ROLE OF QUR'AN IN ISLAM

Edited by
Masood Ali Khan . Shaikh Azhar Iqbal

Marfat.com

ROLE OF QUR'AN IN ISLAM

Edited by :

Masood Ali Khan

Shaikh Azhar Iqbal

D 297.122

Commonwealth

Marfat.com

297.12
R77
283349

Role of Qur'an in Islam

© **Reserved**

First Published 2006

ISBN 81-7169-921-9

Published by:
Ajay Verma
For Commonwealth Publishers
4831/24, Prahlad Street,
Ansari Road, Darya Ganj,
New Delhi - 110 002
Ph.: 23272541, 23257835
Fax : 91-011-23257835
e-mail-campusbooks@hotmail.com

Typesetting by:
Stylish Laser Typesetter
Delhi - 110053

Printed at:
Roshan Offset Printers
Delhi

Marfat.com

PREFACE

The Holy Quran is all revelation of Allah through the prophet. Quran has the most effective appeal to all Muslims the world over.

The original source from which all principles and ordinances of Islam are drawn is the Holy Book called *al-Qur'an*. The name *Qur'an* is frequently mentioned in the Book itself (2 : 185; 10 : 37, 61; 17 : 106, etc.) which also states, to whom, when, in what language, how, and why it was revealed. It was revealed to Muhammad: "And (who) believe in what has been revealed to Muhammad, and it is the very truth from their Lord" (47 : 2). It was revealed in the month of Ramadzan on a certain night which thenceforward received the name of *Lailat-al-Qadr* or the Grand night: "The month of Ramadzan is that in which the Qur'an was revealed" (2 : 185); "We revealed it on a blessed night" (44 : 3); "Surely We revealed it on the Grand Night" (97 : 1). It was revealed in the Arabic language: "So We have made it easy in thy tongue that they may be mindful" (44 : 58); "Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand" (43 : 3). It was revealed in portions, every portion being written and committed to memory as soon as it was revealed, and the revelation of it was spread over twenty-three years of the Holy Prophet's life, during which time he was occupied solely with the reformation of a benighted world: "And it is a Qur'an which We have made distinct so that thou mayest read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it revealing in portions" (17 : 106). It was not the Prophet who spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit; it was a Divine Message brought by the Holy Spirit or Gabriel, and delivered in words to the Holy prophet who delivered it to mankind: "And surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds, the Faithful Spirit has come down with it upon thy heart, that thou mayest be of the warners, in plain Arabic language" (26 : 192-195); "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel, surely he revealed it to thy heart by Allah's command" (2 : 97); "The Holy Spirit has brought it down from thy Lord with the truth" (16 : 102).

It is the Highest Form of Revelation

Though the Holy Qur'an was revealed piecemeal, as pointed out above, yet the entire revelation is one whole, delivered in one and the same manner. It is the word of God revealed through the Holy Spirit, that is, the angel Gabriel. Revelation, we are told in the Holy Qur'an is granted to man in three forms : "And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by inspiring or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases" (42 : 51). The first of these modes is called *wahy* which is used here in its literal sense of *al-isharat-al-saria* (R.), *i.e.*, a hasty suggestion thrown into the mind of man, or *ilqa fi-l-rau*. This is really what is meant by a prophet or a righteous man speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In this case an idea is conveyed to the mind, and the subject to which it relates is illumined as if by a flash of lightning. It is not a message in words but simply an idea which

Marfat.com

clears up a doubt or a difficulty, and it is not the result of meditation. The second mode is described as speaking from behind a veil. This refers to sights seen when asleep or in a state of trance; what we may call dreams (*ruya*) or *vision (Kash f).* The third mode is that in which the messenger (*i.e.* the angel bearing the message) is sent to the recipient of the Divine revelation, and the divine message is delivered in words, and this is the highest form of revelation. As already stated, the angel entrusted with the Divine message in words is Gabriel or the Holy Spirit, and this third mode of revelation is limited to the prophets of God only, that is to say, to men entrusted with important Divine messages to humanity, while the first two forms of revelation, which, compared with the peculiar revelation of the Prophet, are lower forms, are common to prophets as well as those who are not prophets. For the delivery of the higher message which relate to the welfare of mankind, a higher form of revelation is chosen, a form in which the message is not simply an idea but it is clothed in actual words. The prophet's faculty of being spoken to by God is so highly developed that he receives the Divine messages, not only as ideas instilled into the mind or in the form of words uttered or heard under the influence of the Holy Spirit, but actually as Divine messages in words delivered through the Holy Spirit. In the terminology of Islam this is called *wahy matluww,* or *revelation that is recited,* and the Holy Qur'an was from beginning to end delivered in this form to the Holy Prophet, as the quotations I have given from the Holy Book itself make abundantly clear. It does not contain any other form of revelation. It is in its entirely *wahy matluww* or revelation recited to the Holy Prophet distinctly in words, and is thus wholly the highest form of Divine revelation.

Quranic infunctions have a deep meaning for all Muslims. Quran is a complete treatise of philosophy, religion, science and law.

The editor is grateful to all the departments of comparative religion in various universities who have provided useful material on the basis of research on Quran.

Masood Ali Khan

Shaikh Azhar Iqbal

Marfat.com

Contents

		Pages
	Preface	*(v)*
Chapter		
1.	Introduction	1
2.	The Holy Qur'an	11
3.	The Inner and Outer Dimensions of the Qur'an	35
4.	The Revelation of the Qur'an	60
5.	The Relationship of the Qur'an to the Sciences	75
6.	The Order of the Qur'an's Revelation and the Growth of the Qur'anic Sciences	79
7.	Akhbari Shi'i Approaches to Tafsir	96
8.	The Sura as a Unity	128
9.	Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza's Principles of Modern Exegesis	139
10.	Interpreting the Bible Through the Qur'an	157
11.	Two Citations of the Qur'an in 'Historical' Sources for Early Islam	166
12.	Law and Exegesis	174
13.	The Impact of the Qur'an on the Epistolography of Abd al-Hamid	187
14.	The Qur'an and Its Impact on Human History	210
15.	The Koran	223
16.	Belief in the Apostles of God	231
17.	Exposition of the Religion of Islam	262
18.	Islam and the Four Gospels	287
	Index	296

Marfat.com

Marfat.com

1

Introduction

The diffusion of knowledge over the world and the spread of civilisation have very largely lessened the difference between one nation and another and have almost subdued the flames of animosity kindled in men's bosoms by blind fanaticism evoked by religion or creed.

History relates many awful wars waged in the name of religion.

Today, however, men are largely imbued with the spirit of toleration and love of truth and liberty. The more enlightened do respect the doctrines and principles of their fellow-men, however widely they differ from their own. The followers of different religions make earnest endeavours to spread their own faith and to plant their standards even farther afield. It is left to reason to examine and judge the respective merits of each. Christian missionaries in the Orient may be heard loudly preaching Christianity to followers of Moses and Mohammad without the least apprehension of any unlawful opposition on the part of their hearers.

From time to time, we read of some distinguished person who has abandoned the religion of his forefathers to adopt a different persuasion, which, in the light of reason he has found more acceptable. Further the spirit of intelligent curiosity has been so fully developed in human beings by education, that books are eagerly read which deal with the dogmas and tenets of different nations. The widest possible knowledge of these is sought and at times an attachment to new beliefs is not hidden, nor a readiness to adopt them.

On the other hand, the more highly a nation is civilised, the more it is inclined to make known its customs, habits and national or religious character.

Although some vague knowledge of the laws and tenets of Islam may be obtained from treatises and books which have been composed by certain Westerners, yet he who desires thoroughly to comprehend their spirit must trace them to the fountain-head. In the ordinary intercourse of life, he who is desirous of gaining the esteem and affection of those with whom he converses, will be careful not to offend against their religious precepts and notions of right and wrong, with which, precepts and notions he can become acquainted by consulting their own records.

Furthermore, it behoves those ministers and missionaries of the Christian faith whose zeal leads them to labour in the propagation of their own doctrines and in attempts to refute the tenets and precepts of other religions, to be well acquainted with those things which they undertake to impugn.

Marfat.com

The learned Roland[1] has shown that "Christian writers of no small eminence in point of learning and reputation have egregiously misrepresented the doctrines of Muslim faith, and bestowed much useless labour, in confuting opinions which the followers of the Arabian Prophet never maintained; thus exposing themselves to the charge of ignorance and the contempt of their adversaries; and injuring the cause they had undertaken to defend, by making it appear to stand in need of false allegations for its support".

Indeed, it is misrepresentation and misinformation, from which Muslims chiefly suffer. They have had imputed to them that which as no existence whatever in their teachings and policy; baseless charges have been advanced against Islam; nay, the very beauties which Muslims account amongst their exclusive possessions have been denied them, and the very evils which Islam came to eradicate and did succeed in so doing, are ascribed to it. It is certainly a great pity that, with all this outpouring of learning and literature, very little real effort has been made to clear away the clouds of misrepresentation and defective knowledge which still envelop the religion of the Arabian Prophet in Europe and America.

It is a happy sign, however, to find plans for a universal religion being discussed in certain advanced circles in both continents, and a desire to create a better understanding among the adherents of the various denominations of the world.

To achieve this desirable end, it is inconsistent with the advanced culture of enlightened European or American enquiries that information on Islam—a religion which at present is a powerful factor in humanising millions hitherto living in ignorance and barbarity—should come through any adulterated channels and from the writings and works of propagandists hostile to Islam.

Undoubtedly a true knowledge of the life of the Prophet and if his principal teachings in full of interest to those who desire to increase their general stock of information. Indeed the doctrines of Islam tend in general to promote the welfare and prosperity of mankind, inasmuch as they cultivate charity and good will to all people.[2]

The Prophet said "No man's faith shall be perfect unless he wishes for his brother whatsoever he wishes for himself."

That Islam was admittedly the torch-bearer of light and learning in the West when Europe was enshrouded in ignorance and darkness, and that the followers of the Holy Prophet were undoubtedly among the very few factors creating the conditions leading to present culture and advancement, are in themselves cogent reasons to justify and appeal to the Westerner's sense of duty and justice in judging Islam and the Muslims.

An honest student of the tenets of Islam and the labours of Muslims for the regeneration and edification of mankind, especially of Europe, cannot fail to find much for which Islam should be thanked.

I quote Major Arthur Glyn Leonard in this connection :

"Never to this day has Europe acknowledged in an honest and wholehearted manner the great and everlasting debt she owes to Islamic culture and civilisation. Only in a lukewarm

and perfunctory way has she recognised that when, during the dark ages, her people were sunk in feudalism and ignorance, Muslim civilisation under the Arabs reached a high standard of social and scientific splendour that kept the flickering members of European society from utter decadence.

"Do not we, who now consider ourselves on the topmost pinnacle ever reached by culture and civilisation, recognise that, had it not been for the high culture, the civilisation and intellectual, as well as the social splendours of the Arabs and soundness of their school system, Europe would to this day have remained sunk in the darkness of ignorance? Have we forgotten that the Muslim maxim was that, the real learning of a man is of more public importance than any particular religious opinions he may entertain, that Muslim liberality was in striking contrast with the then intolerant state of Europe? Does the magnificent valour of the Arabs, inspired as it was by atheism as lofty as it was pure, not appeal to us? Does not the moderation and comparative toleration shown by them to the conquered, notwithstanding the fierce and burning ardour to regenerate mankind that impelled them onward to conquest, also appeal to us? Does it not all the more appeal to us when we contrast this with the bitterness of the attitude of the Christian sects towards one another? Especially when we consider that in Christendom, as it was then constituted, extortion, tyranny and imperial contralisation, combining with ecclesiastical despotism and persecution, had practically extinguished patriotism, by substitution in its place schismatic and degenerate Church?"

Further the same writer continues to say :

"Is it possible that Europe is unmindful of, and has the ingratitude to ignore the splendid services of the scientists and philosophers of Arabic? Are the names of Assamh, Abu Othman, Alberuni, Albeithar, Abu Ali Ibn Sina (Avicenna) the great physician and philosopher, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) of Cordova, the chief commentator of Aristotle, Ibn Bajja (Anempace) besides a host of others but dead letters? Is the great work that they have done and the fame they have left behind them in their books to be consigned to the limbo of oblivion, by an ungrateful but antipathetic Europe?

"It cannot be that already we have lost sight of the amazing intellectual activity of the Muslim world during the earlier part of the 'Abbaside' period more especially. It cannot be that we have quite forgotten the irrecoverable loss that was inflicted on Arabian literature, and on the world at large, by the wanton destruction of thousands of books that was promoted by Christian bigotry and fanaticism? It cannot be surely said of Christian Europe that for centuries now she has done her best to hide obligations to the Arabs, yet most assuredly, obligations such as these, are far too sacred to lie much longer hidden."[3]

For further enlightenment as to the far reaching beneficial effects of Islam I quote Bosworth Smith, M.A., Asst. master in Harrow School and late fellow of Trinity College, Oxford :

"Nor does Islam lack other claims on our attention. Its ultimate acceptance by the Arabs, the new direction given to it by the later revelations to Mohammed, its rapid conquests, the literature and civilisation it brought in its train, the way in which it crumpled up the Roman Empire on one side and the Persian on the other, how it drove Christianity before it on the West and North and fire worship on the East and South; how it crushed the false prophets

Marfat.com

that always follow in the wake of a true one, as the jackals do the trail of a line, how it spread over two continents, and how it settled in a third and at one time all but over whelmed the whole.... all this is matter of history at which I can only glance.

"And what is the position now?

"It numbers at this day more than one hundred millions, probably one hundred and fifty millions[4] of believers as sincere, as devout, as true to their creed, as are the believers in any creed whatever. It still has its grip on three continents, extending from Morocco to the Malay Peninsula, from Zenzibar to the Kirghis horde....

"....Africa, which had yielded so early to Christianity, nay, which had given birth to Latin Christianity itself, the Africa of Cyprian and Tertullian, of Antony and Augustine, yielded still more readily to Mohammed; and from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Isthmus of Suez may still be heard the Cry which with them is no vain repetition of "Allah Akbar," God is Great, there is no God but God and Mohammed is His Prophet.

"And if it be said, as it often is, that Islam has gained nothing since the first flame of religious enthusiasm fanned, as it then often was, by the lust of conquest, has died out, I answer that this is far from the truth.

"In the extreme East, Islam has since then won and maintained for centuries a moral supremacy in the important Chinese province of Yunnan, and has thus actually succeeded in thrusting a wedge between the two great Buddhist empires of Burmah and of China...

"Throughout the Chinese Empire there are scattered Mussulman communities who have higher hopes than Buddhism or Confucianism, and a pure morality than Taoism can supply. The Panthays themselves, it is believed, still number a million and a half, and the unity of God and the mission of God's Prophet are attested day by day by a continuous line of worshippers from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

"Nay, even beyond, in the East Indian Archipelago, beyond the straits of Malacca if I may venture just now so to call them, in Java and Sumatra, in Borneo and Celebes, ISLAM has raised many of the natives above their former selves and has long been the dominant faith....

It cannot of course, be supposed that among races so low in the scale of humanity as are most of the Indian islanders, Islam would be able to do what it did originally for the Arabs or for the Turkish hordes; but it has done something even for them. It was propagated by missionaries who *cared very much for the souls they could win, and nothing for the plunder they could carry off.* They conciliated the natives, learned their language, intermarried with them and in larger islands their success was rapid, so far as nature would allow, complete.[5]

"The Philippines and the Molaccas, which were conquered by Spain and Portugal respectively, did not become Muslims for they had to surrender at once their liberty and their religion. It is no wonder that the religion, known to the natives chiefly through the unblushing rapacity of the Dutch, has not extended itself beyond the reach of their swords. Here, as elsewhere in the East, the most fatal hindrance to the spread of Christianity has been the lives of Christians....[6]

"In Africa again Islam is spreading itself by giant strides almost year by year. Everyone knows that within half a century of the Prophet's death, the richest states of Africa, and those most accessible to Christianity and to European Civilisation, were torn away from both, by the armies of the faithful, with hardly a struggle or a regret; but few, except those who have studied the subject, are aware that even since then Islam has been gradually spreading over the northern half of the continent.

"Starting from the North West corner, it first marched southwards from Morocco, and by the time of the Normal Conquest had reached the neighbourhood of Timbuctoo, and had got firm hold of the Mandingoes, thence it spread southwards again to the Foulahs, and then eastward by the thirteenth century to Lake Chad, where finally the Arab missionaries from the West joined hands with those from the East in the very heart of Africa. . . .

We hear of whole tribes laying aside their devil-worship or immemorial Fetish and springing at a bound, as it were, from the very lowest to one of the highest forms of religious belief. Christian travellers with every wish to think otherwise, have remarked that the negro who accepts Islam, acquires at once a sense of the dignity of human nature not commonly found even among those who have been brought to accept Christianity.

"It is also pertinent to observe here, that such progress as any large part of the negro race has hitherto made, is in exact proportion to the time that has elapsed, or the degree of fervour, with which they originally embraced, or have since clung to Islam. The Mandina goes and the Foulahs are salient instances of this; their unquestionable superiority to other negro tribes is as unquestionably owing to the early hold that Islam got upon them, and to the civilisation and culture that it has always encouraged. The Government Blue Books on our West Africa settlements, and the reports of missionary societies themselves, are quite at one on this head. The Governor of our West African Colonies, Mr. Pope Hennesay, remarks that the liberated Africans are always handed over to Christian missionaries for instruction, and that their children are baptised and brought up at the public expense in Christian schools, and are, therefore, in a sense, ready made converts, yet the total number of professing Christians, 35,000 out of a population of 513,000 very few even of these, as the Governor says, and as we can unfortunately well believe from our experience in countries that are not African, being practical Christians—fall far short of the original number of liberated Africans and their descendents.[7] On the other hand the Rev. James Johnson, a native clergyman, and a man of remarkable energy and intelligence, as well as of very Catholic spirit, deplores the fact that of the total number of Muslims to be found in Sierra Leone and its neighbourhood three fourths were not born Muslims, but have become so by conversion, whether from a nominal Christianity or from Paganism.

"We are assured on all hands that the Muslim population has an almost passionate desire for education, and those in the neighbourhood of our colonies would throng our schools, first if the practical education given was worth having, and secondly, if the teachers would refrain from needlessly attacking their cherished and often harmless customs. Wherever Muslims are numerous, they establish schools themselves, and there are not a few who travel extraordinary distances to secure the best possible education. Mr. Pope Hennessy mentions the case of one young Muslim Negro who is in the habit of purchasing costly books

Marfat.com

from Trubner in London and who went to Foulah, two hundred and fifty miles away, to obtain an education, better than he could find in Sierra Leone itself. Nor is it an uncommon thing for newly converted Muslims to maze their way right across the desert from Bornu or from Lake Chad, or down the Nile from Darfour or Wadi, a journey of over one thousand miles that they may carry on their studies in El-Azhar, the great collegiate Mosque at Cairo, and they may thence bring back the results of their training to their native country, and from so many centres of Muslim teaching and example.

"Nor as to the effects of Islam when first embraced by a negro tribe can there be any reasonable doubt. Polytheism disappears almost instantaneously, sorcery with its attendant evils, gradually dies away; human sacrifice becomes a thing of the past. The general moral elevation is most marked; the natives begin for the first time in their history to dress and that neatly. Squalid filth is repleaced by a scrupulous cleanliness; inhospitality becomes a comparatively rare exception.

Though polygamy is allowed by the Koran, it is not common in practice; and, beyond the limits laid down by the Prophet, incontinence is rare; chastity is looked upon as one of the highest and becomes in fact one of the commoner virtues. It is idleness henceforward that degrades, instead of the reverse. Offences are henceforward measured by a written code instead of the arbitrary caprice of a chieftain—a step as everyone will admit, of vast importance in the progress of a tribe. The Mosque gives an idea at all event higher than any the negro has yet had. A thirst for literature is created, and that for works of science and philosophy, as well as for commentaries on the Koran. There are whole tribes, as the Jalofs on the river Gambia and the Haussas, whose many qualities we have had occasions to test in Ashantee, which have become to a man Muslims, and have raised themselves infinitely in the process; and the very name salt-water Muslims given to those tribes along the cost, who, from admixture with European settlers, have relaxed the severity of the prophet's laws, is a striking proof of the extent, to which the stricter form of the faith prevails in the far interior.

"It is melancholy to contrast with these wide spread beneficial influences of Islam, the little that has been done for Africa till very Jately by the Christian nations that have settled in it, and the still narrower limits, within which it has been confined. Till a few years ago the good effects produced beyond the immediate territories occupied by them were absolutely nothing...

"The message that European traders have carried for centuries to Africa has been one of rapacity, of cruelty and of bad faith. It is a remark of Dr. Livingstone's[8] that the only art that the nations of Africa have acquired from their 500 years' acquaintance with the Portuguese, has been the art of distilling spirits from a gun-barrel; and that the only permanent belief they owe to them, is the belief that man may sell his brother man; for this, he says emphatically, is not a native benefit to Africa; but if we except the small number of converts made within the limits of their settlements, it has been the only benefit conferred by Europeans.

"Truly if the question must be put, whether it is Muslism or Christian nations that have as yet done most for Africa, the answer must be that it is not the Christian. . . "[9]

I think I can occupy no more space in this introduction by making further quotations to discuss the relation of Islam to modern civilisation and the position which it holds among the recognised religions of the world. It is a matter of pure history that Islam has been beneficial to humanity in general and that it had, and still has, an everlasting influence on the development of human character.

The Muslim School embrances all braches of human knowledge and research—theology, medicine, history, astronomy, grammar, economics, physics, racial philosophy and racial psychology and ethics. It is an important educator on all systems of purely human origin, and its creed adores, worships and acknowledges the Creator of the Universe, in the most sublime, loftiest and divine expression, never to be found in the liturgy of other religions. The Islamic conception of God is that He is 'Allah' and there is no deity beside Him; He alone is to be worshipped. He begets not and He is not begotten. He was before time began its race. He is 'Allah' Who hath raised different prophets of men throughout the ages. His greatness is immeasurable. Allah is He That abideth from eternity to eternity. This is but a fractional part of the Muslim Creed–a creed which strictly, forbids the worship of images and the artistic representation of anything that resembles the human form. Yet in Christian literature, periodicals and other publications Muslims have been alluded to, and spoken of, as pagans, idolaters, polygamists, sunworshippers and what not. Our sacred edifice has been characterised as the Mosque of swords, our heaven as a heaven of sensual bliss, and that after death we sink into space, soul-less, and have no account to give. In the romance of "Turpin" quoted by Renan, Mohammed, the fanatical destroyer of all idolatry, is turned himself into an idol of gold, and under the name of Mawmet, is reported to be the object of worship at Cadiz. In the song of Roland, the National Epic of France, Mohammed appears with the chief of the Pagan Gods on the one side of him and the chief of the Devils on the other. Human sacrifices are supposed to have been offered to him; in the imagination and assertions of Christian writers of the tenth and eleventh centuries he appeared under the various names of Bafum, or Maphomet, or Mawmet. Malaterra, in his history of Sicily describes that island as being, when under Saracenic rule, a land wholly given up to idolatry.[10] It is not a little curious that both the English and French languages still bear witness to the popular misapprehension; the French by the word "Mahomerie," the English by the word "Mummery," still used for absurd or superstitious rites.[11] "Mammetry," a contraction of Mahometry was used in early English for any false religion, especially for worship of idols, insomuch that "Mammet" or "Mawmet" came to mean an idol. In Shakespeare the name is extended to mean a doll : Juliet, for instance, is called by her father "A whinning mammet".[12] In the twelfth century "the god Mawmet" passes into the heresiarch Mahomet, and as such, of course he occupies a conspicuous place in the 'Inferno.'

Dante places him in his ninth circle among the sowers of religious discord; his companions being Fra Dolima, a communist of the fourteenth century, and Berterand de Bron, a fighting Troubadour.

The Romances of Baphonet, so common in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, attribute any and every crime to him, just as the Athanasians did to Arius. He is a debauchee, a camel stealer, a cardinal, who having failed to obtain the object of every cardinal's ambition, invents a new religion to revenge himself on his brethren.[13]

Marfat.com

With the leaders of the Reformation, Mohammed "the greatest of all Reformers"[14] meets with little sympathy, and their hatred of him, as perhaps was natural, seems to be proportionate with their knowledge. Luther doubts whether he is not worse than Leo; Melanchton belives him to be either Gog or Maggog, and probably both.[15]

In the imagination of the Biblical commentators the Arabian Prophet divides with the Pope the credit, or discredit, of being the subject of special prophecy in the books of Daniel and the Revelation. "He is Antichrist, the Man of Sin, the Little Horn" and I known at what the eighteenth century, treats of him as otherwise than a rank impostor and false prophet.[16]

England and France were the first to take a different view and to have begun that critical study of Arabian history or literature which in the hands of Gibbon and of Muir, of Caussin de Perceval and of St. Hilaire, of Weil and of Springer has provided some material for a comparatively fair and unbiassed judgment within the reach of everyone. But most other writers of the 18th century such as Dean Prideaux and the Abbe Maracci, Boulainvilliers and Voltaire have approached the subject only to prove a thesis. With them the Prophet was to be either a hero or an impostor. "From them is learnt much that has been said about Mohammed, but comparatively little of Mohammed himself."[17]

Gagnier has then proceeded to write a history of the Prophet claimed to have been based on the work of Abul Feda. Gagnier's history was still not free from wrong inferences and erroneous allusions.[18]

Then followed the translations of the "Koran" by Sale and Savary into English and French respectively. Gibbon has then written his "three masterpieces of biography" : Athanasius, eulian, and "Mohammed." Gibbon's treatment of Islam is considered to be generally fair and philosophic, "in spite of occasional un-called for sarcasms and characteristic innuendoes".[19] It seems that Gibbon's so called unfair treatment of Christianity prevented the Christian world from doing justice to his generally fair treatment of Islam; and consequently most Englishmen who do not condemn, the Arabian Prophet unheard, derive what favourable notions of him they have, not from Gibbon, but from Carlyle".[20]

It was really a great surprise and an epoch in English intellectual and religious life, as Bosworth Smith has rightly observed, when it was found that Carlyle chose for his "Hero as Prophet" "not Moses or Elija or Isaiah, but the so called *impostor Mohammed*".[21]

Now it is time to conclude this my introduction. The reader will see and judge for himself the extent to which European writers of various reputations and in various ages have, in their different treatments of the Prophet Mohammed and of Islam, been either misleading or themselves misled.

In conclusion I wish to express my heart-felt-obligation to my numerous friends both in Egypt and abroad for their kind assistance and encouragement which enabled me to bring this work to completion. I wish it were possible for me to name them all, but certain considerations prevent my doing so.

My gratitude is due to His Eminence Sheikh Mohammed Mustapha El Maraghi, Grand Rector of Al Azhar University, through whose personal suggestion the book has been

Marfat.com

accredited by that great Muslim Institution for publication as a supplement to Al Azhar Official Monthly Organ.

Special mention must, however, be made of Professor Mohammed Khaled Hassanein of Al Azhar University who was so kind to revise the manuscript and check the proofs.

In my human endeavours I humbly implore the Almighty God, the God of all mankind, to grant that my labour may serve as a basis, if not for an ultimate agreement between Christendom and Islam, at all events for mutual understanding and forbearance, for sympathy and respect.

REFERENCES

1. De Relig Mohammedian L. II.
2. Bosworth Smith, "Mohamed and Mohammedanism."
3. "Islam—Her Moral and Spiritual Value" by Major Arthur Giyn Leonard.
4. The number is assumed at present (940) to be about four hundred millions (Author).
5. Crawford, "Indian Archipelago", II, 275 and 315.
6. For the cruelties of the Portuguese, see Crawford's II, 403 and for the Dutch see especially II, 425 and 411. For some startling facts as to the comparative morality of some native and Christian communities in India, see a paper by Rev. J.N. Thorburn in the Report of the Allahabad Missionary Conference, held in 1972-73 p. 467-470.
7. Papers relating to Her Majesty's Colonial Possession. Part II. 1873, 2nd Division, pp. 14-15. As Mr. Pope Hennessy's Report has been much criticised, chiefly on the ground that he is a Roman Catholic, and as I have based some statements upon it, it may be worth mentioning that I have had a conversation with Mr. Johnson, who is a strong protestant himself, and that he bore testimony to the bonafides of the Reports and to its accuracy even on some points which have been most questioned. He told me that Islam was introduced into Sierra Leone not many years ago by three zealous missionaries who came from a great distance. It seems now to be rapidly gaining the ascendancy in spite of all the European influence at work. (Footnote to Bosworth Smithis Lectures, pp. 33-34).
8. Livingstone's "Expedition to the Zambesi" p. 240.
9. R. Bosworth Smith, "Mohamed and Mohammedanism."
10. "Which people were the greater idolators any candid reader of the Italian annalists of this time collected by Muratori can say." Bosworth Smith "Mohammed and Mohammedanism."
11. See Trench on "Words," p. 112.
12. "Mawmet (cont. fr. Mohamet) a puppet; a doll; originally an idol because in the Middle Ages it was generally believed that the Mohammedans worshipped images representing Mohammed." Webster's Dictionary.
13. Bosworth Smith.
14. See "Quarterly Review" Srt. Islam, by Detsch, No. 254, p. 296.

Marfat.com

15. Bosworth Smith.
16. Renan "Etudes d'Histoire Religiouse," p. 223.
17. Bosworth Smith.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Bosworth Smith.
20. Bosworth Smith.
21. *Ibid.*

Marfat.com

2

The Holy Qur'an

How and When the Holy Qur'an was Revealed

The original source[1] from which all principles and ordinances of Islam are drawn is the Holy Book called *al-Qur'an*.[2] The name *Qur'an* is frequently mentioned in the Book itself (2 : 185; 10 : 37, 61; 17 : 106, etc.) which also states, to whom, when, in what language, how, and why it was revealed. It was revealed to Muhammad : "And (who) believe in what has been revealed to Muhammad, and it is the very truth from their Lord" (47 : 2). It was revealed in the month of Ramadzan on a certain night which thenceforward received the name of *Lailat-al-Qadr* or the Grand night[3] : "The month of Ramadzan is that in which the Qur'an was revealed" (2 : 185); "We revealed it on a blessed night" (44 : 3); "Surely We revealed it on the Grand Night" (97 : 1). It was revealed in the Arabic language: "So We have made it easy in thy tongue that they may be mindful" (44 : 58); "Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand" (43 : 3). It was revealed in portions, every portion being written and committed to memory as soon as it was revealed, and the revelation of it was spread over twenty-three years of the Holy Prophet's life, during which time he was occupied solely with the reformation of a benighted world : "And it is a Qur'an which We have made distinct so that thou mayest read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it revealing in portions" (17 : 106). It was not the Prophet who spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit; it was a Divine Message brought by the Holy Spirit or Gabriel,[4] and delivered in words to the Holy prophet who delivered it to mankind : "And surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds, the Faithful Spirit has come down with it upon thy heart, that thou mayest be of the warners, in plain Arabic language" (26 : 192-195); "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel, surely he revealed it to thy heart by Allah's command" (2 : 97); "The Holy Spirit has brought it down from thy Lord with the truth" (16 : 102).

