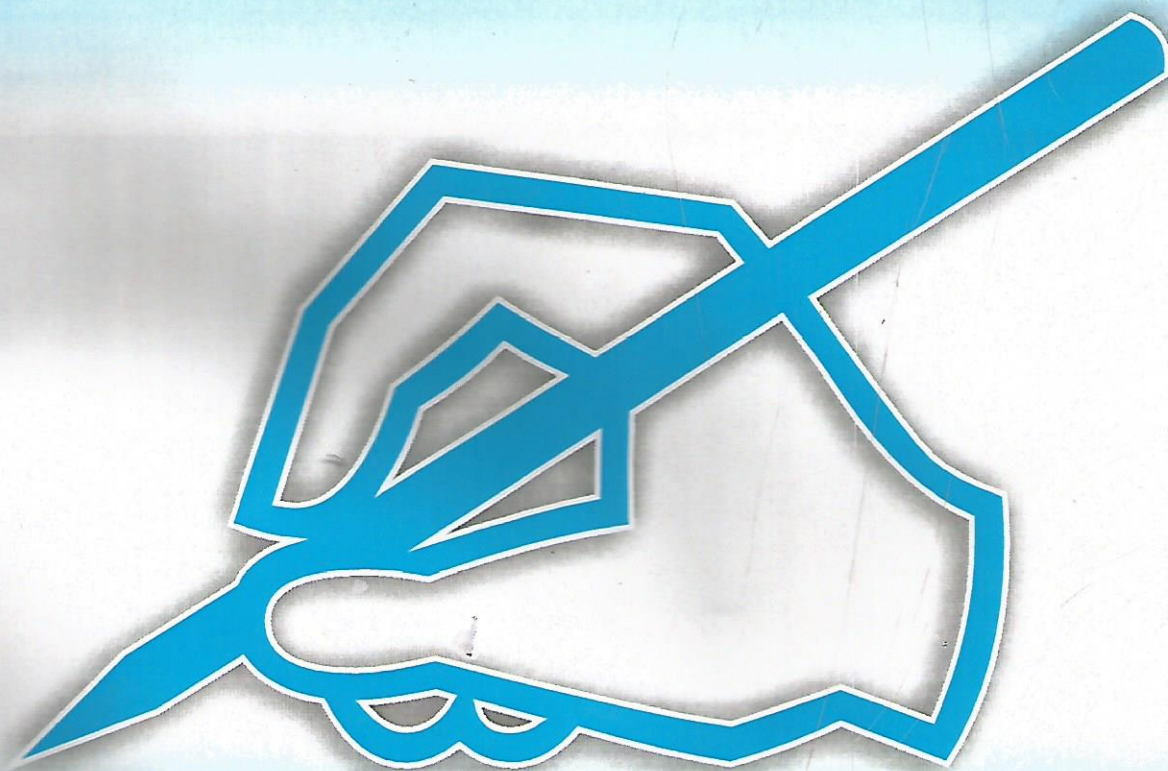


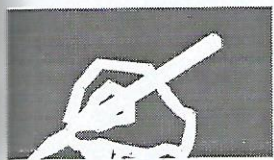


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THE DA'WAH THEMES IN THE WORKS OF AHMED DEEDAT

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the contributions of Ahmed Deedat to Da'wah (Islamic propagation). It also examines the various themes in his works and identifies the unique nature of his da'wah. Through historical and descriptive methods the paper has able to decipher patterns in Ahmed Deedat's approach to Islamic propagation, particularly on comparative religious issues. His works on Islam and comparative religion can be seen as succeeding in arousing the consciousness of the adherents of different religions especially Christians and Muslims. In other words, his Da'wah focused primarily on the theme of the Qur'ān, Muhammad, Islam, Jesus, Bible, and God as a way of propagating Islam. This paper, therefore, concludes that Ahmed Deedat's outlook on Da'wah has implications for Islamic propagation and opens the way for further dialogue among adherents of different religions.

