

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)

The Light

AND

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement
for over eighty years

January - March 2007

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆

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The Light was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. *The Islamic Review* was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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The main objective of the A.A.I.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the *hearts and minds* of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words *La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah* (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that *no* prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, *Mujaddids* will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

U.S.A.	Australia
U.K.	Canada
Holland	Fiji
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
Trinidad	South Africa
Guyana	

Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

1889: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

1901: Movement given name *Ahmadiyya* after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name *Ahmad*.

1905: Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

1908: Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

1981–1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

1996–2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

The Congressman and the Quran:

*Assessing Islam's holy book and re-examining
the faith of the Founding Fathers*

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

It was indeed a historic moment. For the first time ever, a Muslim was elected to the United States Congress. The people of Minnesota voted for Keith Ellison, a Catholic-raised African American who converted to Islam in his college years, to represent them in the nation's capital. What better proof of America's political pluralism? Of freedom of religion being practiced rather than simply preached? What an effect such an event could have on the rest of the world! Surely this would undermine the belief held by so many across the globe that America is not simply a "Christian" country but also an anti-Islamic one. One would have thought so.

Unfortunately, America was not able to capitalize on this international public relations goldmine. Rather, it became embroiled in an internal controversy that exhibited views of intolerance, prejudice and ignorance. Conservative talk-show host Dennis Prager, who is also an appointed member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, blasted Ellison for wanting to swear into office using the Holy Quran, as opposed to the Holy Bible. Following Prager's lead, Virginia Representative Virgil Goode argued swearing on the Quran as opposed to the Bible would be attacking traditional American values and beliefs. So long for political pluralism and freedom of religion!

Although a substantial number of rebuttals were presented by Americans from all quarters to the views espoused by Prager, Goode and their likes, the primary issue was neglected. The counter arguments primarily comprised references to the Constitutional provision pertaining to no religious test being permitted for elective office and citations to the freedom of religion portion of the first amendment. But these arguments did not truly address the objections of Ellison's critics. Prager and Goode know very well that no religious test can be imposed for elective office, and that mandating an elected official to take an oath on a particular religious scripture would violate the anti-establishment clause of the first amendment. The objection was that the *Quran* was anti-American. If Ellison chose to take the oath on no book, there would be no problem. But to take the oath on a book believed to be antagonistic to the very values this country was founded upon, a book that advocated views that undermine the cherished

beliefs promoted by the founding fathers, could not be tolerated.

In response to the silence regarding the true issue at hand, AAAIL(USA) issued a Press Release titled: *Why Such Fear of the Quran?*. The objective was to redirect attention to the question of whether it is legitimate to claim that the Quran is "anti-American". Does the Quran in fact promote beliefs opposed to traditional American values? The Press Release, within the confined space parameters, attempted to answer this question by highlighting certain Quranic tenets that correspond with principles generally regarded as "American" by the citizenry of this country. The Press Release is reproduced below.

WHY SUCH FEAR OF THE QURAN?

*AAAIL(USA) comments on the objections to
Congressman-elect Keith Ellison's planned use of the
Quran in his private swearing-in ceremony*

(Columbus, Ohio, 12/27/06) – AAAIL(USA) urges those who criticize Congressman-elect Keith Ellison (D-MN) for wanting to use the Quran in his private swearing-in ceremony, to read the Quran so that they may better understand what is contained in this holy book.

Dennis Prager, member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, and initiator of this controversy, states that swearing an oath on the Quran "undermines American civilization." Rep. Virgil Goode (R-VA) agrees with Mr. Prager and further expresses a view classifying Islam as antithetical to the "values and beliefs traditional to the United States." In essence, the objections to Mr. Ellison using the Quran are founded in the belief that the Quran is inherently anti-American.

To the contrary, the Quran's teachings are remarkably consistent with values and beliefs espoused by the founding fathers.

It expresses that a state government should be democratic: "whose affairs are decided by counsel among themselves" (42:38).

It affirms that all people, regardless of faith, color or creed, are equal: "mankind is but a single nation" (2:213).

It establishes financial independence of women: "For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women the benefit of what they earn" (4:32).

It insists on total and complete religious freedom: "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256).

It mandates justice in all matters: “Be maintainers of justice even though it be against your own selves or your relatives” (4:135).

It encourages the institutionalization of a welfare system for the poor and needy: “Give away wealth out of love for Him (God) to the near of kin and the orphans, and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and set slaves free” (2:177).

It prohibits aggression, limiting war to cases of self-defense only: “And fight against those who fight against you, and be not aggressive” (2:190); “Permission to fight is given to those on whom war is made” (22:39).

“If Mr. Ellison’s detractors simply took the time to read the Quran, they would see that it fully supports traditional American ideals,” explains Dr. Mohammad Ahmad, President of AAAIL(USA). “In fact,” he continues, “no other religious scripture validates the civil liberties enjoyed in America so clearly and emphatically as does the Quran; one may even surmise that the Quran contributed to the founding fathers’ understanding of natural laws and influenced their revolutionary ideas as it is well known that Thomas Jefferson himself kept a copy of the Quran in his personal library and even learned the Arabic language.”

To learn more about the teachings of the Holy Quran, view Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English translation and commentary online at: <http://www.muslim.org/english-quran/index.htm> . AAAIL(USA) is the U.S. branch of the worldwide Islamic organization The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. For more information about the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, visit: www.muslim.org .

Notwithstanding the evident lack of incongruity that so many believe exists between the Islamic positions on form of government / civil rights / basic human freedoms, etc. and corresponding American principles, some still view an elected official taking an oath on the Quran as “untraditional”. Despite the established doctrine of separation of church and state, some argue that it cannot be denied that the founding fathers were Christian and it was the Bible that equipped them with the knowledge necessary to create the foundational structures, such as the Constitution, of this civilization. Therefore, it is implied that America is inevitably a “Christian” nation and certain traditions, though seeming to violate a strict interpretation of separation of church and state, nevertheless should be upheld as a matter of course. Unfortunately for such critics, this justification is also superfluous because the assumptions upon which this argument rests simply have no factual basis.

Although Christianity was certainly practiced by the majority of America’s colonial statesmen, the most influential founding fathers, those who had the greatest impact upon the shaping of traditional American beliefs and values, broke away from conventional Christian following and were instead adherents of revivalist faiths like Deism. They chose reason and rationality over Biblical folklore and they chose a Unitarianism philosophy over the concepts of a triune god and the divinity of Christ. They specifically, and expressly, rejected those beliefs that are fundamental to Christianity.

Thomas Jefferson – who purchased a copy of the Quran translated into English by George Sale and retained this work in his personal library till his death – openly denounced what he considered to be superstitions and fables of the Bible. He went so far as to produce a revised version of the Gospels wherein he deletes all references to miracles being performed by Christ and those attributing anything to Christ that would depict him as something more than an extremely learned and extraordinarily moral human being. In a letter to John Adams dated January 24, 1814, Thomas Jefferson explained:

The whole history of these books [the Gospels] is so defective and doubtful that it seems vain to attempt minute enquiry into it: and such tricks have been played with their text, and with the texts of other books relating to them, that we have a right, from that cause, to entertain much doubt what parts of them are genuine. In the New Testament there is internal evidence that parts of it have proceeded from an extraordinary man; and that other parts are of the fabric of very inferior minds. It is as easy to separate those parts, as to pick out diamonds from dunghills.