It is the Highest Form of Revelation

Though the Holy Qur'an was revealed piecemeal, as pointed out above, yet the entire revelation is one whole, delivered in one and the same manner. It is the word of God revealed through the Holy Spirit, that is, the angel Gabriel. Revelation, we are told in the Holy Qur'an is granted to man in three forms : "And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by inspiring or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases" (42 : 51). The first of these modes is called *wahy* which is used here in its literal sense of *al-isharat-al-saria* (R.), *i.e.,* a hasty suggestion thrown into the mind of man, or *ilqa fi-l-rau*. This is really what is meant by a prophet or a

Marfat.com

righteous man speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In this case an idea is conveyed to the mind, and the subject to which it relates is illumined as if by a flash of lightning. It is not a message in words but simply an idea which clears up a doubt or a difficulty, and it is not the result of meditation.[5] The second mode is described as speaking from behind a veil. This refers to sights seen when asleep or in a state of trance; what we may call dreams (*ruya)* or *vision (Kash f).* The third mode is that in which the messenger (*i.e.* the angel bearing the message) is sent to the recipient of the Divine revelation, and the Divine message is delivered in words, and this is the highest form of revelation. As already stated, the angel entrusted with the Divine message in words is Gabriel or the Holy Spirit, and this third mode of revelation is limited to the prophets of God only, that is to say, to men entrusted with important Divine messages to humanity, while the first two forms of revelation, which, compared with the peculiar revelation of the Prophet, are lower forms, are common to prophets as well as those who are not prophets. For the delivery of the higher message which relates to the welfare of mankind, a higher form of revelation is chosen, a form in which the message is not simply an idea but it is clothed in actual words. The prophet's faculty of being spoken to by God is so highly developed that he receives the Divine messages, not only as ideas instilled into the mind or in the form of words uttered or heard under the influence of the Holy Spirit, but actually as Divine messages in words delivered through the Holy Spirit. In the terminology of Islam this is called *wahy matluww,* or *revelation that is recited,* and the Holy Qur'an was from beginning to end delivered in this form to the Holy Prophet, as the quotations I have given from the Holy Book itself make abundantly clear. It does not contain any other form of revelation. It is in its entirety *wahy matluww* or revelation recited to the Holy Prophet distinctly in words, and is thus wholly the highest form of Divine revelation.

Other Forms of Divine Revelation to Men

As I have said above, the prophet also receives the lower forms of Divine revelation. For example, we are told in reports that before the higher message came to the Holy Prophet, that is to say, before he received the first Quranic revelation, he used to have visions as true and clear as day : "The first that came to the Messenger of Allah of revelations were good visions so that he did not see a vision but it came out true as the dawn of the day" (Bu. 1 : 1). The Prophet's hearing of certain voices as mentioned in Hadith belongs to the same category, while the details or law as expounded by him, and as met with in the Sunna, belong to the first form of revelation, an idea instilled into the mind. This is called *wahy khafiyy* or *inner revelation.* In the lower forms, revelation is still granted to the righteous from among the followers of the Holy Prophet and even to others, for, as I will show later on, in the lowest form revelation is the universal experience of humanity. There is also a difference as to the method in which the different kinds of revelation are received. While the two lower forms of revelation involve but little change in the normal condition of a man, whether awake or asleep, and he is only occasionally transported to a state of trance, the highest form, which is that peculiar to the prophets, brings with it a violent change; it does, in fact, require a real passing from one world to the other while the recipient is in a state of perfect wakefulness, and the burden of revelation is not only felt by the recipient but it is also visible to those who see him.

The Prophet's Experience of Revelation

The Holy Prophet's first experience of the higher revelation was while he was alone in the cave of Hira. Before this he had, from time to time, seen visions, but when the angel came with the higher message, he found himself quite exhausted : "He (*i.e.* the Holy Spirit) seized me and squeezed me to such and extent that I was quite exhausted" and this was repeated thrice (Bu. 1 : 1). And even after he reached home, the effect of exhaustion was still upon him and he had to lie down on his bed covered over before he could relate what had befallen. It was an equally hard experience when the second message came to him after an interval of some months. And even afterwards the effect of the Spirit being upon him was so great that on the coldest of days perspiration would run down his forehead : "I saw", says 'A'isha, his wife, "revelation coming down upon him in the severest cold, and when that condition was over, perspiration ran down his forehead"[6] (Bu. 1 : 1). Another Companion relates that he was sitting with his leg happening to be under the leg of the Holy Prophet when revelation came down upon him, and the Companion felt as if his leg would be crushed under the weight (Bu. 8 : 12).

Nature of the Prophet's Revelation

The next question is as to the nature of the revelation itself. Harith, son of Hisham, once enquired of the Holy Prophet, how revelation came to him, and the reply was : "It comes to me sometimes as the ringing of a bell and this is hardest on me, then he leaves me and I remember from him what he says; and sometimes the angel comes in the shape of a man and he talks to me and I remember what he says" (Bu. 1 : 1). These are the only two forms in which the Quranic revelation came to the Holy Prophet. In both cases the angel came to the Holy Prophet and was seen by him; in both cases he delivered a certain message in words which the Holy Prophet at once committed to memory. That is the essence of the whole question. The only difference between the two cases was that in one case the angel appeared in the shape of a human being and uttered the words in a soft tone as one man talks to another; in the other case, it is not stated in what form the angel came, but we are told that the words were uttered like the ringing of a bell, that is to say, in a harsh, hard tone, which made it a heavier task for the Prophet to receive them. But still it was the angel who brought the message, as is shown by the use of the Personal pronoun *he* in the first part of the report. In both cases the Prophet was transported, as it were, to another world, and this transportation caused him to go through a severe experience which made him perspire even on a cold day, but this experience was harder still when the deliverer of the message did not appear in human shape and here remained no affinity between the deliverer and the recipient. But whether the angel appeared in human shape or not, whether the message was delivered in a hard or soft tone, the one thing certain is that it was a message delivered in words; and therefore the Quranic revelation is entirely one message delivered in one form. And we must not forget that the Holy Prophet often received the message while sitting with his Companions, but they never saw the angel nor ever heard the words of revelation,[7] though the message sometimes came to the Prophet in sounds like the ringing of a bell. It was, therefore, with other than the ordinary human senses that the Holy Prophet saw the angel and heard his words, and it was really the granting of these other senses that is called transportation to another world.

Marfat.com

Arrangement of the Qur'an

Though the Holy Qur'an was revealed in portions, yet it is a mistake to suppose that it remained long in that fragmentary condition. As its very name implies, it was a book from the first, and though it could not be complete until the last verse was revealed, it was never without some form of arrangement. There is the clearest testimony, internal as well as external, that every single verse or part of a verse and every chapter that was revealed had its own definite place in the Holy Book.[8] The Holy Qur'an is itself clear on this point : "And those who disbelieve say : Why has not the Qur'an been revealed to him all at once? Thus, that we may establish thy heart by it, and we have arranged it well in arranging" (25 : 32). The arrangement of the Qur'an was thus a part of the Divine scheme. Another verse showing that the collection of the Holy Book was a part of the Divine scheme runs thus : "Surely on Us devolves the collecting of it and the reciting of it" (75 : 17); from which it appears that just as the Holy Qur'an was recited by the Holy Spirit to the Holy Prophet, in like manner, the collecting together of the various parts was effected by the Holy Prophet under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. History also bears testimony to the truth of this statement, for not only are there numerous anecdotes showing that this or that portion of the Qur'an was put to writing under the orders of the Holy Prophet, but we are clearly told by 'Uthman, the third Caliph, that every portion of the Holy Book was written and given its specified place, at the bidding of the Holy Prophet : "It was customary with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) that when portions of different chapters were revealed to him, and when any verse was revealed, he called one of those persons who used to write the Holy Qur'an[9] and said to him : Write this verse in the chapter where such and such verses occur" (AD. 2 : 121; Ah. 57, 69). Thus the whole Qur'an was arranged by the Holy Prophet himself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Arrangement in Oral Recitation

In fact, if we bear in mind the use that was made of the Holy Qur'an, we cannot for an instant entertain the idea that the Holy Qur'an existed without any arrangement of its verses and chapters in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. It was not only recited in prayers but committed to memory and regularly recited to keep it fresh in the mind. Now if an arrangement of verses and chapters had not exited, it would have been clearly impossible either to recite it in public prayers or to commit it to memory. The slightest change in the place of a verse by an Imam leading the prayers would at once call forth a correction from the audience, as it does at the present day. Since no one could take the liberty of changing a word or the place of a word in a verse, no one could change a verse or the place of a verse in a chapter; and so the committing of the Holy Qur'an to memory by so many of the Companions of the Holy Prophet, and their constant recitation of it, would have been impossible unless a known order was followed. The Holy Prophet could not teach the Holy Qur'an to the Companions nor the Companions to each other, nor could the Prophet or anyone else lead the public prayers, in which long portions of the Holy Book were recited, without following a known and accepted order.

Complete Written Copies of the Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an thus existed in a complete and ordered form in the memories of men in the

Marfat.com

lifetime of the Holy Prophet, but no complete written copy of it existed at the time, nor could such a copy be made while the Holy Prophet was still alive and still receiving revelations. But the whole of the Qur'an in one arrangement was safely preserved in the memories of men who were called *qurra* or reciters. It happened, however, that many of the reciters fell in the famous battle of Yamama, in the caliphate of Abu Bakr, and it was then that Umar urged upon Abu Bakr the necessity of compiling a standard written copy, so that no portion of the Holy Qur'an should be lost even if all the reciters should die. And this copy was compiled, not from the hundreds of copies that had been made by individual Companions for their own use, but from the manuscripts written under the direction of the Holy Prophet himself, and the arrangement followed was that of the oral recitation as followed in the time of the time of the Holy Prophet. Thus a standard written copy was prepared which was entrusted to the care of Hafsa, wife of the Holy Prophet and daughter of 'Umar (Bu. 66 : 3). But still no arrangement had been made for securing the accuracy of the numerous copies that were in circulation. This was done by Uthman who ordered several copies to be made of the copy prepared in the time of Abu Bakr, and these copies were then sent to the different Islamic centres so that all copies of the Qur'an made by individuals should be compared with the standard copy at each centre.

Standardization of the Holy Qur'an

Thus Abu Bakr ordered a standard copy to be prepared from the manuscripts written in the presence of the Holy Prophet, following the order of chapters which was followed by the reciters under the directions of the Holy Prophet, and Uthman ordered copies to be made from this standard copy. If there was any variation from that standard copy, it went no further than this that where the Quraish wrote a word in one way and Zaid wrote it in another way, 'Uthman's order was to write it as the Quraish wrote it. This was because Zaid was a Madinite while his colleagues were Quraish. Here is an account of what took place :

"Anas son of Malik relates that Hudhaifa came to Uthman, and he had been fighting along with the people of Syria in the conquest of Armenia and along with the people of 'Iraq in Azerbaijan, and was alarmed at their variations in the mode of reading (The Qur'an), and said to him, O Commander of the Faithful, stop the people before they differ in the Holy Book as the Jews and the Christians differ in their scriptures. So 'Uthman sent word to Hafsa, asking her to send him the Qur'an in her possession, so that they might make other copies of it and then send the original copy back to her. Thereupon Hafsa sent the copy to 'Uthman, and he ordered Zaid ibn Thabit and 'Abd Allah ibn Zubair and Sa'id ibn al-'As and 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Harith ibn Hisham, and they made copies from the original copy. 'Uthman also said to the three men who belonged to the Quraish (Zaid only being a madinite), Where you differ with Zaid in anything concerning the Qur'an write it in the language of the Quraish, for it is in their language that it was revealed. They obeyed these instructions, and when they had made the required number of copies from the original copy, 'Uthman returned the original to Hafsa, and sent to every quarter one of the copies thus made, and ordered all other copies or leaves on which the Qur'an was written to be burned" (Bu. 66 : 3).

As to what these differences were, some light is thrown on the point by Tirmidhi making the following addition to this report : "And they differed on that occasion as to *tabut* and

tabuh. The Quraish members said that it was *tabut* and Zaid said that it was *tabuh*. The difference was reported to 'Uthman and he directed them to write it *tabut*, adding that the Qur'an was revealed in the dialect of the Quraish." It would be seen from this that these differences of reading or writing were very insignificant, but as the Companions of the Holy Prophet believed every word and every letter of the Holy Qur'an to be the revealed word of God, they gave importance even to the slight difference in writing and referred it to the Caliph. It may be added here that Zaid was chiefly called upon by the Holy Prophet at Madina to write down the Quranic revelations and the word *tabut* occurs in a Madina chapter (2 : 248). Zaid had written it *tabuh* as the Madinites did, but as the Quraish wrote it *tabut*, 'Uthman restored the Quraishite form. This incident further shows that Hafsa's copy contained the manuscripts written in the presence of the Holy Prophet. These two reports furnish conclusive proof that if there was any difference between 'Uthman's standard copy and the collection made by abu bakr, it was a difference only as to the mode of writing certain words; there was no change of words, no change of verses and no change in the order of chapters.

Differences of Readings

A few words may be added as to the so-called differences of readings in the Holy Qur'an. There were slight differences in the spoken language of different tribes, the language of the Quraish being the model for the literary language. Now the Holy Qur'an was revealed in the dialect of the Quraish, the literary language of Arabia. But when towards the close of the Holy Prophet's life people from different Arabian tribes accepted Islam in large numbers, it was found that they could not pronounce certain words in the idiom of the Quraish, being habituated from childhood to their own idiom, and it was then that the Holy Prophet allowed them to pronounce a word according to their own peculiar idiom. This was done only to facilitate the recitation of the Holy Qur'an. The written Qur'an was one; it was all in the chaste idiom of the Quraish, but people belonging to other tribes were allowed to pronounce it in their own way, and the permission was intended only for those people.[10]

There may have been certain revelations in which an optional reading was permitted. Readings belonging to this class can only be accepted on the most unimpeachable evidence, and the trustworthiness of the hadith containing such reading must be established beyond all doubt. But even these readings do not find their way into the written text which remains permanently one and the same. Their value is only explanatory; that is to say they only show what significance is to be attached to the word used in the text; they are never at variance with the text. They are known to very few even of the learned, to say nothing of the general readers of the Holy Book, and are considered to have the value of an authentic hadith in explaining the meaning of a certain word occurring in the text. Thus the so-called different readings were either dialectic variations, which were never meant to be permanent and, intended only to facilitate the reading of the Qur'an in individual cases, or explanatory variations which were meant to throw light on the text. The former ceased to exist with the spread of education in Arabia, and the latter have still the same explanatory value as they originally had.

Marfat.com

Collective Testimony of the Purity of the Quranic Text

Random reports that a certain verse or chapter, not to be met with in the Holy Qur'an, was part of the holy text, have no value at all as against the conclusive and collective testimony which establishes the purity of the text of the Holy Qur'an. These reports were in some cases fabricated by enemies who sought to undermine the authority of the religion of Islam.[11] In other cases, they may have been the mistaken conception of this or that narrator. However that may be, it is necessary to weigh the evidence as to whether or not a certain verse formed part of the Quranic text.

It is fact that every verse of the Holy Qur'an was, when revealed, promulgated and made public; it became a part of the public prayer and was repeated day and night to be listened to by an audience of hundreds. When the written manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an were first collected into one volume in the time of Abu Bakr, and later on when copies were made from that original in the time of 'Uthman, there was the unanimous testimony of all the Companions that every verse that found a place in that collection was part of the Divine revelation. Such testimony of overwhelming numbers cannot be set aside by the evidence of one or two, but as a fact, all reports quoted as affecting the purity of the text ascribe a certain statement to only one man, and in not a single case is there a second man to support that assertion. Thus when Ibn Mas'ud makes an assertion to this effect, Ubayy's evidence, along with that of the whole body of Companions, goes against his; and when Ubayy makes a like assertion, Ibn Mas'ud's evidence along with that of the rest of the Companions goes against him. Thus there is not a single assertion impugning the purity of the Quranic text for which even one witness can be produced.[12]

The Theory of Abrogation

That certain verses of the Holy Qur'an are abrogated by others is now an exploded theory. The two passages on which it was supposed to rest refer, really, to the abrogation, not of the passages of the Holy Qur'an but, of the previous revelations whose place the Holy Qur'an has taken. The first verse is contained in the chapter *al-Nahl*—a Makka revelation-and runs thus : "And when We change one message for another message,[13] and Allah knows best what He reveals, they say, Thou art only a forger" (16 : 101). Now it is a fact admitted on all hands that details of the Islamic law were revealed at Madina, and it is in relation to these details that the theory of abrogation has been broached. Therefore a Makka revelation would not speak of abrogation. But the reference in the above verse is to the abrogation, not of the Quranic verses, but of the previous Divine messages or revelations, involved by the revelations, of the Holy Qur'an. The context shows this clearly to be the case, for the opponents are here made to say that the Prophet was a forger. Now the opponents called the Prophet a forger, not because he announced the abrogation of certain verses of the Holy Qur'an, but because he claimed that the Holy Qur'an was a Divine revelation which had taken the place of previous revelation. Their contention was that the Qur'an was not a revelation at all : "Only a mortal teaches him" (16 : 103). Thus they called the whole of the Qur'an a forgery and not merely a particular verse of it. The theory of abrogation, therefore, cannot be based on this verse which speaks only of one revelation or one law taking the place of another.

Marfat.com

The other verse which is supposed to lend support to the theory is 2 : 106 : "Whatever communication We abrogate or cause to be forgotten. We bring one better than it or one like it."[14] A reference to the context will show that the Jews or the followers of previous revelations are here addressed. Of these it is said again and again : "We believe in that which was revealed to us; and they deny what is besides that" (2 : 91). So they were told that if one revelation was abrogated, it was only to give place to a better. And there is mention not only of abrogation but also of something that was forgotten. Now the words "or cause to be forgotten" cannot refer to the Holy Qur'an at all, because no portion of the Holy Book could be said to have been forgotten so as to require a new revelation in its place. There is no point in supposing that God should first make the Holy Prophet forget a verse and then reveal a new one in its place. Why not, if he really had forgotten a verse, remind him of the one forgotten? But even if we suppose that his memory ever failed in retaining a certain verse (which really never happened), that verse was quite safely preserved in writing, and the mere failure of the memory could not necessitate a new revelation. That the Prophet never forgot what was recited to him by the Holy Spirit is plainly stated in the Holy Quran : "We shall make thee recite, so thou shalt not forget" (87 : 6). History also bears out the fact that he never forgot any portion of the Quranic revelation. Sometimes the whole of a very long chapter would be revealed to him in one portion, as in the case of the sixth chapter which extends over twenty sections, but he would cause it to be written down without delay, and make his Companions learn it by heart, and recite it in public prayers, and that without the change of even a latter; notwithstanding the fact that he himself could not read from a written copy; nor did the written copies, as a rule, remain in his possession. It was a miracle indeed that he never forgot any portion of the Qur'an, though other things he might forget, and it is to his forgetfulness in other things that the words *except what Allah pleases* (87 : 7) refer. On the other hand, it is a fact that parts of the older revelation had been utterly lost and forgotten, and thus the Holy Qur'an was needed to take the place of that which was abrogated, and that which had been forgotten by the world.

Hadith on Abrogation

"The hadith speaking of abrogation are all weak" says Tabrasi. But it is stranger still that the theory of abrogation has been accepted by writer after writer without ever thinking that not a single hadith, however weak, touching on the abrogation of a verse, was traceable to the Holy Prophet. It never occurred to the upholders of this theory that the Quranic verses were promulgated by the Holy Prophet, and that it was he whose authority was necessary for the abrogation of any Quranic verse; no Companion, not even Abu Bakr or 'Ali, could say that a Quranic verse was abrogated. The Holy Prophet alone was entitled to say so, and there is not a single hadith to the effect that he ever said so; it is always some Companion or a later authority to whom such views are to be trace. In most cases where a report is traceable to one Companion who held a certain verse to have been abrogated, there is another report traceable to another Companion to the effect that verse was not abrogated.[15] It shows clearly that the opinion of one Companion as to the abrogation of a verse would be questioned by another Companion. Even among later writers we find that there is not a single verse on which the verdict of abrogation has been passed by one without being questioned by another; and while there are writers who would lightly pass the verdict of abrogation on hundreds

Marfat.com

of verses, there are others who consider not more than five to be abrogated, and even in the case of these five the verdict of abrogation has been seriously impugned by earlier writers.

Use of the Word Naskh

The theory of abrogation has in fact arisen from a misconception of the use of the word *naskh* by the Companions of the Holy Prophet. When the significance of one verse was limited by another, it was sometimes spoken of as having been abrogated (*nusikhat*) by that other. Similarly when the words of a verse gave rise to a misconception, and a later revelation cleared up that misconception, the word *naskh* was metaphorically used in connection with it, the idea underlying its use being, not that the first verse was abrogated, but that a certain conception to which it had given rise was abrogated.[16]

Earlier authorities admit this use of the word : "Those who accept *naskh* (abrogation) here (2 : 109) take it as meaning *explanation* metaphorically" (RM.I, p. 292); and again : "By *naskh* is meant metaphorically, explaining and making clear the significance" (*ibid.*, p. 508). It is an abrogation but not an abrogation of the words of the Holy Qur'an; rather is it the abrogation of a misconception of their meaning. This is further made clear by the application of *naskh* to verses containing statement of facts (*akhbar*), whereas, properly speaking, abrogation could only take place in the case of verses containing a commandment or a prohibition (*amr* or *nahy*). In the ordinary sense of the word there could be no *naskh* (abrogation) of a statement made in the Word of God, as that would suggest that God had made a wrong statement first and then recalled it. This use of the word *naskh* by the earlier authorities regarding statements[17] shows that they were using the word to signify the removal of a wrong conception regarding, or the placing of a limitation upon, the meaning of a certain verse. At the same time, it is true that the use of the word *naskh* soon became indiscriminate, and when any one found himself unable to reconcile two verses, he would declare one of them to be abrogated by the other.

Basis of Abrogation

The principle on which the theory of abrogation is based is unacceptable, being contrary to the plain teachings of the Holy Qur'an. A verse is considered to be abrogated by another when the two cannot be reconciled with each other; in other words, when they appear to contradict each other. But the Holy Qur'an destroys this foundation when it declares in plain words that no part of the Holy Book is at variance with another : "Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an, and if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy" (4 : 82). It was due to lack of meditation that one verse was thought to be at variance with another; and hence it is that in almost all cases where abrogation has been upheld by one person, there has been another who being able to reconcile the two, has repudiated the alleged abrogation.

Sayuti on Abrogation

It is only among the later commentators that we meet with the tendency to augment the number of verses thought to have been abrogated, and by some of these the figure has been

Marfat.com

placed as high as five hundred. Speaking of such Sayuti says in the *Itqan* : "Those who multiply (the number of abrogated verses) have included many kinds—one kind being that in which there is neither abrogation, nor any particularization (of a general statement), nor has it any connection with any one of them, for various reasons. And this is as in the word of God : And spend out of what We have given them' (2 : 3); And spend out of what We have given you' (63 : 10); and the like. It is said that these are abrogated by the verse dealing with zakat, while it is not so, they being still in force" (It. II, p. 22). Sayuti himself brings the number of verses which he thinks to be abrogated down to twenty—one (*ibid.* p. 23), in some of which he considers there is abrogation, while in others he finds that it is only the particularization of a general injunction that is effected by a later verse; but he admits that there is a difference of opinion even about these.

Shah Wali Allah's Verdict on Five Verses

A later writer, however, the famous Shah Wali Allah of India, commenting on this in his *Fauz al-Kabir* says that abrogation cannot be proved in the case of sixteen out of Sayuti's twenty-one verses, but in the case of the remaining five he is of opinion that the verdict of abrogation is final. These five verses are dealt with below :

1. 2 : 280 : "Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relations, according to usage." As a matter of fact, both Baidzawi and ibn Jarir quote authorities who state that this verse was not abrogated; and it is surprising that it is considered as being abrogated by 4 : 11, 12, which speak of the shares to be given "after the payment of a bequest he may have bequeathed or a debt," showing clearly that the bequest spoken of in 2 : 180 was still in force. This verse in fact speaks of bequest for charitable objects which is even now recognized by muslims to the extent of one-third of property.

2. 2 : 240 : "And those of you who die and leave wives behind, (making) a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for a year without turning them out." But we have the word of no less an authority than Mujahid that this verse is not abrogated : "Allah gave her (*i.e.* the widows) the whole of a year, seven months and twenty days being optional, under the bequest; if she desired she could stay according to the bequest (*i.e.* having maintenance and residence for a year), and if she desired she could leave the house (and remarry), as the Qur'an says : 'Then if they leave of their own accord, there is no blame on you'" (Bu. 65 : 39). This verse, therefore, does not contradict v. 234. Moreover, there is proof that it was revealed after v. 234, and hence it cannot be said to have been abrogated by the verse.

3. 8 : 65 : "If there are twenty patient ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred, etc." This is said to have been abrogated by the verse that follow it :

   "For the present Allah has made light your burden and He knows that there is weakness in you, so if there are a hundred patient ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred." That the question of abrogation does not arise here at all is apparent from the words of the second verse which clearly refers to the early times when the muslims were weak, having neither munitions of war nor experience of warfare, and

Marfat.com

when old and young had to go out and fight; while the first verse refers to a later period when the Muslim armies were fully organized and equipped.

4. 33 : 52 : "It is not allowed to thee to take women after this." This is said to have been abrogated by a verse which was apparently revealed before it : "O Prophet! We have made lawful to thee thy wives" (33 : 50). The whole issue has been turned topsy-turvy. As I have said before, a verse cannot be abrogated by one revealed before it. Apparently what happend was this. When 4 : 3 was revealed, limiting the number of wives to four, should exceptional circumstances require, the Prophet was told not to divorce the excess number , and this was effected by 33 : 50 as quoted above; but at the same time he was told not to take any woman in marriage after that, and this was done by 33 : 52.
5. 58 : 12 : "O you who believe ! when you consult the Apostle, then offer something in charity before you consultation; that is better for you and purer; but if you do not find, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." This is said to have been abrogated by the verse that follows : "Do you fear that you will not be able to give in charity before your consultation? So when you do not do it, and Allah has turned to you mercifully, then keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate.". It is not easy to see how one of these injunctions is abrogated by the other, since there is not that slightest difference in what they say. The second verse merely gives further explanation to show that the injuction is only in the nature of a recommendation, that is to say, a man may give in charity whatever he can easily spare, zakat (or the legal alms) being the only obligatory charity.

Thus the theory of abrogation falls to the ground on all considerations.

Interpretation of the Qur'an

The rule as to the interpretation of the Qur'an is thus given in the Holy Book itself : "He it is Who has revealed the Book to thee; some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical. As for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead and seeking to give it their own interpretation; but none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those well-grounded in knowledge say, We believe in it, it is all from our Lord; and none do mind except those having understanding" (3 : 6). In the first place, it is stated here that there are two kinds of verses in the Holy Qur'an, namely the decisive and the allegorical–the latter being those which are capable of different interpretations. Next we are told that the decisive verses are the basis of the Book, that is, that they contain the fundamental principles of religion. Hence whatever may be the differences of interpreattion, the fundamental of religion are not affected by them, all such differences relating only to secondary matters. The third point is that some people seek to give their own interpretaion to allegorical statements and are thus misled. In other words, serious errors arise only when a wrong interpretation is placed on words which are susceptible of two meanings. Lastly, in the concluding words, a clue is given as to the right mode of interpreation in the case of allegorical statements : "It is all from our Lord." That is to say, there is no disagreement between the various portions of the Holy

Marfat.com

Book. This statement has in fact been made elsewhere also, as already quoted (see 4 : 82). The important principle to be borne in mind in the interpreation of the Holy Qur'an, therefore, is that the meaning should be sought from within the Qur'an, and never should a passage be interpreted in such a manner that it may be at variance with any other passage, but more especially with the basic principles laid down in the decisive verses. This principle, in the words of the Holy Qur'an is followed by "those well-grounded in knowledge."[18] The following rules may therefore be laid down :

1. The principles of Islam are enunciated in decisive words in the Holy Qur'an; and, therefore, no attempt should be made to establish a principle on the strength of allegorical passages, or of words susceptible of different meanings.
2. The explanation of the Qur'an should in the first place be sought in the Qur'an itself; for, whatever the Qur'an has stated briefly, or merely hinted at, in one place, will be found expanded and fully explained elsewhere in the Holy Book itself.
3. It is very important to remember that the Holy Qur'an contains allegory and metaphor along with what is plain and decisive, and the only safegurad against being misled by what is allegorical or metaphorical is that the interpretation of such passages must be strictly in consonance with what is laid down in clear and decisive words, and not at variance therewith.
4. When a law or principle is laid down in clear words, any statement carrying a doubtful significance, or a statement apparently opposed to the law so laid down, must be interpreted subject to the principle enunciated. Similarly, that which is particular must be read in connection with and subject to more general staements.

Value of Hadith and Commentaries in Interpreting the Qur'an

In this connection I have only to add that Hadith also affords an explanation of the Holy Qur'an but a hadith can only be accepted when it is reliable and not opposed to what is plainly stated in the Qur'an. As regards commentaries, a word of warning is necessary against the tendency to regard what is stated in them as being the final word on interpreation, since by so doing the great treasures of knowledge which an exposition of the Holy Qur'an in the new light of modern progress reveals are shut out, and the Qur'an becomes a sealed book to the present generation. The learned men of yore all freely sought the meaning of the Qur'an according to their lights, and to the present generation belongs the same right to read it according to its own lights. It must also be added that though the commentaries are valuable stores of learning for a knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, the numerous anecdotes and legends with which many of them are filled can only be accepted with the gretest caution and after the most careful sifting. Such stories are mostly taken from the Jews and the Christians, and on this point I would refer the reader to my remarks under the heading "Reports in Biographies and Commentaries" in the next chapter, where I have shown that the best authorities have condemned most of this material as Jewish and Christian nonsense.

Divisions of the Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an is divided into 114 chapters, each of which is called a *sura* meaning literally

Marfat.com

eminence or *high* degree (R.) and also *any degree of a structure* (LL.). The chapters are of varying length, the longest comprising one-twelfth of the entire Book. All the chapters, with the exception of the last thrity-five, are divided into sections *(ruku')*, each section dealing generally with one subject, and the different sections being inter-related to each other. Each section contains a number verses (*aya*, meaning originally a *sign* or a *communication from God*). The total number of verses is 6,240,[19] or including the 113 *Bismillah* verses with which the chapters open, 6,353.[20] For the purpose of recitation, the Holy Qur'an is divided into thirty equal parts, each of which is called a *juz'* (meaning *part*), every part being again sub-divided into four equal parts. Another division is into seven *manzils* or *portions*, which is designed for the completion of the recital of the Holy Qur'an in seven days. These divisions have nothing to do with the subject-matter of the Holy Book.

