was spreading and the number of its converts were increasing every day. However, the bloody Crusades organized by Christian priests could not prevent the advance of Muslims. Islam gained power in time and Muslims were able to go forward as far as the center of Europe by challenging the Christian culture and civilizations especially through the conquest of Istanbul during the time of Ottomans. This achievement of Muslims weakened the Christian church and the tolerance of Islam and the new understanding of religion it brought deeply influenced the people. Under these circumstances, in order to increase the number of its adherents, the Christian world began to develop secret missionary methods and employ various tactics in accordance with the characteristics of the areas where people live.

The concept of Sufism and religious orders in the Muslim world and the loyalty of Muslims to these orders were examined in one of the Christian assemblies. It was concluded that Muslims could be convinced first by deceiving the sufi masters and their prominent disciples, and then by using them to

achieve missionary aims. In order to put this plan into practice, personnel should be trained and sneaked into these organizations. In this respect, the most efficient weapon and the wisest way was to raise doubts by infiltrating among Muslims and thus detracting them from their religion.

In this century we live, the missionary activities have gained speed through the development of communication instruments and new opportunities provided by technology. Especially the missionary activities aimed at Africa, Anatolia, Asia and Middle East witnessed massive increases. As a matter of fact, the Pope set new goals to Christians in the speech he delivered on December 24, 2000 by remarking that "**they have Christianized Europe in the first millennium, Africa in the second and it was the turn of Asia in the third millennium."** In accordance with the new plans, the target areas have been throughly examined. The Gospels have been translated into native languages and distributed in these areas.

For missionaries, times of wars, earthquakes, famine, drought, hunger, poverty and internal conflicts are best opportunities to gain followers. In fact, in the English newspaper the Guardian published about the Iraq War, Matthew Engel stated that there are missionaries waiting for a signal of safety to operate in Iraq. Those missionaries will be carrying food in one hand and the Bible in the other. According to this news, the prominent group in this activity is the one that is under the leadership of Franklin Graham, a Baptist priest who said in the USA television that "Islam is a wicked religion". (The Guardian, April 4, 2003.)

In similar vein, we have previously mentioned in the third chapter of this book (see Chapter III, subtitle, "Christianity and Missionary in Africa") that the missionaries made use of the difficult times in many African countries and carried out crucial Christianizing activities there.

II. TRAINING MISSIONARIES AND THEIR METHODS OF ACTIVITIES

First of all, individuals who will be missionaries should have high levels of knowledge, culture and a perfect oratory ability. For this aim, the missionary organizations pay utmost attention to training missionaries. The characteristics that a missionary should have can be summarized as follows:

1. At first, the children who are to become a missionary are chosen among the most intelligent and hardworking children. The chosen ones take special education at schools in the countries where they will do missionary. They are taught Christianity thoroughly and love of Christianity is endeared to them.

2. Missionaries are especially directed to professions that require direct contact with people such as doctors, nurses, teachers, etc. These professions are really important for the success in missionary activities.

3. The missionaries who will work in Muslim countries are taught Arabic and Islamic sciences. They receive training about how to respond Muslims about weak points in Christianity. Moreover, they are taught about the matters that they can criticize Islam and thus raise doubts in the minds of Muslims.

4. Missionaries are encouraged to learn more than one language. The language of the country where they will carry out their activities is asked to be learned in particular.

5. The smart and poor students in Muslim countries are attracted in various ways such as language training, financial support, education in the west, various cultural activities, trips, camp, etc.

The missionaries who are trained as we mentioned above use certain methods in order to carry out their activities in the most efficient way. It is possible to summarize these methods commonly used by missionaries as follows:

1. The missionaries who know about the religious and social circumstances of the country where they go aim to weaken and destroy the material and moral values.

2. They offer Christianity as a redemptive religion during the times of depression to the young generations of Muslim countries who are raised as foreigners to their own religious values.

3. They insistently claim that their aim is to achieve peace, brotherhood, affection and tolerance in the world.

4. They claim that Christianity is an easy religion compared to Islam that obligate Muslims to perform hard practices like prayer and fasting, while in Christianity one can fulfill the religious responsibility only by attending the church once in a week. They argue that Christianity is a religion of love and easiness but Islam is a religion of burden and violence.

5. They say that one can get freed from sins through confessing his/her sins to the priest and feel relieved.

6. By providing support to those who are in need during times of war, fire, earthquake, famine, poverty, etc. missionaries earn the sympathy of these people. Every missionary is financially supported. And the missionaries financially support the unemployed, poor and lonely people and thus propagates Christianity. When something is beyond the power of the missionaries, they continuously receive help and support from their organizations.

7. They send the orientalists (a non-Muslim who has knowledge about Islam) whom they educated on Islamic sciences at the schools they established to the target countries under the cover of scholarly research so that they can confuse Muslims and plant misconceptions in their mind.

8. They follow the political and economic developments in the world very well and direct some of the incidents in Muslim countries in a way that serve their own purpose. Moreover, they try to rise certain problems to breed bad blood among Muslim countries and thus exploit their natural sources.

