

THE QUR'ĀNIC FOUNDATIONS &
STRUCTURE OF MUSLIM SOCIETY
VOLUME ONE

#

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Obtainable From:
THE WORLD FEDERATION OF ISLAMIC MISSIONS
⊥
ISLAMIC CENTRE
NORTH NAZIMABAD B BLOCK
KARACHI-74700 PAKISTAN

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First Edition 1973
Second Impression 1977
Third Impression 1989
Fourth Impression 2008

Printed by
ELITE PUBLISHERS LTD.
D-118, S.I.T.E., Karachi Pakistan

INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR

Maulana Dr. Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman Ansari—with ‘al-Qaderi’ also often affixed to his name, because he is a *Shaykh* of the Qaderiyya Order—is, through Shaykh al-Islam Abdullah al-Ansari of Herat (Afghanistan), a descendant of the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s Companion, Khalid Abu Ayyub Ansari, who attained martyrdom on the soil of Europe and was buried at Istanbul. He holds Doctorate in Philosophy, and is a $\times\acute{E}fi\grave{D}$ of the Qur’an (i.e., one who remembers the entire Qur’an by heart), an Islamic theologian, a scholar of Muslim and Modern Philosophy, and of Comparative Religion, Psychology and the Social Sciences.

As a versatile scholar and winner of high academic distinctions, he was officially hailed at his alma mater, the famous Aligarh Muslim University of India, as “the best product” and “a new refulgent star on the firmament of Islamic Learning.”

As an exponent of Islam, he has been the upholder of Dynamic Orthodoxy, as opposed to Conservatism and Modernism, with the slogan: “Return to the Qur’an, and return to Muhammad.”

As a professor, he taught Philosophy of Religion, Moral Philosophy, Comparative Religion and Islamics to the ‘*UlamÉ*’ at the Academy of Islamic Studies at Quetta, and to post-Graduate students at the University of Karachi. And at the unique educational institution that he founded at Karachi, i.e., the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies, he guided research in Comparative Religion, Psychology and

Philosophy. At the same time, he was an honorary Director of Research at the University of Karachi,

As an author, he had to his credit a large number of publications, ranging from theology, comparative religion, sociology, education, biography and socio-economic ideologies, to philosophy.

As a missionary, he travelled round the earth five times—being the first missionary to have acquired that distinction in Islamic history,— worked for the spiritual and moral uplift of different Muslim communities in the Orient and the Occident, and gained a vast experience of human behaviour and of the merits and deficiencies of the present-day Muslim society. In the trail of his missionary labours emerged the World Federation of Islamic Missions, of which he was the founder.

All in all: he was a multi-dimensional scholar, orator, missionary, teacher, author, spiritual leader and a very widely-travelled servant of humanity. As such, his place among the leading Islamic personalities of the world is unique, and his exposition of the Message of the Qur'an in the present book, which may rightfully be claimed to be a unique attempt of its type in the literary history of Islam, deserves serious response.

Mohammed Ja'fer Shaikh



BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE BEACON LIGHT
THE CHRISTIAN WORLD IN REVOLUTION
MUHAMMAD: THE GLORY OF THE AGES
ISLAM IN EUROPE AND AMERICA
MUSLIMS AND COMMUNISM
HUMANITY REBORN
ISLAM
TRENDS IN CHRISTIANITY
OUR FUTURE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME
ETHICS OF THE QUR'ĀN
MEANING OF PRAYER
COMMUNIST CHALLENGE TO ISLAM
ISLAM VERSUS MARXISM
ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD
THROUGH SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY TO RELIGION
WHICH RELIGION
WHAT IS ISLAM
FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH
BEYOND DEATH
ISLAM AND SLAVERY
WOMAN UNDER ISLAM
PHILOSOPHY OF WORSHIP IN ISLAM
ISLAM AND WESTERN CIVILISATION
ETC: ETC: ETC:

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND IMPRESSION

It is a happy augury that the Publication of the Second Impression of “The Qur’anic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society” is being undertaken by the World Federation of Islamic Missions in the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal so closely and lovingly associated in our minds and hearts with the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him).

The book, it appears, is destined to dispel the cloud of misunderstanding about the true aims and ideals of Islam prevailing in the West and to illumine the hearts and souls of the Muslims with wisdom of Truth and purity of style.

There cannot be a more glowing tribute to its author than the fact that the first edition of the book was exhausted in a very short period and the demand for it continues to grow both from the scholars of repute and Muslims from many countries.

By the grace of God, and the assistance of friends and associates it has become possible for the organisation to reprint the book in a larger number. Their cooperation is most thankfully acknowledged.

Let us pray to God that our humble effort may be accepted and rewarded by Him here and the Hereafter and the entire humanity may be blessed with the True Knowledge and understanding of THE HOLY BOOK and the ONE to whom it was revealed.

Al-Haj Ikram Siddiqui
President
World Federation of Islamic Missions

Karachi:
12th Rabi-ul-Awwal, 1397-A.H.
(March 3, 1977)



FOREWORD

“By this book (the Holy Qur’an) Allah will raise certain people to (the pinnacle of) glory and cast others down into (the abyss of) disgrace.”

The above is the translation of a saying of the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.). The truth and wisdom of this saying can be visualized by casting a cursory glance at the annals of our own history.

In his immortal composition, ‘Rise and Fall of Islam’, Allama Altaf Husain Hali, describes the Qur’an as a formula of alchemy. He says:

“He (the Holy Prophet, p.b.u.h.) descended from Hira and came to his people, bringing with him a formula of alchemy that turned the copper-ore into pure gold and separated the noble from the base. The land of Arabia that was immersed under ignorance since centuries was suddenly transformed (into a territory of Knowledge and Light). The fleet had no longer to fear the destructive waves, for the course of winds was entirely changed.”

The able author of this book, the renowned expounder and preacher of Islam, the late Dr. Maulana Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman Al-Ansari Al-Qaderi (R. A.) had devoted many precious years of his life to the study of the Holy Qur’an, the only Divine Scripture that has remained unaltered by man. He made the study not only for the sake

of knowledge but also to find solutions for ever increasing problems of mankind both in the physical and spiritual realms. Along the course of his study new vistas were being opened before him ever and anon. Ultimately, he found in the Holy Qur'an the panacea for all human ailments. By this time, he had almost exhausted himself; his health was at its lowest and he was often heard saying: "How I wish, I was granted a few more years of life, to be able to produce, the fruit of my labour in the form of a book."

His prayers were granted and he was able to complete this memorable book in two volumes. Its first edition was published in 1973 a few months before his demise and the second in 1979. Now the third edition is under print. It was universally appreciated by scholars and was warmly greeted. The first two editions were sold out. This third edition, I am sure, will also be greeted likewise by scholars both Muslims and non-Muslims throughout the World, as this message is addressed to all mankind for all times.

May Allah guide us through this book and shower His choicest blessings on the soul of its noble author. *ÓmÊn:*

MUHAMMED JA'FER
General Secretary
World Federation of Islamic Missions.



Dedicated most respectfully and In the Name of
Allah to

The Holy Prophet Muhammad
(*ØallAllÉho 'alaihi wa Sallam*),

the Refulgent Sun of Piety, Truth, Justice, Love, Selflessness, Wisdom and Beauty, who came as the Last Prophet and Messenger of Allah to entire Humanity for teaching the Way whereby to combat all Spiritual, Moral, Intellectual, Economic and Political Evils and to achieve the Most Glorious and Comprehensive Success, and who accomplished what stands upto this day as the Noblest and the Most Profound Revolution in human history through the Impact of his Superbly-Dynamic and Humanly-Perfect Personality and through the Holy Qur'ân, which was revealed to him by Allah to function as the Basic Instrument of his Abiding Mission.

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FOREWORD

Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal:

ON THE PREDICAMENT OF MODERN HUMANITY AND THE WAY OUT

The modern man with his philosophies of criticism and Scientific specialism finds himself in a strange predicament. His Naturalism has given him an unprecedented control over the forces of nature, but has robbed him of faith in his own future. It is strange how the same idea affects different cultures differently. The formulation of the theory of evolution in the world of Islam brought into being Rumi's tremendous enthusiasm for the biological future of man. No cultured Muslim can read such passages as the following without a thrill of joy:

*Low in the earth
I lived in realms of ore and stone;
And then I smiled wild and in many-tinted flowers;
Then roving with the wandering hours,
O'er earth and air and ocean's zone,
In a new birth,
I dived and flew,
And crept and ran,
And all the secret of my essence drew
Within a form that brought them all to view—
And lo, a Man!
And then my goal,
Beyond the clouds, beyond the sky,
In realms where none may change or die—*

*In angel form; and then away
Beyond the bounds of night and day,
And Life and Death, unseen or seen,
Where all that is hath ever been,
As One and Whole.*

— *Rumi: Thadani's Translation.*

On the other hand, the formulation of the same view of evolution with far greater precision in Europe has led to the belief that 'there now appears to be no scientific basis for the idea that the present rich complexity of human endowment will ever be materially exceeded'. That is how the modern man's secret despair hides itself behind the screen of scientific terminology ...

Thus, wholly overshadowed by the results of his intellectual activity, the modern man has ceased to live soulfully, *i.e.*, from within. In the domain of thought he is living in open conflict with himself; and in the domain of economic and political life he is living in open conflict with others. He finds himself unable to control his ruthless egoism and his infinite gold-hunger which is gradually killing all higher striving in him and bringing him nothing but life-weariness. Absorbed in the 'fact', that is to say, the optically present source of sensation, he is entirely cut off from the unplumbed depths of his own being. In the wake of his systematic materialism has at last come that paralysis of energy which Huxley apprehended and deplored. ... Modern atheistic socialism, which possesses all the fervour of a new religion, has a broader outlook; but having received its philosophical

basis from the Hegelians of the left wing, it rises in revolt against the very source which could have given it strength and purpose. Both nationalism and atheistic socialism, at least in the present state of human adjustments, must draw upon the psychological forces of hate, suspicion, and resentment which tend to impoverish the soul of man and close up his hidden sources of spiritual energy. Neither the technique of medieval mysticism nor nationalism nor atheistic socialism can cure the ills of a despairing humanity. Surely the present moment is one of great crisis in the history of modern culture. The modern world stands in need of biological renewal. And religion, which in its higher manifestations, is neither dogma, nor priesthood, nor ritual, can alone ethically prepare the modern man for the burden of the great responsibility which the advancement of modern science necessarily involves, and restore to him that attitude of faith which makes him capable of winning a personality here and retaining it hereafter. It is only by rising to a fresh vision of his origin and future, his whence and whither, that man will eventually triumph over a society motivated by an inhuman competition, and a civilization which has lost its spiritual unity by its inner conflict of religious and political values.

— *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*
Chapter 'Is Religion Possible?', pp. 186-189
Printed by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1962



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PREFACE

The basic purpose and function of this book is to state the Philosophy and the Code of Life as given in the Qur'an. That Code has developed, however, with morality as the central theme. And that should have been so. Because, the value-system which the Holy Qur'an has given establishes spirituality as the root, morality as the trunk, and all other aspects of life: economic, political, *etc.*, as offshoots of morality;—whereby it ensures the emergence of the integrated and progressive individual and the integrated and progressive social order.

The central importance for morality that has emerged thus should impress upon the Muslims the central importance of moral struggle.

Viewed in that perspective, the present book forms a basic contribution in respect of extricating Muslim society from the Crisis of Character which has overtaken all classes of Muslims, and which is the deadliest poison that has ever paralysed or killed any human community.

The method of exposition adopted is simple and direct. Moreover, personal comments have been kept at the barest minimum, so that the Qur'an has stayed in its august position free to explain itself. In the dynamic orthodoxy that has thus emerged lies, in the belief of the present writer, the salvation of Muslims and of humanity at large.



The typescript of the original draft of this book was read on June 30th, 1969, and was even handed over to brother Ghazi Nasir-ud-Din, Managing Director of Trade and Industry Publications Ltd., who had come forward with love and devotion to undertake the work of printing. But subsequently it was considered necessary to expound certain topics in detail; as a consequence of which very considerable additions were made, so that the work is being presented finally as a two-volume publication of more than nine hundred pages.

Certain technical discussions relating to philosophical, psychological, sociological, economic and political themes had to be kept out even during the course of the final effort, out of regard for keeping the book handy, lucid and easy of comprehension by the average-educated person. Separate volume or volumes are proposed to be presented on those problems.

The author is conscious of the fact that, although he has availed the talent of the classical translators of the Holy Qur'an, there is scope for improvement in respect of the translation of a number of verses. That task is intended to be taken up in the second edition.

In his study of the Qur'an, the author had recourse to the classical Arabic Qur'anic commentaries and allied literature. But he has quoted mainly from the English commentaries by Abdul Majid Daryabadi and Abdullah Yusuf Ali, because they have projected the best—in fact, the very essence, of the knowledge enshrined in the Arabic classics. Moreover, these two orthodox scholars' commentaries are accessible to the average English-educated Muslim for further study.

The author leads a life wherein he has to perform duties of multifarious types, especially as the President of the World Federation of Islamic Missions, which has several projects to be looked after. Besides that, he has touring duties as an international worker for Islam. It is, therefore, impossible for him to accomplish literary work leisurely and with the concentration which the research-work of the type that has been undertaken in the present book demands. As such, the present task has been accomplished piece-meal by snatching time forcibly from other duties over a period of time, and in consequence there is a possibility of the occurrence of oversights and shortcomings,—even though utmost care has been exercised. The author, who regards himself only as a humble pursuer of Truth and as a student of Islam, will, therefore, appreciate all genuine criticism and advice from the world of scholarship. He requests his readers, however, not to introduce implications into his statements beyond what has been categorically and clearly said.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While presenting this book, I consider it my privilege to express my deep debt of gratitude to my revered teachers: Prof. Dr. S.Z. Hasan, M.A., LL.B., D. Phil. (Erl.), D. Phil. (Oxon.), under whose guidance I learnt to understand the problems of Philosophy; Hadrat Maulana Saiyid Sulaiman Ashraf, from whom I acquired, at the level of my higher education, knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and of the Islamic theological sciences; and Hadrat Maulana Muhammad Abdul Aleem al-Siddiqi al-Qaderi, through whom I received the Qaderiyya Spiritual Discipline and the mission of serving the far-flung Muslim communities of the globe. The deepest debt of gratitude I owe, however, to my beloved parents of revered memory: Muhammad Khalil Ansari and Husn Ara Begum, who, through their noble character and fruitful teaching and loving concern for my well-being, built up the foundations of my personality and sponsored and guided my education at all stages, thereby enabling me to prepare myself for undertaking this work. I must also acknowledge my debt of gratitude to my wife, Begum Subhia, who, ever since our marriage, has stood by me with grace and fortitude in all the ordeals through which I had to pass in respect of my humble service to the cause of Islam, and without whose earnest co-operation and sincere encouragement the present laborious task could not have been accomplished.

I am grateful also to Mr. Muhammad Ja'fer Shaikh and Mr. Muhammad Ilyas Khan, Joint and Assistant Secretaries respectively of the World Federation of Islamic Missions, for the invaluable help rendered especially by the former in the preparation of the typescript;

and to my dear pupils: Waffie Muhammad and Imran Nazar Hosein, both of Trinidad (West Indies), and Siddiq A. Nasir of Guyana (South America): to Waffie for assistance in reading the proofs, handling the problem of the Arabic calligraphy, and supervising the printing during the last stage; to Imran for preparing the list of Contents and checking the references; to Siddiq for compiling the Indexes. May Allah bless them all with His choicest Blessings.

Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman Ansari



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INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

WHY THE QUR'ÓN ALONE?

The enquiry in the present dissertation has been confined strictly to the Holy Qur'an, not because the present writer does not give to the *×adÊth* literature its rightful place, but on the following grounds:

Firstly, it alone enjoys the status of being the Scripture of Islam.

Secondly, every word of its text is absolutely authentic as having been preserved to the very letter in the very words in which it was delivered by the Holy Prophet Muhammad p.

Thirdly, its authority as the basic source-book of Islam has been universally accepted by all sections of Muslims in all ages.

Fourthly, it is the Book which should form the basis of struggle for the reform of human society, even as the Holy Prophet p has been commanded therein:

وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهِ جِهَادًا كَبِيرًا

“... and strive against them (*i.e.*, the opponents of the Islamic Way of Life) therewith (*i.e.*, with the Guidance of the Qur'an) with utmost strenuousness” (25:52).

Fifthly, it claims about itself that it is:

تَبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ

“... an exposition (explicit and implicit) of everything ...”

(16:89). Namely: It imparts complete and eternal guidance concerning all aspects of human life.

Sixthly, it is the *only* Book of Guidance compiled under the instruction of the Holy Prophet ρ, authorised by him, and delivered by him to the Muslims as the abiding, the infallible and the unchallengeable document of his Teaching for all time,—with no compeer and no substitute. As such, it is the basic instrument of the unity of thought and action in respect of the Islamic Way of Life,—standing in all its uniqueness as totally immune from contradictions and variations.

This characteristic of the Qur'an is of tremendous importance in respect of the Islamic System of Belief, on which rests primarily and basically the consolidation of Religious Unity and Uniformity among Muslims,—a fundamental virtue the violation of which has been equated by the Holy Qur'an with nothing less than the greatest sin, *i.e.*, *Shirk*.

Viewing the *×adÊth* literature in the above perspective: All students of Islam are aware of the sectarian mischief raked up, purely in the name of Prophetic Traditions (*×adÊth*), by certain groups in Muslim history, through the projection of certain allegedly divinely-inspired and divinely-sanctioned offices like those of an infallible *Imam*, a *Mujaddid*, a *Mahdi*, a Promised Messiah, or a *Mahdi* cum-Messiah, without the slightest regard for the infallible principles:

1. that any doctrine which is included in the Belief System is *ipso facto* an inalienable part of the Islamic Creed;

2. that it is not the function of the *×adÊth* literature—however valuable its role otherwise, but only of the Qur’an, to lay down the constitutive factors of the Islamic Creed; and
3. that making belief in the claimants to such offices a part of the Islamic Creed constitutes nothing less than a cruel attack on the very foundation of *ImÊn*, being directed to the destruction of the absoluteness and the indivisibility of a Muslim’s allegiance and loyalty to the Holy Prophet Muhammad ρ as Guide, Teacher and Leader.

If the Traditions concerning such a personality as that of the *Mahdi*, for instance, are accepted as authentic, that does not make, and cannot make, the belief in the emergence of a great leader (*Mahdi*) at some period of Muslim history a guiding principle of *ImÊn*. It remains only a prophecy about a distinguished follower of the Holy Prophet ρ.

Similarly, if the Traditions concerning the Second Advent of Jesus ρ are accepted as correct, they relate only to a prophecy about an event of future history, and have nothing to do with the Islamic Creed,—and, as such, have nothing to do with the *ImÊn* of a Muslim: neither in its affirmation nor in its denial. Moreover, to project the concept of a ‘Promised Messiah’ in the person of some x, y, z and to substitute it for the person of Jesus ρ—although it is his personality that has been projected unambiguously in the prophecy—, and to build a sect on that basis, is to indulge in double violation of the Divine Guidance given in the Qur’an.

All in all, accepting the Qur'an **alone** as the **fundamental** basis for the knowledge of Islamic Guidance is not only the requirement of reason but also the only road to the salvation of Muslims.

Seventhly, the text of the Qur'an is grounded in a System of Meaning, through which it is possible to understand Islam fundamentally as a system of Philosophy and a Code of Practice, keeping the exercise of understanding confined to the Qur'an itself; and the present book is a plain demonstration of this fact. Of course, there are certain aspects of the Qur'anic Guidance where the projection is of an implicit nature. And it is there that recourse to the *×adÊth* literature becomes necessary,—but only for further clarification and not for adding further dimensions to the basic structure of Islam. Also, it is necessary to know as to how the Qur'anic Guidance was put into practice by the Holy Prophet Muhammad himself ρ. In other words, it is necessary to know not only the Qur'an as a Book of Guidance but also the 'Qur'an in Action', *viz.*, the Holy Prophet's *Sunnah*. For that, evidently the *×adÊth* literature is the most indispensable instrument.

But here two important facts have to be kept in view:

1. The Qur'an is the basic instrument for understanding Islam. Hence, for the **value-system** of Islam and its entire **fundamental structure**, it is necessary to concentrate on the Qur'an alone.

2. The knowledge thus obtained forms the fundamental instrument for obtaining further guidance on Islam from the *×adÊth* literature.

It should be so, because:

1. it is the Qur'an which forms the Criterion of Judgment in respect of Islam—a status explicitly given to it by itself—and not the *×adÊth* literature; and
2. the Qur'an is **absolutely** authentic, while even the best *×adÊth* literature is only **relatively** authentic—namely, authentic only in a **qualified manner**. And, of course, every student of Islam knows all the mischief in the field of *×adÊth* perpetrated by the forces of counter-revolution in the very early period of Muslim history,—a mischief which emerged in the form of sects and schisms, and which forged the Traditions relating to certain aspects of Islamic life and history to an extent that the confusion created thereby has continued to plague the Muslim society up to the present day.

In fine, it is the function of the Qur'an to sit in judgment on the *×adÊth*, and not *vice versa*; and, thus, a basic study of Islam in the perspective of the Qur'an emerges as the fundamental necessity.



ROLE OF THE QURÓN AS THE BOOK OF GUIDANCE

The QURÓN came:

- ✳ to obliterate all anthropomorphic notions about God and to establish perfect Monotheism—not merely as a theological concept but as a full-fledged philosophy of life;
- ✳ to inculcate the establishment and maintenance of a living and dynamic relation with God in order that human beings may attain the highest spiritual and moral refinement and greatness;
- ✳ to teach the truth that human beings are basically theomorphic beings—emphasizing the ‘ascent of Man to God’ as opposed to the ‘descent of God in Man’,—and that the goal of every human being is the actualization of his or her potential vicegerency of God through the imitation of Divine Attributes;
- ✳ to give to Woman her rightful place in Society, as basically the equal of Man;
- ✳ to resolve the dichotomy;
 - of Faith and Reason;
 - of Religion and Science
 - of Love and Law
 - of Beauty and Simplicity
 - of Participation in godliness and Participation in worldly life;

- ✧ to establish in the domain of the philosophy of Religion, the positive concept of **Fulfillment** in place of the universally-prevalent negative concept of **Salvation**;
- ✧ to extricate Religion from superstitions;
- ✧ to distinguish Spirituality from Mysticism and Psychicisim;
- ✧ to give a comprehensive Philosophy of Integration, based on the teaching of Unity-ism, thereby providing sure basis for the integration of the life of the Individual as well as of Society; and, beyond that, of Humanity at large;
- ✧ to create an Integralistic Culture and an Integralistic Civilisation;
- ✧ to make Morality the basis for Spiritual Development, on the one hand, and for Social Evolution, on the other;
- ✧ to inaugurate the era of Scientific Advancement by means of teaching the requisite fundamental principles;
- ✧ to highlight the role of Inductive Reasoning as the proper instrument for the pursuit of Knowledge;
- ✧ to emphasize the quest for Empirical Knowledge, as well as the resultant Technological Advancement and Conquest of Nature, as Exercise in the Worship of God;
- ✧ to bestow on Religion the role of functioning as Social Alchemy for the establishment of a Total Welfare Society;
- ✧ to harmonize Truth and Justice with Love and Mercy;

- ✧ to make Social Justice the very foundation for healthy collective life;
 - ✧ to establish the concept of Wealth for Welfare;
 - ✧ to eradicate Poverty, Disease and human Suffering in general;
 - ✧ to crown Labour with Dignity;
 - ✧ to proclaim the principle that value lies in Labour, Productivity and Achievement;
 - ✧ to provide the Golden Mean between the extremist philosophies of Monopoly Capitalism and Communism;
 - ✧ to open the avenues and provide Guidance for human progress in all healthy directions in general;
 - ✧ to close the doors on all those perversions in religious and non-religious thought which go to make Religion an opiate and the Secularistic Philosophies atheistic and immoral;
- and
- ✧ to confer on Humanity many other Blessings, besides.

For that, the Qur'ān gave :

- ✧ a well-co ordinated System of Belief,
- ✧ a fully-integrated Philosophy, and
- ✧ a comprehensive Code of Practice.



THE HOLY PROPHET'S *SUNNAH*:**Role, Definition and certain Facets thereof**

- ✧ The Qur'an has laid fundamental emphasis on the importance of imitation of the Holy Prophet's *Sunnah* as a vital factor in the practice of Islam, because it begins in accepting him as the sole human Guide, in the post-Qur'anic period, in respect of Divine Guidance, and it develops in imitating him more and more as the Perfect Practical Model thereof. The question, therefore, emerges: What does the *Sunnah* stand for? We may concisely answer this question by saying that the Holy Prophet's *Sunnah* stands for the dynamic manifestations of the ethico-religious dimensions of his personality. Or: Looking at it in the perspective of the Qur'an, we may define it by saying that it is the realization by him of the Qur'anic value-system in the different dimensions of his personality;
- ✧ If the implications of the *Sunnah* are understood properly by a Muslim, it saves him from indulgence in *bid'ah*, on the one hand, and inspires him with intense fervour for realizing in his personality, to his utmost capacity, the ethico-religious Idealism projected by the Qur'an.
- ✧ The present is not the occasion to project the Holy Prophet's *Sunnah* in detail, because it relates to a personality that has been the richest, the most profound, and the most perfect in history. We may, however, mention here just a few facets selected off-hand,—only to provide a basic idea. They are:

1. Utmost devotion to God;
2. Spending every moment of life productively, and with planning and grace, and not wasting it in frivolities—and doing all that without the harshness and rigors of Asceticism, but with positive consciousness of maintaining life in God-boundness;
3. Maintaining highest fortitude, with a cheerful countenance and a never-failing smile, even in the most trying and terrifying circumstances;
4. Gentleness and considerateness in dealing with others;
5. Forgiveness—and love—for the worst enemies;
6. Practice of Mercy in all situations,—the conquest of Makka demonstrating it at its climax;
7. Utmost generosity;
8. Utmost sacrifice for the welfare of others: feeding others, while himself remaining hungry, clothing others, while himself wearing coarse garments patched time and again; not keeping any wealth with him, in cash or kind, but distributing it to the needy before sunset every day;
9. Extreme humility together with full dignity;
10. Highest rational tolerance;
11. Good-will for all and ill-will towards none;

12. Eating less; sleeping less; talking less;
13. Total abstinence from quarrelsomeness;
14. Immaculate cleanliness in respect of the body, the dress and the environment; and
15. Practice of truthfulness, honesty, fidelity and self-control at their highest.

✱ It is heart-rending to observe that the very notion of the obligatoriness of imitating the real *Sunnah*—which has been fundamentally projected above—has progressively departed from the Muslims; while love for externalistic formalities in the name of the *Sunnah*, and that too with much fuss as to Juristic hairsplitting, has increasingly taken its place among the so-called orthodox pursuers of religiosity;—all that resulting in the creation of large numbers of Islamically-unbalanced religious personalities.



THE QUR'ÓNIC VIEW OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIETY

✱ The mission of the Qur'an in respect of both the Individual and the Society is vehemently Integralistic—the principle of Integralism being grounded in the concept of **Unity** (*tawÍÊd*), and expressing itself in the balanced and harmonious

realization of the basic values of **Piety, Truth, Justice, Wisdom, Love, Beauty and Selflessness.**

- ✳ The Ideational religious approach to human life may either be: (1) ritualistic, or (2) mystical. The ritualistic approach leads to barren Formalism, or Externalism, which brings into play juristic hairsplitting and bigotry even in purely devotional matters. Often falling victim to the cruel disease of 'piety-complex', the adherents of this approach present the picture of a soldier who has acquired only a uniform but no soldierly training. The mystical approach leads to inertia, or to superstitions, or both. As opposed to both of those approaches, the Qur'anic approach is Integralistic, *i.e.*, directed to the build-up of an integrated life, which is fundamentally ethico-religious in character. 'Fundamentally ethico-religious' means that the Qur'an has emphasized the simultaneous pursuit of both Religion and Morality. Indeed, religiosity without regard for the moral refinement and development emerges in the Qur'anic view as nothing less than an opiate, because the very concept of 'godliness' loses all meaning without the active pursuit of the highest Morality.
- ✳ The mission of a Muslim is: To build up his own personality, his social environment, and the world in general, as good; and, for that purpose, to equip himself to possible heights of perfection in respect of, and to cooperate with others in the pursuit of, all healthy and constructive human activities.

- ✧ The external make-up of an Islamic personality is fundamentally grounded in natural grace, because the Qur'an has ordained no sophistications.
- ✧ Religious persons of a particular type feel that they should attach practically all importance to the Law of Grace, and much less or no importance to the Natural Law. No doubt, both of those Laws are operative, under the Divine Plan, in the universe and in the lives of human beings. But, the Holy Qur'an demands that a Muslim should function in life with as much regard for the Natural Law as the wisest Materialist, because God Himself has made the function of the Natural Law as fundamental, and that of the Law of Grace as supererogatory.
- ✧ The adoption of the atheistic mechanistic view of the universe and Man is advocated by its adherents as the only and necessary condition for Scientific progress. That is, however, fallacious; because the Qur'anic concept of the 'Reign of Law' also ensures it in the same measure, and without damage to the spiritual and moral values.
- ✧ The Qur'an rules out the exploitation of man by man in all forms, whether in the social sphere in respect of the economic and the political matters, or in the sphere of Religion in respect of certain so-called religious practices whereby superstitions are traded in as a commodity. Similarly, it is firmly opposed to all forms of tyranny.

- ✳ Wealthy-ness has been very often wedded to wickedness, and the Holy Qur'an has condemned it in that perspective time and again.
- ✳ Hence, while Islam permits private enterprise in business and industry, its permission is not unqualified. Because, it permits only controlled freedom in respect of both earning and spending one's wealth, whereby the emergence of both Monopoly Capitalism and its child, the luxurious and aristocratic living, are ruled out, and the possessors of surplus wealth are stopped from adopting the cult of indulgence in 'wealth, wine, and woman', while the Islamic society as a whole shoulders the responsibility of the provision of basic needs of life to all with dignity.
- ✳ We may sum up the Qur'anic standpoint in respect of Muslim society by saying in negative terms that, with all the practice of religious rituals, the Muslim society loses a vital part of its Islamic character if:
 1. any form of exploitation and tyranny is practised, and economic and political justice is not comprehensively enforced;
 2. the highest moral Idealism is not made the very life-blood of the social order and the basic pursuit of the individuals;

3. the mission of the conquest of Nature is forsaken,—a mission that necessitates the pursuit of Empirical Knowledge and Technology at the highest level.



PURSUIT AND NON-ASCETIC CHARACTER OF SPIRITUALITY

- ✳ The Qur'anic ethico-religious approach does not lead to mysticism, but to what might be termed as **Dynamic Purism** based on *Øidq* and *ØafÉ*. That is the goal and the pride of the orthodox *ØufÉ* orders, in history. They pursued the Qur'anic ethico-religious quest with grace and sincerity,—a quest that is the very essence of Islam.
- ✳ The ultimate goal of the Qur'anic ethico-religious quest is God-realization. But, its pursuit is impossible without self-realization, which, therefore, becomes a Muslim's primary obligation.
- ✳ The struggle for self-realisation emerges in the Qur'anic perspective as basically three-dimensional: the religious, the ethical, and the intellectual.
- ✳ In spite of the fact, however, that it is to be undertaken fundamentally as the first step in the exercise of God-realisation, it leads simultaneously to a knowledge which might be named as the 'knowledge of Spiritual Science'.

That knowledge is scientific, because it is based, like physical science, on observation and verification. The parapsychologists of today, working at the psychological level alone, have affirmed the ESP, the astral projection, *etc.* But, Spiritual Science, in the hands of genuine *ŌufÊ* teachers, has attained immeasurably greater heights. The revelation by men like Rumi and Ibn al-Arabi of certain higher truths discovered only recently by physical science, is a case in point.

- * Surely, *Bid'ah* (i.e., 'spiritual' practices that violate Islam) and superstitions should be condemned by every genuine Muslim. But, to condemn the Spiritual Science itself is unwarranted.
- * Prayer and Fasting play very definite roles in the Qur'anic Spiritual Culture.
- * Prayer is an exercise in respect of the Communion of the finite with the Infinite. It extricates the finite individual from servitude to the finite and opens to him the road to infinite progress. Prayer is thus for progress. Fasting is the exercise in self-control, which is the key to spiritual progress.
- * The enemies of Islam have propagated the allegation that, because of its permission of polygamy, the Qur'an teaches sex-indulgence, which does not harmonize with the pursuit of spiritual refinement and progress. Actually, that allegation is based on the age-old misconception of Ascetic ethics,

wherein the very fulfillment of the natural biological demand of sex is considered to be unholy, in contra-distinction to the Qur'anic view, which holds it as sacred, because it is in conformity with the Divine Scheme, and which condemns only licentiousness as unholy. Thus, the qualified and restricted Qur'anic permission for polygamy has not been prescribed as a license for sex-indulgence but only as an alternative to promiscuity and prostitution, which it eliminates successfully, in sharp contrast with the Ascetic as well as the Totally-Monogamic social philosophies. As for the former, one has to read only the history of Christianity in the Age of Faith to witness the most ugly storm of licentiousness that overtook even the pursuers of saintliness, not to speak of the common folk. (Besides other literature on the subject, the **“History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church”** written by a very devout Christian scholar named Henry C. Lea, published by the University Books Inc., U.S.A., 1966, is enough to provide a correct estimate of the moral disaster perpetrated by that wrong philosophy). Coming to the latter, the modern Western civilization has established the most heinous record of licentiousness,—a record unsurpassed in the history of human civilizations.

- * The enemies of Islam extend their allegation to the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad ρ also, and that to such an extent as to deny to him, with all his superbly-great qualities

of character, even basic spiritual goodness and greatness, simply on the basis of his practice of polygamy. But, what are the facts? **Firstly**, his entire personal life was a life of war against ease, opulence, luxuries, and self-indulgence in general. Indeed, it was through and through a life of Austerity, wherein, even at the height of his material power, he lived in a small thatched mud-hut, passed his days in hunger and toil, and spent his nights for the most part standing in prayer to God. **Secondly**, he adopted polygamy towards the dawn of old age, having led an exemplary monogamous life from the age of twenty-five to the age of fifty in the company of a twice-widowed lady who was fifteen years his senior. **Thirdly**, during the polygamous period, while there was a wife like Lady Ayesha, who was a virgin of seventeen at the time of the consummation of marriage, there were those who were widows or divorcees, and there were even those who, at the time of their marriage with him, were already so old as to have crossed the limit of fitness for married life. All these facts demolish the very basis of the aforesaid insinuation completely, and establish, instead, the truth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ adopted polygamy in the Medinite period of his life **solely** for the sake of his noble and sacred mission,—and that in the perspective of a two-fold achievement. Firstly, in the tribal society of Arabia of those days, wherein one of the fundamental conditions of the success of his mission lay in the unification of the

mutually-hostile tribes, one of the most potent instrument of their unification, in accordance with the mentality of the Arabs of those days, consisted in uniting them through a kinship centered in his person,—and his marriages did make a signal contribution in that behalf. Secondly, through those different marriages he was able to build in the persons of his wives the most accomplished lady-teachers and embodiments of Islam for the propagation of Islamic knowledge among the womenfolk.



THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

- ✳ Muslims rose to greatness through the Qur'an, which built them up into a World-Force dedicated to the service of Humanity, and they led Humanity for a long time in every phase of human activity; spiritual, moral, intellectual, aesthetical, economic and political.

But it is a tragedy of human nature that it is easy for human beings to continue to stick to certain beliefs but difficult to maintain the tempo of the struggle for executing the Practice.

The same has happened to the Muslims, who have fallen from their pinnacle of glory because of their progressive digression from the Qur'anic Way of Life.

✧ Today:

The old-fashioned as well as the outwardly-westernized religious-minded Muslims, who form the overwhelming majority, are demonstrating in their lives a view of Islam which confines their obligation to devotional and ceremonial practices alone—leaving out even morality;—while:

The truly-westernized, secularized, modernized Muslims, who are emerging as the major controlling force in many Muslim communities, are groping in the darkness of utter confusion; and in sheer ignorance they look greedily to fashionable un-Islamic and anti-Islamic ideologies and modes of life for imitation and adoption.

✧ Taking Humanity as a whole:

In the ideological war that is raging all over the world between the Ideational and the Sensate cultural points of view—between the forces of the other-worldly religions and this-worldly social philosophies, wherein the Higher Values of Life are becoming progressively submerged in the quagmire of Secularism—nay, of rank Materialism, Atheism, Nihilism and Libertinism, leading to grave imbalance in the lives of the Individuals and the Communities to the heights of a Mighty Crisis, a Philosophy and a Code of Life based on Integralism is needed very urgently—a Philosophy and a Code that may establish a Culture wherein all human yearnings, ranging from the Transcendental to the Physical,

may find their fulfillment and whereby Humanity may be enabled to achieve its true Destiny.

- * That Philosophy and that Code of Life has been given in the Holy Qur'an.
- * And the present work, being a systematic and comprehensive exposition of the same, forms the need of the hour and deserves serious study by everyone who possesses a serious attitude towards the problems of life.



THE FUTURE ROLE OF ISLAM

The general view of mankind concerning Religion is that its function is confined to the problem of salvation in the next world.

But present-day Humanity has become increasingly interested in achieving salvation in the present world.

Hence Religion has fallen into disrepute as something incapable of solving human problems relating to the earthly life;—nay, even as a definite impediment to human progress.

Here Islam has a unique role to play, because it is definitely, directly and vehemently committed to the salvation of Humanity in both the worlds: the present one as well as the next.

Nay, Islam's role stands at an even higher level, because it substitutes the positive concept of **fulfillment** for the negative concept

of **salvation**. And its concept of **fulfillment** comprehends the healthy and harmonious development of the Individual and the Society in all respects: spiritual, aesthetical, moral, intellectual and physical.

All in all, Islam stands in history as Eternal Guidance: the Guidance for yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The Present may be gloomy because of the wrongs committed by the Muslims themselves during the different epochs of their history, including the present. But;

**THE FUTURE BELONGS TO ISLAM,
—AND TO ISLAM ALONE! —**



BOOK 1 - FUNDAMENTALS

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PART 1

HE TO WHOM THE QURÓN WAS REVEALED

Chapter 1

CHRISTIAN-JEWISH CAMPAIGN OF VILIFICATION

In projecting the discussion about the Holy Qur'an it is necessary to introduce first the personality and the mission of him who was the recipient of its revelation. To do so with any degree of justice would require volumes because of the extreme richness of the personality as well as the mission. The limitations of the present work, however, permit only the briefest introduction. In that connection, again, it seems advisable to present only certain facts, and those too in the words of such Western scholars who, unlike others who were thoroughly drowned in blinding prejudice, felt hesitant in concealing or perverting certain very obvious truths, and exerted, with all their background of inherited prejudice, to adopt fair-mindedness in whatever degree possible. In their words, because no judgment can be regarded as more critical than their judgment, and because "the best testimony is that which comes from the enemy's camp", and the Western scholarship in general,—indeed, Christendom and the international Jewry, has exhibited, and continues to exhibit, such limitless cruelty in terms of a planned campaign of misrepresentation and vilification of Islam and the Holy Prophet ﷺ that in a very brief assessment only this course seems to be beneficial for all those who

fall victim to Western propaganda,—such persons existing in large numbers in all the communities.

The campaign of vilification has, indeed, staggering dimensions. Because, it is not only the Christian priests of the medieval ages and the orientalist of the present day,¹ but also scholars totally unconnected with the polemics against Islam, who have continued to participate in this filthiest and the most degrading job. Just to cite a few examples selected at random, we may refer to four of them:

¹ “During the first few centuries of Mohammadanism,” observes Bosworth Smith, “Christendom could not afford to criticize or explain, it could only tremble and obey. But when the Saracens had received their first check in the heart of France, the nations which had been flying before them faced round as a herd of cows will sometimes do when the single dog that has put them to flight is called off; and though they did not yet venture to fight, they could at least calumniate their retreating foe. Drances-like, they could manufacture calumnies and victories at pleasure.” (*Mohammad and Mohammadanism*. p. 63. 3rd ed., London, 1889). After this remark, Bosworth Smith records those calumnies (pp. 63-72). To say merely that they are vulgar, wild and obscene would not do justice to their atrocious nature. The Dutch orientalist Snouck Hurgronje supports Bosworth Smith’s verdict when he says : “The pictures which our forefathers in the Middle Ages formed of Mohammed’s religion, appear to be a malignant caricature.” (*Mohammedanism*, p. 4). But neither Hurgronje nor the other orientalist could cleanse themselves of the poison inherited from their medieval forefathers, with the result that the West, even after the debacle of Christianity, remains on the whole an inveterate enemy of Islam and Muslims and continues to spread poison against them through all the available media.

1. Dr. J. H. Muirhead of the University of Birmingham has written a text-book on ethics named “**The Elements of Ethics**”, where, just for the sake of insulting Islam, he has irrelevantly inserted the following false statement: “In the lives of the saints among the Turks, as Locke reminds us in his celebrated chapter entitled ‘No Innate Practical Principles’, the primary virtue of chastity seems to have had no place” (p. 231). This allegation applies actually to Christian monasticism of the Middle Ages. But, instead of referring to it, both Locke and Muirhead have foisted a falsehood on Islam!
2. In his book: “**The Theory of Good and Evil**”, which is throughout a work of academic interest on ethical philosophy and which deals only with the western moral theories, Dr. Hastings Rashdall of New College, Oxford, has, without any relevance, hurled a slur on Islam with a touch of innocence thus: “When the Caliph Omar (if the story be not a myth) ordered the Alexandrian library to be burned,² it is probable that he knew³

² It was Dr. Rashdall’s duty as a scholar, if he was not following Paul’s principle of “speaking lies for the glory of God”, to be absolutely sure about the veracity of his statement before falsely insulting a people who brought the light of learning to Europe. The truth is that the said library was burnt by the co-religionists of Dr. Rashdall, who did so to promote Christianity. “... Muslims were friends to learning ... It was not Muslims but (Christian) monks who burnt the Greek library at Alexandria.” (G.D.H. Cole and M.I. Cole: *The Intelligent Man’s Review of Europe Today*, London 1933, p. 31).

³ Mark how a second insult has been added to the first!

very imperfectly what the Alexandrian library or any other library really was” (vol. 1, p. 137).

3. Max Weber, who enjoys a very high place among modern sociologists, has shown a vulgar ignorance of Islam, if not devilish perversion, in his book: “**The Sociology of Religion**” (E. T., Ephraim Fischhoff), wherein it was his duty to adopt scientific objectivity and to acquire a thorough knowledge of Islam before speaking about it. His entire statement on Islam, from p. 262 to p. 266, is, to say the least, abusive. Just to quote a few sentences, picked up off-hand: “... a national Arabic warrior religion ... a religion with very strong class emphasis ... Even the ultimate elements of its economic ethic were purely feudal ... Muhammad’s attitude in opposition to chastity sprang from personal motivations ... the ethical concept of salvation was actually alien to Islam ... An essentially political character marked all the chief ordinances of Islam ... the original Islamic conception of sin has a similar feudal orientation. The depiction of the prophet of Islam as devoid of sin is a late theological construction, scarcely consistent with the actual nature of Muhammad’s strong sensual passions and his explosion of wrath over small provocations ... he lacked any sort of tragic sense of sin ... unquestioned acceptance of slavery, serfdom, and polygamy; the disesteem for and subjection of women”⁴

⁴ A perusal of the present book will reveal even to a casual reader as to how baseless is Max Weber’s indictment.

4. Arnold J. Toynbee, whose academic labours in the field of history are gigantic, and who was naturally expected to be objective in his approach to all religions, displays in respect of Islam the Crusader's zeal rather than the spirit of intellectual honesty. Indeed, the distortion of facts in his hands and the perversion of truth by him is fully reminiscent of the dark minds of those Christian priests of the Dark Ages for whom the more flimsy a cock-and-bull story that was invented about Islam the more spiritually enjoyable it was. Just to quote a few stray samples of Toynbian rubbish from "**A Study of History**", vol. 12: "Hatra had been under the protection of the trinity of goddesses who, in Muhammad's day, were the protectresses of Makka. Their potency was so great that Muhammad almost succumbed to the temptation to stultify his mission by proclaiming them to be daughters of the One True God of the pure religion of Abraham" (p. 466). "In the Arabia of Muhammad's day there was a widespread feeling that it was high time for the Arabs to become 'People of the Book',⁵ such as the Jews and the Christians were" (p. 467). "Thus, by the time of Muhammad's *hijrah* to Madina, the Arabs already possessed all the requisites for becoming world-conquerors except one, and that was political unity" (p. 469). "If the Hijazi prophet Muhammad had failed, the Najdi prophet Maslamah might have done the equivalent of Muhammad's work; and, if Maslamah, too, had failed, some other prophet would have

⁵ Mark how a historian of world renown is projecting a myth!

arisen, in some other part of Arabia, to step into Maslamah's and Muhammad's shoes" (p. 468).⁶

However, we may proceed now to the findings and judgments of some of those Western scholars who could show some fairness in respect of the different aspects of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's ρ personality and mission, to provide a very brief introduction in that behalf.



⁶ Toynbee's vituperative concoctions are so baseless as hardly to deserve any refutation. They are actually based on the old and extremely irrational and groundless Christian accusation of imposture attributed to the Holy Prophet ρ. Some of the modern Western scholars have, however, felt ashamed of it and have controverted and refuted it in strong terms. We will quote later in that connection Montgomery Watt who, in contrast to Prof. A.J. Toynbee, is an Arabicist and specialist in Islamic history, though he too is not a friend of Islam and Muslims.

Chapter 2

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

CONDITION OF THE WORLD AT MUHAMMAD'S ADVENT:

In the fifth and sixth centuries the civilized world stood on the verge of a chaos. The old emotional cultures that had made civilization possible, since they had given to men a sense of unity and of reverence for their rulers, had broken down, and nothing had been found adequate to take their place ...

“It seemed then the great civilization which it had taken four thousand years to construct was on the verge of disintegration, and that mankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism where every tribe and sect was against the next, and law and order was unknown ... The old tribal sanctions had lost their power ... The new sanctions created by Christianity were working division and destruction instead of unity and order. It was a time fraught with tragedy. Civilization, like a gigantic tree whose foliage had overarched the world and whose branches had borne the golden fruits of art and science and literature, stood tottering ... rotted to the core. Was there any emotional culture that could be brought in to gather mankind once more into unity and to save civilization?”⁷

⁷ J.H. Denison: *Emotion as the Basis of Civilization*, London, 1928, pp. 265. 269.

And, then, speaking of the Arabs, Denison says:

“It was among these people that the man (Muhammad) was born who was to unite the whole known world of the east and south.”⁸



**CONDITION OF ARABIA AND THE STATE OF
CHRISTIANITY (THE PRECURSOR OF ISLAM AMONG
REVEALED RELIGIONS):**

“The Arabs believed neither in a future state nor in the creation of the world, but attributed the formation of the universe to nature, and its future destruction to time. Debauchery and robbery everywhere prevailed and since death was regarded as the end, strictly so called, of existence, so was there neither recompense for virtue nor punishment for vice. A like moral and religious corruption was to be found among the Christians and the Jews who, for ages, had established themselves in the Arabian Peninsula, and had there formed very powerful parties. The Jews had come to seek in that land of liberty an asylum from the persecution of the Romans; the Christians had also fled thither in order to escape the massacres occasioned by the Nestorian Eutychianism and Arian dissensions. It is not easy to conceive of anything more deplorable than the condition of Christianity at this time. The scattered branches of the Christian Church in Asia and Africa were at variance with each other, and had adopted the wildest

⁸ *Ibid.*

heresies and superstitions. They were engaged in perpetual controversies and torn to pieces by the disputes of the Arians, Sabellians, Nestorians, and Eutychians, whilst the simony, the incontinence, the general barbarism and ignorance which were to be found amongst the clergy caused great scandal to the Christian religion, and introduced universal profligacy of manners among the people. In Arabia the deserts swarmed with ignorant infatuated Cenobites, or recluses, wasting their lives in vain but fiery speculations, and then rushing, often armed, in mobs into the cities, preaching their fantasies in the churches and enforcing assent to them by the sword. The grossest idolatry had usurped the place of the simple worship instituted by Jesus—that of an all-wise, almighty, and all-beneficent Being, without equal and without similitude: a new Olympus had been imagined, peopled with a crowd of martyrs, saints, and angels, in lieu of the ancient gods of paganism. There were found Christian sects impious enough to invest the wife of Joseph with the honours and the attributes of a goddess. Relics and carved and painted images were objects of the most fervid worship on the part of those whom the word of Christ commanded to address their prayers to the living God alone. Such were the scenes which the Church of Christ presented in Alexandria, in Alleppo, and in Damascus. At the time of Mohammad's advent all had abandoned the principles of their religion to indulge in never-ending wrangling upon dogmas of a secondary importance, and the Arabian people could not but see that they had lost sight of the most essential point of the religious doctrine—the pure and true worship of God—and that, as regards the most

disgraceful and the grossest superstition, they were upon a par with their pagan contemporaries.”⁹

“Their lies, their legends, their saints and their miracles, but above all, the abandoned behavior of their priesthood, had brought the churches in Arabia very low.”¹⁰

“It has been the fashion”, observes Dr. Emanuel Deutsch, “to ascribe whatever is good in Mohammedanism to Christianity. We fear this theory is not compatible with the results of honest investigation. For, of Arabian Christianity at the time of Muhammad, the less said perhaps the better ... By the side of it ... even modern Amharic Christianity, of which we possess such astounding accounts, appears pure and exalted.”¹¹



BIRTH OF MUHAMMAD :

“Four years after the death of Justinian, 569 A.D.,¹² was born at Makka, in Arabia, the man who, of all men, has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race.”¹³

⁹ John Davenport: *An Apology for Mohammad and the Koran*, London 1869. p. 4

¹⁰ Bruce: *Travel*,. vol. I, p. 501.

¹¹ *The Quarterly Review*, London. No. 954, p. 315.

¹² Rather, 571 A.C.



MUHAMMAD'S YOUTH:

“Our authorities”, says Muir, “all agree in ascribing to the youth of Mohammad a modesty of deportment and purity of manners rare among the people of Makka ... Endowed with a refined mind and delicate taste, reserved and meditative, he lived much within himself, and the ponderings of his heart no doubt supplied occupation for leisure hours spent by others of a lower stamp in rude sports and profligacy. The fair character and honorable bearing of the unobtrusive youth won the approbation of his fellow-citizens; and he received the title, by common consent, of *Al-AmĒn*, the Trustworthy.”¹⁴

“... Orphaned at birth, he was always particularly solicitous of the poor and the needy, the widow and the orphan, the slave and the downtrodden. At twenty he was already a successful businessman, and soon became director of camel caravans for a wealthy widow. When he reached twenty-five, his employer, recognizing his merit, proposed marriage. Even though she was fifteen years the older, he married her, and as long as she lived remained a devoted husband.

¹³ John William Draper: *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*. London 1875, vol. 1 pp. 329-330.

¹⁴ Sir William Muir: *Life of Mohammad*, London 1903.

“By forty this man of the desert had secured for himself a most satisfying life: a loving wife, fine children and wealth. Then in a series of dramatic and terrifying events, he began to receive through the Archangel Gabriel a revelation of God’s word.”¹⁵



UNFOLDING OF PROPHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CALL:

“Ah no!” says Carlyle, “this deep-hearted Son of the Wilderness with his beaming black eyes and open social deep soul, had other thoughts than ambition. A silent great man; he was one of those who cannot BUT be in earnest; whom Nature herself has appointed to be sincere. While others walk in formulas and hearsays, contented enough to dwell there, this man could not screen himself in formulas: he was alone with his own soul and the reality of things. The great mystery of Existence, as I said, glared in upon him, with its terrors, with its splendors; no hearsays could hide that unspeakable fact. ‘Here am I’; such SINCERITY as we name it, has in very truth something of divine. The word of such a man is a Voice direct from Nature’s own Heart. Men do and must listen to that as to nothing else: all else is wind in comparison. From of old, a thousand thoughts, in his pilgrimings and wanderings, had been in this man. What am I? What

¹⁵ James A. Michener: *Islam: The Misunderstood Religion*. Reader’s Digest (American Edition) May 1955. p. 68.

is this unfathomable Thing I live in, which men name Universe? What is Life; What is Death? What am I to believe? What am I to do? The grim rocks of Mount Hira, of Mount Sinai, the stern sandy solitudes, answered not. The great Heaven rolling silent overhead with its blue-glancing stars, answered not. There was no answer. The man's own soul, and what of God's inspiration dwelt there, had to answer."¹⁶

“Certainly he had two of the most important characteristics of the prophetic order. He saw truth about God which his fellowmen did not see, and he had an irresistible inward impulse to publish this truth. In respect of this latter qualification, Mohammed may stand in comparison with the most courageous of the heroic prophets of Israel. For the truth's sake he risked his life, he suffered daily persecution for years, and eventually banishment, the loss of property, of the goodwill of his fellow-citizens, and of the confidence of his friends; he suffered, in short, as much as any man can suffer short of death, which he only escaped by flight, and yet he unflinchingly proclaimed his message. No bribe, threat or inducement, could silence him. ‘Though they array against me the sun on the right hand and the moon on the left, I cannot renounce my purpose’. And it was this persistency, this belief in his call, to proclaim the unity of God, which was the making of Islam.

“Other men have been monotheists in the midst of idolaters, but no other man has founded a strong and enduring monotheistic

¹⁶ Thomas Carlyle: *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*. London 1888.

religion. The distinction in his case was his resolution that other men should believe. If we ask what it was that made Mohammed proselytizing where other men had been content to cherish a solitary faith, we must answer that it was nothing else than the depth and force of his own conviction of the truth. To himself the difference between one God and many, between the unseen Creator and those ugly lumps of stone or wood, was simply infinite. The one creed was death and darkness to him, the other life and light ... Who can doubt the earnestness of that search after truth and the living God, that drove the affluent merchant from his comfortable home and his fond wife, to make his abode for months at a time in the dismal cave of Mount Hira? If we respect the shrinking of Isaiah or Jeremiah from the heavy task of proclaiming unwelcome truth, we must also respect the keen sensitiveness of Mohammed, who was so burdened by this responsibility...”¹⁷

“... we feel that the words which he (Muhammad) speaks are not the words of an ordinary man. They have their immediate source in the inner reality of things, since he lives in constant fellowship with this reality.”¹⁸



FIRST CONVERTS :

“It is strongly corroborative of Mohammed’s sincerity that the

¹⁷ Dr. Marcus Dods: *Mohammed, Buddha and Christ*. pp. 17. 18.

¹⁸ Tor Andrae: *Mohammad*, London 1936, p. 247.

earliest converts to Islam were his bosom friends and the people of his household, who, all intimately acquainted with his private life, could not fail to have detected those discrepancies which more or less invariably exist between the pretensions of the hypocritical deceiver and his actions at home.”¹⁹



PERSECUTION AND MIGRATION FROM MAKKA:

“Muhammad’s message infuriated those rich Arabs whose faith required many idols, and he and his new followers were driven from Makka, his home.”²⁰



AT MADINA:

“In little more than a year he was actually the spiritual, nominal and temporal ruler of Madina, with his hand on the lever that was to shake the world.”²¹

“... he became head of the state and the testimony even of his enemies is that he administered wisely. The wisdom he displayed in

¹⁹ John Davenport: *An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran*, p. 17.

²⁰ James A. Michener: *op. cit.*

²¹ John Austin: *Muhammad the Prophet of Allah*, in “T. P’s and Cassels’ Weekly” for 24th September, 1927.

judging intricate cases became the basis for the religious law that governs Islam today.”²²

“... Forced now to fight in defence of the freedom of conscience which he preached, he became an accomplished military leader. Although he repeatedly went into battle outnumbered and outspared as much as five to one, he won some spectacular victories.”²³



CONQUEST OF MAKKA:

“The day of Mohammad’s greatest triumph over his enemies was also the day of his grandest victory over himself. He freely forgave the Koraysh all the years of sorrow and cruel scorn in which they had afflicted him and gave an amnesty to the whole population of Makka. Four criminals whom justice condemned made up Mohammad’s proscription list when he entered as a conqueror to the city of his bitterest enemies. The army followed his example, and entered quietly and peacefully; no house was robbed, no women insulted. One thing alone suffered destruction. Going to the Kaaba, Mohammad stood before each of the three hundred and sixty idols, and pointed to it with his staff, saying, ‘Truth is come and falsehood is fled away!’, and at

²² James A. Michener: *op. cit.*

²³ *Ibid.*

these words his attendants hewed them down, and all the idols and household gods of Mekka and round about were destroyed.”

“It was thus Mohammad entered again his native city. **Through all the annals of conquest there is no triumphant entry comparable to this one.**”²⁴

“... in comparison, for example, with the cruelty of the Crusaders, who, in 1099, put seventy thousand Muslims, men, women and helpless children to death when Jerusalem fell into their hands; or with that of the English army, also fighting under the Cross, which in the year of grace 1874 burned an African capital, in its war on the Gold Coast. Muhammad’s victory was in very truth one of religion and not of politics; he rejected every token of personal homage, and declined all regal authority; and when the haughty chiefs of the Koreishites appeared before him he asked:

“What can you expect at my hands?”

“Mercy, O generous brother!”

“Be it so; you are free! he exclaimed.”²⁵



²⁴ Stanley Lane-Poole: *The Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Mohammad*, London 1882, Introduction, pp. 46, 47. (Bold lettering are the present writer’s).

²⁵ Arthur Gilman: *The Saracens*, London 1887 pp. 184, 185.

FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE AND A GREAT SERMON ON HUMAN RIGHTS:

“A year before his death, at the end of the tenth year of the Hegira, Muhammad made his last pilgrimage from Madina to Makka. He made then a great sermon to his people ... The reader will note that the first paragraph sweeps away all plunder and blood feuds among the followers of Islam. The last makes the believing Negro the equal of the Caliph ... they established in the world a great tradition of dignified fair dealing, they breathe a spirit of generosity, and they are human and workable. They created a society more free from widespread cruelty and social oppression than any society had ever been in the world before.”²⁶



Return To Companionship on High :

“... this very human prophet of God ... had such a remarkable personal influence over all with whom he was brought into contact that, neither when a poverty-stricken and hunted fugitive, nor at the height of his prosperity, did he ever have to complain of treachery from those who had once embraced his faith. His confidence in himself, and in his inspiration from on high, was ever greater when he was suffering under disappointment and defeat than when he was able

²⁶ H.G. Wells: *The Outline of History*, London 1920, p. 325.

to dictate his own terms to his conquered enemies. Muhammad died²⁷ as he had lived, surrounded by his early followers, friends and votaries: his death as devoid of mystery as his life of disguise.”²⁸



²⁷ At the age of sixty-three.

²⁸ H. M. Hyndman: *The Awakening of Asia*, London 1919, p. 9.

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Chapter 3

MUHAMMAD'S PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER AND SIDELIGHTS ON SOME REFORMS

PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER:

Mohammad was of middle height, rather thin but broad of shoulder, wide of chest, strong of bone and muscle. His head was massive, strongly developed. Dark hair, slightly curled, flowed in a dense mass almost to his shoulders; even in advanced age it was sprinkled with only about twenty grey hairs, produced by the agonies of his 'Revelations'. His face was oval-shaped, slightly tawny of colour. Fine long arched eye-brows were divided by a vein, which throbbed visibly in moments of passion. Great black restless eyes shone out from under long heavy eyelashes. His nose was large, slightly aquiline. His teeth, upon which he bestowed great care, were well set, dazzling white. A full beard framed his manly face. His skin was clear and soft, his complexion 'red and white'. His hands were as 'silk and satin', even as those of a woman. His step was quick and elastic, yet firm as that of one who steps 'from a high to a low place'. In turning his face, he would also turn his whole body. His whole gait and presence was dignified and imposing. His countenance was mild and pensive. His laugh was rarely more than a smile.

"In his habits he was extremely simple, although he bestowed great care on his person. His eating and drinking, his dress and his

furniture retained, even when he had reached the fullness of power, their almost primitive nature. The only luxuries he indulged in were arms, which he highly prized, and a pair of yellow boots, a present from the Negus of Abyssinia. Perfumes, however, he loved passionately, being most sensitive to smells. Strong drink he abhorred.

“... He was gifted with mighty powers of imagination, elevation of mind, delicacy and refinement of feeling.” ‘He is more modest than a virgin behind her curtain’, it was said of him. He was most indulgent to his inferiors, and would never allow his little page to be scolded whatever he did. ‘Ten years’, said Anas, his servant, ‘I was about the Prophet, and he never said as much as ‘uff’ to me’. He was very affectionate towards his family. One of his boys died on his breast in the smoky house of the nurse, a blacksmith’s wife. He was very fond of children; he would stop them in the streets and pat little heads. He never struck anyone in his life. The worst expression he ever made use of in conversation was, ‘What has come to him? May his forehead become darkened with mud!’ When asked to curse someone he replied, ‘I have not been sent to curse, but to be a mercy to mankind’. ‘He visited the sick, followed any bier he met, accepted the invitation of a slave to dinner, mended his own clothes, milked the goats, and waited upon himself,’ relates summarily another tradition. He never first withdrew his hand thus, out of another man’s palm, and turned not before the other had turned.

“He was the most faithful protector of those he protected, the sweetest and most agreeable in conversation. Those who saw him were suddenly filled with reverence; those who came near him loved

him; they who described him would say, 'I have never seen his like either before or after'. He was of great taciturnity, but when he spoke it was with emphasis and deliberation and no one could forget what he said.

“He lived with his wives in a row of humble cottages separated from one another by palm-branches, cemented together with mud. He would kindle the fire, sweep the floor, and milk the goats himself. The little food he had was always shared with those who dropped in to partake of it. Indeed outside the Prophet's house was a bench or a gallery, on which were always found a number of poor who lived entirely upon his generosity, and were hence called 'the people of the bench'. His ordinary food was dates and water, or barley bread; milk and honey were luxuries of which he was fond, but which he rarely allowed himself. The fare of the desert seemed most congenial to him even when he was sovereign of Arabia.

“There is something so tender and womanly, and withal so heroic, about the man, that one is in peril of finding the judgment unconsciously blinded by the feeling of reverence, and well-nigh love, that such a nature inspires. He who, standing alone, braved for years the hatred of his people, is the same who was never the first to withdraw his hand from another's clasp; the beloved of children, who never passed a group of little ones without a smile from his wonderful eyes and kind word for them, sounding all the kinder in that sweet-toned voice. The frank friendship, the noble generosity, the dauntless courage and hope of the man, all tend to melt criticism into admiration.