Makka and Madina Suras

An important division of the Holy Qur'an relates to the Makka and Madina suras. After being raised to the dignity of prophethood, the Holy Prophet passed 13 years at Makka, and was forcd then to fly with his Companions to Madina where he spent the last ten years of his life. Out of the total of 114 chapters, into which the Holy Qur'an is divided, 92 were revealed during the Makka period and 22 during the Madina period,[21] but the Madina chapters, being generally longer, contain about one-third of the Holy Book. In arrangement, the Makka revealation is intermingled with that of Madina; the number of Makka and Madina chapters following each other alternately being 1,4,2,2,14,1,8,1,13,3,7,10,48. On referring to the subject-matter of the Makka and Madina revelations, we find the following three broad features distinguishing the two groups of chapters. Firstly, the Makka revelation deals chiefly with faith in God and is particularly devoted to grounding the Muslims in that faith, while the Madina revelation is chiefly intended to translate that faith into action. It is true that exhortations to good and noble deeds are met with in the Makka revelation, and in the Madina revelation faith is still shown to be the foundation on which the structure of deeds should be built, but, in the main, stress is laid in the former on faith in an Omnipotent and Ominpresent God Who requites every good and every evil deed, and the latter deals chiefly with what is good and what is evel, in other words, with the details of the law. The second feature distinguishing the two revelations is that while that of Makka is generally prophetical, that which came at Madina deals with the fulfilment of prophecy. Thirdly, while the Makka revelation shows how true happiness of mind may be sought in communion with God, that of Madina points out how man's dealing with man may also be a source of bliss and comfort to him. Hence a scientific arrangement of the Qur'an must of necessity rest on the intermingling of the two revelations, the blending of faith with deeds, of prophecy with the fulfilment of prophecy, of Divine communion with man's relation to and treatment of man. It may be added here that the idea that the proper arrangement of the Qur'an should be in chronological order is a mistaken one. Most of the suras were revealed piecemeal, and hence a chronological order of revelation would destroy the sura arrangemment altogether. Take, for example, the very first chapter chronologically, the 96th in the present order. While its first five verses are undoubtedly the first revelation that came to the Prophet, the rest of the chapter was not revealed before the fourth year of his ministry. Similarly with the second chapter in the present arrangment; while the major portion of it was revealed in the first and the second

Marfat.com

years of the Hijra, some verses were revealed as late as the closing days of the Prophet's life. Chronological order is, therefore, an impossibility.

The Place of Qur'an in World Literature

That the Holy Qur'an occupies a place of eminence in Arabic literature which has not fallen to the lot of any other book goes without saying; but we may say more and assert with confidence that the place so occupied has not been attained at any time by any book anywhere. For what book is there in the whole history of the human race that has not only through thirteen long centuries remained admittedly the standard of the language in which it is written, but has also originated a world-wild literature? The best books only half as old as the Holy Qur'an are no longer the standard for the language of to-day of the language in which, respectively, they were written. The feat accomplished by the Holy Qur'an is simply unapproached in the whole history of the written word. It transformed a dialect spoken in a very limited area of a forgotten corner of the world into a world-wide language which became the mother-tongue of vast countries and mighty empires, and produced a literature which is the basis of the culture of powerful nations from one end of the world to the other. There was no literature, properly speaking, in Arabic before the holy Qur'an; the few pieces of poetry that did exist never soared beyond the praise of wine or woman, or horse or sword, and can hardly be called literature at all. It was with the Qur'an that Arabic literature originated, and through the Qur'an that Arabic became a powerful language spoken in many countries and casting its influence on the literary histories of many others. Without the Qur'an, the Arabic language would have been nowhere in the world. As Dr. Steingass says :

"But we may well ask ourselves, what would in all probability have become of this language without Muhammad and his Qur'an? This is not at all an idle and desultory speculation. It is true the Arabic language had already produced numerous fine specimens of genuine and high-flown poetry, but such poetry was chiefly, if not exclusively, preserved in the memory of the people .....Moreover poetry is not tantamount to literature....Divided among themselves into numerous tribes, who were engaged in a perpetual warfare against each other, the Arabs, and with them their various dialects, would more and more have drifted asunder, poetry would have followed in the wake, and the population of Arabia would have broken up into a multitude of clans, with their particular bards, whose love and war-songs enterprising travellers of our day might now collect.....

"It seems, then, that it is only a work of the nature of the Qur'an which could develop ancient Arabic into a literary language....

"But not only by raising a dialect, through its generalization, to the power of a language, and by rendering the adoption of writing indispensable, has the Qur'an initiated the development of an Arabic literature; its composition itself has contributed two factors absolutely needful to this development : it has added to the existing poetry the origins of rhetoric and prose.....

"But Muhammad made a still greater and more decisive step towards creating a literature for his people. In those suras, in which he regulated the private and public life of the Muslim,

Marfat.com

he originated a prose, which has remained the standard of classical purity ever since" (Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam,* art. Qur'an, pp. 528, 529).

There are other considerations which entitle the Holy Qur'an to a place of eminence to which no other book can aspire. It throws a flood of light on all the fundamentals of religion, the existence and unity of God, the reward of good and evil, the life after death, Paradise and Hell, revelation, etc. This subject has been fully dealt with in the second part of this book. But in addition to expounding to us the mysteries of the unseen, it offers a solution of the most difficult problems of this life, such as the distribution of wealth, the sex—problem, and all other rquestions on which depends in any degree the happiness and advancement of man. And the value of this copiousness of ideas is further enhanced when it is seen that it does not confront man with dogmas but gives reasons for every assertion made, whether relating to the spiritual or the physical life. There are hundreds of topics on which it has enriched the literature of the world, and whether it be discussing questions relating to spiritual existence or to physical life here on earth, it follows an argumentative course and convinces by argument and not by dogma.

More wonderful still is the effect which the Holy Qur'an has produced. The transformation wrought by its influence is unparalleled in the history of the world. An entire change was wrought in the lives of a whole nation in an incredibly short time, that is to say, a period of no more than twenty-three yeras. The Qur'an found the Arabs worshippers of idols, unhewn stones, trees and heaps of sand, yet in less than a quarter of a century the worship of the One God rules the whole land and idolatry had been wiped out from one end of the country to the other. It swept all supertitions before it and, in their place, gave the most rational religion the world could dream of. The Arab who had been wont to pride himself on his ignorance had, as if by a magician's wand, been transformed into the lover of knowledge, drinking deep at every fountain of learning to which he could gain access. And this was directly the effect of the teaching of a Qur'an, which not only appealed to reason, ever and again, but declared man's thirst for knowledge to be insatiable. And along with supersition went the deepest vices of the Arab, and in their place the Holy Book put a burning desire for the best and noblest deeds in the service of humanity. Yet it was not the transformation of the individual alone that the Holy Qur'an had accomplished; equally was it a transformation of the family, of society, of the very nation itself. From the war-like elements of the Arab race, the Holy Qur'an welded a nation, united and full of life and vigour, before whose onward march the greatest kingdoms of the world crumbled as if they had been but toys before the reality of the new faith. Thus the Holy Qur'an effected a transformation of humanity itself, a transformation material as well as moral, an awakening intellectual as well as spiritual. There is no other book which has brought about a change so miraculous in the lives of men.

European Writers on the Qur'an

To this position of the Qur'an in world literature, testimony is borne by even the most biased European writers. I quote but a few of them :

"The style of the Koran is generally beautiful and fluent...and in many places, especially

Marfat.com

where the majesty and attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent.... He succeeded so well, and so strangely captivated the minds of his audience, that several of his opponents thought it the effect of witchcraft and enchantment" (Sale, *Preliminary Discourse,* p. 48).

"That the best of Arab writers has never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Qur'an itself is not surprising" (Palmer, Intro. p. v.).

"The earliest Mekka revelations are those which contain what is highest in a great religion and what was purest in a great man" (Lane's *Selections,* Intro. p. cvi).

"However often we turn to it, at first disgusting us each time afresh, it soon attracts, astounds, and in the end enforces our reverence. . . . Its style, in accordance with its contents and aim, is stern, grand, terrible–ever and anon truly sublime..... Thus this book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence" (Goethe—Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam,* p. 526).

"We may well say the Qur'an is one of the grandest books ever written. ... ... Sublime and chaste, where the supreme truth of God's unity is to be proclaimed; appealing in high—pitched strains to the imagination of a poetically-gifted people where the eternal consequences of man's submission to God's holy will, or of rebellion against it, are pictured; touching in its simple, almost crude, earnestness, when it seeks again and again encouragement or consolation for God's messenger, and a solemn warning for those to whom he has been sent, in the histories of the prophets of old : the language of the Qur'an adapts itself to the exigencies of everyday life, when this everyday life, in its private and public bearings, is to be brought in harmony with the fundamental principles of the new dispensation.

"Here therefore its merits as a literary production should, perhaps, not be measured by some preconceived maxims of subjective and aesthetic taste, but by the effects which it produced in Muhammad's contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. If it spoke so powerfully and convincingly to the hearts of his hearers as to weld hitherto centrifugal and antagonistic elements into one compact and well-organized body, animated by ideas far beyond those which had until now ruled the Arabian mind, then its eloquence was perfect, simply because it created a civilized nation out of savage tribes, and shot a fresh woof into the old warp of history" (Steingass—Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam,* pp. 527, 528).

"From time beyond memory, Mecca and the whole peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor. The slight and transient influences of Judaism, Christianity, or philosophical inquiry, upon the Arab mind had been but as the ruffling here and there of the surface of a quiet lake; all remained still and motionless bellow. The people were sunk in superstition, cruelty, and vice.... There religion was a gross idolatry; and their faith the dark superstitious dread of unseen beings.... Thirteen years before the Hegira, Mecca lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had those thirteen years now produced!.... Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of the men of Medina; but it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life" (Muir's *Life of Mahomet,* pp. 155, 156).

Marfat.com

"A more disunited people it would be hard to find till suddenly the miracle took place! A man arose who, by his personaility and by his claim to direct Divine guidance, actually brought about the impossible—namely, the union of all these warring factions" (*Ins and Outs of Mesopotamia*).

"It was the one miracle claimed by Mohammed—his 'standing miracle' he called it : and a miracle indeed it is" (Bosworth Smith's *Mohammed,* p. 290).

"Never has a people been led more rapidly to civilization, such as it was, then were the Arabs through Islam" (Hirschfeld's *New Researches,* p. 5).

"The Qoran is unapproachable as regard convincing power, eloquence, and even composition....And to it was also indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Moslim world" (*Ibid,* pp. 8, 9).

Translation of the Holy Qur'an

The Egyptian '*Ulama* have held that the Holy Qur'an should not be translated into any language, but this position is clearly untenable. The Holy Book is plainly intended for all the nations; it is again and again called "a reminder for all the nations" (68 : 52; 82 : 27, etc.) and the Holy Prophet is spoken of as "a warner for the nations" (25 : 1). No warning could be conveyed to a nation except in its own language, and the Holy Qur'an could not be spoken of as a reminder for the nations unless its message was meant to be given to them in their own language. The translation of the Holy Qur'an into other languages was, therefore, contemplated by the Holy Book itself. And translations have actually been done into many lanauges by Muslims themselves. A Persian translation of the Holy Qur'an is attributed to Shaikh Sa'di, while another rendering into Persian was the work of the famous Indian saint, Shah Wali Allah, who died over 150 years ago. Translations were made into Urdu by other members of Shah Wali Allah's family, Shah Rafi' al-Din and Shah 'Abd al-Qadir, while many more have been added recently. Translations also exist in the Pushto, Turkish, Javan, Malayan, Gujrati, Bengalee, Hindi and Gurumukhi languages, and one has also been undertaken into Tamil. "The first translation attempted by Europeans was a Latin version translated attempted by Europeans was a Latin version translated by an Englishman, Robert of Retina, and a German, Hermann of Dalmatia. This translation, which was done at the request of Peter, Abbot of the Monastery of Clugny, A.D. 1143, remained hidden nearly 400 years till it was published at Basle, 1543, by Theodore Bibliander, and was afterwards rendered into Italian, German, and Dutch..... The oldest French translation was done by M. Du Ryer (Paris, 1647). A Russian version appeared at St. Petersberg in 1776.... The first English Qur'an was Alexander Ross's translation of Du Ryer's French version (1649-1688). Sale's well-known work first appeared in 1734... A translation by the Rev. J. M. Rodwell.... was printed in 1861..... Professor Palmer, of Cambridge, translated the Qur'an in 1880" (Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam,* p. 523).

Recently the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore, has undertaken the work of the translation of the Holy Qur'an into European languages. The English edition first appeared in 1917, and the Dutch translation appeared in 1935 while the German has also been completed.

Marfat.com

REFERENCES

1. Generally the sources are said to be four, the Qur'an and the Sunna (or Hadith) being called *al-adillat-al-qat'iyya* or absolutely sure arguments, while *ijma'* or unanimous agreement of the Muslim community and *qiyas* or reasoning are called *al-adillat-al ijtihadiyya* or arguments obtained by exertion. But as ijma' and qiyas are admittedly based on the Qur'an and the Hadith, the latter itself being only an explanation of the Holy Qur'an, as I shall show later on, the Holy Qur'an is actually, the real foundation on which the whole superstructure of Islam rests, and being the only, absolute and final authority in every discussion relating to the principles and laws of Islam, it is perfectly right to say that the Holy Qur'an is the sole source from which all the teachings and practices of Islam are drawn.

2. The word *Qur'an* is an infinitive noon from the root *qara'a* which signifies primarily he collected together things(LA.). It also signifies he *read or recited,* because in reading or reciting, letters and words are joined to each other in a certain order (R.) "According to some authorities, the name of this book al-Qur'an from among the world Divine books is due to its gathering together in itself the fruits of all His books, rather its being a collection of the fruits of all the sciences, a reference to which is contained in the words, 'an explanation of all things'" (R.). It also means *a book that is or should be read,* containing a prophetical reference to its being "the most widely read book" (En. Br.) in the whole world. The Holy Qur'an speaks of itself under various other names. *It is called al-kitab (2 : 2) meaning the Writing which is complete in itself; al-Furqan (25 : 1) or the Distinguisher between right and wrong and between truth and falsehood; al-Dhikra, al-Tadhkira (15 : 9) or the Reminder or a source of eminence and glory to man; al-Tanzil (26 : 192) or the Revelation from on High; Ahsan-al-Hadith (39:23) or the Best Saying; al-Mau'iza (10 : 57) or the Admonition; al-Hukm (13:37) or the Judgement; al-Hikma (17:39) or the Wisdom; al-Shifa (10:57) or the Healing; al-Huda (72:13) or the Guidance; al-Rahma (17:82) or the mercy; al-Khair (3:103) or the Goodness; al-Ruh (42:52) or the Spirit or the Life; al-Bayan (3:137) or the Explanation; al-Ni'ma (93:11) or the Blessing; al-Burhan (4:175) or the Argument; al-Qayyim (18:2) or the Maintainer; al-Muhaimin (5:48) or the Guaradian; al-Nur (7:157) or the Light; al-Haqq (17:81) or the Truth.* Besides these it is mentioned by several other names; and there is also a large number of qualifying words applied to it. For instance, it is called *Karim* (56:77) or *Honourable; Majid* (85:21) or *Glorious; Hakim* (36:2) or *Wise; Mubarak* (21:50) or *Blessed (lit. a thing the goodness of which shall never be intcrcepted); Mubin* (12:1) or *the one making things manifest; 'Aliyy* (43:4) or *Elevated; Fasl* (86:13) or *Decisive; 'Azim* (39:67) or *of great importance; Mukarram or Honoured, Marfu' or Exalted, Mutahhara or Purified* (80:13, 14); *Mutashabih* (39:23) or *conformable in its various parts.*

3. The *Lailat-al-Qadr* or the Grand Night is one of the three nights in the month of Ramadzan, 25th, 27th, or 29th, i.e., the night preceding any of these dates (Bu. 32:4). The Holy Prophet was, at the time when revelation first came to him, forty years of age.

4. It should be noted that the Holy Qur'an uses the words Holy Spirit and Gabriel interchangeably. In one of the reports speaking of the first revelation to the Holy Prophet the angel who brought the revelation is called *al-Namus al-Akbar, or, the great Namus, and Namus means the angel who is entrusted with Divine secrets* (N.), the Divine secrets, of course, being the Divine messages to humanity sent through the prophets of God. The same report adds that it was the very same angel that brought revelation to Moses. Thus both the Holy Qur'an and the reports make it clear that Divine revelation was brought to the Holy Prophet, as well as to the prophets before him, by the angel Gabriel who is also called the Holy Spirit or the Faithful Spirit or the great *Namus.* This clears up all doubts as to what is meant by the Holy Spirit in Islam; and in the

mouths of the Old Testament prophets, as well as Jesus Christ, it carried exactly the same significance. It is true that there is not the same clarity here as in Islam, but it is equally true that the orthodox Christan conception of the Holy Spirit was quite unknown to the Jewish mind, and in this respect Jesus Christ was a staunch Jew, his terminology being taken in its entirely from the Jews. In the Old Testament terminology, the form used is the Spirit or the Spirit of God. In Ps. 51 : 11 and Is. 63 : 10, 11, the form used is Holy Spirit which is also the form adopted in the Talmud and Midrash. The Holy Ghost is peculiar to the New Testament writers. The Jews looked upon it as one of the created things; it was among the ten things that were created on the first day (En. J.). The function of the Holy Spirit is thus described :

"The visible results of the activity of the Holy spirit, according to the Jewish conception, are the books of the Bible, all of which have been composed under its inspiration. All the prophets spoke "in the Holy Spirit"; and the most characteristic sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit is the gift of prophecy, in the sense that the person upon whom it rests beholds the past and the future. With the death of the last three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit ceased to manifest itself in Israel" (En. J.).

It is clear from this the Jewish idea was that the Holy Spirit brought inspiration to the prophets, the only difference between this and the Islamic conception being that the latter looks upon the very words of revelation as proceeding from a Divine source, while the former apparently regards the words as being those of the prophet speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ and his disciples used the word in exactly the same sense, Jesus' first experience of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove was the result of his baptism by John (Mt. 3:16) which seems to indicate its association with a certain stage in the spiritual development of man. The Holy Spirit did not descend upon him until he was baptised. The idea of a dove-like form is also met with in the Jewish literature. Moreover, Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as inspiring the righteous servants of God: "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" (Mt. 22 : 43); "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost" (Mk. 12 : 36); the Holy Spirit is given to them that ask Him (Lk. 11 : 13). Even the disciples' first experience of the Holy Spirit is a repetition of the old Jewish tradition. As there we find the Spirit coming with " a voice of a great rushing" (Ezk. 3:12), so in the case of the disciples of Jesus "there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" (Acts 2 : 2). Thus the Holy Spirit as conceived by Jesus and his disciples was the same as in the Old Testament prophet, which again is almost identical with its conception in Islam, and the orthodox Christian view of the Spirit as one of the three persons of the Godhead, co-eternal with God, is of later growth.

5. Raghib suggests a slightly different interpretation. *He makes wahy* include not only an inspiration or a suggestion thrown into the mind, but also *taskhir, i.e.*, making a certain thing follow a certain course in obedience to the laws of nature, an example of which is the revelation to the bee (16 : 68), and *manam, i.e.,* dreams. And the second form, *from behind a veil,* he looks upon as applying to the case of Moses to whom, it is thought, God spoke in a manner different from that in which He spoke to the other Prophets, that is to say. He spoke to him being invisible to him. Now, as regards the revelation to the bee, it is a clear mistake, as the verse stated only how God speaks to men. And the statement regarding the mode of revelation to Moses is also a mistake, for the Holy Qur'an lays it down in plain words that revelation was granted to the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the same form as it had been granted to the prophets before him including Moses : "Surely We have revealed to thee as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him" (4 : 163); and Moses is specially mentioned in this connection

Marfat.com

in v. 164. Hence the second mode, from behind a veil, refers to *ru'ya* or dreams and *kashf* or visions, because a certain sight is shown in this case which has a deeper meaning than that which appears on the surface. The dream or the vision carries with it a certain meaning, but that meaning is, as it were, under a veil and must be sought for behind that veil. The dreams mentioned in the Holy Qur'an (ch.12) are an illustration of this. Joseph saw the sun and the moon and the eleven stars making obeisance to him, and this signified his greatness and his insight into things. A long saw seven lean kine eat up seven fat ones, and the meaning was that seven years of famine and hardship would follow seven years of plenty and eat away the hoarded corn of the country. Hence God's speaking from behind a veil means His revealing certain truths in dreams or visions. In a saying of the Holy Prophet these are called *mubashsharat:* "Nothing has remained of *nubuwwa, i.e., receiving news from God, except mubashsharat."* Being asked "what was meant by *mubashsharat,*" the Holy Prophet replied, "good visions" (Bu. 91 : 4). In this category are also included words which some righteous servants of God are made to utter or which they hear under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

6. Some misdirected critics have represented this extraordinary experience of the coming of the revelation as an epileptic fit. The question is whether an epileptic could, when the fit came on, utter those grand religious truths which are met with in the Holy Qur'an, or indeed make any coherent statement at all; whether he could have the strong will which made the whole of Arabia at last bow down to the Prophet, or possess the unparalleled energy which we witness in every phase of the Holy Prophet's life, or the high morals which were his, or be the master of that magnetic virtue under whose influence a whole country could be purified of the grossest idolatry and superstition; whether hundreds of thousands of men possessing the Arabs' independence of character would have taken him for a leader whose orders were obeyed in the minutest details of life; or whether he could produce men of the will and character of Abu Bakr and 'Umar and thousands of others before whom mighty empires crumbled? The story of froth appearing from his mouth at the time of revelation is pure invention. Klein, writing in *The Religion of Islam* (p. 8), makes the following statement on the authority of Bukhari; "Another tradition says that froth appeared before his mouth and he roared like a yound camel". Now Bukhari makes no such statement, either in the place referred to (Bu. 1:2) or anywhere else. Nor is anything of this kind contained in the *Mishkat.* The only statements that are met with in Hadith are similar to those quoted from Bukhari. For instance, we have in Muslim: " When revelation came to the Holy Prophet, he appeared to be as it were in distress and turned pale in the face." And according to one report "when revelation came to the Holy Prophet, he would hang his head, and his Companions would do the same; and when that condition was over, he would raise up his head." All these statements and similar statements contained in other Hadith collections, only show that the coming of the revelation brought a real change in the Holy Prophet which other also witnessed.

Another misconception may also be removed here. When the Holy Prophet related his first experience to his wife Khadija, he added the words : "Surely I have fear regarding myself, laqad khashitu 'ala nafsi" (Bu. 1 : 1). Some critics have misunderstood these words as meaning that the Prophet feared he was possessed by an evil spirit; and a rather foolish story from Ibn Hisham as to Khadija's taking off the veil and the angel disappearing (which is without the least foundation and against all historical facts of the Prophet's life) is narrated in support of it. The story seems to me a foolish one, inasmuch as the angel appeared to the Holy prophet in the solitude of Hira, and not in the presence of Khadija. A cursory glance at the words quoted above would show that they could not possibly bear any such interpretation. The Holy Prophet knew for certain that he had a message from on High for the reformation of a fallen humanity;

Marfat.com

all that he feared was lest he should not succeed in bringing about the desired reformation. That was how Khadija understood it, as she immediately comforted him : "Nay, by Allah, Allah will never bring thee to grief; surely thou dost good to thy relatives, and bearest to burden of the weak, and earnest for others that which they have not got, and art hospitable to guests and givest and givest help when there is real distress" (Bu.1 : 1). The faithful wife who had known him intimately for fifteen years enumerated these great virtues in him, as a testimony that a man of such high character could not fail in accomplishing the task which was entrusted to him, the task of uplifting a fallen humanity.

7. There is only one report which seems to convey the idea that the Companions who were sitting with the Holy Prophet once saw Gabriel in human shape, but that incident is not related in connection with a Quranic revelation. A certain man, according to that report, whom no one recognized, came to the Holy Prophet and asked him several questions about *iman, Islam* and *ihsan,* and lastly, when the Hour would come. He then disappeared mysteriously and the Holy Prophet is reported to have said : "That was Gabriel who came to teach you your religion" (Bu. 2 : 37). These words might mean that the answers given by him were of Gabriel's teachings, not that the man who put the questions was Gabriel.

8. This subject has been fully dealt with in the preface to my English Translation of the Holy Qur'an with Text and Commentary, and also in a separate booklet, in the Holy Qur'an series, *collection and Arrangement of the Holy Qur'an.*

9. Among those whom the Holy Prophet used to summon to write down portions of the Holy Qur'an immediately after their revelation are mentioned the names of Zaid ibn Thabit, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Zubair, Ubayy, Hanzala, 'Abd-Allah ibn Sa'd, 'Abd-Allah ibn Arqam 'Abd-Allah ibn Rawaha, Sharhubail, Khalid and Aban, sons of Sa'id, and Mu'aiqab (Fb. IX. p. 19). At Madina, Zaid ibn Thabit was chiefly called upon to do this work, and in his absense any of the other amanuenses would take his place, and this was the reason why Zaid was chosen to collect the Quranic writings in the time of Abu Bakr, and again to do the work of transcription in the time of 'Uthman. At Makka in the earliest days, there were Abu Bakr, 'Ali, Khadija, wife of the Holy Prophet, and others who wrote down the portions revealed. The Holy Prophet took the greatest care to have a writer and writing material with him under ali conditions, and even when he had to fly for his life to Madina, he had still writting material with him (Bu. 63 : 45).

10. Some examples of these variations may be given here. *Hatta* (*meanings until*) was pronounced 'atta by the Hudhail; *ta'lamun* (meaning *you know*) was pronounced *ti'lamun* by the Asad; the Tamim read *hamza,* one of the letters, where the Quraish did not. In one report the meaning is made clear where the following words are added from the lips of the Holy Prophet : "Therefore recite it in the manner in which you find it easy to do so" (Bu. 66 : 5). In other words, the Holy Prophet allowed a reader to pronounce a word in the way he found it easiest. In the proper sense of the word, these dialectic variations would not be readings at all. In exceptional cases, a person who could not pronounce a certain word, may have been allowed to substitute its equivalent. But even that would not be a case of a variant reading, since it was merely a permission granted to a particular individual, and such variations never found their way into the written text of the Holy Qur'an.

11. For instance, Muslim mentions a report ascribing to Abu Musa the statement that there was a certain chapter, of the Holy Qur'an, likened in length and force to the 9th chapter, of which only a single passage was all that he remembered. Now the *Mizan al-I'tidal,* a critical inquiry

Marfat.com

about the narrators of the reports, shows that suwaid, the immediate informer of Muslim, was a *zindeeq*, (*i.e.*, one who conceals unbelief and makes an outward show of belief), and, therefore, the report as its very subject-matter shows, is a clear invention. The four other reports speaking of similar passages, not met with in the text of the Holy Qur'an, may be relegated to the same class.

12. In many cases even internal evidence would show that the report was not credible. For example, one report ascribes the following statement to 'A'isha : "The chapter of the Confederates (ch. 33) consisted, at the time of the Prophet, of two hundred verses : when 'Uthman wrote the *Mushaf*, he was only able to collect of it what it contains." 'A'isha could never have spoken these words as she knew too well that 'Uthman never collected the Mushaf; he had only directed the making of copies from *Hafsa's Mushaf*. The false notion that 'Uthman collected the Holy Qur'an is of later growth, and this affords the surest testimony that this report is a mere invention. Similarly, the words ascribed to 'Umar regarding the stoning of the adulterer are a fabrication. He is reported to have said : "If I were not afraid that people would say, 'Umar has added something to the Book of God, I should write it down in the Qur'an" (Ad. 37 : 23). This assertion is self-contradictory. If it was really part of the Qur'an, why should people say that 'Umar had added to the Book of God.

13. The word *aya* occurring here means originally *a sign*, and hence it comes to signify *an indication or evidence or proof*, and is used in the sense of a miracle. It also signifies risala or a divine message (TA.). The word is frequently used in the Holy Qur'an in its general sense of a Divine message of a Divine communication, and is, therefore, applicable to a portion of the Holy Qur'an or to any previous revelation. It carries the latter significance here as the context clearly shows.

14. Sale's translation of the words is misleading and has actually deceived many writers on Islam who had no access to the original. He translates the words *nunsi-ha* as meaning *We cause thee to forget*. Now the text does not contain any word meaning *thee*. The slight error makes the verse mean that Almighty God had caused the Holy Prophet to forget certain Quranic verses; whereas the original does not say that the Prophet was made to forget anything but clearly implies that the world was made to forget.

15. Some examples may be noted here. 2 : 180 is held by some to have been abrogated while others have denied it (IJ-C); 2 : 184 is considered by Ibn 'Umar as having been abrogated while Ibn 'Abbas says it was not (Bu); 2 : 240 was abrogated according to Ibn Zubair while Mujahid says it was not (Bu). I have taken these examples only from the second chapter of the Holy Qur'an.

16. Many instances of this may be quoted. In 2:284, it is said "whether you manifest what is in your minds or hide it. Allah will call you to account for it; "while according to 2 : 286,". Allah does not impose on any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability." A report in *Bukhari* says that one of the Companions of the Holy Prophet, probably 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Umar, held the opinion that the first verse was abrogated (*nusikhat*) by the second.

What was meant by *naskh* (abrogation) in this case is made clear by another detailed report given in the *Musnad* of Ahmad. According to this report when 2 : 284 was revealed, the Companions entertained an idea which they had never entertained before (or according to another report, they were greatly grieved) and thought that they had not the power to bear it. The matter being brought to the notice of the Holy Prophet, he said : "Rather say, We have heard and we obey and submit," and so god inspired faith in their hearts. As this report

Marfat.com

shows, what happend was this, that some Companion or Companions thought that 2 : 284 imposed a new burden on them, making every evil idea which entered the mind without taking root or ever being translated into action, punishable in the same manner as if it had been translated into action. 2 : 286 made it plain that this was not meaning conveyed by 2 : 284, since according to that verse, God did not impose on man a burden which he could not bear. This removal of a misconception was called abrogation (*naskh*) by ibn 'Umar.

It may be added that there is nothing to show that 2:286 was revealed later than 2 : 284. On the other hand, the use of the words *we have heard and we obey* by the Holy Prophet to remove the wrong notion which some Companions entertained—these very words occur in 2 : 285—shows that the three verses, 284, 285 and 286 were all revealed together, and hence the abrogation, in the ordinary sense of the word, of one of them by another is meaningless. There are other instances in which a verse revealed later is thought to have been abrogated by a previoius verse. But how could a later verse be abrogated by a previous one? Or what point can there be in giving an order which was calcelled before it was given? If, on the other hand, the word *naskh* is taken to mean the placing of a limitation upon the meaning of a verse, or the removal of a wrong conception attached to it, no difficulty would arise, for even a previous verse may be spoken of as placing a limitation upon the meaning of a later verse or as removing a wrong conception arising therefrom.