9. By assisting the heretical and extremist groups in Muslim countries, they sow discord and unrest in their societies.

10. They aim to enter the heart and minds of people by smartly inserting scenes that sympathize Christianity into the printed and visual media, films and especially the cartoons. Hereby under the cover of a more modern and developed lifestyle, they serve their own purpose by means of music, theatre, cinema as well as sports, politics, etc.

11. They send letters, brochures, books, CDs, etc. to the names on their phone book, letter-boxes, as well as various institutions, schools, and dormitories in particular.

12. Rather than direct missionary activities, they carry their mission by opening language courses, social cooperation foundations, cafes, tourist offices etc. in the targeted countries.

III. THE NEW MISSIONARY METHODS USED IN RECENT YEARS

In modern times, the church realized that the old missionary activities they carried out by then began to fail. While many moved away from the church in the west, the Muslim world gathered itself up and the number of Muslims increased particularly in the west. In many areas of Europe Muslims began living together with Christians. Thus, Muslims and Christians got familiar with and influenced by each other. The church observed that the old tactic of defamation was of no use any more and reached the conclusion that new methods should be implemented in this age. The clearest sign of this was the Second Vatican Council held by the Catholic Church between 1958-1963. The main theme of this council was to carry out the missionary activities under the cover of building good relationships with people of other religions, dialogue, etc. The recent changes in the methods of missionary activities are seen under the names of dialogue, evangelism, permission to local churches to follow missionary activities independently and enculturation.

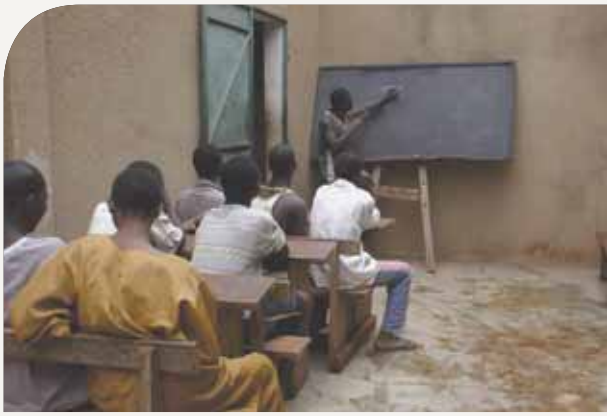
A. CHANGING THE NAMES OF MISSIONARY

The term "missionary" evoke a negative meaning among Muslims. The crusades, imperialism activities, etc. have had a significant effect on the emergence of such a negative image. In order to break down this image, the church began using the term "Evangelization" instead with the thought that it has a more positive meaning.

Evangelization means offering the good and heralding news, i.e. the Gospel, to all humanity. Therefore, Christians use this term in the recent years. Instead of presenting themselves as Catholic, Orthodox or Protestants, the Christian missionaries introduce themselves as "Evangelists." It is a known fact that the main aim of missionary does not change with the changing of the name. This intentional change in name is only a disguise. This is a part of their new strategies for more effective missionary activities.

B. PERMITTING THE LOCAL CHURCHES TO ACT INDEPENDENTLY

Another change the Christian church made in respect to missionary activities in modern times is to soften the discourse of "there is no salvation outside the church." Especially the Roman Catholic Church was ostracizing others as a result of their argument that they are the real truth and there is no salvation outside them. By stretching this notion awhile, the Roman church decided during the Second Vatican Council (1958-1963) to continue this mission along with other Christians from other denominations and with other people who are not Christians under the name of dialogue.



Another change is to give permission to the local churches to carry out missionary activities by their own. Previously, only the major churches would be allowed to carry out missionary activities and supervise the local churches. This situation gave the impression that missionary activities were carried out in line with imperialist objectives of developed Christian countries which was why they had a little success. Based on this fact, the local churches have been strengthened recently. In this way, the missionary activities in Muslim countries was going to be seen as the initiatives of the local church working in these countries rather than being imposed by the western imperialist powers. The western major churches were going to support these local churches financially and spiritually through their state and institutions. Moreover, the church representatives were going to be chosen from among the locals of the area. As a result, by means of this method, the Christian message was going to reach people more easily. As a matter of fact, when the missionary activities in the recent days are observed, it is seen how effective the local churches are. Through this, they in fact want to give following impression: **"Look, once we also were Muslims like you. However, we observed Christianity and concluded that it was a better religion compared to Islam. We received Christian education and joined the clergy. Thus, the churches we represent are not administrated by western imperial powers but by real and sincere Christians who were previously Muslims but in the end of a searching found Christianity as a true religion and way of salvation.** The aim with doing so is to show as if missionary is not a means of western imperialism.