Keywords: Ahmed Deedat, Da'wah, Islam, Propagation, Dialogue

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a faith rich in strong values and traditions and observed by nearly two billion people in the world (Husain, 2019). The root-meaning of the word Islam is to enter into peace, and a Muslim is one who makes his peace with God and man. Peace with God implies complete submission to His will, and peace with man is not only to refrain from evil or injury to another but also to do good to him, and both these ideas find expression in the Holy Qur'ān itself as the true essence of the religion of Islam:

"Yea, whoever submits (*aslama*) himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good to others, he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such, nor shall they grieve"(2:112).

Islam is thus, in its very inception, the religion of peace, and its two basic doctrines, the unity of God and the unity or brotherhood of the human race, afford positive proof of its being true to its name. On the other hand, *da'wah*, is the invitation to Islam and is considered obligatory on all Muslims. That is why Prophets were sent and Prophet Muhammad followed in the footsteps of all previous Prophets. Moreover, just as following the ways of the Prophet is regarded as the best way in different phases and aspects of life so also is the engagement of Muslims in propagating Islam (*Da'wahtul Islam*). However, in today's world there is anxiety in taking the message of Islam to various part of the globe, disregard for the basic

principles of the work of *Da'wah*, and more importantly, getting caught up in Western concepts to the extent of losing one's identity as a Muslim (Baig, 2012).

Comparative religion conveys the notion of the study of religions through a systematic comparison of the doctrines and practices of different world religions. It also implies the study of all traditions and forms of religious life. More specifically, it is a discipline that makes historically informed consideration of commonalities and differences among religions (O'Connor & Eliade, 1958). In other words, it involves not generalizing about religion on the basis of a single case. In addition, the idea of comparative study of religions suggest religious manifestations and their effects on the level of an individual, society, institutions and globally as well as their mutual interaction in history (Saler, Benavides, Korom, & Fitzgerald, 2001).

The importance of comparative religion is made manifest when related to Ahmed Deedat's *Da'wah* and works. Ahmed Deedat (1918-2005) was a South African based Muslim scholar, famous worldwide for his lectures and debates on comparative religious issues (Haron, 2014; Larkin, 2008; Sadouni, 2013; Vahed, 2009). Therefore, our aim in this paper is to examine the approach taken by Ahmed Deedat in inviting to Islam in various parts of the world. Also, this study intends to give the position of Ahmed Deedat on various themes found in Islamic traditions and beliefs. It also seeks through an inquiry into his works; how he has helped in influencing the propagation of Islam and in what way has his views aided the understanding of Islam?

Concept of *Da'wah*

Da'wah is an integral part of Islam as it is the means through which the message of faith is spread. The importance of *Da'wah* can therefore not be overemphasized for the sustenance of the Islamic Faith (Adetona, 2002). *Da'wah* is seeking favour (or hoping) in Allah by supplicating, enjoining a divine or spiritual call on others. *Da'wah* is literally derived from the root *da'a*, to call or invite, has the primary meaning call or invitation. In the religious sense, *Da'wah* is the invitation, addressed to men by God and the prophets, to believe in the religion of Islam (Sakr, 1997).

In addition, *da'wah* implies the concept and practice of Islamic propagation while Islamic propagation itself involves publicizing of the messages and ideals of Islam, persuading the generality of the people to its acceptance and practicalization and seeking, by means of words of wisdom and acts of right conduct, to establish in the society, a community diligent in faith and in religion (Solihin, 2008). The word *da'wah* can also be applied to the propaganda, whether open or not of false Prophets (al-Hamawi & Khalid, 1999). The Qur'ān, which is the primary source of information in Islam, lays down some guidelines on *da'wah* activities. The verses which speak on *da'wah* include the following:

Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong (Q3 vs 104).

Who is better in speech, than one who calls {Men} to Allah, works righteousness and say: "I am of those who bow in Islam (Q41 vs 33).

Invite to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in ways that are best and most

gracious: For thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance (Q16 vs 25).

All the above verses establish the need for *da'wah* and that Muslims should invite others to the way of Allah. It is in relation to these verses that Ahmed Deedat started his *da'wah* activities. Also from the above verses, it can be deduced that Islam enjoins embarking on *da'wah* without compromising one's faith and that the language of communication adopted in *da'wah* must portray decency and be salutary. Moreover, the use of wisdom to propagate the message of Islam was also encouraged.