Similarly, he wrote in a letter to William Short on April 13, 1820:

Among the sayings and discourses imputed to him [Jesus] by his biographers, I find many passages of fine imagination, correct morality, and of the most lovely benevolence; and others again of so much ignorance, so much absurdity, so much untruth, charlatanism, and imposture, as to pronounce it impossible that such contradictions should have proceeded from the same being.

He went so far as to predict in a letter to John Adams dated April 11, 1823:

And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter. But may we hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with this artificial scaffolding, and restore to us the primitive and genuine doctrines of this most venerated reformer of human errors.

John Adams, being of like mind, reportedly considered the notion of the divinity of Jesus an “awful blasphemy”. He, unequivocally rebuffing the purported “Christian” foundation of America notion, signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Tripoli (an Islamic State), which includes in Article XI:

As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion - as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen [Muslims], - and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan [Muhammadan] nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.

Others too were quite open about their Unitarian and Deist beliefs. Benjamin Franklin, upon being questioned about his particular religious affiliation by Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College, simply replied:

Here is my creed: I believe in one God, the Creator of the universe. That he governs it by his providence. That he ought to be worshiped. That the most acceptable service we render him is doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this.

It is also well known that George Washington was a member of the Freemasons, a group subscribing to Deistic beliefs. He was initiated at the Fredericksburg Lodge on November 4, 1752, later becoming a Master Mason in 1799. And the list goes on.

Clearly, making reference to the faith of the Founding Fathers does not justify the imposition of traditionally Christian oriented concepts and practices in the public sector. Far from supporting arguments aimed

at establishing a Christian hegemony over civic customs and norms, the most influential originator's of the American system of governance rejected the concept of a national religion and refused to accept the imposition of the beliefs of the majority in their private lives.

The Founding Fathers were inspired by natural laws and formed their spiritual beliefs on the basis of reason and rationality. In truth, their views were much more akin to Islam than any other traditional religion. And this will be the topic addressed in an upcoming article titled “*The Faith of the Founding Fathers: a comparative analysis of Deism and Islam*” by this author. Thanks to Congressman Ellison's courage and steadfastness, a prime opportunity is provided for educating others about the true principles contained in the Holy Quran and re-examining the commonly accepted presumptions about the faith and values of the founders of the United States of America. ■

Concept of God in Islam

By Dr. Hamid Rahman

[This article is a transcript of a speech that was delivered at the Symposium on “Spirituality in Islam” on the occasion of the 2006 Annual Convention of AAILL(USA). The topic concerning the “Concept of God in Islam” was divided in two sections at the Symposium, the first being addressed by Dr. Hamid Rahman and the second by Dr. Ersalan Rahman. In this article, Dr. Hamid Rahman provides answers to questions that have formed the basis for deep philosophical thought throughout the ages regarding the nature of God and the relationship between God and man. The mode of analysis presented by Dr. Hamid Rahman alone, regardless of the answers provided, reveal the necessity for all believers in God to understand what, in fact, God is. Dr. Ersalan Rahman, following this lead, complimented the topic by speaking about the “attributes” of God, a thorough comprehension of which, as he explained, only can enable one to truly “know” God. Dr. Ersalan Rahman's speech will be published in a forthcoming issue.]

It is narrated in the Bible that when Moses met God for the first time on the sacred mountain, Moses asked God for His name and credentials and God replied: “*Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*,” which in Hebrew means, “I Am Who I Am.” Karen Armstrong, a very well known scholar of Comparative religions, writes in her book [A History of God](#) that, *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* is a Hebrew idiom to express deliberate vagueness. When the Bible uses a phrase like “they went where they went,” it means: “I haven't the faintest idea where they went.” So when Moses asks who He is, God replies in effect: “Never

you mind who I am!” or “Mind your own business!” There was to be no discussion of God’s nature...” The Quran, on the other hand, has an extensive discussion on the nature of God. The Arabic verses I recited at the start of my talk are just three of the hundreds of verses in the Quran that bring to mind the Islamic concept of God. The meaning of these verses is as follows:

He is Allah besides Whom there is no God:
The Knower of the unseen and the seen; He
is the Beneficent, the Merciful.

He is Allah besides Whom there is no God;
the King, the Holy, the Author of peace, the
Granter of Security, Guardian over all, the
Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of great-
ness. Glory be to Allah from that which they
set up (with Him)!

He is Allah; the Creator, the Maker, the
Fashioner: His are the most beautiful names.
Whatever is in the heavens and the earth
declares His glory; and He is the Mighty, the
Wise. (59:22-24).

Arabic is a very rich language and no simple English translation can do justice to the wealth of meaning contained in the words that describe God without going into lengthy explanations about the import of each word. The English language is simply not rich enough to pick the entire concept impounded in an Arabic word in a single English word or even a short phrase. In the next hour or so, Ersalan, the next speaker who is sharing this topic with me, and I will expand on the description and meaning of God in Islam as given in the Holy Quran.

In order to use our time most productively and to avoid repetitions, we have divided the topic such that I will first talk about why it is important to have the right concept of God and then Ersalan will follow with a discussion about the attributes of Allah. Together we will show you that the Holy Quran presents our Creator as an all-powerful being, loving, compassionate and benevolent. The correct knowledge and awareness of Who God is, is absolutely essential so that we can fashion our lives after His will and design – for that is the key to the spiritual development of the soul.

It seems to me that in any discussion about God, a religion must answer the following questions:

Is there a Creator or is mankind the result of a random occurrence?

If there is a Creator, did He send us into the world for a specific purpose or did He make this creation merely as an idle sport or play?

If He did send us for a specific purpose, then what is that purpose?

Did he endow us with the capabilities to achieve that purpose?

Did he provide us with the guidance to reach that goal?

What are the specifics and details of this goal?

Is there a Creator or is mankind the result of a random occurrence?

We must begin first by answering the question, “Is there a God?” because if a religion is unable to answer this question satisfactorily, then the whole question of “What is the concept of God” becomes moot. It must be emphasized that this is not merely a rhetorical question; the vehemence with which the existence of God has been challenged since the nineteenth century to the present has no parallel in any other comparable period in history. Karen Armstrong, in her book, The History of God has a chapter entitled *The Death of God?* She begins the chapter by writing:

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, atheism was definitely on the agenda. The advances in science and technology were creating a new spirit of autonomy and independence which led some to declare their independence of God. This was the century in which Ludwig Fuerbach, Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud forged philosophies and scientific interpretations of reality which had no place for God. Indeed, by the end of the century, a significant number of people were beginning to feel that if God was not yet dead, it was the duty of rational, emancipated human beings to kill him. The idea of God which had been fostered for centuries in the Christian West now appeared disastrously inadequate, and the Age of Reason seemed to have triumphed over centuries of superstition and bigotry.

A little further on, she writes:

Many of the ideologies which rejected the idea of God made good sense. The anthropomorphic, personal God of Western Christendom was vulnerable.

It is interesting to note that rationality was invoked to reject the concept of God in the West. The Quran, on the other hand, invokes rationality to prove the existence of God. The Quran provides many arguments in support of

the existence of a Divine Being. These arguments may be grouped into three classes:

Arguments from Creation

The first group of arguments is drawn creation. The Quran states:

Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth! And when He decrees an affair, He says to it only Be, and it is. (2:117)

And:

Glorify the name of thy Lord, the Most High!
Who creates, then makes complete,
And Who measures, then guides. (87:1-3)

And:

Who created the seven heaven alike; thou seest no incongruity in the creation of the Beneficent God. Then look again: can thou see any disorder? (67:3-4)

Wisdom and purpose are observable in the whole of the Divine creation from the atom to the largest heavenly bodies. Science, despite its apparent advancement, has uncovered only a minutiae of the wisdom and architectural genius that has gone into the creation of the heavens and the earth. To get into details of the wonders of creation would take up too much time. Suffice it to say, that a sage once remarked that the probability of the universe having been created by chance is the same as the probability that an explosion in a printing press resulted in the movable type in the press being so arranged to form a complete dictionary.