C. METHOD OF ENCULTURATION (METHOD OF HYPOCRISY)

Enculturation is also one of the most recent and efficient methods of missionary activities church has adopted. Before examining the method of enculturation in detail, it is worth mentioning Paul who is the founder of today's Christianity because he has become the founder for this attitude. The insidious manner and disguise of missionaries are based upon following the words of Paul that he wrote in his letter to Corinthians:

"Although I'm free from all people, I make myself a slave to all people, to recruit more of them. I act like a Jew to the Jews, so I can recruit Jews. I act like I'm under the Law (of Moses) to those under the Law, so I can recruit those who are under the Law (though I myself am not under the Law). I act like I'm outside the Law to those who are outside the Law, so I can recruit those outside the Law (though I'm not outside the law of God but rather under the law of Christ). I act weak to the weak, so I can recruit the weak. I have become all things to all people, so I could save some by all possible means..." (1 Corinthians 9: 18-23) For example, even though he was rigorously against circumcision, he made his disciple Timothy circumcised. Even though he said that he was not following the Law of Moses, he would see no harm in attending commemoration ceremonies held after him. (Acts 16: 3, 21: 20-27)

As seen here, Paul notifies that he considered everything and every way permissible to convince people and thus to reach his goal. This clearly indicates that there are certain moral problems within the missionary methods. Because, this attitude is based on the idea to

Christianize people however it is necessary and no matter what method is used. This method does not essentially have a moral value and is inconsistent with the principle of "improving people's morality," which is the object of all religions. These words and hypocrite role of Paul served as a model and his words have become guidance for the Christian missionaries. Hence, Paul's method is compatible with the Machiavellist thought that is summarized by Machiavelli, a western thinker who lived centuries after Paul, as "Every way is permissible to reach the goal". All these reminds following the words of Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, a great Muslim Sufi and thinker "Either seem as you are or be as you seem". Therefore, here is a deep difference between two religions in terms of moral understanding and human perception.

The method of Paul mentioned above is systematized in the following periods and expressed by the term "enculturation" by Catholics and "contextualization" by Protestants. This term stands for delivering the message of Christianity to people by interpreting it in accordance with the own religious and cultural values of the communities that they are trying to Christianize in order to make their hearts soften regarding Christianity. The purpose with this is to deliver the message of Christianity in the local language by distinguishing it from western imperialist culture through giving the impression that the church does not have a political and imperial aim. This is a common used method recently. A clear example for this is that even though the missionaries never acknowledge the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Qur'an, while speaking to Muslims, they pretend as if they accept them.

From the very beginning, the missionaries are trained by paying attention to the characteristics of the target country and to which aspects of Christianity its people may object. Sometimes they treat Muslims with tolerance and abstain from calling Jesus the Son of God. And they even approach Muslims by using Islamic knowledge.

E. Bethmann who is an expert missionary recommended the missionaries as follows:

"Tact includes the ability to speak respectfully of their religion and religious institutions. Speaking of Muhammad as the false prophet would be just as helpful as if a Muslim coming to this country in order to win Christians would speak of Christ as the son of a harlot. You have conceded nothing when you call Muhammad the "Prophet of Islam." If you call him "a prophet," that would lead to misunderstandings... In speaking to a Christian audience, the term, Christ the Son of God, is perfectly understood. To Muslim ears it is a blasphemy... For that same reason it is impracticable to translate Christian literature of the West even of the best quality. It has to be rewritten to make it suitable for the understanding of the Muslim. That does not mean that truth should be watered down or even hidden. It means only that it should be presented in such a way that it does not repel the reader from the very outset." (E. W. Bethmann, **Bridge to Islam**, 1950, pp 244-248)

In the same vein, Charles D. Egal who works for a missionary institution based on the USA speaks:

"A number of suggestions have been made for using the Koran in evangelism. Many modern missionaries encourage the use of Koranic teaching on Jesus as a starting point in working with Muslims… Certain praise sections from the Koran could be used as part of prayer and worship in the same way that Christian hymns and poetry are used. Of course, these praise sections would have to espouse proper theology and it should be clear to all worshippers that just because the

Koran is being used for worship does not mean that it is inspired... In addition, various forms of Islamic worship such as Mosque organization, Friday worship, removing shoes, etc., could be adopted. The leader of a house church could be modeled after an Imam, the leader of the Mosque... Muslim rituals such as prayer, chanting or fasting and social practices such as festivals, birth customs and funeral customs should also be examined in light of contextualization. As stated earlier, new meaning may be infused into old forms as long as the form is not prohibited by Scripture. In order to succeed in this area, it is best for the missionary to find and individual who will hold him/her accountable. The accountability would include not only the areas of prayer and Bible study but also areas of personal struggle. (Charles D. Egal, Ministering to Muslims, http://mission-center.com/islams/egal.htm#church)

Since missionary activities will be approached with suspicion and worry by local people, no matter how effective such missionary activities controlled from outside are, this new method mentioned above has become a commonly and successfully used one by the missionaries.

IV. THINGS THAT SHOULD BE DONE IN THE FACE OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES

We wish to summarize here what need to be done against missionary activities.

First of all, it is necessary to provide our people with religious and national culture; satisfy them mentally, spiritually and educate particularly our young generations from all ages through religious courses, seminars, conferences, etc. and teach them Islam and our national culture in the best way. It is important to press books and brochures for all levels of people from all ages and distribute them free of charge if possible. By doing so, it is vital to act in accordance with the spirit of following verses of our guide, i.e. the Holy Qur'an: *"There is no compulsion in religion."* (al-Baqara, 2: 256), *"To you be your religion, and to me my religion."* (al-Kafirun, 109: 6).

