Prof. Watt has been involved in the study of Islam since 1938. He has written numerous books on Islam including *Islam and the Integration of Society*, *What is Islam?*, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, etc. Professor Watt is considered to be a leading authority in the English speaking world on the life of the holy prophet of Islam and the early history of Islamic Theology (Kalâm).

Most of the books written by Prof. Watt on Islam and the life of the holy prophet of Islam show him to be not too much sympathetic to Islam. In this respect he does not stand favourable comparison with Prof. H.A.R. Gibb; because sometimes he makes very adverse remarks about Islam. His book, *Muhammad at Medina*, is notably defective from this point of view.

However, his latest book, *Islam and Christianity Today*, must be treated as an exception. On the whole, it is not unfavourable to Islam. But here and there he makes some comments on Christian doctrines with reference to Islam which cannot be allowed to go unchallenged, because they tend to create grave misunderstandings about Islam.

Thus, on page 50 of *Islam and Christianity Today*, Prof. Watt writes: “It is commonly thought that the Qur'ân criticizes the doctrine of Trinity, but this is not necessarily so. Any statement about the matter requires to be carefully qualified. One of the verses dealing with the point is 5:73, ‘disbelieved have those who say that God is the third of the three; there is no deity except one deity.’ Taken literally this verse is criticizing belief in three gods and not in three hypostases; and from a Christian viewpoint belief in three gods is a heresy, tritheism. Throughout the centuries there have probably been simple minded and badly instructed Christians whose effective belief may in fact have been tritheism, and there may have been some such people in Arabia in Muhammad’s time. In so far as this is so and the Qur'ân is attacking tritheism, it is attacking a Christian heresy and orthodox Christians would agree with its criticism.”

These remarks by Prof. Watt are open to two important criticisms. In the first place the subtle distinction made by him between Trinity and Tritheism cannot be easily grasped by an ordinary man. Only learned men can seize this point. For the ordinary Christian Christ is also God along with the Divine Being. He is not a hypostasis (person) of the Divine Being. If this is so, it will amount to saying that the majority of Christians are heretics, supposing that a small percentage of Christians properly understand the difference between Tritheism and Trinity.

Secondly, when one Being includes three persons (hypostases), the conclusion is inevitable that all of them are co-equal and of the same status. Thus Christ and the Holy Ghost are co-equals of God. This robs Him of His divinity for a God who has equals is no God but a god. The matter is not one of merely academic importance. The entire
doctrine of monotheism rests upon this question. According to the Nicene Creed, it is Jesus who will be the agent of judgement (on the Judgement Day) and Prof. Watt himself says in his book on p. 122 that this is confirmed by many verses of the New Testament. Moreover, the New Testament clearly says that Jesus will be seated on the right hand of God on the Day of Resurrection (Mark, 16, 19, Acts 7; 55 f; Nicene Creed).

Now, if Jesus will judge people on the Judgement Day sitting at the right hand of God, he is the co-equal of God and God loses His divinity. It was probably some such complexity which led Arius to proclaim on the eve of the Council of Nicaea that there was a time when the Father was but the Son was not. Arius so had come half-way towards monotheism.

Prof. Watt does not give any consideration to the real point at issue in the Qur'anic objection to the doctrine of Trinity. The Qur'an proclaimed the truth with the utmost emphasis that God is the Sole Sovereign, the Sole ruler of the universe in whose authority no one else has a share. It rejected and condemned the Meccan deities for this very reason, because they were supposed to have a share in divine authority. Even about intercession, it clearly proclaimed:

Who is there that can intercede
In His presence, except
As He permitteth. (2 : 255).

This being the attitude of the Qur'an, it is obvious that the Qur'an is condemning not Tritheism, as supposed by Prof. Watt but the Christian doctrine of Trinity which makes Jesus Christ a partner in Divinity and the Co-equal of God in the sense that he shares divine authority.

On p. 59 of his book Prof. Watt institutes a comparison between the collection of Ḥadith and the writing down of the Old and New Testaments. He says, "It was also required that each anecdote (Ḥadith) should be authenticated by an Isnād, that is, a list of those who had transmitted it either orally or in writing; but all that was demanded of the transmitters was that they should be honest and upright and have good memories. There was no suggestion that those who transmitted and wrote down Ḥadith should be inspired in any way. For Christians, on the other hand, the writers of the historical books should be more than truthful reporters of what they have heard or seen; they must be personally inspired." On the question of the inspired character of Biblical writings, Prof. Watt further says on p. 58 of his book, "Christians regard all the books of the Bible as part of God's revelation of himself, but they tend to speak of the writers of the books, other than the prophets, not as having 'received revelations' but as being 'inspired', that is, as having been guided in their writing by God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit."

Now, if this theory of the Bible, including the New Testament having been written by non-prophets who were men inspired by the Holy Spirit is accepted, it introduces a great element of confusion in Biblical writings. While the Holy Qur'an is the word of God as revealed to the prophet of Islam and no part of it can be ascribed to any inspired writer on whom prophethood was not bestowed by God, the same cannot be said of the Bible, including the New Testament. In the Bible one will have to search for the revealed word of God as distinguished from the material which has been incorporated
in it by inspired writers but which was not revealed to the Israelite prophets, including Jesus Christ. But such a search for distinguishing between revealed and nonrevealed but inspired material can be undertaken only if there is some criterion to distinguish one type of the material from the other. In the absence of such criterion, it is impossible to say how much of the Old Testament and New Testament is the revealed word of God and how much of it is merely human (though inspired) writing.