The arguments from creation simply shows that there *must be* a Creator of this universe, Who is also its Controller, but it does not go so far as to show that there is a God.

Arguments from Human Nature

The second set of arguments for the existence of a Divine Being come from the human nature since there is in it a consciousness of Divine existence. The Quran states:

And when thy Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants, and made them bear witness about themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes; we bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of Resurrection: We were unaware of this. (7:172)

And:

And when harm afflicts men, they call upon their Lord, turning to Him, then when He makes them taste of mercy from Him, lo! Some of them begin to associate (others) with their Lord. (30:33)

The Quran gives us the example of the Pharaoh of Egypt during the time of Moses. Not only did Pharaoh not believe in the God of Moses, but he considered himself to be god. He told Moses: "If thou takest a god besides me, I will certainly put thee in prison," (26:29) but "when drowning overtook him, he said: "I believe that there is no god but he in Whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit" (10:90). This is more or less the universal experience of humanity that when confronted with distress, human nature instinctively calls for help from the Creator.

Arguments from Testimony of Moral Leaders

The third and final set of arguments that clinch the issue in favor of the existence of a Divine Being is the testimony of hundreds of persons of impeccable moral character throughout human history who by leading a life of purity and devotion reached the spiritual stage of communion with the Divine Being. The truth of the revelations they received from God is borne out not only by their own reputation of never having spoken a lie but of the incredible prophesies contained in their revelations that came true with exact precision. The best examples of this are to be found from the life of the Holy Prophet. The revelation had promised at a time when he was virtually alone, persecuted and destitute in Mecca that: "O man! We have not revealed the Quran to thee that thou mayest be unsuccessful" (20:1-2). The truth of this prophecy can clearly be seen when thirteen centuries years later a book is published, [The 100 – A ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History Updated for the Nineties](#) by Michael H. Hart, and the author ranks Prophet Muhammad at the top of the list. Says the author:

My choice of Muhammad to lead the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels. Of humble origins, Muhammad founded and promulgated one of the world's great religions, and became an immensely effective political leader. Today, thirteen centuries after his death, his influence is still powerful and pervasive. (Page 33).

Before I move to the next question in my argument, there is another point in the Karen Armstrong citation I

read out earlier that I would like to throw some light on from the Islamic perspective of God. The part of the citation I have in mind states as follows:

Many of the ideologies which rejected the idea of God made good sense. The anthropomorphic, personal God of Western Christendom was vulnerable.

Maulana Muhammad Ali writes in the Religion of Islam:

“The anthropomorphic view which likens God to man has never found favor among Muslims.” The Islamic concept of God is based only on His attributes since *laysa kamislahu shayan*. – there is none like Him. Hearing and Seeing are attributes of God but that does not mean that God has eyes and ears. As Shah Wali Allah has stated that “their use is only in the sense of the ultimate end of those words.” For example, man is dependent for his hearing on having ears and a medium through which voice can transmit to him before he can hear. God, on the other hand, does not need ears and a transmitting medium to hear. So wherever physical references are made about God, they only refer to the end product of that physical phenomenon and does not in any way imply to the physical process by which that phenomenon takes place.

If there is a Creator, did He send us into the world for a specific purpose?

The Quran makes it clear that everything God has created has a purpose. For example the Quran states:

In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alteration of the night and the day, there are surely signs for men of understanding.

Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee! ... (3:189-190)

The word *subhan* translated into English as glory is one of those Arabic words that requires a short essay to explain its meaning. The word *tasbih* from which the word *subhan* is derived means to consider or believe or to express that Allah is perfect in his attributes and free from any kinds of defect or shortcoming. *Tasbih* is of two types. One is the verbal expression of a firm belief in Allah’s perfection. It implies that nothing is attrib-

uted to Allah that would in any shape or form diminish His perfection and beauty. A necessary corollary of Allah’s *subhaniyat* is His unity since ascribing partners with Allah is attributing an imperfection to Him. For example:

And they say: Allah has taken to Himself a son – glory be to Him! (*subhannahu*)! Rather, whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His. All are obedient to Him.

Maulana Muhammad Ali explains this as:

The phrase *subhana-hu* is always used to declare the freedom of the Divine Being from all imperfections, and is always mentioned in connection with the doctrine of sonship to show that to attribute a son to the Divine Being is to attribute an imperfection to Him, which is met with in the human beings.

This form of *tasbih* is specific to human beings only. The second kind of *tasbih* is not confined to humans only but is a universal phenomenon. Each and every created thing declares the glory of Allah in the perfection of its design and the actions which it performs. God has endowed all his creation with the best power and capacity to achieve the purpose for which it was created and it is impossible for human intelligence to design a better system than what was created by God. Thus every particle in the cosmos engaged in achieving the objective of its creation is declaring the wisdom and architectural genius of its Creator.

The Quran says:

And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification. (17:44)

If He did send us for a specific purpose, then what is that purpose?

The Quran points out repeatedly that we will be returned back to God and face a Day of Judgment:

Then to your Lord will be your return (6:165)

And to Allah is the return (3:29)

Know for certain that they will meet their Lord and to Him will they return (2:47)

Thou, O man, art laboring toward thy Lord, a hard laboring; then thou art going to meet Him (84:7)

And what will make thee realize what the day of Judgment is? (82:17)

Again, what will make thee realize what the day of Judgment is? (82:18)

The day when no soul controls aught for another soul. And the command on that day is Allah's. (82:19)

Man's goal in life, therefore, is to prepare for this meeting with his Lord and what is the best preparation for this meeting?

The Quran explains this preparation in the following way:

(We take) Allah's color, and who is better than Allah at coloring, and we are His worshippers.

The word *sibghah* in *sibhatullah* (Allah's color) means *dyeing* or *coloring*, and also *dipping* or *immersing* in water; hence *sibghah* indicates baptism. Thus, a Muslim's baptism takes place by immersing in the color of Allah i.e. adopting the attributes of Allah. This is the best way to safety and peace, both in this world and the life to come.

Did He endow us with the capabilities to achieve that purpose?

The story of human creation as narrated in the Quran states:

When thy Lord said to the angels: Surely I am going to create a mortal from dust.

So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down submitting to him. (38:71-72)

The use of the term *My spirit* is very significant. It means that the initial divine spark of a person's spirituality comes from God Himself and thus has the potential and the capability to be colored in the divine coloring i.e. acquiring the attributes of God. Islamic theology makes a distinction between spirit (*ruh*) and the soul (*nafs*). The Quran speaks of granting a spirit to a person only at the start of his or her existence. This spirit is then molded into the soul by the life experiences and actions of an individual. At the end of a person's mortal existence, it is the soul that returns to God. Thus, the spirit is like a sapling with divine characteristics, it can be nurtured through man's actions into a tree that has divine characteristics or it can fall prey to the temptations of the devil and become like the tree of *zaqqum* – a cursed tree referred to in the Quran that provides the food of the sinners. (See 44:43-46). The important point here is that God has fully provided us with the capability to either rise to the divine or to fall to the satanic.

Did He provide us with the guidance to reach that goal?

This question is very succinctly answered right at the very start of the Quran:

I, Allah, am the best Knower.

This Book there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who keep their duty.