It is also necessary to focus our attention on raising specialized scholars and scientists who know the nature and principles of missionary activities very well. In addition to this, the scientific and scholarly researches that reveal the falsity of these movements and show their true colors should be supported.

The society should be informed and warned from time to time in this regard by the religious leaders such as the preachers and *imam*s. Especially the children must be educated sufficiently from a young age at school or in their homes by qualified people.

While giving religious education, one should stay away from harsh and coarse behaviors. Instead, the smiling face of Islam should be demonstrated and by taking the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) treatment to his children and grandchildren as a model, religion should be taught by endearing it. Because when our children are raised devoid of love under the influence of opposite attitudes, they can be like preys given unwittingly to the arms of the missionaries. The schools of our children should be sufficient in terms of cleanliness and playfield so that they do not aspire the missionary schools.

We should introduce to our children and youngsters personalities who are raised in our culture, who live Islam in the best way and are good models for them. In this sense, first of all our Prophet (pbuh), then his Companions and their successors are the most important guides for us.

Due to its importance, it is necessary to highlight the following point: We should always keep in our mind the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) which reads: *"One who sleeps on a full stomach while his neighbor is hungry is not one of us."* It is necessary for us to reach and help especially those who are in financial hardship, the poor, hungry, helpless, and orphans. Especially our values such as *zakat, sadaqa* (charity), *infaq* (helping others), *waqf* (endowment) which are the important social solidarity institutions in Muslim culture should be revived. It is our duty as Muslims to look after all our people, the young ones in particular who are the primary target group of not only the missionaries but also other dangerous ideologies and who are under the danger of getting trapped by smoking, drugs, alcohol, etc.

Moreover, considering the fact that unlike the old aged population of the west, most of the Muslim population consist of youngsters, it's worth emphasizing here once more how a crucial place does the education of our youngsters have who are the potential power to build our future.

READING TEXT

How did the Jewish Scholar Convert to Islam?

Al-Ma'mun, one of the Abbasid Caliphs in the late second century, was an open-minded political leader. During his reign, he respected all scholars, no matter they were Muslim or Christian. Books written in foreign languages were translated into Arabic and thus knowledge was exchanged between cultures. It was during his time when it was discovered that the world is round and many other scholarly studies were done.

One day during the course of all these works, Ma'mun asked a Jewish scholar who attracted his attention by the sharpness of intelligence in his council:

— Since you examine the incidents so rationally, why do you not embrace Islam? Don't you know the difference between the Qur'an, the Gospel and the Torah? The Jewish scholar responded:

— I am studying this matter. I will inform you about my decision when I complete it.

Ma'mun did not want to make a pressure on the Jewish scholar. Because he knew that, a person could not be forced to convert Islam through compulsion or fear.

Leaving the Jewish scholar on his own, Ma'mun did not ask him anything about the issue again. One year later, the Jewish scholar began talking to other scholars in the council of Ma'mun. However, this Jewish scholar was not the same person as previous year. He had embraced Islam and accepted all of the rulings of the Qur'an.

Ma'mun was surprised to see this:

— I hope nothing is wrong. **What is the difference between the Qur'an last year and the Qur'an this year that you did not embrace Islam last year but you do this year.**

The Jewish scholar explained:

— There is indeed no difference between the Qur'an last year and the Qur'an this year which is exactly what made me come to Islam and embrace it.

— What is it? Is it the immutability of the Qur'an?

— Yes. Let me tell you how my studies went and how I became a Muslim. He continued:

— First, I have withdrawn to my house. I wrote a Gospel for many days. I wrote three copies of the Gospel. I deliberately skipped a few lines in the first one. The other one was complete. Then I added a few lines myself to the third copy. I took those three copies and went to a church. I showed them to the priest. The priest examined them all. He bought them and congratulated me for what I have done. I returned home and in the same vein, I wrote three copies of the Torah. I wrote the first one with some missing verses. The second

one was faultless. And I added some verses to the third one. I took them to a rabbi. The rabbi examined and liked them. He bought all the three and thanked me.

It was time for the Qur'an now. The Qur'an was larger. I could not write the whole but I wrote only three chapters. I deliberately skipped a few lines in the first one. I wrote the second chapter completely. I added a few lines to the third one as if they were from its original.

With a great interest and attention, I went to all Muslim scholars. I showed them the Qur'an that I wrote and asked them to buy it. They all said they would gladly buy it at first. However, when they took the copies and looked over them, they figured out the mistakes. They said:

— A few lines are missing in this chapter. This one is okay. These lines in this one are added to it. There is no word like that in the original Qur'an.

They all read the Qur'an in full from heart and corrected the mistakes.

Thereupon I understood how the Qur'an has been preserved in its original form and keeps its freshness and soundness. There are no extraction or additions in the Qur'an. It is the last book that preserves its form in which it was sent down. After this, I became a Muslim. So, this is how my search which caused me to embrace Islam went.