Ahmed Deedat and Islam

His Qur'ānic Message

One of the ways used by Ahmed Deedat in propagating the message of Islam is the Qur'ān. He tried to convince sincere Jews and Christians, people, who hold good opinions about Islam, that the source of Muhammad's revelation is God Almighty, and the Holy Qur'ān is the infallible Word of God perfectly preserved (Deedat, 1979).

To prove the divine authorship and the miraculous nature of the Holy Quran he advanced two arguments. Firstly, the Qur'ān was revealed to someone who was an absolutely unlearned person "An *Ummiy* Prophet", i.e. one who could not read or write (Deedat, 1979). This point was also reiterated by Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), one of the most influential authors of the nineteenth century, in his work regarding the educational qualifications of Muhammad. He says: "One other circumstance we must not forget: that he had no school learning; of the thing, we call school learning none at all" (Carlyle, 2013, p. 62). Allah (SWT) testifies to the veracity of this claim saying:

And thou was not (able) to recite a book before this (book came), nor art thou (able) to transcribe it with thy right hand. In that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted (Q29:48).

Had Muhammad been a learned man or had he been able to read or write many might have had reasons to doubt his claim that the Qur'ān is God's Word. He did not have the capacity to write the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān refers to him as the unlettered prophet. The Qur'ān even notes that the Muhammad, who became a Prophet at age 40, never wrote a book or anything before

Secondly, the Book (the Qur'ān) itself, carries its own testimony that it is from God. Study it from any angle scrutinize it. Allah challenges the doubters' saying:

Do they not then consider the Qur'ān carefully? Had it been from other than Allāh, they would surely have found therein much contradictions (Q4:82).

Deedat noted that several times when miracles were demanded from Muhammad the Prophet of God, he was made to point to the Qur'ān. Moreover, men of knowledge, with literary skills and spiritual insight, who were honest enough to themselves, recognized and accepted the Qur'ān as a genuine miracle (Deedat, 1999).

In addition, the miracle of the Qur'ān is that it yields its knowledge to each mind within its capacity and degree of intellect. It gives to the mind that which satisfies it. Thus, the illiterate quite content to listen to the Qur'ān being read or recited while the literate obtains a great deal of contentment and satisfaction from reading or listening to its meaningful elucidation. The highly educated find its miraculous features challenging and stimulating to their mind and thought. This

is because within the Qur'ān the basis for all knowledge a man may attain by Allah's will, at any period of time, can be found when such knowledge is attained and the relevant verse for enlightenment cited authenticity (Sha'rāwī, 1989).

Ahmed Deedat believes all the words in the Qur'ān were carefully chosen when he wrote that:

Every word of the Quranic text is meticulously chosen chiseled and placed by the All-Wise Himself. They carry God's fingerprint, and are the Signs of God (Deedat, 1991).

If those critics and skeptics spent as much time in an honest and unprejudiced study of the Qur'ān's language and its depth of meaning as in seeking defects or lapses of memory depth of to justify their futile attempts of discrediting Allah's divine message to mankind, they would have long ago discovered the futility of their endeavours (Sha'rāwī, 1989).

Ahmed Deedat's argument amongst others is that human author can never remain consistent in his teachings for twenty-three years. Passing through the most conflicting vicissitudes of life, a man must somewhere along the line make compromises, must contradict himself. No man can ever be the same always in his preaching as the message of the Holy Qur'ān is consistent with itself throughout.

He maintains that the Qur'ān contains many matters relating to the nature of the universe which were unknown to man before but which subsequently, through discoveries of science, have fully confirmed a field where an untutored mind would have most certainly lost in the wild and contradictory speculation. How could he then pronounce truths of scientific nature that no other human being could possibly have developed at that time, and all this without once making the slightest error in his pronouncement on the subject (Bucaille, 2012).