Who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them.

And who believe in that which has been revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee, and of the Hereafter they are sure.

These are on a right course from their Lord and these it is that are successful. (2:1-5)

These verses then provide us with the road map to achieve our goal – the goal of being fully dyed in the color of Allah before we return to our Maker - and the verses further provide us with assurance of success in this endeavor if we follow the road map. This roadmap is the topic of other speakers today and undoubtedly will be expanded upon by them.

But I would like to draw your attention to another telling verse from the Quran on this topic:

The Beneficent

Taught the Quran (55:1-2)

The Beneficent God who brought things into existence for the physical sustenance of man before his creation could not ignore man's spiritual needs. The same Beneficent God, we are here told, has taught the Quran, which is necessary for the spiritual life of man.

What are the specifics and details of this goal?

We have now established that there is a purpose to man's existence, that that purpose is to acquire the attributes of Allah to the maximum perfection he can and that the Quran provides the roadmap to succeed in this endeavor. We must turn to the specific nature of these goals, that is, the attributes of Allah and see what the Quran has to say about them. This is where I leave off and the next speaker will pick up from here. ■

The Supernatural Aspects of the Qur'an

By Dr. Hamid Reza Alavi

[This article was submitted for publication from an admirer of 'The Light and Islamic Review' in Iran. Dr. Alavi is an Associate Professor at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman. In this article, Dr. Alavi aims at identifying and describing various miraculous aspects of the Holy Quran. Because of the manifest proof of its miraculous nature, he argues, there should be no doubt as to the Quran being a divine revelation. As such, he concludes, it is incumbent upon man to study this scripture and attempt to understand it correctly and, when this is done, then only will peace on earth be achieved.]

The great Qur'an is the fundamental basis for every Islamic concept. Like a mighty rock, it is the foundation of all the fruitful buildings of Islamic knowledge. It is the clear spring from which all the streams of Islamic insight flow. The glorious Qur'an is a miracle; its supernatural aspects deserve mankind's attention and admiration.

It is incumbent upon mankind to know the Qur'an so that we may love it; if we love it, we will definitely try to understand it as it deserves. The Qur'an is surely a miracle in its entirety. If recognizing different aspects of its miraculousness will cause us to understand that it is from a divine source, this realization will result in us acting according to its commandments confidently and in the true sense in which it is meant to be practiced. It is only when this occurs, that society will succeed in attaining eternal happiness. It is an error to think that the world does need to recognize this supreme scripture, for an examination of the Quran clearly reveals that it is a divine guidance for all human beings.

It certainly requires much effort, however, to obtain a full understanding of the glorious Qur'an, an understanding that will lead to good deeds and cause our actions to be in accord with divine guidance. This article attempts to reveal some of the divine aspects of the Holy Qur'an. The information in this article has been extracted from several sources, but most of the material was taken from the book Islamic Sciences, written by a group of Persian writers.

Miracle of eloquence

The Qur'an was revealed to Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam, in the Arabic language. Its verses and sentences are formed from basic words and letters, but how is it that it has been impossible for any human being to produce or write a book like it? Like a plant, the compo-

nents of it may be identified and even understood but one cannot recreate it. The composition of the words of the Qur'an is unique, a style that makes it impossible to change the place of even one of its words. No one can bring forth a book like the Qur'an. In spite of this challenge presented in the Qur'an itself, no one has been able to compete with it or even form anything comparable. The Qur'an has a particular rhythm and harmony not seen in any prose.

Comparing the Quran with the sermons, sayings and teachings of his holiness Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, one sees a great difference between the two. At present, we have many narrations and traditions from the Prophet of Islam but there is very little similarity between the style of the Qur'an's writing and the style of the Prophet's speech. Even when comparing these two sources, the Qur'an's challenge stands and it has proven true that no one can write a book like it.

Similarly, when Imam Ali, first Imam of the Shia Muslims, used a verse of the glorious Quran in his eloquent speeches, it is quite evident that the verse is derived from another source, being much different in style than that of Imam Ali's speech. Although beneficial guidance is presented in his teachings, the verses from the Quran shine like the sun among the stars.

Miracle of excellent content

The Qur'an is not a miracle only in terms of its unequal presentation, but the content of its various messages of truth comprise another aspect of the Qur'an's miraculousness. The various truths and insights contained in the Quran are innumerable. It would be impossible to list them within the scope of an article or even determine which is most important. However, for the purposes of illustration, we can look at how "man" is described in the Quran. Man, as introduced by the Qur'an, is much greater than man felt or attempted to be understood by physical senses. Man as understood by physical senses is limited between two distinct points, birth and death. Before and after these two time periods is darkness and uncertainty. But man whom the Qur'an introduces has none of the above limitations and is connected to God on one side by knowledge of his creation and purpose in life and on the other side by knowledge about the "resurrection" and what is in store for man after his time has expired in this worldly abode.

Man's development and purpose in life in the Quran is described as not being random, but rather prescribed according to *tawhid*, Allah the Unique's plans. The *spirit* of man, a clear understanding of which is only found in the Quran, is understood as coming from God and returning unto Him, despite man's physical remains being left here on earth. The importance of this

understanding is revealed by the fact that it is only when man can recognize himself fully – that is, his physical *and* spiritual make-up – that he can truly know his Lord. Moreover, it is only through knowing God that it is possible for man to know himself. In fact, according to the Quran, all creatures glorify and praise God (i.e. live in accordance with his divine laws and guidance) and are inextricably connected to Him. To live, one must know God.

The consistency in the Quran

The glorious Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet periodically over a span of 23 years in different locations (namely Mecca and Medina), in times of war and peace and in states of happiness and sadness. In spite of these different conditions, one can see no incongruity in any of the verses at all. All the verses form a unit with each part confirming one another. Undoubtedly if the Qur'an was not communicated from a Divine source, many contradictions would be found in it. The Qur'an puts forth this argument itself in defense of its authenticity:

Do they not then reflect on the Qur'an? If it was from a source save Allah they will surely see many differences in it.

Changes in thought and expression are expected to appear in a man over a period of 23 years. In this physical world, man is constantly developing. Due to this, he gradually finds his previous mistakes and corrects them. Man's expressions in this life are also influenced by different emotional states. The influence of these factors in his mind and thought is so great that it causes a great difference in man's writings and expressions. Furthermore, if one is accustomed to lying, one may see many contradictions and inconsistencies in his speech. However, no such contradictions are found in the Qur'an. Undoubtedly, the Qur'an is from a separate source which is not influenced by factors such as inherent emotions which have a natural effect on man.

Attractive nature of Quran

Every person whose conscience is clear feels an excellent attraction when he/she recites the Qur'an. The Quran is written in the first person, a direct communication from God to all mankind. When reciting the glorious Qur'an, one feels as if God is speaking. This phenomenon is personally experienced and also explained by others. The Prophet of Islam mentioned: "Verily the fairest discourse is Allah's Book coming from one who embellishes it in his heart", and "When danger and commotion surround you like parts of a dark night, seek refuge in the Quran ... it is a guide that guides to the best way".

His holiness, Imam Ali, describes: Learn the Quran, for it is the fairest of discourse and understand it thoroughly for it is the best blossoming of hearts. Seek remedy with its light for it is the cure for the heart's ailments. Recite it beautifully for it is the most beautiful narration.

He further explained: "No one becomes a companion of the Qur'an without his insight and guidance being increased and his blindness being decreased."