“He was an enthusiast in that noblest sense when enthusiasm becomes the salt of the earth, the one thing that keep men from rotting whilst they live. Enthusiasm is often used spitefully, because it is joined to an unworthy cause, or falls upon barren ground and bears no fruit. So was it not with Mohammad. He was an enthusiast when enthusiasm was the one thing needed to set the world aflame, and his enthusiasm was noble for a noble cause. He was one of those happy few who have attained the supreme joy of making one great truth their very life-spring. He was the messenger of the one God, and never to his life’s end did he forget who he was or the message which was the marrow of his being. He brought his tidings to his people with a grand dignity sprung from the consciousness of his high office together with a most sweet humility ...”²⁹

“His (i.e., Muhammad’s) politeness to the great, his affability to the humble, and his dignified bearing to the presumptuous, procured him respect, admiration and applause. His talents were equally fitted for persuasion or command. Deeply read in the volume of nature, though entirely ignorant of letters, his mind could expand into controversy with the acutest of his enemies, or contract itself to the apprehension of the meanest of his disciples. His simple eloquence, rendered impressive by the expression of a countenance wherein awfulness of majesty was tempered by an amiable sweetness, excited emotion of veneration and love; and he was gifted with the

²⁹ Stanley Lane-Poole: *The Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Mohammad*, Introduction, pp. 27-30.

authoritative air of genius which alike influences the learned and commands the illiterate. As a friend and a parent, he exhibited the softest feelings of nature; but, while in possession of the kind and generous emotions of the heart, and engaged in the discharge of most of the social and domestic duties, he disgraced not his assumed title of an apostle of God. With all that simplicity which is so natural to a great mind, he performed the humblest offices whose homeliness it would be idle to conceal with pompous diction, even while Lord of Arabia, he mended his own shoes and coarse woollen garments, milked the ewes, swept the hearth, and kindled the fire. Dates and water were his usual fare and milk and honey his luxuries. When he travelled he divided his morsel with his servant. The sincerity of his exhortations to benevolence was justified at his death by the exhausted state of his coffers.”³⁰

“Mohammed ... despised grandeur, and lived on principle an extremely frugal life, though he was no ascetic... He is reputed to have behaved very simply, and there is no reason for not supposing that he did. He performed the most menial tasks with his own hands, and was essentially puritan, saying the Divine revelation forbade him to wear either gold or silk .”³¹

“His deportment, in general, was calm and equable; he ... was grave and dignified, though he is said to have possessed a smile of

³⁰ John Davenport: *An Apology for Mohammad and the Koran*, pp. 52-53.

³¹ A. C. Bouquet: *Comparative Religion*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1954, pp. 269-270.

captivating sweetness. His complexion was more ruddy than is usual with Arabs, and in his excited and enthusiastic moments there was a glow and radiance in his countenance, which his disciples magnified into the supernatural light of prophecy.

“His intellectual qualities were undoubtedly of an extraordinary kind. He had a quick apprehension, a retentive memory, a vivid imagination and an inventive genius.

“He was sober and abstemious in his diet, and a rigorous observer of fasts. He indulged in no magnificence of apparel, the ostentation of a petty mind; neither was his simplicity in dress affected but a result of real disregard for distinction from so trivial a source.

“In his private dealings he was just. He treated friends and strangers, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, with equity, and was loved by the common people for the affability with which he received them, and listened to their complaints.

“His military triumphs awakened no pride nor vain glory, as they would have done had they been effected for selfish purposes. In the time of his greatest power he maintained the same simplicity of manners and appearance as in the days of his adversity. So far from affecting a regal state, he was displeased if, on entering a room, any unusual testimonials of respect were shown to him. If he aimed at universal dominion, it was the dominion of the faith, as to the

temporal rule which grew up in his hands, as he used it without ostentation, so he took no step to perpetuate it in his family.”³²

“Mahomet himself, after all that can be said about him, was not a sensual man ... His household was of the frugalest; his common diet barley-bread and water; sometimes for months there was not a fire once lighted on his hearth. They record with just pride that he would mend his own shoes, patch his own cloak ... careless of what vulgar men toil for ... something better in him than hunger of any sort, or these wild Arab men, fighting and jostling three and twenty years at his hand, in close contact with him always, would not have revered him so! They were wild men, bursting ever and anon with quarrel, with all kinds of fierce sincerity; without right worth and manhood, no man could have commanded them ... No emperor with his tiaras was obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clouting. During three-and-twenty years of rough actual trial, I find something of a veritable hero necessary for that myself.”³³

“His (i.e., Muhammad’s) memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid and decisive. He possessed the courage of both thought and

³² Washington Irving: *Mahomet and his Successors*, London 1909; pp. 192-193, 199.

³³ Thomas, Carlyle: *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, p. 61.

action; and ... the first idea which he entertained of his divine mission bears the stamp of an original and superior genius.”³⁴

“Head of the State as well as of the Church”, remarks Bosworth Smith, “he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without Pope’s pretensions, Caesar without the legions of Caesar. Without a standing army, without a body-guard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue, if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Mohammad, for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports. He rose superior to the title and ceremonies, the solemn trifling, and the proud humility of court etiquette. To hereditary kings, to princes born in the purple, these things are naturally enough as the breath of life; but those who ought to have known better, even self-made rulers, and those the foremost in the files of time—a Caesar, a Cromwell, a Napoleon, have been unable to resist their tinsel attractions. Mohammad was content with the reality; he cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life. ‘God’, says Al-Bokhari, ‘offered him the keys of the treasures of the earth, but he would not accept them’.”³⁵

“Never has a man set for himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, a more sublime aim, since this aim was superhuman: to subvert superstitions which had been interposed between man and his Creator;

³⁴ Edward Gibbon: *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London 1838, vol. V, P. 335.

³⁵ Bosworth Smith: *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*, p. 92.

to render God unto man he and man unto God; to restore the rational and sacred idea of divinity amidst the chaos of the material and disfigured gods of idolatry, then existing. Never has a man undertaken a work so far beyond human power with so feeble means, for he (Muhammad) had in the conception as well as in the execution of such a great design no other instrument than himself, and no other aid, except a handful of men living in a corner of the desert. Finally, never has a man accomplished such a huge and lasting revolution in the world, because in less than two centuries after its appearance, Islam in faith and in arms, reigned over the whole of Arabia, conquered, in God's name, Persia, Khorasan, Transoxania, Western India, Syria, Egypt, Abyssinia, all the known continent of Northern Africa, numerous islands of the Mediterranean, Spain, and a part of Gaul.

“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world, and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls. On the basis of a Book, every letter of which has become law, he created a spiritual nationality which blended together peoples of every tongue and of every race. He has left for us as the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality the hatred of false gods and the passion for the

One and Immaterial God. This avenging patriotism against the profanation of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Muhammad; the conquest of one-third of the earth to his dogma was his miracle, or rather it was not the miracle of a man but that of reason. The idea of the Unity of God, proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of fabulous theogonies, was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient temples of idols and set on fire one-third of the world. His life, his meditations, his heroic revilings against the superstitions of his country, and his boldness in defying the furies of idolatry, his firmness in enduring them for fifteen years at Makka, his acceptance of the role of public scorn and almost of being a victim of his fellow countrymen; all these and, finally, his flight, his incessant preaching, his wars against odds, his faith in his success and his superhuman security in fortune, his forbearance in victory, his ambition, which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death: all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. This dogma was two-fold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is, the latter telling what God is not; the one overthrowing false gods with the sword, the other starting an idea with the words.

“Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images, the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness

may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"³⁶

"... These Arabs, the man Mahomet and that one century,—is it not as if a spark had fallen, one spark, on a world of what seemed black unnoticeable sand; but lo! the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada; I said the Great Man was always as lightning out of heaven, the rest of the men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would aflame."³⁷

"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of Supreme."³⁸



GENUINENESS OF FAITH IN HIS DIVINE MISSION:

"The essential sincerity of Muhammad's nature cannot be questioned: and an historical criticism that blinks no fact, yields nothing to credulity, weighs every testimony, has no partisan interest, and seeks only the truth, must acknowledge his claim to belong to that

³⁶ Lamartine: *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris 1854, Vol. 2, pp. 276-277. (Italics are the present writer's).

³⁷ Thomas Carlyle: *op. cit.*, p. 311.

³⁸ Annie Besant: *The Life and Teachings of Muhammad*, Madras 1932, p. 4.

order of prophets who, whatever the nature of their physical experience may have been, in diverse times, in diverse manners, have admonished, taught and uttered austere and sublime thoughts, laid down principles of conduct nobler than those they found, and devoted themselves fearlessly to their high calling, being irresistibly impelled to their ministry by a power within.”³⁹

“His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement—all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad as impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad ... Thus, not merely must we credit Muhammad with essential honesty and integrity of purpose, if we are to understand him at all; if we are to correct the errors we have inherited from the past, we must in every particular case hold firmly to the belief in his sincerity until the opposite is conclusively proved; and we must not forget that conclusive proof is a much stricter requirement than a show of plausibility, and in a matter such as this only to be attained with difficulty.”⁴⁰



³⁹ Prof. Nathaniel Schmidt: *The New International Encyclopaedia*, 1916, Vol. 16, p. 72.

⁴⁰ W. Montgomery Watt: *Muhammad at Makka*, Oxford 1953, p. 52.

A GREAT EXEMPLAR:

“Serious or trivial, his daily behaviour has instituted a canon which millions observe at this day with conscious memory. No one regarded by any section of the human race as Perfect Man has been imitated so minutely. The conduct of the Founder of Christianity has not so governed the ordinary life of his followers. Moreover, no founder of a religion has been left on so solitary an eminence as the Muslim Apostle.”⁴¹



PERMANENT IMPACT OF REVOLUTION:

“It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder; the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Makka and Madina is preserved, after the revolutions of twelve centuries ... The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honours of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue; and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion.”⁴²

⁴¹ D. G. Hogarth: *A History of Arabia*, Oxford 1922, p. 52.

⁴² Edward Gibbon and Simon Ockley: *History of the Saracen Empire*, London 1870, p. 54.



DEVOTION TO GOD AND TO RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CONDUCT:

“The ignorance displayed by most Christians regarding the Muslim religion is appalling ... Mohammad alone, among the nations at that time, believed in one God to the exclusion of all others. He insisted on righteousness as the source of conduct, of filial duty, and on frequent prayers to the Everliving God, and of respect to all other peoples, and of justice and mercy to and moderation in all things, and to hold in great respect learning of every kind ... Most of the absurdities which Christians would have us believe to exist in the Qur'an were never uttered by Mohammad himself, nor are they to be found in a correct translation of the work.”⁴³



CHARGE OF VOLUPTUOUSNESS REFUTED:

“By the force of his extraordinary personality, Muhammad revolutionized life in Arabia and throughout the East. With his own hands he smashed ancient idols and established a religion dedicated to

⁴³ G. Lindsay Johnson, F.R.C.S.: *The Two Worlds*, Manchester, 9th August, 1940.

one God. He lifted women from the bondage in which desert custom held them and preached general social justice.

“Muslims think it particularly ironic when Muhammad is charged by Western writers with having established a voluptuous religion. Among drunkards he abolished alcohol, so that even today all good Muslims are prohibitionists. Among the lazy he ordained individual ritual prayers five times each day. In a nation that revelled in feasting he instituted a most rigorous day-time fast lasting as full month each year.

“Western writers have based their charges of voluptuousness mainly on the question of women. Before Muhammad, however, men were encouraged to take innumerable wives; he limited them to four only, and the Koran is explicit that husbands who are unable to maintain strict equality between two or more wives must confine themselves to one ...”⁴⁴



PROFOUNDLY PRACTICAL AND RATIONAL:

“In all things Muhammad was profoundly practical, When his beloved son Ibrahim died, an eclipse occurred, and rumours of God’s personal condolence quickly arose. Whereupon Muhammad is said to

⁴⁴ James A. Michener, *op. cit.*

have announced, 'An eclipse is a phenomenon of nature. It is foolish to attribute such things to the death or birth of a human being'.”⁴⁵



BROAD, LIBERAL AND UNIVERSALISTIC CREED FOR THE WHOLE WORLD:

“His creed ... necessarily connotes the existence of a universal empire.”⁴⁶

“The nobility and broad tolerance of this creed, which accepts as God-inspired all the real religions of the world, will always be a glorious heritage for mankind. On it could indeed be built a perfect world religion.”⁴⁷

“More pure than the system of Zoroaster, more liberal than the law of Moses, the religion of Mahomet: might seem less inconsistent with reason than the creed of mystery and superstition which, in the seventh century, disgraced the simplicity of the gospels.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Joseph J. Nunan: *Islam and European Chivilizaion*, Demerara 1912, p. 37.

⁴⁷ Duncan Greenless: *The Gospel of Islam*, Adyar 1948, p. 27.

⁴⁸ Edward Gibbon: *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 5, p. 487.

“Islam had the power of peacefully conquering souls by the simplicity of its theology, the clearness of its dogma and principles, and the definite number of the practices which it demands. In contrast to Christianity which has been undergoing continual transformation since its origin, Islam has remained identical with itself.”⁴⁹

“As a religion the Mahomedan religion, it must be confessed, is more suited to Africa than is the Christian religion: indeed, I would even say that *it is more suited to the world as a whole* ⁵⁰ ... the achievement of the Moslem faith enjoys, I maintain, a definite superiority, in proof of which may be cited Moslem abstinence, sense of fraternity, take condemnation of usury, and recognition of prophets other than its own. Its quality may be summed up by saying that it takes a man as he is, and while it does not pretend to make a god out of him, seeks to regulate his conduct so that at least he shall become a good neighbour.”⁵¹



WISEST, MOST LEARNED AND MOST ENLIGHTENED JURISPRUDENCE:

⁴⁹ Jean L'heureux, *Etude sur L'Islamisme*. p. 35.

⁵⁰ Italics are the present writer's

⁵¹ Lancelot Lawton: *The Sphere*, London, 12th May, 1928.

“The Muhammadan law which is binding on all from the crowned head to the meanest subject is a law interwoven, with a system of the wisest, the most learned and the most enlightened jurisprudence that ever existed in the world.”⁵²



NO COLOUR BAR:

“ ‘Take away that black man! I can have no discussion with him’, exclaimed the Christian Archbishop Cyrus when the Arab conquerors had sent a deputation of their ablest men to discuss terms of surrender of the capital of Egypt, headed by Negro Ubadah as the ablest of them all.

“To the sacred archbishop’s astonishment, he was told that this man was commissioned by General Amr; that the Moslems held Negroes and white men in equal respect—judging a man by his character and not by his colour.

“ ‘Well, if the Negro must lead, he must speak gently’, ordered the prelate, so as not to frighten his white auditors.

“(Replied Ubadah:) ‘There are a thousand blacks, as black as myself, amongst our companions. I and they would be ready to meet and fight a hundred enemies together. We live only to fight for God, and to follow His will. We care naught for wealth, so long as we have

⁵² Edmund Burke: in his *“Impeachment of Warren Hastings”*.

the wherewithal to stay our hunger and to clothe our bodies. This world is naught for us, the next world is all’.

“Such a spirit ... can any other appeal stand against that of the Moslem who, in approaching the pagan, says to him, however obscure or degraded he may be, ‘Embrace the faith, and you are at once an equal and a brother’. Islam knows no ‘colour line’.”⁵³



RESTORATION OF DIGNITY OF WOMANHOOD:

“That his (Muhammad’s) reforms enhanced the status of women in general is universally admitted.”⁵⁴

“You can find others stating that the religion (Islam) is evil, because it sanctions a limited polygamy. But you do not hear as a rule the criticism which I spoke out one day in a London hall where I knew that the audience was entirely uninstructed. I pointed out to them that monogamy with blended mass of prostitution was a hypocrisy and more degrading than a limited polygamy. Naturally a statement like that gives offence, but it has to be made, because it must be remembered that the law of Islam in relation to women was until lately, when parts of it have been imitated in England, the most just law, as far as women are concerned to be found in the world. Dealing

⁵³ S. S. Leeder: *Veiled Mysteries of Egypt*, London 1912, pp 332-335.

⁵⁴ H.A.R. Gibb: *Mohammedanism*, London 1953. p. 33.

with property, dealing with rights of succession and so on, dealing with cases of divorce, it was far beyond the law of the West, in the respect that was paid to the rights of women. Those things are forgotten while people are hypnotised by the words monogamy and polygamy and do not look at what lies behind it in the West—the frightful degradation of women who are thrown into the streets when their first protectors, weary of them, no longer give them any assistance ...

“I often think that woman is more free in Islam than in Christianity. Woman is more protected by Islam than by the faith which preaches Monogamy. In Al-Quran the law about woman is more just and liberal. It is only in the last twenty years that Christian England has recognized the right of woman to property, while Islam has, allowed this right from all times ... It is a slander to say that Islam preaches that women have no souls.”⁵⁵



WAR AGAINST THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY:

“According to the Koran, no person can be made a slave except after the conclusion of a sanguinary battle fought in the conduct of a religious war (*JihÉd*) in the country of infidels who try to suppress the true religion. Indeed, wherever the word slave occurs in Koran it is ‘he

⁵⁵ Annie Besant: *The Life and Teaching of Muhammad*, Madras 1932, pp, 25-26.

whom your right hand possesses’, or a special equivalent for neck— ‘he whose neck has been spared’, thus clearly indicating ‘a prisoner of war’ made by the action of not one man only, but of many ... the Arabian prophet recommended: ‘When the war has ended, restore them (the slaves or prisoners) to liberty or give them up for ransom’ (*Sura* 47:57) ...

“And elsewhere: ‘Alms (which procure righteousness) are destined ... to the redemption of slaves’ (*Sura* 9:60). Further (*Sura* 24:33): ‘If any of your slaves asks for his manumission in writing give it to him, if you think him worthy of it, and give him also some of the wealth which God has given you’ ... The reconciliation of a separated married couple should be preceded by the ransom of a slave, and, if none can be found, the husband should feed sixty poor, or else fast for two months (*Sura* 58:4-5). Whenever the sense of happiness, including that of conjugal felicity, predisposes the heart to gratitude towards the Creator, or whenever fear of God or a punishment, or the desire of a blessing, affect, as such motives can and *do* affect the daily life of a Mohammadan, the emancipation of a slave, as a most proper act of charity is recommended. In short, the ‘Cliff’, or narrow path to salvation, is charity: ‘What is the cliff ? It is to free the captive (or slave)’ *Sura* 90:12-13).

“Descending to the second source of the Mohammadan Law, the authenticated traditions of *Hadis*, we find Mohammad stating that ‘the worst of men is he who sells men’: slaves who displeased their masters were to be forgiven ‘seventy times a day’: no believer can be made a slave; and ‘in proportion to the number of redeemed slaves

will members of the body of the releasing person be rescued from the (eternal) fire’.”⁵⁶



CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE AND CIVILISATION:

“It is to Mussulman science, to Mussulman art, and to Mussulman literature that Europe has been in a great measure indebted for its extrication from the darkness of the Middle Ages.”⁵⁷

“Europe was darkened at sunset, Cordova shone with public lamps: Europe was dirty, Cordova built a thousand baths: Europe was covered with vermin, Cordova changed its undergarments daily: Europe lay in mud, Cordova’s streets were paved; Europe’s palaces had smoke-holes in the ceiling, Cordova’s arabesques were exquisite; Europe’s nobility could not sign its name, Cordova’s children went to school; Europe’s monks could not read the baptismal service, Cordova’s teachers created a library of Alexandrian dimensions.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Dr. G. W. Leitner; *Mohammadanism*, pp. 17-18. Cf. the observation: “It is indeed an ‘abuse of words’ to apply the word slavery in the English sense to any status known to the legislation of Islam.” (Syed Amir Ali : *The Spirit of Islam*; p. 262).

⁵⁷ Marquis of Dufferin and Ava: *Speeches Delivered in India*. London 1890. p. 24.

⁵⁸ Victor Robinson: *The Story of Medicine*, p. 164.

“Our use of the phrase ‘the Dark Ages’ to cover the period from 699 to 1,000 marks our undue concentration on Western Europe ... From India to Spain, the brilliant civilization of Islam flourished. What was lost to Christendom at this time was not lost to civilization, but quite the contrary ... To us it seems that West-European civilization is civilization; but this is a narrow view.”⁵⁹

“... From a new angle and with a fresh vigour it (the Arab mind) took up that systematic development of positive knowledge which the Greeks had begun and relinquished ... Through the Arabs it was and not by the Latin route that the modern world received that gift of light and power.”⁶⁰



PEACEFUL PROSELYTISATION:

“History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.”⁶¹

“In their wars of conquest, however, the Muslims exhibited a

⁵⁹ Bertrand Russell: *History of Western Philosophy*, London 1948, p. 419.

⁶⁰ H.G. Wells: *The Outline of History*. p. 327.

⁶¹ De Lacy O’Leary: *Islam at the Crossroads*, London 1923, P. 8.

degree of toleration which puts many Christian nations to shame.”⁶²



THE RISE OF ISLAM:

“The rise of Islam is perhaps the most amazing event in human history. Springing from a land and a people alike previously negligible, Islam spread within a century over half the earth, shattering great empires, overthrowing long-established religions, remoulding the souls of races, and building up a whole new world—the world of Islam.

“The closer we examine this development the more extraordinary does it appear. The other great religions won their way slowly, by painful struggle, and finally triumphed with the aid of powerful monarchs converted to the new faith. Christianity had its Constantine, Buddhism its Asoka, and Zoroastrianism its Cyrus, each lending to his chosen cult the mighty force of secular authority. Not so Islam. Arising in a desert land sparsely inhabited by a nomad race previously undistinguished in human annals, Islam sallied forth on its great adventure with the slenderest human backing and against the heaviest material odds. Yet Islam triumphed with seemingly miraculous ease, and a couple of generations saw the Fiery Crescent borne victorious from the Pyrenees to the Himalayas and from the deserts of Central

⁶² E. Alexander Powell: *The Struggle for Power in Moslem Asia*, New York 1923, P. 48.

Asia to the deserts of Central Africa ... Preaching a simple, austere monotheism, free from priestcraft or elaborate doctrinal trappings, he tapped the well-springs of religious zeal always present in the Semitic heart. Forgetting the chronic rivalries and blood feuds which had consumed their energies in internecine strife, and welded into a glowing unity by the fire of their new-found faith, the Arabs poured forth from their deserts to conquer the earth for Allah, the one true God ...

“They (Arabs) were no blood thirsty savages, bent solely on loot and destruction. On the contrary, they were an innately gifted race, eager to learn and appreciative of the cultural gifts which older civilizations had to bestow. Intermarrying freely and professing a common belief, conquerors and conquered rapidly fused, and from this fusion arose a new civilization—the Saracenic civilization, in which the ancient cultures of Greece, Rome and Persia were revitalized by the Arab genius and the Islamic spirit. For the first three centuries of its existence (circ. A.D. 650-1000) the realm of Islam was the most civilized and progressive portion of the world. Studded with splendid cities, gracious masjids, and quiet universities where the wisdom of the ancient world was preserved and appreciated, the Moslem world offered a striking contrast to the Christian West, then sunk in the night of the Dark Ages.”⁶³



⁶³ A M. Lothrop Stoddard: *The New World of Islam*, London 1932, pp. 1-3

PART 2
THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE REVELATION

Chapter 1

PROBLEMS

1. PROBLEMS OF HUMAN LIFE

Life means activity and all activity brings with it certain problems. Those problems have to be solved successfully in order to make the human life a success.

If we analyse the human problems, we find that they fall under two categories, viz: (1) Immediate Problems; and (2) Ultimate Problems.

The immediate problems are the practical day-to-day problems, such as those which refer to the immediate personal needs of the individuals and such problems as the administration of the state, the production, consumption and distribution of wealth, and the relations between the different nations of the world. There is no human being living on earth who has not to face these problems one way or the other during his life. The manner in which they are faced and the efficiency and practical common sense which is shown in connection with their solutions forms the measure of human success.

As regards the ultimate problems, every human being who takes life seriously finds himself face to face with them as soon as he attains

the age of maturity and feels the strains, the burdens and the intricacies of life. The first question which arises in this connection is: "What am I?" Every human being is closer to himself than to anyone else. Hence the first problem which should arise in his mind in connection with the ultimate problems should naturally be about his own self.

The question: "What am I?" is a question about the *nature* of human beings. But this simple question opens a whole field of questions which shoot off in a continuous chain and whose links are forged with the unbreakable bond of necessity. Consideration of this first question, therefore, leads to the next one, namely: "From where have the human beings come?" Then a third question arises: "What is the nature of human life?" And then a fourth question: "What is the purpose and end of human life?"

All the above-mentioned questions are, so to say, *personal*. But, then, no human being lives in a vacuum. He lives in a world which is infinitely and immeasurably vaster than his physically-infinitesimal personality, and this world influences his life and his actions at every step. His fortunes, nay, his very life, is interlinked with and dependent upon the world around him. For instance, if the sun were to stop its function, the entire related physical environment would be shattered to pieces. Or, if the heat of the sun rises above or falls below the average to certain levels, the very existence of the human beings on the earth would become impossible.

This being the case, the questions about one's own self lead to questions about the world. The first question in that connection is: "What is this world?", which in other words means: "What is the *nature* of this world?" But the nature of a thing cannot be properly understood unless we have a clear idea about the origin of that thing and the purpose for which it functions. Therefore, the question about "what" leads to questions about "when", "how", "wherefrom" and "whereto". In other words, the enquiry arises: "When did the world come into being?"; "From what source did the world acquire its life?"; "What is the end towards which it is moving?"; and "What is its final goal (destiny)?"

Among the questions about the world, the question: "How did the world come into being?" brings forth a number of further questions, namely:—"If this world came into being by itself, how is that conceivable, *i.e.*, on what ground?" "If this world was brought into being by some other force, what is that force?" "Is it an impersonal force like electricity, or is it a person?" "If it is believed to be an impersonal force, that would mean that it is a blind force like all impersonal forces; and if it is a blind force, how could intelligence, foresight, plan, purpose and law come out of it?" "If it is a person, what is the nature and constitution of that person?" "Is He a person like us—physical, faltering and subject to the processes of decay and death, or is He eternal?" "If not physical, what else is He?" "Is He finite or infinite?" "Is He one in number or two or three or more?"

The above-mentioned questions concerning man, the world and God, are ultimate questions (or fundamental problems). The questions

are so vital that every thinking human being is bound to face them at one time or the other during his life and they have such a close bearing on the immediate questions of life that anyone who has any knowledge of human problems will admit that they cannot be shirked.



2. IMPORTANCE OF ULTIMATE QUESTIONS IN PRACTICAL LIFE

Some might doubt that these ultimate questions may not after all be as important as they are said to be. Indeed, the modern secular civilisation is, for all practical purposes, based on the notion that these ultimate questions have nothing to do with the immediate practical problems of mankind and that the interest that can at all be reasonably taken in them cannot be anything else than academic. In other words, these questions are meant only for philosophers and no practical person should waste his time and energy on them. But if we go deep into the matter, we are bound to come to the conclusion on the basis of our common sense itself that the ultimate questions are infinitely more important than the immediate questions.

The problem can be attacked from different angles. But here it will suffice to quote just one instance of the importance of ultimate questions in the field of the immediate problems of life. Namely, we shall discuss the practical consequences of belief and disbelief in the existence of God.

Taking up disbelief in the existence of God first: If there is no God and the world came into being by itself, it means that it came into being by *chance*. In other words, it is a world of chance in which everything and every event emerges and dies out by chance.

If we consider the nature of “chance” itself, we find that it always indicates an event which has no pre-conceived cause. In any case, it cannot be said to be a planned event. Again, if there is no plan in an event, there can be no purpose, because all purposive activity is planned, whether the planning is conscious (namely, based on intellectual appreciation) or merely instinctive. Resuming the argument, if the world came into being by chance, it is a blind and lawless world. Indeed, the very word “chance” means the absence of law.

Now, if the world is lawless in its inherent constitution and if everything which is born out of it is also in its nature without law, it means that the formulation of any laws by human beings, whether those laws are scientific or ethical or political or economic, would be a violation of human nature and the nature of the world itself. But human beings cannot exist without law. Therefore, they are bound to give up the atheistic hypothesis of the existence of the world in order to live. If they don't and if they carry the atheistic hypothesis to its logical consequences, the only law which they can establish for themselves would be the law of the jungle in political administration and the rule of expediency in moral life.

Speaking from the other side, namely, affirmation of faith in God's existence, if we believe that God exists and that He has created the world, it means that the world came into being through planned creation, is functioning under a system of law and is moving towards a purpose. In other words, plan, purpose and law are inherent in the very constitution of the world. This, in turn, provides the ground for every branch of human law—ethical, political, economic, and so on.



Chapter 2

SOURCE OF GUIDANCE—WHAT?

There are three claimants in the field of guidance and everyone of them claims that it can guide humanity in the ultimate problems of life. These claimants are:— (1) Science; (2) Philosophy; (3) Religion. We might take them up one by one and examine the validity of the claim of each.



1. SCIENCE

Modern Science entered the field of human thought as the all-solving branch of knowledge and the rival of religion towards the middle of the 18th century. The reason of this new attitude of Science was not that Science had found out some such unerring methods or instruments of knowledge that could authorise it to make the claim. Rather, it was purely a sentimental affair.

Science came to the modern West from the world of Islam. It was the Muslims who, after the conquest of certain parts of Europe, specially Spain, established the first universities, scientific observatories, laboratories and libraries on the soil of Europe, and the first Christian scientists who, after centuries of darkness and ignorance, lit the torch of scientific knowledge in England, France,

Germany and so on, were pupils of Muslim masters.⁶⁴ Christianity, as distinct from the original Message of the Holy Prophet Jesus (Peace

⁶⁴ The facts referred to are known to all the scholars of history and have been stated by the most eminent authorities of the West and the East. For instance, the renowned British Orientalist, Marmaduke Pickthall, says:

“The Qur’ān undoubtedly gave a great impetus to learning, especially in the field of natural science: and, if, as some modern writers have declared, the inductive method, to which all the practical modern discoveries are chiefly owing, can be traced to it, then it may be called the cause of modern scientific and material progress.

“The Muslims set out on their search for learning in the name of God at a time when Christians were destroying all the learning of the ancients in the name of Christ. They had destroyed the Library at Alexandria, they had murdered many philosophers, including the beautiful Hypatia. Learning was for them a devil’s snare beloved of the pagans. They had no injunction to ‘seek knowledge even though it were in China’. The manuscripts of Greek and Roman learning were publicly burnt by the priests.

“.....the revolving terrestrial globe happened to be part of the educational equipment of the Spanish Muslim universities at the time when the learned Bruno was burnt at a slow fire by the Inquisition for upholding the Copernican theory of the Earth, and before the even greater Galileo was forced by persecution to recant and sign a solemn declaration that the Earth was fixed immovably as the Bible said it was. He is said to have murmured under his breath, as he put his name to the lie: *E pur se Muov* (“And yet it moves”). It was from the teaching of the Spanish Muslim universities that Columbus got his notion that the world was round, though he too was forced by

persecution to recant it afterwards. When we remember that the Spanish Muslim universities in the time of the Khalifa Abdur Rahman III and the Eastern Muslim universities in the time of Al Ma'mun—I mention these two monarchs because it is specially recorded of their times—welcomed Christian and Jewish students on equality with Muslims; not only that, but entertained them at the Government expense: and that hundreds of Christian students from the South of Europe and the countries of the East took advantage of the chance to escape from ecclesiastical leading strings; we can easily perceive what debt of gratitude modern European progress owes to Islam, while it owes nothing whatsoever to the Christian Church, which persecuted, tortured, even burnt the learned.” (*Islamic Culture*. pp. 64, 67, 68).

The learned author of *Islam in the World* says (pp. 142-149):

“The influence of the powerful movement of Islamic culture in Spain rapidly made itself felt throughout Europe. Petrus Alfonsi (b. 1602) who studied at the Arabian medical schools, came to England from Spain as Physician to King Henri I and, in 1120, collaborated with Walcher, Prior of Malvern, in the production of a translation of Alfonsi’s astronomical treatise, based upon Arabian sources. In England their united effort represents the first impact of Arabian learning. Its effect was rapid, for immediately afterwards Adelard of Bath earned the distinction of being the first prominent European man of science, outside Spain, to come to Toledo and make a special study of Arabian learning. The cultural links thus formed between England and Muslim Spain were destined to produce important results. They stimulated in England the desire for the new philosophical and scientific learning and led to the achievements of Michael Scot (C. 1175/1232) and Roger Bacon (1214-1294).

“Scot proceeded to Toledo in order to gain a knowledge of Arabic and of Arabian philosophy. At Oxford, Roger Bacon achieved brilliant success as an exponent of the new Arabian-Aristotelian philosophy. In the library of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral is a late thirteenth century illuminated manuscript, ‘*Vetus Logica*’, the earliest known commentary on Aristotle’s *Logic* produced in England following the Arabian ‘renaissance’ of Aristotelian philosophy. Amongst those scholars who came to Spain from Britain were Robert of England (flourished 1143), first translator of the Quran, Dental Morley (flourished 1170), *etc.* Roger Bacon’s work ‘*Optics*’ was based on Alhazen’s ‘*Theraurus opticae*’. The alchemical teachings of Jabir ibn Hayyan (Geber) and other Arabian writers, are apparent in the work of Albert Magnus, Vincent of Beauvais, *etc.*

“In a recent study made by the ‘Madrid School of Spanish Arabists’, (a school which is concerned with the study of Islamic civilisation in Spain and its influence on Christian civilisation in the Iberian Peninsula as well as in the rest of Europe), Julian Ribera demonstrates that many of the institutions of Christian Spain were nothing but a copy or an imitation of similar institutions of Muslim Spain. He discovered Arabic sources for the doctrines of certain thinkers and certain poetic forms of songs of the Middle Ages, and for the mediaeval Andalusian music and songs of the troubadours, trouveres and minnesingers. Don Miguel Asin Palacios, in studying the origins of philosophy in Spain, traces the influences of such Arabian thinkers as Avempace, Averroes, Abenarabi, Abenmasarra and others. He also establishes the point that, one should seek the key of the Divine Comedy of Dante in the Islamic legends of the nocturnal voyage of Muhammad ﷺ. It is further shown that historiographers,

be on him!), had been anti-Science and anti-reason from the very start. Indeed, it was Christianity which extinguished whatever light of knowledge was to be found in Greece, Egypt and Syria when it became politically powerful.⁶⁵ Besides, as already stated, Science came to the modern West through Muslims whom the Christians regarded as their deadliest enemies. Hence, the Christian Church persecuted the scientists, burnt them at the stake and hanged them on the gallows.⁶⁶

That violent persecution made the Western scientists the enemy not only of the Christian Church but of all Religion, and because

mathematicians and lexicologists, *etc.*, owe much to their Muslim predecessors of Spain.”

“Emmanuel Deutsch says. ‘By the aid of the Qur’ān the Arabs conquered a world greater than that of Alexander the Great, greater than that of Rome and in as many tens of years as the latter had wanted hundreds to accomplish her conquests; by the aid of which they, alone of all the Semites, came to Europe as kings, whither the Phoenicians had come as tradesmen, and the Jews as fugitives or captives. They came to Europe to hold up the light to Humanity; they alone, while darkness lay around, to raise up the wisdom and knowledge of Hellas from the dead, to teach philosophy, medicine, astronomy and the golden art of song to the West as well as to the East, to stand at the cradle of modern science, and to cause us late epigoni for ever to weep over the day when Grenada fell’.”

⁶⁵ Refer to footnote 64 above.

⁶⁶ Refer to footnote 64 above.

religion concerns itself basically with the ultimate problems of human life and demands the loyalty of human beings on that score, the scientists entered the field of ultimate problems and started in the name of scientific facts to oppose the teachings of Christianity concerning such problems as the origin of man, the origin of the world, the existence of the supernatural world and the existence of God. Thus, for instance Darwin sought to show that man was not a superior being as taught by religion, that he was not a being created in the 'image' of God, but just an animal among animals—merely a higher variety of apes! Indeed, he tried to trace the origin of human beings to the lowest form of life, namely, the amoeba, and said that the species had evolved through the process of transmutation, and that the position of man as the strongest of all animals was just due to chance and not because of any Divine decree. His entire thought was actually anti-religious, and others who came after him added to the list of the mistakes of Christian teaching in the name of scientific facts.

But the question remains: "Is Science really capable of answering the ultimate questions on the basis of *sure knowledge*?" The answer to this question lies in the analysis of the Scientific Method.

The scientific method of obtaining knowledge consists in observation and experiment. We shall have to examine the validity of observation in order to find out as to how far it can help us in solving with any certainty the ultimate problems.

Scientifically viewed, every observation is made up of three factors, namely: (1) the Observer; (2) the Object which is observed;

(3) Conditions under which the observation is made. Let us examine these factors and find out whether they are variable or stable, in order to understand if we can arrive at sure knowledge of ultimate things on the basis of *Observation*.

The first factor is the *observer*. Now, observation is bound to vary from observer to observer, because different human beings do not have similarly sharp and accurate powers of observation either as regards their physical senses of sight, smelling, hearing, taste and touch or as regards the intellect which co-ordinates the reports that the brain gets through the physical senses. For instance, a person may be colour-blind or myopic and as such his observation will always differ from the observation of those who have what is called normal eyesight. Similarly, a person may be hard of hearing, or may have lost the smelling sense or the discrimination of taste or the sense of touch, or he may be an idiot or a lunatic. It is thus a well-established fact that the first factor in every observation is a variable factor, which means that different observations can vary on the basis of this factor.

The second factor is the *object which is observed*. It does not require much deep thought to realise that the more immediate, the more concrete and the more comprehensible an object is, the more is the possibility of the observation being correct; and the more remote, the more subtle and the more ungraspable an object is, the less possibility is there for anything like correct observation—nay, even for observation itself. For instance, if we have to find out the chemical properties of Sodium Chloride or of Calcium Carbonate, it is something easily available in its standard form. Also, it is something

which is concrete and it is something which can be examined in a test-tube. But even in immediate objects if we turn to Atomic Physics and try to observe the behaviour of the atom, it is bound to be a most difficult task, although the atom concerned may be one of Sodium, or of Calcium, or of Carbon. Going to remote objects and trying to observe them is a different matter altogether. For instance, if we try to observe the interplanetary strata, there are bound to be different opinions, even as they are there already. As a matter of fact, even in the case of an object like the moon which is observed and enjoyed even by the child, scientific observation begs for accuracy. For instance, till sometime back scientists had agreed on a certain calculation of the distance between the earth and the moon. But now they say it was a miscalculation and that the real distance is more than what had been believed in.

Coming now to the third factor, namely, the *conditions under which an observation is made*, we find that it also is a variable factor. For instance, if we take a straight rod and dip a portion of it in water, thereby placing one part of it in the medium of water and keeping the other part in the medium of air, we observe that the straight rod appears tilted at the point where air and water meet, although when we view it only in one medium, which may be air or water, it always appears straight. This normal change in the appearance of the shape of the rod is due only to change of conditions of observation and not due to any change in the structure of the rod. Another common instance is that where the distance of an object varies. For instance, when we view a sandy waste in the sultry heat of the sun from a distance, it

appears to us as if it is a huge expanse of water—the common phenomenon in the deserts known as mirage. The false nature of this observation becomes known to us only when we approach that supposed lake of water. This means that if we become contented with the first observation, we would always remain in misunderstanding about the supposed lake of water.

We have seen In the foregoing that all the three factors which constitute a scientific observation, are variable. In other words, any and every scientific observation liable to vary in its accuracy according to any one or two or all of these factors. The margin of this possibility of error in scientific observation becomes wider and wider as the objects observed become more subtle and more distant. This means that physical science can be a good guide and source of knowledge only in our immediate, and mostly physical, problems—although even there it is not immune from error. Indeed, it has been making lot of mistakes, as is well known to every student of the history of science. As regards the ultimate problems, which comprehend within themselves the entire universe and all aspects of existence, it should be very plain, even to a person of ordinary intelligence, that it would be extremely unscientific and even foolish to expect sure and accurate solutions from *physical science*.

We have said in the foregoing that physical science cannot give us sure knowledge in *all cases* even as regards the immediate physical objects. We might illustrate this fact by instances. The human body is the most immediate physical object of observation for a scientific observer. But, in spite of the fact that physical science is carrying man

to the moon, it has not succeeded so far even in mastering thoroughly the mysteries of the human body. For instance, the Allopathic system of Medicine and the Homoeopathic system of Medicine are both virtually equally successful in treating human diseases. But the conceptions of human nature on which they are respectively founded are diametrically opposed. This clearly means that neither of them has yet succeeded in grasping the mysteries of human nature (even in its physical aspect) truly and comprehensively. Also, we must bear in mind that if Medical Science, which is a part of Physical Science, had genuinely succeeded in knowing with certain, accuracy and thoroughness the physical aspect of human nature and the medicines needed for the cure of the different human diseases, the margin of failure in the cure of diseases would have become zero,—which is not the case at present. As regards the details of the human body, here again the same lack of accuracy and finality exists. For instance, there was a time when the scientists of the Allopathic school of medicine were of the opinion that the appendix and the tonsils were useless things and that they could be cast out of the body even as a precautionary measure. The scientific belief about the appendix was so vehemently stated that it gave rise even to an English proverb, namely: “as useless as an appendix”. But medical thought is now directed more and more to keeping the organs intact.

We may also give an instance concerning the ever-changing character of scientific conclusions as regards the ultimate problems. We might leave out here the per-Newtonian scientific thought, in order to be more charitable, and consider only the era starting with

Newtonian Physics, which is considered to be the era of the maturity of Science. But what situation do we find here too? Sir Isaac Newton affirmed and proclaimed to the world that the universe was three-dimensional and that Space and Time were two different and independent entities. The entire scientific progress after him proceeded on this assumption. It was held by scientists to be an infallible truth, which they defended and by which they swore day in day out. But then came Einstein who proved, again *scientifically*, that Newtonian physics was all wrong in its foundations, that the universe was not three-dimensional but four-dimensional, that Time was the fourth dimension of Space and not an independent entity, that instead of *immutability* (on which Materialism had thrived) there was *indeterminacy* in the universe (which renders the scientific affirmation of the existence of God possible),—and Science has proceeded since then to show that Matter itself is unreal. Who knows that tomorrow another great scientist may come and explode the Physics of Einstein also?



II. PHILOSOPHY

All Philosophy may be broadly classified into *four schools*, namely: one, Formal Rationalism; two, Empiricism; three, Criticism; and four, Empirical Rationalism. Of these four, two and three do not deserve consideration in the background of our present problem and that for very definite reasons. No. two, namely, Empiricism, holds that the only source of obtaining knowledge is sense-experience. It means

that the empirical philosopher cannot even aim at trying to understand the whole of Reality, because in their very nature the human senses are very limited in their scope and also liable to error, as we have already seen in the section on Science. Indeed, the only natural and logical consequence of Empiricism is Scepticism, namely, that we *cannot know* Reality. In other words, the philosophy of the Empiricist school itself asserts the incompetence and the failure of philosophical endeavour to answer the ultimate questions. As regards no. three, namely Criticism, it says that both Reason and Senses are sources of knowledge but that both are *very limited* sources. Hence, the knowledge of the world which we can get through them can only be very limited in its scope as well as character. In other words, according to this school of Philosophy, philosophical effort can succeed only in knowing a part of Reality. This, in its turn, means that comprehensive and sure knowledge, which is the necessary condition for solving the ultimate questions successfully, cannot be obtained from Philosophy. Thus there remain only two schools of Philosophy, namely, *Formal Rationalism* and *Empirical Rationalism* where the belief is found that Philosophy can discover the Ultimate Truth, which alone, therefore, deserve our consideration in connection with the present discussion. Let us examine the validity of their claim.

Formal Rationalism holds that human Reason, unaided by anything else, is capable of knowing the ultimate facts of life and the world.

Empirical Rationalism holds that Reason and Sense Experience should combine to enable human beings to find out the Ultimate Truth

and that, through this combination of the sources of knowledge, Philosophy *can* solve the ultimate problems and guide humanity in that behalf.

Formal Rationalism depends wholly on Logic. Its method is to choose a hypothesis as the starting point of its investigation and on that hypothesis to build up a whole world of philosophical thought by using the instrument of Logic.

Empirical Rationalism may be better named as “Philosophy of Science”. Its method is to collect and arrange the facts discovered by Science and to endeavour, by using the instrument of Reason, to form an integrated picture of the world as a whole and thereby to answer the ultimate questions.

If we evaluate Formal Rationalism, we find that, on the face of it, it is incapable of giving us any sure and accurate knowledge of the ultimate problems. This is so, because its starting point is always a hypothesis, which is nothing more than a supposed idea or at best an observation based on common sense, and it has always been chosen by every philosopher arbitrarily. Now, every hypothesis, especially in the realm of abstract thought, is, in the very nature of the case, unverifiable. In other words, it is uncertain. And if it is uncertain, the thought structure built upon it and the conclusions arrived at must also be uncertain. That is, the knowledge of ultimate problems given by Formal Rationalism cannot be sure and accurate.

As regards Empirical Rationalism, its starting point consists in the scientific facts, namely, sensorial observation, and its method is to

reason out the ultimate problems on their basis. But, as we have already seen in the discussion of the Scientific Method, scientific facts are at best workable hypotheses or working material on the scale of observation or the system of reference with which they are connected. Hence, for ultimate problems, they have neither finality, nor perfect accuracy, nor absolute certainty. This means that if the starting point and the working material of Empirical Rationalism lack accuracy, certainty and finality, the conclusions arrived at will also suffer from the same shortcomings. In other words, a solution of the ultimate problems on the basis of sure knowledge is impossible even for the Empirical Rationalist school of Philosophy.

An eminent scientific thinker of modern times admits this truth in the following words: “Many people wrongly think that logical mechanisms are ‘standard’ and that logical reasoning, and all the more so mathematical reasoning, are inevitably ‘true’. This is not always the case. We must beware of the process of human thought because, in the first place, the starting point is often a sensorial observation (therefore of doubtful value) or an observation based on common sense. Now common sense cannot be trusted. It is common sense that leads us to think that the earth is flat; that two plumb lines are parallel (they are both directed toward the centre of the earth and consequently form an angle); that motion in a straight line exists, which is absolutely false as we have to take into consideration not only the motion of the earth around its axis and around the sun, and that of the entire orbit of the earth, but also the motion of the whole solar system toward the constellation Hercules, *etc.* As a result, a bullet or an aeroplane, which

seems to move in a straight line with respect to the earth, for a certain length of time, in reality follows a trajectory more closely resembling a kind of corkscrew with respect to a vaster system of reference, the nearest stars for instance. Common sense tells us that the edge of a razor blade is a continuous straight line, but if we examine it under a microscope it resembles a wavy line drawn by a child. Common sense tells us that a piece of steel is solid; X-rays show us that it is porous, and the modern theories of matter teach us that it is in reality made up of trillions of animated, miniature universes having extraordinarily rapid movements and no contact with each other.

“If, therefore, the starting point, the premises of a reasoning is false, the conclusion will necessarily, logically, be false.

“As we have no other means of knowing and describing nature but those given us by our senses and our faculties—*i.e.*, by our brain cells—we must be extremely cautious and never forget the *relativity* of the picture which we construct—a relativity with respect to the recording instrument, man.” (Lecomte du Nouy: *Human Destiny*, pp. 5, 6).

The competence of Science and Philosophy in unraveling the mysteries of the ultimate problems can be examined through another argument also. As stated in the foregoing, the ultimate problems refer to three main heads, namely: Man, Universe and God. Let us take here the case of Man himself. Can Science or Philosophy, or both combined, provide us true and accurate knowledge of the ultimate problems which refer to Man? If we consider this question cool-

mindedly and dispassionately, we find that neither the origin nor the constitution nor the functioning of man can be reasonably conceived to exist in a vacuum. The individual human being is a part of the human race. The human race, in its turn, is part of a larger whole, namely, the animal world. The animal world, in its turn, is part of a larger whole, namely, the organic world (which includes plant life). The organic world, in its turn, is part of a larger whole, namely, the Earth, (which includes both the organic world and the inorganic world). The Earth, in its turn, is part of a larger whole, namely, our solar system. Our solar system, in its turn, is *immediately* part of a galaxy of *unknown* number of solar systems and *ultimately* a part of the entire Universe which is *unknown to us as a whole thing* and which, according to Modern Science, should be termed as virtually infinite both in Space and Time, and is, therefore, incapable of being grasped in knowledge by our finite powers of perception and reasoning, both logical and mathematical. Thus, the human individual is ultimately part and parcel of a universe which, in its origin, constitution and purpose, is *unknowable as a whole thing*.

Now, if we wish to obtain true, accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the *fundamental laws* which govern the existence of the human individual, we find that just as the human individual does not exist in a vacuum the laws also which govern his existence do not exist in a vacuum. For, the system of laws which governs the existence of the human individual is part of a larger and higher whole, namely, the system of laws which governs humanity as an entity. This larger and higher system of laws is, in its turn, part of another system

which is higher and larger than it; and this series goes on—the levels of laws rise higher and higher, tier after tier, until we reach the level where we are confronted with the laws which govern the entire universe *as an entity and fundamentally*.

We are now heading towards the conclusion. To know the nature and destiny of the part we must know the nature and destiny of the whole. Hence, to know the nature and destiny of the human individual we must know the nature and destiny of the whole of which it is a part. As we have already seen, *immediately*, it is part of the human race. But the human race itself is not the final whole. Rather, it is a part of a larger whole, and that larger whole is part of a still larger whole, until, if we were to stop even at physical concepts only, we reach the final whole which is known as the Physical Universe. This means that unless we know the nature and destiny of the universe, we cannot know the nature and destiny of anything which forms part of it, including the human individual.

All the above discussions lead us positively to the conclusion that neither Science nor Philosophy can ever be capable of giving accurate answers to our ultimate questions on the basis of sure knowledge. And those answers which they have been giving, or might give in future, have been, and shall always be, at best approximations in the nature of partial truths and, in most instances, what the following verse of the Holy Qur'an calls "conjectures":

"But they have no *knowledge* thereof. They follow nothing but *conjecture*; and conjecture avails nothing against Truth." (53:28).

The question now is: If Science and Philosophy fail in guiding us on ultimate problems, is that the end of the road, or is there a way out? The answer is: Yes, there is a way—the way of Religion.



3. DIVINE REVELATION

The plausibility of the claim of Religion to answer our ultimate questions consists in the *source* of knowledge. Among the various religions of the world, Islam agrees with us that the human faculties of sense and reasoning are, in their very nature, incapable of arriving at accurate and sure knowledge of the ultimate facts both through logical reasoning and mathematical reasoning. But side by side with that it gives us a message of hope and imparts to us a very plain and convincing guidance in that behalf. That guidance may be stated as follows:

There are two factors in every act of knowledge, namely, the Subject and the Object. As regards the process of knowledge, it is possible in two ways, namely: (1) the subject may *embrace* the object with the instruments of knowledge which, in the case of man, are senses and reason; and (2) the object may *reveal* itself to the subject.

The usual path of knowledge is the first one, and it is this which Science and Philosophy employ. And because the finite cannot embrace the infinite, the attempts of Science and Philosophy at solving the ultimate problems end in failure.

The second path of knowledge is the path of *Revealed Religion*. That this path is a matter of experience in the scientific field also is known to all scientists. For instance, there are planets which are far away from the farthest horizon that the most advanced instruments of astronomy have been able to penetrate. Those planets enter that horizon only for a while after very long periods of time. Thus, instead of the powers of the astronomical instruments going out, so to say, to embrace them, they themselves *reveal* their existence by moving for a while into their embrace from a position where their existence cannot be known, and after that *revelation* they again disappear into the Unknown. Those whose gaze is fixed and whose instruments of observation are focussed on that horizon see them and know them, while others affirm their existence afterwards only on the basis of authority, because verification through observation does not remain possible after the disappearance of those planets.

This much about the physical world—the world of sense experience—the world which in quality as well as quantity is only a *part* of the Unknown and Infinite Universe. But it brings home to us an important fact. The farther removed a thing is qualitatively (*i.e.*, as regards its difference from us in its nature and constitution and function) or quantitatively (*i.e.*, in Space or Time), the greater becomes the necessity for the first path of knowledge to give place to the second path, *i.e.*, Revelation.

Islam emphasises this all-important fact of Revelation. It affirms the existence of God and says that He is the Creator and Cherisher of the Universe. Also, that He is All Powerful, All-Knowing and

Omnipresent. He possesses perfect knowledge of the origin, the constitution and the function of everything, and His knowledge comprehends the past, the present and the future. And He not only possesses that knowledge but has also revealed to humanity the correct guidance on the ultimate and intricate problems which defy correct and sure solution by means of senses and reason. His Revelations came, much like the distant planets mentioned in the foregoing scientific argument, through the Spiritual Luminaries who appeared on the horizon of humanity from time to time. Those Spiritual Luminaries included men like Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, the last among them being Muhammad (Divine Peace and Blessings be with him and all other Messengers of God); and the last Revealed Book is the Holy Qur'an.



PART 3 THE QUR'ONIC REVELATION

Chapter 1

THE QUR'ÂN: A REVEALED BOOK

THE CLAIM TO REVELATION:

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (in whom God's Blessings and Peace abide!) was un-lettered, not knowing how to read and write, because he had received no formal education in any degree from anyone. The historical testimony in this respect is complete and thorough, even as the Qur'anic Revelation contains the proclamation addressed to him and meant to emphasize to his opponents the Divine source of the profound Wisdom that was flowing from his sacred lips:

وَمَا كُنْتَ تُتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لَا رِتَابَ الْمُبْتَلُونَ

“And you (O Muhammad!) did not recite any book before this (*i.e.*, knew not how to read), nor were you (able) to transcribe one with your right hand (*i.e.*, knew not the art of writing). Otherwise, indeed, those who talk baseless things (against your Divine Mission) could have (some excuse for having) doubted (the revealed character of the Qur'an).” (29:48).

The Holy Prophet's sole teacher was God, and no one else:

وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ
عَظِيمًا

“. . . and Allah has revealed to you (O Muhammad!) the Book and the Wisdom, and has taught you what you knew not; and Allah’s Grace unto you is immense.” (4:113).

Thus, the Holy Qur’an is not the product of the Holy Prophet’s speculation and thinking. Rather, every word of that Book is the Word of God which was communicated to him through the process of Revelation:

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ...

“(This is) the revelation of the Book (*i.e.*, the Qur’an in which there is no (ground for) doubt,—(a Book) from the Lord of the Worlds. Will they say: ‘he has forged it’? Nay, it is the Truth from your Lord ...” (32:2-3).

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا

“Blessed is He (*i.e.*, Allah) Who sent down the Criterion (*i.e.*, the Qur’an) to His servant (Muhammad), that he may be a Warner to all the creatures.” (25:1).

قُلْ أَنْزَلَهُ الَّذِي يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“Say (O Muhammad!): The (Qur’an) has been sent down by Him Who knows the Mystery (that is) in the heavens and the earth...” (25:6).

لَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَشْهَدُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ أَنْزَلَهُ بِعِلْمِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَشْهَدُونَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

“But Allah bears witness that what He has revealed to you (O Muhammad!) He has revealed from His (own) Knowledge; and the angels bear witness (also); but enough is Allah for a witness.” (4:166).⁶⁷

Indeed, the Holy Qur'an calls itself the “Speech of God” (9:6) and the “most excellent Discourse”, “sent down gradually by Allah” (39:23), communicated to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!) not as mere ‘inspiration’ but as the “Arabic Qur'an” (12:2)—as *Recitation* “in plain Arabic language” (24:195), through the process of Prophetic Revelation (42:7; *etc.*) which was the same as in the case of the previous Divine Messengers from Adam to Jesus (Peace be upon nature them!) (42:3), and which descended upon the “heart” of the Holy Prophet not metaphorically but literally, namely, in the form of language in which it was subsequently transcribed by the Scribes.

Being the revealed Word of God, it imparts knowledge which is immune from all possibilities of doubt (2:2), all types of crookedness (17:1), every form of discrepancy (4:82), and the faintest taint of evil (26:210). On the positive side, it is the embodiment of Truth and the Balanced Thought together with the Balanced Way of Life (42:17); it is Blessed (with Holiness) (6:155), it is the Light that is Manifest (4:174), whose function is to lead forth humanity from the spiritual and moral darkness into the light of the achievement of human destiny

⁶⁷ We have quoted here just a few verses off-hand. Actually, the Holy Qur'ān is replete with statements that proclaim explicitly that it is, in its entirety, the revealed Word of God.

(14:1), it is the Healing which cures the very basis of spiritual and moral ailments (10:57); it is Mercy and Glad Tidings to those who follow it faithfully (16: 89); and it is the Criterion which distinguishes clearly the right from the wrong, the good from the evil, the true from the false (2:185); it is the Guide for all humanity (2:185), which imparts detailed and comprehensive guidance in all matters wherein human reason can possibly fail in any measure and in any manner (6:114; 16:89); and, imparting new knowledge as it does (2:151), it emphasises that all unbiased persons dedicated to knowledge are bound to uphold its truth at the time of its revelation (34:6), and to attest it, in later ages, as the horizons of human knowledge expand further and further (41:53).



THE PHENOMENON OF PROPHETIC REVELATION:

The Prophetic Revelation has nothing to do with the natural mental processes that relate to the human brain. It does not consist even of intuitional flashes like those experienced by certain eminent scientists and thinkers in respect of the discoveries of certain facts of knowledge. It is not just an inspiration of notions and ideas. Namely, it is not merely an ‘internal’ and subjective fact with no ‘external’ and objective dimension. Rather, it is a concrete objective phenomenon—though, of course, supernatural or metaphysical in character. It is ‘God’s Speech’ communicated at the highest level.

Of course, God's Speech (*kalÉm*) is not of the same nature as the human speech. For, God is Transcendent in His Being, so also in the nature of His Attributes (30:27). That does not imply, however, the impossibility of communication between Him and His creatures. Rather, to the contrary. Because, it is He Who *alone* is the Fountainhead: not only of *existence* but also of *guidance* for every particle of the cosmos:—as the One Who, 'encompasses all things' (41:54), and Who is, in the case of Man, 'closer to him than his jugular vein' (50:16).

God's Speech is communicated to different things in Creation in the form suitable to their function, the goal being the guidance of those things (8:12; 16:68; 41:12; 99:5). Human beings, not belonging to the category of the Prophets and Messengers, have also been the beneficiaries of this Divine blessing in the form of a *subjective guidance* in terms of inspiration (5:3; 20:38; 28:7). In their case, however, it was *purely a personal affair*.

It appears as if the higher the calibre and the function of anything in the cosmos, the higher, in the sense of more explicit, is the form of manifestation or expression for God's Speech, and the lower the calibre of anything the less its capability to accommodate that manifestation of the Divine Speech which relates to a higher level. Thus, the Speech of God may express itself to an inorganic object or a plant in the form of 'sensation' appropriate to it, to an animal in the form of inner 'perception', to a human being not falling under the category of a Prophet and a Messenger in the form of 'conception'. But in the case of those human beings who were chosen by God to be

His Prophets and Messengers and whose function consequently was, not to obtain stray guidance for themselves, but to be the recipients of a full-fledged philosophy of life and a comprehensive code of practical guidance for establishing the Divine Order in the life of humanity, reason leads us to the truth that the Speech of God should have expressed itself through the highest medium—the medium of language, and not through implicit and vague media of inner ‘sensation’, ‘perception’ and ‘conception’. Thus, although none of the human languages is the ‘language of God, the Speech of God has expressed or manifested itself in all the human languages through the Divinely-inspired Teachers who arose in all the communities of the world, in one era or the other, since the time of the Holy Prophet Adam to the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad—who came as the last and the final—(May God’s Blessings be on all of them!) (14:4). There is nothing, in fact, in literal Revelation to the Divine Messengers that may discount it philosophically or scientifically as impossible or even as improbable, provided we do not reduce that phenomenon to the category of the natural phenomena.



MODES OF COMMUNICATION OF GOD’S SPEECH TO HUMAN BEINGS:

To understand the implication further of what we have said: The word *wafy* has been employed by the Holy Qur’an with reference to inanimate as well as animate objects; and, among animate objects, to

animals as well as human beings. Then, among human beings, it has been used for communication with the non-prophets, namely, merely righteous persons, as well as for the Prophets and Messengers of God. And it has also been used in connection with the mutual communication between good as well as evil-minded persons. As such, it covers different levels of meaning like: creation of an impression, suggestion of an idea, inspiration, revelation—direct and indirect, expressive of different modes of the basic underlying concept of ‘communication’.

However, the concept of ‘speech’ emerges in the Qur’an explicitly in respect of God’s communication with the human beings in verse 51 of chapter 42, which we shall shortly quote.

The same verse also leads us to the meaning of the word *wafy* as direct ‘Inspiration’ by God. Elsewhere, however, the entire revelation of the Qur’an, which took place through the medium of the messenger-angel (26:193; *etc.*), has been affirmed to have taken place through the process of *wafy* (12:3; *etc.*). Then the employment of the word, in 42:52, in respect of the multi-modal communication of God with the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) gives to it a most comprehensive scope of meaning. Hence, as it relates to human beings, God’s *wafy* to a merely righteous person—a non-prophet, should be taken to signify ‘suggestion or creation of an idea’; while as ‘Prophetic Revelation’—which, in its ultimate aim, relates to the guidance of humanity at large in a divinely-initiated struggle—it should be accepted as standing for absolutely clear ‘Inspiration’ and literal ‘Revelation’.

With these preliminary observations, we may turn to the Qur'an for the different dynamic modes of Divine communication with the human beings. It says:

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَشْرِ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ
بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلِيُّ حَكِيمٌ

“And it is not possible (or, fitting) for a human being (in his earthly constitution) that Allah should speak ⁶⁸ to him otherwise than by *wafy* (—implying direct communication by Allah, which, in the case of a non-prophet righteous person, is in the form of the suggestion or infusion of some idea, and, in the case of a Prophet and a Messenger of Allah, is in terms of absolutely clear Inspiration),⁶⁹ or from behind a veil (—implying direct communication by Allah to His Prophet and Messenger, to the exclusion of other categories of human beings: a communication wherein a Voice is heard, as happened in the case of Moses at Sinai), or (that) he sends a messenger (in the person of an angel to act as intermediary and) to reveal by His Command whatsoever He wills. Verily, He is Exalted, Wise.” (42:51).

⁶⁸ Mark the word “speak” !

⁶⁹ This implication becomes fully established when we compare the mode of ‘*wafy*’ mentioned in the verse with the two other modes that follow, and give due weight, without any pre-conceived opinion, to the fact that the three forms of communication are three *different* types of processes that exclude one another in respect of their distinct natures.