17. One example of one statement being spoken of as abrogated by another is that of 2 : 284, 286 (for which see the previous foot-note). Another is furnished by 8 : 65, 66, where the first verse states that in war the Muslims shall overcome ten times their numbers, and the second, after referring to their weakness at the time—which meant the paucity of trained men among them and their lack of the implements and necessaries of war—states that they shall overcome double their numbers. Now the two verses relate to two different conditions and they may be said to place a limitation upon the meaning of each other, but one of them cannot be spoken of as abrogating the other. In the time of the Holy Prophet when the Muslims were weak, when every man, old or young, had to be called upon to take the field, and the Muslim army was but ill-equpped, the Muslims overcame double, even thrice their numbers; but in the wars with the Persian and Roman empires, they vanquished ten times their number. Both statements were true; they only related to different circumstances and the one placed a limitation upon the meaning of the other, but neither of them actually abrogated the other.

18. The subject of the interpretation of the Quranic verses is very appropriately dealt with in the opening verses of the third chapter which begins with a discussion with the followers of Christianity, for, it must be borne in mind, that it is on a wrong interpretation of certain allegorical statements that the fundamental principles of Christianity are actually based. The basic doctrine of the religtion of all the prophets in the Old Testament is the Unity of God, but there are a number of prophecies couched in in allegorical language having reference to the advent of Christ. The Christians, instead of interpreting these in accordance with the clear words of the principle of Divine Unity, laid the foundations of Christianity on the metaphorical language of the prophecies, and thus by neglect of the true rule of interpretation were misled to such an extent as to ignore the very essentials of the religion of the prophets. Christ was believed to be God on the strength of metaphorical expressions, and the doctrine of the Trinity thus became the basis of a new religion. The epithet "son of God" was freely used in Israelite literature, and was alwasys taken allegorically. The term occurs as early as Gen. 6 : 2 where the "sons of God" are spoken of as taking the daughters of men for wives. It occurs again in Job 1 : 6 and 38 : 7 and good men are no doubt meant in both places. In Ex. 4 : 22 and many other places, the Israelites are spoken of as the children of God : "Israel is my son, even my first

Marfat.com

born." The expression is used in the same metaphorical sense in the Gospels. Even in the fourth Gosepl, where the Divinity of Christ looked upon as finding a bolder expression than in that synoptics, Jesus Chrsist is reported as saying in answer to those who accused him of blasphemy for speaking of himself as the son of God : "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said. I am the Son of God? (Jn. 10 : 34. 36) It is thus clear that even in the mouth of Jesus the term "son of God" was a metaphorical expression, and by taking it literally the Church has destroyed the very foundations of religion. It is to this fundamental mistake of Christianity that the Holy Qur'an refers by giving the rule for the interpretation of allegorical verses in a discussion of the Christian religion.

19. There existed a slight difference in the numbering of verses in the different centres of lerning, Kufa readers counting them 6,239, Basra 6,204, Syria 6,225, Makka 6,219, Madina 6,211. But this is a difference of computation only, some readers marking the end of a verse where others do not.
20. Every chapter of the Holy Qur'an begins with the *Bismillah* verse except the ninth.
21. Ch. 110 was revealed at Makka during the Farewell pilgrimage and therefore belongs to the Madina period.

Marfat.com

3

The Inner and Outer Dimensions of the Qur'an

In chapter IV : 36 God says, *"And serve God and ascribe nothing as a partner to Him."* The verse prohibits pre-Islamic Arabs from their worship of idols, just as chapter XXII : 30 urges them to *"shun the filth of idols, and shun lying speech."* On reflection it becomes clear that an idol may exist in any form; therefore, idol-worship is forbidden because it involves submission to an entity other than God.

In chapter XXXVI : 60 God treats the devil as an idol when He says, *"Did I did not charge you, O you sons of Adam, that you do not worship the devil."* It also becomes clear that another form of idol-worship is submission to one's desires or to the will of others, over and above the will of God; this is indicated in XLV : 23 which refers to *"him who makes his desire his God."*

Thus it becomes apparent that one should turn to none other for help than God Himself and not forget Him in any circumstances, since to do otherwise would be to direct one's attention away from God. To submit to others is to belittle Him and this is the very essence of idol-worship. Thus, in chapter VII : 179 God says of those who refused to worship Him, *"Already We have urged into hell many of the jinn and humankind, ... These are the neglectful."* The verse, *"ascribe nothing to Him"* clearly forbids worships of idols : that is to say, man may not, without God's permission, submit himself to others including his own desires, since any such submission would render him neglectful of God.

In this way, the simple, apparent text of the verse unfolds multiple meanings and exemplifies a feature to be found throughout the Qur'an. Thus the saying of the Prophet.

(related in the books of hadith and commentary), become clear :

In truth the Qur'an possesses an inner and outer, and the inner contains seven dimensions.[1]

The Wisdom Contained in the Two Facets of the Qur'an : The Inner and the Outer

Man's primary life, namely, the temporal life of this world, is as a bubble on the immense sea of the material; and since all his transactions concern the material, he is throughout his life, at the mercy of the moving waves. All his senses are occupied with the material and his thoughts influenced by sensory information. Eating, drinking, standing, speaking, listening, like all other human actions, take place in the sphere of the material and not in the sphere of thought.

Marfat.com

Moreover, in reflecting upon such concepts as love, enmity, ambition and nobility, one comes to better understand them by translating them into language derived from the senses or from actual material objects; for example, the magnetic attraction of lovers, a burning ambition, or a man's being a mine of wisdom.

Capacity to comprehend the world of meaning, which is vaster than that of the material varies from man to man. For one person it may be almost impossible to imagine the world of meanings; another may perceive it only in the most superficial terms and. yet another, may comprehend with ease the most profound of spiritual concepts.

One may say that the greater a man's capacity to understand meanings, the lesser he is attached to the world of the material and its alluring, deceiving appearance. By his very nature, each person possesses a potential for understanding meanings and, provided that he does not deny this capacity, it may be cultivated and increased further.

It is not a simple matter to reduce meaning from out level of understanding to another without losing its sense. This is particularly true for meanings possessing great subtlety which cannot be transmitted, especially to ordinary people, without adequate explanation. As one example, we may mention the Hindu religion : anyone reflecting deeply upon the vedic scriptures of India and studying the different aspects of its message will ultimately see that its basic aim is the worship of one God.

Unfortunately this aim is explained in such a complicated manner that the concept of oneness reaches the minds of ordinary people in the form of idol-worship and the recognition of many gods. To avoid such problems, it becomes necessary to communicate meanings hidden beyond the material world in a language which is rooted in the material and readily comprehensible world.

Indeed some religions deprive their adherents of rights accorded to them by the religion itself : women, for example, in Hinduism; Jews and Christians who, in general, are denied access to knowledge of their holy books. Islam does not deprive anyone of their rights in the *din,* and both man and woman, scholar and layman, black and white are equal in being accorded access to their religion.

God affirms this in chapter 111 : 195, *"Indeed I do not allow the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost,"* and again, in chapter XLIX : 13. *"O mankind! Truly we have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of God is the best in conduct."*

In this manner the Qur'an addresses its teachings to mankind at large and affirms that every man may increase himself in knowledge and, thereby, perfect his own behaviour. In fact, the Qur'an addresses its teachings specifically to the world of man. Since, as mentioned earlier, each man has a different capacity of understanding and since the expounding of subtle knowledge is not without danger of misinterpretation, the Qur'an directs its teachings primarily at the level of the common man.

In this manner, the subtlest of meanings can be explained and multiple meanings and

Marfat.com

ideas expressed, to the ordinary person, by co-relating them to concrete sensory meanings; meaning, therefore, is always inherent in the letter of the words .

The Qur'an reveals itself in a way suitable for different levels of comprehension so that each benefits according to his own capacity. In chapter XLIII : 3-4 God emphazises this idea :

> *Truly we have appointed it a lecture in Arabic so that you may perhaps understand and indeed in the source of the Book, which we possess, it is sublime, decisive.*

God describes the different capacities of man's comprehension in the following metaphor in chapter XIII : 17

> *He sends down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure;*

and the Prophet, in a famous tradition[2] says : *"We prophets folk to the people according to the capacity of their intellects."*

Another result of the multiple meanings within the Quran is that the verses take on a significance beyond their immediate text. Certain verses contain metaphors which indicate, divine gnosis far beyond the common man's understanding but which, nevertheless, become comprehensible through their metaphorical form.

God says in chapter XVI I : 89, *"And indeed We have displayed for mankind in this Qur'an all kind of similitudes, but most of mankind refuse everything except disbelief."* And again in chapter XXIX : 43 God talks of metaphors as a means of expression. *"'As for these similitudes. We coin them for mankind, but none wilt grasp their meanings except the wise."*

Consequently, we must conclude that all Qur'anic teachings which deal with subtle profound knowledge, are in the form of similitudes.

The Two Kinds of Qur'anic Verses : The Explicit and the Implicit

In chapter XI : 1 God says of the Qur'an, *"This is a book whose meanings are secure."* From this we may draw the meaning to reads *"whose meanings are perfected, expanded, firm and strong."* In chapter XXXIX : 23, it reads,

> *God has revealed the fairest of statements (consistent with and in relation to each other) and arranged in pairs (according to meaning) which cause the flesh of those who fear their Lord to creep.*

In chapter III : 7 He says. *"He it is who has revealed to you the Book in which are clear revelations,* (that is, verses whose meaning is immediately clear and which Muslims use for guidance).

> *They are the substance of the Book and others which are allegorical. But those in whose heart is doubt indeed follow the allegorical seeking dissension by seeking to explain it. None knowest its explanation except God and those who are of sound instruction say : We believe in it, it is all from our Lord.*

The first of the verses describes those sections of the Qur'an whose meaning is explicit,

Marfat.com

clear and unambiguous, and safe from misinterpretation. The second verse refers to all those verses whose meanings are implicit, and which are considered allegorical. It then proceeds to indicate that both types of verses, (the explicit, or clear and the implicit, or allegorical), share certain common qualities : beauty and sweetness of language, and a miraculous power of expression which are present in the entire Qur'an.

The third verse under consideration divides the Qur'an into two parts : the explicit and the implicit, the clear and the allegorical, or, in Qur'anic terms, the *muhkam* and the *mutashabih.*

The *muhkam* and those verses which are explicit, clear and immediate in their message and, therefore, incapable of being misinterpreted; the *mutashabih* verses are not of this nature. It is the duty of every firm believer to believe in and act according to the verses which are *muhkam.*

It is also his duty to believe in the verses which are *mutashabih,* but he must abstain from acting upon them; this injunction is based on the premise that only those whose heart is corrupt and whose belief is false follow the implicit, *mutashabih,* verses, fabricating interpretations and, thereby, deceiving common people.

The Meanings of the Explicit and the Implicit Verses, According to the Commentators and Scholars

There is much difference of opinion amongst the Islamic scholars concerning the meaning of explicit and implicit verses, with almost twenty different views on the matter. We can, however, conclude from the views of commentators, ranging from the time of the Prophet to the present day, that the explicit verses are clear and unambiguous, and that one is obliged to believe in and act according to them.

The implicit verses, on the other hand, are those which outwardly seem to express a meaning, but which contain a further truer meaning whose interpretation is known only to God; man has no access to it. However, he is enjoined to believe in them but to avoid acting upon them.

This view is held amongst the Sunni scholars. It is also maintained by the Shi'ite scholars except they believe that the Prophet and the Imams of his family also understood the hidden meanings. They also maintain that the ordinary man must seek knowledge of the implicit verses from God, the Prophet and the Imams.

This view, although held by most commentators, is in several aspects not in accord with the text of the verse beginning,

He it is who has revealed to you the Book in which are explicit verses (whose meanings are immediately clear) . . .

The Method of Guidance and Explanation Used in the Rest of the Qur'an

This we may attribute, firstly, to the fact that there is no verse whose meaning is totally obscure since the Qur'an describes itself as a light, as a guidance and as an explanation. Thus

Marfat.com

it is not befitting that there be verses which fail to reveal their meaning, or to illuminate the Qur'an as a whole.

We should examine again the verse,

Will they not ponder on the Qur'an. If it had been from other than God they would have found much inconsistency in it [IV : 82].

Thus reflection on the Qur'an would remove all kinds of seeming inconsistencies making it unacceptable to say, as do most of the scholars, that the implicit verses cannot be totally understood and that apparent inconsistencies cannot be resolved.

Other scholars say that what is meant by the implicit verses are the letters found at the beginning of certain chapters. (These are known as the *muqatta'ah-letters,* like *Alif, Lam, Mim Alif, Lam Ra', Ha, Mim,* whose real meaning is unknown) .

We must, however, remember that the implicit verses are so-called when read in relation to the explicit verses. This denotes that, accompanying the hidden meaning of the implicit, there is a surface (or literal) meaning whereby the real and the apparent meanings come together in intricate relationship with one another.

It should be understood that the letters at the opening of certain chapters do not have any literal meaning. It seems that a group of misguided men use the implicit verses to mislead people, but never in Islam has one heard of anyone trying to use the *muqatta'ah-letters* to do so.

Some commentators say that the meaning of the word *mutashabih,* (in the verse), refers to the famous story[3] of the Jews who wanted to find an indication of the duration of Islam within the order of the letters, but the Prophet used to read the letters one after the other and so confuse their calculations.

This view is also without substance since, even if the story is true, it is not of sufficient impact nor conviction to be considered as an interpretation of the implicit verses. Whatever the Jews talked, it contained no malice because, even if the religion, *din,* of Islam was for a limited period of time (and, thus, subject to abrogation), their remarks would in no way be a criticism of the purity and reality of Islam considering that all religions revealed by God prior to Islam were for a specific period and open to abrogation. .

Secondly, this view implies that the word *ta'wil* (which may be translated as "interpretation") in the verse refers to a meaning other than the apparent literal meaning and that it is used only as a reference to the implicit verses. This is incorrect, as we shall see in a later chapter dealing with exegesis *ta'wil,* and revelation, *tanzil* (the actual text or letter of the verse) how exegesis in Qur'anic terminology does not refer to one meaning but to several, encompassing such terms as realization, fulfilment, interpretation and explanation.

We shall also discuss how all Qur'anic verses have a specific interpretation, *ta'wil* and not just their explicit and implicit definitions. On examination, the words of the explicit verses *(ayat muhkamah),* are seen to describe the phrase "They are the source of the Book,"

Marfat.com

meaning that the explicit verses include the most important subjects of the Book, and the theme of the rest of the verses is secondary and dependent upon them.

This implies that the real point intended to be conveyed by the implicit verses refers back to the explicit verses. Thus, the meanings of the implicit are illuminated by referring back to the source (or explicit) verses.

Thus we are left with no verses which have no obvious indication as to their true meaning; they are either immediately clear by virtue of their being in the class of explicit verses or, in the case of the implicit, made clear by the other explicit verses. As for the *muqatta'ah*-letters at the beginning of the *chapters,* they do not have any apparent meaning since they are not words in the normal sense and possess no meaning comprehensible to man; thus, they are outside of the classification of explicit and implicit.

Again, we would refer the reader to an examination of the following verse in order to emphasize the truth of our view : *"And so why do they not reflect upon the Qur'an or are there locks upon their hearts."* And, likewise, the verse,' *"and why do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, if it were from other than God they would have found much inconsistency in it."*

The Commentary of the Imams of the Prophet's Family Concerning the Explicit and the Implicit Verses

It is made clear from the different commentaries of the Imams that there is always a way to discover the real meaning an.[1] aim of the implicit verses. Each verse, even if its meaning is not apparent, can be explained by reference to other verses. Thus the real meaning of the implicit verses can be found in relation to the explicit verses.

For instance, the verse *" The Beneficent, One who is established on the throne,"* [XX : 5] and again the verse, *"And your Lord came,"* [LXXXIX : 22] appear to ascribe bodily characteristics to God, but when compared with the verse, *"Nothing is as His likeness,"* [XLII : 11] it becomes clear that the "sitting" on the throne or the "coming" of God has a meaning other than a physical one. The Prophet, describing the Qur'an, says

> *In truth the Qur'an was not revealed so that one part may contradict the other but rather was revealed so that one part may verify the other. So that what you understand of it then act accordingly and that which is unclear for you then simply believe it.*[4]

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, said the one part of the Qur'an bears witness to another and one part clarifies the others. The sixth Imam said the explicit verse is that which one acts in accordance with, and the implicit is that which is unclear only for the man who is ignorant of its real meaning.[6]

From these narrations, we may conclude that the question of explicit and implicit is relative; it is possible that a verse may seem explicit to one person and implicit to anothr. It is said of the eighth Imam that He considered, *" the person who refers to the implicit* mutashabih, *verses in the Qur'an to the corresponding clarifying explicit verses,"* as having *"found guidance to the right path."*

Marfat.com

He is also reported to have said that,

In truth in our traditions are recorded implicit verses like the explicit of the Qur'an, so refer the implicit to its corresponding explicit verse, or tradition, and do not follow the implicit and go astray.[7]

Thus it is clear from the traditions and, in particular, the last tradition, that the implicit verse is one which does not contain a clear meaning without reference to the explicit verse, and not that there exists no means to understand it.

The Qur'an Possesses Revelation and Exegesis

We shall discuss the word, exegesis, *ta'wil,* in relation to three Qur'anic verses. Firstly, in the verses concerning the implicit *mutashabih* and the explicit verses :

But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, in truth, that which is allegorical talking dissension by seeking to explain it. None knows its explanation except God [III : 7]

Secondly, the verses,

In truth we have brought them a scripture which we expound with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. Do they await anything but the fulfilment of it.

(Here the word *ta'wil* is used connoting the appearance or clarification of meaning).

On the day when the fulfilment of it comes, those who are forgetful of it will say : the messenger of our Lord brought the truth [VII : 52-53].

Thirdly, the verse

And this Qur'an is not such as could ever be invented . . . but they denied that, the knowledge of which they could not encompass and the interpretation (ta'wil) of which had not yet come to them. Even so it was that those before them deny. Then see what was the consequence in the wrongdoers. [X : 37-39].

In conclusion, we should note that the word exegesis *ta'wil* comes from the word *awl,* meaning a return. As such, *ta'wil* indicates that particular meaning towards which the verse is directed. The meaning of revelation *tanzil,* as opposed to *ta'wil,* is clear or according to the obvious meaning of the, words as they were revealed.

The Meaning of Exegesis, According to the Commentators and Scholar's

There is considerable disgreement as to the meaning of exegesis, *ta'wil,* and it is possible to count more than ten different views. There are, however, two views which have gained general acceptance. The first is that of the early generation of scholars who used the word exegesis, *ta'wil* as a synonyn for commentary, or *tafsir.*

According to this view, all Qur'anic verses are open to *ta'wil* although according to the verse, *"nobody knows its interpretation (ta'wil) except God," it* is the implicit verses whose interpretation *(ta'wil)* is known only to God. For this reason, a number of the early scholars

Marfat.com

said that the implicit verses are those with *muqatta'ah-letters* at the beginning of the chapter since they are the only verses in the Qur'an whose meaning is not known to everyone.

This interpretation has been demonstrated in the previous section as being incorrect, a view which is shared by certain of the late scholars. They argued that since there is a way of finding out the meaning of any verse, particularly since the *muqattah-letters* are obviously not in the same classification as the implicit verses then the distinction between the two *(muqatta'ah* and implicit, *mutashabih)* is clear.

Secondly, the view of the later scholars is that exegesis refers to the meaning of a verse beyond its literal meaning and that not all verses have exegesis; rather only the implicit, whose ultimate meaning is known only to God. The verses in question here are those which refer to the human qualities of coming, going, sitting, satisfaction, anger and sorrow apparently attributed to God and, also, those verses which apparently ascribe faults to the messengers and Prophet of God (when in reality they are infallible).

The view that the word exegesis refers to a meaning other than the apparent one has become quite accepted. Moreover, within the divergence of opinion amongst scholars, exegesis has come to mean "to transfer" the apparent meaning of a verse to a different meaning by means of a proof called *ta'wil;* this method is not without obvious inconsistencies.[8].

Although this view has gained considerable acceptance, it is incorrect and cannot be applied to the Qur'anic verses for the following reasons. Firstly, the verses,

Do they await anything but the fulfilment of it [VII : 53]

and,

but they denied that, the knowledge of which they could not encompass and the interpretation of which had not yet come to them [X : 39]

indicate that the whole Qur'an has exegesis, not just the implicit verses as claimed by this group of scholars.

Secondly, implied in this view is that there are Qur'anic verses whose real meaning is ambiguous and hidden from the people, only God knowing their real meaning. However, a book which declares itself as challenging and excelling in its linguistic brilliance could hardly be described as eloquent if it failed to transmit the meaning of its own words.

Thirdly, if we accept this view, then the validity of the Qur'an comes under question since, according to the verse,

Why do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, if it were from other man God they would have found in it many inconsistencies.

One of the proofs that the Qur'an is not the speech of man is that, despite having been revealed in widely varying and difficult circumstances, there is no inconsistency in it, neither in its literal meaning nor in its inner meaning, and any initial inconsistency disappears upon reflection.

If it is believed that a number of the implicit verses disagree with the sound, or *muhkam,* or explicit, verses this disagreement may be resolved by explaining that what is intended is not the literal meaning but rather another meaning known only to God. However, this explanation will never prove that the Qur'an is "not the speech of man." If by exegesis we change any inconsistency in the explicit, or sound *(muhkam),* verses to another meaning beyond the literal, it is clear that we may also do this for the speech and writing of man.

Fourthly, there is no proof that exegesis indicates a meaning other than the literal one and that, in the Qur'anic verses which mention the word exegesis, the literal meaning is not intended.

On three occasions in the story of Joseph, the interpretation of his dream[9] is called *ta'wil* (exegesis). It is clear that the interpretation of a dream is not fundamentally different from the actual appearance of the dream; rather, it is the interpretation of what is portrayed in a particular form in the dream. Thus Joseph saw his father, mother and brother falling to the ground in the form of the sun, the moon and the stars.

Likewise, the king of Egypt saw the seven-year drought in the form of seven lean cows eating the seven fat cows and also, the seven green ears of corn and the seven dry ears. Similarly, the dreams of Joseph's two fellow-inmates in the prison : one saw himself pouring wine for the king (in the form of the first pressing of wine), while the second saw himself crucified (in the form of birds eating from the bread basket on his head).[10]

The dream of the king of Egypt is related in the same chapter, verse 43 and its interpretation, from Joseph, in verses 47-49 when he says,

> *you will sow seven years as usual, but whatever you reap leave it in the ear, all except a little which you will eat. Then after that will come a year when people will have plenteous crops and then they will press (meaning wine and oil).*

The dream of Joseph's fellow-inmates in the prison occurs in verse 36 of the same chapter. One of the two young men says to Joseph, *"I dreamt that I was carrying upon my head bread which the birds were eating."*

The interpretation of the dream is related by Joseph in verse 41

> *O my two fellow-prisoners.! As for one of you he will pour cut wine for his Lord to drink and as for the other, he will be crucified so that the birds will fat from his head.*

In a similar fashion, God relates the story of Moses and Khidr in the chapter "The Cave" [XVIII : 71-82]. Khidr made a hole in the boats; thereafter, killed a boy and, finally, straightened a leaning wall. After each event, Moses protested and Khidr explained the meaning and reality of each action which he had carried out on the orders of God; this he referred to as *ta'wil.*

Thus it is clear that the reality of the event and the dream-picture which portrayed the event-to-be are basically the same : the *ta'wil,* or interpretation, does not have a meaning other than the apparent one.

Marfat.com

Likewise God says, talking about weights and measures, *"Fill the measure when you measure and weigh with a right balance, that is proper and better in the end,"* (that is, more fitting in the final determination of the Day of Reckoning) [XVII : 35].

It is clear that the word *ta'wil* used here in respect to the measuring and weighing refers to fair dealing in business practices. Thus the *ta'wil* used in this way is not different from the literal meaning of the words "measuring" and "weighing"; it merely deepens and extends the significance of the mundane to include a spiritual dimension.

This spiritual dimension is of significance for the believer who has in mind the reckoning of the final day together with his own day-to-day reckoning in the affairs of trade.

In another verse God again uses the word *ta'wil,*

> *and if you have any dispute concerning any matter, refer it to God and the messenger . . . that is better and more fting in the end* [IV : 59].

It is clear that the meaning of *ta'wil* and the referring of the dispute to God and His messenger is to establish the unity of Society and to show how each action or event in a community has a spiritual significance.

Thus, the *ta'wil* refers to a tangible ordinary reality and is not in opposition to the actual text in the verses which refers to the dispute.

In all, there are sixteen occasions in the Qur'an in which the word *ta'wil* is used but on no occasion does it have a meaning other than the literal text. We may say, therefore, that the word *ta'wil* is used to extend the idea expressed to include a further meaning which, (as will be made clear in the next section), is still in accordance with the actual word *ta'wil* occurring in the verse.

Thus, in the light of these examples, there is no reason why we should take the word *ta'wil* in the verse about the explicit *muhkam,* and implicit, *mutashabih,* meanings to indicate *"a meaning basically other than the apparent meaning."*

The Meaning of Exegesis in the Tradition of the Qur'anic Science

What is apparent from the verses in which the word *ta'wil* occurs is that *ta'wil* does not indicate a literal meaning. It is clear that the actual words of the dream described in chapter XII, "Joseph", do not in themselves contain the literal interpretation of the dream; the meaning of the dream becomes clear from the interpretation.

And, likewise, in the story of Moses and Khidr, the actual words of the story are not the same as the interpretation which Khidr gave Moses. Moreover, in the verse,

> *fill the measure when you measure and weigh with a right balance*

the language does not in itself indicate the particular economic conditions which we are intended to understand. Again, in the verse

Marfat.com

And if you have a dispute concerning any matter then refer it to God and the messenger

there is no immediate literal indication that what is meant is the Unity of Islam.

Thus, although the words indicate something not essentially different from their literal meaning, there is, nevertheless, in all the verses the same shifting of perspective, namely, from the actual words to the intended meaning.

Moreover, all the meanings are based on a real situation, an actual physical event. In the case of the dream, the interpretation has an external reality which appeals before its actual occurrence in a special form to the dreamer. Likewise, in the story of Moses and Khidr, the interpretation that the latter gives is, in fact, a reality which is to take place as a result of his action.

Therefore, the interpretation of the event is rooted in the event. In the verse which orders man to fair dealing and measuring, the aspect of the verse is a reality which appears as a social benefit. Thus the order is connected to the effect it is supposed to have in the raising up of society and, in particular, of trade. In the verse concerning referral of the dispute to God and His messenger, the meaning is again fixed to reality, namely, the spiritualization of the life of the community.

To conclude, we may say that interpretation of each verse springs from a reality; the interpretation looks forward to or, in a subtle way, actually brings into being the reality it is 'talking about. Thus its meaning both contains and springs from a future or ulterior event. Just as the interpreter makes the interpretation meaningful, so the manifestation of the interpretation is already a reality for the interpreter.

The idea is also present in the form of the Qur'an since this sacred book has as its source realities and meanings other than the material and physical or, we may say, beyond the sensory level. Thus it expresses meanings which are more expansive than those contained in the words and phrases used by man in the material world. Although these realities and meanings are not contained in the literal explanation of man, the Qur'an uses the same language to inform man of the unseen and to produce correct belief and good action.

Thus, through belief in the unseen, in the last day and in the meeting with God, man adopts a system of morals and a quality of character which allows him to achieve happiness and well-being. In this way the Qur'an produces a spiritual effect which, in turn, produces a physical social change, the importance of which will become clear on the Day of Resurrection and the meeting with God.

There is further reference to this same theme when God says in chapter XLIII : 2-4,

By the Book which makes plain. Take heed, we have appointed it a lecture in Arabic that perhaps you will understand. And indeed the source of the Book which we possess, it is indeed sublime, decisive.

It is sublime, in that the ordinary understanding cannot fully comprehend it, and decisive in that it cannot be faulted.

Marfat.com

The relationship of the last part of the verse to the meaning of exegesis *ta'wil,* (as we have discussed above) is clear. It says, in particular, that *"perhaps you will understand," implying* that one may or may not understand it; it does not imply that one will understand the book fully, merely by studying it.

As we have seen in the verse concerning the explicit *muhkam,* and the implicit *mutashabih,* knowledge of exegesis *ta'wil,* is particular to God; moreover, when in this same verse corrupt men are blamed for following the implicit *mutashabih.* verses and for intending to sow dissension and conflict by searching for an exegesis, *ta'wil.* or special interpretation, it does not state that they necessarily find it.

The exegesis of the Qur'an is a reality, or several realities, which are to be found in the Source Book, the Book of Decrees with God; the Source Book is part of the unseen and far from the reach of corrupters. The same idea is treated again in chapter LVI : 75-80 when God says,

> *Indeed I swear by the places of the Stars-And truly that is surely a tremendous oath if you but knew —that this is indeed a noble Qur'an, in a book kept hidden, which none touch except the purified, a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.*

It is clear that these verses establish for the Qur'an two aspects, namely the position of the hidden book protected from being touched and the aspect of revelation which is understandable by the people. What is of particular interest to us in this verse is the phrase of exception, *"except the purified."* According to this phrase, we can arrive at an understanding of the reality of the exegesis of the Quran.

This positive view of man's capability to understand the Qur'an does not conflict with the negation of the verse. *"And no one knows its ta'wil except God."* Since the comparison of the two verses produces a whole which is independent and harmonious. Thus we understand that God is alone in understanding these realities, yet one may come to know these truths by His leave and teaching.

Knowledge of the unseen is, according to many verses, the special domain of God but in chapter LXXll : 26-27, those who are worthy are excepted from tins : *"He is the knower of the unseen and He reveals to no one His secret, except to even messenger whom He has chosen."* Again we conclude that knowledge of the unseen is particular to God and that it is fitting for no one except Him and for those he gives leave to.

Thus the purified amongst men take the verse concerning the "purified ones" as leave to enter into contact with the reality of the Quran. In a similar way we read in chapter XXXIII.33, *"God's wish is but to remove uncleanliness from you. O people of (he Household, and clean you with a thorough cleaning." This* verse was revealed, (according to a sound tradition with an unbroken chain of transmission), specifically with regard to the family of the Prophet.

The Existence of Abrogating and Abrogated Verses in the Qur'an

Among the verses in the Qur'an containing orders or laws, there are verses that abrogate

Marfat.com

verses previously revealed and acted upon. These abrogating verses are called *nasikh* and those whose validity they terminate are called *mansukh*.

For example, at the beginning of the Prophet's mission. Muslims were ordered to cultivate peace and friendship with the people of the Book. *"Forgive and be indulgent (towards them) until God gives command."* [11 : 109]. Some time later, fighting was allowed and the order to establish peace was abrogated :

> *Fight against such as those who have been given the Book but who believe not in God nor the last day, and do not forbid that which God has forbidden by His messenger. and follow not the religion of truth* [XI : 29].

The common notion of abrogation, that is, a cancelling of one law of code by another, is based on the idea that a new law is needed because of a mistake or shortcoming in the previous one. It is clearly inappropriate to ascribe a mistake in law-making to God. Who is perfect, and whose creation admits or no flaws.

However, in the Qur'an, the abrogating verses mark the end of the validity of the abrogated verses because their heed and effect was of a temporary or limited nature. In time the new law appears and announces the end of the validity of the earlier law. Considering that the Qur'an was revealed over a period of twenty-three years in ever-changing circumstances, it is not difficult to imagine the necessity of which laws.