With these arguments Ahmed Deedat was able to prove to the antagonists that the Qur'ān is the veritable word of God. He demonstrates its miraculous construction which only an omnipotent, omniscient Being could have produced. It is on this basis, therefore, that Deedat believes it is a Muslim's duty to invite non-Muslims to Islam with the Qur'ān in one hand and logic in the other. He believes the Muslims should march forward for the conquest of the hearts and minds of mankind with the message of the Qur'ān.

His view about Muhammad

Ahmed Deedat's love for the Prophet (SAW) has been built in him by his father since when he was young. His father Hossen would not tolerate any kind of disrespect for the prophet due to his intense love for him ("The Story of Ahmed Deedat", Al-Majd T.V.). Ahmed Deedat wrote books on the personality of the Prophet Muhammad in order to show that he was a true Messenger sent by God to all mankind. In his book *Muhammad the Greatest*, he started with Qur'ān 68 vs 4 which reads: *And surely thou hast sublime morals*.

Another reason that can be deduced from why he wrote on Muhammad was because of the inferiority complex among the Muslims about the Prophet and the kudos given to him {the prophet} even by the non-Muslims. He gave various examples of people changing the topic of his lectures thinking it would be too provocative to say something like "Muhammad {pbuh} the Greatest" instead they change it to "Muhammad the Great" and gave the reason of printer's error for changing the title of the original topic and advertising the wrong title. Another example he gave is the Muslim of Indianapolis who change the title "What the Bible says about Muhammad (pbuh)" to "A Prophet in the Bible". A lifeless, insipid title you will no doubt agree and as was to be expected the attendance left much to be desired (Deedat, 1999, 3).

Ahmed Deedat in his work *Muhammad the Greatest* also quoted people who professed different religions apart from Islam and what they say about Muhammad. Authors such as Micheal H. Hart who placed the Prophet in number 1 out of 100 in his book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, William McNeil, a United States historian of the University of Chicago, James Gavin a retired lieutenant general of the United States army, Jules Masserman United States psychoanalyst also gave the basis for selecting the Prophet. These are what people say about the Prophet:

He was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar: Without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue;. If ever any man had the right divine, it was Muhammad for he had the powers without its instruments and without its supports (Bosworth, 1986, 92).

George Bernard Shaw says:

I have studied him, the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-christ, he must be called the saviour of humanity (cited in Deedat, 1999, 17).

Micheal H. Hart says:

My choice of Muhammad to had the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both religious and secular level (Hart, 1978).

Ahmed Deedat also emphasizes the fact that Muhammad is the natural successor to Christ. He says:

Muhammad's (pbuh) succession to Jesus Christ (pbuh) is multifaceted (1) Chronologically, in history as sequence of event in time (2) By being chosen by God. (3) In the fulfillment of the prophecies of his predecessors, and last but not least by bringing the Guidance of God to perfection (Deedat, n.d., 30-31).

Looking at the first reason given by Ahmed Deedat it can be said that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) came after Jesus Christ for Prophet Muhammad came some six centuries later. Prophet Muhammad talked about Prophet Isa as a true messenger of God and who Allāh endowed to perform miracles.

Also, the Prophet (SAW) was chosen by God can be seen in the title *Mustafa* meaning "Chosen". The Qur'ān says in an unequivocal term:

It is He who sent amongst the Unlettered a Messenger from among themselves, to rehearse to them His signs, to purify them, and instruct them in the Book and Wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error (Q62:2).

Another reason given by Ahmed Deedat is the coming of Prophet Muhammad is a fulfillment of the prophecies both in the Qur'ān and Bible. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 18:18:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

Therefore, to Deedat, looking at the Jews and Arabs they are brothers because they come from the same father Abraham or Ibrahim. Ishmael and Isaac are the sons of Abraham. And so the children of one are the Brethren of the children of Ishmael are the Arabs, so they are brethren to one another (Deedat, n.d.)

Furthermore, other parts of the prophecy talk about putting *my words into his mouth*. In Q112 vs1-4 Allah says:

Say: "He is Allah, (the) One and only. Allah the eternal absolute. He begetteth not, nor is he begotten. And there is none like unto Him.