MODES OF DIVINE COMMUNICATION WITH THE HOLY PROPHET ρ:

The above-quoted verse is followed Immediately by the following:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ

“And thus (*i.e.*, in the comprehensive manner covered in the different modes of Divine communication presented in 42:51) have We, by Our Command, sent unto you (O Muhammad) the Inspiration.⁷⁰ You knew not (before the establishment of Divine communication) what the Scripture was, nor what the Faith ...” (42:52).

Accordingly, God’s communication with the Holy Prophet ρ was normally in three ways: (1) direct communication in the form of what has been termed in 42:51 as *walīy*; (2) direct communication ‘from behind the veil’; (3) indirect communication through an intermediary messenger-angel.

The third being the sole mode of communication employed in respect of the revelation of the Qur’an, as we shall shortly notice, the other two modes must be taken to relate to the domain of general

⁷⁰ This word should be taken here to cover in its implication all the levels of Divine Revelation.

communication. Indeed, the Holy Prophet ρ , being firmly and absolutely established as ‘*abd* in the state of harmony with God (6:162, *etc.*) and thus in absolute intimacy with, and under the loving care of, God (52:48: *etc.*), his communication with God and God’s communication with him was frequent—the communication from God not confined to the revelation of the Qur’an.

The above-mentioned modes of communication relate, however, to the Holy Prophet’s life in respect of his earthly constitution in which he normally stayed except—so far as our knowledge goes—on the occasion of *Me‘rÉj* (Ascension), which can be understood only in terms of transcendental transformation of his personality by God. Hence God’s communication with him on that occasion should be classed as belonging to a mode different and distinct from the modes mentioned in 42:52. The reference in the Holy Qur’an stands thus:

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ . مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ . وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ
 إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ . عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ . ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ
 وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ . ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ . فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ
 فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ . مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ

“By the Star when it goes down, your Companion (Muhammad) does not err, nor is misled; nor does he speak (anything) of (his own) Desire (or, ratiocination). It is nothing but Revelation that is revealed (to him). He has been taught by One Mighty in Power, endued with Wisdom; so he attained completion in

knowledge,⁷¹ while he was in the highest horizon (during his *Me'rÉj* or Ascension). Then he (—existing on that occasion, as deducible, in the transcendental dimension of existence—) approached and came closer (to AllÉh, in the transcendental dimension), and it was a distance (in terms of transcendental dimension) of but two bow-lengths or nearer (—implying idiomatically extreme nearness—). Thus He (i.e., AllÉh) revealed to His Devotee (Muhammad) what He revealed. The (Prophet's) heart lied not in what he saw (it being the direct Vision of, and communication from, AllÉh).” (53:1-11).⁷²

[*Note:-* Some scholars who subscribe to no adequate notion either of the nature of human personality or of the dimensions of the personality of a Messenger of God—whose view of religious verities is, for all practical purposes, either ‘formalistic’ or ‘naturalistic’—consider it necessary to explain away or minimise every super-natural, or metaphysical, element in the Holy Prophet's personality. As such, they deny that the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) was blessed with the vision of God in his *Me'rÉj*, saying that the person whom he saw

⁷¹ *IstawÉ al-rajul* means ‘he became full grown and mature in body and intellect, or he attained the completion of his make and intellect’. (Lane's *Lexicon*)

⁷² The translation of these verses and the explanatory remarks inserted within brackets are based on a critical assessment of *×adīth* literature and of the Qur'ānic philosophy of Religion as upheld by a vast majority of Islamic scholars in history.

was the angel JibrĒl (Gabriel). As for the *×adīth* literature, both the views—viz., ‘vision of God’ and ‘vision of JibrĒl’—are deducible. But, as regards the Qur’an, it affirms the ‘vision of God’ in the transcendental dimension of existence, *i.e.*, life in Heaven, even for the true followers of the Messengers of God—not to speak of the Messengers of God themselves. The view reported to have been put forward by Lady Ayesha should be taken to relate basically to the impossibility of seeing God with the physical vision; and, as such, it is an absolutely correct view. The Holy Prophet’s *Me‘rĒj* was, however, an event of unique nature in which it should be accepted that his sacred personality had been transformed by God from the physical to the transcendental dimension of existence⁷³—the same dimension in which his true followers who, in their status, are simply non-entities as compared with his status as God’s greatest Messenger, will exist in Heaven, and will, therefore, become capable of being blessed with the vision of God (75:22-23).

Reverting to 42:52, it was not at all necessary for the Holy Qur’an, after explicitly affirming all the three modes of Divine

⁷³ Qualitative transformations are all the time taking place in Nature. Thus the view presented here is in accordance with the Natural Law. Also: this view synthesizes the partial views in which one school of thought—the minority school—emphasises that *Me‘rĒj* was just a ‘spiritual’ experience like other spiritual experiences, in which the Holy Prophet’s soul *alone* was the subject of experience, while the other school—representing an overwhelming majority of Muslims in history—gives prominence to the participation of the Holy Prophet’s body in that entire event.

communication mentioned in 42:51, to pin-point each occasion and each guidance as it came to the Holy Prophet ρ from God through the respective modes. Such information can be relevantly sought in the *×adÊth* literature, although even there we cannot expect absolute accuracy in respect of reporting, nor a detailed specification of occasions and modes, basically because of the personal and secret nature of Divine communication. However, that being the only way open to us, we may obtain from there whatever information is in conformity with the Qur'an.

There is a consensus of historical reports that the Holy Prophet Muhammad ρ grew up as superbly-normal in mental, physical and moral health and beauty, but abnormally devoted to truthfulness, thoughtfulness, and sympathy for and service to fellow-beings. He passed the greater part of his youth, right from infancy, in the 'lap of Nature', away from the city-life of Makka, where he was born. As a grown-up young man, he had the occasion to undertake long journeys in the 'environment of Nature' when he crossed time and again, in connection with commerce, the desolate desert vastnesses of Arabia. He was born in a community of idol-worshippers; but he never had anything to do with any idol even unconsciously. He had the mental grace and the personal beauty of the Holy Prophet Abraham ρ, from whom he had descended through the Holy Prophet Ishmael ρ. But his family had lost the teaching of Abraham and Ishmael, and had preserved only its history.

His contact with the transcendental Reality started crystallising when he began to see true dreams⁷⁴—dreams in which he appears to have seen future events, which happened as he had seen them, or hidden things of this world, which were exactly what he had seen during his sleep, or hidden realities of the transcendental world. As this spiritual state continued, his love for solitude increased until, in the very prime of his youth, in spite of his marriage with his beloved wife Khadija (which took place when he was twenty-five years old), he began retiring to the wilderness, where, totally cut off from human, animal and even plant life, he would stay engaged in meditation, in the Cave of Hira, which, even to this day, possesses the majesty of the ‘Void’. This retreat to the Cave of Hira continued to repeat itself until, at the age of forty,⁷⁵ on the 12th of Rabi‘ al-Awwal,⁷⁶ the pitch darkness of the night inside the Cave and the death-like stillness of the surrounding wilderness was shattered when the Light from God descended (4:173) and the archangel JibrĒl, the holy and trustworthy Spirit from God, appeared before him and asked him to read, which request was made twice, each time the angel pressing him in his

⁷⁴ The phenomenon of ‘true dreams’ continued all through the Holy Prophet’s life. The term used by Lady Ayesha is *Ru’yĒ ØĒlĪā* which means righteous, sound and healthy dreams. The statement which follows to the end of the paragraph is based originally on Bukhari’s *ØaĪĒĪ; BĒb: KaiĒa kĒna bada’al-WaĪy*—reported by Lady Ayesha, wife of the Holy Prophet.

⁷⁵ Bukhari: *ØaĪĒĪ; BĒb: Øifat al-Nabi*.

⁷⁶ Ibn Kathir: *Al-BidĒyah wa al-NihĒyah*, vol. 2, p. 260—on the authority of Ibn Abbas.

embrace to activate more and more the transcendental dimension of his personality, to which each time the same reply came, *i.e.*, “I do not know how to read.” Then the angel recited to him the first revelation of the Qur’an, which reads:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ . خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ . اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ
الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ . عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

“Read! (or recite, or proclaim) in the Name of your Lord and Cherisher Who created (everything in the universe)—created man out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful,—He Who taught (the preservation, cultivation and promotion of knowledge) through the Pen,—taught man that which he knew not.” (96:1-5). Thereby the Holy Prophet acquired those verses in his memory and returned home highly excited by that most abnormal experience.

Thus came the first revelation of the Qur’an, which was the forerunner for all those others that came down over a period of twenty-three years—the actual period of the Holy Prophet’s ministry—and constitute, together with that first one, the Qur’an as it was completed and as we have it today.

Thus also commenced the period of the Holy Prophet’s life in which not only the communication through the messenger-angel but also other modes of Divine communication blessed him very frequently.

The classical Islamic scholars have listed certain modes of Revelation on the basis of $\times ad\hat{E}th$ literature, with slight differences among themselves. Thus, Suyuti has mentioned five (*Al-Itq\hat{E}n*, vol. 1, p. 44.), and Ibn Qayyim has listed seven (*Z\hat{E}d al-Ma'\hat{E}d*, vol. 1, pp. 24-25). However, keeping strictly within the bounds prescribed by the Qur'anic testimony, as demanded by the nature of the present book, we will not go beyond the basic implications of the three modes mentioned in the holy book—which actually reduce themselves to two, *viz.*, 'direct communication by God' and 'communication by God through the messenger-angel'.

We need not bring testimony from the $\times ad\hat{E}th$ literature in respect of the revelations that constitute the Qur'an, because the holy book itself has explicitly stated the mode of its revelation as consisting in Divine communication through the messenger-angel, *Jibr\hat{E}l*:

وَأِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ . نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ
عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ . بِلسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ

“Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds: The Trusted Spirit (*i.e.*, *Jibr\hat{E}l*) has brought it down upon your heart (O Muhammad!) that you may be of the warners, in plain Arabic language.” (26:192-195).

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْخُنُوسِ . الْجَوَارِ الْكُنُوسِ . وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ . وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ
إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ . ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ . مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ
وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُونٍ . وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالْأُفُقِ الْمُبِينِ . وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ

“So verily I call to witness the Planets that recede, moving swiftly (and) hiding themselves; and the Night as it dissipates (gradually melting away in the Day); and the Dawn as it breathes away the darkness;—verily it is a Word (brought) by a messenger honoured (*i.e.*, JibrĒl), endued with Power (so that no devilish force can obstruct the path of this powerful messenger), with rank before the Lord of the Throne (*i.e.*, Allah), with authority there (*i.e.*, in the heavens), faithful to his trust. And (O people!) your Companion (Muhammad) is not one possessed (as the calumniators say). Without doubt he beheld him (*i.e.*, JibrĒl) at the Clear Horizon.⁷⁷ And he (*i.e.*, Muhammad) is not a withholder of (the knowledge of) the Unseen (which has been bestowed on him by Allah).” (81:5-24).

⁷⁷ Cf. the *×ÉdĒth* reported and accepted by Bukhari: “Jabir reported that he heard God’s Messenger telling about the cessation of Revelation (for a short period after the first one) as follows: ‘(Once) while I was walking I heard a voice coming from above, and raising my eyes I beheld the angel who had come to me at Hira seated on a throne between heaven and earth. I felt overawed (by the supernatural majesty of the experience,—it being the early stage of the experience of that type).’ Then I returned to my family and said: ‘Wrap me up, wrap me up!’ So they wrapped me up. Then Allah Most High sent down the revelation: ‘O you wrapped up (in a mantle)! arise and deliver your warning! And preach you the greatness of your Lord (*lit.*, your Lord do you magnify)! And your garments keep free from stain! and all pollution shun!’ Thereafter the process of Revelation became intensified and continuous.” (Bukhari: *ŌáĒĒĒ*, *KitĒb al-TafsĒr*. Cf. Muslim: *ŌáĒĒĒ*).

قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ

“Say (O Muhammad!): the Holy Spirit⁷⁸ (*i.e.*, angel JibrÊl) has brought down the revelation (of the Qur’an) from your Lord in Truth ...” (16: 102).

Here two important facts may be noted: (1) although even the dreams of a Prophet are fully meaningful and explicit and are grounded in absolute truth, all the Qur’anic revelations came to the Holy Prophet in the state of waking,—on which fact the authorities are unanimous, according to *KitÊb al-TibyÊn* (p. 21); (2) the messenger-angel seems to have been employed by God for the Qur’anic revelations for ensuring their reception by the Holy Prophet ρ in absolute exactitude of *language*, the Qur’an being meant to be a book of guidance for humanity for all time.

In respect of Divine communication through the messenger-angel, however, occasions besides those relating to the revelation of the Messages that constitute the Qur’an have also been reported in the ×*adÊth* literature, wherein the angel’s role emerges as very important. For instance, we know that JibrÊl was commissioned by God to rehearse the Holy Qur’an with the Holy Prophet every year during the nights of the month of Ramadan (Bukhari: *ŖalÊÊ*; *BÊbs: Kaifa KÊna bada’ al-WaÍy* and *Dhikr al-MalÊ’ikah*), and to communicate to him

⁷⁸ Or, the Holy Ghost, who rendered the same service to other Divine Messengers, including Jesus (God bless him!). He is an angel, created by God, and not the third member of Godhead, as erroneously and blasphemously conceived by Pauline Christianity.

the method of the five daily obligatory Prayers (Bukhari: *ØaÍÊÍ: BÉbs: Dhikr al-MalÉ'ikah*).

In connection with angel JibrÊl, we also come across a *×adÊth* which is to the effect that, in answer to an enquiry, the Holy Prophet p said:

“At times the angel (JibrÊl) assumes the human form for me and speaks to me, and I retain (in my memory) what he says.”⁷⁹

What was the exact nature of the appearance of the angel in human form, referred to here, cannot be known to us. However, we find it in the *×adÊth* literature to have occurred on a good number of occasions, and, among them, it also happened a number of times that even the Holy Prophet's Companions saw that angel.⁸⁰

Coming to the mode of Divine communication ‘from behind a veil’: Such a phenomenon has been reported in the following *×adÊth*:⁸¹

“(Lady) Ayesha (wife of the Holy Prophet) reported that Harith ibn Hisham enquired from Allah's Messenger: ‘How does the Revelation come to you, O Allah's Messenger?’ To that he

⁷⁹ Imam Malik: *Mu'aÍlÉ;BÉb MÉ jÉ'a fí al-Qur'ān*. Cf. Bukhari and Muslim.

⁸⁰ In this connection, very definite events, stated in very explicit form, have been reported, among others, by Imam Bukhari (*ØaÍÊÍ: BÉbs: SuwÉlu JibrÊl, Kaifa nazala al-WaÍy, Marja' al-NabÊ min al-AÍzÉb wa Makhrajahu ilÉ Bani Quraizah, Dhikr al-MalÉ'ikah, ShuhÉd al-MalÉ'ikah Badran*).

⁸¹ Imam Malik: *op. cit.*

replied: ‘It comes to me at times in the likeness of an echoing sound of a bell,⁸² and that is (the mode) most severe on me; then it is cut off from me, and I definitely remember thereafter what the (Communicator from behind the ‘veil’) has spoken’.’⁸³

⁸² It was in fact a sound very different from physical sounds,—a sound which is inexplicable in terms of human language (*Al-ItqĒn*, vol. 1 p. 44). Hence the description should not be understood in the literal sense.

Further: Suyuti, the author of *Al-ItqĒn*, puts forward the view that this sound preceded the communication of Revelation for the sake of withdrawing the attention of the Holy Prophet from everything else and concentrating it on the Revelation which was to follow (vol. 1, p. 44). Imam Ahmad’s *Musnad* corroborates this view.

⁸³ As to the communicator of Revelation referred to here, Imam Ahmad and Imam Muslim have narrated Traditions that imply that it was God Himself speaking from behind the ‘veil’. Al-Bazzar’s *Musnad* brings forth similar evidence. Imam Bukhari devotes to this fact a separate section entitled *Dhikr al-NabĒ wa riwĒyatihĒ ‘an RabbihĒ*, where the narrators are personalities of the calibre of Anas ibn Malik, Abu Hurairah and Abdullah Ibn Abbas. The view that the communicator in question was the angel JibrĒl also emerges, however.

Looking at the problem rationally; The phenomenon of ‘the Bell and the Message’ appears to bear similarity in form to the present-day communication through the telephone, wherein a bell rings as a prelude to the communication of some message. But, in the case of JibrĒl, we learn from the Qur’ān that he, was *sent in person* by God—e.g., the relevant verses quoted in this chapter. Hence, to say, as some have held, that the communicator was JibrĒl, is evidently unreasonable. Moreover, the Qur’ānic

For a clear understanding of the implication of the above *×adĒth*, we have to go to the Qur'anic testimony, which relates to the affirmation of Divine communication 'from behind a veil' with the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) (42:51-52), on the one hand, and which states that phenomenon in actual terms in respect of certain other Divine Messengers, on the other. For instance, in the case of the Holy Prophet Abraham (Peace be on him!):

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ . قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا ...

“We called unto him: O Abraham! you have already fulfilled the vision ...” (37:104-105).

Again, in the case of the Holy Prophet Moses (Peace be on him!):

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرُ إِلَيْكَ ...

“And when Moses came to Our appointed tryst and his Lord had spoken to him, he said: ‘My Lord! Show me (Yourself), that I may gaze upon You’ ...” (7:143).

Besides the modes, we come across another aspect of Divine communication also in the *×adĒth* literature, namely, the external ultra-natural symptoms noticed by the Holy Prophet's Companions and reported by them. In that connection, we may first state what Lady Ayesha (Allah be pleased with her!) is said to have reported:

testimony in this respect (42:51-52) is final and decisive. As such, we are compelled to hold to the view that the communicator in the case under reference was God Himself.

“Indeed, I saw him while the Revelation came down on him on a very cold day; then, at the expiry of it (i.e., the state of the communication of Revelation), sweat poured forth from his forehead.”⁸⁴

Going to other reports, we find that the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) attained such a profound state of submergence of his consciousness in the Divine Revelation that those who saw him in that state felt as if his soul had departed from this world (*Kanz al-‘Ummal*, vol. 4, p. 30); and Imam Bukhari reports in his *ØaÍÊÍ* that the rosy white colour of his face would change into intense red and his breathing would become louder (*BÉbs: GÍusl al-KhulËq* and *Nazal al-Qur’an bi LisËn-i-Quraish*). Al-Hakim narrates the report from Abu Hurairah that at the time when the Holy Prophet received the Revelation, it was impossible for anyone to fix his gaze at his holy face (*Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 2, p. 222). This report implies the establishment of a halo of undescrivable majesty and supernatural character around his face—in fact, around his entire personality. Imam Ahmad relates in his *Musnad* on the authority of Abdullah ibn ‘Amr that: “*Sura al-MË’idah* was revealed to Allah’s Messenger while he was riding on a she-camel, which showed expressly her inability to bear (the weight she experienced in physical terms to an extent that he had to alight (from its back)” (vol. 2, p. 176). This fact is corroborated in several other reports also. Zaid ibn Thabit relates that: “... then Allah, the Possessor of Blessedness and the Most High, sent

⁸⁴ Imam Malik: *op. cit.*

down on His Messenger (Muhammad) a Revelation. At that time (I was sitting so close to him by his side that) his folded leg covered my folded leg, whereby I experienced such a heavy load (as to give me the feeling) that my folded leg would be crushed to pieces.” (BukhĒrĒ, *ŌalĒĒ, KitĒb al-TafsĒr*).

As to the manifestation of physical effects on the Holy Prophet’s personality, Ibn Khaldun, the founder of Sociology and of Philosophy of History, observes in his world-renowned *Muqaddimah*, in connection with his scholarly philosophical discourse on the nature of Prophetic Revelation, that a transformation of the Holy Prophet’s personality from the human plane to the angelic plane took place on all such occasions (pp. 98, 99).

However, the phenomenon of ‘severity’ became toned down to lighter and lighter as time passed; as we find, for instance, in Imam Ahmad’s *Musnad* in connection with the revelation of sura *Al-Kauthar* (vol. 3, p. 102).

That the Holy Qur’an is based on literal Inspiration in the form of Prophetic Revelation and is not the result of the Holy Prophet’s own intellectual or spiritual awakening as a seer, is borne out also by the mode of the projection of its teachings, wherein clearly it is God Who addresses humankind, including the Holy Prophet, and not the Holy Prophet himself.

Again, anyone who undertakes a comparative study of the language of the Holy Qur’an and the language of the *×adĒth* literature, which consists of the utterances of the Holy Prophet on his

own behalf, can easily notice the clear difference in the style of expression in both.

Still again, the challenges thrown by the Holy Qur'an to the disbelievers in its divine status, as in 10:38, 11:13, 17:88 and 52:34, bear out that the holy book emphatically affirms about itself that it is the Word of God and not a product of the Holy Prophet's mental effort.

Going into external factors further: Arabic is probably the richest language in respect of its vocabulary, which means for our present purpose that if the very words of the Holy Quran had not been regarded as revealed with the immutable divine sanction behind them, the verses, as they were revealed from time to time during a long period, would have easily and naturally undergone changes at least through the interplay of synonyms;—while it is a well-attested fact that the addition or elimination of such an unimportant word as 'and', for which there is 'in Arabic only a single letter, was not permitted and could not take place.

Then, entering into internal evidence again: The Holy Prophet's entire attitude towards the revelations that he received, belies any assumption as to those revelations being mere 'inspirations' that were projected by him in his own words. For instance, let us consider the verses wherein he has been commanded by God thus:

لَا تُحْرِكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ . إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ . فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ

“Move not your tongue concerning the (Qur'an) to make haste therewith (in fear of not remembering exactly the text that was

revealed). Verily upon Us is the collecting thereof (in your mind) and the reciting thereof (exactly as it is revealed to you). Wherefore when We recite it follow you the recital thereof. And thereafter verily upon Us (*i.e.*, under Our guidance) is the expounding thereof.” (75:16-19).

Movement of the tongue relates to the anxiety of remembering the words that he had heard and not *thoughts* that could have been *infused* in his mind through inspiration.

Before closing this discussion, it is very necessary to emphasise most vehemently that the nature of Revelation—in fact, of entire prophetic experience, is such that it is incommunicable to and incomprehensible for a non-prophet. Hence, it would be the greatest mistake to view it in terms of the natural laws that relate to the general or basic human level.



Chapter 2

THE PROCESS OF COMPILATION

1. INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Although the Qur'an was revealed piece-meal, the fact that its Message was meant to be presented to humanity in the form of a book—that it was to be *al-KitÉb*, or, the Book—projected itself in the very first revelation wherein God mentioned explicitly the role of the Pen in human history. Indeed, we find the Qur'an characterising itself as a book even in the Makkan period of its revelation. Thus, we come across the verses:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ

“Praise be to Allah, Who has sent down unto His Servant (Muhammad) the Book ...” (18:1).

تَنْزِيلٍ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ . كِتَابٌ فُصِّلَتْ ...

“(This is) a revelation from (AllÉh) the Compassionate, the Merciful—a Book whereof the verses are detailed ...” (41:2-3).

وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ . إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“By (this) luminous Book! verily We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that haply you may reflect.” (43:2-3).

رَسُولٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُطَهَّرَةً . فِيهَا كُتِبَ قِيمَةٌ

“A Messenger (Muhammad) from AllĒh rehearsing (unto them) Writs (*Īlūf*) kept pure (from every type of corruption and falsehood) and holy, wherein are discourses (*kutub*) eternal.” (98:2-3).

Then, in the portion revealed at Madina the emphasis on the Qur'an as to its being a Book comes before us again. For instance:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ

“This is the Book wherein there is no (ground for) doubt.” (2:2).

وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

“... (the Prophet) teaches them the Book and the Wisdom ...” (62:2).

Moreover, we come across the following objection raised by the opponents:

وَقَالُوا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ اكْتَتَبَهَا

“They say: (These are) tales of the ancients which he (i.e., Muhammad) has caused to be written ...” (25: 5).

This objection too affirms explicitly that whatever portion of the Qur'an had been revealed upto that time existed in written form.

All this means that writing down the revelations according to some arrangement was the law that was followed, which means that the Qur'an must have been put into writing from the beginning of its revelation to the end according to some principle, —and that writing and compilation should have been executed not merely on palm-leaves and shoulder-bones and pieces of wood and stone but also, and

that basically, on paper, or, at least, on parchment, through which alone the form of a ‘book’ could have emerged after properly arranging and putting together uniform pieces of paper or parchment. Indeed, the incontrovertible truth is that the Qur’an grew up as a book from the beginning—growing in its contents with the progress in revelation, and was used as such by the Muslims even at Makka. Historical facts confirm this fully, as we shall now see.



2. EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

Soon after the commencement of the Revelation, the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him!) made definite arrangements for the preservation of the revealed Messages in writing.⁸⁵ Among those who were entrusted with this task, and whose numbers increased as the numbers of the adherents of Islam increased, —the first one was Abu Bakr, the Companion *par excellence*, the wise and the truthful (*al-Øiddiq*), the first adult man to embrace Islam—and that soon after the coming of the first revelation, and one of the respected elders of

⁸⁵ It may be emphasised here that quite a number of those who joined the Islamic fraternity at Makka and Madina were educated persons who knew the art of reading and writing. Moreover, the Holy Prophet gave such importance to the formal education of his followers that even many Muslim ladies received it (Abu Da’ud *Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 186; etc.), and men like Zaid ibn Thabit acquired, under the Holy Prophet’s orders, languages other than Arabic. e.g., Hebrew and Syriac. (*Al-ÍÉbah*, p. 561; *Al-Tārīkh al-Saghīr*, p. 53; *Kitāb al-MulāÍef*, p. 3).

Makka. Besides him we find the names of several other personalities mentioned in the historical records as the Holy Prophet's Scribes, who served as such at Makka and Madina. The famous Traditionist, Ibn Sayyid al-Nas, has given a list of thirty-eight in the biography of the Holy Prophet entitled: *'UyĒn al-Athar* (vol. 2, pp. 315-316). The author of *al-SĒrah al-×alabiyyah* affirms a list of twenty Scribes, whose names he has selected from variant traditions wherein the number has gone as high as forty-two, this number having been recorded by al-Kattani (*al-Tartīb al-IdĒriyah*, vol. 1, pp. 116-124; Moroccan edition). A critical examination of all the records places the number at twenty-eight, the list including the names of the first four caliphs, namely, Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali, and of Mu'awiyah—the fifth head of the Islamic State after the Holy Prophet's demise, and of Zubair ibn al-Awam. Abdullah ibn Masud, Ubayy ibn Ka'ab, Zaid ibn Thabit, Khalid ibn Walid (the famous General), 'Amr ibn al-'As (later on the governor of Egypt) and Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As.

Thus the task of writing down every revelation as it came was instituted by the Holy Prophet in a very organised and systematic form. Uthman, the third righteous caliph of Islam, and one of the earliest converts to the faith, bears testimony to it in these words: "Whenever some revelation came down on him (i.e., the Prophet), he would call upon some of those who had been appointed to write." (Tirmizi: *JĒme'*, vol. 2, p. 134). This fact is corroborated by Imam Bukhari and others. For instance, Bukhari's *ŌalĒĒ* reports: "Zaid ibn Thabit said that the Prophet dictated to him (the verse:) 'Not equal are

those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the Cause of AllÉh ...” (vol. 3, p. 761). Or, the more comprehensive information contained in the $\times ad\hat{E}th$ recorded by Ibn Abi Daud and reported by Sulaiman, the grandson of Zaid ibn Thabit, on the authority of his father Kharija: “... (Zaid said:) I was a neighbour of God’s Messenger. So, whenever any revelation came (to him), it was his practice to call me, whereat I used to write down the revelation (at his dictation).” (*KitÉb al-MuÎÉÍef*, p. 3). Darimi’s *Sunan* (p. 68) projects the fact that it was not always one person but, probably as a rule, several persons who wrote the revelations, singly but in a joint session, as the Holy Prophet dictated to them. In this connection, the $\times ad\hat{E}th$ runs like this: “Abdullah ibn ‘Amr said: ‘while we (the party of Scribes) were engaged in writing in the presence of God’s Messenger ...’.”

The Holy Prophet did not only dictate the revelations to the Scribes, but also asked them, after they had inscribed, to recite to him what they had written, for correcting any mistake they might have committed. We read in *Majma‘ al-ZawÉ‘id* (vol. 1, p. 60) that “Zaid ibn Thabit said: ‘... whenever I had finished (writing down the revelation dictated to me), he (i.e., God’s Messenger) asked me to read it out, and accordingly I would recite to him. Then, if there was a mistake, he corrected it. Then he gave it out to the people (for making copies for their use and for memorisation by them)’.” (*Cf. FatÍ al-MughÍth*, p. 250).

This much about the fact that every revelation was written down as it came, with the utmost care and by several Scribes at a time. Now

comes the problem relating to the organisation of the discrete revelations into chapters (*sĒras*) as it is to be found in the Qur'an since the Holy Prophet's time,—only certain chapters having been revealed complete on single occasions. The verdict of history in this respect is that the Holy Prophet himself used to instruct on each occasion concerning the sequence of insertion in a particular chapter of a particular verse or set of verses revealed on a particular occasion; and in case a new chapter was to begin with a particular revelation, the Scribe or Scribes were instructed by him accordingly. Thus, for instance, it has been stated in Imam Tarmizi's *JĒme'* (vol. 2, p. 134): "He (i.e. God's Messenger) used to instruct (the Scribes) to place such and such verses in the chapter where such and such had been stated." In this way did all the chapters of the Holy Qur'an—and they are One Hundred and Fourteen in number—came into existence under the Holy Prophet's instruction and under Divine Guidance as communicated to him continuously. (*Majma' al-ZawĒ'id*, vol. 7, p. 157; *Al-ItqĒn*, vol. 1, p. 62. Also refer : Imam Ahmad's *Musnad*).

Now, the chapters in themselves are parts of the Qur'an. By putting them together under a certain principle of arrangement, the Holy Qur'an assumed the form of a book. The question is : Who gave the existing arrangement in respect of chapters. Here, again, the verdict of history⁸⁶ is that this was done by no one else but the Holy Prophet himself. The recorded evidences in this respect are:

⁸⁶ See in this connection, among others: Al-Zarakshi: *KitĒb al-BurhĒn*; Suyūti: *Al-ItqĒn*; Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith: *Ash'at al-Luma'Ēt*.

1. Abu Da'ud has recorded the $\times ad\hat{E}th$ in which Hudhaifah informs us that "he saw the Prophet (serially) reciting in the prayer at night the chapters *al-Baqarah*, *Ól-i-'ImrÉn*, *Al-NisÉ'*, *Al-MÉ'īdah* and *al-An'Ém*." (Sunan, vol. 1, p. 128). Now, the order of the chapters stated in this $\times ad\hat{E}th$ is the same as it has existed in the Qur'an all through; which shows that the arrangement of all the chapters must have been fixed by the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) himself, it being inconceivable that he arranged only the above-mentioned five and left out the rest.

2. In Imam Tirmizi's *JÉme'* (vol. 2, pp. 118,119) there is a $\times ad\hat{E}th$ which says: "A man enquired: 'O God's Messenger! which action is most liked by God?' He replied: '(the action of) him who finishes a journey and goes on a journey'." Dirimi has added to this $\times ad\hat{E}th$, in his *Sunan* (p. 41), the following: "It was asked as to what was the meaning of finishing a journey and undertaking another. (To this) he replied: 'A possessor of the Qur'an recites it from its beginning to its end, and when he finishes, he returns to the beginning (to finish it again), (making it his routine that) whenever he finishes the journey (of reading and studying the Qur'an from beginning to end), he begins the same journey (afresh)'." Here, the very notions of a beginning and an ending for the reading of the Qur'an as a book imply the existence of the arrangement of chapters.

The *×adÊth* narrated by Imam Tirmizi (*JÉme'*, vol. 2, p. 118), wherein the enquiry submitted by Abdullah ibn 'Amr to the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him!) in respect of the number of days that was advisable for him to fix for reading the Qur'an from the beginning to the end is similar to the above as regards the logical conclusion to which it leads.

3. Imam Ahmad has recorded in his *Musnad* a *×adÊth* which has a direct bearing on the problem of the arrangement of chapters. Therein, Aus ibn Abi Aus Hudhaifa al-Thaqafi reports that he was a member of a delegation of the Banu Thaqif tribe that had come to the Holy Prophet at Madina, and that the Holy Prophet used to visit the delegation every night after the 'IshÉ prayer; then, it so happened one night that the Holy Prophet was late in coming to them and, on enquiry as to the cause of the delay, he told them: "I had missed the *×izb* (i.e., a definite portion of the Qur'an fixed for recitation) meant for today; and I disliked that I should come out without finishing that (task)." "Then", Aus adds, "we enquired from the Companions of God's Messenger in respect of *aÍzÉb* (plural of *ÍzÉb*) of the Qur'an (namely, in what manner did they recite the Qur'an divided into a number of parts: *aÍzÉb*). To that they replied that they recited (it according to this division): three chapters, (beginning with chapter: *al-Baqarah*)⁸⁷ (on the first day of the week), (the following) five

⁸⁷ The first chapter, named *Al-FÉtiÍah*, has not been taken into account, because, it being the most basic Qur'Énic prayer, no devotional action is

chapters (on the second day), (the following) seven chapters (on the third day), (the following) nine chapters (on the fourth day), (the following) eleven chapters (on the fifth day), (the following) thirteen chapters (on the sixth day), and from the chapter named *QÉf* (numbering 50 in the Qur'an) to the end of the Qur'an (on the seventh day)." (vol. 4 p. 343). This detail corroborates the arrangement of chapters in the Qur'an as it is today, as Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani emphasises in *FatÍ al-BÉrÊ*, vol. 9, p. 39.

4. We learn from Bukhari's *ØaÍÊÍ* (vol. 3, p. 141) that a rehearsal of the entire up-to-date Qur'an was done by the Holy Prophet in collaboration with angel JibrÊl, every year during the month of Ramadan, it having taken place twice in the Ramadan immediately preceding the Holy Prophet's demise. It is evident that any such thing was impossible to happen if the Qur'an had been un-arranged at any stage; which means that even the arrangement of its chapters in their serial order was taking place under the Holy Prophet's guidance from the very beginning according to the Divine Plan.
5. The greatest proof of the fact that the arrangement of the chapters, even as that of the verses, took place under the

complete without it. Hence, its recitation has to be repeated every day in connection with that day's *Íizb*—and that in its own right. That seems to be the reason why it has not been mentioned as a part of the first day's *Íizb*.

instruction of the Holy Prophet, who as a result bequeathed the Qur'an to humanity is exactly in its present form and contents, consists of the following truths: (a) the Qur'an is not only a Book of Guidance but also a book for recital for all Muslims. As such, one of the fondest pursuit of the Holy Prophet's Companions was its recital to their utmost capacity. It was obligatory for every Muslim to recite it in the daily prayers; but every Muslim's devotion to it was of such magnitude that he or she tried to go as far beyond the obligatory recitation as possible. All that would have been impossible, however, if the Qur'an had not existed from the very beginning as a book thoroughly arranged and perfectly organised internally. (b) If the Qur'an had not been perfected in every aspect before the Holy Prophet's demise, variations at least in respect of the arrangement of its chapters would have unavoidably taken place. But no such thing has happened. (c) Muslim scholars have differed among themselves on different issues, the differences even assuming sometimes what may be termed as 'sectarian dimensions' and the races and peoples who have been joining the fold of Islam during the past fourteen centuries came with different backgrounds. But the Qur'an has remained what it always was since its completion in the Holy Prophet's time. It means that all Muslims have accepted from the very beginning, and always, that not only its meaning-structure but also its word-structure, and that not only its contents but also its form—which consists of the

arrangement of its verses and chapters, is divinely-ordained and exists as perfected and completed under the direct instruction of the Holy Prophet (God's choicest Blessings be with him!).

Says Ibn Hazm, the versatile Islamic scholar of the fifth century of the Hijri era: "He who says that the arrangement of the verses and the chapters (of the Qur'an) is not Divine through His Prophet, he is ignorant and a fabricator ... Had the people arranged (the verses and the chapters) themselves, they could not have avoided one of the (following) three methods (of arrangement): (1) either according to the order of revelation; (2) or, they would have given priority to the longer chapters, placing the shorter ones after them: (3) or, vice versa (i.e., from shorter to longer chapters). But because that is not the case, it (the present arrangement) is certainly through the Prophet's own instruction which could not have clashed with the Divine Order. (In fact) no alternative remains except this." (*KitÉb al-Fasl*, vol. 4, p. 221).



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Chapter 3

THE PROCESS OF PRESERVATION AND PROPAGATION

The arrangements instituted by the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) were perfect not only in respect of the communication of Qur'anic revelations but also concerning their preservation.

In this connection, it should be noted that although paper and parchment were not available in abundance, all important literary work was preserved through writing on parchment or on paper. The concept of writing on parchment or paper has been clearly projected in the Qur'an itself when it says:

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ...

“If We (i.e., God) had sent unto you (O Muhammad!) a book (or, a writing) on paper (or parchment), so that they could touch it with their hands ...” (6:7).

Supplies of paper, and even of parchment, being very limited, the initial writing of the revelations was very naturally executed by using other writing materials of those days, e.g., flat bones, chiselled stems of palm-leaves and wooden or stone tablets. But, once this initial work had been executed, the writing of the revelations, in accordance with their arrangement dictated to the Scribes by the Holy Prophet, on proper pieces of paper or parchment, which were seemingly in the form of the leaves of a book, was undertaken without fail. The

evidence in this respect is explicit. For instance, al-Hakim has recorded the testimony of no less an authority than Zaid ibn Thabit, under the heading of “Compilation of the Qur’an during the time of God’s Messenger”, thus: “He said: ‘We (the Scribes) used to compile the Qur’an from the (records of revelations made on) *ruqÉ‘* (i.e., pieces of paper or of parchment).”⁸⁸ (*Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 2, p. 611).⁸⁹

In this way grew up quite a good number of copies of the Holy Qur’an under the direct instruction and supervision of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him!). Then, the copies compiled ⁹⁰ by the

⁸⁸ Leaves of paper can be stitched together to form a book. Similarly, uniform pieces of parchment can be used for making a book. Hence, whether the Arabs of those days used parchment made of the tanned thin membranous layer of animal skin, or paper made of rags or reeds, is immaterial; because, although in their texture paper and parchment are different materials, they are similar in respect of their function.

We know that Papyrus, manufactured from reed, was used in Egypt as early as 2500 B.C., while paper made from rags was used by the Chinese since the 2nd Century B.C. The existence of paper in Arabia, together with parchment, which was in use there since the 2nd century B.C., cannot be ruled out, as we find in the references to writing materials given, among others, in Suyuti’s *Al-ItqÉn* (vol. 1, pp. 58, 59).

⁸⁹ Cf. *KitÉb al-BurhÉn*, vol. 1, p. 256; Darimi: *Sunan*, p. 68.

⁹⁰ The following *×ÉdÊth* indicates that the compiled material was maintained “between two boards”, namely, in the form of some sort of binding in book-shape. “Abd al-Aziz ibn Rafi said: I and Shaddad ibn Ma‘qil visited Ibn Abbas; then Shaddad questioned him: ‘Did the Prophet bequeath anything?’

Scribes were handed over to other Companions, as we have already noted, so that they copied them out in order to possess their own copies for reading as well as memorisation. The copies compiled by the Scribes as well as the others continued to grow in content with the progress in revelation until they were declared to be complete by the Holy Prophet, who proclaimed in clear terms: “I am leaving in your midst a thing which (in terms of its importance) is such that you will never fall into error so long as you hold to it firmly; and it is the Book of God (i.e., the Qur’an).” (Abu Da’ud: *Sunan*, vol. 1, p. 264).

When we attend to the problem of the number of copies of the Qur’an that existed during the Holy Prophet’s time and look into the statements contained in Bukhari’s *ŒaĪĒĪ* (vol. 3, p. 143), Muslim’s *ŒaĪĒĪ* (vol. 2, p. 252), *TahdhĒb al-TahdhĒb* (vol. 7, p. 243), *IstĒĒb* (vol. 2, p. 565), *Usud al-GhĒbah* (vol. 2, p. 286), Ibn Sa’d’s *TabaqĒt* (vol. 2, p. 112), etc., we become sure of the existence of at least fifteen copies.⁹¹ Then, when we consider the number of the Scribes appointed

He replied: ‘No, except what is contained between the two boards (‘i.e., the Qur’Ēn)’. Then we visited Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah and put the same question to him; then he too replied that he (the Prophet) did not leave behind anything except what is contained between the two boards.” (Bukhari: *ŒaĪĒĪ*, vol. 3, p. 143).

⁹¹ In respect of possessors of complete copies, all recorded evidence compels us to include the first four righteous Caliphs, ‘i.e., Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali,—besides other eminent Companions like Mu’adh ibn Jabal, Ubayy ibn Ka’ab, Zaid ibn Thabit. Abu Darda’, Abu Ayyub Ansari, Abdullah ibn Mas’ud, ‘Ubadah ibn al-Samit and Tamim Dari.

by the Holy Prophet, the number of copies goes further up. Again: when we consider the total situation in the Muslim community of the Holy Prophet's time with reference to widespread activity of recitation and memorisation, we are compelled to consider the number of copies as still higher.

After the demise of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him!), the number of copies multiplied by leaps and bounds under the compulsion of the law of demand and supply, so much so that before the commencement of the caliphate of Uthman thousands upon thousands of copies had come into existence. Ibn Hazm bears testimony to it thus: "When the Prophet passed away, Islam had already spread in the whole (Arabian) peninsula from the Red Sea to the (southern) coast of Yemen and from the Persian Gulf to Euphrates. There were innumerable townships and villages inside the peninsula where all the inhabitants had declared allegiance to Islam and had constructed the masjids. There was no town, village, or quarter, where the Qur'an was not recited at the masjids during prayers. Children and male and female adults, all, learnt it, and it was also copied out in writing. After the Prophet's period, Abu Bakr ruled as Caliph for 2½ years ... the recitation grew more and more. There was no town where the copies of the Qur'an were not available. After that, Omar became the Caliph and conquered the length and breadth of Persia and the whole of Syria and Egypt. In those countries also there was no inhabited place where masjids were not built and new copies of the Qur'an were not made. The leaders of congregational prayers recited it, and the children all over the east and the west (of the Islamic

empire) learnt it. This period lasted for ten years and some months. When Omar died, at least one hundred thousand copies of the Qur'an must have been in existence.” (*KitÉb al-Faíl*, vol. 2, p. 78).

Since then upto this day, the number of copies that have gone into circulation is beyond all possibility of counting. But the text of the Holy Qur'an has not suffered even the slightest deviation and variation. Truly had it been proclaimed by God at the time of its revelation:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

“We have, without doubt, sent down the Message (i.e., the Qur'an), and We are assuredly the guardian thereof.” (15:9).

It is necessary to observe here that the Qur'an was propagated by the Holy Prophet not only in written form but also orally, he being not merely the deliverer of the Divine Message but also its Teacher *par excellence* (62:2)⁹²; and the Muslims were asked by him not only to read the holy book but also to memorise it. In this way a double process of preserving the purity of the text of the Holy Qur'an came to exist, and a perfect system of teaching it originated with the Holy Prophet himself.

⁹² هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

“It is He who raised up among the unlettered people a Messenger from them to recite His signs to them and purify them and teach them the Book and Wisdom...”

Thus we find BukhÉrÊ reporting about Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud that he said: “I learnt directly from the mouth of God’s Messenger about 79 chapters.” (*ØalÉÉÍ*, vol. 2, p. 141). The same Companion also reported, according to Muslim’s *ØalÉÉÍ* (vol. 1, p. 121), that: “God’s Messenger asked me to recite the Qur’an before him. Thereupon I enquired: ‘Should I recite to you while it has been revealed to you?’ He replied: ‘I like to hear it recited by others’. So I recited the chapter *al-NisÉ*.”

Thus were the Companions trained by the Holy Prophet as licensed teachers of the Qur’an for the masses and they performed this function, under appointment from him,⁹³ with utmost diligence. Just by way of examples: *MiftÉÍ al-Sa‘Édah* (vol. 1, p. 349) reports: “Abu ‘Aliyah said: I recited the Qur’an to Omar four times;” and, according to Dhahabi’s *TabaqÉt al-QurrÉ* (p. 606): “When Abu Darda would finish his morning prayer, he would set his students in batches of ten. Once he counted them, and they were more than sixteen hundred.”

The system of teaching that developed had the memorisation of the Qur’an as its vital part, and a continuous chain of licensed and

⁹³ “‘Ubadah ibn al-Samit reported that if God’s Messenger was engaged and someone came (to Madina) as immigrant, he entrusted him to one of us to teach him the Qur’Én.” (*Kanz al-‘UmmÉl*, vol. 1, p. 231). According to *Isti‘Éb* (vol. 1, p. 369) and Tabari’s *TÉríkh* (vol. 3, p. 156), the Holy Prophet appointed several Companions to teach the Qur’Én to the tribes living outside Madina. The appointment of teachers has also been recorded in Bukhari’s *ØalÉÉÍ* (vol. 3, p. 141), Muslim’s *ØalÉÉÍ* (vol. 2, p. 252), and Tirmizi’s *JÉme‘* (vol. 2, p. 222).

authorised teachers grew, and has continued to grow from generation to generation, not only to propagate the text of the Qur'an but also to preserve its purity, in which connection a whole science has developed; and the uniform oral as well as written ⁹⁴ transmission down the centuries through successive generations of Qur'anic teachers belonging to diverse races and countries, has crowned the Holy Qur'an with the merit of *tawÉtur* ⁹⁵ to a degree of glory where even the slightest possibility of doubt in respect of the purity of its text is totally eliminated.

That is the only reason why even those hostile western scholars, for whom the highest virtue is to revile Islam on the flimsiest grounds, had to bow their heads in humility when confronted with the problem of the authenticity of the Qur'an and had to grudgingly admit the purity of its text—scholars, such as: Palmer (*The Qur'an — English Translation; Introduction*, p. 59); Wherry (*Commentary on the Kuran*, 1, p. 349); Snouck Hurgronje (*Mohammedanism*, p. 18); William Muir (*Life of Mohammad*, Introduction, p. 23); Philip K. Hitti (*History of the Arabs*, p. 123); and Torrey (*Jewish Foundation of Islam*, p. 2). To quote just the last reference: “The Koran was his (i.e., Muhammad's) own creation; and it lies before us practically unchanged from the form which he himself gave it.” Had the blinding fire of antagonism to Islam not burned in the heart of Torrey in the manner it did, he could have spoken at least in the tone of Bosworth Smith, who said: “In the

⁹⁴ These two processes have functioned as guards on one another.

⁹⁵ Namely, unbroken transmission with absolute uniformity.

Koran we have, beyond all reasonable doubt, the exact words of Mohammad without subtraction and without addition.” (*Mohammad and Mohammadanism*, p. 22). And it is not only Bosworth Smith who says so, but many others. For instance, F.F. Arbuthnot has confessed that: “... complete text of the Koran ... has remained the same, without any change or alteration by enthusiasts, translators, or interpolators, upto the present time. It is to be regretted that the same cannot be said of all the books of the Old and New Testaments.” (*The Construction of the Bible and the Koran*, p. 5).



Chapter 4

THE QUR'ÂN AS THE ONLY AUTHENTIC REVEALED BOOK IN THE WORLD

Absolute authenticity in respect of the purity of its text forms the Holy Qur'an's distinctive claim—a claim in which it stands unique among all the sacred books of the world: those based on the concept of Divine Revelation and others that are not. Among the former, the Jewish and Christian scriptures stand out most prominently.

As to the Jewish sacred books, from where Christianity derives its base, the reformed Judaism of today has forsaken completely the age-old claim, which is the very foundation of the Jewish faith, namely, the claim relating to their status as divinely-revealed books, as also their authenticity as records of the teachings of Jewish Prophets. According to the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, the emphasis on divine origin has given way to the admission of “the human origin of the Holy Scriptures”, with all their holiness and infallibility shattered, so much so that “the ancient view of a literal dictation by God must be surrendered.” Also, “the prophet and the sacred writer were under the influence of the Divine Spirit while revealing by word or pen ... (but) the human element in them was not extinguished, and consequently, in regard to their statements, their knowledge, and the form of their communication, they could only have acted as children of their age.” (vol. 6, pp. 608-609).

This ugly situation has emerged for Judaism basically because the Message of God preached and taught by the Jewish Prophets (God bless them all!) was lost, in respect of its original purity, by the Jewish people long ago under the strains and stresses of historical circumstances. What remained was an adulterated and corrupted form of religious teaching and incorrect history, and on that Judaism has been fed ever since. As a result, we find today Jewish scholarship between the devil and the deep sea in respect of the authenticity of the Jewish religion. While “the ancients regarded the whole mass of the national religious writings as equally holy,”⁹⁶ the moderns have denied completely God’s authorship of any Jewish sacred book. “That the real authority of the Bible is intrinsic rather than prescriptive”, says Joseph (*Judaism as Creed and Life*), “becomes clear as soon as we think of the circumstances in which the Scriptural canon was formed. The decision by which certain books were included in the Bible and others excluded, was a purely human decision. The great teachers⁹⁷ sat in judgment upon the claims of various works, and decided upon those claims by the light of reason⁹⁸—in other words, by the internal merits of the works themselves.⁹⁹ Nor was the decision

⁹⁶ *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, vol. 3, p. 140.

⁹⁷ And not the Jewish Prophets who had delivered the Message of God! And these ‘great teachers’ also ‘sat’ long afterwards!!!

⁹⁸ And not by the light of Revelation!

⁹⁹ Merits—in what respect?

always easy.¹⁰⁰ The fate of some books, like Ecclesiastes, and Centicles, and Esther, was, we learn, trembling in the balance even as late as the third century of the present era ... The Bible, being the work of godly men, necessarily contains both a Divine and a human element. But since everything human is imperfect, we must not expect to find an absolutely perfect representation of Divine truth even in God's Book ¹⁰¹ ... Some of the Biblical stories are clearly legends ... The Pentateuch is the work not of one hand but of many hands ¹⁰² ... Similar views prevail among scholars with regard to other books of the Bible (pp. 18, 20, 22, 23, 24).” Modern scholarship, which has given birth to reformed Judaism, supports the above views of Joseph unanimously. For instance: with respect to the infallibility of the Jewish scripture and its authenticity as the Word of God, Vellentine's *One Volume Jewish Encyclopaedia* tells us: “Jewish tradition ... does not hesitate to admit later elaboration and revision of certain books in the Bible... As an unimpeachable source of history and chronology the Bible is often disappointing, exhibiting statements and data which

¹⁰⁰ How could it be when there was no standard of judgment?

¹⁰¹ In what sense is it ‘God's Book’ ?

¹⁰² According to the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, the contents of the Pentateuch have been derived from twentyeight different sources, where the authorship of Moses vanishes into thin air (p. 590). We are also informed that “the many inconsistencies and seeming contradictions contained in it (‘i.e., Pentateuch) attracted the attention of the Rabbis. who exercised their ingenuity in reconciling them (p. 589).”

seem either vague or contradictory, or else fail to agree with what is known of contemporary oriental history and chronology.” (pp. 93, 95).

As to the Christian version: “With the advance in the technique of textual criticism during the course of the last generation, with a more searching analysis of the matter of the text, and with the use of the comparative method in evaluating the tradition embodied in the narrative, it has become even more patently evident that orthodox opinion in regard to the authenticity of the Bible cannot be maintained.”¹⁰³ One has only to go through the findings of the official representatives of Christianity, as recorded in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, to discover the impeachment of the authenticity of the Old and the New Testaments by the Christendom of today. In the words of one of the best Biblical apologists, who wrote for the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (vol. 7, p. 263): “It is now a common-place of Biblical learning that God has been at no pains to prevent errors of history and knowledge and defects in the text and its transmission ¹⁰⁴ from finding an entrance into the sacred pages of His Written

¹⁰³ Sir Richard Gregory: *Religion in Science and Civilisation*, p. 86.

¹⁰⁴ “errors of history and knowledge and defects in the text and its transmission” are there only because the Old Testament as well as the New are the products of human brains, where the truth revealed by God has been perverted and mixed up with falsehood by human ignorance as well as wrong motives. The Divine Wisdom is absolute and cannot, even in the understanding of a child, admit of the slightest error or defect.

Word.”¹⁰⁵ Rev. Bosworth Smith, who seems to be more frank, is more rational in his confession. Comparing the confirmed claim of the Qur’an to absolute authenticity with the baseless orthodox Christian claim concerning the Bible, he says: “The Bible in particular makes no such claim... The Bible is the work of a large number of poets, prophets, statesmen, and lawgivers, extending over a vast period of time, and incorporates with itself other and earlier, and often conflicting, documents.” (*Mohammad and Mohammadanism*, p. 19).

It may be observed here in passing that it is not only the so-called ‘revealed’ religions but also the ‘unrevealed’ ones that suffer from inauthenticity with regard to their sacred texts. Although our present discussion does not directly relate to unrevealed religions owing to their different basis, we may with advantage refer to one such major religion, namely, Buddhism, to reveal the situation on that side.¹⁰⁶ To quote just one authority: “The truth is that the oldest stratum of the existing scriptures (of Buddhism) can only be reached by uncertain inference and conjecture... I confess that I do not know what the ‘original gospel’ of Buddhism was ... Buddhism is a body of traditions in which few names stand out, and in which fewer dates are

¹⁰⁵ But, what *Written Word* from God did Jesus ever give, so far as the Christian testimony goes?

¹⁰⁶ Of course, Hinduism, Jainism, Confucianism, Tao-ism, etc., also suffer from the same defect.

precisely known. It is indeed most exasperating when we try to apply our current ideas of historical criticism.¹⁰⁷

To revert to the scriptures which claim to be revealed, the following verdict of an English scholar is final: “The truth of the message is intimately connected with the authenticity of the record, and a critical theory which assails the one assails the other.”¹⁰⁸

With this verdict—and the principle on which it is based is incontrovertible—Judaism and Christianity, both, are ruled out; while the absolute authenticity of the Qur’an proves the genuineness of its Message, and here the judgment emerges in all its grandeur that if Divine Revelation alone is the true and valid basis for Religion, then the Holy Qur’an alone gives us the true Religion—the Religion revealed by the Creator and Sovereign of the universe and man.



¹⁰⁷ Edward Conze: *Buddhism, its Essence and Development*, pp. 27, 29-30.

¹⁰⁸ *The Church Times*, February 10, 1905.

Chapter 5

THE STYLE AND STRUCTURE OF THE QUR'ÂN

The problem may be viewed in three dimensions, namely, (1) intonation, (2) diction, and (3) thought, and the Qur'an is inimitable and unique in each.



INTONATION:

No other scripture possesses that exquisite and majestic charm of melody that the Holy Qur'an has. An English scholar and orientalist of repute bears testimony to this fact when he says: "... the Glorious Qur'an, that inimitable symphony the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy."¹⁰⁹



DICTION:

As regards diction: The Arabic language itself, which is the language of the Qur'an, is an extremely rich language—a fact attested

¹⁰⁹ Marmaduke Pickthall: *Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ân*. Translator's Foreword, 1st para.

unanimously by all the Arabicists of the world, Muslim as well as non-Muslim. Over and above that, there is the style employed in the Qur'an, whose depths in the dimension of meaning and heights in respect of grandeur are simply immeasurable by human genius—a fact which has given to the language of the Qur'an the status of “the purest Arabic”¹¹⁰ and “the standard of the Arabic tongue”¹¹¹—all that in a miraculous form. “Whenever Muhammad was asked a miracle as a proof of the authenticity of his mission”, says the French scholar Paul Casanova, “he quoted the composition of the Qur'an and its incomparable excellence as proof of its Divine origin. And, in fact, even for those who are non-Muslims nothing is more marvellous than its language which with such a prehensible plenitude and grasping sonority with its simple audition ravished with admiration those primitive ¹¹² peoples so fond of eloquence. The amplexness of its syllables with a grandiose cadence and with a remarkable rhythm have been of much moment in the conversion of the most hostile and the most skeptical ...”¹¹³ And the American scholar, Harry Gaylord Dorman, says: “It (Qur'an) is an ever-present miracle witnessing to

¹¹⁰ F.F. Arbutnot, *The Construction of the Bible and the Koran*, London, p.5.

¹¹¹ George Sale: *The Koran: The Preliminary Discourse*, London and New York 1891, p. 47.

¹¹² In actual fact, the Arabs of those days were not primitive but highly civilised in respect of language.

¹¹³ “L'Enseignement de l'Arabe au College de France”. in *Lecon d'overture* for 26th April, 1909.

itself and to Muhammad, the Prophet of God. Its miraculous quality resides partly in its style, so perfect and lofty that neither men nor *jinn* could produce a single chapter to compare with its briefest chapter, and partly in its content of teachings, prophecies is about the future, and amazingly accurate information such as the illiterate Muhammad could never have gathered of so his own accord.”¹¹⁴

It is correct to say that the miraculous quality of the Qur’an resides only partly in its literary aspect. Its emphasis on this aspect was, however, necessitated by the arrogance of the Arabs of those days who were proud of their high attainment in literary skill. Thus the challenge was posed to them on their own terms, when the Holy Qur’an proclaimed:

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَاذْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“Or do they say: ‘he has forged it’? Say: ‘Bring you then ten *suras* forged, like thereunto, and call (to your aid) whomsoever you can, other than AllÉh!—, if you speak the truth’.” (11:13).

قُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ
كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

“Say (O Muhammad!): ‘if the whole of mankind and *jinn*s were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur’an, they could not

¹¹⁴ *Towards Understanding Islam*, New York 1948. p. 3.

produce of the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.” (17:88).¹¹⁵

It is difficult to translate any book written in any language. Much more so the Qur'an, whose miraculous language simply defies translation. All honest translators are unanimous in this behalf. “The Qur'an”, says Marmaduke Pickthall, “cannot be translated. That is the belief of old-fashioned Sheykh's and the view of the present writer.”¹¹⁶ “Of all the great works,” writes Abdul Majid Daryabadi, “the Holy Qur'an is perhaps the least translatable. Arabic is not at all easy to translate into a language so widely and radically differing from it in structure and genius as English, unless it be with the aid of loose periphrasis and lax paraphrase. Even so the fire of the original is quenched, its vivacious perspicuity is lost, and the so-called literal translation looks rugged and dreary. That the language of the Arabs abounds in nuances and both the noun and the verb are extremely flexible, is a fact well known to every student of that tongue. The difficulty is increased hundredfold when one has to render into English, with any degree of accuracy and precision, a work so rich in meaning, so pithy in expression, so vigorous in style and so subtle in implications as the Holy Qur'an. To reproduce even partially its exotic

¹¹⁵ It should be observed that both of these verses were revealed at Makka, which proves that the Qur'Ēn grew from the very beginning in book-form. Also: we find this challenge repeated on three other occasions, viz., 2:23; 10:38; 52:34.

¹¹⁶ *op. cit.*

beauty, wonderful grandeur and magical vivacity without sacrificing the requirements of the English idiom and usage, is the despair of the translator and an ideal impossible of attainment. The result is that every fresh attempt at translating the Holy Writ brings home, in varying degrees, the truth of the old saying that nothing is so unlike an original as its copy.”¹¹⁷ According to Eduard Montet, “... the Coran (Qur’an) ... its grandeur of form is so sublime that no translation into any European language can allow us to appreciate it.”¹¹⁸ Even a Christian clergyman has confessed: “The Qur’an in its original Arabic dress has a seductive beauty and charm of its own. Couched in concise and exalted style, its brief pregnant sentences, often rhymed, possess an expressive force and explosive energy which it is extremely difficult to convey by literal word for word translation.”¹¹⁹

The Qur’anic narration is so unique in its style, and so different from the writings of the world’s seers and sages, that those who are accustomed only to read human literary productions based on commonplace logical sequence and on the finitude in which human thought expresses itself—the finitude of human perception and conception having its own finite, and hence more intelligible and more crystalised, sequential emphasis—are likely to discover that their

¹¹⁷ *The Holy Qur’ân: English Translation and Commentary*, Lahore and Karachi 1957, Preface, p. 9.

¹¹⁸ *Traduction Francaise du Coran*, Paris 1929, Introduction, p. 53.

¹¹⁹ John Naish, M.A. (Oxon.), D.D: *The Wisdom of the Qur’an*, Oxford 1937, Preface, p. 8.

minds do not grasp truly the transcendental logic of the Qur'anic narration as it flows majestically, starting at *sura al-FÉtiha* and ending at *sura al-NÉs*.

A non-Muslim translator of the Holy Qur'an views this problem in his own light and tenders the following advice to the readers of translations: "In the first place, the Western reader must get rid of the assumption that the Koran is more or less like the Old Testament. The misapprehension is natural enough, when the first casual glance picks out the names of Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, Joseph, Jacob, Job: the Biblical style ¹²⁰ of the popular translations does not furnish exactly a corrective. Misled by these early impressions, the reader makes the fatal mistake of trying to take it too much at once; he opens at a likely place, the beginning of a *sura*, and is lulled into suspicion by the familiar layout of chapter and verse; he finishes the first *sura* and goes on to several more; he is bewildered by the rapid and seemingly illogical changes of subject, and he quickly wearies of the frequent repetitions of themes and formulas... The Koran, like the poetry which it resembles in so many ways, is best sampled a little at a time; and that little deserves and needs meditation... He (the reader) will become gradually familiar with the Koran's claim to be a confirmation of earlier scriptures. He will

¹²⁰ The text of the Bible, as we have already noted, has been composed by eminent human writers, who have very naturally adopted the popular human style. In the translations that style has become even more human. But all that has happened at the cost of loss of the Divine Truth.

observe how the Koran assumes a knowledge of the contents of those scriptures, and only later expands the individual narratives into something like connected stories. He now follows step by step the gradual unfolding of the full prophetic powers, and when he comes to the polemic and the legislation he is readier to receive and understand them ... the uninitiated enquirer ... is screened from it by the double veil of a printed page and a foreign idiom. Yes, a foreign idiom, for the Koran is God's revelation in Arabic, and the emotive and evocative qualities of the original disappear almost totally in the skilfullest translation. When appreciation rests upon these foundations, the charges of wearisome repetition and jumbled confusion become meaningless. Truth cannot be dimmed by being frequently stated, but only gains in clarity and convincingness at every repetition ..."¹²¹



THOUGHT:

The Qur'an says about itself that it was sent down during the month of Ramadan (2:185), in the Night of Power (97:1), its primary and eternal existence being in a "Tablet Preserved" (85:21-22), "in the Mother of the Book, in Our (i.e., God's) Presence, high (in dignity), full of wisdom" (43:4).

¹²¹ A. J. Arberry: *The Holy Koran, an Introduction with Selections*, London 1953, pp. 25-27.

The question is: Does the coming down of the Qur'an in the Night of Power imply the commencement of revelation to the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him!), or its revelation to him in its entirety on that single occasion, or its descent from the 'Tablet Preserved' in some other dimension?