The Quran itself reveals: "Indeed there has come to you light and a clear book from Allah Who guides him who will follow his pleasure in the ways of safety and brings them out of darkness and into light by His will" [Maedah: 18]. And also: "Do they not reflect on the Quran? Nay, on their hearts are locks" [Mohammad: 26].

Informing people of the unseen

The Qur'an reveals many facts and proofs which are hidden from man's limited and understanding. These matters include historical facts, prophetic accounts, knowledge of natural and experimental sciences, etc.

For example, with regard to historical facts, the Quran reveals information about the *Saba* tribe, though this tribe lived hundreds of years before the Quran was revealed and was not known of by the Prophet's contemporaries. It was only in 1791 when German scientists and researchers performed excavations that the existence of this tribe was confirmed and the truth of the Qur'an's narration about this tribe proved true. The Quran stated:

Certainly there was a sign for Saba in their abode;

Two gardens on the right and the left; eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him; a good land and a forgiving Lord, But there turned aside; so we sent upon them a torrent of which the rush could not be withstood [Saba: 14-15].

Only modern day research authenticated this description of the tribe. Similarly, recent excavations carried out in *Fars Pond* was the basis for the discovery of tablet proving the history of *Zulqarnain* exactly as related in the Qur'an [Kahf:82] and recent discoveries of the destruction of the tribes of *Lut*, *Samud* and *Ad* also prove the Qur'anic accounts true.

With regard to prophetic accounts, after *Hijrah* when the Muslims formed a government in Madinah, and did not have enough strength to defend themselves, the Quran declared boldly that the Muslims, fighting

against all odds, would be victorious by defeating the polytheists of Madinah in the war of *Badr*. The Quran states: “Or do they say that we are the conquering group, nay this group will be defeated” [Qamar: 44-45]. The war resulted quite amazingly in accordance with the prediction in the Qur’an. Similarly, when Persia defeated Rome in the wars of *Khosrow*, *Parviz* and *Herkhel*, it was revealed in the Quran that Rome would defeat Persia after 3 to 9 years. After a second war between the 2 nations, Rome defeated Iran in accordance with the Quranic statement:

The Romans are vanquished, in a near land,
and they, after being vanquished, shall over-
come within a few years (Rum: 1-3)

Again, in the sixth year of *Hijrah*, when the Muslims were persecuted, had to leave their homes in Makkah for fear for their lives with no sense of returning in sight, the Prophet of Islam dreamed that he and his followers were circumambulating the Kabah in pilgrimage. Two years before this event occurred, it was revealed:

Certainly Allah had shown to his Apostle the vision with truth: you shall most certainly enter the sacred Mosque, if Allah pleases, in security, (some) having their heads shaved [Fath: 27].

With regard to knowledge of natural and experimental sciences, there are too many to list; however, some examples are as follows. The latest scientific research proved that at the beginning of the earth’s formation, all of the earth was in a steamy state. The Qur’an mentioned this fact more than 14 centuries ago by declaring in reference to the beginning of creation: “and it was a smoke” [Fosselat: 10]. Scientific investigations have also proved the earth and sky were a single unit at first but they gradually separated from each other. The Quran established this fact by stating:

Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed up, but We have opened them (Anbia’: 31).

Similarly, the circulation and movement of the sun and the moon was explained 14 hundred years ago in Qur’an (“All (orbs) travel along swiftly in their celestial spheres” [Yasin: 40]), the force of gravity between the sun and the moon and their individual courses (“Neither is it allowable to the sun that it should overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day [Yasin: 40]), the composition of white color from different colors (“He made the sun as lights” [Yunos: 5]), the mountains containing root-like structures (“And the mountains as nails” [Naba’: 7]), ants being able to *speak* to one another by communicating with their antennae (“A namlite

said: O naml! Enter your houses” [Naml: 18]), etc. There are many more verses which scientific research has proven true but the above verses should suffice to make the point. It is quite evident that more than fourteen centuries ago we were quite unaware of the above mentioned facts. Certainly the Qur’an cannot be from a human source but must be from the infinite Knowledge of God, Who encompasses all.

Conclusion

The Quran is certainly a miracle. In whatever manner one studies it, the result will always be that this book cannot be from a worldly source but is rather divinely inspired. None of the speeches of man, not even of the blessed prophets, can be compared to the glorious Qur’an. According to the famous translator of the Qur’an into English, Marmaduke Pickthall, it is “... that inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy.” However, it is not a book simply for reciting its verses or memorizing them, rather it is a scripture to guide man through all phases and aspects of life. As his holiness Ali said, “No one become a companion of this Qur’an without his insight and guidance increases and his blindness decreases.”

The Qur’an’s inclusive principles and teachings provide a foundation for guidance for all mankind. Firmly grounded in universal laws, it has a natural attraction for seekers after truth. The Quran surely provides the means for a world-wide belief system based on reason and rationality. If today’s Iranian Muslims turn their mosques into centers of education and rely on two sources of knowledge, the Qur’an and its history, they will have laid the most essential basis possible for the development of the greatest change in Islamic thought. This, in turn, can shape a new worldview on what is to be expected from a “religion”. When this occurs, only then will societies live in peace, as promised in the Qur’an:

We will surely soon show them our tokens and signs in the universe and in their souls so that it might be clear unto them that the religion (Islam) and the Qur’an is truth. ■

Id ul Fitr Khutba 2006

By Ebrahim Mohamed

[This article is a transcript of the Id ul Fitr Khutba (sermon) delivered in South Africa in 2006. Ebrahim Mohamed is the President of the South African branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. The South Africa Jammāt holds a key position in the history books of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. Faced with prejudice and bigotry, it was subjected to various forms of discrimination perpetuated by orthodox Muslim groups in the country. A civil court case resulted and, after an extensive presentation of testimony and review of evidence, it was held by the court that members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement are “Muslims” and, therefore, cannot be denied their religious rights as such. Mr. Mohamed was a key figure in the Lahore Ahmadiyya victory. Today he continues working steadfastly in preaching the true message of Islam to the world and does so, as is ever evident from this article, with a deep reverence for logic, reason and rationality.]

He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions (Ch 9: 33).

Praise be to Allah Who us brought us together so that we may share in the joyous celebration of Id and afford us the opportunity to ponder and reflect on His majestic teachings. Praise be to Allah Who has made us endure the trials of the Ramadan as well as make us taste the blessings and joy of the Holy Month. Every Ramadan should bring a change in us for the better even if it means discarding just one bad habit going forward. Otherwise the fast was a waste. During the days of Ramadan, plagued by the pangs of hunger and thirst, I realized that I will never be able to look at a poor man in the same way ever again. I told myself that I need to find a way of being less wasteful and find a credible institution that feeds the poor that I can support. There are many other lessons that Ramadan taught me but I cannot share them all with you now as I do not have the time, but this is one I will concentrate on for the rest of the year. I challenge each one of you, if you have not done so already, to do the same. For each one of you I know there must have been something that was of exceptional significance that the Ramadan inculcated in you that you would like to take forward with you after Ramadan. Perhaps you are one who loses your temper very easily and the Ramadan helped you to keep your temper under control? Or perhaps you are often neglectful of your prayers and the Ramadan helped you to be more regular in that regard? Only you know what is the best lesson the Ramadan had for you and which you

would want to work on and uphold relentlessly for the rest of the year.

But the question I have for all of us that have benefited from the Holy month of Ramadan is, what can we do collectively that would benefit humanity. Everything we have done so far is for ourselves. What is it that we can do in the way of Allah? And the answer that I come up with every time is that we should engage in constructive propagation of the Holy Quran, for the month of Shawwal is the month in which the propagation of the Holy Quran started. We should become ambassadors of the Holy Quran by familiarizing, nay at best, strive to gain a good understanding of its sublime teachings and striving to model our own lives on it.