It is in this light that we should regard the wisdom of abrogation within the Qur'an :

> *And when we put a revelation in place of (another) revelation and God knows best what He reveals —they say : you are just inventing it. Most of them do not know. Say : The Holy Spirit (Gabriel) has revealed it from your hand with truth and as a guidance and good news for those who have surrendered (to God)* [XVI : 101 -102].

Applicability and Validity of the Qur'an

Bearing in mind that the Qur'an is valid for all times, the verses revealed in special circumstances informing Muslims of their specific duties are also valid for those who, in future, experience the same circumstances. Similarly, those verses which praise or reproach certain qualities, and promise reward or threaten punishment accordingly, are applicable to all ages and places. Thus the meaning of a verse is not limited to the circumstances or the times of its revelation.

Similar circumstances occurring subsequent to the revelation of a verse are to be followed; this is known in Qur'anic Science as *jary*, or applicability. The fifth Imam said, *"were a verse after its revelation to pass away with the passing away of that people, then nothing would have remained of the Qur'an."* As long as the heavens and the earth exist, there are verses for every people, wherever they be, which they may read and act upon for the benefit or reject at their loss.[10]

Qur'anic Commentary : Its Advent and Development

Commentary on the words and expressions used in the Qur'an began at the time of the first

Marfat.com

revelation. The Prophet himself undertook the teaching of the Qur'an and the explanation of its meanings and intent.

Thus in chapter XVI : 44 God says, *"And we nave revealed to you the Remembrance that you may explain to mankind that which has been revealed for them." And* He says in LXII : 2, *"He it is Who has sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite to them His revelations and to make them grow and to teach them the Scriptures and wisdom."*

At the time of the Prophet a group of men, on his orders, were instructed to read, record and learn the Qur'an by heart. When the Prophet's companions passed away, other Muslims took over the responsibility of learning and teaching the Qur'an; and so it has continued until the present day.

The Science of Qur'anic Commentary and the Different Groups of Commentators

After the death of the Prophet a group of his companions, including Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, 'Abd Allah ibn .. al-Zubayr, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, Anas, Abu Hurayrah, Abu Musa, and, above all, the famous 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, were occupied with the Science of Commentary. Just as they had heard the Prophet explaining the meanings of the verses, they would transmit it orally to other trustworthy persons.

The traditions specifically concerned with the subject of Qur'anic verses number over two hundred and forty; many were transmitted through weak chains of transmission and the texts of some have been rejected as incorrect or forged. Sometimes the transmission would include commentaries based on personal judgements rather than on a narration of the actual sayings, *hadiths,* from the Prophet.

The later Sunni commentators considered this kind of commentary as part of the body of Sayings of The Prophet, since the companions were learned in the science of Qur'anic commentary. They argued that these companions had aquired their knowledge of this science from the Prophet himself and that it was unlikely they would say anything which they themselves had invented.

There is, however, no absolute proof for their reasoning. A large proportion of these sayings, or traditions, about the reasons and historical circumstances of the revelation of verses do not possess an acceptable chain of narration. It should be noted that many of the narrators like Ka'b al-Akhbar, were learned companions who had belonged to the Jewish faith before accepting Islam.

Moreover, it should not be overlooked that Ibn 'Abbas usually expressed the meanings of verses in poetry. In one of his narrations over two hundred questions of Nafi' ibn al-Azraq are replied to in the form of poetry; al-Suyuti in his book, *al-Itqan,* related one hundred and ninety of these questions.

It is evident, therefore, that many of the narrations made by the commentators amongst the companions cannot be counted as actual narrations from the Prophet himself; therefore, such additional material related by the companions must be rejected.

Marfat.com

The second group of commentators were the companions of the followers *(tabi'un),* who were the students of the companions. Amongst them we find Mujahid, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, 'Ikrimah and Dahhak. Also from this group were Hasan al-Basri, Ata' ibn Abi Rabah, 'Ata' ibn Abi Muslim, Abu al-'Aliyah, Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi, Qatadah, 'Atiyah, Zayd ibn Aslam, Ta'us al-Yamani.[11]

The third group were comprised of the students of the second group, namely, Rabi 'ibn Anas, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam, Abu Salih al-Kalbi and others.[12] The *tabi'un* sometimes narrated the commentary on a verse as a tradition of the Prophet or of the companions and, sometimes, they explained its meaning without attributing a narrator to the source, this they did especially when there was any doubt as to the identity of the narrator. The later commentators treat these narrations as traditions of the Prophet, but count them as *mawquf* in their science of the levels of *hadiths* (that is as a tradition whose chain of narration does not reach back to the Prophet).

The fourth group comprised the first compiler of commentaries, like Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah,[13] Waki ibn al-Jarrah, Shu'bah al-Hajjaj and 'Abd ibn Humayd; others from this group include Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, the author of the famous Qur'anic Commentary.[14]

This group recorded the sayings of the companions and the followers of the companions with a chain of narrators in their works of commentary; they avoided expressing personal opinions except, perhaps, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari who sometimes expressed his views by indicating his preference when discussing two similar traditions. The basis of the work of later groups may be traced to this group.

The fifth group omitted the chain of narrators in their writings and contented themselves with a simple relation of the text of the traditions. Some scholars regard these commentators as the source of varying views in the commentaries by connecting many traditions to a companion or a follower without verifying their validity or mentioning their chain of narration. Consequently, confusion has arisen allowing many false traditions to enter the body of traditions, thus undermining the reputation of this section of *hadith* literature.

Careful examination of the chains of transmission of the traditions leaves one in doubt as to the extent of the deceitful additions and false testimonies. Many conflicting traditions can be traced to one companion or follower and many traditions, which are complete fabrications, may be found amongst this body of narrations.

Thus reasons for the revelation of a particular verse, including the abrogating and abrogated verses, do not seem to accord with the actual order of the verses. No more than one or two of the traditions are found to be acceptable when submitted to such an examination.

It is for this reason that Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who himself was born before this generation of narrators, said, *"Three things have no sound base: military virtues, bloody battles and the traditions pertaining to Qur'anic commentary."* Imam al-Shafi'i relates that only about one hundred traditions from Ibn 'Abbas have been confirmed as valid.

The sixth group consists of those commentators who appeared after the growth and

Marfat.com

development of the various Islamic Sciences and each undertook the study of Qur'anic commentary according to his specialization : al-Zajjaj studied the subject from the grammatical point of view; al-Wahidi and Abu Hayyan[15] investigated the verses by studying the inflection of the verbs, the vowels and the diacritical points.

There is also commentary on the rhetoric and eloquence of the verses by al-Zamakhshari[16] in his work entitled *al-Kashshaf.* There is a theological discussion in the "Grand Commentary" of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi.[17] The gnosis of Ibn al-Arabi and 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani[18] treated in their commentaries. Other narrators, like al-Tha'labi, record the history of transmission of the traditions[19]. Some commentators, among them al-Qurtubi,[20] concentrate on aspects of *fiqh* (jurisprudence).

There also exists a number of commentaries composed of many of these sciences, such as *Ruh al-bayan* by Shaykh Isma'il Haqqi,[21] *Ruh al-ma'ani* by Shihab al Din Mahmud al-Alusi al-Baghdadi[22] *Ghard'ib al-Qur'an* by Nizam al-Din al-Nisaburi.[23] This group rendered a great service to the Science of Qur'anic commentary in that it brought the Science out of a state of stagnation (characteristic of the fifth group before it), and developed it into a Science of precise investigation and theory.

However, if one were to examine closely the precision of this group's research, one would see that much of its Qur'anic commentary imposes its theories onto the Qur'an rather than allowing the content of the verses to speak for themselves.

The Methods Used by the Shi'ite Commentators and their Different Groupings

All the groups mentioned above are Sunni commentators. Their method, used in the earliest commentaries of this period, was based on *ijtihad,* that is, the reports of the companions and the followers of the companions were examined according to certain rules in order to reach an acceptable understanding of the text. This resulted in varying opinions amongst those making *ijtihad* and caused disorder, contradiction and, even, fabrication to enter into the body of the traditions.

The method employed by the Shi'ite commentators, however, was different, with the result that the patterning of the groups was also different. The Shi'ite commentators in their study of a verse of the Qur'an, viewed the explanation given by the Prophet as proof of the meaning of the verse, they did not accept the saying of the companions, or the followers, as indisputable proof that the tradition was from the Prophet.

The Shi'ite commentators only recognized as valid an unbroken chain of narration from the Prophet and through members of his family. Accordingly, in using and transmitting the verses concerning Qur'anic commentary, they restricted themselves to the use of traditions transmitted by the Prophet and by the Imams of the Prophet's family. This has given rise to the following groups :

The first group comprises those who have learned these traditions from the Prophet and from the Imams of the Prophet's family, studying and recording them according to their own method but not in any particular order. Among them we may mention such scholars as

Zararah, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Ma'ruf and Jarir who were companions ot the fifth and sixth Imams.[24]

The second group comprises the first compilers of the commentaries, like Furat ibn Ibrahim al-Kufi, Abu Hamzah al-Thumali, Muhammad al-'Ayyashi, Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi and al-Nu'mani who lived between the second and fourth centuries after *Hijrah*.[25] The method of this group was similar to that of the fourth Sunni group of Commentators.

Thus, they avoided any kind of *ijtihad* or passing of judgement. We should remember that the Imams of the Prophet's family were living amongst Muslims and available for questioning (on matters of commentary, for example) for a period of almost three hundred years. Thus the first groups were not divided chronologically but rather according to their relationship with the Imams.

There are very few who recorded the tradition without a chain of transmission. As an example, we should mention one of the students of al-'Ayyashi who omitted to record the chains of transmission. It was his work, instead of the original of al-'Ayyashi which came into common use.

The third group comprises masters of various sciences, like al-Sharif al-Radi[26] who provided a commentary concerned with Qur'anic language and Shaykh al-Tusi who wrote a commentary and analysis on metaphysical matters.[27] Included, too, is Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi's philosophic work,[28] al-Maybudi al-Kunabadi's gnostic commentary[29] and 'Abd Ali al-Huwayzi's commentary *Nur al-thaqalayn*.[30] Hashim al-Bahrani composed the commentary *al-Burhan*[31] and al-Fayd al-Kashani compiled the work known as *al-Safi*.[32]

There were others who brought together many different themes to their commentaries, like Shaykh al-Tabaisi who in his *Majma' al-bayan*[33] researches different fields of language, grammar, Qur'an recitation, gnosis of death, after-life and paradise, and knowledge of the traditions.

How Does the Qur'an Lend itself to Interpretation?

The answer to this question is contained in the previous section where we discussed the eternal validity of the Qur'an : it speaks to, instructs and guides man now as it did in the past. As we have seen, the whole text of the Qur'an is a challenge to mankind and particularly to the enemies of Islam in that the Qur'an itself is proof of its own argument; it announces itself as a light, an illumination and an explanation of all things.

Thus a document which states and demonstrates that it is self-illuminating, hardly needs others to illuminate it. As proof that it is not the speech of man, the Qur'an says that it is a harmonious speech, without the slightest inconsistency and any seeming inconsistency may be removed through reflection on the Qar'an itself. If it were not the word of God, the Qur'an would not be as clear as it is.

Moreover, if such speed needed something or someone else to explain its meaning and purpose, it would neither be the proof nor the absolute authority that it is so obviously is.

Marfat.com

This clarity is absolute, even if a seemingly contradictory passage becomes the object of dispute; it could be understood by cross-reference to the text of the Qur'an.

For instance, at the time of the Prophet, such matters could be referred to him since his knowledge of the Qur'an was perfect and he did not need to refer to other verses for clarification. Those who insisted on disagreeing, or disbelieving in the Prophet's fallibility, were not satisfied.

Therefore, commentaries which solve problems of interpretation by quoting the commentaries of the Prophet, without giving proofs from other Qur'anic verses, are useful only for those who believe in Prophethood and the Prophet's infallibility. These people do not go unmentioned in the Qur'an; we are familiar with the following verse.

if it had been from other than God then they would have found many inconsistencies in it.

This is a clear argument against those who would seek for inconsistencies in the Qur'an and find fault with the Prophet.

The Qur'an itself declares that the commentary and explanation of the Prophet is valid while the Prophet himself has confirmed the validity of the Qur'anic commentary of the Imams. We may summarize this by saying that in the Qur'an some verses may be explained by comparison with other verses and some by using the instructions and teachings of the Prophet and the Imams. The latter commentaries are not, of course, different from the explanation which is produced by comparing and analysing different verses.

Conclusion

There are three roads open to us when making commentary upon the Qur'an. Firstly, by using knowledge that one already possesses,

Secondly, with the help of the sayings of the Prophet or Imams.

Thirdly, by using a combination of methods : by reflection and analysis, or by allowing the verse to become clarified by comparing it to other verses, or by use of the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams, whenever possible.

The third way is the one which we have outlined in the last section and it is this way which the Prophet himself and the Imams of his family indicate in their teachings.[34] As we have seen, the Prophet said that, *"The verses were revealed to confirm each other."* and Imam 'Ali said that *"One part of the Qur'an explains another and one part witnesses to the other."*

It is, moreover, clear that this method of commentary is other than that warned against by the Prophet when he said, *"Whoever makes a commentary upon the Qur'an according to his own opinion prepares for himself a place in the Fire."*[35] This method uses the Qur'an to explain itself and is not based merely on explanation arising from whim or fancy.

The first method is unacceptable and exemplifies commentary based on opinion, except in cases where it agrees with the third method. The second method is the one used by the early scholars and for many centuries afterwards, and is still in use amongst both Sunni and

Marfat.com

Shi'ite scholars of the traditions of the Prophet. This method is limited, considering the vast nature of the subject and the countless number of questions, (both general and particular), arising from over six thousand verses.

Where, one asks, is the answer to such questions? Where is the solution to so many intricate and perplexing questions? Or, should we refer to the body of tradition concerning the verses?

Let us not forget that the total number of traditions of the Prophet accepted and transmitted by the Sunni scholars number no more than two hundred and fifty; we should also remember that many of them are weak and some even totally unacceptable. It is true that the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams transmitted by the Shi'ite scholars number a thousand and that amongst them are to be found a considerable number which are fully trustworthy.

Consideration of these traditions is not enough, however, given the countless questions which arise and the many Qur'anic verses that are not even mentioned In this body of traditions. Should one refer in such matters to the appropriate verses?

As we have explained, this is not acceptable according to the method under consideration here. Should one simply abstain from investigation and imagine that the need for knowledge is non-existent? In this case, what is one to understand by the verse,

And we reveal the Book to you as an exposition of all things, [XVI : 89].

which is clear proof that the Qur'an itself is not a mystery but rather explains, among other things, *itself,* by its own light.

Chapter IV : 82 contains the injunction, *"Will they not ponder on the Qur'an."* Similarly, in chapters XLVII : 24 and XXXVIII : 29 *"(This book) is a Book that we have revealed to you, full of blessing, that you may ponder its revelation and the men of understanding may refect."* Likewise in Chapter XXIII : 68, *"Have they not pondered the word, or has something come to them which did not Come to their forefathers."*

What are we intended to understand by these verses? How are we to act in the light of the totally trustworthy traditions of the Prophet and the Imams in which they advise us to refer to the Qur'an itself in case of problems of interpretation and discordance of opinion? According to many well known traditions of the Prophet, transmitted in unbroken chains of transmission, one is obliged to refer the tradition to the Book of God; if the tradition is in accordance with the Book, then it is accepted and used in commentary and, if in disagreement, it is rejected.

It is clear that the meaning of these traditions is applicable when one discovers through the Science of Commentary that the inner meaning of one verse is contrary to what is contained in another verse. In this case, one must reject what one has discovered through the study of commentaries.

These traditions are the best proof that the Qur'an, like speech or writing in general,

has meaning and will always have meaning, even when studied independently of the traditions. Thus it is the duty of the commentators to take into account and reflect upon the traditions of the Prophet and Imams concerning Qur'anic verses but only use those traditions which are in accordance with the verse under scrutiny.

An Example of Commentary on the Qur'an with the Aid of the Qur'an

On four occasions in the Qur'an God says *"Allah is the creator of all beings,"* [XXXIX : 62]. The meaning is clear on each occasion; God is stating that everything man may possibly imagine in the world has been created by him and is sustained by Him. However, one should not ignore the fact that in hundreds of verses the Qur'an affirms the existence of cause and effect and attributes the action of every doer to the immediate cause.

Thus the effect of the burning of fire is a direct result of the fire itself, the growing of plants, the action of the plants, the falling rain caused by the state of the sky; the actions which man chooses to undertake are, according to the Qur'an, the result (and consequent responsibility) of man. We may also say that the doer of any action is the one responsible for that action, but God is the giver of existence, the Creator of deeds and the owner of deeds.

Keeping in mind this general relationship between the Creator and His creation, we may read in chapter XXXII : 7 *"Who made all things beautiful and good which We created."* When we join this verse to the previous one we see that beauty and goodness necessarily accompany His creation and so anything which has existence in the cosmos is also good and beautiful.

We should not forget, however, that in many verses, the Qur'an affirms the existence of good and its opposite, evil, useful things and harmful things, beauty and ugliness; and it enumerates many bad actions, wrong doers and bad events.

These are all, however, negative aspects of the human character and are mentioned as a measure of man, they are relative and not intended as proof that the creation of man is basically bad. For example, the snake or the serpent is harmful but only to man and animals who suffer the effects of its sting; to stones and earth it is harmless. Bitter taste and foul smell are unpleasant, but only to the human sense of taste and smell, not to all animals. Certain behaviour may at times appear wrong but this is often the result of observing human behaviour in relation to one particular society of men; in another society or circumstance it may not be considered wrong.

Indeed, if we dispense for a moment with those negative aspects of man's character which are secondary or relative to the miracle and perfection of His creation, we witness only the beautiful symmetry and proportion of the cosmos in its entirety and the amazing beneficence of the Creator. Words re not able to describe this beauty since they themselves are part of this world of beauty.

In reality the above-mentioned verses awake man to an awareness of the relative nature of beauty and ugliness : they invite him to a comprehension of absolute beauty and prepare him for an understanding of creation as a whole. In fact, there are Qur'anic verses which explain or comment upon the different aspects of creation in the universe, either as isolated

Marfat.com

individual examples or as groupings and classes. Each creation, whether a single manifestation or joined to a larger structure and patterning, is a sign and indication of God. Whichever way we regard creation, it all points to the existence of God.

This way of understanding or seeing the universe and its signs, leads to an appreciation of the stupendous beauty which encircles the whole world and allows us to realize that it is His beauty, emanating from the domain of His power, and made visible in the signs of the skies and the earth. Each aspect of the cosmos lends beauty and dimension to everything surrounding it, yet at the same time it is insignificant in relation to the whole.

The Qur'an affirms in other verses that perfection and beauty manifest themselves from the domain of his power; thus He says in chapter XL : 65 *"He is the Living One. There is no god save Him,"* and in 11:165 *". . . power belongs completely to God,"* and in IV: 139, *"Truly all power belongs to God."* and *"He is the knower, the All-Powerful."* On another occasion we read *"And He is the Hearer, the Seer,"* and in XX : 8, *"Allah! There is no god save Him. His are the most beautiful names."*

We realize from these verses that the beauty which manifests itself in the visible world has its reality in the domain of His power and grandeur. All other beauty, all other power, is illusory or metaphorical of His power.

In affirmation of this explanation, the Qur'an states that the beauty and perfection created by man is limited and temporal but that of God boundless and eternal. God emphasizes that all creation is from Him and under His power. In chapter LIV : 49, *" Truly we have created fiery thing by measure*[3]*'* and in the chapter XV : 21, *"And there is not a thing with its but there are stores of it. And we do not send it down except in appointed measure."*

Careful observation reveals that the Book itself declares its own perfection and beauty, that it encompasses all aspects of creation and the Creator, and that there is no fault or shortcoming in it. Such is the perfection of the Qur'an, which itself is one of the signs of God, that it makes the reader forget himself in rapturous appreciation of its beauty.

This we read in 11:165 *"Those who believe are stauncher in their love of God."* Love, of its very nature, demand the self and the giving over of the self to God. It demands the handing over of one's affairs completely to Him and allowing Him to be one's Lord : *"And Allah is the protecting Friend of the believers,"* [III : 68].

This idea is also contained in 11 : 257 which declares, *"God is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into light,"* and also in VI : 122, *"Is he who was dead and We have raised him to life and set for him a light in which he walks among men . . ."* Likewise, we read in LVIII : 22, *"As for such, He has written faith upon their hearts and has strengthened them with a spirit from Him."*

This spirit, this new life and light, is given by God to the man who perceives reality and truth and who understands the path of happinesss and well-being in society. In another verse in LVII : 28, He explains the effect of such light : *" O you who believe! Be mindful of your*

Marfat.com

duty to God and put faith in His messenger. He will give you two fold of His mercy and will appoint for you a light in which you shall walk."

Again, in another verse, He makes a commentary on "faith in the Prophet" by explaining it as submission and obedience to Him; chapter III : 31, *"Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): If you love God follow me; God will love you."*

The nature of this path is explained in chapter VII : 157,

> *Those who follow the messenger the Prophet, who can neither read nor write, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospels (which are) with them. He will rejoin in them that which is right and forbid them that which is wrong. He will make lawful for them all good things and prohibit for them only the foul; and He will relieve them of their burden and the fetters they used to wear.*

Still more vividly, the path is explained in another verse which is also a commentary on the previous verse [XXX:30],

> *So let your purpose (O Muhammad) for the din (of Islam) as a man by nature upright—the nature of God on which he has created man. There is no altering God's creation. That is the right way or life, but most men to not know . . ."*

The right way of life, or *din* refers to the correct path for society to follow for its well-being and happiness. According to this verse, the way of Islam is also the way desired by the Creator for man.

In other words, the legislative framework given to man by God is the very framework which is appropriate for the creature man. This divine law is in complete harmony with the nature of man, living a life of piety and obedience.

God says in another verse [XCI : 7-8], *"And a soul and Him who perfected it. And inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right."* The Qur'an is the only revealed book which equates the happiness and well-being of man with a pure and sincere way of life.

Moreover, unlike other religions, Islam does not separate worship of God from the actual programme of living; it establishes the word *din* to mean not only religion but also life in general as well, the actual day to day routine of man, both on a personal and social level.

The Qur'an establishes a programme of living which is in accord with the functioning and the reality of the cosmos, and the Qur'an mentions many of the benefits and virtues to be expected by the man of God and the lovers of Truth, including a certainty of faith and tranquillity of the heart.

The Validity of the Commentary of the Prophet and the Imams

From an indication in the Qur'an itself, the commentary of the Prophet and the Imams, (as discussed in the previous sections), is established as being absolutely true. Authentication of the savings of the Prophet and the Imams is clearly established by the existence of fully

trustworthy chains of transmissions. A tradition may not, however, be recognized as totally acceptable if it has been transmitted by one chain of narration only.

The validity of the tradition may be disputed amongst the Muslim Scholars of Commentary : amongst the Sunni's a tradition of a single chain of transmission, classified in their terms as *sahih* (sound), must be accepted and acted upon; among the Shi'ite scholars a tradition with a single undisputed chain of transmission is also accepted as a proof. However, in the laws of the *shari'ah* it is not valid and must be investigated and checked before use as a proof.

REFERENCES

1. See al-Fayd al-Kashani, *al-Safi fi tafsir al-Qur'an,* pp. 38-41; Abba al-Qummi, *Safinat al-bihar,* s.v. "Batn".
2. Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar,* Vol. 1, p.37.
3. Al-'Ayyashi, *Kitab al-tafsir,* Vol. 1, p. 16; al-Qummi, *Tafsir,* beginning of the commentary on *Surat al-Baqarah;* al-Huwayzi. *Tafsir nur al-thaqalayn,* Vol. 1, p.22.
4. Al-'Amili, *at-Durr al-manthur,* Vol. 2. p.8.
5. Al-SharIf al-Radi, Nahj *al-balagnan,* Discourse no. 131.
6. Al-'Ayyashi, *op. cit.,* Vol. 1, p. 162.
7. Ibn Babuyah, '*Uyun akhbar al-Rida,* Vol. 1, p.290.
8. Since explaining the meaning of exegesis (*ta'wil),* and at the same time, recognizing that no one but God knows that *ta'wil* meaning, is self-contradictory, the scholars hi question have put forward this view as a hypothesis rather than as a truth.
9. Joseph's dream is mentioned in the third verse of chapter XII. "Joseph", (when he says to his father : *"O father I saw in a dream eleven stars, the Sun and the Moon making prostration to me")* and its interpretation is related by Joseph in verse 100 : *"Joseph placed his parents on the dais when they arrived from Egypt after years of separation and then his parents and his brother fell down before him prostrate and he said : O my father.! this is the interpretation of ray dream."*
10. Al-'Ayyashi, *op. cit.,* Vol. 1, p. 10.
11. Mujahid, a famous commentator, died 100 or 103 A.H. (al-Nawawi, *Tahdhib al-asma').* Sa'id ibn Jubayr, a pupil of Ibn Abbas, was martyred at the hands of al-Hajjaj in 94 A.H. *(Tahdhib).* 'Ikrimah, a pupil of Sa'id ibn Jubayr, died 104 A.H. *(Tahdhib).* Dahhak was a pupil of 'Ikrimah (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Lisan al-mizan).* Hasan al-Basri, an ascetic and commentator died in 110 A.H. *(Tahdhib).* 'Ata' ibn Abi Muslim was a pupil of Ibn Jubayr and 'Ikrimah and died in 133 A.H. *(Tahdhib).* 'Ata' ibn Abi Rabah, a commentator and jurisprudent, a pupil of Ibn Abbas, died 115 A.H. *(Tahdhib).* Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qarthi, a well known commentator, was a descendant of a Jewish tribe Banu Qurayzah *(Tahdhib).* Qatadah, one of the greatest commentators, was a pupil of Hasan al-Basri and 'Ikrimah, and died in 117 A.H. *(Tahdhib).* 'Atiyah was a *rawi* (transmitter) of Ibn 'Abbas *(Lisan).* Zayd ibn Aslam, a freed slave of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, died 136 A.H. *(Tahdhib).* Ta'us al-Yamani, a great scholar of his time, a pupil of Ibn 'Abbas, died 106 A.H. *(Tahdhib).*

Marfat.com

12. Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd, son of Zayd ibn Aslam, is regarded as a commentator. Abu Salih al-Kalbi, a genealogist and commentator, lived in the second century A.H.

13. Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah of Mecca, belongs to the second group of *tabi'un,* died 198 *(Tahdhib).* Waki ibn al-Jarrah of Kufa, like Sufyan belongs to the second group, died 197 A.H. *(Tahdhib).* To the same group also belongs 'Abd ibn Humayd, died in 160 A.H. *(Tahdhib).*

14. Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (died 310 A.H.) was one of the great Sunni scholars *(Lisan).*

15. Al-Zajjaj, a grammarian, died 310 A.H. (al-Tabrizi, *Rayhanat al-adab).* Al-Wahidi, a grammarian and commentator, died 468 A.H. *(Rayhanah).* Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi, a grammarian, commentator and reciter of the Qur'an, died in Cairo 745 A.H *(Rayhanah).*

16. Al-Zamakhshari, the author of *al-Kashhaf,* died in 538 A.H. (Hajji Khalifah, *Kashf al-zunun).*

17. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, a theologian and commentator, the author of a *tafsir* entitled *Mafatih al-ghayb,* died 606 A.H. *(Kashf al-zunun).*

18. Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani, a famous Sufi, died 720 or 751 A.H. *(Rayhanah).*

19. Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tha'labi, the author of a well known commentary *(tafsir)* on the Qur'an, died 426 or 427 A.H. *(Rayhanah).*

20. Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abi Bakr al-Qurtubi died in 668 A.H, *(Rayhanah).*

21. Written by Isma'il Haqqi (died 1137 A.H., *Dhayl kashf al-zunun).*

22. Written by Shihab al-Din Mahmud al-Alusi (died 1270 A.H., *Dhayl kashf al-zunun).*

23. Al-Nisaburi died 728 A.H. *(Dhayl kashf al-zunun).*

24. Zararah ibn A'yun and Muhammad ibn Muslim were special companions of Imam Baqir and Sadiq. Ma'ruf ibn Kharbudh as well as Jarir were special companions of Imam Sadiq.

25. Furat ibn Ibrahim al-Kufi, known for his commentary on the Qur'an; was one of the teachers of 'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi *(Rayhanah).* Abu Hamzah al-Thumali was a special companion of Imam Sajjad and Imam Baqir *(Rayhanah).* Muhammad ibn Mas'ud al-'Ayyashi al-Kufi al Samarqandi was one of the great Shi'ite scholars who lived in the second half of the third century A.H. *(Rayhanch).* 'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi, who lived at the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century A.H., was one of the great teachers of Shi'ite tradition. Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Nu'mani, a student of al-Kulayni, lived at the beginning of the fourth century A.H. *(Rayhanah).*

26. Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Musawi al-Sharif al-Radi (died in 404 or 406 A.H.), a great Shi'ite scholar, known for his compilation *Nahj al-balaghah (Rayhanah).*

27. Shaykh al-Ta'ifah Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi, the author of *al-Tahdib* and *al-Istibsar,* the well known canonical books of the Shi'ah. He died in 460 A.H. *(Rayhanah).*

28. Sadr al-Din Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Shirazi, a famous philosopher, the author of *Asrar al-ayat* and *Majmu'at al-tafasir,* died in 1050 A.H. (Muhammad Baqir al-Khwansari, *Rawqat al-jannat,* Vol. 4, pp. 120-122).

29. Rashid al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-May budi, the author of *Kashf al-asrar,* lived in the sixth century A.H.

30. Abd Ali al-Huwayzi al-Shirazi died in 1112 A.H. *(Rayhanah).*
31. Hashim al-Bahrani died in 1107 A.H. *(Rayhanah).*
32. Muhammad Muhsin ibn al-Murtada al-Fayd al-Kashani, the author of *al-Safi* and *al-Asfa,* died in 1091 A.H. *(Rayhanah).*
33. Al-Fadl ibn al-Hasan al-Tabarsi died in 548 A.H. *(Rayhanah).*
34. See the beginning of al-'Ayyashi's, *Kitab al-tafsir,* al-Fayd al-Kashani's *al-Safi,* al-Bahram's *al-Burhan* and al-Majlisi's *Bihar al-anwar.*
35. Al-Majlisi, *ibid.,* Vol. 1. p. 137 (chapter on *ikhtilaf al-akhbar).*

Marfat.com

4

The Revelation of the Qur'an

General Beliefs of Muslims Concerning the Revelation of the Qur'an

More than any other revealed book, especially the Torah and the New Testament, the Qur'an describes the details of the revelation, the transmittance and even accounts of the experience of the revelation. The general belief of Muslims concerning the revelation, based on the Qur'an, is that the text of the Qur'an is the actual speech of God transmitted to the Prophet by one of His chosen angels.

The name of this angel, or heavenly being, is Gabriel or the Faithful Spirit. He transmitted the word of God over a period of twenty-three years to the Prophet. He would bring the divine instructions to the Prophet, who would relate them faithfully to the people using the same words in the form of a verse.