As to the first, we have already recorded in the foregoing that the first revelation came to the Holy Prophet on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal, that being the fact to which a critical study of all the relevant reports leads us.

Taking up the second alternative: It is denied by the Qur'an. We are told therein:

وَقُرْآنًا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا

“And (this is) a Recitation (lit., Qur'an) that We have divided (into parts from time to time), that you (O Muhammad!) mayest recite it to humankind at intervals, and We have revealed it (to you) by (successive) revelation.” (17:106).¹²²

¹²² Cf. 25:32 –

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا

“Those who reject Faith say: ‘Why is not the Qur'an revealed all at once?’ Thus (is it revealed), that We may strengthen your heart thereby, and We have rehearsed it to you in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually.”

76:23 –

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنْزِيلًا

Thus we are left only with the third alternative, and here we get to the correct answer. Abdullah ibn Abbas, whose authority in respect of the problems relating to the Qur'an has been held in very high esteem all through Islamic history, is reported by different authorities, like Nasai, Baihaqi, al-Hakim, al-Tibrani and al-Bazzar, to have held that the entire Qur'an, as we have it today, came down in the Night of Power from the "Divine Presence" "to the nether heaven" (i.e., the heaven nearest to the earth), where in the "House of Power, Honour and Glory (*bait al-'izzat*)", it dwelt, like the stars, by the order of God, and from where its portions came to the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) as occasions arose, even "as the stars fall from heaven", under the Decree of God,—whereafter the revelations were arranged, under Divine guidance, by the Holy Prophet, through his Scribes, in accordance with the original eternal Qur'an and not in their chronological sequence. The Commentator Ibn Kathir has concurred with this view in his *Tafsîr* (vol. 4, p. 529), while the famous Suyuti proclaims, quoting al-Qurtubi, thus: "The consensus of learned verdict is to the effect that the the Qur'an came down all at one time from the 'Tablet Preserved' to the 'House of Power, Honour and Glory' in the nether heaven." (*Al-Itqân*, vol. 1, p. 40).

The report of Ibn Abbas directs our attention to *sura HÉ MÊm* (41), which begins with the claim of the Qur'an as a revealed book; then, after reference to those who contested its divine origin and the Divine Messengership of the bearer of its Message, speaks of the

"It is We who have sent down the Qur'an to you by stages."

bounties of God as manifested in the earth and of the *wafy* of God to the seven firmaments in respect of the assignment of their duty and command,—thereafter emphasising:

فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا
بِمَصَابِيحٍ وَحِفْظًا ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ

“And We adorned the nether heaven with lights, and rendered it inviolable. Such is the Decree of (Him) the Exalted in Might, Full of Knowledge” (verse 12). Maybe, the reference in the adornment of the nether heaven with lights and the establishment of inviolability, is concerned not only with the physical phenomenon as the human beings know it but also with the spiritual phenomenon so explicitly spoken of by Ibn Abbas.

Anyhow, the main point to be noted is that the Qur’an we possess today existed in ‘Divine Presence’ eternally as a ‘Book’¹²³ and that, although it was revealed piece-meal as occasions arose,¹²⁴ the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) arranged it in accordance with the eternal arrangement as revealed to him. It may be emphasised that *unless this fact is accepted, the style of the Qur’an cannot be properly understood.*

¹²³ That the Qur’Ēn calls itself a Book even in the early revelations forms proof of the fact that it was a ‘Book’ before its revelation to the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!).

¹²⁴ It should be clearly noted that though the revelations came as occasions arose, the message contained therein was not confined to the exigencies of the situation.

Now, a collection of haphazard statements cannot be genuinely named as a book. There should be a sequence and a system inherent in it, which alone bestows that status properly. Thus, because the Qur'an insisted upon designating itself as a Book, much before it acquired the book-form with the ending of the Revelation, there must be present in it some definite type of sequence. And that it does possess.

In fact, there are two types of sequence enshrined in the Holy Qur'an: one sequence relating to the chronological order of revelations, the other relating to the order in which the revealed messages were arranged.

The chronological sequence guides us, not only in respect of the commencement and progress of the Holy Prophet's mission, but also about the future technique concerning the reform and development of human communities, and of individuals, on the Islamic pattern. Hence Islamic scholars took the greatest pains in preserving the knowledge of chronological sequence as best as they could.

What light we receive through the consideration of chronological sequence may be illustrated here very briefly by way of example. The first revelation that came to the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him!) and formed, thus, the starting point for his mission, consisted of the first five verses of the *sura* named *al-'Alaq* (96). Now, the basic problem projected in those verses is that of the conflict of Faith and Reason and the solution thereof. The immense importance of this problem in human history in respect of the establishment of peace and harmony between religion, on the one hand, and philosophy and

science, on the other, cannot be over-estimated, especially when we consider that the Holy Prophet stood at the helm of the modern era of scientific advancement—of which he himself was to be the inaugurator, while his basic role was to establish Religion on sound footing as God Himself had revealed it before him time to time. Hence, placing the human knowledge cultivated through the pen in the embrace of a dynamic Faith in God, as those verses do, it was only logical and natural that they should have been revealed first. Moreover, the importance given there to the cultivation of knowledge lend to those verses pre-eminence in view of the fact that it was the Holy Prophet's mission to “teach new knowledge” (2:151).

Then, the first verses that were revealed after the short suspense in Revelation, i.e., 74:1-5, reflect in essence the five Pillars of Islam, as we find them mentioned in the *×adÊth*,¹²⁵ the first two verses reflecting the Divine Messengership of Muhammad (Peace be on him!); the third verse reflecting the belief in God, the fourth reflecting the concept of purity, for which prayer, compulsory charity and pilgrimage, have been prescribed as Pillars of Islam;¹²⁶ the fifth verse

¹²⁵ For instance: Imam Ahmad: *Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 27.

¹²⁶ The expression: “Thy raiments purify” covers, in the widest sense, physical, moral and spiritual purity,—these three forms of purity bearing reference to the three pillars of Islam mentioned in that connection. The words ‘raiment’ and ‘garment’ have been used in the Holy Qur’Ēn in wider significance than clothes (2:187; 7:26).

reflecting fasting (among the Pillars) in respect of the elimination of impurities—spiritual, moral and physical.

Thereafter, we come to the following verses which, by general consent of the authorities, are accepted as having been revealed in the first year of the Call, forming thus a part of the very earliest revelations:

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ . فَكُّ رَقَبَةٍ . أَوْ إِطْعَامٌ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ . يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ .
 أَوْ مَسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ . ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ
 وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ .

“And what will make you comprehend what the uphill road (of virtue) is: (It is:) the setting free of a slave; or the giving of food in a day of privation to the orphan with claims of relationship, or to the indigent (down) in the dust; and to be of those who believe, and enjoin patience, (constancy and self-restraint), and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion” (90:12-17).

The emphasis in these verses on the abolition of slavery, which had been one of the greatest curses of the pre-Islamic civilisations, on service to fellow-beings, and on the cultivation of a serene personality, has an importance in understanding the approach of Islam to human problems and its system of priorities in respect of the role of religion.

As regards the arrangement sequence, the Holy Qur’an contains two levels of understanding Nature, it being the Book of the Religion

of Ideal Human Nature and (*al-Din al-Fiġrah*) authored by the Author of Nature.

The two levels that relate to the understanding of Nature are: the commonsense level and the probe-level. Human commonsense feels the existence of a system—an order, and witnesses the beauty and the grandeur of the starry heavens, the luminous moon and the blazing sun, the majestic mountains, the enchanting landscapes, and many many other parts of Nature besides. It is, however, the scientists who, through their probe into the depths of the mysteries of Nature, define the system—though not unerringly in every detail—and discover the facts that exist below the surface, revealing the knowledge progressively as they attain level after level.

The two levels that relate to the understanding of the Holy Qur'an are: (1) the level of religious consciousness, which is embraced by unperverted human commonsense; (2) the level of theoretic consciousness, which necessitates probe and research below the surface of the Qur'anic text. The logic of religious consciousness is the instrument for acquiring understanding at the first level; while the logic of theoretic consciousness serves the other level.

The logic of religious consciousness witnesses in the Holy Qur'an the sequence and the concordance as grounded in the demands of Religion. The logic of theoretic consciousness observes the sequence and inter-relatedness as grounded in the requirements of theoretic Reason.

The Holy Qur'an has come to guide all human beings, including the common men and women, and not merely the scholars; and its primary function is: (1) *religious* and not *speculative*; (2) development of human personality and the social order on the basis of Religion, and not speculation in terms of the deduction and induction of Reason; (3) exhortation for guidance on the basis of the absolute Knowledge and Wisdom of God and in the form of direct and categorical statements of the Truth, and not the presentation for academic interest of any imperfect findings of the struggling human mind which, if it is to succeed in its labours in any measure, has perforce to proceed within the framework of certain fixed categories and under a certain 'system'.

Thus the primary level of sequence in the Holy Qur'an is that of the logic of religious consciousness, and in that respect there exists perfect and multi-dimensional sequence¹²⁷ from the beginning to the end,—a sequence that, has been demonstrated by the classical commentators. Indeed, even a cursory glance at the Qur'anic text bears out this fact. For instance, the very starting point of the Holy Qur'an is:

¹²⁷ It should be emphatically noted that a multi-dimensional sequence, which is richer than the single-dimensional sequence that is found in the literary works of the greatest human writers, emerges in the Holy Qur'án primarily in the order and arrangement that has been given by God through the Holy Prophet to the verses that constitute its text, as well as to the words of rich connotation employed therein.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

“In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful”—the quest for God being the highest quest, nay, the very basic quest, of religious consciousness.¹²⁸ Then it continues to speak of God, together with the emphasis on His relation with the universe and man:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ . الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ . مَا لِكَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ .

“Praise be to God AllÉh, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Ruler of the Day of Judgment” (1:1-3). Then, because man seeks God primarily in the perspective of his needs, the 4th verse is:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“You (alone) do we worship; and your aid (alone) we seek.” Then the dimensions, positive and negative, of the Path that leads to the fulfilment of human destiny, have been crisply projected in verses 5-7:

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ . صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ .

¹²⁸ The Qur'Ānic narrative begins with God, both chronologically and arrangementally, in response to religious consciousness. The Biblical narrative begins with the story of “Creation”, in response to what? Mark the contrast.

“Show us the Straight Path, the path of those on whom you have bestowed your Grace; not (the path) of those whose portion is Wrath nor of those who stray.”

The first chapter ends here, and the second chapter begins. There, the opening verse forms the response to the prayer contained in the first chapter, with the words:

الم . ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ . الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ
الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ . وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ
وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ . أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ .

“A. L. M. This is the Book; in it is guidance, with no dubiousness, for the godfearing: who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them; and who believe in the Revelation sent to you (O Muhammad!), and before your time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter. They are on the right path, guided by their Lord, and they shall prosper” (2:1-5).

Here the basic qualifications of the Acceptors of the Truth, or, the Pursuers of the Straight Path, mentioned in the first chapter, have been referred to. Immediately after that comes the reference to the Rejectors of the Truth, and then of those who swing between Truth and Falsehood, i.e., the Hypocrites,—and so on the narration proceeds.

Similarly, when we look at the last portion of the Holy Qur’an, we find that, after its multi-dimensional and elaboration of the Straight

Path, it enters into certain very important and relevant topics. Picking up the last one dozen chapters for the illustration of sequence, the picture that emerges in respect of one dimension of sequence is that, having taught the Islamic Way of Life in detail, the Holy Qur'an renders advice to the Muslims with regard to their status as promoters of the mission for which Islam came. In this perspective, chapter 103 deals with the principles of the rise and fall of nations,—providing to the Muslims certain positive dimensions of the basic emphasis; chapters 104 and 105 project the fatal consequences attendant upon the evils of love of wealth and lust for power; chapter 106 recalls the principles of devotion to God and trust in His Providence as opposed to indulgence in worldly aggrandisement; chapter 107 emphasises that lack of the spirit of human fellowship constitute the very denial of religion and Divine Judgement; chapter 108 emphasises that the Holy Prophet, who is the highest embodiment of service to others based on love for God, is the recipient of unlimited Divine favours—thus indirectly inviting the Muslims to a life of service to fellowbeing and devotions to God in conformity with the Ideal that the Holy Prophet's life present; chapter 109 highlights toleration, with devotion to Islam, as the virtue to be pursued, in combination with the virtues emphasizes positively and negatively in the preceding chapters just mentioned, by the Muslims in their world-mission relating to the establishment of all that is good for humanity and the elimination of all that is evil; chapter 110 directs to the assurance of the triumph of Truth and emphasises the spirit of humanity and godliness that should be observed in victory; chapter 111 reflects inevitability of destruction

of the forces of evil; chapter 112 lifts up into the appreciation of God concerning such of His Attributes as are basic for faith in Him,— establishment of a dynamic and living relation with Him being the goal towards which entire Islamic activity is directed; chapters 113 and 114, which are the last two, teach the principle that, with all the positive technique taught by the Holy Qur'an for the pursuit of godliness, a Muslim should ever remain vigilant against the impact of even the slightest evil,—thus to ensure his progress on the path of godliness and the attainment of the final goal, namely, complete harmony with God.

Here we must record one of the miracles relating to the holy book, to which our attention has been drawn thus:

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَابًا ...

“AllÉh has revealed (from time to time) the most excellent Message in the form of a Book, consistent with itself and conformable in its various parts, repeating (its teaching in various aspects) ...”¹²⁹ (39:23).

The Holy Qur'an was revealed in portions during a long period of well-nigh twenty-three years, wherein the Holy Prophet's life passed through very complicated and varied circumstances, and events of very different types took place. Indeed, the situation remained throughout such as to invite discrepancies in the Holy Prophet's

¹²⁹ The reference here is to multi-dimensional sequence mentioned in the foregoing.

conduct and in the projection of principles by him. Had the Holy Qur'an been a product of the Holy Prophet's mind, it was bound to have registered numerous inconsistencies,¹³⁰ and those inconsistencies were bound to have been present in it because its piecemeal revelation was recorded once for all on all the occasions of revelation and was preserved as such. But under the circumstances that we have noted, the presence of consistency in it is a definite and miraculous proof of the truth of its revelation, as well as of its preservation, by God.

Now, besides consistency, the conformability of the Holy Qur'an in its various parts, as mentioned in the above verse, brings us to the logic of theoretic consciousness, which, too, is inherent in the holy book, even as the logic of religious consciousness is enshrined therein. The conformability, however, signifies, in the estimation of the best

¹³⁰ Also: if Muhammad (Peace be on him!) had not been truly a Divine Messenger, living his entire life under the guidance of God, his conduct was bound to have registered numerous discrepancies. But we find his whole conduct and his entire career as absolutely self-consistent. Bosworth Smith confesses this fact in these words: "On the whole the wonder to me is not how much, but how little, under different circumstances, Muhammad differed from himself. In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitary of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the exile of Madina, in the acknowledged conqueror, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heraclitus, we can still trace a substantial unity. I doubt whether any other man, whose external conditions changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them: the accidents are changed, the essence seems to be the same in all." (*Mohammad and Mohammadanism*, London 1874, p. 93).

Qur'anic authorities, not only uniformity of teaching but also the principle that all the verses of the holy book are inter-related as parts of an intelligible system—whereby the existence of a system of meaning in the Holy Qur'an is positively established, as also the technique of the exposition of that system. *The present work is a humble attempt towards the presentation of that system, and the author hopes that he has accomplished that task,—of course, in accordance with his limitations, and not in accordance with the greatness of the Holy Qur'an.*

The fulfilment of the demands of theoretic consciousness is contained so richly and so emphatically in the Qur'anic Guidance that even non-Muslim scholars, who are naturally devoid of the eye of faith, could not fail to notice it. As examples of this appreciation, we may quote the judgment of two Western scholars.

Eduard Montet observes:

“Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term, considered etymologically and historically. The definition of rationalism as a system that bases religious beliefs on principles furnished by the reason, applies to it exactly. It is true that Muhammad, who was an enthusiast and possessed also the ardour of faith and the fire of conviction, the precious quality that he transmitted to so many of his disciples, brought forward his reform as a revelation; but this kind of revelation is only one form of exposition, and his religion has all the marks of a collection of doctrines founded on the data of reason... A creed so precise, so stripped of all

theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvellous power of winning its way into the consciences of men.”¹³¹

Dr. A. Bertherand remarks:

“‘To seek knowledge is a duty for every Muslim man and woman’. ‘Seek knowledge even though it be in China’. ‘The savants are the heirs of the Prophets’. These profound words of the great reformer (Muhammad) are an indisputable contradiction to those who seek and exert themselves in putting the responsibility of the intellectual degradation of Muslims upon the spirit of the Qur’an. Let them read and meditate upon this great Book and they will find in it, at every passage, a constant attack upon idolatry and materialism; they will read that the Prophet incessantly called the attention and the meditation of his people to the splendid marvels, to the mysterious phenomenon of creation. The incredulous, skeptical and un-believing may convince themselves that the importance of this Book and its doctrine was not to throw back, eventually, the intellectual and moral faculties of a whole people. On the contrary, those who have followed its counsels have been, as we have described in the course of this

¹³¹ Eduard Montet: *La propagande Chretienne et es adversaires Musulmans*, Paris 1890, pp. 17-18.

study, the creators of a civilization which is astounding unto this day.”¹³²



¹³² Dr. A. Bertherand: *Contribution des Arabes au Progress des Sciences Medicales*, Paris 1883, p. 6.

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PART 4
ISLAM: THE RELIGION—IN TERMS OF THE SCOPE
AND NATURE OF THE QURÓNIC GUIDANCE

Chapter 1

ISLAM AMONG RELIGIONS

The Holy Qur'an claims that all the problems of human life that relate directly or indirectly to the fulfilment of human destiny, in the earthly environment as well as in the next world, have been dealt with therein explicitly or implicitly:

... وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تَبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ ...

“... And We have revealed unto you (O Muhammad!) the Book (*i. e.*, the Qur'an) as an (explicit and implicit) exposition of everything (requisite in respect of perfect Guidance) ...”
(16: 89).

That comprehensive guidance has been projected, however, under the name of *al-Islám* ('submission to God')—termed as 'Islam' in popular usage—and on the basis of *Faith in God* and all that it implies. As such, it is *theocentric*, as distinct from the *anthropocentric* and the *nihilistic*.

The terms '*theocentric*', '*anthropocentric*' and '*nihilistic*' refer to three basic attitudes towards Reality that humanity has entertained in history. Among the better-known and representative systems—or, we

may call them 'religions' in the broadest sense of the word, the broad¹³³ classification emerges, subject to certain inherent reservations, thus: systems like Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and certain schools of thought in Hinduism, stand in the civilised sector, and systems like Shintoism stand in the primitive sector, of the first category; systems like Buddhism, Jainism and Confucianism relate to the second; and systems like Marxist Dialectical Materialism and Atheistic Existentialism fall under the third.

In the *theocentric* view at its *highest*, the Ultimate Reality is supra-cosmic, personal and divine. It is 'Being'. It is God. It is the fountain-head of the highest values and ideals. It reveals itself in the Cosmic Order, which is its creation. Man is 'from God and for God'. He is the pilgrim of eternity with his source of existence and capabilities in the Ultimate Reality, whose Grace he should seek. His function is to promote harmony with the Ultimate Reality through worship, in order to acquire perfection adequate to his nature. His ideal is to reflect the Divine Attributes in the mirror of his personality, thereby fulfilling his destiny. His outlook is positive and optimistic, and is grounded in the concept of 'affirmation of personality'.¹³⁴

¹³³ It should be noted that there is a certain amount of intermixing of concepts and attitudes which damage the logic of structural purity in respect of classification. Therefore, only a broad classification with reservations is possible in a summary appraisal.

¹³⁴ This statement of the theocentric view is genuinely and comprehensively correct in respect of Islam alone. Because: For instance, Christianity presents

In the *anthropocentric view at its highest*, the Ultimate Reality is intra-cosmic and impersonal. It is 'Becoming'. It is immanent in the Cosmic Order, which consists of the 'natural' and the 'supra-natural'. Man is the child of the cosmos. The 'supra-natural' element in him is the source of his power. His function is to renounce the 'natural', which is evil. His ideal is to efface his personality for attaining freedom from the bondage of the 'natural'. His outlook is negative, because salvation lies through Renunciation. His worship bears reference to ascetic exercises and magical concepts. His ethics is the ethics of asceticism. His goal is the submergence of his personality in that Impersonal Reality.

In the *nihilistic view at its highest*, the Ultimate Reality is Illusion, and the cosmos is mere accident. Man is an ephemeral speck of mechanical activity in a chance-order. His power lies in the cunningness that he may be able to employ for 'making the best of a bad bargain'. His ideal is the acquisition of maximum physical happiness, towards which all human struggle is conceived to be directed. The outlook that emerges logically for him is incapable of accommodating any element of hope, because of the notion of double tragedy in terms of the world being a chance-order as well as hostile. His approach to the domain of moral behaviour is possible only

the picture of a mixture of certain elements of the theocentric view with certain elements of the anthropocentric view.

through the shifting sands of expediency. His destiny is the annihilation of his personality in the all-consuming Illusion.¹³⁵

We have distinguished the *theocentric* from the *anthropocentric* and the *nihilistic* attitudes to Reality, including not only the first but also the second and the third under the category of 'religion'. That we have done on the basis that any system of thought which may *bind* anyone to any specific view of life, together with its emotional and ethical implications, is religion, because the very word 'religion' stands etymologically for the idea of being *bound* or *linked* to something. This is how the concept of religion is viewed in the wider sense. Thus, for instance, Ralph Barton Perry says, referring to Marxism and Buddhism, in his *Realms of Value*:¹³⁶ "Whether one says that Communism is atheistic or that it has made a god of Economic Force depends on whether one is thinking in terms of a particular religion or in terms of religion in general. The god which, Communism denies is a particular variety of God—such as the Christian God. The god it affirms is another variety of universal God. Both gods answer the description of God as Cosmic Power viewed from the stand-point of what men take to be their paramount good. It is clear that esoteric Buddhism as well as Marxian Communism recognises no god in the Christian sense. But Buddhism teaches that Nirvana is the supreme good and that the constitution of things—the

¹³⁵ Ref: For instance, Bertrand Russell's statement in the forthcoming discussion on 'Life after Death'.

¹³⁶ Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1954.

view of Karma and ultimate illusoriness of existence—permits Nirvana to be attained. Buddhism is thus a religion in its conjoining of a hierarchy of values with a cosmology; and it can even be said to have its god, if by ‘god’ is meant the saving grace of man’s total environment” (p. 464).

However, taking up the *theocentric view* alone, vital differences exist between the different theocentric systems. In the first instance, these systems are divisible into those which claim to be revealed and those which do not. Thus, for example, Islam and Christianity and Judaism lay claim to Divine Revelation as the source of their guidance, while the theocentric systems of Hinduism make no such claim. Then, as we have already seen, the Divine Revelation which Islam projects is unadulterated and authentic, while in the case of Judaism and Christianity it is adulterated and unauthentic. Again, as regards the ‘unrevealed’ systems, they are divisible into vulgar (or, primitive) and civilised. Hence, going from lower to higher levels, we arrive at four categories: (1) Unrevealed—of the vulgar or primitive level; (2) Unrevealed—of the civilised level; (3) Revealed but adulterated and unauthentic; (4) Revealed and existing in unadulterated and authentic form.

Religions falling under the above categories admit of comparative normative evaluation in seven dimensions, namely: (1) Concept of God; (2) Outlook; (3) Stand-point; (4) Ideal; (5) Standard of Behaviour; (6) Mission; (7) Programme. It is necessary to undertake this study here in order to establish the nature of Qur’anic

Guidance in the perspective of theocentric religions. The evaluation of each category emerges as follows:



1. UNREVEALED: PRIMITIVE (SHINTO-ISM, ETC.) :

1. *Concept of God:* Fetish-worship and Nature-worship, representing the quest for the metaphysical Reality at a superstitious level.
2. *Outlook:* Superstitious, rather than rational.
3. *Standpoint:* Magical, rather than ethical.
4. *Ideal:* Satisfaction of immediate wants.
5. *Standard of Behaviour:* Acquisition of immediate gains.
6. *Mission:* None.
7. *Programme:* Performance of rituals.

Japanese Scholars' Verdicts:

The eminent Japanese scholar, Dr. Genchi Kate, who taught the Shinto religion for many years at the Imperial University of Tokyo, evaluates Shintoism in the historical perspective thus:

“Considered in the broadest historical sweep there are three main cultural stages in the evolution of Shinto. There is, in the first place, the stage of primitive nature-worship or polydemonism; secondly, the stage of higher nature worship or

sheer polytheism; and thirdly, Shinto as an advanced cultural religion wherein beliefs and practices relating to *Kami*-objects have come under the influence of ethical and intellectual influences of a high order. It is at this last named stage that Shinto shows its most definite political pattern.”¹³⁷

As regards *Kami*, the key-term of Shintoism, Motoori, another eminent Japanese scholar, expounds its implications as follows:

“Speaking in general, *Kami* signifies, in the first place, the deities of heaven and earth that appear in the ancient records and also the spirits worshipped in the shrines.

“It seems hardly necessary to add that it also includes human beings. It also includes such objects as birds, beasts, trees, plants, seas, mountains, and so forth. In ancient usage, anything whatsoever, which was outside the ordinary, which possessed superior power, or which was awe-inspiring, was called *Kami*. Eminence here does not refer to the superiority of nobility, goodness or meritorious deeds. Evil and meritorious things, if they are extra-ordinary and dreadful, are called *Kami*.

“It is also evident that among human beings who are called *Kami* the successive generations of sacred emperors are all included. The fact that emperors are called ‘distant *Kami*’ is because from the point of view of common people they are far

¹³⁷ Cited in John Clark Archer’s: *The Great Religions of the Modern World*, p. 153.

separated, majestic and worthy of reverence. In a lesser degree we also find, in the present as well as in ancient times, human beings who are *Kami*... Furthermore, among things which are not human, the thunder is always called 'sounding-*Kami*'. Such things as dragons, the echo, and foxes, in as much as they attract attention and are wonderful and awe-inspiring, are also *Kami* ...”¹³⁸



2. UNREVEALED: CIVILISED (HINDUISM) :

[**Note:** In respect of this category, we shall deal with Hinduism under two separate headings, viz., (a) Philosophical Hinduism, and (b) Popular Hinduism. This we shall do because of certain very fundamental difficulties. Hinduism is popularly believed to be a consolidated religion and, as such, the oldest among the important religions of the world. Actually, what passes under the name of Hinduism is a collection of different systems of religion, and of different philosophies and mythologies, with a strong colouring of the human element in the historical experiences of Asiatic section of the Aryan race. As such, it is a hybrid melange. At best, it is the record of a rich civilisation of the past—a civilisation that had many elements of merit and many deficiencies and even ugly aspects. An earnest student does find there some profound philosophical discussions, which at

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 148.

times shoot off into the fervour of pure Monotheism—thereby confirming the Qur’anic stand as to the advent among the Aryans of Divine Messengers the light of whose Message glimmers today, even as in the case of the Messengers whom Judaism and Christianity mention, only through the mists of later distortions. And he finds certain noble moral concepts and words of wisdom and sciences like the science of Yoga. But, he also finds that, unfortunately, humanity cannot benefit from all that any more than it can benefit from the achievements of the philosophers, the psychologists and the spiritualists of other ancient and modern communities, with all the respective differences in outlooks and statures notwithstanding; because: *firstly*, nothing in Hinduism has any divine sanction, and consequently no seeker of God—quest for God being the very essence of a spiritual religion—can place himself under the control of the subjective findings of the Hindu philosophers and sages (which is the highest that Hinduism can offer); and, *secondly*, all that which may be regarded as worthy of appreciation in any sense is mixed up with an overwhelming and dominating mass of puerile beliefs, ugly practices and inhuman social concepts; and it is impossible for even the most radical among the reformers (who have been appearing since the impact initially of Islam and later on of Modern Thought) to purge Hinduism of all objectionable elements in the name of Hinduism itself without creating a new man-made religion. Moreover, unlike Christianity which has the Bible, and unlike Islam which has the Qur’an, Hinduism has no single consolidated scripture.

The renowned Hindu scholar and leader, Pundit Jawahar Lal

Nehru says (*The Discovery of India*, p. 37):

“Hinduism as a faith is vague, amorphous, many sided, all things to all men. It is hardly possible to define it, or indeed to say definitely whether it is religion or not, in the usual sense of the word. In its present form, and even in the past, it embraces many beliefs and practices, from the highest to the lowest, often opposed to or contradicting each other.”

John Clark Archer, the western scholar of Comparative Religion, observes (*The Great Religions of the Modern World*, pp. 44-45):

“Hinduism in its vagueness is first of all an item of the Stone Age. It is so ancient ... Hinduism has had no founder to furnish a basic message, no early leader comparable with Zoroaster, Jesus or Muhammad ... These at least, each in its turn, inspired a ‘book of wisdom’, a ‘gospel’, and a ‘writing’. Hindus have had no one even like Confucius to edit fully a long, inherited tradition. Strictly speaking, they have had for themselves no such figures as the Jains have in their Vardhaman Mahavira, as Buddhists have in Gotama Sakyamuni or as the Sikhs have in Nanak. In a sense, the founders of Hinduism are legion, their figures as shadowy as ‘cloud messengers’ of changeful constitution and fitful errand.”

However, taking up Hinduism as *one* religion, as it is understood to be, we shall attempt a scientific classification of the basic concepts that constitute its foundations.]

(a) Philosophical Hinduism:

1. *Concept of God*: Pantheism with high philosophical fervour, joined to monotheistic approach, on the one and, and to philosophised idol-worship, on the other.
2. *Outlook*: More speculative than religious. (at its highest)
3. *Standpoint*: Mystico-philosophical.
4. *Ideal*: Individualistic salvation, through meditation and ascetic exercises as if human life and the world are essentially evil.
5. *Standard of Behaviour*: Ascetic
6. *Mission*: Salvation (*muktī*) of the individual from the evil of the ever-repeating cycles of earthly existence.
7. *Programme*: Basically mystico-ascetic exercises.

(b) Popular Hinduism:

1. *Concept of God*: Nature-worship and Fetish-worship, representing the approach to the metaphysical Reality and grounded in rank Polytheism.
2. *Outlook*: Superstitious-cum-mystical-cum-racial.
3. *Standpoint*: Ritualistic and magical, rather than ethical.
4. *Ideal: Ethically considered*: Preservation of the Social System based on distinctions of race and caste, together with the sanctity of the metaphysics and the ethics from which the said Social System derives its sanction.

Religiously considered: Deliverance from the painful and inexorable cycle of re-births.

5. *Standard of Behaviour:* Adherence to caste-based ethics, as distinct from the universalistic humanistic ethics.
6. *Mission:* Supremacy of the Hindu section of the Aryan race.
7. *Programme:* Performance of religious rituals and pursuit of earthly requirements of life within a caste-ridden -cum- autocratic -cum- feudalistic -cum- capitalistic ethico-politico-economic framework.



3. REVEALED, BUT ADULTERATED AND UNAUTHENTIC:

(a) Christianity:

1. *Concept of God:* Monotheistic, with the concept of a Compound Deity—the Triune God, consisting of three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.
2. *Outlook:* Mystical, earthly life being conceived as incompatible with human yearnings.
3. *Standpoint:* Mystical.
4. *Ideal:* Salvation of the individual in the life-after-death.
5. *Standard of Behaviour:* Ascetic. In fact, no standard of behaviour or principle of evaluation is needed, because it

would necessitate obedience to Law and thus annul the efficacy of Atonement.

6. *Mission*: To lead its followers into Divine Grace through the mystery of Vicarious Atonement.
7. *Programme*: Ritualistic and Ascetic exercise for the attainment of 'saintliness'.

(b) Judaism:

1. *Concept of God*: Monotheistic, with the concept of a Single Deity—leaning towards Anthropomorphism and the notion of a Racial Deity.
2. *Outlook*: This-worldly, adjusted with the vested interests of the Israelites.
3. *Standpoint*: Legalistic and Racialistic.
4. *Ideal*: Salvation of the Israelite race alone.
5. *Standard of Behaviour*: Pragmatic and bearing reference to the interests of the race.
6. *Mission*: Welfare of the narrow group.
7. *Programme*: Struggle for making the Israelites the dominant race in respect of their being the 'Chosen People of God'.



4. REVEALED: UNADULTERATED AND AUTHENTIC (ISLAM ALONE):

1. *Concept of God:* Monotheistic. The Islamic deity is not merely 'god' (ilÉh) but 'the GOD' (AllÉh). He is not merely an object of ritualistic worship, but the Possessor of all the dimensions of Highest Excellence,—indeed, of Absolute Perfection. He is the Fountainhead of all Values and Ideals. He is the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Infinite, the Absolute, the One and the Indivisible God, Who neither incarnates nor has any Partner or Son or Compeer. He is Transcendent in His Being and Immanent in the cosmos through His Love, Knowledge and Power. He is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Nourisher and the Evolver of everything that constitutes the cosmos, equally. He is the Righteous God Who bestows no special favour on any individual or community on the basis of such distinctions as those of race or colour—nay, even in respect of mere formal labels of 'creed'.
2. *Outlook:* Universalistic and Integralistic on the basis of spiritual orientation of human life.
3. *Standpoint:* Dynamic and Comprehensive.
4. *Ideal:* Realisation of the status of Vicegerency of God for entire humanity.
5. *Standard of Behaviour:* Integralistic and Comprehensive, in terms of the concept of 'Fulfilment' and on the basis of the

Model of Comprehensive Human Perfection enshrined in the Personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!).

6. *Mission*: Establishment of all that is good for human beings and eradication of all that is evil, on the basis of godliness and unity of humankind.
7. *Programme*: Constant spiritual, moral and intellectual struggle (*JihÉd*) for the fulfilment of the above mission, in terms of: (1) conquest of the Lower Self by the Higher Self ; (2) conquest of Evil by Good in respect of Social Order ; (3) conquest of Nature for the realisation of ‘Vicegerency of God’.

The foregoing discussion reveals two important facts. *Firstly*, the Qur’anic System of Guidance, or, Islam, is grounded in religious approach. It is basically *religion*—*religion par excellence*, in the broader sense as well as in the narrower, or, strict, sense—namely, as implying ‘belief in a higher unseen controlling power, with the emotion and morality connected with it’.¹³⁹ Hence, it cannot be viewed merely in terms of a conceptual philosophy or a social doctrine. *Secondly*, it is *unique* as regards its normative as well as structural dimensions. In other words, *Islam is religion, but at the same time it stands as a masculine challenge to the generally-*

¹³⁹ *Chambers’s Twentieth Century Dictionary*, section ‘R’.

accepted notions of religion. This very basic characteristic of Islam emerges more and more prominently as we proceed in our study.



Chapter 2

STRUCTURAL LOGIC, PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRATION, SCOPE AND IDEAL OF GUIDANCE

A. STRUCTURAL LOGIC:

As a system of Knowledge, the Qur'anic Guidance is thoroughly grounded in the Logic of Knowledge, wherein the different knowledge-domains emerge inter-related in a logical sequence that manifests itself thus, starting objectively: Metaphysics, with its function of providing the world-view and consequently the system of values, stands at the base. Out of it emerges Moral Philosophy which, in its practical aspects, assumes the form of the Moral Code. Expanding into the dimensions of organised society, Moral Philosophy gives rise to Social Philosophy which, for practical purposes, crystallises into the different Social Sciences like Politics, Economics, and Law. Then, from the side of the subject, Psychology and Aesthetics shoot off to constitute organically-related complimentaries for the 'tree of knowledge' whose roots are in Metaphysics.

Just by way of illustration:

When we consider the relationship of *Metaphysics* to *Moral Philosophy*, we find that different metaphysical views lead to different ethical theories under a logical compulsion. Thus, for instance:

Pantheism leads to Perfectionism, Philosophical Materialism to simple Hedonism, Bio-ism or Vitalism to Evolutionary Hedonism, and Pragmatism to what might be termed as Opportunism.

Similarly, as regards the relationship of *Philosophy* and *Culture*: Rationalism, which consists in the principle that Reason is the avenue of the knowledge of Reality and that the rational alone is real, affirms reality only in the conceptual, the universal, the eternal, the abstract, the necessary, the absolute and the permanent; and, as such, gives rise to *Ideational Culture*. As opposed to it, *Empiricism*, which consists in the principle that Sense-experience is the avenue of the knowledge of Reality and that the empirical alone is real, attributes reality only to the 'existent', the particular, the spatio-temporal, the concrete, the contingent, the relative and the changing; and, as such, leads, through skepticism, to *Sensate Culture*.

A proper understanding of this natural and inherent relationship and the resultant balanced and comprehensive journey into the realm of Knowledge leads to a systematic and unitary view of Reality, wherein the fragmentary and partial view-points are modified in mutual adjustments, and a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the human destiny becomes possible.

Then, the higher the point of thought which the human mind may acquire through its exercise in respect of the struggle for knowledge the larger in scope is the *Unity* grasped, and the larger the Unity the higher is the Principle of Integration acquired, and the higher that principle the nearer towards the Truth moves the human mind.

In this connection, the human difficulty—as it has manifested itself in human thought—seems to reside basically in the fact that, left to itself, the human approach is very naturally ‘from below upwards’, wherein human reason as well as sense-experience find themselves confronted with *Diversity*, and consequently become captives of fragmentary and reactionary views of Reality, to the detriment of human life in respect of the realisation of human yearnings,—as has happened often with the modern so-called ‘scientific’ thought.

As opposed to this, the view of Reality in terms of Unity is possible only in Revealed Guidance which originates ‘Above’—in the realm of Unity—and thus projects the Whole in its organic relatedness. That possibility is realised by the Holy Qur’an in its Structural Logic, wherein Reality is centred in *The One* (112:1), Who is the Living, the Eternal, and from where dimensions shoot off in organic ‘wholeness’ with the base as also among themselves.



B. PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRATION

Being theo-centric in its approach and comprehensive in its outlook, as we have already noticed, the mission of the Holy Qur’an is to transform the life of this world with all its dimensions into a life of the ‘Worship of God’ by channelising it into a ‘System of Obedience to God’ (= *al-Islām*). It does not endorse the dualistic philosophy of “Give unto God what is God’s and unto Caesar what is Caesar’s”, because everything belongs to God and nothing— absolutely nothing

— belongs to Caesar,—in fact, to any creature. Indeed, it is the height of irrationality to believe in God, and, at the same time, to deny His status as the Sovereign of the Cosmos, the Fountainhead of all Values, and the Source of all Guidance, in Whom alone the loyalty of every particle of the Cosmos is centred in the very nature of the case; and consequently the loyalty of those creatures on whom He has bestowed free-will, i.e., the human beings, should also be centred in Him and *Him* alone. And, then, the division of loyalty into parts breeds conflicts, and conflicts breed perversions, and perversions breed neurosis and split-personalities and un-balanced social life.

There can be no two opinions about the fact that it is the *principle of integration* that ensures power, health and life, while non-integration brings about the very opposite. Also, the higher the integration the higher is the measure of the blessings that are obtained as a result. And the higher the integrating principle in the scale of existence the higher is the integration. Then, the deeper we go into Reality, the higher is the integrating principle that emerges before us.

Islam gives the integrating principle in the One True God, *AllÉh*. Bentham and Mill and the recent pragmatic philosophies give it in the concept of Utilitarianism, which is based on the principle of pure Expediency,—and Expediency is no principle! Hegel and the Hegelians give it in the State deified. The protagonists of nationalism and racialism give it in the Nation deified and the Race deified. The worshippers of the Earth give it in the Motherland or the Fatherland deified. Karl Marx and the Marxists give it in the Economic Force deified.

Islam's integrating principle is grounded in Total Reality. The other integrating principles are founded on discrete parts of Reality. Islam projects the 'Principle of principles', or, the Eternal Principle, which is related to the integration of Reality at all levels, and forms therefore *the* Comprehensive Principle; others put forward at best a principle which relates to one out of the many dimensions of that infinitesimally-small part of Reality which relates to the material aspect of human existence on earth. Islam's vision is focussed in absolute depth; the visions of other monistic philosophies are focussed in a narrow view and on tiny patches of what appears to exist on the surface in the immediate physical experience of the human beings.

It is not, however, only the materialistic philosophies that are defective in respect of the principle of integration, but also the spiritually-orientated religions of the world, though the problem exists there in a different dimension. Leaving aside the defects in their conceptions of the Spiritual Value, they do emphasise the value itself as basic to human life. But, then, they do not integrate it with the other values, whereby they land themselves in dualism, leaving all the practical affairs of mankind to human ingenuity. In that compartmentalisation, spiritual considerations recede into the background, or stay merely ritualistically, and religion becomes imbecile in respect of the practical affairs of human life. As a consequence, the representatives of religion either become the tools of the secular exploiting forces—as has happened in a very large measure in human history, or have to engage themselves in a never-ending conflict with them.



C. SCOPE:

Coming to Qur'anic Guidance in respect of its *Scope*: Based, as it is, on the Monistic Principle of Evaluation and the consequent Comprehensive Principle of Integration, it covers, on the individualistic level, the spiritual, the moral, the intellectual, the aesthetical and the physical dimensions of human personality, and, on the collective level, the social, the economic, the political—in fact, all the dimensions of society,—creating thus a theo-centric individual, a theo-centric social order, a theo-centric culture and a theo-centric civilization.



D. IDEAL

Thus, in the concept of Religion which the Holy Qur'an projects, i.e., the concept of the religion of Islam, the following scheme of life emerges. Man's highest merit—nay, his basic function—is the worship of the One True God, AllÉh (51:56)¹⁴⁰. This worship is to be undertaken by him, however, not merely as a creature among creatures but as the Vicegerent of God—as a fully—integrated being committed

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وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I have only created Jinns and men, that they may worship Me.”

to a cosmic mission. Namely, he has to realise the principle of integration at its highest, because God's Personality enshrines the Perfect Ideal of Integration, and he is His vicegerent. As such, his *worship* should be *dynamic*, *consequential* and *comprehensive* in its nature; which means that it should not be confined only to the act of *Prayer* but also to: (1) the development of his personality in all dimensions; (2) the establishment of a godly society in which human beings can live a full and integrated life in love, justice and wisdom; and (3) the unravelling of the mysteries of Nature for establishing his status of Vicegerency and for comprehending the majesty and the glory of God.

It is in this perspective that the Holy Qur'an makes the pursuit of physical science,—indeed, of all knowledge, and the active struggle for the spiritual and moral emancipation of humanity, and the establishment of social, economic and political justice, *acts of worship*.



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Chapter 3

VIEW OF RELIGION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE

A. VIEW OF RELIGION

(1) Fundamental Nature of Religion:

Religion, according to the Qur'an, is the *Law of the Ideal Human Nature* (30:30), which is to be pursued with due regard to the principle of *Balance* (55:7-8), *i.e.*, just proportion, correct measure and through harmony.

(2) Fundamental Form of Religion:

The fundamental form which enshrines the concept of Religion in the Holy Qur'an is *IslÉm* (3:19), which as a religious term means 'submission to the Divine Will' (2:207; etc.), in the sense of conformity to the Divine Plan as enshrined in Nature (3:191; etc.) and History (7:176; etc.), and as expressed in Divine Revelation (30:8; etc.),—'submission to the Divine Will' being the universal Law of the Cosmos (3:83).

(3) Fundamental Norm of Religion:

The religion of Islam is based on the fundamental norm of *tawÍEd*, or, *Unity*. This norm consists of a nucleus at the centre and a number of unicentric orbits around it on which the principle of Unity manifests itself at different levels. Thus we have the 'Unity of God' as

the Eternal Principle at the centre; with subsidiary unities, which are the creations of the Eternal Principle, at the orbits—unities like the Unity of the Cosmos, Unity of Mankind, Unity of Human Personality, Unity of Faith and Reason, Unity of the Social Order, etc., on which we shall elaborate in chapter 6.

(4) Fundamental Function of Religion:

Being based on the fundamental norm of *tawĪĒd*, or Unity, the fundamental function of Islam, in terms of the human life on earth, is *Integration*,—namely: (a) integration of human personality; (b) integration of social order; (c) integration of units of mankind divided on the basis of race, colour, language, etc. In other words, that function consists in: (a) the realisation of the ideal of comprehensive, harmonious and balanced development of the individual and the Society; and (b) the realisation of the ideal of Unity of Mankind.

(5) Form of Fundamental Achievement envisaged by Religion:

This problem is originally grounded in the views relating to the nature of the world and the nature of man. Hence those religions which teach that the world is evil and that every human being is born in sin—on the basis of either the dogma of inheritance of the ‘original sin’ of mankind’s parents or the hypotheses of *Karma* and transmigration of souls—conceive the form of fundamental religious achievement in terms of ‘deliverance from evil’. They stand, therefore, in the category of *Religions of Salvation*.

As opposed to them, the Holy Qur’an teaches that the world is good (32:7) and that every human being is born sinless (6:164; etc.).

Hence it emphasises the form of fundamental religious achievement in terms of ‘positive acquisition of the Good’, as, besides the entire sweep of its philosophy of life, its emphasis on the terms *falÉÍ*¹⁴¹ (actualisation of latent forces) and *fauz*¹⁴² (success and achievement) affirms. Islam is, thus, the Religion of Fulfilment,—and of fulfilment *par excellence*, because it emphasises the acquisition of the Good both in the earthly existence of a Muslim and in the life after death (2:201).

It should be noted here in passing that there is a world of difference between ‘deliverance from evil’ and ‘acquisition of good’. The former is a negative concept, the latter is positive. The former is wedded to pessimism, the latter to optimism. The former bestows a static and effeminate outlook, the latter a dynamic and virile outlook. The former invites to a life of renunciation and asceticism, the latter invites to a life of *JihÉd*, i.e., perpetual struggle against the heaviest odds for the promotion of good and eradication of evil (3:109; etc).

(6) Path of Religion:

The Holy Qur’an has emphasised the concept of the ‘Straight Path’ (1:5), which, in the very nature of the case, denotes the shortest and the most direct path. Then, this ‘path’ has been defined as the Pursuit of the law of Ideal Human Nature (30:30), which bears the glory of the impact of what God calls His ‘spirit’ (*rÉÍ*) (32:9). Divine guidance, in the form of the Holy Qur’an and the scriptures that were

¹⁴¹ 5:35; etc.

¹⁴² 33:71; etc.

revealed by God for the benefit of the different communities of the world prior to its revelation, forms the exposition of that Law undertaken by God out of love for humanity. The path of Religion consists, therefore, not in mysterious dogmas and magical rites, but in the fulfilment of human destiny in accordance with the demands of Ideal Human Nature and the status of the Vicegerency of God. That necessitates, in its turn, constant exercise in respect of: (a) acquisition of control by the higher self over the lower (or, the animal) self which always forms the greatest obstacle in connection with the pursuit of all idealistic yearnings: spiritual, moral, intellectual, social and aesthetic, —in order to build up human personality in harmony with the demands of ideal human nature; (b) understanding human personality, Nature and History, for the sake of pursuit of harmony in terms of human society; (c) effort for service to, and reform of, the society for the practical establishment of harmony in the social order; (d) subjugation of Nature through the power of knowledge, in order to bring the natural environment into harmony with ideal human aspirations; (e) submission to God, Who is the Basis of all Existence, the Source of all Excellence, and the Fountainhead of all Values, thereby to establish harmony with Him—which harmony alone bestows fundamentally the capability to achieve the human destiny in the true sense.

(7) Goal of Religion:

In the above discussion, the Islamic goal of religion has emerged in terms of the fulfilment of human destiny, which every individual is

under obligation to realise in the measure of his personal capability only, as clearly set down in the Holy Qur'an:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

“AllÉh puts no burden (of duty) upon any soul beyond what it can bear” (2:286). In concrete terms, it means the actualisation, in accordance with one's capacity, of the potential 'vicegerency of God', which has been bestowed on humanity as a whole by its Creator (2:30).



B. ATTITUDE TOWARDS EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE — PURSUIT THEREOF: ACT OF WORSHIP

Says a Western scholar of the Qur'an:

“We must not be surprised to find the Qoran the fountain-head of the sciences. Every subject connected with heaven or earth, human life, commerce and various trades is occasionally touched upon, and this gave rise to the production of numerous monographs forming commentaries on parts of the Holy Book. In this way the Qoran was responsible for great discussions, and to it was indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Muslim world ... This again not only affected the Arabs but also induced Jewish philosophers to treat metaphysical and religious questions after Arab methods. Finally, the way in which Christian scholasticism was fertilised by Arabian theosophy need not be further discussed.

“Spiritual activity once aroused within Islamic bounds was not confined to theological speculations alone. Acquaintance with the philosophical, mathematical, astronomical and medical writings of the Greeks led to the pursuance of these studies. In the descriptive revelations Muhammad repeatedly calls attention to the movement of the heavenly bodies, as parts of the miracles of AllÉh, forced into the service of man and therefore not to be worshipped. How successfully Moslem people of all races pursued the study of astronomy is shown by the fact that for centuries they were its principal supporters. Even now many Arabic names of stars and technical terms are in use. Medieval astronomers in Europe were pupils of the Arabs...

“In the same manner the Qoran gave an impetus to medical studies and recommended the contemplation and study of Nature in general.”¹⁴³

Just to speak in respect of the last statement in the above quotation: the Holy Qur'an did not merely recommend “the contemplation and study of Nature in general.” It did much more when it projected the guidance in respect of the Inductive Method of enquiry, i.e., the Scientific Method; gave the basic principles on which alone the quest of physical science could be established, relating, as it does, to the discovery of Identity in Diversity,—the principles, namely, of: (1) Unity of Nature, (2) Unity of Mankind, and (3) Unity of Knowledge; and opened the way to the conquest of Nature through

¹⁴³ Dr. Hartwig Hirschfeld: *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, London 1902, p. 9.

its emphasis on absolute Monotheism, on the one hand, and on the Vicegerency of Man, on the other,—thereby causing the Muslims to emerge in history as the founders of Modern Science.¹⁴⁴ And not only that. We find therein some very rich scientific concepts, which are of fundamental importance in relation to scientific knowledge. For instance: **(1)** the concept of “expanding universe”,¹⁴⁵ as opposed to the belief in a “block universe” (35:1); **(2)** the concept of a created but evolving universe (41:11-12; etc.) ultimately destined to achieve, through crisis, a new birth (29:19; etc.); **(3)** the concept of biological evolution in general (21:30; etc.), evolution of plant life (36:33; etc.), and evolution in relation to Man (15:26; 22:12-16); **(4)** the principle of

¹⁴⁴ Ref. Robert Briffault: *The Making of Humanity*, p. 190: “The debt of our science to that of the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries of revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal more to Arab culture, it owes its existence. The ancient world was, as we saw, pre-scientific. The Astronomy and Mathematics of the Greeks were a foreign importation never thoroughly acclimatized in Greek culture. The Greeks systematized, generalized, and theorized, but the patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observation and experimental inquiry were altogether alien to the Greek temperament ... What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of Mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs.”

¹⁴⁵ This concept has emerged only recently in modern science, as expounded, among others, by James Jeans (“The Expanding Universe”).

parity, as for instance, we know it now in physics (51:49); (5) the concept of the revolutions of planets in their orbits (21:33; 36:40); (6) the concept of the earth as rotating on its axis (7:137; etc.); (7) constant movement of the sun towards a goal (36:38); (8) the principle of pairs in terms of male and female among plants (36:36); (9) the principle of pairs of opposites in “things” about which it was said in the Qur’an for the people of those days that “they have no knowledge” (36:36),—things discovered in modern times, e.g., the positive and the negative in electricity, the proton-electron combination in the constitution of the atom, the ‘particle’ and the ‘anti-particle’, and matter and anti-matter; (10) the concept of space-travel, with its difficulties and possibilities (55:33); (11) the emergence of till-then-unconceived patterns of vehicles in the post-Qur’anic period (16:8); (12) the existence of animal life on other planets and its expected contact in future with the animal life existing on earth (42:29)—so on and so forth.

Thus, having come to teach “new knowledge” (2:51), the Holy Qur’an chartered a new course for the pursuers of science; and in that its function was to stimulate the scientific outlook and the quest for scientific knowledge, and to promote the cultivation of the physical sciences;—and that to an extent that *the Scientific Quest has been made a part of the Worship of God*, having been affirmed as an inseparable complimentary of the Religious Quest (3:189-190). Also, the confirmation by the scientists of the future of what it had taught was to form, in respect of its acceptance as Divine Knowledge, its

permanent miracle for the succeeding ages,—even as the proclamation stands:

سُنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ ...

“In the time to come We (God) will show them (i.e., human beings) Our Signs in remote regions ¹⁴⁶ (of the universe) and in their (own) selves, ¹⁴⁷ until it becomes manifest to them that this (i.e., the Qur’an) is the Truth ...” (41:53).



¹⁴⁶ Here the reference is to future discoveries in the fields of astronomy and astrophysics.

¹⁴⁷ Here the reference is to future discoveries relating to the human personality in terms of Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Physiology and Psychology.

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Chapter 4

STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS CREED AND CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

A. STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS CREED

It is a basic requirement of religion, whether primitive or civilised, and whether ‘revealed’ or ‘unrevealed’, to embody its fundamental beliefs in a ‘creed’; and the creeds of different religions are naturally different. Besides the differences relating to terminologies and historical perspectives, they also differ in respect of their basic approach to human personality and its relationship with what each religion regards as the ultimate Reality. Among the spiritually-orientated religions—and we are concerned basically with them here—that approach may be fundamentally mythological, or mystical, or ethico-religious. It is degrading if it is mythological. It is enervating if it is mystical. It is dynamic if it is ethico-religious.

The Islamic creed is genuinely, consistently and purely ethico-religious—covering ‘this-worldly’ as well as the ‘other-worldly’ Good. It is built up, in the form of Articles of Faith, on belief in seven Qur’anic verities, namely: (1) AllÉh (God); (2) the Angels; (3) the Prophets (or, human Messengers of Divine Guidance); (4) Divine Scriptures; (5) *al-Qadr* (or, the ‘Law of Measure’); (6) Resurrection; and (7) the Life ‘Hereafter’.

Its rationale is grounded in both of its structural components, i.e., (1) the ethical and (2) the religious.

1. Viewed in the basically-Ethical Perspective:

1. AllÉh is the Supra-Cosmic Ideal of Supreme Good, as the Possessor of Absolute Harmony in all Dimensions of Perfection.
2. *The Angels* are the Cosmic Ideal of Supreme Good, as possessors of perfect harmony with the Divine Being.
3. The Prophets—all the Prophets of humanity—are the Human Ideal of Supreme Good, as possessors and demonstrators of humanly-perfect harmony between the human will and the Divine Will.
4. The Scriptures—all the Books of Guidance which came from God to humanity—represent Divine Guidance in respect of the pursuit of harmony between the human will and the Divine Will for the attainment of Supreme Good by the human beings.
5. *Al-Qadr* forms the basic Norm for the technique of pursuing the Supreme Good.
6. The Resurrection—Revival after death with the self-same Identity—enshrines the assurance of the attainment of Supreme Good by the human beings.

7. The 'Hereafter'—its concept enshrines the fulfilment of human destiny in terms of the acquisition of Supreme Good.

2. Viewed in the basically-Religious Perspective:

1. *AllÉh* is the Fountainhead of Guidance as well as of Power, and His personality forms the Monistic Principle of Evaluation, in respect of the pursuit by humanity of the fulfillment of its Destiny.
2. Angels (who are neither sub-deities nor 'sons' or daughters' of God), are the executors of Divine Will, and as such the carriers of Divine Guidance for the entire Cosmos. Their presence demonstrates the fact that the Cosmos is pervaded with Intelligence and Purpose and that its control by God is perpetual. This view is in contrast to the Newtonian view of the 'Indifferent God', the recent view projected in Christendom of the 'Dead God', and the Nihilistic view of a 'Blind Cosmos'.
3. *Prophets* are the human transmitters to, and exemplifiers of, Divine Guidance for humanity.

Here it should be noted that the unique Qur'anic doctrine concerning '*Belief in all the Prophets of Humanity*' is related to the Qur'anic teaching that: (1) God being one, and mankind being one, the Guidance from God has come to all the human communities since the time of Adam (Peace be on him!) through the Prophets of God that came to them (13:7; etc.),—and it has not been confined to any

'chosen people'; (2) it has been—as it ought to have been in the very nature of the case—fundamentally the same, i.e., Islam, or, the Philosophy and the Way of Submission to the One God (3:19); and (3) wherever there are resemblances in the teachings of the different religions, they are the remnants of the original Truth revealed by God.

In these Qur'anic doctrines of *Universal Divine Guidance* and the *Unity of Religious Truth* emerges a noble and *unique* dimension in the *religious attitude* of a Muslim, which is of tremendous importance for him as well as for humanity. It is the triune dimension of large-heartedness, good-will and wisdom. Because: (1) These doctrines establish in him a rational attitude towards other religions, whereby he tries to view the original reality beneath the crusts of mythology and human interpolations; and possessing, as he does, the Divine Guidance in its pure and authentic revelation, he can undertake a most rational and meaningful probe and research in the field of Comparative Religion, can reconstruct the original religion for the different communities, and can invite them to the same. (2) Knowing, as he does, through his own religion and through history, the in-authenticity of the records of all the pre-Qur'anic religions, he is duty-bound to refrain, on principle and not just for expediency, from insulting those personalities of other religions who are considered to be their founders,—which lays the foundation of international goodwill on the basis of Religion from his side. He can criticise, without ill-will and only for upholding and distinguishing the truth, the wrong teachings of different religions and the wrongs committed by different religious communities, but he is not permitted

by Islam to indulge in insult and abuse of the supreme heads of other religions.

The final part of ‘Belief in all Prophets’ is the affirmation of belief in the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!) not only as one of the Prophets but as the *last* Messenger of God, who came to seal the Age of Prophethood and Prophetic Revelation in the history of mankind (33:40) and to be the Guide for entire humanity in its Age of Maturity ¹⁴⁸ for all time (34:28).

It is essential to note here that the Qur’an does not speak, even indirectly, of the appointment after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!) of anyone, from within the ranks of its followers or from without, as Prophet of any calibre and in any sense. Also, it does not even hint at the emergence from among its followers, at any period of history, of any divinely-appointed *Imam* (Religious Leader), or *Mujaddid* (Religious Reviver), or *Mahdi* (the ‘Rightly Guided’ Leader who, according to the *×adÉth* literature, will, *in his own lifetime and through his personal achievement*, totally annihilate the Jewish Power in Palestine and establish Islam as the Supreme World-Force after the political decline of the Muslims), or *Mahdi-cum-Messiah* (which is a recent innovation)—thus blocking the way to the creation, with its sanction, of sects and sectarian Movements around the personalities of claimants to religious Reformership for the Muslim community.

¹⁴⁸ Ref: Discussion on ‘era of maturity’ under the next article of faith.

4. Belief in all the Scriptures ever revealed to humanity by God fulfils the same function, in terms of 'code of guidance', as 'Belief in the Prophets'. Namely: All the Divine Guidance communicated by God to the Prophets of the world, for the guidance of human communities, in the form of Scriptures, since the earliest times—as a result of which *Muslims* have existed in all periods of human history—has been directed to final human success in the Life Hereafter on the basis of ethico-religious fulfilment during the life lived on earth.

As regards the Holy Qur'an, it is the last, the final, and the comprehensive revelation of Divine Guidance. Consequently, it performs three functions: (1) it restates the Divine Guidance that had come before its revelation to the different human communities but had subsequently suffered perversion through the vicissitudes of history and human interpolation. Thus, its Guidance is fundamentally the same¹⁴⁹ as that contained *originally* in the previous Scriptures (87:18-

¹⁴⁹ This is the claim of the Qur'Ēn, in harmony with its distinctive doctrine of universal Divine Guidance. But, instead of: (a) appreciating the rationale of certain points of resemblance of the Qur'Ēnic teachings with the remnants of the original revealed teachings, or with certain parts of historical facts found in the Bible, and (b) evaluating that resemblance in the perspective of the radical differences that explicitly exist between the Qur'Ēn and the existing Bible in respect of the *basic* aspects of their teachings, the orientalist are at pains to name Islam as the 'bastard child' of Judaism and Christianity. (Refer, among others, to Prof. Snouck Hurgronje's *Mohammedanism*).

19); (2) it corrects ¹⁵⁰ all the wrong notions found in the different religions, as they came to exist after the introduction of changes; (3) it projects the Divine Guidance in the dimensions that bear reference to the ‘era of maturity’ in the history of human civilisation, imparting *comprehensive* guidance as a result.

As to the ‘era of maturity’: Taking humanity as a whole, the history of civilisation presents a picture of definite stages in respect of its evolution, and this evolution has been in the form of the progressive actualisation of human potentialities in terms of creativity. In this perspective, the present Scientific Era, which the Holy Qur’an initiated, forms definitely the ‘era of maturity’ of human civilisation because of the emergence of, so to say, limitless possibilities of human thrust into the empirical aspect of Reality, which clearly stands out as the ‘maturity’-dimension of human civilisation, providing an ever-widening vision for understanding the Reality,—ever wider than

¹⁵⁰ This is a great service which the Holy Qur’Ēn has rendered to the cause of Religion. But, instead of examining the Qur’Ēnic contribution dispassionately, the Jewish and the Christian controversialists, in spite of the absolute inauthenticity of Judaism and Christianity and the indefensible faults and errors from which they admittedly suffer, name the rational and consistent stand of the Qur’Ēn as “corruption”.

Readers of the present book can very well assess as to how absurd and malicious are the allegations mentioned in footnotes 147 and 148 above. For further edification, they may refer to the Author’s: *Islam and Christianity in the Modern World*, published by the World Federation of Islamic Missions, Karachi, Pakistan.

possessed by humanity in any pre-Qur'anic period of human history, and, consequently, necessitating Divine Guidance in comprehensive measure and directly grounded in the new situation. The same has been provided in the Qur'an in terms of the *comprehensive* projection and correlation of all the dimensions of life (16: 89).

Then, as the emergence of the new dimension of human quest in terms of the conquest of Nature beyond the earth constitutes the completion of the dimensions of civilisation,¹⁵¹ with variations seemingly possible only in correlations within the structure of the quest, the Qur'anic comprehensive guidance has also been made by God as the *last* and the *final* revealed guidance from Him.

It should be clearly noted that the Qur'an has explicitly qualified the Muslims as those:

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ...

“who believe in that which has been revealed to you (Muhammad) and that which was revealed *before* you” (2:4), and does not even indirectly hint at belief in any future Prophetic Revelation (*wafy al-nubĒwah*).