But before I can do so, I need to know if the Holy Book can provide me with answers to the many questions that I often struggle with. I cannot narrate all the questions here for lack of time but I will share some of them with you, as I am certain you grapple with the same questions. I also need to know whether the Quran provides the best answers or whether there are better answers contained in other scriptures before I can truly become an ambassador of the Quran.

I have therefore summarized the questions I have and reduced it into two main ones:

Does the Quran provide me with a perfect concept of the existence and nature of GOD, which no other scripture can provide, which readily appeals to and satisfies my rational mind?

Does the Quran clearly explain who I am and what role I play in the grand plan of the Divine scheme of things?

The answer is an emphatic yes and I challenge any skeptic to prove me wrong. None of the previous scriptures (Torah, Injeel, Vedas, Bagha Vagita, etc.) are in its pure form any more and therefore its depiction of the Divine Being are grossly imperfect and cannot be relied upon by any serious seeker after the truth. For example, the Christians do not know if God is one or three or four or whether God has a Son and whether the son is really a son or a god himself. Even the Pope, who is the Head of the largest Christian group, admits that the Trinity or the Triune concept of God is confusing and cannot be adequately explained. The nature of the Christian God is one that is extremely cruel and unjust. The God of Christianity is said to have masterminded the cruel and bloody execution of his only ‘so called’ son for no offence committed by him but to redeem other undeserving sinful parties. How can anyone trust a God like this when it comes to executing justice? Even humans of the worst kind will not resort to such a despicable act out of their own free will.

The way the Divine Being is depicted in the Quran, however, appeals to the reasoning faculties of the human mind. As we look around us everywhere and we ponder on His creation, we see everything is on an evolutionary path of progress, from the smallest vegetable seeds to vast luxuriant plantations; from the smallest atoms to the gigantic planets and galaxies in the universe; from inconceivable sperm cells to the highest and best of his creation, the human species, known as Adam or Mankind. The list goes on and on, ad infinitum. So the Divine Being or Allah as we name Him in Islam is aptly called “*Rabb*” in the Quran, an Arabic word which no other language has an equivalent for. The best the English can do to give some meaning to the word *Rabb* is:

That Being Who brings everything into existence from nothing, nourishes and sustains it through several evolutionary stages; each stage being higher than the other until such things reach its perfection.

But this is not all. The Quran describes the nature of the Divine Being in such a way as not to be found in any other ancient scripture or modern writings. The Holy Prophet’s first mission was to establish a grounding faith in Allah in men. He did not start by applying himself to removing degrading usages or evil customs or superstitions. Almost the whole of his Meccan revelations have but one theme: Allah is the Creator (*Rabb*) of all; He is the Nourisher of all; He reveals Himself to man; He makes His will known to man; He is the Holy One; He is nearer to man than his own soul; He is the Beneficent One; the Merciful One; the Loving One; the Affectionate One; the Forgiving One; the Giver of all gifts; the Ample Giving; He listens to every man’s prayer; He loves good and hates evil; He loves those who serve the poor and those in distress; He loves the truthful; ones and so on.

As for the nature of Allah, we find that the Quran does not depict Him as a wrathful, punitive God ready to punish at all times. In fact we find that His Mercy extends to all mankind regardless of religion, race or creed. We find that His kindness and Mercy are boundless, beyond the conception of man. He is Merciful to the believers and to the unbelievers, the righteous and to the sinners alike. Says the Holy Quran:

O My servants who have acted extravagantly against their own souls! Do not despair of the mercy of Allah, for Allah forgives sins altogether (39:53).

Only from the Quran, we learn that Allah has been revealing Himself to all nations and Divine revelation is recognized as a universal fact. While revelation of

the highest kind through the angel Gabriel was peculiar to the prophets, in its lower forms – through inspiration by the infusion of an idea into the mind, or in the form of a true dream or a vision – revelation was granted to other than prophets, to men as well as women:

And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by infusing an idea into the mind or from behind a veil or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases (45:51).

Even unbelieving people are also spoken of as seeing significant and truthful dreams. Thus in the history of the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) we are told;

And two youths entered the prison with him. One of them said, I saw myself pressing wine; and the other said, I saw myself carrying bread on my head of which birds ate (12:36).

And the King said, I see seven fat kine which seven lean kine devoured, and seven green ears and (seven) other dry; O Chiefs explain to me my dream (12:43).

Both the youths and the King were unbelievers, and the three dreams were interpreted by Joseph as speaking of future events, being prophetic in their essence.

So this is sufficient to prove to me that Allah’s *ni’-mat*, or goodness, to mankind is magnanimous, transcending all boundaries. So this is the God that is worthy of my worship and emulation and this description and more, which I do not have the time to cover here today, is contained in the Holy Quran alone and nowhere else. So the Holy Book more than answers my first question.

On my second question as to whether the Quran clearly explains who I am and what role I play in the grand plan of the Divine scheme of things, I find adequate evidence that pleases my rational mind. The Holy Quran says:

So set thy face upright for religion in the right state – the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah’s creation; that is the right religion but most people do not know (30:30).

Surely we created man in the best make (95:4).

Unlike Christianity, which teaches that every child is born in sin, the Holy Prophet, explaining the first verse above, said: “every child that is born conforms to the true religion (lit. human nature, i.e. Islam); it is his par-

ents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian” (Bukhari 23:80).

Every child was thus recognized by birth to be a Muslim; the purity of human nature was not affected by his being born of non-Muslim parents.

Everything created by Allah, we are further told, was made according to a measure so that it could not go beyond a certain limit.

Glorify the name of thy Lord, the Most High, Who creates things, then makes them complete; And Who makes things according to a measure, then guides them to their goal (87: 1 -3).

So from an uncivilized state when mankind was still a slave to and worshipper of the forces of nature, the Holy Prophet through the teachings of the Holy Quran raised the early Muslims to the dignity of Master and Ruler over the forces of nature. By realizing their position and role in nature in the grand Divine scheme of things, the early Muslims took vigorous strides towards the expansion of knowledge and the advancement of sciences. Reading and writing was within a few years spread throughout the whole of Arabia and other countries which came under the influence of Islam, and the Muslim State so encouraged the pursuit of study and scientific research that centers of learning and universities sprang up throughout the empire of Islam. Unlike the dark ages that set in after Christianity, Islam left behind a trail of light and learning that gave rise to the renaissance (the revival of learning) in Europe.

But although the Holy Quran inspired the contributions of human thought on the physical sphere which led to man’s conquest of the forces of nature, it, more importantly, brought about a complete change in the spiritual outlook of man. About Allah we are told;

Who made good everything that He created, and He began the creation of man from dust; Then He made his progeny of an extract of water held in light estimation; Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit (32:7-9).

This verse shows a mystic relation of the spirit of man with the Divine Spirit and refers to the higher life of man. The destiny of man we are taught by the Holy Quran through the Holy Prophet was therefore higher than the mere conquest of nature on the physical plain; it was to seek union with the Divine Spirit. That is the ultimate goal of all mankind. Says the Holy Quran:

O Soul that are at rest! Return to thy Lord, well-pleased with Him, well-pleasing Him.

So enter among My servants, And enter into My Garden (89: 27-30).