The Prophet thus used the meaning of the verses to call the people to an understanding of faith, of belief, of social laws and of individual duties. These instructions from God to His messenger are known as the Prophecy, or the message; the Prophet transmitted this message without making any addition to or detraction from it in any way.

The View of Contemporary Non-Muslim Writers Concerning the Revelation and Prophecy

Most contemporary writers who take an interest in different religions and ideologies adopt the following view of the Qur'an : they say the Prophet was a social genius who appeared to save society from the throes of decline into savagery and to raise it up in the cradle of civilization and freedom. They claim also that he called men to his own ideas of pure and sincere behavior by giving them a comprehensive religious form and order. They affirm that he had a pure soul and tremendous ambition; that he lived in a particularly dark and ignorant age, where only the law of force and foolish singing of verse, social chaos and selfishness, stealing, marauding and savagery were to be seen.

They describe how he was troubled by witnessing such things and, sometimes when overcome by the pain of such sights, he would withdraw from men and pass days alone in the cave in the Tihamah mountains; he would marvel at the sky and its shining stars, the earth, the mountains, the sea, the desert and all the precious means placed at the disposal of man by the Creator; he would be grieved at the bad behaviour and ignorance of those around him, who had thrown away a life of well-being and happiness for a tormented succession of bestial habits.

This feeling was always present with the Prophet; he bore this pain and vexation up to his fourtieth year when, according to these contemporary non-Muslim writers, he formed a plan to save his fellow-men from their miserable state of nomadic wandering, rebellious independence, selfishness and lawlessness.

This plan, called the religion of Islam, was the most suitable one for the times. The Prophet being of pure and sincere character, realized that his chaste thoughts were the Word of God and Divine Revelation which were infused in him through his virtuous nature. His good will and benevolent spirit, from which his thoughts exuded and established peace in his heart, was called the Spirit of Trustworthiness and Gabriel, the angel of revelation.

Furthermore, according to this contemporary view of Muhammad, he perceived the forces of good and happiness in nature as Angels and all the forces of bad as Satan and the *Jinn* (invisible entities). He called his own task, which he had undertaken according to his own conscience, Prophethood and himself, the deliverer of the divine message.

This explanation, however, comes from those writers who affirm the existence of God or at least, some kind of nature-force, and attach a certain importance to the religion of Islam, albeit in the name of just and unbiased assessment. Those, however, who deny outright the existence of a Creator see Prophecy, revelation, divine duties, reward and punishment, the fire and the garden as mere religious politics, a lie in the name of religion to further one's own ends.

They say that the prophets were reformers who brought about social change in the name of religion. They argued that since men of past ages were drowned in ignorance and superstitious worship the prophets contained the religious order within a framework of superstitious beliefs about the origin of Creation and the day of reckoning in order to further their prospects of reform.

What the Qur'an Itself Says Concerning this Matter

Scholars who explain the power of revelation and prophecy using the above explanation, attach great importance to the Science of nature and the visible world, and claim that everything in the world works according to the laws of nature. They view historical events, right up to the present-day, as the developing and constantly changing face of nature.

Likewise, they view all revealed religions as social manifestations. Thus they would agree that if one of the geniuses of history, like Cyrus. Darius or Alexander, had announced himself as having been chosen by God as an executor of divine commands, their explanation would have been no different than that given above.

We do not intend here to establish the existence of the unseen, of the world beyond the visible world of nature; we are not saying to other scholars or scientists that any one science may only be discussed by remaining within the strict limits of that particular science. We are not suggesting that the modern sciences which investigate the properties and effects of the material world, (whether or not they be positively or negatively disposed to the creation), do not have the right to enter into an investigation of the metaphysical.

Marfat.com

What we are saying is that any explanation they propose must be in accordance with the explanation of society, existence, nature and the cosmos given by the Qur'an. The Qur'an is an authentic document of prophecy and is the basis of all social, metaphysical and scientific discussion; the explanation of the Qur'an contain proofs against their arguments which we can enumerate and reflect upon. These proots are connected to different Qur'anic verses discussed below.

Divine Revelation

According to the explanation of modern non-Muslims and atheists, the Prophet's nature was pure through which came to him the word of God, meaning that the divine system of thought was alive in his own thoughts; the idea of divinity manifested itself in his thoughts because he was pure and holy; it was natural (in the minds of these Scholars) for prophets to attribute these thoughts to God for, in this way, they ennobled and exalted their own task.

The Qur'an, however, strongly and convincingly denies that it is the speech or the ideas of the prophet or, indeed, of any other man. In chapters X : 38 and XI : 13 the Quran declares that if it is the word of man then detractors of Islam should produce similar words about every subject treated in the Qur'an, namely, belief in the after-life, morals, laws, stories of past generations and other, prophets, wisdom and advice. The Qur'an urges them to seek help anywhere if they do not realize that it is the word of God and not of man, but adds that even if *jinn* and man joined forces together they would not be able to produce a Qur'an like it.

In chapter II : 23 the Qur'an challenges those who consider it merely the speech of Muhammad to produce a book similar to it or even just one chapter like it. The force of this challenge becomes clear when we realize that it is issued for someone whose life should resemble that of Muhammad, namely, the life of an orphan, uneducated in any formal sense, not being able to read or write and grew up in the unenlightened age of the *jalaliyah* period (the age of ignorance) before Islam.

In IV : 82 the Qur'an asks why no inconsistencies or changes appeared in the verses considering that neither the wording nor the meaning of the verses has altered despite being revealed over a period of twenty-three years. If it was the word of man and not the word of God, then it would have certainly been affected by change like all other things in the temporal world of nature and matter.

It is clear that this challenge and these explanations are not mere empty words of exultation; rather they present the Qur'an for what it is, namely the word of God.

The Qur'an establishes its own miraculous nature in hundreds of verses. This miracle is still unexplained by normal literacy standards used to "grasp" a text, Indeed successive prophets established their prophethood through similar verses revealed by God. If prophecy was merely the call of an individual conscience or the inspiration of a pure and sincere soul, then there would be no sense in claiming it as divine proof or seeking help in its miraculous nature as the Prophet, in fact, did.

Marfat.com

Some writers interpret the many miracles of the Qur'an in terms of undisguised mockery. When we investigate the subject of their mockery we inevitably discover that the Qur'an means something other than that which they have understood.

It is not our intention to try and prove the miraculous nature of the Qur'an nor to demonstrate the soundness and authenticity of its narration; rather, we would point out that the Qur'an clearly describes the miracles of the past prophets, like Salih, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. The stories related in the Qur'an can only be understood and interpreted in the light of miraculous guidance.

Why, we may ask, if the prophets were mere men, inspired by the purity of their character, was it necessary to establish the existence of this miraculous guidance?

The Angel Gabriel

According to the explanation of the above-mentioned writers, the prophet referred to his own pure soul as the "Faithful Spirit" or the giver of revelation. The Qur'an, however, does not support this view and names Gabriel as the deliverer of the verses.

God says in chapter II : 97, *"Say (O Muhammad, to mankind) : Who is an enemy to Gabriel! for it is he who has revealed (this book) to your heart by God's permission."* This verse refers to Jews who wanted to know who had revealed the Qur'an to the Prophet.[1] He replied that it was Gabriel. They said, *" We are enemies of Gabriel as he it was who gave us (the tribe of Israel) the laws and legal punishments and as we are enemies to him, we do not believe in the book which he has brought."* Thus God replies to them in the verse that Gabriel revealed the Qur'an to the Prophet by God's permission. God further says that the Qur'an is to be believed in, and that it is not the speech of Gabriel. It is important to note that the Qur'an, in the words of the above verse was revealed "to the heart" of the Prophet Muhammad by Gabriel.

In another verse [XXVI : 193-4] we read that it was transmitted by the Faithful Spirit, *" which the Faithful Spirit has brought down upon your heart."* By comparison of these two verses it becomes evident that it is the angel Gabriel who is meant here by the words, "Faithful Spirit."

In chapter LXXXI : 19-23 God describes the transmittance of revelation :

That this is in truth the word of an honoured messenger (Gabriel), Mighty established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne, one to be obeyed and trustworthy and your comrade (the Prophet) is not mad. Surely he saw him on the clear horizon.

These verses show that Gabriel was one of the intimates of God, possessing great power and trust. Again in chapter XL : 7 we read, *"Those who bear the power, and all who are around Him, praise their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe."* Such characteristics as belief in God and seeking forgiveness from him are only to be expected from independent, sentient creatures.

In chapter IV : 172-173 we read,

The Messiah will never disdain to be a servant of God, nor will the favoured angels. Whoever

disdains His service and is proud, He will gather them all to Himself, then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace, and as for those who disdain and are proud, He will punish them with a painful doon. And *they will not find for themselves besides Allah a guardian or a helper.*

It is clear that although the Messiah, Jesus, and the favoured angels do not disobey the commands of God they are, nevertheless, warned of a painful punishment on the day of reckoning if they were to commit a wrong. The possibility of neglect of their duties or committing wrong action is necessarily dependent on their being sentient beings, possessed of free will and entrusted with the task of transmitting the revelation of God.

Thus we learn from the Qur'an that Gabriel is the Faithful Soul : he is trustworthy and to be obeyed because he is obeyed by angels in his task. An indication of these obedient angels comes in the verse,

But truly it is a warning - so let whoever will pay heed to it, on honoured leaves exalted, purified (set down by scribes) noble and righteous [LXXX : 11-16].

The Angels and the Devils

According to the explanation of contemporary non-Muslim writers, angel is the name given to forces in nature which represent goodness, and happiness and devils are forces in nature representing evil and unhappiness. What we understand from the Qur'an, however, is that they are beings existing beyond our sense-range, who possess feelings and an independent free-will. To the verses above, (indicating that angels possess independence and free will), may be added many other verses which confirm these same qualities.

The refusal of Satan to prostrate himself before Adam and the dialogue between Satan and God occurs several times in the Qur'an. Satan, after having been expelled from intimacy with God, says in chapter XXXVIII : 82-83, "*I surely will lead every one of them astray except your sincere slaves among them.*" And God replies "*I shall fill hell with you and with those who follow you, together*" [XXXVIII : 85].

It is clear that punishment can only take place if the punished understand the reason for the punishment. God in chapter XXXIV : 20, says in confirmation of Satan's warning to man, "*And Satan indeed found his calculation true concerning them, for they follow them, all except a group of true believers.*" Likewise, we read in chapter XI V : 22, "*And Satan said when the matter had been decided : Indeed! Allah promised you a promise of truth; and I promised you and failed you. And I had no power over you except that I called to you and you obeyed me. So do not blame me but blame yourselves.*"

Blame is a matter which can only be associated with those who possess the power of reason and free-will. We quote these verses to show that Satan, like the rest of the angels, is a thinking independent being rather than a force in nature.

Just as verses occur in the Qur'an concerning the angels and the devils, there also are verses which clearly and vividly describe the *jinn* (elemental spirits or invisible beings, either harmful or helpful). In chapter XLVI : 18 reference is made to those who, invited to believe in Islam, spurn it as just another ancient fable or superstition :

Marfat.com

Such are those in whom the word concerning nations of the jinn and mankind which have passed away before them has effect. Indeed they are the losers.

We may understand from this verse that *the jinn,* the invisible entities, like mankind, live in different nations, pass a period of time in their different societies and finally die. In the same chapter, verses 29-32 we read,

And when we inclined toward you (Muhammad) certain of the jinn *who wished to hear the Qur'an and when they were in its presence said, Listen! and, when it was finished turned back to their people warning. They said : 0 our people! Truly we have heard a book which has been revealed after Moses, confirming that which was before it, guiding to the truth and a right road. O my people! respond to God's Summoner and believe in Him. He will forgive you some of your wrong actions and guard you from a painful doom. And whoever does not respond to God's Summoner he can in no way escape in the earth, and you (can find) no protecting friends instead of Him. Such are in clear error.*

These verses clearly confirm that *the jinn.,* like men, live in groups, are thinking individuals possessing free will and charged with duties, Moreover, there are other verses dealing with the day of rising which affirms these same qualities in the *jinn.*

The Call of Conscience

According to the explanation of certain modern writers, prophethood is the rising up of a man from amongst his people in order to undertake social reform in accordance with the call of his conscience. The Qur'an, however, gives a different meaning to the prophethood. In XCI : 7-8 we read, *"And a soul and Him who perfected it. and inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it."*

In this verse God demonstrates that each individual perceives from his own conscience and God-given nature the difference between good and bad action; and, that the potential for reform and the bettering of one's self is contained within each person; some listen to their conscience and act correctly while others pay no heed and so act wrongly.

Thus in the following verses of the same chapter God says : *"He is indeed successful who causes it to grow and he is indeed a failure who stunts it."* If prophethood manifests itself as a result of the conscience, which everyone possesses, then everyone in theory may become a prophet. God, however, has reserved this duty for certain men only.

Thus He says in chapter VI : 124, *"And when a sign comes to them, they say : me do not believe until we are given that which God's messengers are given. God, knows best with whom to place His message."*

The Reality of the Prophet's Mission

We should repeat at this point that we do not intend to prove or disprove here the truth of Islam or the validity of the Prophet's invitation of the people to Islam. Rather, we simply want to state that the second of the modern non-Islamic explanations is also not in accordance with the explanation given in the Qur'an.

Marfat.com

According to it, the prophet succeeded in convincing people to believe in a set of superstitions framed in a politico-religious framework; he was aided in this, so they say, by the fact that his own people were tribesmen, having no advanced culture of their own. In the name of public good and the well-being of society harsh punishments were promised to those who did not obey the religious laws; the Prophet instilled a fear of the Day of Reckoning and promised rewards for those who obeyed.

Thus fervour for the promised paradise and fear of the Day of Reckoning created a society based on a religious foundation.

The history of the lives of other prophets has, for the most part, been lost in time, but the life of the Prophet Muhammad is well documented. Anyone who researches into it will not be left in the least doubt that he had total faith and inner certainty in his mission. If religious beliefs were mere superstitions or a means to unify and subdue a society, then all the proofs expounded in the Qur'an concerning the hereafter, the existence of a Creator of the World, Divine Unity, His attributes, belief in a prophecy and the reckoning of a man's actions after death would have absolutely no meaning.

What the Qur'an Says About the Meaning of Revelation and Prophecy

The Qur'an clearly states that it is a book revealed to the Prophet and that revelation is a kind of divine utterance beyond the understanding or communication of the material world; revelation is unperceived by sense or intellect but apprehended by other faculties which, by God's will, are present in certain individuals. Through revelation instructions from the unseen are received and their acceptance and implementation is called prophethood. To clarify this matter we may make the following points.

Man's Innate Nature

In the beginning of this book we explained that each created entity, whether mineral, plant or animal, is endowed with an inherent force which enables it to develop in accordance with its own innate design and nature.

Thus we read in chapter XX : 50, "*Our Lord is He who gave everything its nature, then guided it correctly,*" and again in chapter LXXXVII : 2-3 "*Who creates, then disposes, who measures then guides.*" We also know that man is not excluded from this general law, that is he has a direction and an aim towards which he develops, having been endowed with faculties which allow him to fulfill this aim. All his happiness lies in achieving this aim; his sorrow, grief and misfortune are the result of his failure to achieve this aim. He is guided to this special purpose by his Creator.

As God says in chapter LXXVI : 3, "*Indeed, we have shown him the way whether he be grateful or disbelieving.*" Likewise we read in chapter LXXX : 19-20, "*From a drop of seed, He creates him and proportions him. Then makes the way easy for him.*"

Man's Path in Traversing the Road of Life

The difference between the animal and plant kingdoms and man is that the former react according to their inherent knowledge or instinct, while man, also possessing an inherent

knowedge, is equipped with an intellect and the capacity to use or recognize wisdom. Even if man is capable of undertaking a certain action, he weighs the good or the bad, the benefit or harm, contained in that action and implements it only if he estimates chat the benefit outweighs the harm.

Thus he follows the instruction of his intellect in every action; the intellect dictates the necessity of an action. The intellect causes one to abandon an act if it is likely to bring with it an unacceptable degree of troubles and hardship; it not only instructs one on the feasibility of an action, but it also takes into account the dictates of sentiment and feeling.

Indeed the perception of sentiment with regard to the relative good or bad in matter is so closely connected with the decision of the intellect as to be considered one and the same thing.

Man as a Social Being

No one would deny that men are social beings who co-operate with each other to better meet their daily needs. We may wonder, however, whether men desire this co-operation from their natural feelings; are they naturally inclined to undertake an action with others and share an interest in something as a social project?

On one level, man's needs, feelings and desires cause him to act for his own benefit and without regard for the needs and wishes of others. Man uses every means to fulfil his own needs : he uses every kind of transport to reach his destination; he uses the leaves, stems and fruit of plants and trees; he lives upon the meat of animals and their products, and takes advantage of a multitude of other things to complement his own deficiences in certain respects. Can man, whose state is such that he uses everything he finds to his own ends, be expected to respect another human being? Can he extend his hand to another in co-operation and turn a blind eye tc his own desire for the sake of mutual benefit?

The answer in the first instance must be no. It is as a result of man's countless needs, which can never be fulfilled by himself alone, that he recognizes the possibility of fulfilling them through the help and co-operation of others. Similarly, he understands that his own strengths, desires and wishes are also shared by others, and just as he defends his own interests so others defend theirs.

Thus, out of necessity, he co-operates with the social nexus and gives a certain measure of his own efforts to fulfill the needs of others; in return he benefits from the efforts of others in order to fulfill his own needs. In truth he has entered into a market-place of social wealth, always open to traders and offering all the benefits obtained by the collective work of the society. All these factors are placed together in this marketplace of pooled human resources and each person, according to the importance society attaches to his work, has a share in these benefits.

Thus man's first nature incites him to pursue the fulfilment of his own needs using others in the process and taking advantage of their work for his own ends. It is only in cases of necessity and helplessness that he lends a hand to co-operate with society.

Marfat.com

This matter is clear when we observe the nature of children : anything a child wants he demands in an extreme way; he emphasizes his demand by crying. As he grows older, however, and becomes a part of the social fabric, he gradually puts an end to his excessive demands. More evidence for the truth of this may be seen when a person accumulates power which exceeds that of others and he rejects the spirit of cooperation and its restrictions of society; such an individual uses people and the fruits of their labours for himself without giving anything back in return.

God refers to the necessary spirit of natural cooperation in society in chapter XLIII : 32, *"We have apportioned among them their livelihood in the lift of the world, and raised some of them above others in rank that some of them take labour from others ..."* This verse refers to the reality of the social situation in which each individual has a different capacity and different talents : those who are superior in one domain engage the cooperation or employ of others for their eventual mutual benefit.

Thus all members of society are linked together in the ways and wants of the fabric of one single social unit. Those who do not see the obvious necessity of mutual cooperation are condemned by God in chapter XIV : 34, *" Truly man is surely a wrong-doer, (a tyrant)" and,* in chapter XXXIII : 72, *" Indeed he has proved a tyrant and a fool."*

These verses refer to man's natural instinct which, unless checked, drives him to take advantage of his fellow-men and in doing so to overstep the rights of others.

The Manifestation of Social Differences and the Necessity of Law

Man in his dealings with his fellow men is obliged to accept a social life based on cooperation; in doing so he effectively forgoes some of the freedom enjoyed within his own sphere of work. Merely taking part in a society based on injustice and gaining social differences is not enough to satisfy the basic needs of the average man. In such a society, taking advantage of the efforts of others leads to corruption and a loss of the original purpose of removing glaring differences between men and bettering their lives.

It is clear that a framework of laws, understood and respected by all, must govern the different members of society. If there are no clear laws governing even the most basic of transactions (like buying and selling), transactions will cease to function correctly. Laws are necessary to preserve the rights of individuals. The power and wisdom of the Creator, who has guided man towards his well-being and happiness, has also guaranteed the success and happiness of society.

Guidance in the form of social law is mentioned by God in LXXX : 19-20, "From *a drop of seed He creates him and proportions him. Then makes the way easy for him."* This making of life easy for him is an indication of the social guidance which he has given to man in the form of laws and instructions.

The Intellect is not Sufficient in Guiding Man Towards Respect of the Law

The guidance we are considering here is that which emanates from the wisdom of the Creator; this wisdom has created man and allotted him his goal of well-being just as it has assigned a

Marfat.com

path and goal to all creation. This goal of happiness and well-being is the path of self-fulfilment based on correct behaviour in a social setting. It is clear that, of necessity, there can be no inconsistencies or shortcomings in the work of the Creator.

If, at times, one cannot discern His aim or it seems hidden from normal perception, it is not through lack of reason or cause on the part of God, but rather that the cause is linked to other causes which obscure the one in question. If there were no hindrances to a clear perception of the causal chain of events, two given actions would never appear inconsistent or contradictory to the harmony of creation. Nor would the work of the Creator appear (as it sometimes does to those whose perception is hindered by the intricacy of the causal chain of events), inconsistent and imperfect.

Guidance towards the law, whose function is to remove differences and conflict between individuals in society, is not a matter for the intellect since it is this very intellect which causes man to dispute with others. It is the same intellect which incites man to profit at the expense of others and to preserve, first and foremost, his own interest, accepting justice only when there is no alternative.

The two opposing forces, one causing difficulties and one doing away with them, are qualities of man's character; they do not obviously exist in the Creator : the countless daily transgressions and violations of the law, in effect, all result from those who use their intellect incorrectly; they themselves are the very source of their own difficulties.

If the intellect was truly a means of removing wrong action from society and was itself a trustworthy guide to man's well-being, it would recognize the validity of the law and prevent man from violating it. The intellect's refusal to willingly accept what is obviously given for the well-being of man is confirmed when we realize that its acceptance of a society based on just laws is only out of necessity. Without this compulsion, it would never accept to know the law.

Those who transgress the law do so for many reasons : some oppose it without fear, because their power exceeds that of the law; others, because they live outside the reach of the law, through deceit or negligence on the part of the authorities; others are able to invent reasons which make their wrong actions appear lawful and acceptable; some make use of the helplessness of the person they have wronged. All, however find no legal obstacle in their wrong aims : even if an obstacle appears, their intellect, rather than guiding them to an acceptance of the law, renders the obstacle right and ineffective.

From these examples we are left in no doubt that the intellect, far from controlling, restricting or guiding man, merely uses its influence to its own purpose. We must include, therefore, that it is incapable of guiding man towards a social law which guarantees the rights, freedom and well-being of all the members of society.

God says in chapter XCVI : 6-7 *"Indeed man truly rebels when he thinks himself independent."* The independence referred to here includes the independence of those who imagine that they can claim their rights through other than the path of legality.

Marfat.com

The Only Way to Guidance is that of Revelation

Man, like the rest of creation, naturally seeks his own well-being and happiness as he lives out his life. Since, by his very make-up, he has a variety of natural needs, he has no alternative but to live in society in order to fulfill these needs; his own well-being and search for the fulfilment of his natural character takes place in the wider framework of society's well-being.

Thus the only acceptable pattern of existence, regulated by a comprehensive law common to all people, is the one which guarantees both the well-being of society and of the individual in a balanced and just fashion. It is also clear that man, like the rest of creation, must endeavour to achieve his well-being and undertake whatever preparation is necessary for achieving this by allowing himself to be guided by his Creator.

It is but a logical next step in our analysis to say that any guidance from the Creator must be towards this comprehensive law, common to all and, at the same time, in accord with the individual's well-being. Intellect is not enough to guide man to the law since it does not always decide in favour of cooperation with others nor in favour of the common good.

The path, the way, which fits perfectly the requirements of man is the way taught by the Prophets and messengers of God. It is the way brought to them by God through revelation and established as undeniably true and valid, by the example of their own lives and their intimate knowledge and contact with God.

In chapter II : 213, God says, *"Mankind was one community and God sent (to them) prophets as bearers of good news and as warners and revealed to them the book with the truth that it may judge between mankind concerning that in which they differed."* Here we understand "one community" to mean a society at peace, its members living without dispute or difference. After a period of time, men differed with one another and as a result God sent the prophets.

Again He says in IV : 163-165, *"Indeed we have inspired you as we have inspired Noah . . . Messengers of good news and a warning in order that mankind might have no argument against God after the Messenger."* Intellect alone does not make man accountable to God and this is why he must be awakened to the reality of his inner condition by other means.

The first of the above-mentioned verses recognizes the way of revelation and prophecy as the only way of removing differences between men. The second shows revelation and prophecy to be the complete and absolute proof to mankind of the truth of God's message.

Some Questions Answered

Question : By using the premise that the intellect cannot prevent violation of the law and the wrong action of man in general, you are declaring the necessity of imposing a law or, as you say, "guidance" towards his own well-being; that is, you are demanding that we place our trust in revelation and in prophethood rather than in the intellect.

The truth is, however, that the laws and instructions of revelation are also ineffective in that they cannot prevent violation of the law, of the Shari'ic law or divine code; in fact, man's acceptance of this code is even less than his acceptance of the civil code. What can you reply to this?

Marfat.com

Answer : To point out the way is one thing and to follow it is another. The Creator has taken upon himself to guide mankind to a law under which he can achieve his well-being; He has not taken upon himself to stop mankind from infringing upon the law nor of compelling men to follow the law. We have investigated above the problem of man's infringement of the law, not to prove that the intellect is deficient or incapable of preventing wrong action but, rather, to show that it usually does not decide in favour of the law or of cooperation with society.

As we have pointed out, the intellect only follows the law out of necessity; if it perceives that obeying the law and restricting one's personal freedom brings less benefit than disobedience, then it will not follow the law nor stop others from transgressing.

The acceptance of the way of the revelation, however, always brings with it an obedience to the law. By accepting the code of behaviour revealed by the prophets, one entrusts one's judgement to God who, with his boundless power and knowledge, constantly watches over man; only He can reward good deeds or punish bad ones in an absolutely just and unbiased way. God says in chapter XII : 40, *"The decision rests with God only,"* and in chapter XCIX : 7-8, *"And whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it then and whoever does an atom's weight of bad will see it then."*

Likewise, He says in XXII : 17, *"Indeed God will decide between them on the day of Rising, Indeed! God is witness over all things,"* and in 11 : 77, *"Are they unaware that God knows that which they keep hidden and that which they proclaim."* In XXXIII : 52 we read : *"And God is watcher over all things."*

From these verses it is clear that the divine *din* of Islam, which has been given to man through revelation, is not capable of preventing transgression of the law any more than the civil law drawn up by men. The machinery of the civil law appoints officials and employees to control and inspect the action of man and also imposes a system of punishment for his offences; this method only works when the law is strong and the crime is discovered.

The divine *din* is superior to man-made laws or social orders in that control over man is carried out in a very special way, namely, through the vigil of the angels. Moreover, the divine *din* obliges in every man and woman to enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. All men, without exception, are instructed to watch over the action of their fellow men and to be guardians of the law.

It is only belief in a divine order which contains and defines action outside the limits of good and bad and within the reality of the Day of Reckoning to come. Most importantly, the Lord of the world and of all the unseen world is aware of man's every action and is present with him everywhere at every moment.

Like the civil codes drawn up by man, there is also in the divine code a corresponding system of punishment for every sin, both in this world and on the day of reckoning after death. Unlike the civil code, however, the divine law guarantees that no man will escape from judgement and punishment, if punishment is warranted. As proof, the reader is urged to follow what is written in chapter IV : 59, *"Obey God and obey the messenger and those of you in*

Marfat.com

authority" and, in XI : 71, *"And the believers men and women are protecting friends one to another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong."*

Likewise, we may study LXXXII : 10-12 when God says, *" Indeed there are guardians above you, generous and recording, who know (all) that you do"* and, also in XXXI V : 21. *"And your Lord (O Muhammad) takes note of all things."*

A Second Question : It has been argued that the intellect does not always decide in favour of respect for the law. Is this not inconsistent with what is contained in the saying of the Imams which states that God has given two proofs to his servants, the outward and obvious one being that of His Prophet and the inner and hidden one being that of the intellect of man? How are we to understand this statement in the light of how the intellect has been described?

Answer : Without exception, man's intellect is concentrated on securing benefit and avoiding harm. Whenever it accepts to cooperate and share in society's activity, it is, as we have seen above, seeking its own benefit. This need is often felt by those who wish to profit from others or seek to control others by using their wealth. For such men there is nothing prohibiting them from pursuing their illegal action; their intellect will not decide in favour of the law nor forbid transgression of the same law.

If, however, the source of compulsion (as is understood in the light of divine revelation) is from God, then the effect on man is totally different. God's watching over man's action. His punishment or reward of bad or good action, admits of no negligence, ignorance or incapacity. The intellect, which recognizes the existence of God, cannot refuse the law. It will always decide in favour of that which revelation demands of man.

Thus the intellect of a believing man will recognize the importance of the revelation over any personal matter. God say in XIII : 33 *" Is He who is aware of the deserts of every soul as he who is aware of nothing;"* and, in LXXXVI : 4, *"No human soul but has a guardian over it"* and, LXXIV : 38, *"Every soul is a pledge for its own deeds."*

The Path of Revelation is Protected Against Mistakes

The path of revelation is part of the Creator's programme. He never makes mistakes, neither in His Creation nor in the system of belief and the laws of the *shari'ah,* which are delineated for man through revelation.

God says in LXXI 1 : 26-28,

> *(He is) the knower of the Unseen and he reveals His secret to no one except to every messenger He has chosen and He makes a guard go before him and a guard behind him, that He may know that they have indeed conveyed the message of their Lord. He surrounds all their doings and He keeps count of all things.*

From this we understand that the prophets and messengers of God must be infallible both in receiving the revelation and in preserving it against alteration and attack. They are as instruments at the disposal of the Creator's wisdom. Were they to make an error in receiving or teaching the message of the revelation or be led astray by the whispering of evil

Marfat.com

persons, were they themselves to commit wrong or deliberately change the message they had to deliver, then the wisdom of God would be unable to perfect its programme of guidance.

God confirms in chapter XVI : 9 that He is in total control of man's guidance by means of his messenger, *"And God's is the direction of the way, and some (words) do not go straight,"*

The Hidden Reality of Revelation

The reality of revelation is hidden from us. What is clear is that the aim of the programme of life, outlined for man by the Creator, cannot possibly have been put together by the intellect; there must be another way of understanding, of perceiving, (other than through reflection and thought), by which man learns of the duties incumbent on him and his fellow-men. This understanding may only be encompassed by the path of revelation.

There are, however, only a limited number of men who possess this kind of understanding since receiving revelation requires an understanding based on purity, sincerity and freedom from all corruption and bad thoughts. It requires men whose spiritual qualities do not change; men who are psychologically balanced in their judgements and who possess real depth of understanding. It must be admitted that these qualities are rarely to be found amongst men.

The Prophets and messengers mentioned in the Qur'an are men of precisely these qualities. The Qur'an does not mention their number; it only names a few (namely Adam, Nuh (Noah), Hud, Salih (Methusaleh), Ibrahim (Abraham), Lut (Lot), Isma'il (Ismael, Ishmael), Alyasa' (Elisha), Dhu al-Kifl (Ezekiel), Ilyas (Elias), Yunus (Jonah), Idris (Enoch), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), Yusuf (Joseph), Shu'ayb, Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Da'ud (David), Sulayman (Solomon), Ayyub (Job), Zakariya' (Zacharias), Yahya (John), Isma'il Sadiq al-Wa'd, 'Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad; others are indicated but not named).