5. The concept of *al-Qadr* implies that: (a) the Cosmos as a whole, as also the tiny universe of human personality, is a ‘Reign of Law’ and not a ‘Reign of Magic’ (54:49); (b) hence, the religious approach should not be ‘magical’ but in terms of pursuit of the ‘law of measure’ (65:3) which has

¹⁵¹ Cf. The ‘Programme’, according to Islam (p. 111).

been revealed in the *Īudūd-AllÉh*, i.e., the limits prescribed by God (9:112; etc.); (c) as a result, the ethico-religious good—as also other forms of good—consists in conformity to measure, or, maintaining the balance (55:7-8),—deviation from the measure towards any extreme being evil, the commission of which is ‘sin’ in Islamic terminology. Thus emerges in the belief in *al-Qadr* the basic technique of pursuing the ethico-religious struggle.

6. Belief in *Resurrection* after death: (a) lifts up the human vision beyond earthly existence and thus crushes the attitude of earth-rootedness which is the mother of all moral ills; (b) bestows on human values absoluteness, as opposed to expediency, and renders the moral struggle worth-while, meaningful, and genuinely consequential; (c) hence, provides the enthusiasm for moral struggle, in the face of all obstructions and frustrating situations; (d) supplies the basis for the consummation of the reward of moral struggle; (e) establishes the rational ground for the highest sacrifice in the service of all that is good,—including the sacrifice of life, which for a genuine believer in God and the Resurrection is an aspiration of life.
7. Belief in the ‘*Hereafter*’ relates to the following basic Qur’anic concepts: (a) God is the Moral Sovereign of the Cosmos; (b) the Cosmos is a Moral Order; (c) Man has to function on the earth as a moral being with a spiritual base; (d) he has to submit his credentials to the Moral Sovereign,

Who is actually the Over-All Sovereign, in order to pass to higher level of existence; (e) hence, he has to face Final Accountability on the Day of Judgment, which will occur when the 'heavens and the earth' have passed through the portals of 'death' into new dimensions of existence (14:48).

Finally, it should be noticed that the Islamic Creed is through and through *universal*, and not *sectarian*, because it demands belief not only in the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!) and the Holy Qur'an but in all the Prophets of God and in all the revealed Scriptures that came before in any part of the world.

Closely related to this universalism is the Islamic theo-centric Humanism, which has found its expression, in the sphere of inter-religious fellowship, in the following Qur'anic proclamation:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ

“Say (O Muhammad!): O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we shall worship none but the One True God; that we shall associate no equals with Him; that we shall take not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God ...” (3:64). The formula of cooperation and fellowship for the promotion of good and the eradication of evil that is contained in this verse is: Commitment of absolute and undivided loyalty and devotion to God and the acceptance of the principle of total elimination of exploitation of man by man.



B. CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

This problem has a vital bearing on human life; because it is related to the relationship with God, on the one hand, and to the character of society, on the other. A religion which endorses the institution of priesthood,¹⁵² establishes what might be termed as ‘spiritual feudalism’, dividing the society into two distinct classes of religious ‘masters’ and religious ‘serfs’, and opening the road to the exploitation of the masses by the ‘privileged few’. Besides that, it creates a barrier between the human beings and God through the creation of a class of canonised professionals who become the sole agents for selling the blessings of God, including forgiveness of sins and salvation in the Hereafter. The history of Religion is replete with

¹⁵² Giving due weight to the basic characteristics that underlie the varied roles played by the institution of priesthood in human history, among the civilised and the uncivilised communities, the concept of the priest as it emerges in its full stature and form is that he is basically a consecrated person, established in an exalted social status in comparison with the lay adherents of a religion—a status acquired on the basis of canonisation either through some ritual or through descent from some particular clan or caste, possessing an unchallengeable authority in religious matters, enjoying in the beliefs of the people such powers or privileged position as to be capable of obtaining from the deity the fulfilment of what he may put forward on behalf of anyone, and therefore the *unavoidable instrument* of the lay-folk for employment in their dealings with the deity. (For a historical discussion, see: *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 10; art.: ‘Priest, Priesthood’).

all this and the attendant evils, wherein humanity has been exploited spiritually, morally and materially—and, wherever possible, even politically, through the establishment of theocracy in the form of government by the priests.¹⁵³

What a tremendous amount of misery the institution of priesthood can cause, even in its administrative aspect, to the prestige of *religion* itself, emerges clearly in the ecclesiastical history of mankind. For instance, just to refer to one brief period of Christian history, Will Durant observes in his *The Age of Faith* (New York 1950; pp. 538-540):

“... In 897 Pope Stephen VI had the corpse of Pope Formosus (891-6) exhumed, dressed it in purple robes, and tried before an Ecclesiastic Council on the charge of violating certain Church Laws; the corpse was condemned, stripped, mutilated, and plunged into the

¹⁵³ Speaking of the Jewish institution of priesthood, H. Hirschfeld writes: “According to the Levitical code, the Hebrew priest is born, not made ... In order to safeguard the purity of lineage for future generations, the Biblical laws regulating Priestly marriages were not only strictly enforced, but also strengthened in various directions... These restrictive regulations, added to ancestral pride, gradually converted the priestly class into an exalted theocracy which, from the nature of public affairs, at the same time formed the social aristocracy. The priestly family of the Hasmonaeans acquired royal dignity. Later the high priest was the president of the Sanhedrin. Thus power, both spiritual and temporal, and wealth accumulated in some priestly families.” (The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 10, pp. 322, 323).

Tiber. In the same year a political revolution in Rome overthrew Stephen, who was strangled in jail. For several years thereafter the papal chair was filled by bribery, murder, or the favour of women of high rank and low morality. For half a century the family of Theophylect, a chief official of the papal palaces, made and un-made popes at will. His daughter Marozia secured the election of her lover as Pope Sergius III (804-11), his wife Theodora procured the election of Pope John X (914-28). John has been accused of being Theodora's paramour, but on inadequate evidence ... Marozia after having enjoyed a succession of lovers married Guido, Duke of Tuscany I; they conspired to unseat John; they had his brother Peter killed before his face; the Pope was thrown into prison and died there a few months later from causes unknown. In 931 Marozia raised to the papacy John XI (931-5) commonly reputed to be her bastard son by Sergius. In 932 her son Alberic imprisoned John in the Castle of Saint Angelo, but allowed him to exercise from jail the spiritual function of the papacy. For twenty-two years Alberic ruled Rome as the dictatorial head of a 'Roman Republic'. At his death he bequeathed his power to his son Octavian, and made the clergy and people promise to choose Octavian pope when Agapetus II should die. It was done as he ordered; in 955 Marozia's grandson become John XII, and distinguished his pontificate by orgies of debauchery in the Lateran palace."

“Otto I of Germany, crowned Emperor by John XII, in 962, learned the degradation of the papacy at first hand. In 963, with the support of the Transalpine clergy, Otto returned to Rome, and summoned John to trial before an ecclesiastical council. Cardinals

charged that John had taken bribes for consecrating bishops, had made a boy of ten a bishop, had committed adultery with his father's concubine and incest with his father's widow and her niece, and had made the papal palace a very brothel. John refused to attend the council or to answer the charges; instead he went out hunting. The council deposed him and unanimously chose Otto's candidate, a layman, as Pope Leo VII (963-5). After Otto had returned to Germany, John seized and mutilated the leaders of the Imperial party in Rome, and had himself restored by an obedient council to the papacy (964). When John died (964) the Romans elected Benedict V, ignoring Leo. Otto came down from Germany, deposed Benedict, and restored Leo, who thereupon officially recognized the right of Otto and his Imperial successors to veto the election of any future Pope. On Leo's death Otto secured the election of John XIII (965-72). Benedict VI (973-74) was imprisoned and strangled by a Roman noble, Bonifazio Francone, who made himself Pope for a month, then fled to Constantinople with as much papal treasure as he could carry. Nine years later, he returned, killed Pope John XIV (983-4), again appropriated the papal office, and died peaceably in bed (985). The Roman Republic again raised its head, assumed authority, and chose Crescentius as consul. Otto III descended upon Rome with an irresistible army, and a commission from the German prelates to end the chaos by making his Chaplain Pope Gregory V (966-9). The young Emperor put down the Republic, pardoned Crescentius, and went back to Germany. Crescentius at once re-established the Republic, and deposed Gregory (997). Gregory excommunicated him,

but Crescentius laughed, and arranged the election of John XVI as Pope. Otto returned, deposed John, gouged out his eyes, cut off his tongue and nose, and paraded him through the streets of Rome on an ass, with his face to the tail. Crescentius and twelve Republican leaders were beheaded, and their bodies were hung from the battlements of Saint Angelo (998). Gregory resumed the papacy, and died, probably of poison, in 999...

“... The counts of Tusculum, in league with the German Emperors, bought bishops and sold the papacy with hardly an effort at concealment. Their nominee Benedict VIII (1012-24) was a man of vigor and intelligence, but Benedict IX (1032-45), made pope at the age of twelve, led so shameful and riotous a life that the people rose and drove him out of Rome. Through Tusculan aid he was restored: but tiring of the papacy he sold it to Gregory VI (1045-6) for one (or two) thousand pounds of gold. Gregory astonished Rome by being almost a model pope ... The Tusculan house ... made Benedict IX pope again, while a third faction set up Sylvester III. The Italian clergy appealed to the Emperor Henry III to end this disgrace; he came to Sutri, near Rome, and convened an ecclesiastical council; it imprisoned Sylvester, accepted Benedict’s resignation, and deposed Gregory for admittedly buying the papacy. Henry persuaded the council that only a foreign pope, protected by the emperor, could terminate the debasement of the Church.”

The Holy Qur’an sounds the death-knell to the institution of priesthood, establishing what might be aptly termed as ‘spiritual democracy’. All human beings possess equal human dignity as their

birthright (17:70) and enjoy the right of access to God equally, because He is equally the God of all (1:1). And because He is nearer to every human being than his jugular vein (50:16), no one needs any priest or priestess in his dealings with Him. He is Himself the Bestower of all Blessings on whomsoever He considers worthy; He Himself judges and forgives the sins of whomsoever He seems deserving; to Him belongs the Absolute Sovereignty and His contact with everyone is direct and constant;—hence, the very notion of a priest or a priestess is regarded by the Qur'an as absurd.¹⁵⁴ God's unambiguous proclamation runs through the holy book:

ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

“Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer) ...” (40:60).

Congregational Prayer does necessitate a leader of the congregation. But this necessity has been fulfilled by Islam, not through the appointment of canonised priests, but on the democratic principle that anyone who is highest in learning and piety among a congregation at the time of congregational prayer should lead the congregation.

Not only is every Muslim man and woman his or her own priest or priestess, the transmission of the light of Divine Message is also the

¹⁵⁴ Says D.B. Macdonald: “God, Himself, the One, reveals Himself to man through prophets and otherwise, and man, in prayer, can come directly to God. This is Muhammad's great glory. The individual soul and its God are face to face.” (*Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, p. 38).

obligation of every Muslim, being the collective obligation of the entire Islamic Community (3:110). Of course, the Holy Qur'an has projected the concept of specialised workers who should form the spearhead for the fulfilment of that collective obligation (3:104). But, they too have been conceived basically as 'Inviters to the Good' and not as priests.

The religious leadership that emerges thus in the Islamic Community is that of 'teachers' and 'guides' and not of 'priests'. Every Muslim, without any considerations of colour, race, tribe, family, sex, and worldly status, can aspire—in fact, should aspire—for acquiring that status. The qualification he has to acquire for that purpose consists of sound knowledge of Divine Guidance, sound wisdom and sound spiritual and moral personality, as emphasised in connection with the Holy Prophet's Mission (62:2). In short, he should be a *miniature representative* of the Holy Prophet's Personality, and as such should be a spiritually-morally-and-intellectually-illuminated person. Whoever acquires this qualification will earn the respect and love of the fellow-Muslims, and even of the fair-minded human beings in general. Therein lies his leadership, which is obviously attained through the democratic process of hard-earned merit. As such, he becomes not only a teacher (*mu'allim*) but also a guide (*murshid*), capable of helping the people not only intellectually but also spiritually,—assisting them in emerging from spiritual darkness into the Light Divine (14:1), himself acting through the Light bestowed on him by God (6:122).

No other category of religious leadership emerges in the Qur'anic Guidance. Those who possess only scholastic information, and are scholars of Islam in that sense, and do not fulfil the above-mentioned qualifications, are not entitled to religious *leadership*. Rather, they have been denounced by the Qur'an (61:2-3), even as the Jewish religious leaders of yore have been denounced:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا

“The similitude of those who were charged with the (obligations of the) Mosaic Law, but who subsequently failed in (personally acting according to) those (obligations), is that of a donkey which carries huge tomes (but understands them not) ... (62:5). At best, the scholastics can function only as formal transmitters of the information they possess, and nothing more.¹⁵⁵

In the end, it is essential to note that no religious leader, not even the Super-Leader, i.e., the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!), can function in any way as the substitute for God or as a sub-deity. Also, no religious leader, however great, can possess any absolute authority over the Muslims, because absolute authority resides, among human beings, only in the person of the Holy Prophet, who alone is the absolute Leader of the Muslims for all time, and no

¹⁵⁵ As matters stand in the Muslim world today, it is the decline of religious leadership from the Islamic standard in a serious measure that constitutes a major cause of its inability with regard to its emergence from the abyss into which it has been descending since some time. The remedy for the situation is obvious!

one else; so that there is no room in Islam for the creation of sects around personalities.

It is urgent for the Muslim world to pay due heed to the Qur'anic Warning:

... وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ . مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيعًا
كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ

“And be not among those who join gods with AllÉh,—those who split up their religion and become (mere) sects,—each party rejoicing in that which is with itself!” (30:31-32)—while the prestige of Islam suffers damage after damage and the *millat* as a whole courts defeat after defeat!!!



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Chapter 5

VIEW OF RELIGIOUS QUEST

(1) Nature of Religious Quest:

The Religious Quest proceeds in terms of ‘*religious experience*’. The Holy Qur’an centralises it in the ‘Quest for God’ (*JihÉd fī-AllÉh*) and tells us that it establishes in the pursuer’s consciousness the experience of ‘Divine Presence’:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“As for those who pursue most earnestly the Quest in (or, for) Us (AllÉh), We surely guide them in Our Paths. And certainly Allah is with ¹⁵⁶ (i.e., in dynamic reciprocal relationship ¹⁵⁷ with) those who practise *ÍsÉn*” (29:69). That living and dynamic contact with God, the All-Holy (59:23; etc.) and the All-Wise (2:32; etc.), brings to the

¹⁵⁶ The Arabic word *ma‘a* used in the text for ‘with’ possesses the emphasis on ‘togetherness’ and ‘company’. It denotes a distinctive form of relationship between God and the Devotee, as compared with the universal and general with-ness of God in reference to everything in Creation.

¹⁵⁷ Cf.

{ فَادْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ } “Remember Me, I will remember you” (2:152);

{ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ } “Verily, AllÉh helps one who helps Him” (22:40);

{ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ } “Call unto Me, and I shall answer your prayer” (40:60).

pursuer of the Quest, in proportion to the intensity of striving built up by him, on the one hand, holiness¹⁵⁸ adequate to human nature—even as a valley or a territory on which the blessings of the All-Holy descend becomes holy (20:12; 5:21; etc.)—, and on the other, *experience* culminating in *baĀĒrah* (i.e., evidence clear as seeing with one's eyes) spoken of in the Qur'an thus:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Say you (O Muhammad!): This is my Way: I do invite unto AllĒh,—on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes,—I and whosoever follows me (practically). Glory to AllĒh! and I am not of those who join gods with AllĒh.” (12:108). The Religious Quest is thus basically different from the quests of Philosophy and Science, which relate to the acquisition of *formal discursive knowledge*.

In Islamic terminology, the term that emerges for the Religious Quest is *al-ĪsĒn*, as laid down explicitly in Bukhari's *Salīl*: “... he

¹⁵⁸ ‘Holiness’ attainable by a human being is a factual state of human consciousness, and not a mere Idea—a mere concept of speculative thought; and because consciousness is the basic element in Personality, holiness forms the basic achievement in religious quest. This state emerges when the ego, in soaring higher, gets out of the range of the gravitational pull of instinctive urges and passions (79:40; etc.) and becomes established in the experience of Divine Presence through total surrender to God (2:112, etc.),—acquiring as a consequence, the status of *waliy-AllĒh* (Friend of, in the sense of intimacy with, God) (10:62).

(the enquirer) asked: ‘What is *al-ÍsÉn*?’ (To that) he (the Holy Prophet) replied: ‘It is to pursue the System of Obedience to AllÉh as if you are seeing Him (i.e., with the inner vision of ‘Divine Presence’); but if it is not possible for you to see Him (inside your consciousness), then (this reality should remain thoroughly established in your mind that) He is seeing you’ ... (vol. 1, p. 12). In the Holy Qur’an we find the command:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ ...

“Verily, AllÉh enjoins *al-‘Adl* and *al-ÍsÉn* ...” (16:90), —*al-ÍsÉn* having been related elsewhere in the holy book not only to acts of well-doing to others but also to attitudes and acts that bear direct reference to the practice of self-negation for the sake of God and the attendant purity of the heart and godliness (3:134; 5:13; etc.); and we repeatedly come across the theme that “AllÉh loves those who are *MuÍsin* (i.e., pursuers of *ÍsÉn*)” (2:195; etc.). Then, the important fact is to be noted that the root from which *ÍsÉn* and *MuÍsin* emerge is $\times SN$, which enshrines the concept of ‘beauty’. Hence *al-ÍsÉn*, as Imam Raghíb al-Isfahani explains, stands in one of its two connotations for “the creation of beauty in one’s conduct, which is achieved through beauty in knowledge and beauty in action” (*MufradÉt al-Qur’an*, section $\times SN$), —thus denoting, as a religious term, the beautification of *ImÉn* (Faith) and *IslÉm* (Exercise in Submission to God); or, as Lane states it on the basis of the findings of other eminent authorities, it relates to the basic Qur’anic virtue of *al-IkhlÉs* (undivided loyalty and purity of devotion to AllÉh—7:29; 98:5; etc.) and “watchfulness and good obedience” (*Lexicon*, (Section

×SN). All that involves a perpetual conscientious struggle (*jihÉd*, *mujÉhada*) on the path of 'Devotion to God' for the sake of establishing purer and purer and more and more living relation with Him,—in one word, the Religious Quest,—the struggle being grounded in the fundamental norm of 'Love for God' (*Íubb AllÉh*) (2:165) and pursued with utmost regard (*taÍarru'*) for God's infinite Greatness and Glory (7:55; etc.).

It is necessary to emphasise here with all the force at the present writer's command that it is the actualisation and the fulfilment of the Quest for God alone which equips a Muslim, according to the Qur'an (22:78), for becoming capable of 'bearing witness of the Truth of Islam to humanity'—which is his mission (2:143)—and thus *it is an unavoidably necessary qualification, together with the requisite intellectual achievement, for an Islamic religious leader.*

(2) Standpoint for Religious Quest:

The Qur'anic standpoint is *ethico-religious*, as opposed to magical, mystical, ritualistic and legalistic standpoints given by other systems. *Subjectively*, it relates to spiritual and moral transformation of the individual (91:9); *objectively*, it is grounded in love for God manifesting itself in love for fellow-beings (2:177: etc.).

(3) Source of Guidance for Religious Quest:

Religious Quest is to be pursued on the basis of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (i.e., the dynamics of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's Personality), together with an ever-deepening understanding of Nature and History as repositories of the Signs of God (3:189-190; 14:5; etc.).

(4) Instruments employed for Religious Quest:¹⁵⁹

The Holy Qur'an projects two instruments in that behalf, namely, *Faith and Reason* (58:11).

Vision of Faith guided by Reason leads to the deepening of Conviction (35:28; etc.), which, in its turn, leads to confident progress in the Quest.

(5) Standard of Behaviour relating to Religious Quest:

Faith begets *Love*; *Reason* begets *Law*. *Love* and *Law* have, however, been considered as antithetical in the pre-Qur'anic religious thought. But, according to the Holy Qur'an, they are complimentary and should therefore be reconciled (96:1; etc.) in order that a 'sound heart' is built up, which is the demand of Religion (26:89; etc.).

That is so, because: *Love* relates to *motivation*; while *Law* relates to *discipline*, which is vitally necessary for human success. But, *discipline* cannot be consequentially *imposed from without*; rather, it should *grow from within*. Hence *Love* should form the basis of following the *Law*.

Also: the ethico-religious (spiritual *plus* moral) approach to life is grounded in *Love*, while the juristic approach is grounded in *Law*. Hence, because *Love* forms the basis of following the *Law*, the primary emphasis in an ideal religious life should be on the spiritual

¹⁵⁹ For further edification, refer to our discussion on "*Ethico-Religious Dynamics*"— (Book 2, Part 1, Chapter 5).

and moral aspects of human conduct rather than on juristic formalism. It means that emphasis on *Law* should be subordinate to the emphasis on *Love*,—not that *Law* should be discarded. That will ensure healthy development of human personality: Because the spiritual and the moral dimensions of conduct belong to the realm of 'freedom', which renders initiative possible and ensures the flowering of human personality; while the formal, or the juristic, dimension is grounded in 'compulsion', which gives rise to inertia and stultifies the personality.

Hence it is that a much greater portion of the Holy Qur'an is devoted to spiritual and moral guidance than to juristics (*al-fiqh*) and the emphasis through and through is on the primacy of the *spirit*, which alone makes the pursuit of the *Law*, fruitful (2:177; 2:263; 22:37; etc.); while legalistic hair-splitting, which is born of formalistic and externalistic approach to Religion, has been vehemently denounced (2:67-71; Etc).

(6) Fundamental Ethical Guide-Lights for Religious Quest:

Besides the practice of the entire Qur'anic ethico-religious system to the best of opportunity and ability, the pursuer of Religious Quest has to fix up some fundamental *ethical* guide-lights on his spiritual Path. These lights are enshrined in the concepts of: Piety, Love, Truth, Justice, Beauty, Wisdom, and Selflessness.

Piety:

Religious Quest is the quest focussed in the direction of the All-Holy. This fact bestows extra-ordinary importance on Piety (*taqwÉ*). But Piety has been conceived in the religious practice of mankind in

two ways, viz., as *formal piety* and as *practical piety*. The Holy Qur'an rejects the former and prescribes the latter (2:177;¹⁶⁰ etc.).

Practical Piety originates in the consciousness of the tremendous seriousness of human life and brings forth unflagging moral earnestness; and it reflects itself in three dimensions, namely:

1. An ever-deepening Awareness of the Perpetual Presence of God (57:4), Who, besides His other Attributes, is the 'Lord of the worlds' (1:1) and the Judge to Whom account will have to be rendered on the Day of Judgment (1:3),—an awareness which is cultivated through constant and meaningful remembrance of God (3:190-192; etc.) and which compels the pursuer of Religious Quest to act as if he is under constant judgment of the Divine Judge, Whom he can neither evade nor deceive.

The motto that emerges in this respect is: "Act always as if you are standing before the Divine Judge and witnessing Him; or, at least, that He is witnessing you." (Cf. Bukhari: *ØalÊÍ*, vol. 1, p. 12—*KitÊb-al-ImÊn*).

¹⁶⁰ About this verse a hostile critic of Islam. Rev. E.M. Wherry, is compelled to remark thus in his *Commentary on the Koran*: "This is one of the noblest verses in the Kuran. It clearly distinguishes between formal and practical piety. Faith in God and benevolence towards men is clearly set forth as the essence of religion."

2. Unswerving attitude of Goodwill towards all Fellow-beings, because the Holy Will of God is in harmony only with the good will (2:195; 3:76; etc.).

The motto that emerges in this respect is: “Always so act that your action is guided only by good-will.” In other words, the guiding-light is: “Goodwill towards all and ill-will towards none.”

3. Constant vigilance in respect of making and maintaining one’s self immune from spiritual and moral evil (59:18); because then alone the human ‘self’ can function as a receptacle for the Blessings coming from the All-Holy. (Cf. { وَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ } “... and He loves those who practise purity.” 2:222).

The motto that emerges in this respect is: “Always act with the consciousness that your goal is God.” (53:42; etc). That, it may be emphasised, demands utmost spiritual and moral refinement.

Love:

Love is basically directed to God (2:165), Who is the Absolute Good. On the moral plane, it manifests itself in love for the moral good, which projects itself in two dimensions: (a) love for fellow-beings; (b) love for personal goodness, implying that goodness alone should be permitted to reside in the human self.

Love for the good leads to its appreciation wherever found, even in one's enemy.

Thus the motto emerges here: "Appreciate the good wherever found, without any extraneous consideration." (Cf. 5:8).

Love for the good also leads to the consciousness of the ugliness of evil, which is the opposite of good. That, in its turn, brings forth hatred for evil.

There, the motto emerges: "Hate evil to the extent of fighting against it." (35:6).

But, 'hate for evil' viewed in the perspective of 'love for fellowbeings' leads to the outlook: "Hate evil, but not the evil-doer."¹⁶¹ In this outlook, the evil-doer becomes the deserver of sympathy in terms of the spiritual and moral damage that he does to himself. This aspect of the problem of evil evokes in the pursuer of Religious Quest the inspiration and the effort for the spiritual and moral emancipation of the evil-doer,¹⁶² as opposed to the spirit of hatred. This outlook found its highest expression in the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!), to which the Holy Qur'an bears witness thus:

¹⁶¹ Hating other persons creates spiritual darkness in the moral agent's consciousness.

¹⁶² He alone who, among other qualities, personifies this outlook in himself, is entitled to act as a preacher and missionary of religion. according to the Qur'Én.

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

“Haply you (O Muhammad!) are going to kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they believe not in this Message (thereby depriving themselves of its blessings)” (18:6).

It is active sympathy that assumes the form of *forgiveness*—even when dealing with an enemy, and of *mercy*, which both ought to be practised as the basic principles of conduct (24:22; 41:34-35; 90:17).

Truth:

*Truth*¹⁶³ implies adherence to *Reality*. As such, it is the very salt of life, being the constitutive quality of godliness (3:17; etc.). It is the light which runs through the cosmos (6:73; etc.). It is the most basic merit with which God has crowned the Holy Qur’an, the Holy Prophet—in fact, all Divine Messengers—, and the religion of Islam (2:119; 2:176; 7:43; 48:28; etc.). It is the Attribute of the Divine Being (31:30; etc.). Hence, Truth should be adhered to and pursued without mixing it with falsehood in the least (2:42).¹⁶⁴ From the practical point

¹⁶³ The Qur’Ēn projects the concept of *Truth* comprehensively, employing the term *al-Īdiq* (truthfulness, veracity) for the subjective aspect, and the term *al-Īqq* (reality) for the objective aspect.

¹⁶⁴ When this adherence is perfect and Truth captures the sub-conscious state of mind thoroughly, the adherer begins to see true dreams (*al-Ru’yÉ al-ØÉdiqa*) as a manifestation of *al-BushrÉ* (Glad Tidings) promised by God “in the life of the Present and in the Hereafter” (10:64). It would be a grave mistake to believe that such a state can be induced merely through ‘spiritual recitations’, which are consequential in respect of that purpose only when

of view, it should manifest itself in human life in two dimensions, namely: (a) personal truthfulness in thought, word and deed; (b) appreciation of truth wherever found.

The motto that emerges here is: “Maintain always the attitude of such strict devotion to Truth and Reality that nothing, not even the fear of death, may have any chance of success in enticing you into falsehood and un-reality.”

Justice:

Justice may be defined as ‘giving to everyone his due on the basis of equity’. The Holy Qur’an views it in terms of absoluteness, namely, as an imperative which is unconditionally, universally and absolutely binding—binding on everyone, under all circumstances, and in all situations; the binding without considerations of sex, caste, tribe, or race; binding without regard to the distinction of Muslim and non-Muslim, or of the ruler and the ruled, or of the rich and the poor; binding even if it hurts one’s personal interests (4:135; 5:9; 6:152; etc.). It is the virtue nearest to the virtue of Piety (5:9), which is basic to Religious Quest.

In its widest sense, the pursuit of Justice relates to two levels, viz., individualistic and collective.

The individualistic level has two dimensions, viz., justice to one’s self and justice to other individuals. Then, there are two aspects

undertaken in conjunction with moral and spiritual purification and integration of the self.

of the pursuit in each case, viz., positive and negative. Thus, at the individualistic level, four basic rules of justice emerge in the Qur'anic ethics: (a) establish positive devotion to the harmonious development of your personality; (b) remain constantly on guard against all negative factors in respect of every aspect of your personality; (c) give unstintedly to others what is due to them; (d) refrain absolutely from defrauding others in what belongs to them.

At the collective level, justice takes the following four forms, which have been projected by the Holy Qur'an:¹⁶⁵ (a) justice in social relations; (b) justice in respect of the process and enforcement of Law; (c) economic justice; and (d) political justice. The healthy growth of society, which influences the growth of the individual seriously, demands the enforcement of all these forms of justice.

Accordingly, the Qur'anic motto emerges: "Always adhere to justice in respect of yourself as well as in the interest of others with absolute sincerity and in all comprehensiveness."

Beauty:

The pursuit of spiritual, moral, or any other, Good is good in itself. It is good intrinsically. But the perfection of form is achieved only when it is grounded in the simultaneous pursuit of Beauty, which stands for *grace*, *balance* and *refinement* in conduct. Thus, Beauty forms the structural component in the Qur'anic term for virtue itself,

¹⁶⁵ See vol. 2: "The Structure of Islamic Society" for details and references.

i.e., *al-Íasanah* (the Good),¹⁶⁶ and of course it runs through the entire structure of the Qur’anic View of Life.¹⁶⁷

In the Islamic Religious Quest, the primary emphasis emerges naturally in respect of adherence to Beauty in the spiritual, moral and mental spheres. But, what is most remarkable, the physical dimension of life also gets its due to the full—of course, controlled by spiritual and moral values¹⁶⁸ and with the emphasis on *natural grace* as opposed to unbalanced artificiality and sophistication and vulgar ostentation,—in sharp contrast with the view of contempt for the physical in the ideal of ‘saintliness’ in other spiritually-orientated religions, on the one hand, and with the ‘worship’ of the physical dimension of life in the modern Sensate Culture, on the other.

Here, the motto emerges: “Always and in all things adopt Beauty as the garb of your behaviour.”

Wisdom:

A human being cannot move forward one step consequentially without *knowledge*. Hence, acquisition of knowledge to the maximum of one’s ability and availability of opportunity, stands forth as the fundamental human obligation, and this is what the Holy Qur’an has taught.¹⁶⁹ But, *formal knowledge* is only *information*, and does not

¹⁶⁶ Ref: “The Critique and Dynamics of Morals” (Book 2, Part 1).

¹⁶⁷ See vol. 2: “The Structure of Islamic Society”.

¹⁶⁸ Ref. vol. 1: “Art and Morality”, and vol. 2: “Duties as Aesthetical Being”.

¹⁶⁹ See vol. 2: “Duties as Rational Being”.

assist much beyond the minimum level of human aspirations. Rising higher in terms of Values and Ideals necessitates the struggle of diving deeper and with intellectual honesty and sharpness of vision into the System of Meaning which runs through the Reality. According to the Holy Qur'an, this struggle should be undertaken in terms of 'Religion' and 'Science' both; and having been undertaken in that *comprehensive* manner, it transforms 'information' into 'experience', and the stage is set for the pursuit of *Wisdom*, which progressively discovers *unity* in *diversity* and enables the possessor to distinguish between *appearance* and *reality* until he arrives at the *Fundamental Unity* pervading the cosmos, which, in its turn, leads him to the *experience* of *Ultimate Reality* (3:190-191). This is the height of wisdom, about which it has been proclaimed: "... whosoever is vouchsafed Wisdom he of a surety receives abundant good; and none will (truly) grasp the Truth (contained in the Divine Message) save the possessors of Wisdom."

Here, the motto emerges: "Strive for the acquisition of Wisdom, so that you are able to comprehend the Truth at a level where all doubt ceases."

Selflessness:

The concept of Selflessness is thoroughly projected in the very term employed by the Holy Qur'an for him who accepts its guidance, i.e., 'Muslim', which means: 'the human being who: (a) accepts the ideal of total surrender to God; and (b) pursues that ideal actively'. He remains a *formal Muslim* so long as he does not cross from (a) to (b) (49:14). He starts on the road to be Muslim in the proper sense when

he crosses into (b). He becomes a *genuine Muslim* only when he undertakes *comprehensively* the active pursuit of the ideal of total surrender to God, which, though it proceeds gradually, definitely implies the *practical affirmation* of Faith (*Im'Én*) through its translation into requisite *Action* (*al-'Amal al-ÎÉliÍ*), elevating him finally to the rank of the *Mu'min* (i.e., the Faithful, or, the Believer in the true sense) (49:15; etc.).

It implies that the *commitment* of the 'genuine Muslim' is total, expressed thus in the Qur'anic *Covenant of Faith*:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ ...

“AllÉh has purchased from the Believers their persons and in their wealth ...” (9:111). This Covenant enshrines *total selflessness* for the Believer, which is basically not negative but positive inasmuch as it means, in the final analysis, ‘affirmation of the self’ in God—in Divine Pleasure.

Selflessness being thus a positive state in Islam, adherence to it even at the basic minimum establishes in the personality of its possessor *humility, sweetness, gentleness, large-heartedness, active sympathy for all fellow-beings, simplicity in life, unstinted devotion to labour, fortitude, sincerity* and many other virtues.

From the point of view of Religious Quest, selflessness is the very starting point, being the very basis of Islamic life, subjectively considered.

Hence, the motto emerges: “Always so behave that not the pleasure of your self but the ‘Pleasure of God’ is the motivating force for your action.”

(7) Ultimate Goal of Religious Quest:

Islam is opposed to the doctrine of the Descent of God in Man. It regards the belief in Incarnation as both irrational and blasphemous,—irrational, because it projects the incarnation of the Infinite into the finite, and blasphemous because it involves an attack on the transcendent Majesty and Uniqueness of God. The theory of Incarnation finds its rationale actually in two related dogmas, namely, the dogma of ‘original sin’, which degrades humanity to the utmost, and the dogma of the physical reality being evil, which renders the human effort for spiritual evolution in the earthly environment illusory. Both of these dogmas are very damaging to the ideal of the spiritual and the moral progress of humanity. They only create despair and skepticism, except for the unverifiable hope in respect of the next life, and there also only for those who may develop faith in Irrationalism and compel themselves to believe in the mysteries of vicarious atonement, or of salvation through transmigration of souls, etc.

Rejecting the above-mentioned beliefs, the Holy Qur’an affirms the sinless birth of the human beings and the essential goodness of the world. Going beyond that, it emphasises the ‘vicegerency of God’ as the status of humanity, and invites human beings to undertake the

pilgrimage of eternity¹⁷⁰ in terms of *dynamic* movement towards God (5:35; etc.). Thus it lays down the doctrine of the ‘Ascent of Man to God’.

The ‘Ascent of Man to God’ consists in a spiritual journey, or, the Religious Quest. We learn the following from the Holy Qur’an in respect of its progress and achievement.

The spiritually un-regenerate person stays in a state of spiritual inertia (6:122). When his heart is opened to the understanding and appreciation of the ideal of ‘Surrender to God’ (39:22), and he undertakes the Religion Quest, he is revived spiritually (6:122) and his spiritual nearness to God increases (96:19); and as it increases, the harmony with the Divine Life increases; and as that harmony increases, God’s Grace bestows upon him ‘a Light with which he walks among human beings’ (6:122). Then he continues his spiritual pilgrimage with the help of that Light, acquiring more and more holiness in terms of harmony between himself and God (89:28), maturing more and more in terms of the direct experience of Reality, and acquiring deeper and deeper *Conviction* about God (15:99). In this, the pursuer of Religious Quest attains the realisation of God, on the one hand, and realizes himself in terms of the vicegerency of God, on the other; whereby he attains the fulfilment of the highest and the most ultimate yearning of his soul—which constitutes his essential personality—in the state of Beatitude and Felicity. That is the highest possible achievement for the human personality, because of the

¹⁷⁰ Cf. The concept of ‘*journey to God*’ in 37:99.

realisation in it of the ideals of all forms of human consciousness at their highest.¹⁷¹



**CERTAIN POINTS OF BASIC DISTINCTION BETWEEN
MYSTICISM AND ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS QUEST
[POPULARLY CALLED TASAWWUF IN MUSLIM HISTORY]**

Lexicologically, the word ‘mystical’ has two shades of meaning, viz.: (1) ‘relating to mystery’; ‘mysterious’; ‘sacredly obscure’; (2) ‘involving a sacred or secret meaning hidden from the eyes of the ordinary person, only revealed to a spiritually-enlightened mind’. Similarly, the word ‘mysticism’ carries two shades of meaning, viz.: (1) ‘fogginess and unreality of thought (with suggestion of mist)’; (2) ‘the habit or tendency of religious thought and feeling of those who seek direct communion with God or the divine’.¹⁷²

Refined mysticism, as it has emerged in the civilized religions, conforms to the second shade of meaning. And in this respect some superficial affinity might be discernible between Mysticism and the Islamic Religious Quest. But going deeper we find certain very basic differences which are of immense importance.

¹⁷¹ Ref: vol. 1: “The Qur’Ēnic Conception of Heaven and Hell”.

¹⁷² *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*, section ‘M’.

These differences exist in terms of: (1) philosophy; (2) technique, (3) function, (4) outlook; and (5) goal.

1. In terms of *philosophy*: Islam differs with all the systems of Mysticism, either largely or wholly, with regard to the teachings concerning God, the World, and Man; and it is self-evident that those differences cannot but influence the structure of the quest most vitally.
2. In terms of *technique*: All the schools of Mysticism employ as their instruments meditation, contemplation, recitation and asceticism; while Islam employs spiritual devotions to God, and spiritual contact with the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) and with the spiritual world as such—all that involving recitation of spiritual Truths as one of the instruments—, intellectual grasp of the Value-System of the Islamic Code of Guidance, study of Nature and History, practice of social morality, meditation, contemplation, and periodic seclusion or ‘withdrawal’ (*I’ktikÉf*). Again, the element of asceticism in Mysticism makes its quest possible for only a select few; while the Islamic principle of the practice of Religion in social life and its scheme of placing the basic elements of Religious Quest in the obligatory religious routine of a Muslim¹⁷³ makes it possible for every Muslim to undertake it in accordance with his capacity and the availability of opportunity.

¹⁷³ See: the discussion on “The Integrated Individual” (vol. 1, pp. 260-267).

3. In terms of *function*: The function of Mysticism is the annihilation of the animal self, the development of psychical powers and self-realisation in terms of its specific philosophy. The function of Islamic Religious Quest is spiritual and moral integration and development of the 'self' through self-purification, ultimately for reforming the society.
4. In terms of *outlook*: In Mysticism, the outlook is pessimistic as regards earthly existence, and hence it is passive in relation to it. In the Islamic Religious Quest, the outlook is optimistic based on faith in the goodness of the Divine Plan under which everything exists and every event occurs; and it is dynamic, because the world and worldly life, handled in accordance with the Divine Guidance, are viewed as means to the attainment of human destiny,—which outlook directs the life of the pursuer of Islamic Religious Quest to multi-dimensional and virile activity for interference in the process of history.

The glorious role of genuine *ØĒfīs*¹⁷⁴ in Muslim history bears historic testimony to this fact. Of all the sections of Muslim

¹⁷⁴ With the awful degeneration of Muslim society, due to certain historical factors, well-known to students of Islamic history, the understanding as well as the practice of *TaĀwwuf* also has degenerated in more dimensions than one. Also its name has been misused for certain wrong notions and ideas in certain quarters. In spite of that, however, the denial to the Islamic Religious Quest of its rightful place amounts to the very negation of Islam. Also,

society, *only* they and their disciples have propagated Islam in the world; and it is they who have contributed most in respect of spiritual and moral fervour among Muslims. Also, their heroic struggles in the field of political reform form a very important chapter in the history of Islam.

5. In terms of *goal*: The goal of the mystic is personal salvation. The goal of the pursuer of Islamic Religious Quest—of the true *ØĒfĒ*—is personal fulfilment at three levels, viz., in his inner being, in human society, and finally in God. Thus, it becomes his vital obligation to undertake ceaseless struggle for transforming human society in terms of godliness.

Before closing this discussion, we may refer to the four terms which have become famous in respect of the ‘Way of classical orthodox *Øūfī* Teachers’—namely: *al-Sharī‘ah*, *al-Ùarīqah*, *al-Ma‘rifah* and *al-×aqīqah*; and we may emphasize that all these terms are firmly grounded in the teachings of the Qur’an.

To begin with: They do not imply four different philosophies or ways of life, but only four stages in the life and experience of a genuine pursuer of *IslĒm*.

Thus:

interpreting *Talāwwuf* in terms of the forms of Mysticism projected by other religions is a flagrant violation of Truth.

- a. The stage of *al-Sharī'ah* relates to the acquisition of knowledge of the Islamic system of Beliefs and the code of Conduct relating to the Path of Islam; and it emerges in response to the primary question: 'What is Islam?'—or, in other words, 'What does Islam demand of a human being?'

The answer to the above question has emerged in the Qur'Ēn in all its fullness; and it forms a major part of the present book.

- b. The stage of *al-Tarīqah* refers to the *method* for pursuing *IslĒm*, 'i.e., for travelling on the 'Path of Islam' *meaningfully* and *purposefully*, rather than *formalistically* and *ritualistically*; and it emerges in response to the very vital question: 'How to be a *Muslim*?—namely, 'What is the *method* of becoming, living and developing as a *Muslim* in the true sense?'

The Qur'an supplies the *method* which is enshrined in the verse:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ رَزَّاهَا

"he attains *falĒĪ* who subjects it (i.e., the soul) to *tazkĒyyah*" (91:9). As such, it consist in the pursuit of *tazkĒyyah*—i.e., eradication of the positive and the negative evils that obstruct or keep in abeyance the development of human personality in the spiritual dimension, and consequently in the moral dimension,—thereby ensuring healthy spiritual growth under the impact of *IslĒm*—which operates on the wheels of *Zikr* ('Remembrance of God') and *Fikr* ('Probe into the mysteries of Creation') (3:190-191), and which ends in the establishment of *falĒĪ* in one's personality (i.e., spiritual

development in terms of the harmonious and comprehensive actualization of the latent capabilities that relate to the transcendental dimension of the personality) (87:14). This method is employed in strict adherence to the ‘Straight Path’ projected in *al-Sharī‘ah*.

- c. The stage of *al-Ma‘rifah* (or, ‘the Realisation’, as opposed to the possession of ‘formal knowledge’) bears references to the fruits of the strenuous labour (*JihÉd*) undertaken in respect of *al-Tarīqah*.

That stage consist in the progressive realization in one’s Consciousness, through the ‘Light from AllÉh’ (39:22), of the Glory of God, the nature and status of the cosmos, and the true function and destiny of the human being (3:191),— in short, of the Truth of Islam and all that it stands for. In other words, it consists in achieving *baġtrah* spoken of in 12:108; thereby rising to the most meritorious status, with reference to this world’s life, becoming the ‘bearer of witness’ of the Truth of Islam to humanity (2:143).

- d. The stage of *al-‘aqīqah* (or, ‘the Reality’) forms actually the highest level of *al-Ma‘rifah*.

That stage is said to be attained when the Light that God establishes in His Devotee (‘*abd*’) (39:22) illumines all the dimensions of his Consciousness to an extent that he lives and moves *only* under the impact of that Light (6:123), and not through his Desire (79:40). At that level of experience, his ego transcends, in terms of its approach to the reality of Existence, the phenomenological level of

'Diversity' and becomes focussed in the realm of 'Unity',—'Unity' being the *ĪaqĒqah* (reality) of Existence.

The above facts may be briefly stated in other words thus: The basic function of Islam is to *transform* the human personality on the basis of *ImĒn bi AllĒh* (Faith in God). That transformation is, in the very nature of the case, an *internal process*. As regards *al-Sharī'ah*, it is the Law relating to the 'Straight Path' of Islam. But that Path, like every path as such, is meant for undertaking a journey to a goal—the goal in its case being God (2:156). Now, travelling *voluntarily* towards the goal, which Islam emphasises, necessitates: (a) travelling with vigilance and personal enthusiasm and pleasure, which alone enables a person to face the hazards and hardships of journey with equanimity and steadfastness; and (b) proceeding in the journey *meaningfully* and *consequentially*. It is, however, in the very nature of formal Law, even though it may have divine sanction, that, in respect of transformation of personality, it can, by itself, bring about only *superficial* results, which do not endure under the strains and stresses of human life. Then, being externally-imposed, it imparts the impression of being a 'burden' rather than a 'pleasure'. Also, the Instinctive Self—which, unless fixed in subjection to the Higher Self, acts normally as the dominating force in human life—always tries to evade the 'Law' in numerous ways. Hence, it is necessary that *al-Sharī'ah* should be *internalised*. Namely, it should be assimilated in *personal experience* as best as possible in every individual case—rather than remaining an imposition 'from outside'—,any meaningful transformation of personality being impossible in the latter case.

Internalisation, in its turn, demands the adoption of a method (*al-Ùarīqah*) and actual meaningful journey (*sulūk*) in the realm of experience. Then, as the transformation proceeds, the appreciation of the Truths that Islam has taught begins to deepen in terms of personal realisation (*al-Maʿrifah*)—realisation with total Consciousness and not merely rationalistic appreciation through discursive thought, which can never provide unshakeable *ImĒn* (Faith), and realisation not only in respect of the physical problems of human life but, moreso—and that is important—in respect of the metaphysical problems, which are of the most basic importance in the Islamic scheme of Guidance. That realisation brings the earnest *Muslim* progressively closer and closer to the understanding of the Reality (*al-ḫaqīqah*). That understanding attains in due course a standard level when a *Muslim's* Consciousness becomes *fixed* on AllĒh, the Really-Real.

Finally, it may be emphasised that a religion without Religious Quest is like a body without a soul; and, as a modern psychologist has remarked: “A man with a religion purely of the rational type would be in a worse position than the devils.” (Thouless: *Psychology of Religion*, p. 90).



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Chapter 6

THE PHILOSOPHY OF UNITY

The Holy Qur'an has laid the greatest emphasis on the concept of Unity (*TawÍÊd*). It is not found there, however, merely as a concept among concepts but as an all-pervading principle which governs all the fundamental domains of human faith and action. As such, it is vitally necessary to understand it in all its dimensions for the sake of understanding the basic Qur'anic approach to the vital human problems.

(1) *Unity of God:*

The Qur'anic view of life is grounded in the purest monotheism—the doctrine of the *Unity* of God. God is One. He is indivisible, and He has no partner in the godhead. He is the Reality. He is all-in-all. Belief in Him demands indivisible loyalty and devotion to Him. This emancipates the human beings from every cosmic and earthly bondage and elevates them to the highest pinnacle of glory.

(2) *Unity of the Universe:*

The universe has come into existence through creation, and God alone is its Creator. Therefore, it is a *unity*—in existence as well as in purpose. And, as such, it is a cosmos and not a chaos. It is a Reign of Law and not a Chance Order. Moreover, it is a Moral Order and not an amoral conglomeration of wayward particles.

Subjectively pitched on the denial of the existence of God by hook or by crook, the materialistic philosophies assume,—*assume* only, because they have no *proof*—the origin of the world in *chance*—a *ghostly* and *meaningless* term *in that respect*. Postulation of chance shuts the door to the affirmation of any Meaning, or of the necessary existence of a Monistic Principle as the starting point. But the affirmation of a Meaningful Monistic Principle is the condition of believing in the universe as a *cosmos*, as opposed to *chaos*; and the affirmation of the universe as a *cosmos* is necessary for regarding the human life as *meaningful*. Then, unless human life is *meaningful*, all talk of philosophy, science, economics, politics, social improvement, justice and truth is, to say the least, beside the point.

The principle of Evolution may be presented by the Materialists as the monistic principle underlying the working of the cosmos. But, how, where, why and by whom was that process originated? Evolution remains devoid of any genuine meaningfulness without satisfactory answers to those questions? Indeed, it remains a blind process, even though we may notice some method in it. The difficulties inherent in the hypothesis of Evolution have been commented upon by an eminent French scientist thus:

“One of the greatest successes of modern science was to link the fundamental Carnot Clausius law (also called the second law of

thermodynamics),¹⁷⁵ key-stone of our actual interpretation of the inorganic world, with the calculus of probabilities. Indeed, the great physicist Boltzmann proved that the inorganic, irreversible evolution imposed by this law corresponded to an evolution toward more and more ‘probable’ states, characterized by an ever increasing symmetry, a levelling of energy. The universe, therefore, tends towards an equilibrium where all the dissymmetries existing today will be flattened out, where all motion will have stopped and where total obscurity and absolute cold will reign. Such will be the end of the world—theoretically.

“Now, we men at the surface of the earth are witnesses to another kind of evolution: that of living things. We have already seen that the laws of chance, in their actual state cannot account for the birth of life. But now we find that they forbid any evolution other than which leads to less and less dissymmetrical states, while the history of the evolution of life reveals a systematic increase in dissymmetries, both structural and functional. Furthermore, this trend can hardly be attributed to a ‘rare fluctuation’ destined to be ironed out statistically, as it has manifested itself steadily for over one thousand million years (probable age of life on this globe), and as the dissymmetries, gloriously unconcerned about the law set by man, became greater as eons passed by until they culminated in the brain of man.

¹⁷⁵ This law can be worded as follows: An isolated material system can never pass twice identically through the same state. Every successive state entails a definite decrease in its available energy. Hence its irreversibility.

“Once more we repeat that there is not a single fact or a single hypothesis, today, which gives an explanation of the birth of life or of natural evolution. As far as the origin of life is concerned, we have briefly studied the problem in the first part of this book. Willy-nilly, we are, therefore, obliged either to admit the idea of a transcendent intervention, which the scientist may as well call God as anti-chance, or to simply recognize that we know nothing of these questions outside of a small number of mechanisms. This is not an act of faith, but an undisputed scientific statement.”¹⁷⁶

In the hypothesis of the Dialectical Process also the Materialists fail to see that the emphasis should lie not on the process as such but on the monistic *principle* inherent in it. If the world-process is conceived to have started with the simultaneous emergence, through *chance*, of the thesis and the anti-thesis, leading through their interaction to synthesis, that would explain nothing. If it is said that only a thesis emerged first and the anti-thesis was born out of it, that would give us a monistic principle at the start. But the emergence of the original thesis by *chance* makes the entire process blind and does not provide any sanction for any meaningful philosophy of life. The fact is that if it is inferred on the basis of certain phenomena that the world-process consists in repetition *ad-infinitum* of a triad in terms of ‘thesis—anti-thesis—synthesis’, then we are compelled to accept the monistic principle as the controlling force running through the process, because of the culmination of the interaction of the ‘thesis’

¹⁷⁶ Le Comte du Nouy: *Human Destiny*, pp. 41, 134.

and the ‘anti-thesis’ in ‘synthesis’ everytime that the cycle is conceived to be repeated,—the repetition giving to the world-process the form of a chain wherein every new ‘synthesis’ assumes the form of two prongs in terms of ‘thesis’ and ‘anti-thesis’ that finally merge themselves into a ‘synthesis’. In other words, dualism is repeatedly reducing itself into monism. This gives the clue to the existence of a monistic principle as the starting point and of the spirit of ‘monism’ pervading twice the dialectic.

The Qur’an also speaks explicitly, and not just implicitly, of the presence of the dialectic in the world-process in terms of the perpetual conflict of the ‘Reality’ and the ‘un-reality’, or of Truth and Falsehood (21:18; etc.), and it emphasises its importance for human beings in its ethico-religious dimensions. It affirms its origin and starting point, however, not in chance, nor in a blind monistic principle, but in the Will of the Supreme Being Who possesses all the attributes of Perfection.

It may also be observed in passing that while the so-called Scientific Materialism emphasises the transformation of Quantity into Quality as the mode of the world-process, the Qur’an emphasises the transformation of Quality into Quantity. The former view was actually built on certain wrong scientific notions of the nineteenth century in respect of Matter, which have now undergone radical change—lending ever-growing support to the Qur’anic view.

We might state the Qur’anic view thus: Because God is the Absolutely Transcendental Being, His fundamental Attribute is

‘Absolute Quality’. The cosmos has emerged in existence, in terms of evolutionary creation—as opposed to ‘spontaneous’ creation—through the activity of His Will. Quality is ‘intangible’. Quantity relates to tangibility. The world-process is the progressive crystallisation of in-tangibility into tangibility. The intangible is space-less and time-less,—we may call it ‘Idea’ in the fundamental sense. The tangible is spatio-temporal. We know that we proceed progressively towards intangibility as we move from ‘appearance’ to ‘reality’ in the physical analysis of Matter, which means that intangibility, or space-lessness and time-lessness, or Qualitativeness, is the basis of the existence of Matter.

(3) Principle of ‘Unity’ in respect of the relation of God with the Cosmos:

According to the Qur’an: God is Eternal and Absolute, and the cosmos is Transient and Relative. Now, the Relative is not the Absolute. But it has originated in the Will of the Absolute and is sustained by the Absolute. Thus, the Relative has no independent existence of its own, while the Absolute neither *excludes* nor *includes* the Relative. (Cf. the philosophical doctrine of the “Ahl-as-Sunnah wal JamÉ ‘ah”: *LÉ ‘ain wa LÉ ghair*).

(4) Unity of Life:

Taking ‘life’ in the universe as a whole, or ‘*life*’ as such, all ‘life’ forms a *unity*. In other words: Because the Holy Qur’an projects the universe as an organic whole which has come into existence through the unitary action of the Divine Will, all the projections and

manifestations of ‘life’ exist within a single unitary evolutionary principle—human life being distinguished as unique and overpowering because it functions within the framework of Personality.

With respect to the human being, as such, his life before his birth on the earth, his earthly life, and his life after death—all these three phases form a *unity*. Indeed, life is tied to a continuous evolutionary process.

(5) Unity of the ‘Natural’ and the ‘Super-Natural’:

The Basis of Existence for all phenomena and things in the entire universe being *one*, and the Source of all laws pertaining to every aspect and every part of the universe being *one*, the ‘natural’ and the ‘super-natural’ are only two levels of the activity pervading the cosmos, involving no contradiction. The distinction is actually grounded only in the human framework of reference.

(6) Unity of Knowledge:

Because the universe is a *unity*, knowledge should be pursued in terms of ‘*unity*’ in the sense that it should form one ‘Whole’. The different branches of knowledge should be viewed in the relationship of inter-dependence. This leaves no ground in the Qur’anic view of knowledge for the time-honoured division in terms of ‘religious’ and ‘secular’.

(vii) Unity of Faith and Reason:

It is not, however, only the different branches of knowledge that are complimentary among themselves. The time-honoured dichotomy

of Faith and Reason, which has played havoc in the history of Christian West, is also a false notion. Cognition (knowing) and conation (feeling) are not anti-thetic, both being the dimensions of the same human Consciousness. Faith and Reason have also, therefore, to go together: to function in *unity*. Faith without Reason lands human beings in superstition. Reason without Faith deprives humanity of the highest values. Taking up this problem in the very first Revelation, the Holy Qur'an has emphasised the *unity* of Faith and Reason and has projected the ideal of Rationally-orientated Faith.

(8) *Unity of Truth:*

God has stated the basic Truth in His Revealed Guidance, and has invited His vicegerents, the human beings, to experience the Truth through their observation. Truth does not have different facets; it is one-sided. But its observation through the finitude of human senses and reason gives only partial views which relate to infinitesimally small portions of the whole and are, in the very nature of the case, discrete. However, even the minute and partial views, if interpreted in the scientific spirit, i.e., objectively and without the distortion of the image through the intrusion of subjectivity, are bound to corroborate the Revealed Truth. In other words, true Religion and true Scientific Approach to Truth stand in the relation of *unity*.

(9) *Unity of Religion:*

The Holy Qur'an teaches that, God being One and humanity being one, Divine Guidance in terms of Religion has not been confined to any particular chosen race. Rather, entire humanity has

been blessed with it during the course of human history (13:7; etc). Nor could it be different for different communities. This gives the principle of *unity* in respect of Divine Revelation. Also, this teaching provides the venue of appeal to the religions of the world for casting off the shells of later accretions, perversions and distortions brought into existence by human ignorance, ingenuity, or vested interests, and returning to the original Message in the light of reason and with the assistance of the Qur’anic Revelation,—finally bringing about the *unification* of religions in the Divine Truth and paving the way to the unity of mankind.

(10) Unity of ‘Love’ and ‘Law’:

‘Love’ functions as the ‘soul’ and ‘Law’ functions as the ‘body’ of the human code of Conduct; and, in the Qur’anic view, genuine flowering of the human personality is possible only when ‘Love’ and ‘Law’ function in organic *unity* in the life of a person.

(11) Unity of Mankind:

Coming to human beings: God, the One, has created them all; and He originated the existence of the human species on the earth through one original pair of man and woman. This gives us the Qur’anic principle of the *Unity* of Mankind, in which all prejudices of race, colour, caste and sex are obliterated and the only principle of distinction in respect of status is *achievement* in terms of spiritual and moral character and knowledge. As regards respect for human dignity, it is, in the Qur’anic view, the birthright of every human being.

(12) Principle of Unity in respect of the Sexes:

Although man and woman are different in respect of some of their functions, and consequently in some of their organs, they have emerged, according to the Holy Qur'an, from a single primeval Self. In their basic human nature and status, therefore, they are *united in the bond of humanity*:—they are one and the same, and even in their functions they stand out as complimentaries and not as the negation of one another. Consequently both possess, equal human dignity.

(13) Unity of Human Personality :

With reference to the human personality, the Holy Qur'an emphasises its organic wholeness. The human being is a *unitary being*, with the soul, the mind and the body and their different dimensions of existence and behaviour, forming an integrated organic Whole—a *Unity*. This Qur'anic view gives rise to the Qur'anic ideal of the integration, wherein all the dimensions of human personality: the physical, the moral, the rational, the aesthetical and the spiritual, have to be developed comprehensively and harmoniously in order to achieve the Divine Purpose with regard to human destiny.

It may be emphasised here that, similar to what we have noticed in the case of the cosmos, the human being also emerges, in the Qur'anic view, as a being who is 'space-less' and 'time-less' in his origin and constitution. Namely, he originated in a dimension of existence which transcends 'space' and 'time', or, in other words, in the transcendental dimension—a dimension akin to the fifth dimension of the five-dimensional continuum in which we find an electron during its jump from one orbit to the other. And his *essential*

constitution is in terms of what is called 'soul' in popular language. As for the birth and the death of the human being on the earth, the Qur'anic view may be stated in scientific terms thus. In respect of birth : The soul projects itself, under the Will of God, in the 'dimension of time', bringing about the existence of the *mind*, which is temporal. Then, beyond that, it projects itself into the 'dimension of space', bringing about the existence of the *body*, which is spatio-temporal. At the time of death, the soul resumes its purely transcendental state of existence,—of course, carrying within itself the effects of its earthly career.

(14) Unity in respect of 'Freedom' and 'Determinism':

According to the Holy Qur'an, man is neither the abject slave of inexorable Fate, as the ancient oriental philosophy would have it, nor completely self-determined—the sole maker of his destiny, as the atheistic existentialism of the modern West teaches. Affirmation of inexorable Fate bars the way to all moral struggle,—in fact, to all struggle for improvement, because every sentiment and every idea and every desire of every human being is conceived to be predestined. On the other hand, the view that man is completely free plunges him in the terror and the agony of being infinitely lonely—and that with all the human weaknesses—in what is regarded as an alien and hostile world. Both of these views end in the philosophy, of Pessimism, which is pure poison in relation to human happiness and progress.

The Holy Qur'an steers clear of both the above-mentioned stand-points and gives us a view whereby it harmonises the concepts of

Freedom and Determinism. It teaches that when God created man, He *endowed* him with personality as well as freedom—a freedom which, though not absolute, is, nevertheless, adequate to human nature. Then it teaches that God has not abandoned man to himself. Man has been made the vicegerent to function in harmony with God, Who is the real Architect of man's destiny. As such, God is man's constant 'companion', and God and man both participate in the making of man's destiny. This 'Mutual Participation' forms the medium wherein Freedom and Determinism stand out in *unity*.¹⁷⁷

(15) Unity in Basic Social Life:

The distinctions of the clergy and the laity, of the wealthy and the poor, of the superior caste and the inferior caste, and of the superior race and the inferior race (based on the inhuman dogmas of the 'chosen people' or of the supremacy of one colour of human skin over another), have plagued the life of human communities—and that not only among those who have believed in the plurality of gods, like the Hindus, but also among those who have been the so-called upholders of Monotheism, like the Jews and the Christians. Negatively, through the abolition of the institution of priesthood, and positively through the creation of a classless, casteless and non-racial society, the Holy Qur'an has sounded the death-knell to all such evil distinctions. It has envisaged a society dedicated to godliness, and it has laid down a value-system wherein the only criteria of superiority are greater

¹⁷⁷ Cf. The position of *Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-JamÉ'ah* in terms of '*bain al-Jabr wa al-IkhtiyÉr*'.

spiritual refinement, moral goodness and knowledge. This value-system reduces all the conflicting material distinctions into *unity*.

(16) *Unity in terms of Politics:*

The establishment of the state is rooted in organisation, and organisation necessitates the emergence of the super-ordinate, on the one hand, and the sub-ordinate, on the other. The super-ordinate is the repository of the coercive authority and its function is to command—to rule. As opposed to it, the function of the sub-ordinate is to obey—to be *ruled*. This gives rise to a situation of conflict if supremacy is vested in the state-authority. The ancient thinkers have believed for long in the Divine Right of Kings. They have conceived the kings as above Law. Among the moderns, Hegel has idolised the State to the extent of its being infallible, unquestionable and unaccountable. Again, the Marxist state, through its iron regimentation, reduces the sub-ordinates to mere automatons. There, the politbureau is all-in-all.

The Holy Qur'an resolves this ugly and painful situation, by *uniting* the super-ordinate and the sub-ordinate *in subjection* to the principle of the Supremacy of the Law. No human being has a right to rule over another human being. It is the authority of Law—the Law of God, Who alone is the Sovereign—that should reign supreme.

It was this unifying principle which was proclaimed in his inaugural address by the first Caliph of Islam, Abu Bakr the Illustrious (in whom God's Pleasure abides!). He said: "Obey me so long as I obey AllÉh and His Messenger (Muhammad). But if I deviate from obedience to AllÉh and His Messenger, obedience to me remains

binding on you no more.” (Ref: Dr. M.S. Jung: *The Administration of Justice in Muslim Law*, p. 6).