The word "say" that started the chapter shows that words were put into the mouth of Prophet Muhammad by Allah Himself by commanding him to "Say". During the next twenty-three years of his prophetic life, words were "put into his mouth", and he uttered them. They made an indelible impression on his heart and mind (Deedat, n.d).

Lastly, Ahmed Deedat raised the point that Muhammad brought the Guidance of God to perfection. The Qur'ān had come to confirm, correct and complete divine revelation, or whatever was left of it in unworthy hands (Al-faruq, 2003). Allāh says:

This Qur'ān is not such as can be produced by other than Allah; On the contrary, it is a confirmation of (revelation) that went before it and a fuller explanation of the Book wherein there is no doubt from the Lord of the worlds (Q10:37).

The Prophet of Islam was foretold in many ways, and when he came he showed forth many clear signs, for his whole life from the beginning to end was one vast miracle. He fought and won against odds. Without learning from men he taught the highest wisdom. He melted hearts that were hard, and he strengthened hearts that were tender and required support. In all his sayings and doings men of discernment could see the working of God's hand, yet the skeptics called it sorcery or magic. Some even went further call him mad! Describing his miraculous fulfillment of prophecy enchantment of which later became the most solid fact of human history.

His Presentation of Islam

The main aim of Ahmed Deedat is presenting to the public both the Muslims and non-Muslims that Islam is the only true religion free from errors and contradictions. He tried to prove that Islam is a way of life, a comprehensive approach to all aspects of human life. Islam is a religion as it caters for all spiritual needs of man. Islam is power and politics because it enunciates how to run the state. Islam is science because it provokes investigations that always lead to scientific discoveries.

Before the coming of Islam, the world was in the Dark Age. Ali Nadwi explained that it was like the whole world was packed into a train bus that was racing towards a deep gorge. Humanity was busy with merriments until Muhammad (SAW) rescued the control of the train bus from its captains and re-orientated men's direction, attention, and energy (Deedat, 1993).

In the book *The Muslim at Prayer*, Ahmed Deedat noted:

The fact is that Islam is simple, reasonable and practicable religion and free from priestcraft ... It is a way of life for the social, moral and spiritual development of humanity. It does not demand for a man to surrender his reasoning faculties nor does it demand a blind faith in obscure and inexplicable mysteries. It teaches the purest form of monotheism and regards polytheism as an unpardonable sin (Deedat, 1993, 222).

Although Islam is the youngest of all revealed religions, Deedat believes it is not a new religion but a continuation of the first religion of God to Man, purged and purified, time after time, from all human adulteration and restored to its original purity. Through a comparative study of Muslim prayer, he was able to show the relationship between various aspects of Islamic prayer with the teachings of the people of the Book (i.e the Jews and the Christians). For instance that the Muslims come to the Mosque and take off their shoes so that they may enter the house of worship in bare feet, a similar thing can be found in Exodus 3 vs 5 and also Act 7 vs 33 which reads:

(And God said to Moses) "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon. Thou standst is holy ground.

Also before entering the mosque, the Muslims make ablution washing their faces, hands, and feet. Exodus 40 vs 31-32 which reads:

And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet there at; when they went into the tent of the congregation they washed as the Lord commanded Moses.

Furthermore, in the mosque, the Muslims face the Ka'aaba in Makkah, whether in prayer, or reciting, or seeking the blessings of God in unison with the Muslims from all over the world. Daniel 6 vs 10 which reads:

Now when Daniel...went into his house; and his window being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and give thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

From all the examples given above, we can see that Ahmed Deedat portrayed Islam as the religion of Prophets from Adam to Muhammad (pbuh) came to preach the same, religion, which continued to grow and grow until it reached perfection at the hands of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Ahmed Deedat believes Islam is the only religion in the world that commands its followers to respect the founders of all revealed religions such as Abraham, Moses, Noah, Jesus, etc. 21 The Holy Qur'ān says in Q2 vs 285:

The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, As do the men of faith, each one (of them) believeth in Allāh, His messenger We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers." And they say: "We hear and we obey".