Yahya ibn Aqsam who was the governor of Basra at the time narrated this incident to the great scholar Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, when he went to pilgrimage. Sufyan ibn Uyaynah responds:

— This incident is the practical confirmation of a verse in the Qur'an. Our Lord did not give the assurance of protecting the Tawrat and Injil but there is such a Divine Assurance for the Qur'an. The 9th verse of chapter al-Hijr (15) reads:

"Surely We have revealed the Qur'an and We will most surely be its guardian."

CHAPTER EVALUATION

A. Answer the questions below.

1. Explain what the aims of missionaries by spreading Christianity are.
2. What are the best atmospheres for missionaries to carry out their activities?
3. What are the methods missionaries use recently? Why did they resort to these methods?
4. Do you think it is right for Christian missionaries to use all means to reach their aim? Discuss this by taking the words of Paul (1 Corinthians 9:18-23) into considering.
5. What do you think Muslims should do against missionary activities?

B. Mark the correct answers to the multiple-choice questions below

1. Which one of the following is not among the aims of missionaries?

A. To raise doubts about people's religion

B. To convert people to Christianity

C. To strengthen Islam

D. Provide a basis for western imperialism

2. What are the fights that Christians had to spread Christianity between 1095-1270?

A. Missionary

B. *Tabligh*

C. Rite

D. Crusades

3. Who is the pioneer of Christian missionaries who consider every way permissible to reach their target?

A. Peter

B. Paul

C. Jesus

D. Barnabas

4. Which one of the following option presents the Christian denomination/s that have/has a leading role in missionary activities?

A. Orthodox

B. Anglican

C. Catholic-Protestant

D. Evangelic

5. What should be the measure taken against missionary activities in the long run?

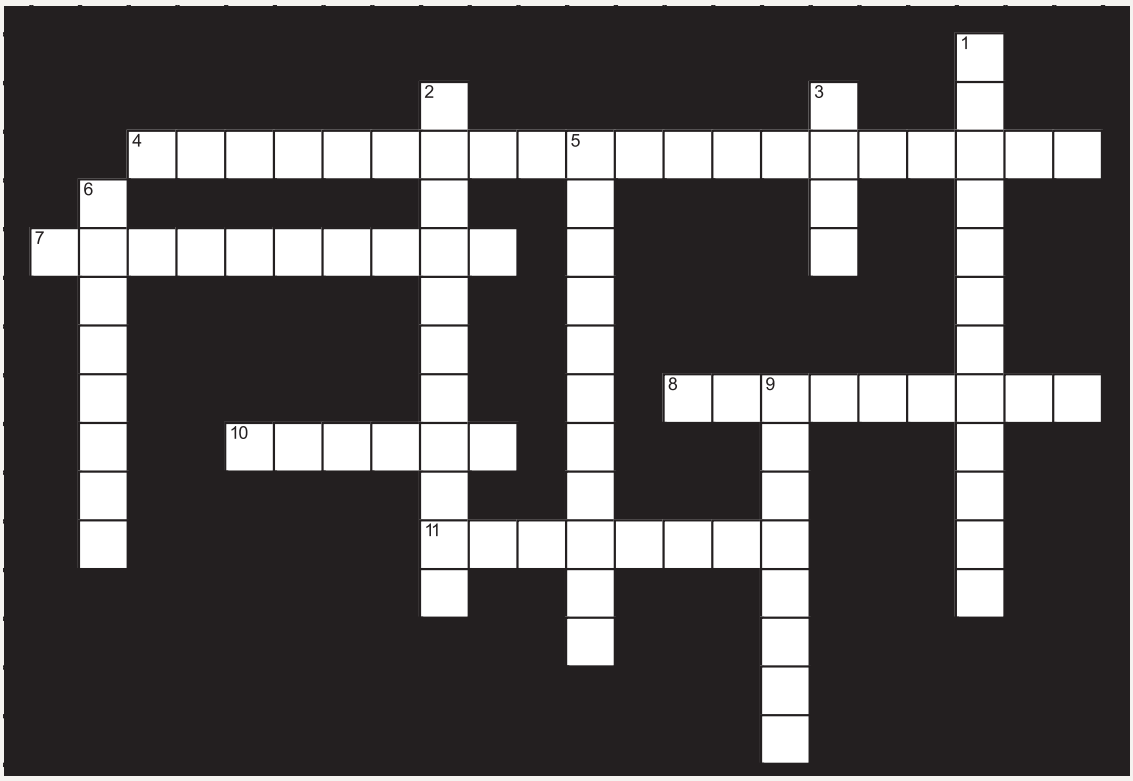
A. To become wealthy

B. To become Christian at once

C. To pay attention to education

D. To build hospitals

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



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4. The assembly organized by Catholics and held in Vatican in the year 1965. In this council the relationship with people of Christian denominations and other religions is discussed.

7. The second largest Christian denomination after Catholics.

8. A term used for Christians' rites and acts of worship.

10. Law, order, regulation. All commands and prohibitions in Islam.

11. To act differently from what one really is, hypocrisy. The enculturation method in Christianity.

↓

1. The pragmatic thought that consider everything permissible to reach the goal.

2. The person who brings good news. The name that missionaries gave to themselves.

3. The highest religious leader of Catholic Christians and the state minister of Vatican at the same time.

5. All activities that the westerners carry out to exploit the material and spiritual values of communities in order to guarantee their own interests.