(17) Unity of ‘Church’ and ‘State’:

A state which functions without any idealistic foundations is only an expediency-based crude ‘police organization’; and a state which concerns itself only with the physical needs of its citizens, leaving the spiritual and moral needs to a parallel organisation, calling it the ‘Church’, damages the cause of its citizens. Because, it either breeds a state of the conflict of ideals or promotes the relegation of the fulfilment of spiritual and moral needs to a position of no importance. Being firmly committed to the principle of *Unity*, the Qur’an projects the concept of the state in terms of the organised effort of the people for a comprehensive and integrated fulfilment of all the requirements and needs of healthy, progressive and vibrant collective existence. Hence, the Islamic state functions in terms of the *unification* of the ‘Church’ and the ‘State’ and shoulders the responsibility of protecting and promoting not only the physical interests but also the spiritual and the moral interests of its citizens.

(18) Unity in terms of Economics:

All human systems and institutions aim at realising some human value or values. Thus capitalism is grounded in the value of Freedom. It was this value which emerged as the highest, by way of reaction to the authoritarianism of the Christian Church, when Europe was blessed with the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution. The effort to realise this value brought about revolutionary changes in the fields

of general social life, politics and economics. In the general social life emerged the phenomenon of increasing respect for anti-authoritarianism leading to disrespect for all authority, including that of the parents, the teachers and the Church. This disrespect has assumed enormous proportions today, leading almost to anarchy. In the political field, autocracy gave way to democracy, which became a tremendous source of strength for those Western communities wherein it had the proper opportunity for flourishing in a healthy manner. In the field of economics, the value of Freedom was realised in terms of 'free enterprise'—the *laissez-faire*, which finally built up the giant of Monopoly Capitalism. This process gave tremendous economic power to the advanced states of Europe and America. At the same time, however, it helped to undermine a very important human value, i.e., the value of Equality. Such a result was inherent in the philosophy of Capitalism and could not be avoided.

However, it is human nature to yearn for the realisation not only of the value of Freedom but also of the value of Equality, and of several other values besides. Hence a severe reaction came, and the child of this reaction was Communism, or, the Scientific Socialism of Karl Marx. But, very unfortunately, this reaction was a blind reaction. It was even a crude reaction. Because, without challenging the sincerity and the academic attainments of Karl Marx, it is evident that his mind could not penetrate the true nature of the evil which he wanted to eradicate, and, in his reactionary mood, he just picked up the value of Equality, as a superficial person would do, and made it the foundation of his social philosophy. But with what result? There

are so many states in the world today who have adopted the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Everywhere the effort to realise the value of Equality in terms of Scientific Socialism has invariably resulted in depriving the people of the value of Freedom—and that completely. This tragedy, again, like the tragedy of Capitalism, was inherent in the situation.

The truth of the matter is: If a society adopts Freedom as the fundamental value, there will be no Equality. Similarly, if a society adopts Equality as the fundamental value, the value of Freedom will vanish into thin air.

But the realisation of both the values: Freedom and Equality, is necessary for the proper development of the human communities. The question is: how to bring this about?

The Holy Qur'an has supplied the answer in its philosophy of Unity, wherein it teaches the establishment of harmonious *union* between the values of Freedom and Equality through the adoption of the value of Justice as the fundamental value on which the human social order should be founded. It is evident that if this is done, the dichotomy of Freedom and Equality will be resolved, and it will be possible to realise both of these values in *due proportion* and without sacrificing either. As a consequence, a synthesis of the merits of free enterprise and controlled economy, will emerge, making it possible to establish a welfare society, which will function on the principles, not of class-war or of exploitation of the working class by the moneyed class, but of love, harmony, human fellowship, moral excellence and

justice, will ensure a just distribution of wealth on the basis of just reward for *labour*, *talent* and *achievement*, and will guarantee to every citizen the basic needs of life in terms of food, clothing, shelter, medical assistance and education. Therein, no one, to whatever station in life he may belong, will be wronged in any manner, and slavery of all types between man and man will vanish—freedom and equality in respect of human dignity being accepted as the birthrights of every human being.

This is what the Qur’anic philosophy of Unity envisages in respect of the economic structure of society, and this is what it actually achieved during the Righteous Period of Muslim history, when the Qur’anic orthodoxy had not yet been tampered with.

(19) Unity of Classes:

It is in the very nature of every human society to undertake and promote diversified activity. Diversification of activity, in its turn, creates diversified groups who contribute to the life and growth of the community through the pursuit, at different *levels* of execution, of different types of tasks. Then, each type enjoys a *status* of its own. Thus different types of tasks become graded as of *superior* or *inferior* status in respect of their superior or inferior role in terms of their utility to the community, conferring *ipso facto* superiority or inferiority on the executors of those tasks. Thus groups of people become diversified and differentiated and emerge in terms of their professional superiority or inferiority.

Then, it is in the very nature of organised activity that there is someone who commands, and there are others who obey. That, in itself, creates superiority and inferiority among the members of a society.

Thus, the emergence of classes with positive differentiations is the very condition of the existence of a human society. And those classes emerge on different bases. *Administratively*, the society becomes divided into the ruling class and the class of people who are ruled. *Activistically*, it gets divided into classes according to professions or *types of work*, on the one hand, and in respect of the *quality of labour*, on the other. Then, the factors of 'type of work' and 'quality of labour' are related to the talent which, certain persons possess while others do not, to the labours put in by certain persons for cultivating those talents, and to the measure of the merits acquired by them through sincere labour. Even if it is said that every member of a society owes all his merits and achievements totally to the society, that the society makes him what he is, and that therefore he should submerge his individuality in the society,—even then, on principle, the society has to pay more regard, and take more care of, him on whom it spends more in order that he may be more useful to it. Thus even making the concept of 'labour' as the only standard of evaluation, the emergence of classes with differences in respect of status in social, political and economic terms is unavoidable. The unskilled manual labourer cannot be put on par with the skilled manual labourer. Then, a manual labourer cannot be put on par with an intellectual labourer. Again: Among intellectual labourers, a

creative scholar or scientist cannot be put on par with an office-worker or even with a journalistic writer,—nay, even with a teacher. Still again: The head of the state, elected by the people for his exceptional learning, wisdom and sagacity, cannot be put on par with the citizens of his state.

The above situation emerges whether the society is capitalistic or communistic, and whether it is autocratic or democratic.

The real fault with the feudalistic and the capitalistic societies lies in their materialistic approach to life and the consequent exploitation, injustice and want of human sympathy—all these evils being inherent in the feudalistic and the capitalistic social philosophy. “Every man unto himself, and devil take the hindmost”, as they say. Or, as the Darwinian atheism formulates it: “Survival of the Fittest.”

Human inequalities and qualitative and quantitative gradations are natural to the social life of humanity. But exploitation and injustice and want of human feeling are not natural. What the Holy Qur’an does, therefore, is: (1) it emphasises the *human basis* of social life, as opposed to class-distinctions. It does not believe that different professions should unavoidably divide the human beings into mutually-hostile classes. (2) It destroys the spirit of estrangement, to which the engagement of different groups of the people in different professions might give rise, through its fundamental *unifying* institution of Brotherhood. (3) It destroys the very foundations of, and the spirit behind, Feudalism and Monopoly Capitalism. (4) It gives a firm teaching and sound laws to keep away exploitation, injustice and

tyranny from the society which practices the Guidance it gives. (5) On the positive side, it establishes Welfare Society based on Piety, Truth, Justice, Love, Wisdom, Beauty and Selflessness,—thereby eliminating all possibilities of the emergence of any type of class-conflicts and the consequent disturbance of the principle of *human unity*.

(20) Principle of 'Unity' as the basis of Culture:

The emphasis on 'other-worldliness' creates ideational culture. The emphasis on 'this-worldliness' leads to sensate culture. The Qur'an stands for human fulfilment in 'this' world as well as in the 'other' world, *unifies* the Good of this world with the Good of the other world,¹⁷⁸ and gives to both the spiritual and the physical values their full due—synthesising them within its *unitary* ideal of human fulfilment. Thus it projects the *unified* integralistic Culture.

(21) Unity in terms of the 'Ideal of Single Goal':

All human activity proceeds under the impact of different yearnings: the yearning for holiness, the yearning for moral achievement, the yearning for aesthetic refinement, the yearning for knowledge, the yearning for physical happiness, etc. Thus activity becomes diversified, at the individual as well as the collective level, into spiritual, moral, aesthetical, intellectual, physical, social, economic, political, etc. Now, what happens in actual life is that the

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Along with other references, the prayer:

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً

“Our Lord ! Give us Good in this world and Good in the Hereafter” (2:201).

superficial and un-balanced mind views each of these activities as if it exists independently of the others and believes that it should be pursued as such. Then, because of a diversification of human temperaments and environmental settings, different human beings acquire *special* interest in different types of activity and finally land themselves in the evil of fixing up the goal relating to one particular activity as the *only* or, at least, the *basic* goal of life. Then they go beyond that and transform their personal inclination into philosophy. The errors thus committed infect the minds of even great thinkers. To give just a few examples. In respect of the function of the State: Hegel says that it is moral, while Marx says that it is economic. As regards Man: Aristotle says that he is a social being. Plato emphasises that he is a rational being. Marx asserts that he is an economic being. Then, coming to Culture: the upholders of the ideational school of sociology maintain the view that the spiritual alone is real and consequently hold to the ideal of an other-worldly culture; while the materialistic sociologists believe that the physical alone is real and, as a result, stand as protagonists of sensate culture. Thus, different individuals, different thinkers and different human groups adopt and emphasise different goals, and the pursuit of those different goals leads to endless disharmony and perpetual conflicts within the personalities of the individuals, and between different classes that go to constitute a community, as also between the different nations and races.

The Qur'anic concept of *unity* which, at the level of the psychological, the moral and the social phenomena, assumes the form of the principle of *integration*, provides the guidance which can save

mankind from disaster in this behalf. Because God has created all the human beings with a plan and a purpose, and has endowed them with the status of His vicegerency, and has created the world such that the human beings can act in it in accordance with their status, the *only goal* worth the name which every human being should by his very nature pursue is the fulfilment of his destiny as the vicegerent of God,—wherein he attains harmony with God, Who is the Source of all life, light, power, happiness and beatitude. This *only goal* is, in fact, the *comprehensive goal* to which the pursuit of all the partial goals should bear reference; and for that purpose all the *immediate* goals of human activity (—and every healthy activity *must be* included in the empire of Human Action—) should be pursued in an integrated and balanced manner, harmonising everyone of them with the rest, and all together with the *comprehensive goal*, or, the *ultimate goal*.



Chapter 7

INTEGRALISTIC MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND COMPREHENSIVE MORAL CODE

We have noticed in the foregoing that the Holy Qur'an gives a monistic principle of evaluation in its concept of God. That principle plays a vital role in the Qur'anic moral philosophy, so that the Qur'anic ethical norms are established in what might be named as Divine Ethics.

The Divine Ethics emerges in the Qur'anic concept of God as 'ethical Being' Who behaves towards human beings in the ethical way. As for the human being, he has to imitate the Divine Ethics as the vicegerent of God—as best as he can.

God is the Possessor of the Best ¹⁷⁹ Attributes (7:180; 17:110; 59:24), and:

يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“all that is in the heavens and the earth is devoted to His *tasbÊl* (i.e., proclaims His absolute freedom from every type of evil and attests His glory in respect of His absolute perfection).”¹⁸⁰ (59:24).

¹⁷⁹ *al-ÍusnÊ*: the Best (Lane's *Lexicon*).

¹⁸⁰ Meaning of *tasbÊl* according to Lane's *Lexicon*.

Elsewhere, the act of *tasbīl* has been distinguished from the act of prayer:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرِ صَافَاتٍ كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ
صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ

“Behold you not that it is AllÉh Whose *tasbīl* is the function of all (beings that are) in the heavens and the earth, and the birds (in flight) with wings outspread? Surely each one knows its (own mode of) prayer and its (own mode of) *tasbīl*. And AllÉh is Aware of what they do.” (24:41).

Then, among the human beings, those who do not ignore the Signs of God—which form the keys to the understanding of the meaning of human life and the nature of human destiny—and establish such a living faith in God that they become capable of appreciating those Signs, surrender of their whole self and *tasbīl* enshrined in the realisation of God’s absolute Perfection become the guiding lights of their lives:

إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرُوا بِهَا خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَسَبَّحُوا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا
يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

“Only those (human beings) are (genuine) believers in Our Signs, who, when they obtain admonition therewith, fall down prostrate (in adoration of AllÉh’s Glory) and engage in *tasbīl* celebrating the praise of their Lord; and they are never arrogant (in respect of the acceptance of their total dependence on AllÉh)” (32:15).

Tasbīl has been made a regular daily routine for the Believers:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا . وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

“O you who believe! Remember AllÉh with much remembrance and engage in His *tasbīl* morning and evening” (33:41-42).

According to Imam Raghīb al-Isfahani, the act of *tasbīl* stands for worship in thought, word and deed.¹⁸¹

Thus: As it relates to thought and word, *tasbīl* is a process of active realisation in one’s consciousness of the infinite glory of the Divine Attributes, and thereby of the infinite purity and perfection of the Personality of God; and, as it relates to deed, it is a process of active assimilation of the ethical value-system of those Attributes in one’s personality on the basis of a dynamic understanding of the privileged status that God has conferred on him through the infusion of what He calls ‘My spirit’ (15:29)—the goal being the realisation of the human vicegerency of God, which starts actualising only when the human personality begins to project the reflection of the Divine Attributes.

The ethical implications of this Qur’anic teaching are:

God Himself is the ethical ideal, and the proper ethical function of the human being is to imitate Him.¹⁸² This teaching forms the

¹⁸¹ *MufradÉt al-Qur’Én*, sec: *SBH*.

¹⁸² Cf. The Qur’Énic verse:

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ

fundamental base of the Qur'anic moral philosophy, and it has been repeatedly brought into focus in explicit terms in the Qur'an. For instance:

1. The mercy, compassion and loving kindness of God is the ever-recurring theme of the holy book. Its very first verse projects it with full emphasis in terms of *raġmah*. Hence the observance of compassionate kindness (*marġamah*) has been made one of the governing principles of Islamic life (90:17), along with its different dimensions projected in different contexts at different places,—for instance, love and mercy spoken of in respect of their observance by the husband and the wife (30:21).
2. God is *al-Barr* (52:28). Hence, a human being has to act as *barr* through practising *birr* comprehensively (2:177), with special emphasis on social good (3:92). In fact, *birr* has been made one of the governing principles of human life (5:2), and to be from among the *abrĒr* (pl. of *barr*) has been made the ideal (3:193).

The words *barr* and *birr*, which emerge from the same root, are untranslatable because of the richness of their meanings. The basic connotation is: kindness, affection, gentleness,

“(We take our) colour from AllĒh, and who is better than AllĒh at colouring? It is He whom we worship” (2:138).

justice, righteousness, honesty, veracity, considerateness, extensive beneficence.¹⁸³

3. God is Forgiving (*Ghafūr*) and Merciful (*Raḥīm*). Human beings should also be forgiving and merciful in their behaviour towards one another (24:22).
4. God is the Bestower of Good. A human being should also do good to his fellow-beings (28:77).
5. God does not wrong any human being even in the slightest measure (10:44; 4:40). The human beings also should not wrong either others or themselves (2:279; etc.).

One important aspect of this ideal is that it has not been laid down only theoretically, but has also been projected in practical terms in the moral personalities of all the Prophets of mankind, who came to exemplify the Divine Ethics,—and, finally, in the exemplary moral character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!), which enshrines comprehensively the Divine Ethics in terms of human perfection and thus forms the perfect human Model for imitation (33:21).¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Lane's *Lexicon*, Sec: 'BR'.

¹⁸⁴ All the Divine Messengers of the world have been, as mentioned above, the embodiments of the ideal. But, because history has not preserved any authentic records of their lives, while historical records are available for a critical assessment of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's imitation of the Divine Ethics, he alone is to be followed as the Exemplar.

As to the implications of the ideal of “imitation of Divine Ethics” for moral philosophy, they may be stated thus :

1. This ideal is the highest—the most sublime, the noblest and the most consequential—ideal conceivable for humanity, because of its basis in God’s Personality.
2. This ideal imparts a dynamic approach to human life, because God’s Personality is dynamic.
3. This ideal makes creativity the fundamental mode of human struggle, because God’s Personality is committed to continuous creation.
4. This ideal supplies an objective moral standard, because it places the standard totally outside of human subjectivity;— and thus it ensures the absolutely-pure moral behaviour.
5. This ideal provides the highest motivation for morality. Because, on the positive side, the entire human moral behaviour has been conceived therein as based on ‘love for God’ (2:177; etc.); and, on the negative side, the devotee of God is to remain perpetually in a state of ‘fear of God’, Who is always present with him (57:4), is always watching him as to whether he is fulfilling his role of vicegerency (49:18; etc.), and will recompense him after death, i.e., at the termination of his earthly sojourn, as the Lord of the Day of Judgment (1:3; 99:6-8; etc.).

6. This ideal enshrines infinite possibilities for human evolution, because the levels of imitation of the infinite perfection of the Divine Personality are infinite.
7. This ideal projects an integrated and comprehensive view of human struggle and destiny, because God's Personality possesses the highest integration and comprehensiveness; and, consequently, the Qur'anic moral philosophy runs into all the dimensions of human activity and functions as a philosophy governing total human behaviour.¹⁸⁵

As such, the Moral Code which the Qur'an has given is the most comprehensive code possessed by humanity.¹⁸⁶



¹⁸⁵ The Holy Qur'án integrates the life of humanity both horizontally and vertically. The integration mentioned here is *horizontal integration*; while, through its teaching concerning the role of the Prophets and their genuine followers, it establishes *vertical integration* in human moral history.

¹⁸⁶ The entire volume on the "Structure of Islamic Society" forms the Qur'Énic moral code.

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Chapter 8

THE INTEGRATED INDIVIDUAL: BASIC QUALITIES OF A MUSLIM

Man's status and function has been differently viewed in the different schools of moral thought,—the differences emerging basically in the emphasis laid by each on the different aspects of human nature and activity. Thus: for some, man is only an animal among animals; while, for others, he is something more, and as such should be referred to as a 'being'. Then, his function has been emphasised variously in terms of a 'social animal', a 'rational animal', an 'economic animal', a 'moral being', and a 'spiritual being'.

In the Qur'anic view, the essential attribute of the human being is *personality*, which consists in the possession of self-consciousness, self-directed will and creative intellect. As such, he is unique among all the creatures living on earth. Nay, his superiority is acknowledged even by the holy celestial creatures known as angels (2:34; etc.). Moreover, he stands in a special relation with God in terms of the attribute of 'personality', which both possess—; and, in consequence, his status among God's creatures is that of the vicegerent of God (2:30). He carries a responsibility on his shoulders which "the heavens and the earth and the mountains" found themselves unable to bear (33:72). He has a cosmic mission, because "whatever is in the heavens and the earth has been made subservient" to him (45:13). Nay, his mission is even beyond that. It is supra-cosmic. For, he belongs to

God and unto Him he is journeying (2:156). Indeed, God is his final destination (53:43). As such, he is a theocentric being functioning on earth in a spatio-temporal framework of activity and a physical environment; and his vicegerency of God implies that he should function as an integrated being, namely, comprehensively, harmoniously and creatively, in all the dimensions of his personality: physical, spiritual, moral, intellectual, and aesthetical.

It is with this view of status and function of the individual that the Qur'an prescribes a comprehensive moral code for him. That moral code is grounded in a value-system which is comprised of the same norms as the ethical guidelights for the Religious Quest, mentioned already, namely; Piety, Selflessness, Truth, Justice, Love, Wisdom and Beauty.

The existence of this similarity is due to the fact that the Qur'anic integralistic philosophy of life aims at integrating not only the individual but also the society. The integration in the former case is achieved horizontally, while in the latter case it is vertical, wherein the individuals at all the levels of human development in terms of that philosophy—from the beginners to the highly-developed—automatically follow the same value-system and the same dynamics, being thus distinguishable from one another only in quantitative terms and not qualitatively. The 'path' is the same, and the 'goal' is the same. Hence the path is open to all, and the goal is open to all. The role of the more-developed is not to consider themselves as a special privileged class but to inspire and assist the less-developed towards

ever-greater effort. *Thus a true co-operative spiritual, social, political and economic democracy comes into existence.*

Here the Qur'anic philosophy differs radically with those religions which create a distinct class of 'pursuers of saintliness', on the one hand, and a vast mass of 'religious proletariat', on the other,—with principles and ideals and modes of life different for each class.

However, to return to the basic norms that should govern the life of every Qur'anic individual, i.e., of every Muslim: The acceptance of each of these norms as a guidelight brings into activity certain very basic moral principles ¹⁸⁷ even at the minimum level, which might be named as the level of the *Basic Moral Quest*.

[*Note:* It should be understood that the difference between the *Religious Quest*, which we have already discussed, and the *Basic Moral Quest*, which we shall discuss now, is, strictly speaking, not of kind but of degree. They are focussed in the same direction, but differ as to the respective levels of achievement enshrined in them,—the emphasis in the latter case being on the building up of a sound moral life through ethico-religious, exercise grounded in 'Faith in God', and in the former case on the achievement of sound experience of nearness (*taqarrub*) to God, and the consequent 'holiness' in *walÉyah*, basically through the exercise of 'Love for God' in its progressive

¹⁸⁷ The full-fledged moral code which governs human life Islamically has been presented in vol. 2: "The Structure of Islamic Society", to which the readers should turn to for the Qur'Énic references relating to the basic moral principles projected here.

intensification. It will thus be noticed that while the two Quests are distinguishable, the latter forms actually an inseparable part of the former; or, we might term the latter as the preliminary level of the former.]

To proceed briefly:

Piety: in the basic sense, has three fundamental dimensions in the Qur'anic philosophy, namely: 'faith in God', 'love for God', and 'fear of God'. Adherence to faith in God in the form of the Islamic formula: "There is none worthy of worship except AllÉh" establishes *humility* and *moral courage* and *optimism* in one's moral behaviour at the very start. Love for God supplies *positive motivation for the highest ideals*. Its cultivation establishes *unfailing love for doing good to humanity as well as for one's betterment*, and '*fills*' the human life so perfectly as to keep away the psychical ailment of the feeling of 'emptiness' of life for good. Cultivation of fear of God, which is, according to the Qur'an, actually fear of Accountability and Divine Judgment, brings about the establishment of *conscientiousness, sense of responsibility and moral earnestness*.

Sefflessness: which, according to the Qur'anic philosophy, consists in 'absence of evils relating to the animal self', imparts genuine *dignity* to the pursuer's personality through the exercise of *self-control*, which is its vital base, and ensures *temperance* and true *chivalry* and the *pursuit of all the social virtues* in the highest measure. (It is the urges of animal self that form the source of all moral evils. Hence, the Holy Qur'an teaches that the impelling force

of the animal self should be kept in abeyance through the constant cultivation of the basic Qur'anic ideal of 'surrender to God',—that being the very function of a Muslim, as contained in the word '*Muslim*' itself.)

Truth: Its pursuit, according to the Qur'an, is three dimensional, namely: in thought, in word, and in deed. Adherence to 'truth in thought' establishes a person in *adherence to reality, or, a realistic approach to life*, and in *sincerity*—as opposed to hypocrisy, and in *single-mindedness*. Adherence to 'truth in word' ensures *veracity* and *integrity*. Adherence to 'truth in deed' establishes *honesty* and *effort* for *efficiency* in one's life.

Justice: functions in respect of others as well as in regard to one's self. (1) Adherence to absolute justice in respect of others, as commanded by the Qur'an, ensures the *avoidance of doing any undeserved injury* to anyone, even though one's own interests or the interests of one's relatives and friends are injured thereby. (2) Adherence to justice in respect of one's self ensures utmost effort for promoting a *natural, healthy and vigorous* life, as demanded by the Qur'an: (2.1) The ideal of promotion of life as *natural* commits a person to *simplicity*—as opposed to luxurious and vain sophistication. (2.2) The ideal of promotion of life as *healthy* consists, in accordance with the Qur'anic philosophy, in the effort for the establishment of *sound physical health, sound moral health, sound spiritual health, sound economic outlook and sound social demeanour*; and the duties that emerge are: (a) in respect of physical health: negatively, *to avoid unhealthy foods and drinks* and *to refrain from gluttony*; and,

positively, *to stick to healthy foods and drinks only*—and that in *balanced quantities*, with *recurrent fasting*, besides the obligatory one month's fasting during Ramadan—, and to *physical exercise in the form of sports and otherwise, healthy recreation and proper rest*; (b) in respect of moral health: to maintain *purity of conscience* and the effort for achieving *soundness in moral behaviour*; (c) in respect of spiritual health: positively, to cultivate more and more a *living and dynamic relationship with God*,¹⁸⁸—the minimum basic obligatory institutional exercises prescribed by the Qur'an in that connection being the five daily obligatory Prayers (*ØalÉt*), fasting during Ramadan (*Øaum*), and the payment annually of a fixed portion of one's surplus wealth for the benefit of others, solely out of love for God (*zakÉt*); and, negatively, *to avoid all that which hinders or damages the devotion to God*, including all superstitions; (d) in respect of economic outlook: to undertake utmost *sincere effort for earning one's livelihood by lawful means and with dignity*, and *to avoid all waste* of possibilities for economic production; (e) in respect of social demeanour: to maintain one's *dignity in society* through adherence to moral integrity, for which, in addition to its moral teachings, an exercise in the religious perspective has been provided by the Qur'an in the institution of the *×ajj*.¹⁸⁹ (2.3) The ideal of

¹⁸⁸ The combination of (a), (b) and (c) ensures what is called 'mental health'.

¹⁸⁹ In respect of the wisdom enshrined in the institutions of *ØalÉt*; *Øaum*, *ZakÉt* and *×ajj*, readers may refer to the Author's: "*Philosophy of Worship in Islam*", published by the World Federation of Islamic Missions, Karachi, Pakistan.

vigorous life commits a person to: (a) pursuance of *earnestness, purposiveness, hard labour* and *a progressive outlook*; and (b) *avoidance of waste of time and energy in idleness or in vain pursuits.*

Love: projects itself in two dimensions, namely, love for one's self, and love for other creatures of God. The *former* demands: (a) doing all that lies in one's power for making one's self *sound physically, spiritually, morally, intellectually and economically*; (b) avoiding to the utmost what harms one's self in any way. The *latter* brings into action such virtues as *sympathy, mercy, compassion, kindness, respect, generosity*—in fact, doing good to others in every way and abstaining from injuring them and their lawful interests in any way.

Wisdom: as an ideal of life, commits a person to growth in knowledge and attainment of more and more insight into the reality of phenomena and things. The Qur'an wants this pursuit to proceed through a critical study of Divine Revelation, Nature and History, along with the consequential outlook of promoting good and eradicating evil in one's self and in society,—whereby, through *JihÉd*, i.e., ceaseless and vigorous effort, the individual as well as the society attain *power, peace* and *progress.*

Beauty: as an ideal of Qur'anic philosophy, commits the pursuer to gracefulness and beautification in every aspect of life. Thus: *sweetness, gentleness* and *gracefulness* emerge in morals and manners; *cleanliness* becomes the watchword in respect of all actions and things, including the body, the dress and the environment: *natural*

beautification in conformity with the ideals of Piety and Wisdom is pursued in respect of one's self, one's productions and one's environment.¹⁹⁰



¹⁹⁰ For Qur'Ānic references relating to the details projected in this chapter, refer to vol. 2, relevant sections.

Chapter 9

THE INTEGRALISTIC WELFARE SOCIETY

BASICALLY GROUNDED IN THE PURSUIT OF PIETY, TRUTH, JUSTICE, LOVE, WISDOM, BEAUTY AND SELFLESSNESS

The Qur'anic Guidance lays such vehement emphasis on Social Good that its social gospel emerges as the very kernel of the religion of Islam, as the unfriendly Canadian orientalist, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, also admits: "While Christianity in recent years has moved towards a social gospel,¹⁹¹ Islam has been a social gospel from the very start."¹⁹²

This is due to the fact that Islam is opposed to the mystico-ascetic approach to life and regards society as the natural framework of activity for human fulfilment.

Islam's social gospel is, however, based on religion and morality, as opposed to the secular social philosophies which are earth-rooted and materialistic in their approach and built up on Expediency as the ground-work of their value-systems. Hence, as regards its foundations,

¹⁹¹ Mark the movement of Christianity towards the philosophy of Islam, and assess the Christian allegation that Islam has borrowed its humanitarian philosophy from the teachings of Christianity.

¹⁹² *Islam in the Modern World*, London 1946, p. 22.

the Islamic society is *theo-centric* and *ethico-religious*, nourished by the pursuit of *godliness*.

As *Theocentric Society*, its social philosophy is grounded in the highest and the most meaningful value-system, because belief in and devotion to God provides the perfect and the comprehensive principle for the highest values and ideals. Indeed, it alone projects the genuine and meaningful sanction for the pursuit of Truth, Justice, Love, Beauty, Austerity and Selfless Service to Fellow-beings.

As *Ethico-Religious Society*, it is based on the theocentric ethical Idealism, which rests upon: (a) the 'love for God' as manifesting itself in the love for humanity, and (b) the 'fear of God' as manifesting itself in the fear of Divine Judgment; which provides, in its concept of God—wherein the ethical aspect of His Personality has been thoroughly emphasised—and the concept of Survival-after Death in terms of a dynamic concept of human destiny, the *only* genuine and absolute sanction for morality; and which enshrines the assurance of the realisation of its Social Ideal in its Exemplar, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!) and in the society established by him at Madina.

In terms of *spiritual activity*, it is committed to spiritual illumination. Because: God is the 'Light of the heavens and the earth' (24:35); the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) is 'Light' (5:15) and the 'Illuminating Lamp' (33:46); the Holy Qur'an is 'Light Manifest' (4:174); Faith (*ImĒn*) is 'Light' (39:22); the function of Qur'anic Guidance, or, Islam, is to bring humanity out of Darkness into Light

(14:1); a genuine member of the Islamic society is one who receives a Light from God, which shines forth in dealings with fellow-beings (6:122); and, in the heavenly life, the Light of the Faithful “will run before them and on their right hands, while they say: Our Lord! Perfect our Light for us ...” (66:8). Thus, the Islamic society is a *Spiritually – Illumined Society*.

In respect of its *ethical outlook in terms of human dignity*, it invites its members beyond *goodness to nobleness*. Because: (1) God is Most Noble (96:3); the Prophet is noble (69:40); the Qur’an is noble (56:77); the messenger-angel of the Qur’an is noble (81:19); the human race is noble (16:70); the norm governing Islamic conduct is to behave nobly (17:23; 25:72; 89:17), so that the members of Islamic society are to be regarded as more or less noble, and hence deserving more or less honour, in proportion to the nobility in their character (49:13); genuine pursuers of Islam have been promised ‘noble provision’ (8:4) and ‘noble (final) reward’ (33:44); and it is the mission of Islam to lead its followers into the ‘noble gate’ (4:31) for the attainment of all the dimensions of human nobility. Hence, the Islamic society is a *Noble Society*.¹⁹³

In its *structural aspect*, it lays emphasis on the family as the unit of society (35:54; etc.). In fact, the family plays a very important role

¹⁹³ The root-word *Karuma*, employed in all the verses quoted, means ‘to be noble’, i.e., ‘to be noble-hearted, high-minded, magnanimous, generous, liberal, munificent’. (Ref: *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, edited by J. Milton Cowan, p. 821) Mark here the Qur’Énic dimensions of nobility!

in Islam's social ethics (26:214; etc.). Because, providing, as it does, the first and the basic social environment to the individual, it is emphasised by Islam as the original field for social morality wherein a person has to engage himself in a constant socio-moral exercise, and it is the moral discipline which he acquires there that plays a vital role in respect of his moral behaviour relating to his community, country and humanity at large. The institution of the family is thus the corner-stone of Islamic society; and Islam has provided, for its proper functioning and stability, a code of familial ethics which is built upon: (a) marital piety, (b) parental piety, and (c) filial piety,—namely: uncompromising emphasis on: (a) chastity of the husband and the wife, (b) comprehensive parental benevolence, and (c) unflinching goodwill, devotion and respect of the children for their parents and all elders. It should be noted here that Islam's emphasis on *chastity* is absolute, because without that no healthy family life is conceivable. This fact accounts for: (a) the special rules of *modesty* which Islam has laid down for the women folk, with which is connected its prohibition of promiscuous intermingling of sexes; and (b) Islam's conditional permission for polygamy. The former is in acknowledgement of the woman's basic role as mother, wherein "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world";—indeed, the possibilities of the spiritual and moral survival of a community can exist only so long as the womenfolk remain conscientious custodians of the community's spiritual and moral values. As to (b), the qualified permission for polygamy is for warding off prostitution, besides

providing for the orphans, in a society having a surplus of women folk.¹⁹⁴ All in all, the Islamic society is a *Family-Based Society*.

Being based on the affirmation of the unity of human kind and the ideal of human brotherhood (4:1), Islam regards racialism, tribalism, caste-ism, class-ism and dynasty-ism as nothing less than infidelity to God and treachery against humanity. All the members of the Islamic society, therefore,—whatever their race, or tribe, or dynasty, or colour, or language, are *equal* members and possess, originally and basically, equal fundamental rights. The Islamic society is thus a *Non-Racial, Non-Tribal, Casteless, Classless Society* (49:13). It may also be termed as an *Egalitarian Society*.

The rights which the members of the Islamic society possess fundamentally in equal measure are, however, subject to modification, on *individual basis*—and not on the basis of race, tribe, etc.—in terms of practical demonstration of respect for the discipline of the society and the contribution to the welfare of the society. This must be so, because, in the first instance, up-grading the merit of and degrading the demerit is the very essence of justice and the only way to avoid the frustration of virtue; and, in the second instance, the emergence of gradation among individuals is the unavoidable condition of the functioning of a society, and the existence of the spirit of competition is the necessary prerequisite for progress. Thus, the Islamic society is an *Open Society*, wherein merit is based on achievement alone and not

¹⁹⁴ For Qur'Énic references relating to the facts mentioned in this discussion, see vol. 2: "The Structure of Islamic Society."

on considerations of physical distinctions in terms of race, or tribe, or family, or colour, or language, or sex (6:132).

Coming to the *ideological structure*: it is integralistic, 'religion' being the integrating factor. Thus, morality is indissolubly joined to 'religion' (2:25; etc.), while economics (3:91;¹⁹⁵ etc.), politics (2:38; 5:8;¹⁹⁶ etc.), and law (4:135;¹⁹⁷ etc.), are related to 'religion' through morality in an unbreakable bond. Thus, ideologically, the Islamic society is an *Integrated Society*.

Then, besides the principle of integration, its structural aspect is also governed by the principle of 'the Balance' (55:7-8), which implies the realisation of *all* the values of human life in a balanced manner—namely, giving to every value its due,—in contrast with the ideational philosophy which emphasises only the spiritual pursuit, and with the materialistic philosophy which confines the human struggle within the bounds of physical needs. Thus, the Islamic society is a *Balanced Society*.

¹⁹⁵ The Qur'Ānic ethico-religious basis of economics is the economic welfare of humankind, as emphasised in the verse referred to.

¹⁹⁶ The Qur'Ānic ethico-religious basis of politics is the elimination of 'fear and sorrow' and the establishment of justice, as emphasised in the verses referred to.

¹⁹⁷ The Qur'Ānic ethico-religious basis of law is equity, as emphasised in the verse referred to.

In its *functional aspect*: Being theo-centric, ethico-religious, integrated and balanced, its vision is not confined to the day-to-day issues of human life—to which it gives their due—but extends beyond them to the ultimate problems of human destiny. It, therefore, commits itself to the most comprehensive and the highest human ideals, in contradistinction to the materialistic approach which has actually no room for ideals because of its affirmation of the cosmos as ‘blind’, the human life as a ‘gamble’, and the human destiny as an ‘illusion’.

Then, being the trustee of the mission of humanity for the realisation of the vicegerency of God, it has to imitate God’s Attributes, among which is His Attribute of Creativity (23:14). As such, it has to function progressively in its adoption of means for the improvement of human welfare in all aspects of life, through the pursuit of Wisdom and through the conquest of the terrestrial and the celestial environment. The Islamic society is thus an *Idealistic, Dynamic and Progressive Society*.

We have already noted that, structurally, the Islamic society is an egalitarian society. That being so, it functions democratically. Indeed, the Holy Qur’an establishes spiritual democracy, social democracy, political democracy, and economic democracy. It establishes spiritual democracy, as we have already noted, by abolishing priesthood and ‘spiritual feudalism’ completely and by making the acquisition of knowledge the prerogative and the obligation of everyone, including the womenfolk, tearing into shreds the very notion of privileged families and special classes and castes. It establishes social

democracy, as already noticed, by abolishing all criteria of tribal, racial and colour distinctions, affirming only the superiority of good character. It establishes political democracy by abolishing theocracy as well as all those secular views of government in which any human being may have the opportunity of tyrannising over and exploiting other human beings,—both of these principles forming basic constituents of the Qur'anic social philosophy, as already noticed. It establishes economic democracy—through, among other principles and laws, the basic principle that 'wealth should not be permitted to circulate among the wealthy only' (59:7)¹⁹⁸, which makes it imperative that the economic system should be such as to provide a fair measure of equality of opportunity to all the members of the society for securing decent means of livelihood, and thereby sharing in the national wealth honourably through honest labour and sincere achievement, whereas the disabled secure their basic needs honourably through the social-welfare tax imposed by Islam on the well-to-do on members of the society (9:60; etc.). Thus, the Islamic society is a *Democratic Society*.

The guiding light of the Islamic social ethics is justice, which has been enjoined by the Holy Qur'an in terms of absoluteness and comprehensiveness (5:8; etc.),—whereby the establishment of all forms of social justice, i.e., moral, legal, economic and political, has

¹⁹⁸ { كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ }

been enshrined in the Islamic code of life.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the Islamic society is a *Just Society*.

The concept of Mercy enjoys a basic importance in the Qur'an. Because: God is the 'Most Merciful of the merciful' (7:151; etc.), Whose Mercy 'comprehends everything'²⁰⁰ (7:156; etc.); the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) is 'Mercy unto the worlds'²⁰¹ (21:107); the Holy Qur'an is 'Mercy to the Doers of Good' (31:3); God will cause the Faithful to enter His Mercy after death (76:31); and the practice of Mercy in human relations has been explicitly emphasised (17:24; 30:21; 48:29; 90:17). Thus, the Islamic society is a *Merciful Society*.

The very basis of the Qur'anic philosophy of life is the negation of all forms of selfishness and the affirmation of love for humanity on the basis of love for God. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an has emphasised the principle of 'preferring the good of others to one's own comforts'

¹⁹⁹ For references, see vol. 2: "The Structure of Islamic Society."

²⁰⁰ Imitation of Divine Attributes' being the function of the Muslims, they are under obligation, on this basis itself, to make the practice of Mercy one of the guiding principles of their lives.

²⁰¹ Imitation of the Holy Prophet's moral character being the very basis of Islamic life, all Muslims are under obligation to practise Mercy towards all creatures, even as the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) has commanded: "It is the merciful people on whom the Merciful (God) bestows Mercy. Be merciful to those who are on the earth. (Then) He Who is Above will bestow Mercy on you." (Tirmizi : JÉme', vol. 2, "*al-Birr wa al-Øilah*").

as a basic characteristic of Islamic life (59:9). Hence, the Islamic society is an *Altruistic Society*.

The Qur'an has made knowledge one of the two most fundamental pillars of the pursuit of greatness by human communities (58:11), and the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) has made the pursuit of education for the acquisition of knowledge obligatory for every Muslim, man and woman. Hence, the Islamic society is an *Educated Society*.

The Qur'an has laid down the 'Limits prescribed by AllÉh' and has commanded the members of the Islamic society to adhere to the requirements of those 'limits' (2:187; etc.). It has thus channelised human life, and thereby subjected it to discipline. Again: It has emphasised consequential activity (59:18). But a truly consequential activity is not possible without proper planning, which, in its turn, necessitates disciplined undertaking. Moreover, the principle of 'discipline' forms the very soul of Islamic conduct (24:51; etc.). The Islamic society is thus a *Disciplined Society*.

The Qur'an stresses the 'Brotherhood of the Believers' along with all its implications (49:10). Hence, the Islamic society is a *Fraternal Society*.

The Qur'anic laws relating to international relations between Muslims and non-Muslims and the Qur'anic ethics of war are based on absolute justice and regard for humanity.²⁰² Similarly, the Qur'an

²⁰² For references, see vol. 2: "The Structure of Islamic Society",

forbids the Muslims from persecuting the non-Muslims for compelling them to change their religion, allowing them thus the right to freedom of conscience (2:256). Also, the Qur'an emphasises that Muslims should not abstain from doing good to the non-Muslims, unless they are in a state of active enmity (60:8-9). Thus, the Islamic society is a *Humanitarian Society*.

The Qur'an has made *JihÉd*, i.e., relentless effort through hard labour to one's utmost capacity, one of the highest and the most unavoidable virtues of a Muslim (22:78; etc.), and has stressed that value lies in labour (53:39) and achievement (59:18; etc.). The Islamic society is, therefore, an *Industrious Society*.

The Qur'an condemns 'love of this world's life' (79:38-39; etc.), invites repeated attention to the emptiness of the pleasures of worldly life (3:185; etc.), forbids all vain spending and waste (7:31; etc.) which is the basis of luxurious living, castigates the infidels for 'loving wealth' (89:20), commands the Muslims not to follow the behests of their animal self (4:135; etc.), and finally invites them to a life dedicated to the love for values (3:15-17)—the highest value being the love for God (2:165), which should manifest itself in the love for fellow-beings (2:177; etc.). This makes *austerity* the ideal in respect of Islamic life, as exemplified at its highest in the life of the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!), and practised by all those who have walked in his footsteps. The Islamic society is thus an *Austere Society*.

Finally, the *goal* to be achieved through the realisation of the values that govern the Islamic society has been enshrined by the Holy

Qur'an in the concept of *faĪ*,²⁰³ i.e., welfare, which has been related explicitly and directly both to the society²⁰⁴ and to the individual.²⁰⁵ Then, the concept of *collective welfare* has been presented in all dimensions: spiritual, moral, physical, economic, political, etc., in contrast with the emphasis on economic welfare *alone*,—as we find in the Marxist Scientific Socialism. This makes the Islamic society a *Total Welfare Society*.

The above *twentyone* basic dimensions emerge in respect of the society which it is the mission of the Qur'an to establish,—a mission that was not only preached but *realised* unambiguously and concretely by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (in whom God's choicest Blessings abide!) in the Islamic society founded by him.

When this society assumes the form of the state, as it did in the state of Madina, a theo-centric, democratic, welfare state, or, a *theo-democratic welfare state*, comes into being. Defining it a little more elaborately, it is the 'Government of God, through the Rule of Divine Law, by the Trustees of the Mission of Islam, who function on the basis of their election by persons of character and wisdom among Muslims and administer the state, within the limits prescribed by God,

²⁰³ 3:104; 3:130; 59:9; 62:10; etc.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ 87:14; etc. —

{ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى } “He who has purified himself will have success.” (87:14)

as Servants of the People, for the attainment by the People of their Comprehensive Welfare.’

We might briefly clarify certain basic concepts involved here.²⁰⁶

‘Government of God’ implies that sovereignty in the Islamic state belongs to God and not to the people. The concept of the ‘sovereignty of God’, in its turn, ensures political equality for all—the rulers and the ruled, and provides the basis for immunising the society from political tyranny. The sovereignty of God can be challenged and denied only by the atheists. But even in secular political philosophy, which projects the concept of the ‘sovereignty of the people’, the term ‘people’ stands for a Corporation and a conceptual entity as it embraces the past, the present and the future generations of the people of a nation-state, bound all the time by the fundamental principles of Constitution established by the ‘founding fathers’.²⁰⁷ Thus, there too, it is a ‘transcendental’ entity in which sovereignty is affirmed. However, the antinomy that emerges in affirming that the people are ‘sovereign’ and ‘subject’ at the same time creates difficulties, which are avoided most rationally in affirming God as *sovereign* and the people as *subjects*.

²⁰⁶ A separate treatise is intended to be presented by the author on the Islamic state, wherein elaboration and comparative evaluation of Islam’s political and economic philosophies shall be undertaken.

²⁰⁷ Refer, among other books on political philosophy, to Walter Lippmann’s ‘*The Public Philosophy*’, London 1955.

‘Rule by Divine Law’ implies that the fundamental structure of political norms, principles and laws has been given by God, and is therefore eternal and unchangeable. This characteristic of the law governing the Islamic state ensures stability in political life and the consequent stability in the total life of the community, and establishes the principle of ‘supremacy of law’,²⁰⁸ on firm grounds wherein no body, not even the head of the state, stands above the law.

‘Government by the Trustees of the Mission of Islam’ implies that because the entire Islamic *millat* is under obligation to promote that mission, which consists in the effort directed to the establishment of all that is good and the eradication of all that is evil,—and all that keeping the ideal of service to entire humanity in view (3:110), those who administer the Islamic state have, in the very nature of the case, to function primarily and positively as the ‘trustees of the mission of Islam’, and not merely as good administrators of a political machinery.

The condition that the administrative hierarchy shall come into power through the ‘will of the people’ and not through hereditary monarchy is clearly laid down by the Qur’an,—as, for instance, when it asks the Faithful to delegate the trust of administration to those worthy of it (4:58), or when it makes mutual consultation the basic principle in respect of the administration of their affairs (42:38)—and in the Holy Prophet’s *Sunnah*, wherein we find that, with all his

²⁰⁸ Islam establishes ‘supremacy of law’ through the separation of the executive and the judiciary also.

absolute authority and wisdom, he did not nominate anyone from among his descendents²⁰⁹ to be his successor in office as head of the Islamic state but left that office open, as a consequence of which Abu Bakr was subsequently elected.

The condition that the electors should be ‘persons of character and wisdom’ is the most rational condition in respect of an ideological state. If the persons who are to wield authority in an Islamic state are necessarily to be those who are the best available embodiments of Islamic character and wisdom, very naturally they should be elected by those who are themselves practically dedicated to Islam and can understand properly the comparative merits of the different persons for whom they have to cast their votes. Otherwise, democracy is likely to degenerate into *mobocracy*, as it is progressively becoming nowadays under the spell of adult franchise, and to end in disaster. As Walter Lippmann remarks in *The Public Philosophy* (p. 21) “Where mass opinion dominates the government, there is a morbid derangement of the true functions of power. The derangement brings about the enfeeblement, verging on paralysis, of the capacity to govern. The breakdown in the constitutional order is the cause of the precipitate and catastrophic decline of Western society. It may, if it cannot be arrested and reversed, bring about the fall of the West.” It is

²⁰⁹ In fact, he did not nominate anyone at all. As regards nomination from among his descendents, had he established the institution of hereditary rule in Islam, he would have nominated his elder grandson, the illustrious Imam Hasan, who was the son of his daughter, Lady Fatimah (AllÉh be pleased with her!)

this realistic approach in Islam that accounts for the fact that, in the election of Abu Bakr, it was only the Muslims of Madina, and not the Muslims of the outlying areas, that participated. It is well-known that the former were the people who had assimilated and imbibed Islamic character and wisdom, because of the blessing of long and continuous contact with and training under, the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!), much more than the latter. Notwithstanding that, however, it is desirable, and even necessary, in an Islamic state to evolve a system whereby the entire population becomes finally the participant in the elective machinery, —the only condition for the adoption of universal adult franchise being the universal basic education of the people and their training in Islamic living: both of which have been enjoined by Islam. What is of importance in this connection, however, is the acquisition of the real benefits of democracy, and not the technique of democracy. And for obtaining of the benefits of democracy, importance lies, in the final analysis, in the spiritual character, moral integrity and statesmanly wisdom of those who are elected to govern.

In respect of collective welfare, Islam lays emphasis, as we have already noted, on comprehensive approach,—that being the demand of its philosophy of Unity. It means that, side by side with spiritual and moral welfare, the Islamic state is *under obligation* to give to the economic welfare of the people its due; and in that respect the teachings of the Qur'an are directed through all the channels of economic activity to one goal, namely: the achievement of not only economic justice but of positive economic welfare for every member

of the society, so that everyone is enabled to live with honour and dignity.

Such a goal is actually very difficult to achieve, until and unless all the dimensions of human activity are trimmed and fashioned to assist in that achievement. And this is what Islam has done.

In the first instance, it goes to the root of the problem of human suffering when it lays stress on the spiritual and moral reform of the people side by side with the establishment of a healthy economic order. It is self-evident that the dependents of a wage-earner are bound to starve, however much the level of his income is raised within rational limits, if he is addicted to harmful pleasures or wasteful pursuits. Indeed, his own health will starve and he will be crippled. And not only an ordinary wage earner. Even a wealthy man is bound to suffer through spiritual and moral evils, and so too his family. Hence, Islam has positively commanded that the life of a Muslim should be a life of spiritual grace, moral earnestness and material simplicity. It means that in the godly, austere and industrious society which Islam creates, all types of luxuries are totally banned,—as historically exemplified in the society established by the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!). Indeed, ‘simple and industrious living and high thinking’ is incontrovertibly the only Way of life found in the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*, while luxurious living and wasteful pursuits are the dopes needed in the pagan way of life because of its spiritual bankruptcy and materialistic sensuous demands,—and by no stretch of imagination can they be traced in the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*, and by

no amount of sophistry can they be combined rationally with the lives of the worshippers of AllÉh.

The prime motive in the production of commodities may either be mounting monetary profit for the producer with selfish disregard for the interests of fellowbeings, which is the very soul of industrial capitalism; or, it may be the service of fellowbeings through the supply of their basic needs. The former is anti-God and anti-human, and therefore completely ruled out in Islam. The latter is godly and humanitarian, and therefore becomes an obligation in the Islamic ethico-religious economic philosophy.

Indeed, the Islamic state is under obligation, in respect of its ethico-religious philosophy, to ordain regimentation of production and consumption both, so that, with the establishment of maximum beneficial production relating to the necessities of human life and a rational austerity in consumption—as distinct from ascetic austerity, the material resources of the community are deployed and employed for the widest and unhampered flow of economic blessings, and the possibilities of the emergence of moral corruption and economic exploitation are eliminated.

Secondly, in the Qur'anic principles of widest possible distribution of wealth and of reward on the basis of labour and achievement, on the one hand, and of cooperation, on the other, the principle of peasant-proprietorship emerges in the domain of agriculture—as opposed to the institutions of feudalism and absentee-landlordship—with the creation of co-operatives in farming.

Thirdly, the Holy Qur'an blocks the roads to monopoly capitalism through its anti-monopolistic laws in general and the abolition of all form and all rates of interest in particular.

However, neither private enterprise nor private ownership of property has been banned. Rather, the latter is protected under the Qur'anic law. Indeed, the Qur'anic economic philosophy stands in definite opposition to the Marxist Scientific Socialism which establishes 'state capitalism', as much as it is opposed to individualistic monopoly capitalism. But the fundamental Qur'anic ideals relating to the maintenance of Islamic society as spiritually-illuminated, morally healthy and economically dedicated to the welfare of *all* members, make it imperative for the Islamic state to establish a form of economy wherein private sector does not give birth to business magnates and industrial lords, and the state remains in a position to ensure the provision of basic needs to all.

The provision of basic needs to all has to be in the Islamic state fundamentally on the basis of full employment. However, Islam has provided a social welfare tax through *ZakÉt* for ensuring basic needs to the disabled and the unemployed. Then, because all that belongs to a Muslim is held by him as 'trust' from God (9:111), Islam has also commended generosity in terms of voluntary economic well-doing to those in need, to the utmost of one's capacity and considering one's action as a fulfilment of the right of the other person—and not merely as ritualistic religious 'charity to a beggar'.

This last fact deserves repeated and vehement emphasis in view of the colossal ignorance concerning Islam's economic philosophy. For the achievement of its goal of ensuring economic welfare for all, the Holy Qur'an does not confine itself to emphasis merely on voluntary charity,²¹⁰ as other religions do, but adopts a methodical approach to the problem of the economic sufferings of humanity and its solution. These sufferings emerge, in its view, when wealth becomes concentrated in a few hands, bringing in its wake insatiable lust for luxuries, creating the cult of 'wealth, wine and woman', and giving rise to the need of greater and greater exploitation of the weaker members of society. The lust for exploitation, grounded as it always is in a spiritually-hardened heart, is directed to the enjoyment of vulgar pleasures and to exercise in megalomania. When it continues unchecked in a society, moral, economic and political corruption attains progressively such virulence as to act as a dynamite for blowing up the entire spiritual and moral fabric of the community, finally bringing about its destruction. The pithy warning has gone forth in the Qur'an:

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ بَطَرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا

²¹⁰ It should be clearly noted that un-organised voluntary religious charity does not achieve much; and its adverse effect is the creation of the institution of beggary, which is highly degrading and which Islam has vehemently condemned. The fact is that greed for possession of wealth is rooted in the animal self of the human beings, and not many people are capable of helping their fellowbeings with any amount of grace and large-heartedness.

“And how many a community have We (God) destroyed that became reckless in respect of (its structure of) livelihood! ...” (28:58).



Chapter 10

INTEGRALISTIC CULTURE AND INTEGRALISTIC CIVILISATION

A. CULTURE

Because of its comprehensive and integralistic approach—which is the demand of its unique Philosophy of Unity, the Holy Qur’an reconciles the elements of value in Rationalism and Empiricism,²¹¹ affirms the reality of both the rational and the empirical (22:62; 6:73; etc.)—of course, in accordance with the status of each, demands belief in the Unseen (2:3) as well as in the Seen (2:190; etc.), i.e., in the supra-sensible as well as in the sensible, and synthesises the Ideational and the Sensate, projecting thereby a perfect and sound *Integralistic or Idealistic Culture*.



B. CIVILISATION

As already pointed out, the Holy Qur’an came not to add one more to the list of the world’s religions, or to merely correct certain notions taught by the different religions in respect of the *religious aspect* of human life; but—and that is extremely important for our notice—it came to impart a correct philosophy of *Culture* and, beyond

²¹¹ Ref. p. 114.

that, to lay the foundations of a new *Civilisation*. The existence of socio-political dimension in the Holy Prophet Muhammad's spiritual struggle, in contrast to the other-worldly character of the spiritual struggle said to have been waged by Holy Prophet Jesus (Peace be on him!), was in response to the demands of the former's all-comprehending Message and Mission, whose range covered the entire area of human thought and behaviour: from the problems of the individual to the problems of the healthy growth of human civilisation.

And a new civilisation did come into existence—a balanced civilisation conceived in terms of the realization of Piety, Truth, Justice, Love, Beauty, Wisdom and Service to Humanity, and based on the concept of integralistic or idealistic culture, as distinct from the pre-Qur'anic ideational and the modern sensate cultures, of the East and the West respectively—as already noticed.

Just to give an idea of what type of civilization emerged in history under the impact of Islam, we may give here only its briefest account, and that too qualified by the following considerations:

1. Because of what we shall emphasize later about the intimate relation between the Islamic and the modern Western civilisation, we shall confine ourselves to that period wherein the Islamic civilisation matured in its different dimensions and we shall lay greater emphasis on its, what might be called, sensate aspects.²¹² Of course, their Islamic ethico-religious

²¹² Some of the ethical aspects shall be dealt with in the next chapter.

foundations as well as the concomitant high spiritual and moral tone of the Muslims in general—in spite of the deviations of certain members of the aristocracy—are unchallengeable.

2. We shall state the facts on the authority of a non-Muslim historian, Will Durant, who is one of the most recent writers on the subject, as also a devout Christian and fanatically anti-Islam,—the latter qualification standing guarantee against any misgiving as to the authenticity of the account in respect of the merits of Islamic civilisation.
3. It is impossible to make the account in any degree comprehensive because of the extreme dearth of source-materials, as Will Durant himself admits:

“It is a pity that we know these three centuries (750-1050) of Arabic efflorescence so imperfectly. Thousands of Arabic manuscripts in science, literature, and philosophy, lie hidden in the libraries of the Moslem world; in Constantinople alone there are thirty mosque libraries whose wealth has been merely scratched; in Cairo, Damascus, Mosul, Baghdad, Delhi are great collections not even catalogued; an immense library in the Escorial near Madrid has hardly completed the listing of its Islamic manuscripts in science, literature, jurisprudence, and philosophy. What we know of Moslem thought in those centuries is a fragment of what survives; what survives is a fragment of what was produced; what appears in these pages is

a morsel of a fraction of a fragment.” (*The Age of Faith*, p. 257).



THE ISLAMIC CIVILISATION IN IT’S AGE OF GLORY

Will Durant observes (*The Age of Faith*, pp. 179-343):

“In the Koran ... are rules not only for manners and hygiene, marriage and divorce, and the treatment of children, slaves, and animals, but also for commerce and politics, interest and debts, contracts and wills, industry and finance, crime and punishment, war and peace. Mohammed did not disdain commerce ... He threatened hell to lying or cheating merchants; denounced monopolists and speculators who ‘keep back grain to sell at a high rate’; and bade the employer ‘give the laborer his wage before his perspiration dries’. He prohibited the taking or giving of interest (2:275; 3:130). No reformer ever more actively taxed the rich to help the poor. Every will was expected to leave something to the poor; if a man died intestate his natural heirs were directed to give a part of their inheritance to charity (4:8) ... he improved the position of woman...

“Mohammed’s ethic transcended the limits of the tribe ... Distinction of rank or race, so strong among the tribes, was diminished by similarity of belief. ‘If a negro slave is appointed to rule you, hear and obey him, though his head be like a dried

grape'. It was a noble conception that made one people of diverse nations scattered over the continents ... Mohammed (taught) ... 'Let there be no violence in religion'. 'If they embrace Islam they are surely directed; but if they turn their backs, verily to you belongs preaching only'. 'Give a respite to the disbelievers. Deal you gently with them' ... 'Kill not the old man who cannot fight, nor young children, nor women' ... 'Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Allah loveth not aggressors'.

"... the Koran ... gave to simple souls the simplest, least mystical, least ritualistic, of all creeds, free from idolatry and sacerdotalism. Its message raised the moral and cultural level of its followers, promoted social order and unity, inculcated hygiene, lessened superstition and cruelty, bettered the condition of slaves, lifted the lowly to dignity and pride, and produced among Moslems (barring the revels of some caliphs) a degree of sobriety and temperance unequalled elsewhere in the white man's world. It gave men an uncomplaining acceptance of the hardships and limitations of life, and at the same time stimulated them to the most astonishing expansion in history.

"Civilisation is a union of soil and soul—the resources of the earth transformed by the desire and discipline of men ... All these were busy in Islam ... The orange tree ... the Arabs introduced it to Syria, Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt, and Spain, from which countries it pervaded southern Europe. The cultivation of sugar-cane and the refining of sugar were

likewise spread by the Arabs ... and were brought by Crusaders to their European states. Cotton was first cultivated in Europe by the Arabs.

“These achievements on lands largely arid were made possible by organized irrigation; here the caliphs made an exception to their principle of leaving the economy to free enterprise; the government directed and financed the maintenance of the greater canals.

“... Under Moslem rule western Asia attained a pitch of industrial and commercial prosperity unmatched by western Europe before the sixteenth century.

“The state left industry and commerce free, and aided it with a relatively stable currency. Ibn Hawqal (c. 975) describes a kind of promissory note ... from the Arabic word *sakk* for this form of credit is derived our word *check*. Investors shared in financing commercial voyages or caravans ... Monopolies were illegal ...

“... in general the Moslem seems to have excelled the Christian in commercial morality, fidelity to his word, and loyalty to treaties signed normally, the Moslem was the soul of courtesy, humanity, and tolerance ... In general Moslem society was one of excellent manners ...

“If we may believe the traditions, *Mohammed, unlike most religious reformers, admired and urged the pursuit of knowledge ...* Education began as soon as the child could speak

... At the age of six some slave children, some girls, and nearly all boys except the rich (who had private tutors) entered an elementary school ... Tuition was normally free ... Elementary education aimed to form character, secondary education to transmit knowledge ... Tuition in these colleges was free, and in some cases government or philanthropy paid both the salaries of the professors and the expenses of the students ... students would travel from one end of the Moslem world to another to meet the mind of a famous teacher ... When a visitor entered a Moslem city he took it for granted that he could hear a scholarly lecture at the principal mosque at almost any hour of the day.

“... The first paper-manufacturing plant in Islam was opened at Baghdad in 794 by al-Fadl, son of Harun’s vizier. The craft was brought by the Arabs to Sicily and Spain, and thence passed into Italy and France ... The invention facilitated the making of books wherever it went. Yaqubi tells us that in his time (891) Baghdad had over a hundred booksellers.

“Most mosques had libraries, and some cities had public libraries of considerable content and generous accessibility. About 950 Mosul had a library, established by private philanthropy, where students were supplied with paper as well as books. Ten large catalogues were required to list the volumes in the public library at Rayy. Basra’s library gave stipends to scholars working in it ... When Baghdad was destroyed by the Mongols it had thirty-six public libraries. Private libraries were numberless; it was a fashion among the rich to have an ample

collection of books ... princes like Sahib ibn Abbas in the tenth century might own as many books as could then be found in all the libraries of Europe combined ... In a thousand mosques from Cordova to Samarkand scholars were as numerous as pillars, and made the cloisters tremble with their eloquence; the roads for of the realm were disturbed by innumerable geographers, historians, and theologians seeking knowledge and wisdom ... the conquerors showed such tolerance that of the poets, scientists, and philosophers who now made Arabic the most learned and literary tongue in the world only a small minority were of Arab blood.

“... Ibn Qutaiba (828-89) was one of many Moslems, who attempted to write a *history of the world* ... Muhammad al-Nadim produced in 987 an *Index of the Sciences (Fihrist al-ulum)*, a bibliography of all books in Arabic, original or translated, on any branch of knowledge ... we may estimate the wealth of Moslem literature in his time by noting that not one in a thousand of the volumes that he named is known to exist today.

“... Abu-l-Hasan Ali al-Masudi, an Arab of Baghdad, traveled ... He gathered his gleanings into a thirty-volume encyclopedia ... Al-Masudi surveyed omnivorously the geography, biology, history, customs, religion, science, philosophy, and literature of all lands from China to France ... he summarized his views on science, history, and philosophy in a *Book of Information*, in

which he suggested an evolution 'from mineral to plant, from plant to animal and from animal to man'.

“Algebra ... owes its name to the Arabs, who extensively developed this detective science ... Al-Khwarizmi contributed effectively to five sciences: he wrote on the Hindu numerals; compiled astronomical tables which, as revised in Moslem Spain, were for centuries standard among astronomers from Cordova to Chang-an; formulated the oldest trigonometrical tables known; collaborated with sixty-nine other scholars in drawing up for al-Mamun a geographical encyclopedia; and in his *Calculation of Integration and Equation* gave analytical and geometrical solutions of quadratic equations. *This work, now lost in its Arabic form, was translated by Gerard of Cremona in the twelfth century, was used as a principal text in European universities until the sixteenth century, and introduced to the West the word algebra (al-jabr—‘restitution’, ‘completion’).* Thabit ibn Qurra (826-901) ... achieved fame in astronomy and medicine, and became the greatest of Moslem geometers ...