Amongst some of the non-Muslims, there is a strong misconception of Islam which they believed to be a mystical cult abounding in dogmas, superstitions and rituals dances (Deedat, 1993). That is why Ahmed Deedat presented Islam the way he did and to support this Lari, (2014) says that: "

Islam stands for harmony and perfectibility with an unmatched depth and breadth of scope that comprises all aspects of spirit and life. It knows all the roads that lead to blessing and happiness. It has the cure for human ills, individual and social, and makes them as plain as the wit of man can devise or comprehend. It sets out to develop all sides of each person and therefore perforce includes every reality which impacts human existence. It has not given way in its doctrine of man, to modern errors or corrupt institutions. It does not set man in God's place (52).

Ahmed Deedat and Christianity

His Stand on the Personality of Jesus

Jesus holds a very high position in the House of Islam, though the Christians seem skeptical when this is said. When Ahmed Deedat discusses the issue of Jesus Christ he did not avoid Mary the mother of Jesus. That Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virtuous woman and honoured above the women of all nations.

Ahmed Deedat discussed the personality of Jesus Christ in the light of the Qur'ān and the Bible. The Muslims believed, that Jesus was one of the mightiest messengers of God, that he was the Christ i.e. the messiah (the anointed one); that he was born miraculously without any male intervention, that he gave life to the dead by God's permission, in fact, no Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus (Deedat, 2008).

It must be noted that whenever Ahmed Deedat has the chance, he tries to tell the Christians that the true spirit of charity which the Muslims display, always towards Jesus and his mother, Mary, spring from the fountainhead of his faith in the Qur'ān. He (the Christian) does not know that the Muslim does not take the holy name of Jesus, in his own language without saying Hazrat Isa (meaning revered Jesus) or Isa *alaihiss- salām* (Jesus, peace be upon him). Ahmed Deedat noted in his book Christ in Islam that:

The Christian does not know that in the Holy Qur'ān Jesus (pbuh) is mentioned by name five times (5x) more than the numbers of times the prophet of Islam is mentioned in the Book of God To be exact twenty-five times as against five (Deedat, 2008, 4).

Looking at Jesus in the light of the Bible, the Christians believe that Jesus was given birth through an immaculate conception a view also shared by the Muslims. But one thing Ahmed Deedat would never agree with the Christians about is that Jesus is God or the son of God. Yusuf Ali says in his commentary on Q3 vs 39 that:

After the description of the high position which Jesus occupies as a prophet, we have a repudiation of the dogma that he was Allah, or the son of Allah, or anything more than a man. If it is said that he

was born without either a human father or mother (Ali, 1989, 158).
 also so born. Indeed Adam was born without either
 a human father or mother (Ali, 1989, 158).

Further, Deedat observes that if the Christian split hairs by arguing that Adam was "created" from the dust of the ground, whereas Jesus "begotten" in the womb of Mary. This is his response:

The Muslim takes exception to the word begotten, because begetting is an animal act, belonging to the lower animal functions of sex. How can we attribute such a lowly capacity to God? (Deedat, 2008, 29)

Another point that must also be noted is that Ahmed Deedat does not believe that Jesus died on the cross or was crucified. Looking at the various evidence he brought in his book *Was Christ Crucified*. He believes he (Jesus) was reluctant to die for he (Jesus) knew the Jews want to kill him and so Jesus prayed to God to deliver him. It must be noted that all the evidence brought by Ahmed Deedat was from the Bible and not from the Qur'ān, in other words, he, Ahmed Deedat, was trying to say even from the evidence and the events in the Bible, Jesus did not die on the cross. Ahmed Deedat quoted Professor Jurgen Moltmann in his (Deedat's) *Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction* as saying:

The Death of Jesus on the cross is the centre of all Christian theology... All statements about God, about creation, about sin and death have their focal point in the crucified Christ. All Christian statements about history, about the Church, about faith and sanctification, about the future and about hope stem from the crucified Christ.