6. literally means the true path. The third largest Christian denomination.

9. literally means universal. The largest one among Christian denominations.

CONCLUSION AND ISLAM'S POSITION AMONG OTHER RELIGIONS

Islam is the last revealed true religion. However, it does not deny the existence of other religions. Islam grounds its relations with other religions on the principles explained in following verses: *"There is no compulsion in religion."* (al-Baqara, 2: 256) and *"To you be your religion, and to me my religion."* (al-Kafirun, 109: 6). Thus, it has presented its respect to religious tolerance and freedom of conscience.

Today, with its one and a half billion adherents, the number of Muslims increase every passing day. Islam is the fastest growing religion in Europe by means of both the immigrants to the west and local western converts. In modern times, Islam challenges these new circumstances even in the world of industrialization and urbanization. By preserving its essence in this rapidly changing world, Islam provides new solutions to the contemporary problems and continue to be a guide for people. Thus, in the face of the changing world conditions, the number of Muslims increases day by day rather than decreasing.

Whereas in the Christian world, there is a continuous decrease in population. In order to balance these populations, Christians have accelerated the missionary activities in Asia and Africa. As a result of the population decrease in the western world, Christianity also decreases in terms of its population.

In the present day, there are certain problems seen in the creedal principles of other religions the most important of which is the misconceptions about the belief of God. Jahveh, the God of Jews is only their God and consequently Judaism is a national religion.

The principles of Christian faith still have not been grounded on rational basis in the minds of western intellectuals. The trinity is the most important religious crisis that has been experienced by the western world. People are not satisfied with the explanations and deep philosophical interpretations regarding Trinity. For example, in a survey conducted in France, only 36 % of participants said that they acknowledge godhood of Jesus. Therefore, this low rate of people who believe in godhood of Jesus which constitute the fundamental principle of Christianity reveals people's doubts in this matter. (Jean Chevalier, ***Din Fenomeni***, trans. Mehmen Aydın, pp 6.) The situation is not different in other western countries.

On the other hand, the principles of Islamic faith, especially the conception of Allah is more credible and convincing compared to those of other religions. Although the issues about faith cannot be comprehended solely by human intellect, they need to be grounded on rational basis that can convince people. Therefore, we observe that Islam, the belief in Allah, the concept of prophethood and the Hereafter are explained in the Qur'an based on rational foundations.

Compared to Judaism, which was born in 13th century BCE and Christianity which has a two thousand-year history, Islam is a quite new religion. Islam has a fifteen-century long history. The fact that Islam is the most recent and the final divine religion shows that the information about it is more accurate and is based on more reliable basis.

There is sufficient information and material available today about the last Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). His whole life has been thoroughly recorded and transmitted to us. The recording of the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) life in such meticulous details increases the trust in the authenticity of the Message he brought. The deficiency of information about Judaism and Christianity and the recording of the available information much later lead certain suspicions about the lives of the Prophet Moses and Jesus. So much so that there are discussions today in the Christian world about whether Jesus lived in reality or was a mythical character.

History that has a great deal of knowledge on the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also possesses accurate and authentic knowledge about the messages he brought. In fact, the Holy Qur'an began to be memorized and written down from the very moment it started to be revealed. This method provided its coming down to this day without any missing parts. No other divine book has been preserved like the Qur'an. This is why neither the Torah as conveyed by the Prophet Moses nor the Gospel as conveyed by the Prophet Jesus is available today. Likewise, the *hadith*s of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), which are explanations of the Qur'an, are protected and are transmitted to us thanks to the methods developed as a result of rigorous studies.

Islam always takes the human factor into account in all messages it has delivered. This is why the society that Islam aims to establish is not an imaginary and utopic one, but one that has real reflections in real life. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself applied these messages of Islam in his life as the best model for Muslims. As being both a prophet and a human being, he satisfied his needs of human nature by getting married, having children, and engaging in trade. By his attributes, he has become the perfect exemplar (*Uswa al-Hasana*) to all people from all levels.

Islam is a religion of norm and balance. Islam neither recommended to be deceived by the charms of world nor to give up it entirely. Islam has established a natural balance between this world and the Hereafter and also emphasized that this world is temporary while the life in the Hereafter is the real one.

One the other hand, the world system that Judaism aims to establish is a selfish one which addresses the Jews only while excluding others. Christianity was originally not a worldly but a system that was completely oriented to the otherworld. However, the practice today is totally the opposite. Because Christianity has been secularized with the influence of clergy. The church, which was a shelter for the poor once, has been secularized through exploiting the poor people and acquiring lands.