We, as ordinary men, do not share at all their qualities and so we cannot taste the reality of their perception. Prophecy, as an experience, remains unknown for us. Moreover, few of the past revelations have reached us and we have only a limited view of the reality which is revelation and prophecy. It may be that what has reached us in the form of revealed books is exactly as the revelation we are familiar with, that is the Qur'an.

Nevertheless, it is possible that other revelations (completely unknown to us) may have contained information and instructions of which we have no knowledge.

How the Qur'an was Revealed

Qur'anic revelation, according to the Qur'an itself, is an utterance on behalf of God to His Prophet; the Prophet received the speech of God with all his being, not just by way of learning, In XLII : 51-52 God says,

> *And it was not to be for any man that God should speak to him unless (it be) by revelation or from behind a veil or (that) we send a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave. Truly He is exalted, wise. And thus We have inspired in you (Muhammad) a spirit of Our Command. You did not know what the Book, nor what the Faith was. But We have made it a light whereby We guide whom We will of our slaves. And truly you surely guide to a right path.*

Marfat.com

On comparison of these two verses we discover three different ways of divine utterance. Firstly, God speaks without there being any veil between Him and man. Secondly, God speaks from behind a veil : like the tree on the *Tur* mountain from behind which Moses heard God speaking. Thirdly, God's speech is brought to man by an angel who had previously heard the revelation from Him.

The second of the two verses above show that the Qur'an has reached us by means of the third of three possible ways. Again God says in XXVI : 192-5, *"(A revelation) which the Faithful Spirit (Gabriel) has brought down upon your heart, that you may be (one) of the warners, in plain Arabic Speech,"* and in chapter II : 97 *" Who is an enemy to Gabriel! For it is he who has revealed (this book) to your heart"*.

From these verses we understand that the Qur'an was transmitted by way of an angel named Gabriel, or the "Faithful Spirit", and that the Prophet received the revelation from him with all his being, all his perception and not merely by listening. The verse says "on your heart," which in Qur'anic terms means perception or awareness. In LIII : 10-11 we read, *" And He revealed to His slave that which He revealed. The heart did not lie (in seeing) what it saw;"* and in XCVIII : 2 reception of the revelation is indicated as a reading of "pure pages" by God's messenger.

REFERENCE

1. Because both verses relate the descension of the Qur'an before 'the Holy Prophet. It says, *"Upon their hearts"* and not "their hearts" and the heart, in the usage of the Holy Qur'an is the soul because in several places, understanding and awareness comes from the soul and is related to the heart, XXVI : 93-195.

Marfat.com

5

The Relationship of the Qur'an to the Sciences

Praise of Knowledge and the Stimulation of the Desire to Study

No other revealed book praises and encourages science and knowledge as does the Qur'an and it is for this reason that the Qur'an names the age of the desert Arabs, together with their pagan cultures, before Islam as the "age of ignorance." In over a hundred verses reference is made to science and knowledge in a variety of ways; and many of these verses praise the value of scientific knowledge. In XCVI : 5 God indicates the favour he has done man by bringing him out of his state of ignorance. *"He teaches man what he did not know."*

Likewise, we read in LVIII : 11, *"God will exalt those who believe among you and those who have knowledge to high ranks,"* and in XXXIX : 9 God says, *"Are those who know equal to those who do not?"* Besides the many verses in the Qur'an concerning knowledge, there are also countless traditions of the Prophet and the Imams on this subject which rank second only in importance to the Qur'an.

The Sciences which the Qur'an Invites Men to Study

In verses too numerous to mention, the Qur'an invites one to reflect upon the signs of creation : the heavens, the shining stars and their astonishing celestial movements, and the cosmic order which rules over them all. Similarly, the Qur'an urges one to reflect upon the creation of the earth, the seas, the mountains, the desert, and the wonders contained below the surface of the earth, the difference between night and day and the changing cycle of seasons. It urges mankind to meditate on the extraordinary creation of the plants and me order and symmetry governing their growth, as well as the multiplicity of the animal kingdom.

The Qur'an invites one to witness the interdependence of beings and how all live in harmony with nature. It calls upon man also, to ponder on his own make-up, on the secrets of creation which are hidden within him, on his soul, on the depth of his perception, and on his relationship with the world of the spirit.

The Qur'an commands man to travel in the world in order to witness other cultures and to investigate the social orders, history and philosophies of past people. Thus it calls man to a study of the natural sciences, mathematics, philosophy, the arts and all sciences available to man, and to study them for the benefit of man and the well-being of society.

The Qur'an recommends the study of these sciences on the condition that it leads to truth and reality, that it produces a correct view of the world based on an understanding of

Marfat.com

God. Knowledge, which merely keeps a man occupied and prevents him from knowing the reality of his own existence, is equated with ignorance. God says in XXX : 7, *"They know only some appearance of the life of one world and are heedless of the Hereafter,"* and in chapter XLV : 23, *"Have you seen him who makes his desire his goal, and God sends him astray purposely and seals up his heart and sets a covering on his heart. Then who will lead him after God (has condemned him)."*

The Qur'an not only stimulates the desire for study but is itself a complete system of education of divine knowledge : it provides, too, a model for human behaviour and thought. This complete way of life is called Islam, the way of submission.

The Sciences Particular to the Study of the Qur'an

There are many sciences devoted to the study of the Qur'an itself. The development of such sciences dates from the first day of Qur'anic revelation; over a period of time they were unified and perfected. Today countless books are available on these sciences, fruit of the labour of different researchers over the centuries.

Some of these sciences investigate the language and vocabulary of the Qur'an, and some the meanings. Those concerned with language are the sciences of correct Qur'anic pronunciation and reading *(tajwid* and *qira'ah)*. They explain the simple changes which certain letters undergo when occurring in conjunction with others, the substitution of letters and the places prescribed for breath-pausing, and other similar matters. They also study the different ways the Qur'an has been written down and the several generally accepted ways of recitation, together with the three lesser known ways and the rarer modes of recitation.

Other works enumerate the number of chapters and their verses, while others relate these numbers to the whole Qur'an. They discuss the tradition of Qur'anic calligraphy and how it differs from the normal Arabic script. They research, too, into the meanings of the Qur'an and the general division of subject matter, such as the place and circumstance of revelation, the interpretation of certain verses, the outward and inner meanings, the *muhkam* (clear) or the *mutashabih* (ambiguous), and the abrogating and the abrogated verses.

Others study the verses containing the laws (which, in fact, are part of what is known as Islamic *fiqh* or jurisprudence). Others specialize in the commentary of the meanings (already seen in a previous section of the book). Specialists in each of the different sciences have published numerous works on each subject.

The Sciences which Developed because of the Qur'an

The sciences of the *din* of Islam came into being at the beginning of the Prophet's mission and the revelation of the Qur'an, including laws governing the behaviour and transactions of Muslims. Study of these sciences developed in the first century after the *Hijrah* although initially, not in any formal way. Since the Caliphs had prohibited the writing down of the tradition, they were handed down by word of mouth by the companions and their followers.

A small number of Scholars wrote on jurisprudence and on the science of the traditions at the beginning of the second century when the prohibition was lifted[1], allowing Scholars to record the traditions.

Marfat.com

It was at this point that a number of disciplines came into being including the Science of Traditions and the Science of establishing the authority and sincerity of those men who transmitted it; the Science of analysis of the text of the traditions : the Science of the foundations of jurisprudence and jurisprudence itself; the Science of belief in the judgement after death and the after-life. Even philosophy, which entered the Islamic arena via the Greek, and remained there for some time in its original Greek, took on the colour and beliefs of the people after a time.

Changes in the subject matter and the structure of disciplines took place such that today, amongst Muslims, all subject matter concerning divine gnosis is supported by proofs and reasons taken from the Qur'an and the traditions.

All these subjects were also studied as an integral part of the Arabic language : mastery of the science of verb declension, grammar, meanings of words, commentary and explanation, the art of metaphors and good style, and the philosophy and science of derived meanings allowed greater precision and clarity in the study of the Islamic Sciences as a whole.

Indeed what stimulated scholars to record and arrange coherently the laws of the Arabic language was the sense that they were serving God; love of Him drew them to a clarity and sweetness of style which in turn generated the Science of correct speech and composition.

It is thus related that Ibn 'Abbas, who was one of the commentators amongst the companions, explained the meanings of verses by taking examples of the vocabulary in question from Arabic poetry. He advised people to collect and learn Arabic poetry saying,

Poetry is the court of the Arabs (meaning the place where the finest language may be heard).

The famous Shi'ite scholar Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi wrote the book *al-'Ayn* on the subject of language and also described the science of poetic rhyme.

Many others also wrote on the same subjects. The subject of history was initially derived in Islam from stories of the lives of prophets, in particular that of die Prophet Muhammad, and the description of the course of past nations. To this basic material was added an account of the events during the period immediately following the appearance of Islam. All this was developed into a history of the world in the writings of such men as al-Tabari, al-Mas'udi, al-Ya'qubi and al-Waqidi.

The original reason the Muslims translated and transmitted the natural Sciences and mathematics from other cultures and languages into Arabic was the cultural stimulation given to them by the Qur'an. Many different Sciences were translated from Greek, Syriac and Sanskrit into Arabic.

Access to these sciences was at first available only to the Caliph (who was at that time leader of only Arab Muslims). Gradually they were made available to all Muslims and improved upon as research methods, structuring, classification and ordering of the subjects developed.

One of the main reasons the civilization of Islam, which formed after the death of the Prophet, came to include a large part of the inhabited world (and which today numbers over

Marfat.com

six hundred million inhabitants), was the Qur'an. We as Shi'ahs, however, deny that the caliphs and the kings who followed them had legitimate claim to the guardianship and execution of the law even though they expanded Islamic civilization, and do not fully agree with the way they explained the realities of Islam.

Indeed the light of wisdom which illuminated the world was from the light of the miracle of the Qur'an. The appearance and diffusion of the revelation caused a change in the direction of history and generated a chain of important events resulting in the progress and development of the culture of man.

REFERENCES

1. This restriction was imposed by the Umayyad caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, 99-101 AH.

6

The Order of the Qur'an's Revelation and the Growth of the Qur'anic Sciences

The Order in which the Verses of the Qur'an were Revealed

That the chapters and verses were not revealed in one place but rather in stages over a period of twenty-three years during the Prophet's mission is authenticated not only by historical evidence but also from evidence from the various verses. In XVII : 106 we read: *"And it is a Qur'an that we have divided that you may recite it to mankind at intervals and we have revealed it by (successive) revelations."* As further proof there are abrogating and abrogated verses which are directly related to events from different periods and circumstances and which obviously were not revealed at one time.

At this point we should note that the chapters and verses were not revealed in the order in which they are set out : that is the first chapter "al-Fatihah" (The Opening) was revealed after "The Cow", "The Family of 'Imran," "Women," and "The Table Spread." This is true also for the order of the verses which do not necessarily follow chronologically. The content of a Qur'anic text may for example show that the content of some chapters and verses concord with the first period of the Prophet's mission—like the chapters "The Clot," and "Nun," but are recorded at the end of the Qur'an.

Many chapters and verses which correspond to the time after the migration like "The Cow," "The Family of "lmran," "Women," "The Spoils" and "Repentance" have been placed at the beginning of the Qur'an.

The contents of the chapters and verses are thus directly related to the events, circumstances and different needs of the period of the Prophet's mission : the chapter and verses which only deal with the calling of the polytheists to belief in God's oneness and the struggle against the idol-worshippers correspond to a time before the migration when the Prophet was inviting the people to Islam in Mecca.

The verses dealing with battles and those dealing with social laws were revealed after the events and circumstances associated with the establishment and progress of the Islamic society in Medina.

Conclusions to be Drawn

We may divide the chapters and Qur'anic verses according to the place, time and circumstance of their revelation :

Marfat.com

Some of the chapters and verses are Meccan and some Medinan; usually those revealed before th Prophet's migration are counted as Meccan. The majority of the chapters, and especially the shorter ones, are of this type. Those revealed after the migration are counted as Medinan even though they may have been revealed outside Medina or even in Mecca.

Some chapters and verses were revealed while the Prophet was travelling and some while he was resident in a place. The verses are also divided according to whether they were revealed by day or by night, in peace or in war, or when the Prophet was on earth or in the heavens, or whether he was alone or with others. In the light of these different classification we may study the reasons for the revelations.

Some chapters were revealed more than once such as the chapter "al-Fatihah," which was revealed once in Mecca and once in Medina. Some verses were revealed several times like, *"Which is it of the favours of your Lord do you deny,"* in the chapter "The Beneficent" which is repeated thirty times, and the verse, *"And indeed your Lord He is truly the Mighty, the Merciful,"* which is repeated eight times.

Sometimes one verse occurs in more than one chapter such as *"they say : when is the fulfilment of promise, if you are truthful."* We find, too, that a sentence appears as a complete verse in one chapter and as part of another verse elsewhere; for example, the sentence, *"Allah! there is no God save Him, The Alive, The Eternal,"* is a complete verse in the beginning of "The Family of Imran," Yet, in "The Cow" it is part of the "al-Kursi" verse. Most chapters and verses, however, were revealed in one place at one time and do not recur in the Book.

Similar verses appear in different places in the Qur'an because of certain subjects which demand repetition. One of the significant features of the Qur'an is the difference in the length of the chapters. We may compare "Abundance" (the snortest chapter) and "The Cow" (the longest).

Likewise we may compare the length of verses, with the shortest being the single arabic word *"mudhammatan"* (dark green with foliage) and the longest, composed of thirty sentences being the two hundred and eighty-second verse of "The Cow" (whose subject concerns debt).

All these differences are in accordance with the demands of the revelation. Sometimes it happens that two verses are closely connected in meaning but differ greatly in length; for example, the thirtieth and thirty-first verses of "The Cloaked One", the first being a single sentence and the second more than eleven sentences.

We should not forget that most of the shorter verses like "The Dawn" and "The Night" are Meccan, and those whose subject matter is treated in greater length and detail are Medinan. The first verse to be revealed to the Prophet was during the revelation of the first five verses of "The Clot" and the last to be revealed was verse 281 of "The Cow" : *"And guard yourselves against a day in which you will be brought back to Allah. Then every soul will be paid in full that which it has earned and they will not be wronged. "*

The Reasons for the Revelations

Many of the verses are connected with events and circumstances which took place as the Prophet called the people to Islam, for example "The Cow".[1]

Marfat.com

Other chapters, like "The Tribe", refer to the exile of the Banu al-Nadir and the chapter "The Coursers" was revealed for the bedouin Arabs of the Dry Valley and other tribes. Some chapters or verses were revealed because of the need to explain the laws and directions of Islam; for example, the chapter "Women" which defined marriage and the inheritance of women, "The Spirits" which explains how to deal with the prisoners-of-war captured as booty and, the chapter "Divorce" which was revealed, as its name suggests, to explain divorce.[2]

The circumstances leading to the revelation of these chapters are called "reasons for revelation" and there arc countless traditions on this subject.

Amongst the Sunni's there are many traditions which deal with the reasons for revelation; several thousand narrations may be enumerated (although in the Shi'ab School only a few hundred may be counted). Many of these are without a chain of narration and are not accepted as fully trustworthy : moreover, a considerable number are classified as weak. The dubious nature of the majority of these may be ascribed to the following reasons. Firstly, it is obvious from the form of many of these sayings that the narrator had not learned them through oral transmission but rather based on his own judgement, that the revelation of a certain verse was connected with certain events. Thus the narrator links a certain event to a verse of suitable meaning mentioned in the tradition.

This is a subjective view, carried out through *ijtihad* or per onal reflection upon the matter, and not me actual reason for revelation learned orally through transmission from the Prophet. As proof of this argument, we may cite many inconsistencies amongst these traditions. There are verses, for example, recorded as having several conflicting "reasons for revelation' which are totally unconnected with each other.

Ibn 'Abbas, for example, who is not alone in this practice, relates several "reasons for the revelation" of one single verse. The existence of such conflicting reasons is because many have been arrived at through subjective deliberation rather than transmitted directly from the Prophet. This results in one narrator attributing a certain verse to a particular event while another narrator attributes it to another event.

On Other occasions a narrator relates two different reasons for the revelation of one verse and thus implicates himself in two conflicting views; then he rejects the first view in favour of the second. We are led to conclude, moreover that most of these narrations are fabrications or deceitfully transmitted under the pretence of trustworthy narrators. Such doubt concerning the validity of many of these traditions greatly endangers their credibility.

Secondly, it has been related with certainty that the early Caliphs strictly prohibited the recording and writing down of the narrations and, whenever a sheet of paper or tablet was found on which a saying had been written, it war, burned. This prohibition lasted until nearly the end of the first century after *Hijrah,* that is, for a period of about ninety years. The effect of this prohibition was that the narrators and scholars of sayings were free to make small additions or changes during oral transmission of the saying. These additions gradually accumulated until the original meaning of the saying was lost.

Marfat.com

This becomes very clear on investigation of an event or subject which has been related by two different narrators; one may come across a saying which describes an event and see the same event described in a different way by another narrator. False sayings were not only introduced by attributing them to respected narrators but also by the hypocrites. Their sayings soon became part of the main body of sayings and this further undermined the credibility of this particular section of the Science of tradition.

The Method Used in Describing "The Reasons for the Revelations"

Past scholars of Islam, and in particular the Sunni scholars, attached great importance to the order of revelation of the chapters. Among the narration on the subject is that of Ibn Abbas, who has said that *"the beginning of each chapter which was revealed in Mecca was recorded as having been revealed in that very place, then God added what He wanted to it.*[3] "The following is the order of revelation of the Qur'an (beginning with the Meccan verses) :

(1) Read in the name of your Lord. (XCVI : 1)
(2) Nun. (LXVIII : 1)
(3) O, you wrapped up in your raiment. (LXXIII : 1)
(4) O you wrapped up in your cloak. (LXXIV : 1)
(5) The power of Abu Lahab will perish. (CXI : 1)
(6) When the sun is overthrown. (LXXXI : 1)
(7) Praise the name of your Lord, the Most High. (LXXXVI : 1)
(8) By the night enshrouding. (XCII : 1)
(9) By the Dawn. (L XXXIX : 1)
(10) By the morning hours. (XCIII : 1)
(11) Have we not caused your breast to expand. (XCIV : 1)
(12) By the declining day. (CIII : 1)
(13) The Courses. (C : 1)
(14) Indeed, we have given you abundance. (CVIII : 1)
(15) Rivalry in worldly increase distracts you. (CII : 1)
(16) Have you observed him who denies the din. (CVII : l)
(17) Say : O disbelievers! (CIX : 1)
(18) Have you not seen your Lord dealt with the owners of the elephant. (CV : 1)
(19) Say : I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak. (CXIII : 1)
(20) Say : I seek refuge in the. Lord of Mankind. (CXIV: 1)
(21) Say : He is God, the One. (CXII : 1)
(22) By the Star. (LIII : 1)
(23) He Frowned. (LXXX : 1)

283349

(24) Indeed we have revealed it on the Night of Power. (XGVII : 1)
(25) By the Sun and its brightness. (XCL : 1)
(26) By the heaven, holding mountains of the stars. (LXXXV : 1)
(27) By the Fig. (XCV : 1)
(28) For the Taming of the Quraish. (CVI : 1)
(29) The Calamity. (CI : 1)
(30) No, I swear by the Day of Resurrection. (LXXV : 1)
(31) Woe to every slandering traducer. (CIV : 1)
(32) By the emissary winds. (LXXVII : 1)
(33) Qaf. (L : 1)
(34) No, I swear by this city. (XC : 1)
(35) By the heaven and the morning star. (LXXXVI : 1)
(36) The hour drew near. (LIV : l)
(37) Sad. (XXXVIII : 1)
(38) The Heights. (VII : 1)
(39) Say (O Muhammmad) It is revealed . . . (LXXII : 1)
(40) Ya Sin. (XXXVI : 1)
(41) The Criterion. (XXV : 1)
(42) The Angels. (XXXV : 1)
(43) Kaf Ha Ya 'Ayn. Sad. (XIX : 1)
(44) Ta' ha'. (XX : 1)
(45) The Reality. (LVI : 1)
(46) Ta Sin Mim. (The Poets). (XXVI : 1).
(47) Ta sin. (XXVII : 1)
(48) The Story. (XXVIII : 1)
(49) The Children of Israel (XVII : 1)
(50) Jonah. (X : 1)
(51) Hud. (XI : 1)
(52) Joseph. (XII : 1)
(53) The Exile. (XV : 1)
(54) The Cattle. (VI : 1)
(55) Those who set the ranks. (XXXVI : 1)
(56) Luqman. (XXXI : 1)
(57) Saba. (XXXIV : 1)

PANJAB UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Marfat.com

(58) The Troops. (XXXIX : 1)
(59) Ha Mim (The Believers). (XL : 1)
(60) Ha Mim (The Prostration of Fussilat). (XLI : 1)
(61) Ha Mim 'Ayn Sin Qaf. (XLII : 1)
(62) Ha Mim Ornaments of Gold. (XLIII : 1)
(63) Smoke. (XLIV : 1)
(64) Crouching. (XLVI : 1)
(65) The Wind Curved Sandhills. (XLVI : 1)
(66) The Winnowing Winds. (LI : 1)
(67) The Overwhelming. (LXXXVIII : 1)
(68) The Cave. (XVIII : 1)
(69) The Bee. (XVI : 1)
(70) Indeed We Sent Noah. (LXXI : 1)
(71) Abraham. (XIV : 1)
(72) The Prophets. (XXI : 1)
(73) The Believers. (XXIII : 1)
(74) The Prostration. (XXXII : 1)
(75) Mount Sinai. (LII : 1)
(76) The Sovereignty. (LXVII : 1)
(77) The Reality. (LXIX : 1)
(78) A Questioner Questioned. (LXX : 1)
(79) About What do They question one another. (LXXVIII : 1)
(80) Those who drag forth. (LXXIX : 1)
(81) When the heaven is cleft apart. (LXXXII : 1)
(82) When the heaven is split asunder. (LXXXIV : 1)
(83) The Romans. (XXX : 1)
(84) The Spider. (XXIX : 1)
(85) Woe to the defrauders. (LXXXIII : 1)
(86) The Cow. (II : 1)
(87) The Spoils of War. (VIII : 1)
(88) The Family of 'Imran. (III : 1)
(89) The Clans. (XXXIII : 1)
(90) She That is to be examined. (LX : 1)
(91) Women. (IV : 1)

Marfat.com

(92) When the earth is shaken. (XCIX : 1)
(93) Iron. (LVII : 1)
(94) Muhammad. (XLVII : 1)
(95) The Thunder. (XIII : 1)
(96) The Beneficent. (LV : 1)
(97) Man. (LX XVI : 1)
(98) Divorce. (LXV : 1)
(99) The Clear Proof. (XCVIII : 1)
(100) Exile. (LIX : 1)
(101) When God's help arrives. (CX : 1)
(102) Light. (XXIV : 1)
(103) The Pilgrimage. (XXII : 1)
(104) The Hypocrites. (LXIII : 1)
(105) She that Disputes. (LVIII : 1)
(106) The Private Apartments. (XLIX : 1)
(107) Banning. (LXVI : 1)
(108) The Congregation. (LXII : 1)
(109) Mutual Disillusion. (LXIV : 1)
(110) The Ranks. (LXI : 1)
(111) Victory. (XLVIII : 1)
(112) The Table Spread. (V : 1)
(113) The Immunity (Repentance). (IX : 1)

Further Traditions Concerning the Order and Place of Revelation of the Chapters

The tradition of Ibn 'Abbas mentions one hundred and thirteen chapters, the chapter "al-Fatihah" not being counted among them. There is another saying, related by al-Bayhaqi from 'Ikrimah[4], which enumerates one hundred and eleven chapters, the three chapters "al-Fatihah," "The Heights," and "Counsel" not being mentioned. When al-Bayhaqi relates this same tradition from Ibn 'Abbas it includes all one hundred and fourteen chapters. The tradition of al-Bayhaqi reckons "The Defrauders" as one of the Medinan chapters in opposition to the other traditions which count it as Meccan. The order mentioned in these two traditions for both the Meccan and Medinan chapters is different from that of other traditions.

Another tradition, related from 'Ali ibn Abi Talhah,[5] says : The chapter "The Cow" was revealed in Medina and "The Family of 'Imran," "Women," "The Table Spread," "Spirits of '.War," "Repentance," "The Pilgrimage," "Light," "The Clans, "Those Who Deny," "Victory," "Iron," "She That Disputes," "Exile," "She That Is To Be Examined," "The Helpers of Allah (The Ranks)," "Mutual Disillusion," "O Prophet if you divorce women," "O Prophet why do

Marfat.com

you ban," "The Dawn," "The Night," "We have revealed it in the night of power," "The Clear Proof," "When the earth shakes," "When the help of Allah comes," and the rest of the chapters were revealed in Mecca.

The intention of the tradition seems only to establish the difference between the Medinan and Meccan chapters and to define the order of revelation of the chapters mentioned. The chapters "Table Spread" and "Repentance" are, without doubt, later in revelation than that indicated in this tradition. Moreover, chapters "The Dawn," "The Night," and "The Night of Power," are counted as Medinan chapters, whereas the above tradition counts them as Meccan. Likewise, "The Thunder," "The Beneficent," "Man," "The Congregation," " The Private Apartments" are considered as Meccan, whereas in the above tradition they arc counted as Medinan.

In another tradition related by Qatadah.[6] "The Cow," 'The Family of 'Imran," "Women," "The Table Spread," "Immunity," "The Thunder," "The Bee," "The Pilgrimage." "The Light," "The Clans," "Muhammad," "Victory," "The Private Apartments." "Iron," "The Beneficent," "She that disputes," "Exile," "She that is to be Examined," "The Ranks," "The Congregation," "The Hypocrites," "Mutual Disillusion," "Divorce," the first thirteen verses of "O You Prophet! Why do you ban," "When the earth Shakes" and "When the help of Allah comes," were revealed in Medina and the rest in Mecca. This tradition is contrary to the previous traditions and, in particular, with regard to the mention of "The Defrauders," "Man," and "The Clear Proof."

This tradition is, however, unacceptable according to the Science of traditions, being disconnected from direct transmission from the Prophet. It is also unclear whether Ibn 'Abbas learned of the order of revelation from the Prophet himself or from some other unidentified person, or arrived at it by subjective decision.

If the latter is the case, it has no value or authenticity but for himself. It has also no value historically, as Ibn 'Abbas did not have close contact with the Prophet. It is obvious that he could not have been present nor a witness to the revelation of all these chapters. Even if we suppose the tradition to be true, it is still not totally acceptable in matters outside the law of the *shari'ah*.

The only way to discover the true order of the chapters, and whether they are Meccan or Medinan, is to examine the content of the chapters and to compare them with the circumstances and social reality before and after the migration. Such a method is effective in certain cases; the content of chapters "Man," "The Coursers," and the "Defrauders" testify to their being Medinan, although some of these traditions only establish them as Meccan.

The Gathering of the Qur'an into One Volume (Before the Death of the Prophet)

The influence of the Qur'an, which was revealed in separate chapters and verses, increased day by day. Its eloquence and miraculous clarity transfixed the Arabs who attached great importance to fine language; they came from far and wide to hear and learn a few verses from the Prophet. However, the notables of Mecca and the leaders of Quraysh, who were idolators and bitter enemies of the Prophet and of Islam, tried to prevent the people from

Marfat.com

getting close to the Prophet : they tried to frighten off the Arabs by telling them the Qur'an was magic.

Despite this people came, unknown to friends, family and servants, in the dark of night to a place near the Prophet's house and listened to the Prophet reading the Qur'an.

The efforts of the early Muslims in listening to, memorizing and recording the Qur'an were stimulated by another motive : they valued the Qur'an as a sacred document, being the word of God; they were also obliged to read the chapter "al-Fatihah" and a portion of another part of the Qur'an during their prayers. It was also the Qur'an through which the Prophet had been commanded to instruct people in the laws of Islam.

This study and devotion to the Qur'an became more ordered and comprehensive after the Prophet emigrated to Medina and formed an independent Muslim community. He ordered a considerable number of the companions to recite the Qur'an and to learn and teach the laws which were being revealed daily. So important was this activity that, according to special permission granted by God in chapter "Repentance," verse 122, these scholars were relieved of their obligation to fight *jihad* (so called Holy War).

Since most of the Prophet's companions, (in particular those who had emigrated from Mecca to Medina), were unable to read or write, the Prophet ordered them to learn from the Jewish prisoners-of-war the simple writing of the time. Thus a group of the companions gradually became literate.

Those of this group who engaged in the recitation of the Qur'an, learning by heart the chapters and verses were called *qurra';* it was from amongst this group that forty (some report seventy) died as martyrs in an accident called Bi'r Ma'unah.

The Qur'an was recorded, as it was revealed, on tablets, bones and the wide flat end of the date palm fronds. There is no doubt that most chapters were in use amongst early Muslims since they are mentioned in numerous *sayings* by both Sunni and Shi'ah sources, relating the Prophet's use of the Qur'an as a call to Islam, the making of prayer and the manner of recitation.

Similarly, one comes across names of chapters in traditions which describe the time when the Prophet was still alive, namely the very long chapters and "al-Fatihah".

After the Death of the Prophet

After the death of the Prophet, 'Ali who, (according to a tradition of absolute authority), was more knowledgeable of the Qur'an than any other man, retired to his house and compiled the Qur'an in one volume in the order corresponding to its revelation. Before six months had elapsed after the death of the Prophet, the volume was completed and carried by camel to show to other people.

Just about a year after the death of the Prophet, the war of Yamamah took place in which seventy of the reciters were killed and the Caliphs conceived the idea of collecting the different chapters and verses into one volume. They feared that should a future battle take place and the rest of the *qurra'* be killed, the whole Qur'an would disappear with them.

Marfat.com

Thus, on the orders of the Caliph, a group of the *qurra'from* amongst the companions including Zayd ibn Thabit, collected the chapters and verses (written on tablets, bones and date palm fronds and kept in the Prophet's house or the houses of reciters) and produced several hand-written copies of the complete Book. They then sent copies of this compilation to all areas of the Muslim domain.

After a time, during the rule of the third Caliph, it came to the attention of the Caliph himself that differences and inconsistencies were appearing in the copying down of the Qur'an; some calligraphers lacked precision in their writing and some reciters were not accurate in their recitation.

Since the word of God seemed threatened with alteration, the Caliph ordered that five of the *qurra'* from amongst the companions, (one of them being Zayd ibn Thabit who had compiled the first volume), produce other copies from the first volume which had been prepared on the orders of the first Caliph and which had been kept with Hafsah, the wife of the Prophet and daughter of the second Caliph.

The other copies, already in the hands of Muslims in other areas, were collected and sent to Medina where, on orders of the Caliph, they were burnt (or, according to some historians, were destroyed by boiling). Thus several copies were made, one being kept in Medina, one in Mecca, and one each sent to Sham (a territory now divided into Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan), Kufa and Basra.