In other words, what Ahmed Deedat is trying to say is that if the crucifixion of Jesus has been faulted Christianity would have no basis. This is why he brought various examples such as; Jesus only stayed on the cross for 3 hours; was alive when spear thrust his body on the cross; Always in disguise in order for the Jews not to recognize him; Never shown himself to the Jews; took only short trips; Never said "I was dead and now I am alive; Mary Magdalene was not afraid on recognizing him; Pilate marvels on hearing about his death amongst other evidence (Deedat, 2008).

Deedat maintains that the study of the crucifixion was thrust upon him by those of the Christian faith who claimed to be his benefactors and well-wishers. He seriously took their concern to heart and studied and researched objectively using their own sources. He also noted that he does not expect anyone to ask him about his belief as a Muslim concerning the crucifixion. His belief he says is "the Qur'ānic believe as categorically stated in Chapter 4 vs 157" (Deedat, 1984, 88). To support Deedat's assertion, Suleman (1997) noted about the crucifixion of Jesus that:

The agility of the Jews in the crucifixion episode should be seen from the fact that the Jewish Priests were trying to make a sacrificial lamb out of Jesus,

rather than God sacrificing His Son' for any vicarious purposes (p. 46).

Suleman also continued that facts abound to show that Jesus was not really crucified. In the first place, the Bible shows that when a righteous person calls on God He delivers such a person. During the raising of Lazarus from death, Jesus also made it clear that God Heard his prayer always. It, therefore, follows that Christ's prayer that he be saved from the torture of crucifixion was answered by God. Also, the Bible claims that a resurrected body is no longer a mortal but a spirit. In order to demonstrate the fact that he was not dead, Jesus took the pain to prove to his followers that he was not a spirit at all but he was the same Jesus they know (Suleman, 1997).

Ahmed Deedat maintained that the message of Jesus (pbuh) was as simple and straight forward as that of all his predecessors as well as that of his successor Muhammad (pbuh) namely "believe in God and keep His commandments" For the God who inspired His messengers, is an unvarying God and He is consistent. He is not the "author of confusion" (Deedat, 2008, 42).

His Criticism about the Bible

It must be mentioned that Ahmed Deedat was more of a Bible scholar than the Qur'ān. This is why he has problem with what the Christians call the Bible. He believes there are contradictions in the Bible; therefore, it cannot be regarded as the word of God alone.

He believes there are three different kinds of witnesses recognizable without any need of specialized training. These are: the word of God, words of a prophet of God, words of a Historian. Example of the first type is: "I, I am the Lord, and beside me there is no savior" (Isiah43:11). Also, "[t]urn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (Isaiah45:22).

The second type is:

Jesus answered, "The first is, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One (Mark12:29).

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, Lama sabach- thani? That is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matthew27:46).

The third type is:

And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it he found nothing but leaves... (Mark11:13)

According to Deedat, in Islam, all these are recorded in separate books and are guarded jealously apart, in their proper gradations of authority. He further observes that "[a] Christian is forced to concede equal spiritual import and authority to all, and it is unfortunate in this regard" (Deedat, n.d., p. 78). In support of this, Dimashkiah (1997) noted:

The book of the religion remains always as proof of the religion. If the book is right then its religion is right, if it is wrong then its religion is wrong. To consider any scripture

as a holy Book} it should: Be free of errors, contradictions be free of the low, obscene words; be free of slander of God, God's prophets; be free of racism; describe God in the best possible way not negatively; be expressed in the most beautiful language, the language of the creator of language; it should not permit what God has forbidden, nor forbid what God has allowed (Dimashkiah, 1997, n.p.).

How can such a book be accepted as the word of *Allahu ta'ala*? A book in which there are some words by *Allāhu ta'ālā*, some words by Prophets, and some different narrations by ordinary human beings. This is why it is believed that there are many errors in today's Bibles because a story is related in different ways by narrators, the number reported in a story is not the same. All these points to the fact that today's Bible is really the work of human beings (Kitabevi, 1990).

Ahmed Deedat did not only look at the contradictions and subtractions in the Bibles but what other Christians say about the Bible itself. Ahmed Deedat quoted Mrs. Ellen G. White, a prophetess of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, in her Bible commentary as saying:

The Bible we read today is the work of many copyists who have in most instances done their work with marvelous accuracy. But copyists have not been infallible, and God most evidently has not seen fit to preserve them altogether from error in transcribing (Deedat, 99).