Compared to these religious systems, the balance that Islam maintains between this world and the Hereafter is quite remarkable. Because Islam regulates all aspects of religious life. Along with the domains of faith, acts of worship and ethics, Islam also regulates the people's worldly dealings such as trade, family matters, marriage, eating, and drinking etc. The example of the society that Islam targets to establish could be seen in the era of the Prophet and the period of *al-Khulafa al-rashidun* (Rightly Guided Caliphs) which is called "Asr al-sa'adah" (the Era of Bliss) and the time of following generations. While religion has been lived this way in the Muslim societies,

the rights of the adherents of other religions have never been neglected but are assured through Islamic law. This is why there has been no genocides in history to be committed in Muslim societies against the followers of other religions. When there were some people who attempted to commit such atrocities, the Muslim religious men became the first ones who stood against it. On the other hand, it is recorded by history that the Christian world have committed numerous total annihilation against those who are not one of them like the Jews and Muslims in Spain, in certain areas of Africa, Germany and Bosnia.

Another remarkable feature of Islam is that it has a strong structure of thought that can confront all kinds of movements of thought. The Qur'an provides answers to all kinds of intellectual movements and denials ranging from refusing the existence of Allah or associating partners with Him to refusing the Hereafter. Rather than prohibiting free thinking, Islam calls people to think freely. With this mentality, it maintains its dynamism at all times, Islam has always been one step further compared to other faith systems.

Another important fact that highlights the place of Islam among other religions is that it is not divided into theological denominations. Compared to Judaism and especially Christianity, its solidity is quite remarkable. All denominations emerged within Christianity has parted from the main Christian structure by founding their own churches. In the end, these groups have accused each other for being separatists, deniers and heretics and are regarded as different religions rather than denominations.

Whereas Shia is the most remarkable denomination in Islam. Even though the Shiite Muslims distinguish from mainstream Sunni thought with their views on certain matters, they have never been accused of being non-Muslims. In this respect, compared to Christianity, Muslim world has a religious integrity.

The last thing that we would like to point out here is to briefly remind the differences of Judaism and Christianity from Islam:

1. The concept of God is based on *tashbih* (anthropomorphism) in Judaism; the trinity in Christianity and *Tawhid* in Islam.

2. The previous prophets were sent to definite communities such as the Prophet Musa and Isa were sent primarily to people of Israel. Christianity was spread among people of other nations only after the Prophet Isa. The prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh), on the other hand, is universal.

3. The Torah and the Gospels were altered while the Qur'an reached today in its original form without any corruptions.

4. There is a class of clergy in Judaism and especially in Christianity. For Islam, all Muslims who carry the conditions are responsible for their religious obligations.

5. According to Bible, every child is born sinful while in Islam everyone is born sinless and innocent.

6. The Christian priests usually do not get married. However, this is considered unnatural for human beings and marriage is recommended for all those who have the means.

7. The church has the authority to absolve the sins while in Islam, the authority to forgive people's mistakes belongs only to Allah.

8. In Christianity, people can be excommunicated. However, in Islam, no one who expresses his/her faith can be called non-believer.

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"And they (the Jews and Christians) say: Be Jews or Christians,(so that) you will be guided. Say: Rather, we follow the religion of Ibrahim, the Hanif, and he was not one of the polytheists." (al-Baqarah, 2: 135)

*****

"Say, (O believers), 'We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we submit to Him." (al-Baqarah, 2: 136.)

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"And whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers."(Al 'Imran, 3: 85)

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ANSWER KEYS

CHAPTER I:
DEFINITON OF RELIGION, ITS SOURCE, IMPORTANCE AND CLASSIFICATION

B) Mark the correct answers to the multiple-choice questions below

1. C

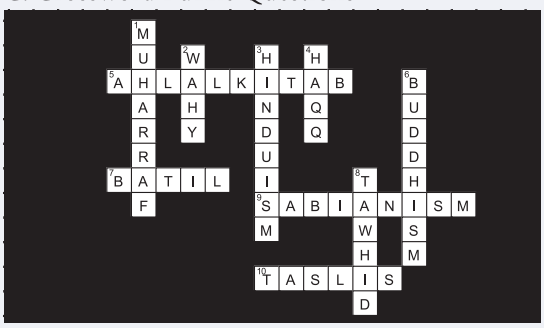
2. B

3. D

4. A

5. B

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



CHAPTER II:
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DIVINE RELIGIONS