On page 60 of his book Prof. Watt says, "For Muslims, of course, Jesus is a prophet and something more than a prophet (italics ours), since the Qur'an (4--171) speaks of him as 'God's word which he put into Mary and a Spirit from him'. Why Jesus Christ should be something more than a prophet, Prof. Watt does clearly explain. Perhaps he wants to say that Jesus Christ shares in the Divinity of God but, on purpose, he leaves it unsaid. He does not quote the full verse of the Qur'an which contains the words on which he lays stress. Below we quote the full verse which totally negates his insinuation.

O people of the Book! Commit no excesses
In your religion, nor say of Allah aught but truth.
Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than)
an Apostle of Allah and His word which he
bestowed on Mary and a spirit proceeding from
Him. So believe in Allah and His apostles. Say
not "Trinity"; desist. It will be better for you.
For Allah is one Allah; glory be to Him.
(For Exalted is He) above having a son." (4 : 171)

Now, this verse makes it clear that Jesus Christ was the son of Mary, that Allah has no son and that He is one and the verse also repudiates Trinity. In view of these clear statements, it is useless to seek any implications from the words, "And His word which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit proceeding from Him".

If there are still any doubts in the mind of the readers of Prof. Watt's book, they should be dispelled by the verses immediately following those quoted above:

Christ disdaineth not
To serve and Worship Allah
Nor do the Angels, those
Nearest (to Allah).
Those who disdain
His worship and are arrogant —
He will gather them all
Together Unto Himself
(To answer). (4 : 172)

These verses make it clear that Jesus Christ is a servant and worshipper of Allah and anyone who disdains to serve and worship Him will be treated as an arrogant creature and will be punished with dire punishment. (4 : 173).
On page 74 of his book Prof. Watt discusses the role of human reasoning in religious legislation and remarks, "The contrast between the Islamic belief that all laws should be based on God’s commands and the Christian readiness to accept sound human reason as a source of law parallel to revelation is one of the greatest differences between the two religions and raises the question whether in the future it will be possible for Muslims to cooperate in the field of law with Christians, or at least for the two to have some degree of mutual understanding."

The above quotation tends to create the misunderstanding that in Islam there is no place for sound human reason, whereas the fact cannot be gainsaid that our medieval jurists applied much sound human reason in deriving laws and rules (Aḥkām) from the teachings of the Holy Qur‘ān and the authentic Ḥadīth of the holy Prophet. Similarly, the way is open for modern Muslim jurists to derive new laws and rules from the Qur‘ān and the Sunnah of the holy prophet in the light of modern conditions where the laws and rules (Aḥkām) laid down by the medieval jurists do not fit in the modern context or lack applicability. This is the principle of Ijtiḥād without which no legislation can meet with success. The difference between the Islamic and Christian approach is that while Christianity breaks up the unity of the legislative field into two compartments, the religious and the secular, Islam insists on preserving the unity of the legislative field in accordance with its belief in the unity of life. In Islam all laws are religious laws based on God’s Commands, whether they are purely revealed laws or whether human reasoning forms an element in the interpretation, derivation (Istīnbat) and application of those laws. The fact is that while the Christians may accept Divine Commands in their private lives, the Christian states have thrown overboard all divine commands and all their laws are based on what Prof. Watt calls sound human reason.

Discussing the relationship of God and man, Prof. Watt makes much of the fact that "the Qur‘ānic conception of the relation of the human race to God is dominated by two words ‘abd and Rabb. In relation to God a human being is ‘abd or slave, while God is Rabb, usually translated as ‘Lord’ but connoting perhaps something more august such as ‘sovereign’." (page 125) Then on p. 127 he remarks, “the Chief way in which the modern Muslim rises above the status of slave is when he becomes God’s agent or steward in the world. Here Prof. Watt is referring to the term Khalīfa which the Qur‘ān uses in connection with Adem when He informs the angels that He is going to appoint a Khalīfa (vicegerent) on the earth.

Why Prof. Watt says that the modern (italics ours) Muslim rises above the status of the slave in relation to God is not clear. Does he mean that while early Muslims had no disliking to be the ‘Abd or slave of God, the modern Muslims dislike this term? If so, he is mistaken. When the Qur‘ān says that Jesus Christ does not disdain to be the ‘Abd or slave of God, how can a modern Muslim disdain to be the ‘Abd. (Qur‘ān, 4 : 172) Whether ‘Abd is translated as slave or servant, it does not make much difference to a modern Muslim. As regards the vicegerency of man on this earth, it is an undeniable fact that the Holy Qur‘ān has used both the singular Khalīfa and the plural Khalā‘if for human beings. Not only that, the Qur‘ān raises the status of Muslims by using the word wali or friend for Muslims. Thus when Prophet Joseph assumed the highest office in the Pharaonic Kingdom, he exclaimed
O my Lord! Thou hast
Indeed bestowed on me
the Kingdom and taught me
something of the interpretation
of dreams and events — 0 Thou
Creator of the heavens
And the Earth. Thou art
My friend in this world
And in the Hereafter. (12:101)

Similarly, the Qur'an says that the friends of God (virtuous Muslims) need not grieve nor fear.

Behold! verily on the friends
of Allah, there is no fear,
Nor shall they grieve. (10:62)

Not only can man become the friend of God, the Qur'an says that he can become the helper of God and co-worker with Allah;
O ye who believe!
If you aid
(The cause of) Allah
He will aid you
And plant your feet. (47:5)

Thus, if a Muslim lives and dies for the cause of Allah and fulfils His purposes, he is not only the friend of Allah but a co-worker with Him. This requires a life of dedication and fullest submission to God and one who surrenders himself to Allah remains his 'Abd (slave or servant), however high he may rise on the ladder of spiritual progress.

MAZHERUDDIN SIDDIQI