The goal of life for every human being is therefore *Liqā – Allah*, or the meeting with Allah. So man’s progress from one stage to another higher stage is endless. The aim and goal, according to the Holy Quran, is not this worldly life and the conquest of nature but it goes much further; progress to realms that the eyes have not seen and the ears have not heard of (according to the Holy Prophet). Our progress goes beyond this world into the next world. Says the Holy Quran of the believers in the next life:

Allah has promised to the believing men and the believing women gardens in which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual abode; and greatest of all is Allah’s goodly pleasure – that is the grand achievement (9:72).

So while spiritual realization is limited in this world, the next world opens unlimited fields of advancement to higher and higher stages. Paradise was thus according to the Prophet, the starting point for an advancement to higher and higher spiritual stages; hence, the high places to which the faithful shall be raised know no end, as there are still higher places above them and the ardent desire for more and more light in that life continues.

The Holy Quran, teaches that even those who wasted their opportunity in this life by engrossing themselves in lower desires will ultimately be saved, hell being only a remedial stage in the higher life of man. Hell is called in the Quran as *maula*, or “friend of the sinners” in one place (57:15), and *Umm*, or Mother in another (101:9)

All men, both believers and unbelievers, were created for mercy, and the purpose of Allah i.e. the meeting with Him or reaching the highest stage of our spiritual evolution must ultimately be fulfilled. The sinners we are told will have a hard life in Hell for a while because they avoided the “hard striving” here which was needed to bring them closer to their Lord. But this ‘hard life’ will not last forever, as is the teachings of Christianity, for we are assured on the authority of the Holy Prophet:

Surely a day will come over hell when there shall not be a single human being in it (Fath al Bayan fi Maqasid al – Quran).

Surely a day will come over hell when it will be like a field of corn that has dried up after flourishing for a while (Kanz al Ummal).

In another Hadith, the inmates of hell are expressly stated as being placed on the road to a higher life:

Then Allah will say, Bring out (of the fire) every one in whose heart there is faith or goodness to the extent of a mustard seed, so they will be taken out having become quite black; then they will be thrown into the river of life and they will grow as grows a seed by the side of the river (Bu: 2: 15).

This report is conclusive on the remedial nature of Hell and establishes beyond doubt that all men will ultimately be set free on the way to a higher life.

So with this knowledge from the Holy Quran corroborated by the Holy Prophet in places about who I am and what is my role in the grand Divine scheme of things, I am highly satisfied that my second question has been adequately answered and I am ready to serve as an ambassador of the Holy Quran and engage in the propagation of its sublime message to those who are sincere seekers after the truth. So I pass this message on to you, in the hope that I have adequately motivated and inspired you to do likewise. ■

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Revelation and Prophethood

By Sarah Ahmad

[This article is a transcript of a speech delivered at the Symposium on "Spirituality and Islam" on the occasion of the 2006 Annual Convention of AAII(USA). Ms. Ahmad's speech was the first of a two-part topic on "Prophethood in Islam". While Ms. Ahmad discussed the concept of "revelation" and its connection with prophethood, the Editor spoke on the concept of "finality of prophethood". In this article, Ms. Ahmad thoroughly examines all aspects of divine revelation, including its purpose, its scope and its various forms. She begins by addressing the deep-rooted philosophical question of what is the real need for revelation.]

Need for Divine Revelation

The need for revelation from Allah and the purpose it fulfils has been described in the Quran in the story of Adam, as the prototype of man. The two objects of human existence are to conquer the powers of nature and to control one's own desires. The Quran tells us that Adam was given the knowledge of things, meaning that *man* was endowed with the capacity to obtain knowledge of all things; he was also gifted with the power to conquer nature, for the angels (the beings controlling the forces of nature) were made to submit to him. But *Iblis* (the inciter of lower desires in man) did not make obeisance, and thus man is found too weak to overcome the evil suggestions of the devil or the evil inclinations within himself, however strong he may be to conquer the forces of nature. Man is powerful against all, but weak against himself. He can conquer nature by the power of knowledge granted to him, but the greater conquest and the greater perfection lies in the conquest of his own self, and this conquest can only be brought about by a closer connection with the Divine Being. It is to make this perfection possible for him that Divine revelation is needed. And so we are told that when Adam proved weak against his own desires and passions, Allah came to his help and granted him the gift of Divine revelation which, strengthening his faith in Allah, gave him the strength to overcome the devil and reject his evil suggestions. As for the rest of mankind, the promise given to it is expressed in the section of the verse I recited at the start:

Surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve (2:38).

So Allah promised that Divine Revelation would be granted to the whole of humanity, prophets would

appear everywhere from time to time, and it would be by following the Guidance sent by Allah through His prophets that men would attain unto perfection. This state of perfection is described as a state in which “no fear shall overcome them nor shall they grieve”. The man who truly follows Divine Revelation shall have no fear of the devil misleading him, for he will have subjugated the devil with the help of Divine revelation, nor shall he grieve that he wasted the opportunity given him in this life, for he will surely turn it to the best use.

In fact, the sending of revelation is necessitated by the Divine attribute of *Mercy*. It is stated in the Quran: “He has ordained mercy on Himself” (7:12). One of the chief names of Allah is *Rahman*, which signifies that love is so predominant in the nature of God that He bestows His favours and shows His mercy even though man has done nothing to deserve them. The granting of the means of subsistence for the development of physical life and of Divine revelation for man’s spiritual growth, are due to this attribute of unbounded love in the Divine Being. It is inconceivable that the Beneficent Lord of all-encompassing Mercy, Who provided so extensively for the physical welfare of man could have neglected his spiritual welfare. The evidence of Divine mercy is manifest in the physical world: He has created all things for the benefit of man. Would He not deal equally mercifully with man in his spiritual needs and send a revelation to guide him? The Quran likens the effect of revelation to the effect of rainfall. It repeatedly asserts: “And Allah sends down water from above, and therewith gives life to the earth after its death. Surely there is a sign in this for a people who listen”. (16:65) Divine revelation is the water from heaven, the death of the earth is its corruption and the giving of life signifies its spiritual awakening.

It is Divine revelation that provides the clearest and surest evidence of the truth of the existence of God and casts a flood of light on the Divine attributes without which the existence of the Divine Being would remain mere dogma. A belief in a God possessing the perfect attributes made known by Divine revelation is the highest ideal which a man can place before himself; and without this ideal there is a void in man’s life, a lack of all earnestness and every noble aspiration. Another way in which Divine revelation brings man closer to God and makes His existence felt as a reality is through the example of the perfect men (chosen people of God/prophets/messengers) who hold communion with the Divine Being. That God is a Reality, a Truth — in fact, the greatest reality in this world — that man can feel His presence and realize Him in each hour of his everyday life, and have the closest relations with Him; such a realization of the Divine Being works a change in the life of man, making him an irresistible spiritual force in the world and shows the heights to which the

human soul may rise if it follows the guidance given by Divine revelation.

Types of Revelation

The Arabic word for revelation – *wahy* – has, in its highest form, come to signify the Divine word which is communicated to prophets and saints or righteous servants of God who have not been raised to the dignity of prophethood. The Quran mentions five kinds of *wahy*: first, the Quran speaks of revelation as being granted to inanimate objects; for instance, there is mention of revelation to the earth (99:1-5). Second, the Quran mentions a revelation to living creatures other than man, in which case their inborn instinct is spoken of as being akin to a revelation from Allah, such as in the case of the bee (16:68, 69). Third, the Quran speaks of a revelation to the angels (8:12). Fourth, it speaks of revelation to men and women other than prophets, as the apostles of Jesus (5:111) or the mother of Moses (28:7). Fifth, it speaks of revelation to prophets and messengers.