B) Mark the correct answers of the multiple-choice questions below

1. D

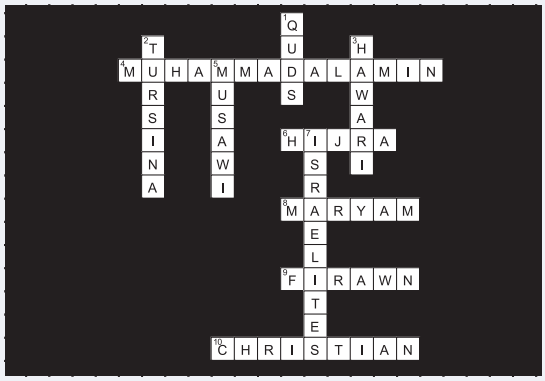
2. C

3. B

4. B

5. C

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



CHAPTER III:
RELIGIONS IN AFRICA: FROM PAST TO PRESENT

B) Mark the correct answers of the multiple-choice questions below

1. C

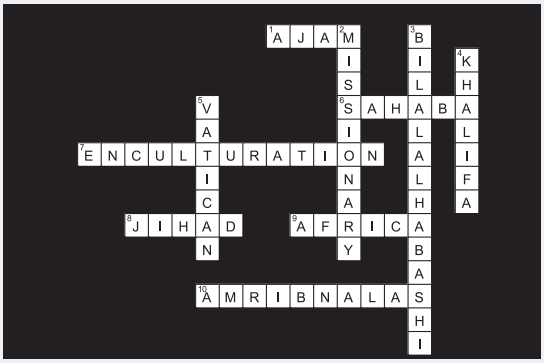
2. D

3. C

4. D

5. C

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



CHAPTER IV:
THE BELIEF OF GOD IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANIY AND ISLAM

B) Mark the correct answers of the multiple-choice questions below

1. D

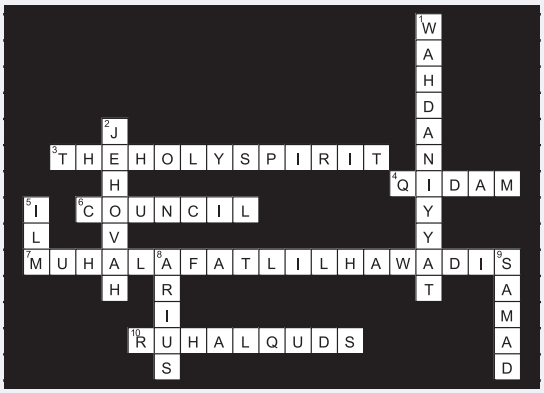
2. D

3. B

4. C

5. D

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



CHAPTER V:
BELIEF IN BOOK IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

B) Mark the correct answers of the multiple-choice questions below

1. C

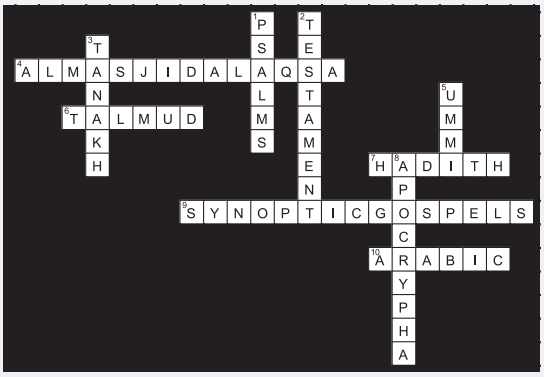
2. D

3. B

4. C

5. C

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



CHAPTER VI:
BELIEF IN PROPHETS, ANGELS AND THE HEREAFTER IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

B) Mark the correct answers of the multiple-choice questions below

1. C

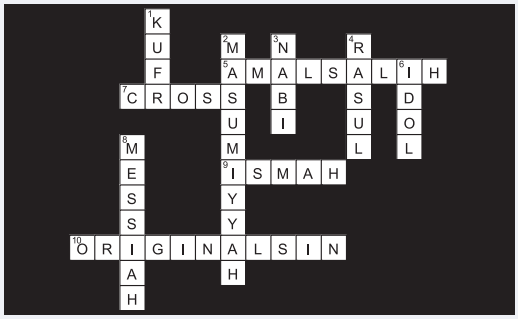
2. D

3. C

4. D

5. C

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



CHAPTER VII:
WORSHIP IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

B) Mark the correct answers of the multiple-choice questions below

1. D

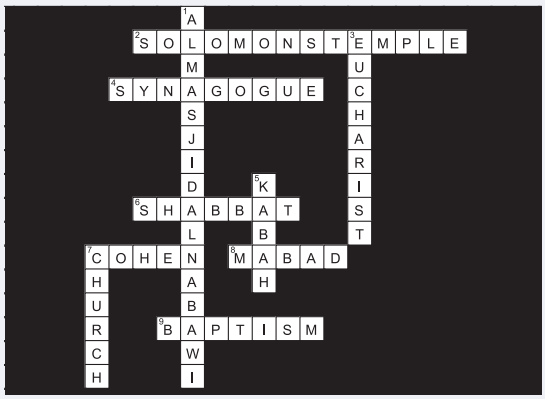
2. B

3. D

4. C

5. B

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



CHAPTER VIII:
MISSIONARY

B) Mark the correct answers of the multiple-choice questions below

1. C

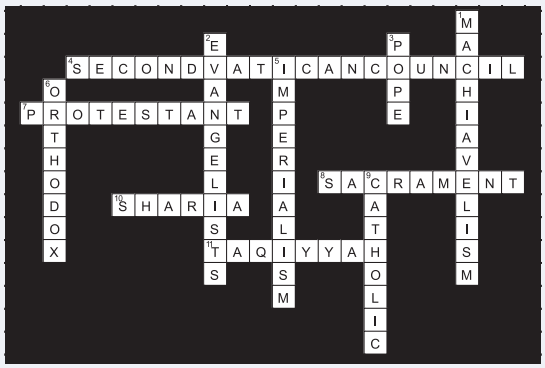
2. D

3. B

4. C

5. C

C. Crossword Puzzle Questions



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