She also stated further that:

I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible, Yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to learn to their established views, which were governed by tradition (cited in Deedat, n.d., 99).

From the old and the New Testament, there is abundant evidence that indicates the voice of third-person writing from hearsay. Looking at the New Testament, every Gospel begins with the introduction "According to" because not a single one of the vaunted twenty-four thousand copiest extant carries its authors' autograph. Ahmed Deedat also observes various contradictions in the Bible. For instance, 1 Kings 7 vs 26. It reads:

And it was a handbreadth thick, and the brain thereof was wrought like the brain of a cup, with flowers of lilies. It contained two thousand baths.

Also in 11 Chronicles 4 vs 5:

And the thickness of it was a handbreadth, and the brim of it like the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies, and it received and held three thousand baths.

Ahmed Deedat noted that whether it is witting or unwitting the “inspired writers singular inability to grasp the difference between 2,000 and 3,000 is unforgivable. No miracle, however numerous, could remove a contradiction which lies in the surface of the teachings and records of Christianity. He also observed that the Bible contains pornography which is not befitting for the word of God and gave the example of Genesis 19 vs 30. All these are some of the various criticisms Deedat raised against the Bible.

His Argument on the Reality of God

Ahmed Deedat believes God cannot be compared with anything or anybody and that the Belief in God is ingrained in the nature of man. As long as man existed on earth, the knowledge of God Almighty also co-existed. Deedat also noted that there is no nation or language group on earth who does not know God by some name. This knowledge was given by the Creator Himself through the lips of His chosen messengers (Deedat, 1981).

However, according to Deedat, Islam is the only religion which teaches the existence of perfect God, a perfect God in the sense that there is no sharer in His Nature and His Attributes. This argument about God is against the Christian teachings who refer to Jesus as God. The reason was given by the Christian why Jesus is God is that He shares the nature of God, and He is in every way like God. In order to prove them wrong, Deedat gave different quotations from the Bible which shows he cannot be compared to God. For instance, when the Bible was talking about the spiritual development of Jesus. It says: “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom” (Luke2:40).

Also on the powerlessness of Jesus, Jesus said: “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John5:30). This indicates that he does not have the power to do anything without God’s command. On the ancestors of Jesus, the Bible says: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew1:1). Ahmed Deedat was asking the question does “God” have ancestors or was “God” given birth to by anyone? Also, Jesus was said to be hungry “Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered” (Matthew21:18).

With these examples given above Ahmed Deedat’s question was can a God have all these attributes? Deedat further observes that the onus to prove that Jesus is God now rests with the Christians. Either he must prove that Jesus is God, or he must admit that he is a polytheist i.e. believer in more than one God (Deedat, 1993). Deedat opines that Muslims have not done enough for the benighted millions of the world who needed to be rescued from *shirk*. If this is not done they are likely to take Muslims down with them to perdition here as well as in the hereafter, since, there are many millions more worshipping man gods today than those worshipping the one true God (Deedat, 1981).

Conclusion

This paper investigates the *da'wah* themes in the works of Ahmed Deedat. It shows that just as he has been able to raise a lot of critical points on religion especially Christianity, he has also been able to strengthen the hearts of Muslims about their faith. The paper highlights various themes from his *da'wah* to adherents of different faiths and was able to deduce points on the personality of Jesus and Muhammad, the Bible and the Qur’ān, God as well as Islam. The paper also explains how his *da'wah* messages were centred on who has got the good news right. Moreover, the paper demonstrates the effectiveness of his *da'wah* activities in raising the consciousness of followers of other religions especially the Jews and Christians about the

religion which they profess and looking critically at their doctrines in comparison with Islamic teachings. Finally, the paper suggests that Ahmed Deedat's *da'wah* methodology great impact is that it has been able to convert many into Islam. The findings of this paper have implications for Islamic propagation and open the way for further dialogue among adherents of different religions.

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