“The Caliph al-Mamun engaged a staff of astronomers to make observations and records, to test the findings of Ptolemy, and to *study the spots on the sun*. Taking for granted the sphericity of the earth, they measured a terrestrial degree by simultaneously taking the position of the sun from both Palmyra and the plain Sinjar; their measurement gave $56\frac{2}{3}$ miles—half a mile more than our present calculation; and from their results they *estimated the earth’s circumference* to approximate 20,000

miles. *These astronomers proceeded on completely scientific principles: they accepted nothing as true which was not confirmed by experience or experiment.* One of them, Abu'l-Farghani, of Transoxiana, wrote (c.860) an astronomical text which remained in authority in Europe and Western Asia for 700 years. Even more renowned was al-Battani; his astronomical observations, continued for forty-one years, were remarkable for their range and accuracy; he determined many astronomical coefficients with *remarkable approximation to modern calculations*—the precession of the equinoxes at 54.5" a year, and the inclination of the ecliptic at 23°55'. Working under the patronage of the early Buwayhid ruler of Baghdad, *Abu'l-Wafa ... discovered the third lunar variation 600 years before Tycho Brahe.* *Costly instruments were built for the Moslem astronomers:* not only astrolabes and armillary spheres, and known to the Greeks, but quadrants with a radius of thirty feet, and sextants with a radius of eighty. The astrolabe, much improved by the Moslems reached Europe in the tenth century, and was *widely used by mariners till the seventeenth.* The Arabs designed and constructed it with aesthetic passion, making it at once an instrument of science and a work of art.

"Even more important than the charting of the skies was mapping of the earth ... Suleiman al-Tajir —i.e., the merchant—about 840 carried his wares to the Far East; an anonymous author (851) wrote a narrative of Suleiman's journey; this oldest Arabic account of China antedated Marco Polo's Travels

by 425 years. In the same century Ibn Khordadbeh wrote a description of India, Ceylon, the East Indies, and China, apparently from direct observation; and Ibn Hawqal described India and Africa. Ahmad al-Yaqubi, of Armenia and Khurasan, wrote in 891 a *Book of the Countries*, giving a reliable account of Islamic provinces and cities and of many foreign states. Muhammad al-Muqaddasi visited all the lands of Islam except Spain, suffered by countless vicissitudes, and in 985 wrote his *Description of the Moslem Empire*—the greatest work of Arabic geography before al-Biruni's *India*.

“Abu al-Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (973-1048) shows the Moslem scholar at his best. Philosopher, historian, traveler, geographer, linguist, mathematician, astronomer, poet, and physicist—and doing major and original work in all these fields ... His first major work (c.1000) was a highly technical treatise—*Vestiges of the Past* ... *his attitude was that of the objective scholar, assiduous in research, critical in the scrutiny of traditions and texts* (including the Gospels), *precise and conscientious in statement*, frequently admitting his ignorance, and promising to pursue his inquiries till the truth should emerge. In the preface to the *Vestiges* he wrote like Francis Bacon: ‘We must clear our minds ... from all causes that blind people to the truth—old custom, party spirit, personal rivalry or passion, the desire for influence’ ... In 1030 he published his masterpiece, *History of India* ... His interest extended to nearly all the sciences. He gave the best medieval account of the

Hindu numerals. He wrote treatises on the astrolabe, the planisphere, the armillary sphere; and formulated astronomical tables for Sultan Masud. He took it for granted that the earth is round, noted ‘the attraction of all things towards the centre of the earth’, and remarked that astronomic data can be explained as well by supposing that the earth turns daily on its axis and annually around the sun, as by the reverse hypothesis. He speculated on the possibility that the *Indus valley had been once the bottom of a sea*. He composed an extensive lapidary, describing a great number of stones and metals from the natural, commercial, and medical points of view. He determined the specific gravity of eighteen precious stones, and laid down the principle that the specific gravity of an object corresponds to the volume of water it displaces. He found a method of calculating, without laborious additions, the result of the repeated doubling of a number ... He contributed to geometry the solution of theorems that thereafter bore his name. He composed an encyclopedia of astronomy, a treatise on geography, and an epitome of astronomy, astrology, and mathematics. He explained the workings of natural springs and artesian wells by the *hydrostatic principle of communicating vessels*.

“Chemistry as a science was almost created by the Moslems ... the Saracens introduced precise observation, controlled experiment, and careful records. They invented and named the alembic (al-anbiq), chemically analyzed innumerable

substances, composed lapidaries, distinguished *alkalis* and acids, investigated their affinities, studied and manufactured hundreds of drugs ... The most famous of the alchemists was Jabir ibn Hayyan (702-65), known to Europe as Gebir ... The hundred or more works attributed to him ... were translated into Latin, and *strongly stimulated the development of European chemistry* ...

“... (Moslems) *developed in alchemy that experimental method which is the greatest pride and tool of the modern mind. When Roger Bacon proclaimed that method to Europe, five hundred years after Jabir, he owed his illumination to the Moors of Spain, whose light had come from the Moslem East.*

“The remains of Moslem biology in this period are scant. Abu Hanifa al-Dinawari (815-95) wrote a *Book of Plants* ... adding many plants to pharmacology. Mohammedan botanists knew how to produce new fruits by grafting ... Othman Amr al-Jahiz (d.869) propounded a *theory of evolution like al-Masudi's: life had climbed 'from mineral to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to man'*. The mystic poet Jalal ud-din (Rumi) accepted the theory ...

“... *The Moslems established the first apothecary shops and dispensaries, founded the first medieval school of pharmacy, and wrote great treatises on pharmacology.* Moslem physicians were enthusiastic advocates of the bath, especially in fevers and in the form of the steam bath. Their directions for the treatment

of smallpox and measles could scarcely be bettered today. *Anaesthesia by inhalation was practised in some surgical operations; hashish and other drugs were used to induce deep sleep ...* Medical instruction was given chiefly at the hospitals. *No man could legally practice medicine without passing an examination and receiving a state diploma; druggists, barbers, and orthopedists were likewise subject to state regulation and inspection, The physician-vizier Ali ibn Isa organized a staff of doctors to go from place to place to tend the sick (931), certain physicians made daily visits to jails; there was an especially humane treatment of the insane.*

“... Ali ibn Isa, greatest of Moslem oculists, whose *Manual for Oculists* was used as a text in *Europe till the eighteenth century.*

“The outstanding figure in this humane dynasty of healers was Abu Bekr Muhammad al Razi (844-926), famous in Europe as Rhazes ... he ... wrote some 131 books, half of them on medicine, most of them lost. His *Kitab al-Hawi (Comprehensive Book)* covered in twenty volumes every branch of medicine. Translated into Latin as *Liber continens*, it was probably *the most highly respected and frequently used medical text book in the white world for several centuries*; it was one of the nine books that composed the whole library of the medical faculty at the University of Paris in 1395. His *Treatise on Smallpox and Measles* was a masterpiece of direct observation and clinical analysis; it was the *first accurate study of infectious diseases*, the first effort to distinguish the two ailments. We

may judge its influence and repute by the forty English editions printed between 1498 and 1866. The most famous of al-Razi's works was a ten-volume survey of medicine, the *Kitab al-Mansuri* ... Gerard of Cremona translated it into Latin: the ninth volume of this translation, the *Nonus Almonsoris*, was a *popular text in Europe till the sixteenth century*.

“... Islam knew its greatest philosopher and most famous physician as Abu Ali al-Husein ibn Sina (980-1037) ... he found time ... to write a hundred books, covering nearly every field of science and philosophy ... He translated Euclid, made astronomical observations, and devised an instrument like our vernier. He *made original studies of motion, force, vacuum, light, heat and specific gravity*. *His treatise on minerals was a main source of European geology until the thirteenth century*. *His remark on the formation of mountains is a model of clarity*: ‘Mountains may be due to two different causes. Either they result from upheavals of the earth's crust, such as might occur in violent earthquake; or they are the effect of water, which, cutting for itself a new route, has denuded the valleys. The strata are of different kinds, some soft, some hard; the winds and waters disintegrate the first kind, but leave the other intact. It would require a long period of time for all such changes to be accomplished ... but that water has been the main cause of these effects is proved by the *existence of fossil remains of aquatic animals on many mountains*’.

“Two gigantic productions contain Avicenna’s teaching: the *Kitab in al-Shifa* ... an eighteen-volume encyclopedia of mathematics, physics, metaphysics, theology, economics, politics, and music; and the *Qanun-fi-l-Tibb*, or *Canon of Medicine*, a gigantic survey of physiology, hygiene, therapy, and pharmacology, with sundry excursions into philosophy ... He conceives medicine as the art of removing an impediment to the normal functioning of nature ... *The Qanun*, translated into Latin in the twelfth century, *dethroned al-Razi, and even Galen, as the chief text in European medical schools; it held its place as required reading in the universities of Montpellier and Louvain till the middle of the seventeenth century.*

“... Avicenna ... *His influence was immense: it reached out to Spain to mold Averroes and Maimonides, and into Latin Christendom to help the great Scholastics; it is astonishing how much of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas goes back to Avicenna. Roger Bacon called him ‘the chief authority in philosophy after Aristotle’; and Aquinas was not merely practicing his customary courtesy in speaking of him with as much respect as of Plato.*

“... Abu Yusuf Ibn Ishaq al-Kindi was born in Kufa about 803 ... studying everything, writing 265 treatises about everything—arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, meteorology, geography, physics, politics, music, medicine, philosophy ... he struggled to reduce health, medicine, and music to mathematical relations. He *studied the tides, sought the laws that determine*

the speed of a falling body, and investigated the phenomena of light in a book on Optics which influenced Roger Bacon.

“Thirty-nine works of al-Farabi survive ... One work ... strikes us with its original force: *Al-Madina al-Fadila—The Ideal City*. ... the only right is might. Al-Farabi counters this view with an appeal to his fellow men to build a society not upon envy, power, and strife, but upon reason, devotion, and love.

“... From the Alhambra in Spain to the Taj Mahal in India, Islamic art overrode all limits of place and time, laughed at distinctions of race and blood, developed a unique and yet varied character, and expressed the human spirit with a profuse delicacy never surpassed.

“Moslem architecture, like most architecture in the Age of Faith, was almost entirely religious ... Nevertheless, though the remains are scant, we hear of bridges, aqueducts, fountains, reservoirs, public baths, fortresses, and turreted walls built by engineer-architects ... The Crusaders found excellent military architecture at Aleppo, Baalbek, and else where in the Islamic East, learned there the uses of machicolated walls, and took from their foes many an idea for their own incomparable castles and forts. The Alcazar at Seville and the Alhambra at Granada were fortresses and palaces combined.

“We probably owe this splendor of ornament to the Semitic prohibition of human or animal forms in art: as if in compensation, the Moslem artist invented or adopted an

overflowing abundance of non-representational forms. He sought an outlet first in geometrical figures—line, angle, square, cube, polygon, cone, spiral, ellipse, circle, sphere; he repeated these in a hundred combinations, and developed them into swirls, guilloches, reticulations, *entrelacs*, and stars; passing to floral forms, he designed, in many materials, wreaths, vines, or rosettes of lotus, acanthus, or palm tendrils or leaves; in the tenth century he merged all these in the arabesque; and to them all, as a unique and major ornament, he added the Arabic script.

“The brightest name of Moslem Egyptian science is that of Muhammad ibn al-Haitham, known to medieval Europe as Alhazen ... We know al-Haitham chiefly by his *Kitab al-Manazir*, or *Book of Optics*; of all medieval productions this is probably the most thoroughly scientific in its method and thought. *Al-Haitham studied the refraction of light through transparent mediums like air and water, and came so close to discovering the magnifying lens that Roger Bacon, Witelo, and other Europeans three centuries later based upon his work their own advances toward the microscope and the telescope.* He rejected the theory of Euclid and Ptolemy that vision results from a ray leaving the eye and reaching the object; rather ‘the form of the perceived object passes into the eye, and is transmitted there by the transparent body—the lens. He remarked the effect of the atmosphere in increasing the apparent size of sun or moon when near the horizon; showed

that through atmospheric refraction the light of the sun reaches us even when the sun is as much as nineteen degrees below the horizon; and on this basis he *calculated the height of the atmosphere at ten* (English) miles. He analyzed the correlation between the weight and the density of the atmosphere, and the effect of atmospheric density upon the weight of objects. He studied with complex mathematical formulas the action of light on spherical or parabolic mirrors, and through the burning glass. He observed the half-moon shape of the image, during eclipses, on the wall opposite a small hole made in the window shutters; *this is the first known mention of the camera obscura, or dark chamber, on which all photography depends. We could hardly exaggerate the influence of al-Haitham on European science. Without him Roger Bacon might never have been heard of*; Bacon quotes him or refers to him at almost every step in that part of the *Opus maius* which deals with optics; and Part VI rests almost entirely on the findings of the Cairene physicist. As late as *Kepler and Leonardo European studies of light were based upon al-Haitham's work.*

“*Never was Andalusia so mildly, justly, and wisely governed as by her Arab conquerors*’. It is the judgment of a great Christian Orientalist, whose Faith, enthusiasm may require some discounting of his praise; but after due deduction his verdict stands ... al-Maqqari gives a *hundred examples of the justice, liberality, and refinement of the Umayyad rulers of Spain* ... they were certainly an improvement upon the illiberal

Visigothic regime that had preceded them. *Their management of public affairs was the most competent in the Western world of that age. Laws were rational and humane, and were administered by a well-organized judiciary. For the most part the conquered, in their internal affairs, were governed by their own laws and their own officials. Towns were well policed; markets, weights and measures were effectively supervised. A regular census recorded population and property. Taxation was reasonable compared with the imposts of Rome or Byzantium. The revenues of the Cordovan caliphate under Abd-er-Rahman III reached the 12,045,000 gold dinars (\$57,213,750)—probably more than the united governmental revenues of Latin Christendom; but these receipts were due not so much to high taxes as to well-governed and progressive agriculture, industry, and trade.*

“... The Arabs for the most part left the actual work of agriculture to the conquered; however, they used the latest manuals of agronomy, and under their direction agricultural science developed in Spain far in advance of Christian Europe.

“... Christians and Moslems intermarried freely; now and then they joined in celebrating a Christian or Moslem holiday, or used the same building as church and mosque ... Clerics and laymen from Christian Europe came in safety and freedom to Cordova, Toledo, or Seville as students, visitors, travelers.

“... Cordova ... *extraordinary general prosperity* ... streets were paved, had raised side walks, and were lighted at night; one could travel for ten miles by the light of street lamps, and along an uninterrupted series of buildings ... was *the focus and summit of Spanish intellectual life, though Toledo, Granada, and Seville shared actively in the mental exhilaration of the time*. Moslem historians picture the Moorish cities as beehives of poets, scholars, jurists, physicians, and scientists; al-Maqqari fills sixty pages with their names. Primary schools were numerous, but charged tuition; Hakam II added twenty-seven schools for the free instruction of the poor. Girls as well as boys went to school; several Moorish ladies became prominent in literature or art. Higher education was provided by independent lecturers in the mosques; their courses constituted the loosely organized University of Cordova, which in the tenth and eleventh centuries was second in renown only to similar institutions in Cairo and Baghdad. Colleges were established also at Granada, Toledo, Seville, Murcia, Almeria, Valencia, Cadiz. The technique of paper-making was brought in from Baghdad, and books increased and multiplied. Moslem Spain had seventy libraries; rich men displayed their Morocco bindings, and bibliophiles collected rare or beautifully illuminated books ... *Scholars were held in awesome repute* in Moslem Spain, and were consulted in simple faith that learning and wisdom are one.

“... Abu Muhammad Ali ibn Hazm (994-1064), besides serving as vizier to the last *Umayyads*, was a theologian and historian of great erudition. *His Book of Religions and Sects*, discussing Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and the principal varieties of Mohammedanism, is *one of the world's earliest essays in comparative religion* ... Maslama ibn Ahmad (d.1007), of Madrid and Cordova, adapted the astronomic tables of Khwarizmi to Spain ... *Ibrahim al-Zarqali* (c.1029-87) of Toledo made an international name by improving astronomical instruments; Copernicus quoted his treatise on the astrolabe; his astronomical observations were the best of his age, and enabled him to prove for the first time the motion of the solar apogee with reference to the stars; his ‘Toledan Tables’ of planetary movements were used throughout Europe. *Abul Qasim al-Zahrawi* (936-1013), physician to Abd-er-Rahman III, was honored in Christendom as Abulcasis; he stands at the top of Moslem surgeons; his medical encyclopedia, *al-Tasrif* included three books on surgery which, translated into Latin, became the standard text of surgery for many centuries. Cordova was in this period the favorite resort of Europeans for surgical operations.

“... Cairo, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Baalbek, Aleppo, Damascus, Mosul, Emesa, Tus, Nishapur, and many other cities boasted of colleges; Baghdad alone had thirty in 1064. A year later Nizam al-Mulk added another: the Nizamiya; in 1234 the Caliph Mustansir founded still another, which in size, architecture, and

equipment surpassed all the rest; one traveler called it the most beautiful building in the city. It contained four distinct law schools, in which qualified students received free tuition, food, and medical care, and a monthly gold dinar for other expenses; it contained a hospital, a bath-house, and a library freely open to students and staff. Women probably attended college in some cases, for we hear of a *Shaikha*—a lady professor—whose lectures ... drew large audiences (c.1178) ... Muhammad al-Shahrastani, in a *Book of Religions and Sects* (1128) analyzed the leading faiths and philosophies of the world, and summarized their history; *no contemporary Christian could have written so learned and impartial a work.*

“Europe knows Persian Poetry chiefly through Omar Khayyam. ... *His Algebra*, translated into French in 1857, *made significant advances* both on al-Khwarizmi and on the Greeks; its partial solution of cubic equations has been judged ‘perhaps the very highest peak of medieval mathematics’. Another of his works on algebra (a manuscript in the Leiden Library) studied critically the postulates and definitions of Euclid. In 1074 the Sultan Malik Shah commissioned him and others to reform the Persian calendar. The outcome was a calendar that required a day’s correction every 3770 years—slightly more accurate than ours ...

“Jalal-ud-Din Rumi (1201-73) ... wrote several hundred poems. The shorter ones, collected in his *Divan* or *Book of Odes*, are marked by such depth of feeling sincerity, and richness, yet

naturalness, of imagery as place them *at the top of all religious poetry composed since the Psalms*. Jalal's main work, the *Mathnawi-i-Ma'nawi* (Spiritual Couplets), is a ... religious epic outweighing in bulk all the legacy of 'Homer'.

*"The Moslems continued, in this period (1057-1258), their unchallenged ascendancy in science. In mathematics the most signal advances were made in Morocco and Azerbaijan; we see here again the range of Islamic civilization. In 1229 Hasan al-Marraqushi (i.e., of Marraqesh) published tables of sines for each degree, and tables of versed sines, arc sines, and arc cotangents. A generation later Nasir ul-Din al-Tusi (i.e., of Tus) issued the first treatise in which trigonometry was considered as an independent science rather than an appendage to astronomy; his *Kitab shakl al-qatta* remained without a rival in its field until the *De Triangulis* of Regiomontanus two centuries later. Perhaps Chinese trigonometry, which appears in the second half of the thirteenth century, was of Arabic origin.*

*"The outstanding work of physical science in this age was the *Kitab Mizan al-hikmah* ... written about 1122 by ... Abu'l Fath al-Khuzini. It gave a history of physics, *formulated the laws of the lever*, compiled tables of specific gravity for many liquids and solids, and *proposed a theory of gravitation as a universal force drawing all things towards the centre of the earth*. Water wheels ... were improved by the Moslems; the Crusaders ... introduced them into Germany.*

“In 1081 Ibrahim al-Sahdi of Valencia constructed the oldest known celestial globe, a brass sphere 209 millimeters (81.5 inches) in diameter; upon its surface, in forty-seven constellations, were engraved 1015 stars in their respective magnitudes. The Giralda of Seville (1190) was an observatory as well as a minaret; there Jabir ibn Aflah made the observations for his Islah al-Majisti, or Correction of the Almagest (1240). The same reaction against Ptolemaic astronomy marked the works of Abu Ishaq al-Bitruji (Alpetragius) of Cordova, who paved the way for Copernicus by destructively criticizing the theory of epicycles and eccentrics through which Ptolemy had sought to explain the paths and motions of the stars.

“The age produced two geographers of universal medieval renown. Abu Abdallah Muhammad al-Idrisi was born at Ceuta (1100), studied at Cordova, and wrote in Palermo, at the behest of King Roger II of Sicily, his Kitab al-Rujari (Roger’s Book). It divided the earth into seven climatic zones, and each zone into ten parts; each of the seventy parts was illustrated by a detailed map; these maps were the crowning achievement of medieval cartography, unprecedented in fullness, accuracy, and scope. Al-Idrisi, like most Moslem scientists, took for granted the sphericity of the earth. Rivaling him for the honor of being the greatest medieval geographer was Abu Abdallah Yaqut (1179-1229) ... he completed his Mu’jam al-Buldan (1228)—a vast geographical encyclopedia which summed up nearly all

medieval knowledge of the globe. Yaqut included almost everything—astronomy, physics, archaeology, ethnography, history, giving the *co-ordinates of the cities* and the lives and works of their famous men. Seldom has any man so loved the earth.

“Botany, almost forgotten since Theophrastus, revived with the Moslems of this age. Al-Idrisi wrote a herbal, but stressed the botanical rather than merely the medicinal interest of 360 plants. Abu’l Abbas of Seville (1216) earned the surname of al-Nabati, the Botanist, by his studies of plant life from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. *Abu Muhammad ibn Baitar of Malaga (1190-1248) gathered all Islamic botany into a vast work of extraordinary erudition, which remained the standard botanical authority till the sixteenth century*, and marked him as the greatest botanist and pharmacist of the Middle Ages. *Ibn al-Awan of Seville (1190) won a like pre-eminence in agronomy; his Kitab al-Falaha (Book of the Peasant) analyzed soils and manures, described the cultivation of 585 plants and fifty fruit trees, explained methods of grafting, and discussed the symptoms and cures of plant diseases. This was the most complete treatment of agricultural science in the whole medieval period.*

“In this as in the preceding age the Moslems produced the leading physicians; of Asia, Africa, and Europe. They excelled especially in ophthalmology ... Operations for cataract were numerous. Khalifah ibn abi-Mahasin of Aleppo (1256) was so

confident of his skill that he operated for cataract on a one-eyed man. Ibn Baitar's *Kitab al-Jami'* made medicinal-botanical history; it listed 1400 plants, foods, and drugs, 300 of them new; analyzed their chemical constitution and healing power; and added acute observations on their use in therapy. But the greatest name in this acme of Moslem medicine is Abu Marwan ibn Zuhr (1091-1162) of Seville, known to the European medical world as Avenzoar. He was the third in six generations of famous physicians, all of one family line, and each at the top of his profession. His *Kitab al-Tasir*, or *Book of Simplification of Therapeutics and Diet*, was written at the request of his friend Averroes, who (himself the greatest philosopher of the age) considered him the greatest physician since Galen. Ibn Zuhr's forte was clinical description; he left classical analyses of mediastinal tumors, pericarditis, intestinal tuberculosis, and pharyngeal paralysis. Translation of the *Tasir* into Hebrew and Latin deeply influenced European medicine.

"Islam led the world also in the equipment and competence of its hospitals. One founded by Nur-ud-din at Damascus in 1160 gave free treatment and drugs during three centuries: for 267 years, we are told, its fires were never extinguished. Ibn Jubayr, coming to Baghdad in 1184, marvelled at the great Bimaristan Adadi, a hospital rising like some royal palace along the bank of the Tigris: here food and drugs were given to the patients without charge. In Cairo, in 1285, Sultan Qalaun began the Maristan al-Mansur, the greatest hospital of the Middle Ages.

Within a spacious quadrangular enclosure four buildings rose around a courtyard adorned with arcades and cooled with fountains and brooks. There were separate wards for diverse diseases and for convalescents; laboratories, a dispensary, outpatient clinics, diet kitchens, baths, a library, a chapel, a lecture hall, and particularly pleasant accommodation for the insane. Treatment was given gratis to men and women, rich and poor, slave and free; and a sum of money was disbursed to each convalescent on his departure, so that he need not at once return to work. The sleepless were provided with soft music, professional story-tellers, and perhaps books of history. *Asylums for the care of the insane existed in all the major cities of Islam.*

“... Mohammedanism produced its greatest theologian, the Augustine and the *Kant of Islam*. Abu Hamid *al-Ghazali* was born at Tus in 1058 ... wrote his most influential book—*Tahafut at-Filasifa (The Destruction of Philosophy)*. All the arts of reason were turned against reason. By a ‘transcendental dialectic’ as subtle as Kant’s ... seven centuries before *Hume*, *al-Ghazali* reduced reason to the *principle of causality*, and *causality to mere sequence* ... In his *Ihya Ulum al-Din (Revival of the Sciences of Religion)* he expounded and defended his renovated orthodoxy with all the eloquence and fervour of his prime; never in Islam the sceptics and the philosophers encountered so vigorous a foe ...

“Abu Bekr (Europe’s Abubacer) ibn Tufail (1107-1185) ... found time to write, among more technical works, the most remarkable philosophical romance in medieval literature (*Hayy ibn Yaqzan*). It took its title from Ibn Sina, and (through Ockley’s English translation in 1708) *may have suggested Robinson Crusoe to Defoe*.

“... known to Islam as *Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Rushd* (1126-98), and to medieval Europe as Averroes—the most influential figure in Islamic Philosophy ... In 1169 Averroes was appointed chief justice of Seville; in 1172 of Cordova ... His work in medicine has been almost forgotten in his fame as a philosopher: he was, however, ‘one of the greatest physicians of his time’, *the first to explain the function of the retina*, and to recognize that an attack of smallpox confers subsequent immunity. *His encyclopedia of medicine (Kitab al-Kulliyat fil tibb)*, translated into Latin, *was widely used as a text in Christian universities* ... he added several works of his own on logic, physics, psychology, metaphysics, theology, law, astronomy and grammar ... *Maimonides followed in Averroes’ steps* in seeking to reconcile religion and philosophy. In Christendom the Commentaries (of Averroes), translated into Latin from Hebrew, fed the heresies of Siger de Brabant, and the rationalism of the School of Padua, and threatened the foundations of Christian belief. *St. Thomas Aquinas* wrote his *Summae* to stem this Averroistic tide; but he *followed Averroes* in the method of his Commentaries, in divers interpretations of

Aristotle ... *Roger Bacon marked Averroes next to Aristotle and Avicenna, and added ... 'The philosophy of Averroes today (c.1270) obtains the unanimous suffrage of wise men'.*

"The influence of Islam on Europe was varied and immense."
(All italics, present writer's).



MODERN CIVILISATION: A CONTINUATION OF ARABIC-ISLAMIC CIVILISATION

The present civilisation is, in respect of its merits, the continuation of the Islamic civilisation, with the difference that theocentricism, integralism and comprehensiveness have dropped off under the stress of certain well-known historical circumstances, culminating in its transformation into a purely sensate civilisation. However, its tragic inadequacy and diseased condition is now taken notice of by all sane-thinking Westerners, together with the necessity of adopting the Islamic philosophy of civilisation for restoring the balanced accommodation of all the values and thereby reverting to the original Islamic civilization from which it sprang up. The thick curtain of hatred against Islam, nurtured assiduously for centuries by a scheming priesthood, is the only obstacle. But the goodness of human nature is bound to win the day, and the yearnings of the human soul for Truth and Beauty and Justice are bound to attain realisation. The light of reality has already begun to shine forth, as manifested in the

following considered judgment of Prof. H.A.R. Gibb, the famous British orientalist:

*“... in its foundations we have seen that Islam belongs to and is an integral part of the larger Western society. It is the complement and counterbalance to European civilisation, nourished at the same springs, breathing the same air. In the broadest aspect of history, what is now happening between Europe and Islam is the reintegration of western civilization, artificially sundered at the Renaissance and now reasserting its unity with overwhelming force. The student of history, though fearfully conscious of the pitfalls of analogy, cannot help recalling two earlier (though even then not the earliest) moments in this secular process of creative interaction between the two halves of the western world. It was the glory and the greatness of the Roman Empire that it united them under its *imperium* and that from that unity were born the spiritual forces which have governed the course of Western history ever since. Halfway between that age and ours occurred the first great intellectual adventure of Islam, when it absorbed the heritage of Hellenism and brought it to a new flowering, the seeds from which contributed to the Renaissance in Europe.*

“The process could not end there. It is going on before our very eyes, on a wider and vaster scale, though the contrast offered by the Islamic world as a whole to the amazing technical progress of Europe may still blind us to it: and it may be that the sequel will be the same, that *we must wait upon the Islamic society to*

restore the balance of Western civilization upset by the onesided nature of that progress ... At all events Islam stands side by side with Europe in distinction from the true Oriental societies of India and the Far East ... for the fullest development of its cultural life, particularly of its spiritual life, Europe cannot do without the forces and capacities which lie within Islamic society...

“Within the Western world Islam still maintains the balance between exaggerated opposites. Opposed equally to the anarchy of European nationalism and the regimentation of Russian communism, it has not yet succumbed to that obsession with the economic side of life which is characteristic of present day Europe and present-day Russia alike. Its social ethic has been admirably summed up by Professor Massignon: ‘Islam has the merit of standing for a very equalitarian conception of the contribution of each citizen by the tithe to the resources of the community; it is hostile to unrestricted exchange, to banking capital, to state loans, to indirect taxes on objects of prime necessity, but it holds to the rights of the father and the husband, to private property, and to commercial capital. Here again it occupies an intermediate position between the doctrines of bourgeois capitalism and Bolshevist communism’.

“But Islam has a still further service to render to the cause of humanity. It stands after all nearer to the real East than Europe does, and it possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and co-operation. No other society has such a

record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity, and of endeavour so many and so various races of mankind ... *Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of East and West is to be replaced by co-operation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition. In its hands lies very largely the solution of the problem with which Europe is faced in its relation with the East. If they unite, the hope of a peaceful issue is immeasurably enhanced. But if Europe, by rejecting the co-operation of Islam, throws it into the arms of its rivals, the issue can only be disastrous for both.*"²¹³

Besides the above judgment of H.A.R. Gibb, the verdict of Arnold J. Toynbee, the fanatical crusader against Islam and zealous upholder of Christian cause, is also worthy of note. He says (*Civilisation on Trial*, London, 1957; pp. 87, 88, 205-209):

“What value are we to place on Islam ourselves? ... Islam’s creative gift to mankind is monotheism and we surely dare not throw this gift away ... *Islam remains, with a mighty spiritual mission still to carry out* ... (italics, present writer’s).

“Two conspicuous sources of danger—one psychological and the other material—in the present relations of this cosmopolitan

²¹³ *Whither Islam?*, London 1932, pp. 376-379. (Italics, present writer’s).

proletariat (—i.e, westernised humanity—) with the dominant element in our modern Western society are race consciousness and alcohol; and in the struggle with each of these evils the Islamic spirit has a service to render which might prove, if it were accepted, to be of high moral and social value.

“The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding moral achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue ... It is conceivable that the spirit of Islam might be the timely reinforcement which would decide this issue in favour of tolerance and peace.

“As for the evil of alcohol, it is at its worst among primitive populations in tropical regions which have been ‘opened up’ by Western enterprise ... the fact remains that even the most statesmanlike preventive measures imposed by external authority are incapable of liberating a community from a social vice unless a desire for liberation and a will to carry this desire into voluntary action on its own part are awakened in the hearts of the people concerned. Now Western administrators, at any rate those of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ origin, are spiritually isolated from their ‘native’ wards by the physical ‘colour bar’ which their race-consciousness sets up; the conversion of the natives’ souls is a task to which their competence can hardly be expected to extend; and it is at this point that Islam may have a part to play.

“In these recently and rapidly ‘opened up’ tropical territories, the Western civilization has produced an economic and political plenum and, in the same breath, a social and spiritual void...

“Here, then, in the foreground of the future, we can remark two valuable influences which Islam may exert upon the cosmopolitan proletariat of a Western society that has cast its net round the world and embraced the the whole mankind; while in the more distant future we may speculate on the possible contributions of Islam to some new manifestation of religion.”



APPENDIX

CHRISTIAN CIVILISATION IN ITS AGE OF FAITH

Before closing this discussion, it is necessary to attend to the Jewish-Christian allegation, referred to in the present work on different occasions, that, as one Orientalist has worded it, “Islam is the bastard child of Judaism and Christianity”, and hence whatever is good in the value-system of the Islamic civilisation is in bondage to the Biblical civilisation. In that connection we may give here a brief review of the civilisation nurtured on an international level by Christianity, under the Biblical civilisational value-system, since its coming to power and until the Renaissance in western Europe brought about by the Islamic civilisation,—whereafter the West adopted a secularistic and free-thought approach. We shall present here its basic

characteristic features, leaving out certain, vital facts for being dealt with in the next chapter under different headings; and our review, here again for avoiding all possibilities of doubt as to accuracy and authenticity, will be submitted in the words of a devout and eminent Christian historian of that civilisation, i.e., Will Durant. Projecting it as ‘Civilisation in the Age of Faith’, he says (*The Age of Faith*, pp. 44-843):

“The foster mother of the new civilisation was the Church ... There is an epic grandeur, sullied with superstition and cruelty, in the struggle of the new religion to capture, tame and inspire the minds ... to forge a uniting empire of faith...”

“... In paganism the family had been the social and religious unit; it was a loss that in medieval Christianity this unit became the individual.”

“... the status of woman was hurt by the doctrine ... that woman was the origin of sin and the instrument of Satan.”

“The Church did not condemn slavery. Orthodox and heretic, Roman and barbarian alike assumed the institution to be natural and indestructible ... slavery continued throughout the Middle Ages,²¹⁴ and died without benefit of clergy.”

“Next to determination of faith, the greatest power of the Church lay in the administration of sacraments—ceremonies

²¹⁴ And it continued in Christendom with greater virulence and unspeakable cruelty the thereafter also, as we shall notice in the next chapter.

symbolising the conferment of divine grace ... More Important was the sacrament of penance ... According to the Gospel (Matthew, 16:19; 18:18), Christ had forgiven sins, and had endowed the apostles with a similar power to 'bind and loose'. This power, said the Church, had descended by apostolic succession from the apostles to the early bishops, from Peter to the popes; and in the late twelfth century the 'power of the keys' was extended by bishops to the priests ... Absolution in confession removed from sin the guilt that would have condemned the sinner to hell ... The Church claimed the right to remit such punishments ... The Church commissioned certain ecclesiastics, usually friars, as *quaestarii* to raise funds by offering indulgences in return for gifts, repentance, and prayer. These solicitors ... developed a competitive zeal ... they exhibited real or false relics to stimulate contributions and they kept for themselves a due or undue part of their receipts.

“The official prayers of the Church were often addressed to God the Father; a few appealed to the Holy Ghost; but the prayers of the people were addressed mostly to Jesus, Mary, and the saints. The Almighty was feared ... Jesus was closer, but He too was God, and one hardly ventured to speak to Him face to face ... It seemed wiser to lay one's prayer before a saint certified by canonization to be in heaven, and to beg his or her intercession with Christ ... Every nation, city, abbey, church, craft, soul, and crisis of life had its patron Saint, as in pagan Rome it had a god ... The Church arranged an

ecclesiastical calendar in which every day celebrated a saint; but the year did not find room for the 25,000 saints that had been canonized by the tenth century. The calendar of saints was so familiar to the people that the almanac divided the agricultural year by their names ... Many saints received canonization through the insistent worship of their memory by the people or the locality, sometimes against ecclesiastical resistance. Images of the saints were set up in churches and public squares, on buildings and received a spontaneous worship ... With so many saints there had to be many relics—their bones, hair, clothing, and anything that they had used. Every altar was expected to cover one or more such sacred memorials ... The churches of Constantinople, before 1204, were especially rich in relics; they had the lance that had pierced Christ and was still red with His blood, the rod that had scourged Him, many pieces of the True Cross enshrined in gold, the ‘sop of bread’ given to Judas at the Last Supper, some hairs of the Lord’s beard, the left arm of John the Baptist ... In the sack of Constantinople many of these relics were stolen, some were bought, and they were peddled in the West from church to church to find the highest bidder. All relics were credited with supernatural powers, and a hundred thousand tales were told of their miracles. Men and women eagerly sought even the slightest relic, or relic of a relic, to wear as a magic talisman—a thread from a saint’s robe, some dust from a reliquary, a drop of oil from a sanctuary lamp in the shrine.

Monasteries vied and disputed with one another in gathering relics and exhibiting them to generous worshipers, for the possession of famous relics made the fortune of an abbey or a church. The 'translation' of the bones of Thomas á Becket to a new chapel in the cathedral of Canterbury (1220) drew from the attending worshipers a collection valued at \$300,000 today. So profitable a business enlisted many practitioners; thousands of spurious relics were sold to churches and individuals; and monasteries were tempted to 'discover' new relics when in need of funds. The culmination of abuse was the dismemberment of dead saints so that several places might enjoy their patronage and power ... The worship of God as Lord of Hosts and King of Kings inherited Semitic and Roman ways of approach, veneration, and address; the incense burnt before altar or clergy recalled the old burnt offerings; aspersion with holy water was an ancient form of exorcism; processions and lustrations continued immemorial rites; the vestments of the clergy and the papal title of *pontifex maximus* were legacies from pagan Rome. The Church found that rural converts still revered certain springs, wells, trees, and stones; she thought it wiser to bless these to Christian use than to break too sharply the customs of sentiment ... So a dolmen at Plouaret was consecrated as the chapel of the Seven Saints, and the worship of the oak was sterilized by hanging images of Christian saints upon the trees. Pagan festivals dear to the people, or necessary as cathartic moratoriums on morality, reappeared as Christian feasts, and

pagan vegetation rites were transformed into Christian liturgy. The people continued to light midsummer fires on St. John's Eve, and the celebration of Christ's resurrection took the pagan name of Eostre, the old Teutonic goddess of the spring. The Christian calendar of the saints replaced the Roman *fasti*; ancient divinities dear to the people were allowed to revive under the names of Christian saints; the Dea Victoria of the Basses-Alpes became St. Victoire, and Castor and Pollux were reborn as Sts. Cosmas and Damian ... The finest triumph of this tolerant spirit of adaptation was the sublimation of the pagan mother-goddess cults in the worship of Mary. Here too the people took the initiative. In 431 Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria, in a famous sermon at Ephesus, applied to Mary many of the terms fondly ascribed by the pagans of Ephesus to their 'great goddess' Artemis-Diana; and the Council of Ephesus in the year, over the protests of Nestorius, sanctioned for Mary the title 'Mother of God'. Gradually the tenderest features of Astarte, Cybele, Artemis, Diana, and Isis were gathered together in the worship of Mary. In the sixth century the Church established the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin into heaven, and assigned it to August 13, the date of ancient festivals of Isis and Artemis. Mary became the patron saint of Constantinople and the imperial family; her picture was carried at the head of every great procession, and was (and is) hung in every church and home in Greek Christendom. Probably it was the Crusades that brought from the East to the

West a more intimate and colourful worship of the Virgin ... Just as the sternness of Yahveh had necessitated Christ, so the justice of Christ needed Mary's mercy to temper it. In effect the Mother—the oldest figure in religious worship—became ... the third person of a new Trinity ... knights vowed themselves to her service, and cities gave her their keys ... The Church ... made great festivals of the events in Mary's life—the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Purification (Candlemas), the Assumption.

“... In Christian theory the whole human race had been tainted by the sin of Adam and Eve. Said Gratian's *Decretum* (c. 1150), unofficially accepted by the Church as her teaching, 'Every human being who is conceived by the coition of a man with a woman is born with original sin, subject to impiety and death, and therefore a child of wrath'; and only divine grace, and the atoning death of Christ, could save him from wickedness and damnation ... *The preaching of this doctrine* ... gave many medieval Christians a sense of inborn impurity, depravity, and guilt, which colored much of their literature before 1200.

“... by the age of sixteen the medieval youth had probably sampled a variety of sexual experiences. Pederasty ... reappeared ... In 1177 Henry, Abbot of Clairvaux, wrote of France that 'ancient Sodom is springing up from her ashes' ... The Penitential—ecclesiastical manuals prescribing penances for sins—mention the usual enormities, including bestiality; an astonishing variety of beasts received such attentions ... Cases

of incest were numerous. Premarital and extramarital relations were apparently as widespread as at any time between antiquity and the twentieth century ... Rape was common ... Knights who served highborn dames or damoiselles for a kiss or a touch of the hand might console themselves with the lady's maids; some ladies could not sleep with a good conscience until they had arranged this courtesy. The Knight of La Tour-Landry ... if we were to believe him, some men of his class fornicated in church, nay, 'on the altar'; and he tells of 'two queens which in Lent, on Holy Thursday ... took their foul delight and pleasure within the church during divine service'. William of Malmesbury described the Norman nobility as 'given over to gluttony and lechery', and exchanging concubines with one another lest fidelity should dull the edge of husbandry. Illegitimate children littered Christendom, and gave a plot to a thousand tales. The heroes of several medieval sagas were bastards—Cuchulain, Arthur, Gawain, Roland, William the Conqueror, and many a knight in Froissart's *Chronicles*.

"Prostitution adjusted itself to the times. Some women in pilgrimage, according to Bishop Boniface, earned their passage by selling themselves in the towns on their route. Every army was followed with another army, as dangerous as the enemy. 'The Crusaders', reports Albert of Aix, 'had in their ranks a crowd of women wearing the habit of men; they traveled together without distinction of sex, trusting to the chances of a frightful promiscuity' ... The university students, particularly at

Paris, developed urgent or imitative needs, and *filles* established centres of accommodation ... In Rome, according to Bishop Durand II of Mende (1311), there were brothels near the Vatican, and the pope's marshals permitted them for a consideration. The Church showed a humane spirit toward prostitutes ... A council at Rouen, in the eighth century, invited women who had secretly borne children to deposit them at the door of the church, which would undertake to provide for them; such orphans were brought up as serfs on ecclesiastical properties. A law of Charlemagne decreed that exposed children should be the slaves of those who rescued and reared them ²¹⁵ ... Penalties for adultery were severe; Saxon law, for example, condemned the unfaithful wife at least to lose her nose and ears, and empowered her husband to kill her. Adultery was common notwithstanding.

“... Feudal masters seduced female serfs at the cost of a modest fine; he who ‘covered’ a maid ‘without her thanks’—against her will—paid the court three shillings. The eleventh century, said Freeman, ‘was a profligate age’, and he marveled at the apparent marital fidelity of William the Conqueror, who could not say as much for his father. ‘*Medieval society*’, said the

²¹⁵ Mark the tone of Christian charity towards the orphans!

learned and judicious Thomas Wright, '*was profoundly immoral and licentious*',²¹⁶

“... In the Middle Ages ... men, good and bad, lied to their children, mates, congregations, enemies, friends, governments, and God. Medieval man had a special fondness for forging documents. He forged apocryphal gospels ... he forged decretals as weapons in ecclesiastical politics; loyal monks forged charters to win royal grants for their monasteries; Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury, according to the papal Curia, forged a charter to prove the antiquity of his see; schoolmasters forged charters to endow some colleges at Cambridge with a false antiquity; and ‘pious frauds’ corrupted texts and invented a thousand edifying miracles. Bribery was general in education, trade, war, religion, government, law. Schoolboys sent pies to their examiners; politicians paid for appointments to public office, and collected the necessary sums from their friends; witnesses could be bribed to swear to anything; litigants gave presents to jurors and judges ... perjury was so frequent that trial by combat was sometimes resorted to in the hope that God would identify the greater liar. Despite a thousand guild and municipal statutes and penalties, medieval craftsmen often deceived purchasers with shoddy products, false measures, and crafty substitutes. Some bakers stole small

²¹⁶ Is the society in Christendom in any way less immoral and licentious today!

portions of dough under their customers' eyes by means of a trap door in the kneading board; cheap cloths were secretly put in the place of better cloths promised and paid for; inferior leather was 'doctored' to look like the best; stones were concealed in sacks of hay or wool sold by weight; the meat packers of Norwich were accused of buying measly pigs, and making from them sausages and puddings unfit for human bodies, Berthold of Regensburg (c.1220) described the different forms of cheating used in the various trades, and the tricks played upon country folk by merchants at the fairs.

"... Once at war, Christians were no gentler to the defeated, no more loyal to pledges and treaties, than the warriors of other faiths²¹⁷ and times. Cruelty and brutality were apparently more frequent in the Middle Ages than in any civilization before our own.

"... In all classes men and women were hearty and sensual; their festivals were feasts of drinking, gambling, dancing, and sexual relaxation: their jokes were of a candor hardly rivaled today; their speech was freer, their oaths vaster and more numerous. Hardly a man in France, says Joinville, could open his mouth without mentioning the Devil.

²¹⁷ On Will Durant's own admission elsewhere in his book under reference, Islam stands excluded here from 'other faiths'.

“... begging flourished ... Mendicancy reached ... a scope and pertinacity unequalled today except in the poorest areas of the Far East.

“Cleanliness, in the Middle Ages, was not next to godliness. Early Christianity had denounced the Roman baths ... and its general disapproval of the body had put no premium on hygiene. The modern use of the handkerchief was unknown ... One result of the Crusades was the introduction into Europe of public steam baths in the Moslem style.

“... In the thirteenth century the chamber pots of Paris were freely emptied from windows into the street ... People eased themselves in courtyards, on stairways and balconies, even in the palace of the Louvre.

“... The commonest meat was pork. Pigs ate the refuse in the streets, and people ate the pigs.

“... Drunkenness was a favourite vice of the Middle Ages, in all classes and sexes. Taverns were numerous, ale was cheap. Beer was the regular drink of the poor, even at breakfast. Monasteries and hospitals north of the Alps were normally allowed a gallon of ale or beer per person per day ... A custom of the abbey of St. Peter in the Black Forest includes some tender clauses: ‘When the peasants have unladen the wine, they shall be brought into the monastery, and shall have meat and drink in abundance. A great tub shall be set there and filled with wine ... and each shall drink ... and if they wax

drunken and smite the cellarman or the cook, they shall pay no fine for this deed; and they shall drink so that two of them cannot beat the third to the wagon’.

“... *Gambling was not always forbidden by law*; Siena provided booths it in the public square.

“... The French and Germans in particular were fond of the dance ... Dancing could become an epidemic: in 1237 a band of German children danced all the way from Erfurt to Arnstadt; many died en route; and some survivors suffered to the end of their lives from St. Vitus’ dance, or other nervous disorders.

“... Several persons, of any age or sex, might sleep in the same room. In England and France all classes slept nude.

“Does the general picture of medieval Europe support the belief that religion makes for morality? Our general impression suggests a wider gap between moral theory and practice in the Middle Ages than in other epochs of civilization. Medieval Christendom was apparently as rich as our own irreligious age in sensuality, violence, drunkenness, cruelty, coarseness, profanity, greed, robbery, dishonesty, and fraud. It seems to have outdone our time in the enslavement of individuals ... It surpassed us in the subjection of women; it hardly equalled us in immodesty, fornication, and adultery, in the immensity and murderousness of war. Compared with the Roman Empire from Nerva to Aurelius, medieval Christendom was a moral setback.

“... *The intellectual virtues naturally declined in the Age of Faith*; intellectual conscience (fairness with the facts) and the search for truth were replaced by zeal and admiration for sanctity, and a sometimes unscrupulous piety ... *The civic virtues suffered* from concentration on the afterlife ... Perhaps *hypocrisy*, so indispensable to civilization, *increased in the Middle Ages* as compared with the frank secularism of antiquity, or the unabashed corporate brutality of our time.” (All italics, present writer’s).



GENUINE MORAL IDEALISM

A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN ALLEGATIONS AND CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

Preliminary Observations:

Every religion possesses a certain type of moral Idealism. Of course, there are differences among religions in respect of the form and the content of that idealism. But noble ideas and ideals are nevertheless found, however defective in individual cases their setting, their projection, or their range. Going, however, beyond theoretical assessment into the practical aspect of those ideals, we may consider their worth in the light of the question: ‘How far have those ideas and ideals influenced the respective followers of those religions and brought blessings to humanity in practical terms?’

If we compare Islam and other religions in this perspective of evaluation, it will be possible to assess the nature and worth of the Qur’anic moral Idealism. For that purpose, we may place Islam and Christianity in the scale of comparison, especially because the Christian propagandists have been, in the past and in the present, foremost in attacking Islam on that ground—others being only their imitators or camp-followers. And those attacks have continued from their side during the past millennium ceaselessly and violently without

regard for either Justice or Truth. We have already made certain references to Christian misrepresentations in Chapter 1 of Part 1 of this volume. We may quote here one more—one, which is more recent and which comes from an eminent Christian religious dignitary who has been acclaimed as “one of the greatest missionary-statesmen of the twentieth century”, viz., Rev. Dr. Glover. In chap. 4 of his publication: *Progress of Worldwide Missions* (Harper & Bros., New York, 1960), he makes the following observations:

“He (Muhammad) was an Oriental and a Potentate ... He was nurtured in the faith that his hand must be against every man. His Arabian armies were possessed by a wild fanaticism and a thirst for plunder and conquest. The Prophet’s injunction to them was to exterminate all heathens ...

“The sword of Mohammad and the Koran are the most stubborn enemies of civilization, liberty and truth, which the world has yet known.”

We have already quoted Max Weber’s statement on page 6. His allegations relate to the establishment of feudalism, serfdom, slavery and subjection of women by Islam.

The above and other similar calumnies have been actually repeated *ad nauseam*, because Western orientalists, historians, religious writers, missionaries, journalists, and others have been ceaselessly working under a planned effort to malign Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!)—seemingly convinced that, through widespread and continuous repetition, even totally false

statements can accomplish the alienation of humanity at large from goodwill for Islam and the demoralisation of the rising generations of Muslim intelligentsia. The latter, because of persistent westernisation during the past one and-a-half century of Western domination of the world of Islam and the impoverishment of the agencies of Islamic knowledge and inspiration, are more under the intellectual and cultural influences of the West than of Islam. Hence, the adversaries of Islam hope that, side by side with political and military intrigues, thrusts and assaults, which, engineered by them, have continued unabated to this day—though changing their forms according to circumstances, their anti-Islamic propaganda might finally succeed in weakening Islam to an extent that it may no more be able to challenge their faults and the evils which they endorse.

In his *Age of Faith*, Will Durant has tried, as a good Christian, to tender a lame apology for all that cruelty and blatant dishonesty, though he himself could not escape it on numerous occasions. But, the very term 'religion' loses all grace if there is no adherence to principles of truth and justice by its upholders. Hence, the entire anti-Islamic Christian-Jewish propaganda is a standing disgrace for the very name of Religion.

In our discussion here, we shall confine ourselves only to the testimony of believing Christian scholars, although their appreciation of Islam can in the very nature of the case be only very meagre, and in certain respects very defective, while in others even non-existent. As for Islam's own stand, the present work has projected it on the basis of Islam's scripture itself in all its basic dimensions.

Confining ourselves to Dr. Glover's and Max Weber's allegations, we shall project the realization in history of the values of mercy, tolerance, regard for freedom of conscience and respect for human dignity in such of their dimensions as bear reference to the allegations made; and because the said allegations have been projected in the perspective of the supposed superiority and sublimity of Christianity, we shall present a comparative evaluation in terms of Muslim as well as Christian history. (Dr. Glover's allegation that Islam is the enemy of civilisation has been already dealt with in the previous chapter). As for the complete rebuttal, it emerges at relevant places in the present work in connection with the exposition of the Qur'anic philosophy and code of life. Hence, the statements that follow should be read in conjunction with it.



1

IN TERMS OF MERCY, TOLERATION AND REGARD FOR HUMAN CONSCIENCE

1. WITH REFERENCE TO WAR

In connection with the comparative evaluation of Islamic and Christian moral Idealism in terms of the ethics of war, we may take up the most difficult virtue, namely, magnanimity and forgiveness in respect of the enemy. As such, we may refer to the practical effects of

the Christian teaching in that behalf and the parallel Qur'anic teaching, as recorded in history. Such a comparison will fix the merit of Islam's moral Idealism in the perspective of history, and will at the same time expose the baselessness of Christian propaganda against Islam.

Who have been more tolerant, more humane, more forgiving, more just and more chivalrous in history—the believers in the Bible or the believers in the Qur'an? Just one pair of events contrasting Christian and Muslim behaviour will suffice—the one relating to the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders on July 15, 1099 A.C and later on its conquest by Ghazi Salah al-Din Al-Ayyubi (named Saladin in European history) in November 1187 A.C, wherein Christendom and Islamdom demonstrated their ethico-religious Idealism because both fought a *holy war*—a war in the name of religion; and for the Christians it was a war initiated by them right in their Holy Land where Christ had delivered his message of Mercy.

We will quote here *only* the reputed Christian authorities whose accounts are based on eye-witness reports and first-hand information.

Charles Mills says about the Crusaders and the Crusade:

“They abandoned themselves to every grossness and libertinism. Neither public treasures nor private possessions were spared. Virgin modesty was no protection, conjugal virtue no safeguard ... Among the Crusaders, particularly distinguished for ferocity, were two thousand Normans or French. That they destroyed children at the breast and scattered

their quivering limbs in the air ... that their crimes were enormous, is the general confession of the Latin writers ... The Christians dragged the corpses from the sepulchre and despoiled them of their dress and ornaments. They severed the heads from the trunks, and 15 hundred of them were exposed on pikes to the weeping Turks; and some were sent to the Caliph of Egypt in proof of victory. The dignity of age, the helplessness of youth and the beauty of weaker sex were disregarded by the Latin savages. Houses were no sanctuaries, and the sight of mosque added new virulence to cruelty ... the attendants and followers of the camp pillaged the houses of Antioch as soon as the gates had been thrown open; but the soldiers did not for a while suffer their rapacity to check their thirst for blood; when however, every species of habitation, from the market place to the meanest hovels, had been covered into a scene of slaughter, when the narrow streets and the spacious squares were all alike disfigured with human gore, and crowded with mangled carcasses, then the assassins turned robbers, and became as mercenary as they had been merciless ... They were soon reduced to their old resources of dog's flesh and human carcasses. They broke open the tombs of the Musalmans; ripped up the bellies of the dead for gold, and then dressed and ate fragments of the flesh ... Their cruelty could not be appeased by a bloodless conquest; extermination, not clemency, marked their victory ... Such was the carnage in the mosque of Omar that the mutilated carcasses were hurried by the torrents of

blood into the courts; severed arms and hands floated into the current that carried into contact with bodies to which they had not belonged. Ten thousand people were murdered in this sanctuary. It was not only the lacerated and headless trunks which shocked the sight, but the figures of the victors themselves reckoning with the blood of their slaughtered enemies. No place of refuge remained to the vanquished, so indiscriminately did the insatiable fanaticism of the conquerors disregarded alike supplication and resistance. Some were slain, others were thrown from the tops of the churches and of the citadel ... It was resolved that no pity should be shown to the Musalmans ... the subjected people were, therefore, dragged into the public places, and slain as victims; women with children at breast, girls and boys, all were slaughtered. The squares, the streets and even the uninhabited places of Jerusalem were strewed with dead bodies of men and women and the mangled limbs of children. No heart melted into compassion or expanded into benevolence.”²¹⁸

Referring to the occasion when the Muslims, fighting under Saladin, recovered Palestine from the Crusaders and re-occupied Jerusalem, the same author observes:

“In solemn procession the clergy, the queen, and her retinue of ladies followed. Saladin advanced to meet them and his heart

²¹⁸ Charles Mills: *The History of Crusades* (2 vols), London 1821, vol. 1, pp. 68, 71, 185, 228-229, 254, 260.

melted with compassion, when they approached him in this attitude and with the air of suppliants. The softened warriors uttered some words of pity ... with courteous clemency he released all the prisoners when the women requested, and loaded them with presents.”²¹⁹

In the same context, Stanley Lane-Poole remarks :

“After that he (Saladin) commanded that to the dames and damsels whose lords were dead there should be handsomely distributed from his own treasure, to some more and to others less, according to their state, and he gave them so much that they gave praise to God and published abroad the kindness and honour which Saladin had done to them ... Islam in its essence and as professed by such a man as Saladin is a religion of noble simplicity and austere self-sacrifice.”²²⁰

Edward Gibbon has the same tale to tell:

“Instead of a rigorous exaction of his debt he (Saladin) accepted a sum of thirty thousand byzants for the ransom of 7 thousand poor; two or three thousand more were dismissed by his gratuitous clemency ... In his interview with the queen (Sybilla of Jerusalem) and her captive husband his words and even his tears suggested the kindest consolations ... Thus did the

²¹⁹ *op. cit.*, pp. 330, 441.

²²⁰ Stanley Lane-Poole: *Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*. London 1906 pp. 232-233, 373.

Saracens show the mercy to the fallen city. One recalls the savage conquest by the first crusaders in 1099, when Godfrey and Tancred rode through streets choked with the dead and dying, when defenceless Moslems were tortured, burnt and shot down in cold blood on the towers and roof of the temple, when the blood of wanton massacre defiled the honour of Christendom and stained the scene where once the gospel of love and mercy had been preached. 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' was a forgotten beatitude, when the Christians made shambles of the Holy City. Fortunate were the merciless, for they obtained mercy at the hands of the Moslem Sultan. If the taking of Jerusalem were the only fact known about Saladin, it was enough to prove him the most chivalrous and great-hearted conqueror of his own, and perhaps of any age.²²¹

Before concluding this discussion, we regard it necessary to make certain observations:

1. In respect of the history of Islam, we have purposely avoided reference to its early period which, being truly idealistic, is naturally expected to enshrine Islamic moral Idealism at its highest. Instead, we have referred to the period in which Muslims had deviated considerably, in the natural historical

²²¹ Edward Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London 1922 vol. 6, pp.116. 233.

process, from the Islamic Idealism as such. This we have done to be just to Christianity.

2. In respect of Christianity: Most unfortunately, the heart-rending record of cruelty and absolute absence of human feeling that has been presented in the foregoing does not stand in history as a solitary lapse. Rather, the political history of Christianity—and even its religious history—, since the acquisition of political power under Constantine, reveals an amazing record of violation without mercy of the Sermon on the Mount and of all the other noble moral teachings given by the Holy Prophet Jesus (Peace be on him!). The injustice, the cruelty, the wanton barbarism which the Christian nations have practised throughout, and continue to practise without blush till today, in international politics and warfare both, forms—as recorded by Christian historians themselves—an amazing example of revolt against God as well as human goodness.

And, then, they have practised utmost cruelty and injustice not only against their political opponents but also against the other people by imposing the most cruel form of slavery upon, and uprooting, defenceless populations, as they did in respect of the Blacks of Africa, and by staging mass murder

of indigenous populations, as they did in the Americas and Australasia;—all this for their material power and glory!²²²

3. A student of history is, indeed, amazed to find that with all their emphasis on religiosity and on certain basic moral principles, none of the existing religions except Islam possesses any record, in its history of inter-national and inter-religious relations, of practising the ideal of 'respect for humanity'. Even the Jews with all their 'worship of the One God', whom their centuries-long persecution by the Christians should have made exceptionally conscious of the evils of international cruelty and injustice, are indulging, after acquiring political power, in the same evils—and that, against their own cousins, the Arabs, and against those who gave them asylum when their present friends persecuted them, i.e., the Muslims.

What, then, is the difference in practical terms between 'religion' and 'irreligion'?

²²² Even for filthy lucre!!! For instance, in respect of what has been termed in Christian history as 'trade' and which "at all times was little distinguished from piracy": "the first voyage of 1562 of John Hawkins left him the wealthiest man in Plymouth, his second voyage of 1564 left him the wealthiest man in England, and his third voyage of 1567, led to open naval warfare between England and Spain." (*The New Cambridge Modern History*, 1961, vol. 1, p. 457).

The basic cause seems to lie in the fact that religions other than Islam have, either not given any ethics of war, or have given a wrong one; while Islam has given it in a full-fledged manner, on the one hand, and based it on sound humanitarianism,²²³ on the other. Then, that ethics has been properly exemplified for practical guidance by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!).

Thus: The merit of Saladin is not basically his personal merit, but the merit of the Islamic ethics of war and of the Ideal set by the Holy Prophet of Islam²²⁴—at its highest in his conquest of Makka. And, the brutality demonstrated by the Christian nations in Palestine and elsewhere in their history, before and after, is due to the absence of ethics of war in Christianity and of its practical model; whereby the Sermon on the Mount alone could not do the job of saving them from

²²³ Ref: vol. 2: “The Structure of Islamic Society”.

²²⁴ Lest it be understood that Saladin’s is a solitary example, we may refer to another. Says Will Durant (The Age of Faith, p. 308):

“... Alp Arslan lived up to his name—‘the lion-hearted hero’—by conquering Heart, Armenia, Georgia, and Syria ... Emperor Romanus IV collected 100,000 ... troops to meet Arslan’s 15,000 ... warriors. The Seljuq leader offered a reasonable peace; Romanus rejected it scornfully, gave battle at Manzikert in Armenia (1071), fought bravely ... was defeated and captured, and was led before the Sultan. ‘What would have been your behaviour’, asked Arslan, ‘had fortune smiled upon your arms?’ ‘I would have inflicted upon your body many a stripe’, answered Romanus. Arslan treated him with all courtesies, released him on the promise of a royal ransom, and dismissed him with rich gifts.”

committing crimes against humanity in their holy wars. Indeed, sermons do not achieve much by themselves! Because, the human nature is so constituted that, unless it has been properly disciplined spiritually and morally, the human being is always inclined to follow the behest of his instinctive self and to indulge in unbridled vengeance. And, for that spiritual and moral discipline, the first pre-requisite is the possession of a sound moral code and a source of inspiration in the personality of him whom a person loves and respects above all as his guide and benefactor,—though, that in itself is only a pre-requisite. For, what is finally needed is the *achievement* of the requisite spiritual and moral discipline. It means that not only the followers of other religions and philosophies but even those who are members of the Muslim community in a formal sense, and are thereby related nominally to a humanitarian ethics of war and the highest source of humanitarian inspiration in the Holy Prophet's personality, but have not achieved the requisite spiritual and moral discipline, are likely to behave merely as 'human animals'.

Anyhow, in the final analysis, in respect of teaching as well as inspiration and its practical realisation in history, even today Islam alone provides humanity with what it needs in this behalf; and, those who insult the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!) for his permission of, and participation in, war, and adore the ascetic-pacifist Ideal, would do well to revise their opinion in the interest of humanity;—as also in their own interest, because by insulting him and depriving themselves of the appreciation of his merit, they only insult themselves.