Three modes of granting Revelation to man

Revelation to inanimate objects, to lower animals and to the angels is of a different nature from revelation to man, and it is with the latter with which we are chiefly concerned. Divine revelation to humans is stated to be of three kinds:

“And it is not vouchsafed to a mortal that Allah should speak to him, except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases. Surely He is High, Wise” (42:51)

This verse shows how Allah speaks to a person or makes known His will to him. Three modes of this are stated. The first mode is by *wahy*, which word is generally translated as meaning “revelation.” The literal meaning of the word *wahy* however is a “hasty suggestion,” and since different kinds of revelation are spoken of here, the meaning intended must be the primary significance of the word. This *wahy* is an idea coming to the mind as if by a flash of lightning, not as a result of meditation. So this kind of revelation is the “infusing of an idea into the heart” and it is called a form of Allah’s speaking to man. This is technically called *wahy khafi* or “inner revelation”, and the sayings of the Prophet touching religious matters are in this class. The Prophet himself is reported to have said on an occasion: “The Holy Spirit has inspired (this) into my heart”. It is an idea put into the mind, as distinguished from revelation proper, which is a message conveyed in words. Revelation in this form is common to both prophets and those who are not prophets. Hence it is in this sense that a revelation is

spoken of as being granted to the mother of Moses (28:7) and to the apostles of Jesus who were not prophets (5:111).

The second mode of Allah speaking to His servants is that He speaks from behind a veil (*min warai hijab*), and this includes *ru'ya* or “dreams,” *kashf* or “visions” and *ilham* “when voices are heard or uttered in a state of trance, the recipient being neither quite asleep nor fully awake.” This form of revelation is also common both to prophets and those who are not prophets, and in its simplest form, the *ru'ya*, is a universal experience of the whole of humanity. While discussing the history of Joseph, the Quran tells us of the dream of a king, who was apparently not a believer in Allah (12:43) — a dream with a deeper underlying significance. This shows that according to the Quran revelation in its lower forms is the common experience of all mankind, of the unbeliever as well as the believer, of the sinner as well as of the saint.

The third form of revelation, which is peculiar to the prophets of Allah, is that in which a messenger — the angel Gabriel — is chosen by the Almighty to deliver His message in words to the person to whom He wishes to speak. This is the highest and most developed form of revelation, called *wahy matluww* or “revelation that is recited.” I would like to emphasize that it is a mistake to believe that revelation means only an illumination of the mind and that Allah “speaking” is a mere metaphor. According to the Quran, the illumination of the mind, or the inspiration of the mind with a certain idea, is only the lowest form of revelation, common both to the prophet and to him who is not a prophet, the only difference being that, in the case of the prophet, it is a very clear idea while in the case of others it may be clear or vague according to the capacity of the recipient. Revelation, in which words are communicated to the prophet through the angel Gabriel is the highest and most developed form of revelation, while next to it in force and clarity come the words communicated to the righteous among the Muslims or the visions shown to them.

It should be borne in mind that in all these cases the recipient of revelation is granted certain other senses. He sees what others do not see and he hears words which others do not hear. It is, therefore, with what may be called spiritual senses that he hears and sees and feels things which others do not hear, see or feel.

Revelation a universal experience of humanity

Not only is revelation in its lower forms, the universal experience of humanity but according to the Quran, even the highest form of revelation is not limited to one particular man or nation. Rather, it is emphatically stated that just as Allah has given His physical sustenance to each and every nation, even so has He endowed it

with His spiritual sustenance for its moral and spiritual advancement. A repeated doctrine of the Quran is that a prophet was raised in every nation (10:47; 35:24).

It should also be understood that no man can rise to the dignity of prophethood by his own efforts; it is Allah Who raises someone to that dignity when He intends to reform men. Thus the unbelievers' question as to why revelation was not sent to them is met with the reply in 6:125: “Allah knows best where He places His message”.

It is moreover noteworthy that Islam, while making revelation the universal experience of mankind, also considers its doors as standing open for all time. It has been shown that of the three kinds of revelation, the first two are common to both prophets and those who are not prophets, while only one form of revelation, the highest, in which the angel Gabriel is sent with a message in words, is peculiar to prophets. Since we believe that no prophet shall appear after Prophet Muhammad, the door to the highest form of revelation has been closed, but the granting of revelation to those who are not prophets, remains, and humanity will always have access to this great Divine blessing. This concept of the continuance of revelation is supported by the Quran and Tradition.

Also, *Kalaam* or, “speaking,” is an attribute of Allah according to the Quran and hence, although no prophet will come after the Prophet Muhammad, God still speaks to His righteous servants because it is one of His attributes and His attributes never cease to function. Furthermore, the saints (*auliya*) not only receive knowledge of the unseen, and revelations containing glad tidings and warnings (against wrong-doers), but also commands and prohibitions to the recipient, though not law (28:7); (19:25); (5:111).

Conclusion

Revelation is truly the very soul of religion. Although attempts have been made to raise a structure for religion without any foundation in revelation, all real religious movements in the world are rooted in the idea of revelation. Revelation is the voice of God. It is proof of an ever-Living God and a religion that is alive and vibrant. In conclusion, I leave you with verse 89 of Ch 16:

“And on the day when We raise up in every people a witness against them from among themselves, and bring thee as a witness against these. And We have revealed the Book to thee explaining all things, and a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit”

May Allah enable us to gain maximum benefit from the gift of revelation that we already possess and continue to Bless us with His choicest Blessings. Ameen. ■

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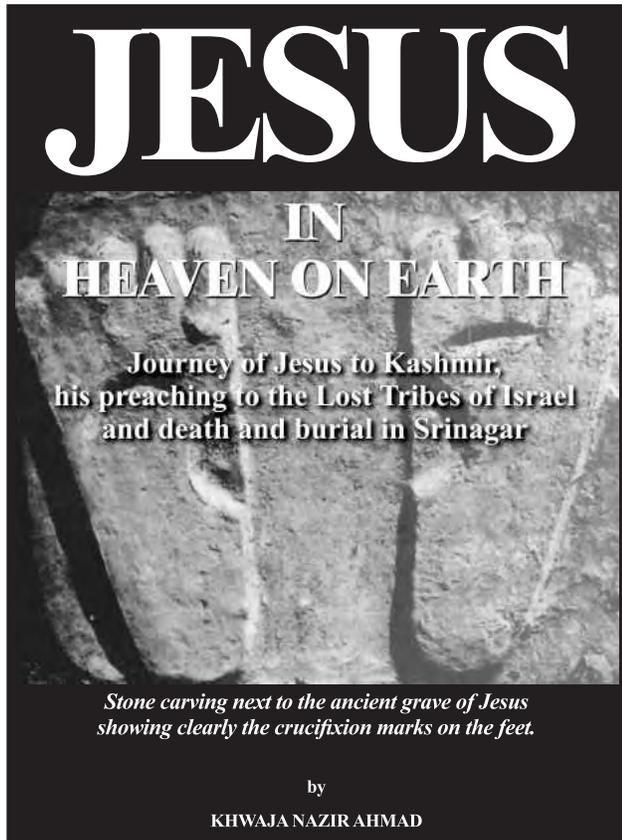
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9. Jesus undertook a journey to Galilee, a major port city, with two disciples (Matt 28:10), clearly unnecessary to rise to heaven but convincing evidence of an escape elsewhere.
10. Jesus prayed the whole night before his arrest to be saved from dying on the cross (Matt 26:39) and his prayer was answered: “When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared” (Heb. 5:7).

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