2. WITH REFERENCE TO POST-CONQUEST TREATMENT OF THE SUBJECTED COMMUNITIES

A. CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY ON CHRISTIAN CONQUESTS

Arnold J. Toynbee says in his *Study of History* (London, New York, Toronto 1962), vol. I, pp. 211, 212, 225:

“The race-feeling which is thus aroused in our Western Society by the present situation and temper of our settlers overseas also springs naturally from the religious background ... This has been a misfortune for Mankind; for the Protestant temper and attitude and conduct in regard to Race, as in many other vital issues, is inspired largely by the Old Testament ... Under this inspiration, the English-speaking Protestant settlers in the New World exterminated the North American Indian, as well as the bison, from coast to coast of the Continent, whereas the Spanish Catholics only exterminated the Indian in the Caribbean Islands and were content, on the Continent, to step into the shoes of the Aztecs and the Incas—sparing the conquered in order to rule them as subject populations, converting their subjects to their own religion, and inter-breeding with their converts ... The sense of religious solidarity and fraternity did not, however, restrain the Spaniards and the Portuguese in South America, a century and a half ago, from cold-bloodedly and brutally destroying—out of sheer greed for (non-existent)

gold and for (to them, unutilizable) land—*the wonderful society which had been conjured into existence*, by the genius of the Jesuit missionaries, *among the primitive peoples of Paraguay.*” (Italics, present writer’s).

The Spaniards might not have employed bullets for wiping out the conquered ‘natives’ on the American mainland, as Toynbee says. But the decimation of the indigenous population occurred nevertheless as a blessing of the Spanish conquest. The *New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 2, p. 583, (1958), gives the following figures for Central Mexico:

“A recent and well documented study gives the following approximate figures of the indigenous (Indian) population on different dates in Central Mexico (then known as New Spain):

1519.....	11 Million.
1540.....	6,427,466.
1565.....	4,409,180.
1597.....	2,500,000.

(vide S.F. Cook and L.B. Simpson: *The Population of Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century, Berkeley, California, 1948.*)”

That the intolerance practised by Christendom has always gone to the highest level of barbarism in the form of mass murder of human populations, wherever they could carry it out, is fully borne out by

history. For instance, in the Sudan, the extensive blood-bath undertaken by the crusading Lord Kitchener against the Muslims reduced the population, estimated by the British authorities in 1880 at ten million souls, to less than two million—actually 1,853,000. (Ref: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, X, XI, and XII editions; 1902, 1911, 1923).

As to those conquests wherein mass murder did not take place, Toynbee, the ardent lover of Christianity attributes to *expediency* and not to any Christian moral idealism. Citing the example of India, he says:

“Finally, in Continental India, where the English could not think of supplanting the conquered ‘Natives’ as they had supplanted them in North America, but could only impose their rule on them as the Spaniards had imposed theirs on the ‘Natives’ of Mexico and Peru, the sequel was not the same as it had been in the Spanish Indies ... The reasons are almost too obvious to need mentioning. In the first place, Europeans could not hope to make themselves at home in the Indian climate, even if they had found, or made, the soil of India free from other human occupants. In the second place, the existing ‘Native’ population of India was too numerous and too far advanced in civilisation to be exterminated, even if our British Israelites had ever contemplated treating the Canaanite in India as they treated him in America.” (*op. cit.*, p. 212).

Indeed, Toynbee, with all his subjective devotion to Christianity, is so deeply convinced of the Bible being responsible for all the most amazing and the most callous barbarism and ferocity demonstrated by Christendom in history that he finds himself forced to advocate the subjection of the Christian *sacred* scripture, which Christendom has adored as the Word of God, to the amputator's knife. He says:

“When the first translation of the Bible into a Teutonic language was made by Ulfilas, the Apostle of the Goths, in the fourth century of our era, the translator wisely omitted the Books of Samuel and Kings, on the ground that war and bloodshed were too much in the minds of the Goths as it was, without their proclivity in this direction being consecrated and confirmed by the authority of the sacred book of their new religion. It is a pity that Luther and the English translators did not follow Ulfilas' example—or, indeed, improve on it by omitting Joshua and Judges as well! King James I's English Authorized Version of the Bible, which presents the Old Testament complete and unexpurgated, was published in A.D. 1611. A book called *The New English Canaan*, by Thomas Morton, was published in 1637!” (*op. cit.*, p. 212).

That sheer barbarism was employed as an instrument for converting the heathen²²⁵ is also borne out by Christian history. And

²²⁵ In respect of conversion. the law of Islam stands radically opposed to the use of force, because of the Qur'Ēn's categorical prohibition (2:256). Hence, Muslim history presents a radical contrast to Christian history in this respect.

it was employed from the very beginning of the acquisition of political power by Christianity; as, among others, Will Durant testifies:

“Christians divided on almost every point but one—that the pagan temples should be closed, their property confiscated ... Constantine had discouraged, but not forbidden pagan sacrifices and ceremonies; Constantine forbade them on pain of death; Constantius ordered all pagan temples in the Empire closed, and all pagan rituals to cease. Those who disobeyed were to forfeit their property and their lives; and these penalties were extended to provincial governors neglecting to enforce the decree.” (*The Age of Faith*, p. 8).

We may also notice in this connection that the unparalleled barbarism which Christendom inflicted on the black races of Africa, to which we shall refer shortly, was also conceived by the Christian proselytisers as the instrument for their Christianisation. A brief remark by an eminent Christian scholar may suffice here:

“The Church also supported the slave trade. The Spaniards saw in it an opportunity of converting the heathen, and the Jesuits, Dominicans and Franciscans were heavily involved in sugar cultivation which meant slave-holding, The story is told of an old elder of the Church in Newport who would invariably, the Sunday following the arrival of a slaver from the coast, thank

Christian testimony in this behalf has been provided in Thomas Arnold’s *Preaching of Islam* (latest edition: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf; Lahore, Pakistan).

God that 'another cargo of benighted beings had been brought to a land where they could have the benefit of a gospel dispensation'." (Dr. Eric Williams: *Capitalism and Slavery*, London 1964, p.42).

B. CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY ON MUSLIM CONQUESTS

Says Will Durant ²²⁶ in *The Age of Faith* (pp. 187-190, 218-219, 227):

“Mohammed had appointed no successor to his power, but he had chosen Abu Bekr (573-624) to conduct the prayers in the Madina mosque ... this mark of preference persuaded the Moslem leaders to elect Abu Bekr the first Caliph of Islam ... Abu Bekr was ... simple and abstemious, kindly but resolute; attending personally to details of administration and judgment, and never resting till justice was done; serving without pay till his people overruled his austerity; and then, in his will, returning to the new state the stipends it had paid him ... the Moslem leaders were passionate disciples of Mohammed, prayed even more than they fought ... The Arab troops were more rigorously disciplined and more ably led; they were inured to leadership ... could fight on empty stomachs ... ‘Be

²²⁶ It may be remembered here that, as a good Christian, Will Durant is always ready to attack and insult Islam and its promulgator on the flimsiest grounds.

just', ran Abu Bekr's proclamation, 'be valiant; die rather than yield; be merciful; slay neither old men, nor women, nor children. Destroy no fruit trees, grain, or cattle. Keep your word, even to your enemies. Molest not those religious persons who live retired from the world' ... Omar (the second Caliph) ... Having beaten a Bedouin unjustly, he begged the Bedouin—in vain—to inflict an equal number of strokes upon him. He was a severe puritan, demanding strict virtue of every Moslem ... Moslem historians tell us that he owned but one shirt and one mantle, patched and repatched; that he lived on barley bread and dates, and drank nothing but water; that he slept on a bed of palm leaves, hardly better than a hair shirt; and that his sole concern was the propagation of the faith by letters and by arms. When a Persian satrap came to pay homage to Omar he found the conqueror of the East asleep among beggars on the steps of the Madina mosque ... The Patriarch Sophronius agreed to surrender Jerusalem if the Caliph would come in person to ratify the terms of capitulation. Omar consented, and traveled from Madina in stately simplicity, armed with a sack of corn, a bag of dates, a gourd of water, and a wooden dish ... He received Sophronius with kindness and courtesy, imposed an easy tribute on the vanquished, and confirmed the Christians in the peaceful possession of all their shrines ... Omar forbade the conquerors to buy or till land...

"The Jews of the Near East had welcomed the Arabs as liberators ... they stood on equal terms with Christians, were

free once more to live and worship in Jerusalem, and *prospered under Islam in Asia, Egypt, and Spain as never under Christian rule. Outside of Arabia the Christians of western Asia usually practised their religion unhindered; Syria remained predominantly Christian until the third Moslem century; in the reign of Mamun (813-33) we hear of 11,000 Christian churches in Islam—as well as hundreds of synagogues and fire temples. Christian festivals were freely and openly celebrated; Christian pilgrims came in safety to visit Christian shrines in Palestine; the Crusaders found large numbers of Christians in the Near East in the twelfth century; and Christian communities have survived there to this day. Christian heretics persecuted by the patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, or Antioch were now free and safe under a Moslem rule that found their disputes quite unintelligible. In the ninth century the Moslem governor of Antioch appointed a special guard to keep Christian sects from massacring one another at church. Monasteries and nunneries flourished ... relations between the two religions were so genial that Christians wearing crosses on their breasts conversed in mosques with Moslem friends. The Mohammedan administrative bureaucracy had hundreds of Christian employees ... Sergius, father of St. John of Damascus, was chief finance minister to Abd-al-Malik, and John himself, last of the Greek Fathers of the Church, headed the council that governed Damascus. The Christians of the East in general*

regarded Islamic rule as a lesser evil than that of the Byzantine government and Church.

“Despite or because of this policy of tolerance in early Islam, the new faith won over to itself in time most of the Christians, nearly all the Zoroastrians and pagans, and many of the Jews, of Asia, Egypt, and North Africa ... Gradually the non-Moslem populations adopted the Arabic language and dress, the laws and faith of the Koran. Where Hellenism, after a thousand years of mastery, had failed to take root, and Roman arms had left the native gods unconquered, and Byzantine orthodoxy had raised rebellious heresies, Mohammedanism had secured, almost without proselytism, not only belief and worship, but a tenacious fidelity that quite forgot the superseded gods. From China, Indonesia, and India through Persia, Syria, Arabia, and Egypt to Morocco and Spain, the Mohammedan faith touched the hearts and fancies of a hundred peoples, governed their morals and molded their lives, gave them consoling hopes and a strengthening pride ...

*“... We must concede that the early Caliphs, from Abu Bekr to al-Mamun, gave successful organization to human life over a wide area, and may be counted among the ablest rulers in history. They might have devastated or confiscated everything, like the Mongols or the Magyars of the raiding Norse; *instead they merely taxed.* When Omar conquered Egypt he rejected the advice of Zobeir to divide the land among his followers, and the Caliph confirmed his judgment: ‘Leave it’, said Omar, ‘in the*

people's hands to nurse and fructify'. Under the caliphal government lands were measured, records were systematically kept, roads and canals were multiplied or maintained, rivers were banked to prevent floods; Iraq, now half desert, was again a garden of Eden; Palestine, recently so rich in sand and stones, was fertile, wealthy, and populous ... *the caliphs gave reasonable protection to life and labor, kept career open to talent, promoted for three to six centuries the prosperity of areas never so prosperous again, and stimulated and supported such a flourishing of education, literature, science, philosophy, and art as made western Asia, for five centuries, the most civilized region in the world.*"



3. WITH REFERENCE TO TREATMENT OF DISSENTERS WITHIN THE FOLD

In the age of Islam's glory, religious fanaticism in respect of differences within the fold did exhibit itself there occasionally,²²⁷ as

²²⁷ This phenomenon should actually be traced to Jewish-Christian influence, which came through the very large number of converts from Judaism and Christianity, including the priests of those faiths, entering the fold in the very early days of Islamic history and forming a part of the Muslim community larger than that of the descendants of the original Muslims. As for Islam, it is committed to *positive* struggle for the triumph of Truth on the basis of

was natural in the case of a community for whom religion was the be-all and end-all of life. But it exhibited itself basically in the issuance of academic condemnatory-verdicts by the jurists, and went on a few occasions to the height of public burning of what was regarded as unorthodox religious literature. But the dimensions of mass barbarism and indescribable tortures which culminated in burning the dissenters at the stake forms the 'pride' of Christianity alone!

Starting from the beginning of Christian political power, and then proceeding straight to Inquisition, we may project here very brief references just to give an idea of the brutality practised in respect of violation of the values of mercy and toleration in Christian history of the ages of Faith and Orthodoxy.

With all his determined endeavour to minimise or explain away the evils that emerged in Christendom under the impact of the Church, Will Durant has been forced to say as follows (*The Age of Faith*, pp. 8, 46, 610, 735-784):

“... Once triumphant, the Church ceased to preach toleration...

“Constantius took theology more seriously than his father ... ecclesiastics loyal to the Nicene Creed were removed from their churches, sometimes by the violence of mobs; for half a century it seemed that Christianity would be Unitarian, and abandon the

sublime spiritual and moral principles and does not countenance the *negative* attitude of persecution.

divinity of Christ ²²⁸ ... when Constantius ordered the replacement of the orthodox patriot Paul by the Arian Macedonius, a crowd of Paul's supporters resisted the soldiery, and three thousand persons lost their lives. Probably more Christians were slaughtered by Christians in these two years (342-343) than by all the persecutions of Christians by pagans in the history of Rome.

“... We hear of many heretics, but most of these admitted the basic tenets of the Christian creed...”

“The Old Testament laid down a simple code for dealing with heretics: they were to be carefully examined; and if three reputable witnesses testified to their having ‘gone and served other gods’, the heretics were to be led out from the city and ‘stoned with stones till they die’ (Deut. 17:25) ... According to the Gospel of St. John (15:6), Jesus accepted this tradition: ‘If anyone abide not in me he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither; and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth.’ ...

²²⁸ Mark the confession, in support of what the Qur'Ēn has proclaimed, that the original monotheistic religion preached by Jesus was replaced with its paganised version by the Christian Church—and that through the force of arms ! In respect of paganisation, readers may also refer to pages 327-329 in the foregoing.

“... The Templars ... aroused the envy, fear, and wrath of King Philip IV the Fair ... A tribunal of prelates and monks loyal to the King examined the prisoners; they denied the royal charges, and were put to the torture to induce them to confess. Some, suspended by the wrists, were repeatedly drawn up and suddenly let down; some had their bare feet held over flames; some had sharp splinters driven under their fingernails; some had a tooth wrenched out day after day; some had heavy weights hung from their genitals; some were slowly starved. In many cases all these devices were used, so that most of the prisoners, when examined again, were weak to the point of death. One showed the bones that had fallen from his roasted feet ... Several of them died in Jail; some killed themselves; fifty-nine were burned at the stake (1310), protesting their innocence to the end...

“The most powerful of the heretical sects was variously named Cathari ... Bulgari ... and Albigenses, from the French town of Albi, where they were especially numerous ... Innocent ... gave him (Arnaud, head of Cistercian monks) extraordinary powers to make Inquisition throughout France, and commissioned him to offer a plenary indulgence to the king and nobles of France for aid ... Philip Augustus allowed many barons of his realm to enlist ... the same plenary indulgence was promised as to those who took the cross for Palestine ... When the crusaders approached Beziers (in their heresy-hunt) ... scaled the walls, captured the town, and *slew 20,000 men, women and children*

in indiscriminate massacre; even those who had sought asylum in the church ... when Arnaud, the papal legate, was asked should Catholics be spared, he answered, 'Kill them all, for God knows His Own' ... Simon de Montfort ... For four years Simon continued his campaigns, devastating nearly all the territory...

*"... Compared with the persecution of heresy in Europe from 1227 to 1492, the persecution of Christians by Romans in the first three centuries after Christ was mild and humane procedure. Making every allowance required of an historian and permitted to a Christian, we must rank the Inquisition, along with the wars and persecutions of our time, as among the darkest blots on the record of mankind, revealing a ferocity unknown in any beast."*²²⁹



2

IN TERMS OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

²²⁹ To quote Will Durant: Besides "burning at the stake", which was the mode of killing the condemned persons (*op. cit.*, p. 783), "the worst tragedies of the Inquisition were concealed in the dungeons rather than brought to light at the stake" (*op. cit.*, p. 783). In crushing one dissident movement alone, i.e., the Albigensian 'heresy' one million men, women and children were massacred. (vide *Newsweek*, "Massacre of the Pure").

1 . WITH REFERENCE TO THE STATUS OF WOMAN

We shall confine ourselves here only to brief *confessions* by a Christian scholar, and shall leave out elaborate discussion—both theological and historical. (Elaborate presentation of the Qur’anic teaching in this behalf has been given in vol. 2).

A. CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY ON THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY

Will Durant says (*The Age of Faith*, pp. 825-826):

“The theories of churchmen were generally hostile to woman; some laws of the Church enhanced her subjection ... To priests and theologians woman was still in these centuries what she had seemed to Chrysostom—‘a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, a painted ill’. She was still the ubiquitous reincarnation of the Eve who had lost Eden for mankind, still the favored instrument of Satan in leading men to hell. St. Thomas Aquinas, usually the soul of kindness ... placed her in some ways below the slave: ‘The woman is subject to the man on account of the weakness of her nature, both of mind and of body ... Man is the beginning of woman and her end, just as God is the beginning and end of every creature ... Woman is in subjection according to the law of nature, but a slave is not ... Children ought to love their father more than their mother’ ... Man, but not woman, was made in the image of God; ‘it is plain from this’, argued the canonist, ‘that wives should be subject to their husbands, and should almost be servants’ ...

“Civil law was more hostile to her than canon law. *Both codes permitted wife-beatings ... Civil law ruled that the word of women could not be admitted in court ... it excluded even the most high-born ladies from representing their own estates in the Parliament of England or the Estates-General of France. Marriage gave the husband full authority over the use and usufruct of any property that his wife owned at marriage.*” (Italics, present writer’s).

B. CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY ON THE ROLE OF ISLAM

Will Durant states (*The Age of Faith*, pp. 180-181, 183):

“In like manner *He (Muhammad) improved the position of woman ... He allowed women to come to the mosque, but believed that ‘their homes are better for them’; yet when they came to his services he treated them kindly even if they brought suckling babes: if, says an amiable tradition, he heard a child cry, he would shorten his sermon lest the mother be inconvenienced. He put an end to the Arab practice of (feminine) infanticide (17:31). He placed woman on the same footing with man in legal processes and in financial independence; she might follow any legitimate profession, keep her earnings, inherit property, and dispose of her belongings, at will (4:4, 32). He abolished the Arab custom of transmitting women as property from father to son. Women were to inherit half as much as the male heirs, and were not to be disposed of*

against their will ... a tradition quotes the Prophet as saying to women, 'It is permitted to you to go out for your needs' ... we find Moslem women moving about freely and unveiled in the Islam of his time, and a century thereafter.

“Morals are in part a function of climate: probably the heat of Arabia intensified sexual passion and precocity, and some allowance should be made for men in perpetual heat. *Moslem laws were designed to reduce temptation outside of marriage, and increase opportunity within. Premarital continence was strictly enjoined (24:33), and fasting was recommended as an aid. The consent of both parties was required for marriage ... Mohammed accepted polygamy to balance a high death rate in both sexes, the length of maternal nursing, and the early waning of reproductive powers in hot climes ... He forbade concubinage (70:29-31).*

“... the *ethic of the Koran is sternly puritan* as Cromwell’s; only the uninformed think of Mohammedanism as a morally easy creed.” (Italics, present writer’s).



2. WITH REFERENCE TO SERFDOM AND SLAVERY

A. CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY²³⁰ RELATING TO MUSLIM HISTORY

Being the uncompromising upholder of human dignity and liberty, an institution like serfdom had no sanction to emerge under the law of Islam. Will Durant admits it, even as Islam's adversary, when he observes: "The Caliphs gave reasonable *protection to life and labour*" (*op. cit.*, p. 227). And the irreverent critic, H.G. Wells, confesses that "*Islam established in the world a great tradition of dignified fair-dealing*" and "*created a society more free from widespread cruelty and social oppression than any society had been in the world before.*" (Outline of History, p. 325). (Italics, present writer's).

In respect of the institution of Slavery, Will Durant admits that the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him!) "did what he could do to mitigate its burdens and its sting" (p. 180), and observes: "*The Koran recognised the capture of non-Muslims in war, and the birth of children to slave-parents, as the sole legitimate sources of slavery; no Moslem (just as in Christendom no Christian) was to be enslaved*" (p. 209). As such, it was mostly and basically the unransomed prisoners of war,²³¹ the exaggeration of whose numbers is discounted by Will

²³⁰ For the Qur'Ānic stand in respect of the abolition of these evils, readers should refer to the relevant sections of the present book, especially in vol. 2.

²³¹ If there were 'slaves' of any other category, they must be taken to have come in reprisals against the continuous mischief of the neighbouring non-Muslim communities. For instance, Will Durant says, referring to Christian

Durant himself (p. 209), that formed in the Muslim world what has been wrongly termed as slave class. However, with all his want of love and respect for Islam, he finds himself forced to say:

“The Moslem ... handled them (slaves) with a genial humanity that made *their lot no worse—perhaps better, as more secure—than that of a factory worker in nineteenth-century Europe ... The offspring of a female slave by her master, of a free woman by her slave, was free from birth. Slaves were allowed to marry; and their children, if talented, might receive an education. It is astonishing how many sons of slaves rose to high place in the intellectual and political world of Islam, how many, like Mahmud and the early Mamluks, become kings.*” (p. 209). (Italics, present writer’s).

B. CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY RELATING TO CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Serfdom:

Will Durant observes (*The Age of Faith*, pp. 552-564):

slave-trade: “Moslems and Greeks were kidnapped by (Christian) slave traders along the shores of the Black Sea, western Asia, or northern Africa for sale as farm hands, domestic servants, eunuchs, concubines or prostitutes ... The slave trade flourished in Italy, probably due to the nearness of Moslem countries which could be preyed upon with a good conscience ...” (*op. cit.*, p. 554).

“The same factors that paved the way for feudalism between the third century and the sixth established it between the sixth and the ninth ...

“An institution that had lasted throughout known history appeared inevitable and eternal, even to honest moralists ... Pope Gregory I ... continued to use hundreds of slaves on the papal estates, and approved laws forbidding slaves to become clerics or marry free Christians. *The Church ... permitted the enslavement of Moslems and of Europeans not yet converted to Christianity.* Thousands of captured Slavs and Saracens were distributed among monasteries as slaves; and slavery on church lands and papal estates continued till the eleventh century. Canon law sometimes estimated the wealth of church lands in slaves rather than in money; like secular law, it considered the slave as a chattel; it forbade church slaves to make wills, and decreed that any *peculium* or savings of which they died possessed should belong to the Church. The archbishop of Narbonne, in his will of 1149, left his Saracen slaves to the bishop of Beziers. *St. Thomas interpreted slavery as one consequence of Adam's sin ... emancipation sometimes proved more difficult on ecclesiastical than on secular properties.*

“The decline of slavery was due not to moral progress but to economic change ... Servitude continued...”

“Typically the serf tilled a plot of land owned by a lord or baron ... He could be evicted at the owner's will ... it is impossible to

calculate the total of serf's obligations. For late medieval Germany it has been reckoned at two-thirds of produce ... stories told how Satan excluded serfs from hell because he could not bear their smell ... His (i.e., serf's) manners were rough and hearty, perhaps gross ... he had to survive by being a good animal ... He was greedy because poor, cruel because fearful, violent because repressed, churlish because treated as a churl. He was the mainstay of the Church...

"... the Church became the largest landholder in Europe, the greatest of feudal suzerains ... her 'feudalities', or feudal rights and obligations, became a scandal ... Feudalism feudalized the Church." (Italics, present writer's).

White Slavery:

Speaking of this institution, assiduously cultivated in Christendom through the beneficence of the Church, Dr. Eric Willams makes the following observations in his *Capitalism and Slavery* (pp. 12-18):

"The political and civil disturbances in England between 1640 and 1740 augmented the supply of white servants. Political and religious nonconformists paid for their unorthodoxy by transportation, most to the sugar islands ... Religious intolerance sent more workers to the plantations. In 1661 Quakers refusing to take the oath for the third time were to be transported; in 1664 transportation ... was decreed for the third offence for persons over sixteen assembling in groups of five or

more under pretence of religion ... *The prisoners were granted in batches to favourite courtiers, who made handsome profits from the traffic in which, it is alleged, even the Queen shared.* A similar policy was resorted to after the Jacobite rising of the eighteenth century.

“The status of these servants became progressively worse in the plantation colonies. *Servitude ... tended to pass into a property relation* which asserted a control of varying extent over the bodies and liberties of the person during service as if he were a thing. Eddis, writing on the eve of the Revolution, found *the servants groaning ‘beneath a worse than Egyptian bondage’ ...* Defoe bluntly stated that *the white servant was a slave.*” (Italics, present writer’s).

Black Slavery:

In his valuable historical document entitled *African Glory* (Wett & Co., London 1955), Mr. J.C. Degroft Johnson projects the beginnings of the Negro slave trade thus:

“In 1441-42 Antonio Gonsalves and Nuno Tristan passed Cape Blanco on the Saharan coast, and on the return journey called at Rio d’Ouru, or, River of Gold, whence they brought back some gold dust and *the slaves. These slaves having been sent by Prince Henry to Pope Martin V, the latter conferred* ²³² *on*

²³² What a gift, and what a reward, and what a holiness!

Portugal the right of possession and sovereignty over all lands that might be discovered between Cape Blanco and India.

“Prince Henry the Navigator, having now received the support of the Church,²³³ carried horses on his ships to enable his sailors to hunt down their human prey on the Saharan coast. *Great was the rejoicing in Catholic Christian Lisbon as each succeeding batch of African slaves arrived.*” (p. 127). (Italics, present writer’s).

In his highly-scholarly work, *Capitalism and Slavery*, the Christian scholar-statesman of the West Indies, Dr. Eric Williams, projects a historical record which, though it deals mainly with the British slave trade, brings into broad relief the fact that rejoicing in the Negro slave trade was shared by all the Christian Powers capable of participating in the Rape of Black Africa. He says (pp. 35-48, 192, 209):

“With free trade and the increasing demands of the sugar plantations, the volume of the British slave trade rose enormously ... The importation into Jamaica from 1700 to 1786 was 610,000, and it has been estimated that the total import of slaves into all the British colonies between 1680 and 1786 was over two million.

“Mutinies and suicides were obviously far more common on slave ships than on other vessels, and the *brutal treatment* and

²³³ Mark the role of the Church in blessing the Rape of Black Africa!

greater restrictions on the movements of the slaves *would doubtless have tended to increase their mortality* ... The sole aim of the slave merchants was to have their decks 'well covered with black ones'. It is not uncommon to read of a vessel of 90 tons carrying 414 ... The space allotted to each slave on the Atlantic crossing (called the 'Middle Passage') measured five feet in length by sixteen inches in breadth. Packed like 'rows of books on shelves', as Clarkson said, chained two by two, right leg and left leg, right hand and left hand, each *slave had less room than a man in a coffin. It was like the transportation of black cattle*, and where sufficient Negroes were not available cattle were taken on. The slave trader's aim was profit and not the comfort of his victims...

"Prior to 1783, however, *all classes in English society presented a united front with regard to the slave trade. The monarchy, the government, the church, and public opinion in general, supported the slave trade...*

"*The (Christian) Spanish monarchy set the fashion which European royalty followed to the very last. The palace-fortresses of Madrid and Toledo were built out of the payment to the Spanish Crown for licences to transport Negroes. One meeting of the two sovereigns of Spain and Portugal was held in 1701 to discuss the arithmetical problem posed by a contract for ten thousand 'tons' of Negroes granted the Portuguese. The Spanish queen, Christina, in the middle of the nineteenth century, openly participated in the slave trade to Cuba. The*

royal court of Portugal, when it moved to Brazil to avoid capture by Napoleon, did not find the slave atmosphere of its colonial territory uncongenial. Louis XIV fully appreciated the importance of the trade to metropolitan France and France overseas. The plans of the Great Elector for Prussian aggrandizement included the African slave trade.

“Hawkins’ slave trading expedition was launched under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth ... slave traders held high offices in England. Of The Royal Adventurers trading to Africa in 1667, a list headed by royalty included two eldermen, three dukes, eight earls, seven lords, one countess, and twenty-seven knights.

“The Church also supported slave-trade ... Sherlock, later Bishop of London assured the planters that ‘Christianity and the embracing of the Gospel does not make the least difference in civil property’. Neither did it impose any barriers to clerical activity; for his labors with regard to the Asiento, which he helped to draw up as a British plenipotentiary at Utrecht, Bishop Robinson of Bristol was promoted to the see of London. The bells of the Bristol churches pealed merrily on the news of the rejection by Parliament of Wilberforce’s bill for the abolition of the slave trade. The slave trader, John Newton, gave thanks in the Liverpool churches for the success of his last venture before his conversion and implored God’s blessing on his next. He established public worship twice every day on his slaver, not for the slaves but for the crew. ‘I never knew’, he

confessed, 'sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than in the last two voyages to Guinea'. The famous Cardinal Manning of the nineteenth century was the son of a rich West Indian merchant dealing in slave-grown produce. Many missionaries found it profitable to drive out Beelzebub by Beelzebub. According to the most recent English writer on the slave trade, they 'considered that the best way in which to remedy abuse of negro slaves was to set the plantation owners a good example by keeping slaves and estates themselves, accomplishing in this practical manner the salvation of the planters and the advancement of their foundations'. The Moravian missionaries in the islands held slaves without hesitation; the Baptists, one historian writes with charming delicacy, would not allow their earlier missionaries to deprecate ownership of slaves. To the very end the Bishop of Exeter retained his 655 slaves, for whom he received over £12,700 compensation in 1833 ... Quaker nonconformity did not extend to the slave trade. In 1756 there were eighty-four Quakers listed as members of the Company trading to Africa, among them the Barclay and Baring families. Slave dealing was one of the most lucrative investments of English as of American Quakers, and the name of a slaver, The *Willing Quaker*, reported from Boston at Sierra Leone in 1793, symbolizes the approval with which the slave trade was regarded in Quaker circles ... An inscription to Foster Cunliffe (a Liverpool slave trader) in St. Peter's Church describes him thus: 'a Christian devout and exemplary

in the exercise of every private and public duty, friend to mercy, patron to distress, an enemy only to vice and sloth, he lived esteemed by all who knew him ... and died lamented by the wise and good'...

"... It was held in 1677 that 'Negroes being usually bought and sold among merchants, so merchandise, and also being infidels, there might be property in them'. In 1729 the Attorney General ruled that baptism did not bestow freedom or make any alteration in the temporal condition of the slaves; in addition the slave did not become free by being brought to England ... So eminent an authority as Sir William Blackstone held that 'with respect to any right the master may have lawfully acquired to the perpetual service of John or Thomas, this will remain exactly in the same state of subjection for life', in England or elsewhere.

"The barbarous removal of the Negroes from Africa continued for at least twenty-five years after 1833, to the sugar plantations of Brazil and Cuba.

"... What was characteristic of British capitalism was typical also of capitalism in France. Gaston-Martin writes: 'There was not a single great shipowner at Nantes who, between 1714 and 1789, did not buy and sell slaves ... it is almost as certain that none would have become what he was if he had not sold slaves'." (Italics, present writer's).

We may close this most brutal tale of heinous crimes against humanity with the observations of Professor Emil Torday who, lecturing at Geneva in 1931 under the auspices of the 'Society for the Protection of Children of Africa', said:²³⁴

“This, too, is an age of propaganda. We excel our ancestors only in system and organisation; they lied as fluently and as brazenly. Central Africa was a territory of peace and happy civilisation. Traders travelled hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles from one side of the vast continent to the other without molestation; the stranger was always an honoured guest to the African. *The tribal wars from which the European pirates claimed to deliver the people were mere sham-fights*; it was a great battle when half a dozen men perished on a battlefield. Some may question the use of the word ‘pirates’ but it must be admitted that even the mode employed by Sir John Hawkins to procure his first stock of slaves for the new world was worse than that of an accredited pirate.

“Pierre de Vaissiers gives us the incident of a *captain who poisoned his human cargo when held up by calms or adverse winds. Another killed some of his slaves to feed the others with the flesh of their slaughtered friends.*

“It is little wonder, then, that *slaves died not only from physical ill-treatment, but also from grief, rage, and despair. Some*

²³⁴ Quoted by J. C. Degroft Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-165.

undertook hunger strikes; some undid their chains and hurled themselves on the crew in futile attempts at insurrection. In order to combat the grief and melancholy among the slaves it became the custom to have them on deck once a day and force them to dance, but even in these cases many a slave took the opportunity to jump overboard, uttering cries of triumph as he cleared the vessel and disappeared below the surface. There are indeed limits to the degradation which the human spirit will endure.

“... The slaves were forced into crowded canoes and taken to the ships, where the use of whips and spears compelled them to climb reeling and trembling up the swaying rope-ladders...

“... It is difficult to determine accurately the extent of the depopulation of Africa occasioned by the slave trade. One French historian quoted by Utting says it is not exaggeration to say that 100,000,000 people were lost to Africa as a result of it. Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, the eminent Afro-Asian historian, also believes that Africa lost about 100,000,000 souls as a result of the slave trade.

“Next it must be stressed that many died in the slave wars ... Whitened skeletons littered the slave routes as if to blaze a trail for others to follow. Such was the carnage. Between 1690 and 1820 Jamaica alone received no fewer than 800,000 slaves; yet in 1820 only 340,000 slaves existed in the island. Think of the numerous West Indies islands, under the domination of so many

European countries, think of the United States of America, of Canada, of Mexico and of the South American Republics, which have large Negro populations even today, and then picture those blacks who perished in Africa before the journey to the new world had really begun; think of those who perished during the Middle Passage; then again consider of those who fell dead as a result of the slave whips; and let us reflect on the lot of those sick, injured, and aged slaves who were cast adrift to die of hunger and starvation. Finally, let us remember that band of brave Negro men and women, particularly the Koromantee Negroes, who found the state of bondage insufferable and who died at the stake in the cause of liberty.” (Italics, present writer’s).



CONCLUSION

Finally, may we be permitted to emphasise that the role of the Christian civilisation in the ages of faith being what has been recorded in the foregoing, the following judgment of Bertrand Russell, in his well-known book: *Why I am not a Christian?* (London, 1967), stands unchallenged for all time:

“In the so-called ages of faith, when men really did believe the Christian religion in all its completeness, there was the Inquisition, with its tortures, there were millions of unfortunate women burnt as

witches, and there was every kind of cruelty, practised upon all sorts of people in the name of religion.

“You find as you look around the world that every single bit of progress in human feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step towards the diminution of war, every step towards better treatment of the coloured races, every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized Churches of the world. I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its Churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world.” (p. 25).



APPENDIX

ISLAM’S ROLE IN AFRICA

IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY

Virulent missionary propaganda has been carried on in respect of Africa in which, in order to hide the crimes of Christendom against Africa’s black populations, the name of Islam has been most falsely dragged in respect of Negro slavery. Hence, a brief discussion in respect of Islam’s role among the black races of Africa has become absolutely necessary. In this connection we will bring forward the testimony of the Afro-American Christian scholar Dr. Blyden. Combining eminence in scholarship with a first-hand knowledge of

Africa, he wrote thus, towards the end of the nineteenth century, in his book: *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (London, 1887):²³⁵

“After the first conquests of the Muslims in North Africa, their religion advanced southward into the continent not by arms, but by schools and books and mosques, by trade and inter-marriage. They could not have brought a force sufficient to subjugate the people, for they had to deal with large, powerful and energetic tribes. The Nigritian and Soudanic tribes have never been subdued by a foreign foe, but they have over and over again driven back both Arabs and Europeans.” (p. 256).

*“You can understand why it is then that Islam has such a hold upon the African tribes who have embraced it. They gather under the beams of the Crescent not only for religious but for patriotic reasons, till they are not only swayed with one idea but act as one individual. The faith becomes a part of their nationality, and is entwined with their affections. Arguments from outsiders have no weight with them. There are names and phrases which have such effect upon their minds and so thrill them as supersede and transcend all argument ... *That theory which attributes the success of Islam in Africa to what are frequently denounced as the sensual aspects of the religion is based upon ignorance, not only of the system but of the elementary facts of human nature.* No religion could exert so*

²³⁵ Italics in all quotations, present writer's.

powerful a sway over two hundred millions ²³⁶ of people of all races and climes for more than a thousand years which appealed chiefly to the lower passions.” (p. 266).

“It is not too much to say that the popular literature of the Christian world since the discovery of America, or at least for the last 200 years, has been anti-Negro. *The Muhammadan Negro has felt nothing of the withering power of caste. There is nothing in his colour or race to debar him from the highest privileges, social or political, to which any other Muslim can attain. The slave who becomes a Mohammadan is free.*” (p. 18).

“With every wish, no doubt, to the contrary, the European seldom or never gets over the feeling of distance, if not of repulsion, which he experiences on first seeing the Negro. While he joyfully admits the Negro to be his brother having the same nature in all its essential attributes, still owing to the diversity in type and colour he naturally concludes that the inferiority which to him appears on the surface must extend deeper than the skin, and affect the soul. Therefore very often in spite of himself he stands off from his African convert even when under his training he has made considerable advance in civilization and the arts ... And the *(European) missionary looking from a comfortable social distance surveys the Europeanised native, sometimes with pity, sometimes with dismay, seldom with thorough sympathy.*” (p. 34).

²³⁶ Now seven hundred million.

“Mohammadanism and learning to the Negro were coeval. No sooner was he converted than he was taught to read, and the importance of knowledge was impressed upon him. The Christian Negro came in contact with mental and physical proscription and the religion of Christ contemporaneously. If the Mohammadan Negro had at any time to choose between the Quran and the sword, when he chose the former, he was allowed to wield the latter as the equal of any other Muslim; but no amount of allegiance to the Gospel relieved the Christian Negro from the degradation of wearing the chain which he received with it, or rescued him from the political, and in a measure ecclesiastical, proscription which he still undergoes in all the countries of his exile. Everywhere in Christian lands he plays at the present moment the part of the slave, ape, or puppet.” (pp, 15, 16).

“The Mohammadan Negro is a much better Mohommodan than the Christian Negro is a Christian, because the Muslim Negro as a learner is a disciple, not an imitator ... With the disciple progress is from within; the imitator grows by accretion from without. The learning acquired by a disciple gives him capacity; that gained by an imitator terminates in itself. The one becomes a capable man; the other a mere sciolist. This explains the difference between the Mohammadan and the Christian Negro.” (p. 44).

“The introduction of Islam into central and west Africa has been the most important, if not the sole preservative, against the desolations of the slave trade.” (p. 78).

“Mungo Park, in his travels seventy years ago, everywhere remarked the contrast between the pagan and the Mohammadan tribes of interior Africa. One very important improvement noticed by him was abstinence from intoxicating drinks ... Thus *throughout Central Africa there has been established a vast Total Abstinence Society; and such is the influence of this Society that where there are Muslim inhabitants even in Pagan towns it is a very rare thing to see a person intoxicated. They thus present an almost impenetrable barrier to the desolating flood of ardent spirits with which traders from Europe and America inundate the coast ...* The abstemiousness of Islam is one of its good qualities which we should like Africans to retain, whatever may be the future fortunes of that faith on this continent. The Negro race in their debilitating climate do not possess the hardihood of the North American Indian or of the New Zealander; and under the influence of that apparently inseparable concomitant of European civilization, they would in a much shorter time than it has taken the last-named races, reach the deplorable distinction of being ‘civilized off the face of the earth’ .” (pp. 79, 80).

Dr. Blyden's book created a big stir in the British press. Among those who boldly came forward to espouse the cause of truth and to confirm the learned doctor's verdicts on the roles of Islam and Christianity in Africa were Bosworth Smith, who wrote a long article in the *Nineteenth Century* for December 1887, and an eminent Englishman who had travelled widely in Africa, Mr. Joseph Thomson by name, who wrote in high praise of Islam's role in the *London Times* (November 10, 1887). We may quote here the latter's verdict on the allegation of Islam's association with slave trade in Africa. He said:

“It has been argued by some of your correspondents that in Eastern Africa and the Nile basin you see Islam in its true colour in congenial association with the slave trade and all forms of degradation and violence. A more baseless statement could not be conceived. I unhesitatingly affirm—and I speak from a wider experience of Eastern Central Africa than any of your correspondents possess—that if the slave trade thrives, it is because Islam has not been introduced to those regions, and for the strongest of all reasons, that the spread of Mohammanism would have meant the concomitant suppression of the slave trade.”



PART 5 CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Chapter 1

THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE QUR'ÂNIC REVOLUTION

The Holy Qur'an emerged in Arabia and, though it claimed to be the Message of God for entire humanity, very naturally its immediate encounter was with the Arabs, who possessed a religious philosophy, a system of religious rituals, a social structure, an ethical outlook and a moral code; along with the *Ka'bah* at Makka—which had been established in hoary antiquity as the House of Worship for the One True God—still enjoying the status of Arabia's central holy place under the control of the descendants of Abraham through Ishmael, though no longer for monotheism but only for idolatry.

In that encounter, Arab paganism, with all its material resources, fought against Islam tooth and nail until, tottering step by step in the process, it finally vanished lock, stock and barrel.

One of the aspects of that bloody conflict was that, even in the worst crisis—and crises were many, Islam did not compromise in the slightest measure,—and in this its reform movement stands in human history as radically different from other known reform movements which crystallised into distinct religions, as they exist today; because the latter built on the existing material, some of which alone was

discarded for projecting new dimensions. This is what we find, for instance, in the teachings of Gautama Buddha, who came forward to reform Hinduism—as a result of which Buddhism came into existence; and in the teachings of Christ, who stood up to reform Judaism—as a result of which the Christian religion was born.

Thus, Islam is neither a reaction brought about by the theoretical or the practical dimensions of Arab life, nor is it in any way a product of Arab environment.

Hence it cannot be called Arab religion. Nor can it be called Muhammadanism, because unlike Gautama Buddha, for instance, Muhammad has not claimed to be the author of Islam. Rather, he has emphatically renounced all such claim, proclaiming God as its Author.

To come to the *religion, social structure* and *ethics* of the pagan Arabs:

As accepted on all hands, the Arab '*cult of worship*' was a magical cult based on sheer polydaemonism. and fetish-worship, possessing not even the faintest semblance of any civilised features. The Qur'an confronted it with the purest form of Monotheism and wiped it out completely.

The *outlook in respect of human life* was based on a thorough-going Pessimism. The present world was regarded as the only world that existed, and Time was considered to be the great Destroyer. The existence of human beings was believed to be confined to the span of earthly life commencing with birth and terminating in death. Thus, the worldly relations were ephemeral, life was an empty dream, and

struggle for anything idealistic was vanity. This crude materialistic view of the world and human life led to the establishment of Nihilism as the ‘religious philosophy’.²³⁷ As for the Qur’an, it agreed in respect of the transient character of the worldly joys, which forms an incontrovertible truth. But, then, it gave a philosophy which was the very opposite of the Arab pagan view. It taught: (a) the earthly life possesses reality—as opposed to vanity, and meaningfulness—as opposed to ‘emptiness’; (b) only to regard it as the be-all and end-all of human existence is wrong, because (c) it is actually a *means* to a higher *end*,—the end being evolution of the human personality, and it being only a stage in the stages of that evolution; (d) as *means*, however, it has to be pursued and cared for with all earnestness; and, therefore, (e) *Pessimism* is a false view, and *Optimism* alone deserves to be adopted.

In respect of *social structure*, the most ferocious and inhuman form of tribalism²³⁸ constituted its foundation—a tribalism that had led to prolonged internecine wars and tremendous social mischief. The Holy Qur’an challenged it and uprooted it on the basis of its principles of Human Unity and Brotherhood of the Believers, which cuts right across all ties of tribal and racial kinship and establishes the social structure on ethico-religious foundations.

²³⁷ Ref: The Holy Qur’án, 6:29; 23:84-85; 45:23-24; 50:2-3; etc. Also: ‘Abid b. al-Abras: *DiwÉn*; and the Seven *Mu‘allaqÉt*.

²³⁸ Dozy names it as ‘a violent and terrible passion’ (*Histoire des Musulmans d’Espagne*, 1,7. Leiden, 1932).

The pessimistic nihilistic outlook had very naturally led the pagan Arabs to full-blooded Hedonism *in the domain of morality*. For them, it was a bad world, and life was a 'bad bargain'. The pursuit of 'wealth, wine and woman' had, therefore, become their greatest passion, to which the praises of voluptuousness in pre-Islamic poetry bear full testimony.²³⁹ Indeed, the pagan Arabs were a godless, thoughtless, reckless people, whom only a miracle could change,—and the miracle came in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!) who, with his unique personality and his unique

²³⁹ For this purpose, even the reference to the famous Seven *Mu'allaqĒt* alone is enough.

In his *Literary History of the Arabs* (p. 136), Prof. R. A. Nicholson has projected the pagan hedonistic conception of life in the words of a pre-Islamic poet thus:

Roast meat and wine, the swinging ride
On a camel sure and tried,
Which her master speeds amain
Over low dales and level plain:
Women marble-white and fair
Trailing gold-fringed raiments rare:
Opulence, luxurious ease,
With lute's soft melodies—
Such delights hath our brief span;
Time is change, Time's fool is man:
Wealth or want, great store or small,
All is one, since death's are all !

message in the form of the Qur'an, as his weapons, blew up the sands of pagan morality and built up the edifice of the morals of godliness.

To revert to Arab morality: Along with hedonism as their basic moral philosophy, the pagan Arabs possessed certain moral concepts like loyalty, generosity, courage, patience, veracity and regard for honour. Unfortunately for them, however, they possessed no refined moral sense. nor did they have any idea of ethical norms and principles. Hence, their notions of those virtues were either defective or positively vicious. A brief examination will suffice.

Loyalty:

The pagan virtue of loyalty was grounded purely in materialistic considerations, with absolutely no idea of anything higher. It was rooted in tribalism—in kinship by blood, and as such it could induce the pagan Arabs to demonstrate the highest self-sacrifice and to undergo the worst sufferings in upholding it, whether the cause was morally right or wrong. In consequence: Based on the outlook: 'My tribe, right or wrong', it was no more than an irrational and immoral passion; as we find plainly expressed, for instance, by Durayd b. al-Simmah, in a verse quoted by Nicholson: "I am of Ghaziyya: if she be in error, then I will err; and if Ghaziyya be guided right, I go with her."²⁴⁰ To enter into a solemn covenant with someone outside one's tribe, for safeguarding any of his specific interests, was rare. Such a covenant was, however, honoured with full loyalty. But, the pagan

²⁴⁰ *op. cit.*, p, 83.

spirit being one of overbearing haughtiness and show of vulgar 'manliness', the practice of loyalty in this respect also was not based on any considerations of humanitarian moral obligation but on crude self-esteem.

As opposed to the above pagan view, the Holy Qur'an establishes the virtue of loyalty on *principles*: spiritual and moral. A Muslim should be loyal to God and to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!)—a bond of loyalty which exists in the form of an explicit and solemn Covenant that comes into being simultaneously with the acceptance of Islam (48:10)²⁴¹. Besides that, he has to practise loyalty in the entire sweep of social relations on the *principle* of upholding all that is good and striving against all that is evil for humanity (3:110),—on the basis of the universalistic Divine Law and not on petty tribalism or racialism.

Generosity:

It was intimately related to the pagan view of 'honour', as Zuhair b. Abi SulmÉ projects it in terms of 'a shield for his personal honour'.²⁴² It was more a demonstration of self-projection than of

241 إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ
عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فسنؤتيه أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Those who pledge you their allegiance, pledge allegiance to Allah. Allah’s hand is over their hands. He who breaks his pledge only breaks it against himself. But as for him who fulfils the contract he has made with Allah, We will pay him an immense reward.”

benevolence. In other words, it was motivated purely by the spirit of ostentation and vainglory, the notion of its role as a moral virtue being conspicuously absent from the pagan consciousness. This fact becomes evident when we find the pre-Islamic poets boasting of even their excessive drinking of wine as a hall-mark of generosity! Thus Arab paganism stood not for generosity as such, but for thoughtless prodigality.

The Holy Qur'an, too, gives a high place to generosity in its moral code. But it denounces vehemently the pagan notions connected with it, namely: lavish wasteful spending (17:27), and spending for ostentation and vainglory (2:264). Indeed, thoughtless extravagancy is regarded as no less a vice than niggardliness (4:36-37; 17:27,29; etc.); and Muslims have been commanded to practise *disciplined* generosity (25:67; etc.), and that with the purest of motives, i.e., love of God (2:177; etc.). Hence, generosity is a purely moral act in Islam—well-balanced and consequential for its executor as well as of for its recipient.

Courage:

Military prowess was the demand of the vicissitudes attendant on the cult of tribalism, wherein reckless courage constituted the very means of survival; and it was meant to be practised indiscriminately and without any ethical considerations, namely, as a brute passion—as an uncontrolled and irresistible animal impulse, employed for plunder

²⁴² *Mu'allaqah*, 5:51.

or for destroying the members of a rival tribe. Indeed, the sages of paganism preached openly that the courage of an Arab consisted not merely in striking dauntlessly at the enemy who had committed aggression, but basically in the attitude whereby 'he should rather take the initiative (of murdering people) and perpetrate aggression (even) when no one does him any wrong'.²⁴³ Thus, for Arab paganism bravery was only another name for the practice of brute and barbaric ferocity.

The Holy Qur'an, too, commends and commands courage (8:45; etc.) and deprecates cowardice (8:15; etc.). But therein courage has been projected as a noble and thoroughly-disciplined trait of human character; and it has been emphasised in both of its aspects, namely, physical courage and moral courage. As *physical courage*, or, military prowess, it has been firmly grounded in justice (5:8), mercy (90:17) and peace (8:61), on the one hand, and in the highest ideals of fighting in the 'Way of God' (4:73; etc.) and of attaining the sublime blessing of martyrdom (2:154; etc.), on the other—which makes a Muslim absolutely fearless of death. As *Moral courage*, it has been affirmed as an inseparable part of Islamic character (5:54).

Patience:

The rough and difficult conditions of life, with scarcity, pestilence, famine and fratricidal wars always haunting them, had made extraordinary endurance and patience eminent virtues in the

²⁴³ Zuhair b. Abi SulmÉ: *Mu'allaqah*, 5:38-39,

sight of the desert Arabs, for whom it was essentially a vital part of courage to face hardships dauntlessly on the battlefield and elsewhere. As such, it was not actually a moral virtue with an idealistic content but a bare necessity relating to their physical existence and survival.

As compared with that view, the Holy Qur'an has filled the concept of patience (*sabr*) with a rich spirituo-moral content (2:153, 155; etc.), elevating it to the status of a high moral principle and an eminent constituent of godliness (2:177), whereby the promotion of the best in man as well as the advancement of the cause of Truth and Goodness in the life of humanity are ensured (2:156; 3:146-148).

Veracity:

The qualities of rugged straightforwardness, courage and vigour which the desert life breeds, establish an appreciation of the virtue of veracity, or, truthfulness, as a manly trait of character. Moreover, simple truthfulness is a virtue which has been appreciated throughout human history, among the most primitive as well as the civilized communities, as an admirable mode of human expression. Thus, the pagan Arabs also regarded veracity, or, truthfulness, as an eminent virtue.

As compared with the simple Arab pagan view, the Holy Qur'an has projected the concept of 'Truth' comprehensively in terms of, so to say, both of its poles: subjective and objective, namely, as *Īdq* and *Īqq*, and has presented an elaborate philosophy of Truth with its

spiritual, moral, social, cosmic and supra-cosmic dimensions.²⁴⁴ Similarly, it has given an elaborate exposition of the concept of Falsehood (*BĒ'il*).

Regard for Honour:

The pagan Arabs possessed a deep sense of honour. Its entire concept revolved, however, around their philosophy of tribalism. It was embedded in the notion of exultation in ancestral virtues (*Īsab*), which formed the criterion of the excellence to which the tribes laid their claim, as also the real source of personal glory for every member of a tribe. The honour of the tribe was thus the honour of every individual, and the greatest virtue of the individual was to cultivate and maintain a violent and blind passion for defending and promoting it, and finally bequeathing it to posterity,—regarding no sacrifice and no suffering as too great in that regard.²⁴⁵

It was this peculiar sense of honour that had created in the pagan Arabs the spirit of violent arrogance (*ibĒ'*),—a spirit that caused them to regard submission to the authority of man,²⁴⁶ or even of God,²⁴⁷ as highly dishonourable for themselves.

²⁴⁴ We have dealt with it elaborately in our “*Dynamics of Moral Revolution*”.

²⁴⁵ Ref: *MufaġġaliyĒt* and the Seven *Mu‘allaqĒt*.

²⁴⁶ ‘Abid b. al-Abras: *DiwĒn*: 4:20; etc.

²⁴⁷ *The Holy Qur’Ēn*, 2:206; 97:6-7; 16:22; etc.

Also, it was this vulgar sense of honor that had given birth to, and nourished for centuries, the spirit of blind and persistent vengeance, which Nicholson calls “a tormenting thirst which nothing could quench except blood, a disease of honour which might be described as madness”.²⁴⁸

Again, it was this blind sense of honour that was responsible for the practice of female infanticide,²⁴⁹ the womenfolk being regarded as nothing more than chattels in the pagan Arab society.

Still again, it was this irrational sense of honour which was responsible for the existence of a feudalistic aristocratic social order in which honour belonged only to those of noble descent (*nasab*), namely, the aristocracy, and not to the ‘base-born’, i.e., those who could not trace their lineage to any heroic person: the serfs and the slaves.²⁵⁰

As compared with all that, the Holy Qur’an, based as its teachings are on a genuine notion of moral good and evil and on universalistic ethical ideals, has counteracted, in a radical and revolutionary manner, the pagan concept of ‘honour’ as well as its different practical ethical implications. In its view, all human beings, irrespective of their tribe or sex, are equally honourable in respect of their humanity (17:70); while, in terms of achievement, it is neither

²⁴⁸ *op. cit.*, p. 93.

²⁴⁹ *The Holy Qur’Ēn*, 81:8-9; etc.

²⁵⁰ For references, see Ibn Ishaq: *Sirat al-NabĒ*.

hasab (ancestral glory) nor *nasab* (pedigree) that can confer greater honour on a human being, but only sound godly moral character (49:13). The only division of humanity which it endorses is that of upholders of Truth and Goodness and the upholders of Falsehood and Evil (64:2; etc.), and the only conflict which it consequently permits is for the establishment of Truth and Goodness in, and the eradication of Falsehood and Evil from, the life of mankind (3:110; 4:76; etc.). As opposed to pagan arrogance, it preaches the practice of humility in respect of both: human beings (25:63; etc.) and God (57:16; etc.), and projects the virtue of honour in terms of self-respect (63:8) in the light of that humility; and it teaches self-restraint in anger, forgiveness (3:134), and compassionate kindness (90:17; etc.), as laws of life. It kills the spirit of vengeance by asking the Muslims to meet evil with good (41:34), and to leave the matter of punishment to God, Who is the 'Lord of Vengeance' on behalf of the oppressed (3:4). Even in respect of murder, which was the source of immense and never-ending cruelty in the pagan 'cult of Honour', it teaches the law of equity as based not only on absolute justice but also on mercy (2:178). It elevates the woman to the status of the twin-half of man,—equal to him spiritually, morally and legally (4:1; 33:35; etc.).



Chapter 2

THE HOLY PROPHET'S DIVINE MISSION

The Holy Prophet was born and brought up among the pagan Arabs whose spiritual, moral and social outlooks we have discussed in the previous chapter. But, how different, radically different, from their philosophy of life is the revolutionary Message of the Qur'an?

There was a sprinkling of Jewish and Christian groups also present in that country since some centuries, who were as backward in terms of culture as the pagan Arabs. Even so, however, they possessed better religious philosophy and ethical teachings. But, how different, radically different, from their philosophies of life is the Qur'anic philosophy?

Indeed, the Qur'an emerged in history with a philosophy which in its structure, dimensions and outlook differed vitally from all the existing religions and philosophies, adding new dimensions even where it agreed and correcting the wrongs wherever they existed in any religion—not only in respect of Arab paganism but also with reference to other religions of the world. And, no wonder, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!) claimed the Qur'an as the greatest of the miracles bestowed on him by God.

And, then, another important fact, to which we have made a passing reference in the foregoing, deserves full notice—the fact, namely, that the departure of the Qur'an from the prevalent thought in

religion or ethics or social structure is not of a re-actionary character but positive in its nature. In other words, the Qur'anic Message emerges in a positive, original, constructive, and comprehensive principle which contains within it potentially the entire system of its philosophy,²⁵¹ like the seed of a tree which is said to contain the tree within it potentially,—even as the holy book says:

أَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي

السَّمَاءِ .

تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا ...

“Seest you not how AllÉh sets forth a parable ?—A Goodly Word (i.e., the Divine Message) (is) like a goodly tree, whose root (is) firmly fixed and its branches (reach) to the heavens, (and) it brings forth its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord ...” (14:24). Thus, it did not grow out of something pre-existing through re-adjustments and pruning but emerged as an exclusive and self-subsisting reality, which supplied the sound model of thought and action in every sphere of life, so that any belief or any principle of action which had affinity with it to any extent—even if only in name—became transformed by coming into contact with it, casting off its wrong dimensions and the wrong approach to reality contained in it.

It is this we find in the case of the pre-Qur'anic Arab virtues of generosity, courage, loyalty, veracity, patience, etc. In that connection, it may be observed, beyond what we have already noticed, that certain

²⁵¹ Ref : “The Philosophy of Unit”, pp. 157-172 (vol. 1).

noble moral concepts—noble in terms of their nomenclature—have been possessed by all human communities, including the most primitive. It is, however, not the names of those concepts but their contents that are important. Otherwise, to possess the basic notion of generosity, or courage, or loyalty, etc., is the very demand of human nature. Indeed, it is the very condition of human existence.

In the final analysis, the fact cannot be denied that what could not be achieved upto this day in terms of comprehensive and balanced Wisdom by the greatest thinkers of the world—Aristotle, Plato, Kant, Hegel, Marx, etc.,—and by the greatest religions, was achieved through the Qur’an by an unlettered person who had no access to any wisdom of the world and who was born and brought up in a community whose highest intellectual achievement was nihilistic and hedonistic poetry. Yes, he was unlettered and enjoyed not the slightest advantage of any Wisdom in his environment,—unlike Jesus Christ, who was born and brought up in the prophetic lore of the Israelites, unlike Gautama Buddha, who received the highest education as a prince and whose environment was saturated with the accumulated learning of the Hindu sages, and unlike Aristotle, Plato, Hegel, Karl Marx, and others, who had drunk deep at the fountains of knowledge that existed through the labours of previous thinkers. And, then, he gave that Wisdom not through any academic process of research and creation and polishing up of thought from inside academies and libraries, but in an extempore manner—orally and in bits, whose collection under his guidance assumed the form of a Book that contains a thoroughly consistent and comprehensive philosophy and

code of life. If, therefore, the Qur'an is not the greatest existing miracle of history—what else it is? And how could such a superhuman achievement take place without a superhuman basis of achievement? Indeed, there is no way but to accept the Qur'an as the Word of God. And that it claims to be from the beginning to the end.

Those who believe in the existence of God and in the genuineness of the phenomenon of Divine Revelation, and yet refuse to accept the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him!) as the Messenger of God and the Holy Qur'an as a divinely-revealed Book, land themselves in the quagmire of absolute irrationality. And the same can be said about the other categories of the Unbelievers also.

This irrationality becomes evident when we examine the attitudes adopted in respect of his claim by his opponents, their judgments emerging in the following terms: (1) it was an act on his part of downright lying, forgery and imposture; (2) it was a case of self-deception under the influence of some serious and peculiar form of madness.

As to the first: Human nature being what it is: He who never spoke a lie in his dealings with human beings,—nay, he who conspicuously shone out as the very personification of Truth and Integrity (*al-ØÉdiq* and *al-AmÊn*) from the very beginning of his life, how could he indulge day in and day out, for twenty-three years, in forging lies in the name of God? Then, who can possibly forge lies deliberately and consciously in the name of God? Only a diehard atheist with a firm devilish mind; because a simple philosophical

atheist with any degree of human character would regard any such thing as obnoxious. But, what do we find in his case? Practice of the highest human virtues of truth, justice, mercy, forgiveness, sweetness, sympathy, generosity, selfless service to and suffering for the cause of humanity, etc.,²⁵² on the one hand, and the total submergence of his personality in a living and positive devotion to God and the utmost sacrifice in His Way, on the other.²⁵³ Then, had he been an adventurer, employing the name of God as a subterfuge, why should he have insisted on belittling himself by attributing all his merits not to himself but to God, and by confining his status to that of a human being and a Servant of God?—while it was easy for him, with all his dynamic personality and with all the primitive and vulgar superstitiousness of his countrymen, to claim some form of divinity for himself. All of us know that a human being like Jesus has been elevated to the status of the Son of God and has been accepted as such by a large section of mankind in spite of the monotheism projected by the Bible, and

²⁵² Even the tributes paid by the non-Muslim scholars, which we have quoted elsewhere, are enough to give some idea as to what type of character and personality he possessed.

²⁵³ Both the Qur'Ēn and the Sunnah bear irrefutable evidence to the fact that, with all the super-human labour that he had to undertake for building up the multi-dimensional spiritual, moral, social, economic and political Revolution that he accomplished in history and with all his self-imposed rigours and sufferings of poverty, he would regularly pass a large part of the night, when others would sleep, in standing in prayer before God, until sometimes the skin of his feet would crack and bleed.

Gautama Buddha has been worshipped by his followers very much as a god in spite of the atheistic foundations of Buddhism. Moreover, if his mission would have been based merely on political adventurism, what need was there for him to antagonise his countrymen by confronting them with the challenge of a radically-different religion and undertaking, as a consequence, the most poignant sufferings and the greatest risks? Therefore, only a person who has been totally blinded by prejudice can even think of bringing forward the allegation of imposture.

As to the second: The foundations of human behaviour being what they are: What do we really find? The records of his life are in existence. And what do they reveal? Only one thing: that he possessed a most sound physical health and a most sound mind that any human being ever possessed. And the fact that, even under the stress and strain of the greatest adversity, he never lost his equanimity of mind but greeted the worst crisis always with super-human fortitude and forbearance and an unflinching smile, as also the fact that he combined in his personality utmost mercy with the utmost bravery, speak volumes not only of his spiritual, moral and mental grace and greatness but also of the extraordinary soundness of his nerves. Indeed, only a mentally-diseased person can think about him that he could ever be mentally diseased.

In the final analysis: If Truth has any reality and Reason any value, and both of them any meaning: The Holy Prophet Muhammad (in whom God's greatest Blessings abide!) is, by all canons of Truth and Reason, the Messenger of God to humanity.