It is said that beside these five, one copy was also sent to Yemen and one to Bahrein. These copies were called the Imam copies and served as original for all future copies. The only difference of order between these copies and the first volume was that the chapters "Spirits of War" and "Immunity" were written in one place between "The Heights" and "Jonah."

The Importance Muslims Attached to the Qur'an

As we have pointed out above, the verses and chapters of the Qur'an were in oral use amongst Muslims at the time of its Likewise, the guidance for man contained in the Qur'an is still valid; it still expounds a complete world view which is in accord with the purest of intellectual proofs and is the source of man's well being in this world and in the next. By the benevolence and care shown by the Creator for His creation in the Book, it still invites man to belief.

The Qur'an cares for the needs of man by giving him a vision of reality based on Divine Unity. All knowledge and belief spring from this view of reality. At no point does the Qur'an fail to explain in the most comprehensive fashion the reality of this oneness.

It devotes much attention to explaining the behavior and transactions expected of the individual in society and shows how correct action is that which accords with the natural character and capability *(ftrah)* of man. The Qur'an leaves the detailed description of man's behaviour to the Prophet whose daily life was an example of how man was tc apply what was contained in the Qur'an.

Together the Book of God and the example *(or Sunnah)* of the Prophet delineated an astoundingly comprehensive life-pattern for man, namely, the way of living in tune with the reality which is Islam. The Qur'an deals precisely with all aspects of individual and social life and, despite having been revealed in another age, does not contain the slightest inconsistency or incompatibility even today. It describes a *din,* a comprehensive way of life, whose programme of living is beyond the imagination of the world's most capable lawyers and sociologists.

The miracle of the Qur'an has in it clarity and eloquence, rooted, as it is, in the language of a nation famed for the purity and power of its language. The Quran is a miraculous sun whose light shines far brighter than the finest poetry of the time, indeed of any age. During the Islamic conquests of the first century after Hijra, the resulting admixing of non-Arabic words with the Arabic lessened the purity of Arabic language used in the Qur'an causing it to disappear from the every-day speech of the people.

The Qur'an does not merely challenge man by the use of its language but also by the depth of its meaning. Those familiar with the Arabic language (both prose and verse writings) are reduced to silence and astonishment when they attempt to describe it.

The Qur'an is neither poetry nor prose but rather seems to draw qualities from both; it is more attractive and dazzling than poetry and clearer and more flowing than prose. A single verse or phrase from the Qur'an is more illuminating, more penetrating, and more profound than the complete speech of most eloquent speakers.

The profundity of meaning in the Qur'an remains as miraculous as ever; its complex structure of beliefs, morals and laws stands as proof that the Qur'an is the word of God. Man, and in particular someone who was born and raised in circumstances similar to those of the Prophet, could never have created such a system; the Qur'an is a harmonious whole despite having been revealed during twenty-three years in greatly varying circumstances.

God Himself confirms that the Qur'an has been preserved from change; in chapter XV : 9 He says, *"Indeed We, even We, reveal the Reminder and indeed We are truly its guardian,"* and in chapter XLI : 41—42 He says, *"for indeed it is an unassailable Book. Falsehood cannot come at it from before or behind it. (It is) a revelation from the Wise, the Owner of Praise."* Only a divine Book could remain preserved for fourteen centuries in a world where the enemies of truth and of Islam are numerous.

The Recitation, Memorization and Transmission of the Qur'an

There were a number of reciters engaged in learning and teaching the Qur'an in Medina. Anyone learning from one of them would transmit that individual' particular style of recitation when he transmitted it to others as a tradition. Various ways of recitation occur. One may attribute this, firstly, to the fact that the script used at the time was the kufic style and had no diacritical points; each word could be read in various ways.

Secondly, most people were illiterate and, when learning the Qur'an, had no alternative but to commit it to memory and transmit it orally. This method continued to be used for many generations.

Marfat.com

The Different Groups of Reciters

The first group of reciters were those companions who were engaged in learning and teaching the Qur'an during the time of the Prophet. Among them was a group which mastered the whole Qur'an; one of this group was a woman by the name of Umm Waraqah bint 'Abd Allah ibn Harith.

Study was also undertaken by four of the Ansars (or helpers, that is Medinans who became Muslim and welcomed the Muslims from Mecca). They learned the whole Qur'an by heart but were not concerned with the ordering of the verses and chapters; other scholars were responsible for memorisation of the order.

Some traditions say that the position of each verse and chapter was defined at the orders of the Prophet himself but this is generally refuted by the rest of the traditions.

According to some later scholars, (namely al-Suyuti in his book *al-Itqan,* in the chapter dealing with the qualities of the men responsible for transmission), several of the *qurra'* became famous, among them 'Uthman, Ali, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Zayd ibn Thabit, Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari.

The second group of reciters were the students of the first group. They were generally *tabi'un* (followers of the companions of the Prophet) and the more famous amongst them had centres of recitation and teaching in Mecca, Medina, Kufa, Basra and Sham. The 'Uthmanic volume was used in these five places.

In Mecca were 'Ubayd ibn 'Amir and Ata' ibn Abi Rabah, Ta'us, Mujahid, Ikrimah ibn Abi Mulaykah and others. In Medina were Ibn Musayyib, 'Urwah, Salim, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, Sulayman ibn Yasar, 'Ata' ibn Yasar, Mu'adh al.-Qari', 'Abd Allah ibn al-A'raj, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, Muslim ibn Jundub and Zayd ibn Aslam.

In Kufa were 'Alqamah, al-Aswad, Masruq, 'Ubaydah, Amr ibn Shurahbil, Harith ibn al-Qays, 'Amr ibn Maymun, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, Zarr ibn Hubaysh, 'Ubayd ibn Naflah, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, al-Nakha'i, al-Sha'bi 'Abu al 'Aliyah, Abu al-Raja' Nasr ibn al-'Asim, Yahya ibn Ya'mur, Hasan al-Basri, Ibn Sirin, Qatadah, Mughirah ibn Abi Shihab, 'Uthman, Khalifah ibn Sa'd, Abu Darda'.

The third group lived during the first half of the second century after *Hijrah* it included a number of Imams famous for their Qur'anic recitation who received this knowledge from the second group. In Mecca were 'Abd Allah ibn Kathir one of the seven aurra); Humayd ibn Qays al-A'raj and Muhammad ibn Abi Muhaysin. In Medina were, Abu Ja'far Yazid ibn al-Qa'qa', Shaybah ibn Nassah and Nafi ibn Nu'aym (one of the seven *qurra).*

In Kufa were Yahya ibn Waththab, 'Asim ibn Abi al-Najjud (one of the seven *qurra'),* Sulayman al-A'mash, Hamzah (one of the seven *qurra')* and al-Kisa'i (also one of the seven reciters). In Basra were 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Ishaq, 'Isa ibn 'Umar, Abu 'Amr ibn al-'Ala' (one of the seven reciters), Asim al-Jahdari and Ya'qub al-Hadrami. In Sham 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amir (one of the seven reciters), 'Atiyah ibn Qays al-Kalla'i, Isma'il ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Muhajir, Yahya ibn Harith and Shurayh ibn Yazid al-Hadrami.

Marfat.com

The fourth group consisted of the students of the third group, like Ibn 'Ayyash, Hafs and Khalaf and many of the most famous may be classed in the next section.

The fifth group comprised those concerned with academic research and writing including Abu 'Ubayd Qasim ibn Salam, Ahmad ibn Jubayr al-Kufi and Isma'il ibn Ishaq al-Maliki from the companions of Qalun al-Rawi. Included also are Abu Ja'far ibn Jarir al-Tabari and Mujahid. The field of research was widened after them by men like al-Dani[7] and al-Shatibi[8] who wrote a great number of books on poetry.

The Seven Reciters

Seven members of the third group achieved considerable celebrity; they became a focus of learning for others. Each of the reciters appointed two narrators who each propagated a particular style of recitation. The following is a list of these seven :

First Ibn al-Kathir,[9] whose narrators were Qanbal and al-Bazzi, with only one intermediate relator in the chain from Ibn 'Abbas from the leader of the Faithful, 'Ali. The second was Nafi'[10] and his narrators Qalun and Warsh. The third was 'Asim[11] and his narrators were Abu Bakr Shu'bah ibn al-'Ayyash and Hafs; the Qur'an recitation which is in common use among Muslims today is according to the reading of 'Asim by a narration of Hafs. The fourth was Hamzah[12] and his narrators were Khalaf and Khallad. The fifth was al-Kisa'i[13] and his narrators were al-Dawri and Abu 'Ali al-Harith. The sixth was Abu "Amr ibn ai-Ala'[14]; and his narrators al-Dawri and al-Susi with one intermediate narrator. The seventh was Ibn 'Amir[15] and his narrators were Hisham[16] and Ibn Dhakwan with one intermediary narrator.

Following the seven famous recitations are the three recitations of Abu Ja'far[17] . Ya'qub[18] and Khalaf[19].

The majority of Scholars recognize the seven types of recitation as *mutawatir,* that is, as having been related in unbroken chains of transmissions. One group of narrators have equated the tradition that the Qur'an was revealed in seven *harf* (literally, "word" in Arabic), with the seven different recitations; this tradition is well known amongst Muslim scholars in general but is not recognised as being trustworthy.[20]

Al-Zarkshi[21] says in his book *al-Burhan,* "It is true that these seven recitations from the seven reciters have come to us via unbroken chain of transmission but their chain of transmission from the Prophet are open to inspection, since the chains of transmission of the seven reciters are all of the type of single transmission, that is, related by one single man to another single man."

Al-Makki says in his book, *"Anyone who imagines that the recitation of such men as Nafi' and 'Asim are the same seven 'harf mentioned in the saying of the Prophet is committing a grave mistake."* Moreover, the implication of this saving is that recitations, other than these seven, are not correct; this also is a grave mistake since early Islamic Scholars like Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim ibn Salam and-Abu Hatim al-Sijistani, Abu Ja far al-Tabari and Isma'il al-Qadi have recorded several other recitions besides these seven.

Marfat.com

At the beginning of the second century A.H. the people of Basra used the recitation of Abu 'Amr and ya'qub and in Kufa the recitations of Hamzah and 'Asim. In Sham they used that of Ibn 'Amir and in Mecca that of Ibn Kathir. In Medina that of Nafi' was used. This situation remained unchanged until the beginning of the third century A.H. when Ibn Mujahid removed the name of Ya'qub and put the name of al-Kisa'i in his place.

The reason why scholars paid so much attention to the seven reciters, despite there being many others of equal or better standing, was that the number of recitations had multiplied so quickly that they lost interest in learning and recording all the traditions about recitation. Thus they decided to choose several of the recitations which complied with the orthography of the Qur'an and which were easier to learn and record.

Thus for the five copies of the Qur'an which 'Uthman had sent to the towns of Mecca. Medina. Kufa, Basra and Sham, five reciters were chosen from the five areas and their recitations were then used. Ibn Jubayr writes about these five recitations from the five forms. Ibn Mujahid records a tradition which asserts that 'Uthman sent two other copies to Yemen and Bahrain, that the number of 'Uthman copies thus numbered seven and that they chose seven narrators.

Since precise information about this tradition (which states that copies were sent to Yemen and Bahrain was not available, they added two of the reciters of Kufa, to make up the number they had previously chosen, to seven. This number, which corresponds with the above-mentioned saying and affirmed that the Qur'an was revealed in seven recitations, was then used by others who had no knowledge of the matter. They mistakenly supposed that what was meant by the seven *harf* which the Prophet spoke of, was the seven recitations. The only trustworthy recitations are those whose text is sound and whose meaning corresponds to what is written in the Qur'an.

Al-Qurab says in his *al-Shafi.* "We *should look for the seven recitations amongst the qurra'* not from among others." This view is neither traditlon nor sunnah but rather it originated from some of the later Scholars who collected the seven recitations. These seven recitations became so well known that people imagined that other recitations should not be used. This however, has never been claimed.

The Number of verses in the Qur'an

The enumeration and delineation of the verses date from the time of the Prophet. In a saying the Prophet mentions ten verses from the "Family of 'Imran," seven in he chapter "al-Fatihah" and thirty in the chapter "The Sovereignty".

There are six views concerning the total number of verses in the Qur'an, as related by al-Dani. Some have said that the total is 6,000, some 6,204 and some 6,219. From these six estimations, two are from the reciters of Medina and four from the other areas to which the 'Uthmanic copies were sent, namely, Mecca, Kufa, Basra and Sham.

All these scholars support their claims by traditions reaching back to the companions and thus not directly linked, in a chain of transmissions, to the Prophet. Such traditions are called *mawquf* the science of the traditions.

Marfat.com

From Medina, those who specialized in enumeration and delineation of the verses, were Abu Ja'far Yazid ibn al-Qa'qa, Shaybah ibn Nassah, Isma'il ibn Ja'far ibn Abi Kathir al-Ansari, Ibn Kathir, Mujahid, Ibn 'Abbas. Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Hamzah, al-Kisa'i, Khalaf, Ibn Abi Layla, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, AIi. 'Asim ibn al-'Ajjaj al-Jahdari Ibn Dhakwan. Hisham ibn 'Ammar.

The reason for the different opinions concerning the total number of verses is related to the method of delineation and separation of the verses and letters.

The Names of the Chapters

The division of the Qur'an into chapters, like its division into, verses, is mentioned in the Qur'an itself. In several places God uses the actual words *surah* and *ayal.* In (XXIV : 1) He says *"(Here is) surah which we have revealed.."* in "Repentance", verse 86. *"And when a surah is revealed,"* in "The Cow" verse 23, *"Then produce a surah like it . . . "* and other similar verses.

The name of the chapter is sometimes derived from a name or form occurring in the chapter or from a subject treated by the chapter : for example "The Cow". "The Family of 'Imran" "The Night Journey" and "The Unity". We may note here that in the old Qur'ans it is usual to observe the following at the beginning of each chapter : *"The surah in which the Cow is mentioned "or "the surah in which the family of Imran is mentioned."* Sometimes the chapter becomes known by its first phrase : take for example, the chapter *"Read in the name of your Lord"* (or "the Clot") or the chapter, *"Truly we revealed it"* (The Night of Power) or the chapter *"Those who aisdelieve" (a*lso called "The Clear Proof)

Sometimes the chapter becomes known by a certain position or quality it possesses; thus the chapter "The Opening of the Book"' or "The Mother of the Book" or "The Seven Oft-repeated verses" (all describing the first chapter, or the "al-Fatihah"). The chapter "The Unity" is also called by the name "al-Ikhlas" (meaning that it describes the absolute unity of God) or by the name "Nisbat al-Rabb". (meaning the chapter which describes the divine nature of the Lord in relation to the slave . This method of naming the chapters was also used in the early days of Islam and is attested to by the traditions.

There are traditions, whose chains of authority reach back to the Prophet, which assert that the name of such chapters as "The Cow", "The Family of Imran" "Hud" and "The Event" were used by the Prophet himself. We may Conclude from this that many of these names came into being at the time of Prophet as a result of being in common use.

Calligraphy, Orthography and Diacritical Marks Used in the Qur'an

The first and second copies of the Qur'an were written in Kufic script at the time of the Prophet. The very basic nature of the script, without diacritical marks, was suitable for the reciters, relators and scholars who had learned the Qur'an by heart, since only they knew the precise pronunciation of the words. Others found great difficulty if they opened the Book and tried to read correctly.

It was for this reason that at the end of the first century after *Hijrah* Abu al-Aswad al-Du'alr[22], one of the companions of 'Ali, with the guidance of the latter, wrote out the rules of

Marfat.com

Arabic language and on the orders of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik produced a Qura'nic text with diacritical marks. This, to a certain extent, removed the difficulty of reading the Kufic script.

Several difficulties remained, however : the diacritical marks for vowels, for example, were for a time only points. Instead to a *fathah,* a point was placed at the beginning of the letter and, instead of *Kasrah,* a point below and, fort a dammah, a point above at the end of a letter. This led to ambiguity, he was not till Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Fauhidi set about explaining the *maddah, i.e.* the lengthening of certain words, the doubling of letters, the diacritical marks of vowelling and the pause, that the difficulty of reading the script was finally removed.

REFERENCES

1. The second chapter *(al-Bagarah)* descended in 1 A.H. in Medina. Some of its verses reproach the Jews who prevented the progress of Islam and others are about the rituals like the *qiblah.* the month of fasting, hajj, etc.
2. See *Surah* 4, 8 and 65 respectively.
3. Al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan,* Vol. 1, p.10 (quoting *Fada'il al-Qur'an* of Ibn Daris).
4. Al-Suyuti, *at-Itqan,* Vol. 1, p. 10.
5. Al-Suyuti, *ibid.*
6. Al-Suyuti, *ibid.,* Vol. 1, p.ll.
7. Abu 'Amr 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Dani al-Andalusi, the author of many works including *Kitab al-taysir,* died in 444 A.H.
8. Al-Qasim ibn Firruh al-Shatibi, a famous reciter and author of the celebrated *al-Qasidah al-Shatibiyah* (1120 verses), died 590, A.H. (*Kashf al-zunun*).
9. Abd Allah ibn Kathir al-Makki (d. 120 A.H.) received his instruction in the recitation of the Qur'an from 'Abd Allah ibn al-Sa'ib and Mujahid.
10. Nafi' ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Nu'aym al-Isfahani al-Madani (d. 159 or 169 A.H.) received his instruction from Yazid ibn al-Qa'qa' and Abu Maymunah Mawla Umm Salmah.
11. Asim ibn Abi al-Najjud al-Kufi (d. 127 or 129 A.M.), a pupil, in the art of Qur'anic recitation, of Sa'd ibn Ayyas al-Shaybani and Zarr ibn Hubaysh.
12. Hamzah ibn Habib al-Zayyat al-Tamimi al-Kufi (d. 156 A.H.) was a pupil of 'Asim. A'mash, al-Sabi'i and Mansur ibn al-Mu'tamar. He also studies under the Sixth Imam al-Sadiq and was the first to write about the *mutashabihat* of the Qur'an.
13. Ali ibn Hamzah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Fayruz al-Farisi (d. between 179-193 A.H.), a grammarian and recitor of the Qur'an was a teacher of the Caliphs al-Amin and al-Ma'mun. He studied grammar under Yunus al-Nahwi and Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi and Qur'anic recitation under Hamzah and Shu'ba ibn 'Ayyash.
14. Abu 'Amr Zabban ibn al-'Ala' al-Basri (d. between 154159 A.H.).
15. Abd Allah ibn 'Amir al-Shafi'i al-Dimashqi (d. 118 A.H.) studied under Abu al-Darda" and the companions of 'Uthman.

Marfat.com

16. There are differences of opinion as to the names of *ruwah* (transmitters) of Ibn 'Amir. Those mentioned above are given according to al-Suyuti's *al-Itqan.*

17. Abu Ja'far Yazid ibn al-Qa'qa' al-Madani (d. between I28-133 A.H.), a freed slave of Umm Salmah, received his instruction in Qur'anic recitation from 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ayyash, ibn 'Abbas and Abu Hurayrah.

18. Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Basri al-Hadrami (d. 205 A.H.) was a scholar and reciter on the authority of Salam ibn Sulayman, 'Asim al-Salami and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

19. Khalaf ibn Hisham al-Bazzaz (d. 229 A.H.) was a *rawi* of Hamzah. He studied under Malik ibn Anas and Hammad ibn Zayd and his pupil was Abu 'Awanah.

20. See al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* (section or. Qur'an); al-Fayd al-Kashani, *al-Safi* (introductory-matter); al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan,* Vol. 1, p.47.

21. Al-Suyuti, *op. cit.,* Vol. 1, p. 82.

22. Al-Suyuti, *op. cit.,* Vol. 2, p.171.

Marfat.com

7

Akhbari Shi'i Approaches to Tafsir

The expression Akhbari *tafsir* refers, perhaps misleadingly, to a particular type of quranic interpretation which achieved its final form in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries at the hands of Shi'i scholars. The prime concern of the Akhbaris and their 'opponents' the Usulis was not scripture interpretation *per se,* but rather the more far-ranging discipline of law and its working out—*fiqh*. It is likely that inasmuch as this division or school seems to have come about largely as an alternative theory of jurisprudence, rather than the somewhat more narrow discipline of *tafsir,* that the title of this paper is ill-conceived. However, the four works treated below do exhibit many similarities in approach and subject matter despite the fact that their authors appear to represent varying degrees of attachment to what might be called strict Akhbari belief. Because these works appear not to have attracted much attention in the West, a brief survey of their authors and contents will be offered.[1] It should be emphasized that these commentaries are extremely rich in content and that the following represents only the most preliminary sounding of their concerns. It is hoped, however, that by doing this the main purpose of this paper will have been achieved : to draw attention to these commentaries as representative of a more or less distinctive genre of *tafsir,* one which, from the evidence of their dates of publication, appears to have an enduring place in Shi'i religious literature. Before turning to the works themselves, a brief characterization of the major doctrinal differences between the Usulis and the Akhbaris will provide something of an introduction.

The Akhbari Usuli Debate

The Usulis recognize four sources of the law : Qur'an, *hadith, 'aql,* and *ijma'*. The Akhbaris recognize only the first two, the Qur'an and the *hadith*. In some cases, we are told, certain scholars accept only *hadith* as a proper source. Against the Usulis, the Akhbariyya consider the entire contents of the 'four books' of Shi'i tradition[2] to be reliable and may even allow traditions from a much wider field, including traditions from Sunni sources. Akhbaris also recognize only two categories of *hadith* : sound *(sahih)* and weak *(da'if),* against the four types recognized by the Usulis : sound *(sahih),* good *(hasan),* continuously-attested *(mutawatir),* weak *(da'if)*. According to the Akhbaris, *naqli* legal rulings, decisions based squarely on the traditions, have precedence over *'aqli* rulings, decisions based on reasoning and analogy *(qiyas),* tools the Usuliyya employ and require as part of the necessary *ijtihad*—independent legal reasoning– that is to be applied to the Qur'an and *hadith* for arriving at a legal decision. The Akhbaris, in short, reject *ijtihad*. Where the Usuliyya allow decisions to be made on the

Marfat.com

basis of conjecture *(zann),* Akhbaris allow a legal decision *(fatwa)* only in the case of certainty *(yaqin)* derived from a tradition *(khabar* pl. *akhbar).* Where there is no clear text, caution *(ihtiyat)* must be exercised. The Usulis divide humanity into two groups : *mujtahid* and *muqallid.* That is, between the Imam and the average believer is interposed an expert in religious matters to whom the believer must defer in matters of religion and law. The leading *mujtahid* of a given generation is called *marja' al-taqlid* (the object of emulation) and is the ultimate authority in religious matters. Obedience to the *mujtahid* for the Usulis is obedience to the Imam. Akhbaris maintain that ali men are *muqallid* to the Imam - that is all must emulate the Imam, and the Imam alone and directly in matters of religion which include law. Akhbaris permit the use of the decisions of a dead jurist, the Usuliyya forbid this.[3] This characterization should, however, be used with caution as it seems clear that there were varying degrees of attachment to these doctrines on both sides.[4]

It is not possible, or necessary, to survey the history of this dispute; reference is made to a recent summary of the question.[5] The point to keep in mind here is that the Akhbari approach, which had apparently been dormant for five or so centuries, began to assert itself in Iran during the Safavid period, especially in the writings of Mulla Muhammad Amin Astarabadi (d. 1623—24).[6] It is after this time that a series of Qur'an commentaries which may be characterized as Akhbari, were produced. The usual story is that from about the mid-seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth, a battle raged between the two camps. At the end of the day, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Usuliyya emerged victorious. The exact nature of the debate, the *dramatis personae,* and the place where the debate occurred is still a subject for study.[7]

While this particular struggle between the two groups was a fairly late event, traces of the argument can be found throughout the history of Qur'an interpretation. For example, in the earliest Shi'i commentaries on Qur'an 16.6 the bees, which are presented there as having been inspired by God to behave the way they do, are treated as a metaphor for the Imams whose divine knowledge, the honey of the verse, is that which provides this healing.[8] However, by the time of al-Sharif al-Radi (d.1016), the explanation of the verse had changed considerably : 'This honey is with the *muhaqqiqin* from among the *'ulama'* and does not come from the bellies of the bees'.[9]

Such a shift in exegesis supports Madelung's view concerning the history of the Usuli/ Akhbari dispute. In his discussion of the relationship between Shi'sm and Mu'tazilite theology, he cites a twelfth century work in which the author, one 'Abd al-Jalil al-Razi, describes his theological position as that of the *Imamiyya Usuliyya* as opposed to the position of the *Imamiyya Akhbariyya.* Madelung's conclusion is :

> These statements show that the conflict between *Usuliyya* and *Akhbariyya* in Imamism is not a phenomenon originating in... Safavid times, as is sometimes suggested.... The later conflict which centres on technical questions of the principles of the law *(usul al-fiqh)* is rooted in the earlier broader conflict between supporters of speculative theology and traditionalist opponents of reasoning in religion.[10]

Marfat.com

Types of Shi'i *Tafsir*

The *tafsirs* which form the subject of this essay are most usefully contrasted with the standard *tafsir* works of so-called classical Shi'ism : the two famous commentaries by Tusi (d. 1067) and Tabarsi (d. 1144). Quite simply, they are worlds apart in style, structure and content. The classical works are interested in grammatical questions, avoid major controversies and, contrary to the Akhbari works, relate vast amounts of *hadith* materiaf from Sunni sources and transmitters such as Tabari, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Mas'ud, and 'A'isha. The works at hand appear to care almost nothing for stylistics, points of grammar and so on, except in so far as such concerns might impinge upon finding the true reading of the verse in question through metonomy or metaphor for the Imam or some related topic such as *walaya*. The Akhbari approach is distinguished by the employment of vast numbers of oral reports, long since preserved in writing, that bear directly, and sometimes indirectly, on the meaning of the Qur'an. These oral reports are structurally the same as *hadith* reports but are distinguished from them in this case by the technical term *khabar* because virtually all of these reports are traced to one of the members of the holy family of Shi'sm, the *ahl al-bayt,* namely one of the so-called Fourteen Most Pure Ones, the twelve Imams, Fatima and the prophet Muhammad. A typical Akhbari commentary will cite a verse, or sequence of verses of the Qur'an, and then list a number of these oral reports which in some way or another explain the scriptural material.

Structurally then, Akhbari *tafsir* is quite similar to a perhaps more familiar type of interpretation, namely *tafsir bi'l-ma'thur*. The classic example of this category of exegesis is the massive commentary of Tabari (d. 923) known simply as *tafsir al-Tabari.*[11] In fact, the similarities appear at first to be so striking as to generate speculations on the cyclical recurrence of specific types of approaches to scripture. The works considered here are products of Safavid times, a period when a definite world view was in the making *and* at stake, and can therefore be compared with the above-mentioned *tafsir al-Tabari* of the late ninth and early tenth centuries during which those materials had been gathered and sorted which would form the basis for another world view. Interestingly, both projects were mounted during periods of decline in their respective political milieus.

But there is another difference between the work of Tabari and the work of our authors : they show a radical disagreement as to the fundamental questions of Islamic religious authority. Many of the traditions cited are explicitly anti-Sunni in nature, and all either explicitly or implicitly uphold and promulgate the absolute authority of the Imams. The resuscitation of such material began well before the rise of the most recent dispute in the eighteenth century between the Usulis and the Akhbaris and is dated from the beginning of the Safavid period itself when traditions long laid to rest were collected and ultimately translated into Persian for the widest possible circulation.[12] Their radicalism has been characterized as affecting three characteristic topics :

> ... the integrity of the Qur'an, the status of the Companions, and the position of the Imams. Briefly put, the message contained in these traditions is that certain phrases of the Qur'an which referred to 'Ali's rights had been deliberately omitted by 'Uthman and his accomplices; that the great majority of the Companions (including in particular

> the first three caliphs) were grave sinners or even unbelievers for usurping 'Ali's rights or acquiescing in his usurpation; that the Imams were superhuman, possessed knowledge of the *ghayb* and could perform miracles.[13]

This radicalism is expressed in a method of scripture interpretation most commonly designated by the word *ta'wil*. The word means 'taking back to the beginning' or 'taking back to first principles'. For the authors presented below, this means reading the verses of the Qur'an according to the interpretations of the Imams, who are, par excellence, the 'first principles' *(mabadi')* of Shi'ism. But beyond this, *ta'wil* means an interpretation of many quranic verses which mention such things as 'the Face of God' (*e.g.* Qur'an 2.115) as referring specifically to the Prophet and the Imams. So, for the present example :

> In a long *khabar,* God addresses the Prophet and the Imams in the *'alam al-dharr* (the world of the primordial covenant), thus : 'I have appointed you intercessors for Me. All things are passing away except my face, and you are my face which never perishes, and he who turns toward you will likewise never perish.'[14]

In contrast, the 'Face of God' is explained by Tusi as follows :

> To God belongs the east and the west. So wherever you turn, there is the Face of God. (Qur'an 2.115)

First comes a long discussion of the meaning of *mashriq* and *maghrib* in which Tusi cites many examples to prove that this refers to the places of the rising and the setting of the sun. This occupies almost three pages of his commentary. As for *wajh Allah* he cites a *hadith* from Ibn 'Abbas which the Mu'tazilite al-Jubba'i also used to bring out the familiar meaning of the expression : this verse was revealed to refute the Jews who objected to the changing of the *qibla* and the meaning is that God is not in one direction *(jiha)* to the exclusion of others. Another *hadith* from Qatada says that the verse simply indicates the direction of prayer. It is also said, Tusi tells us, that the verse was revealed for those who are unable to determine the correct direction of prayer because of darkness or other impediments. About the phrase there is general disagreement. He then quotes Hasan al-Basri and Mujahid to the effect that *wajh* means the direction of the *qibla, i.e.,* the Ka'ba. A final quotation from al-Rummani and al-Jubba'i gives the possible equivalence : Face of God = good pleasure of God.[15]

The works described below, quite apart from avoiding such authorities as Mujahid, Qatada, and al-Jubba'i, never delve into lexical questions with the attendant citation of literary *shawahid*. As stated above, the commentary is offered in the form of statements from the Imams.

The exegetes of this period whose works are considered below are, in the order of the dates of composition of their respective commentaries : 'Abd 'Ali al-Huwayzi (d. before 1693), Muhsin Fayd Kashani (d. 1680), Hashim al-Bahrani (d. ca.1695), and Abu 'l-Hasan al-Isfahani, al-Sharif al-'Amili (d. 1724). Each of these authors has written an introduction for his *tafsir*. The following examination is restricted for the most part to this introductory material. It will be helpful, as stated above, to bear in mind that even within the so-called Akhbari school a spectrum of intensity may be discerned. Indeed, it will be seen that it may be

Marfat.com

doubtful whether Isfahani can be considered an Akhbari at all. But inasmuch as his *tafsir* expresses the same 'radicalism' shared by the other authors discussed here, his work has been included.[16]

Nural-Thaqalayn

The first work to be discussed was written by 'Abd 'Ali b. Jum'a al-'Arusi al-Huwayzi, *Kitab tafsir nur al-thaqalayn,* hereafter *Nur.*[17] The title is taken from the famous *hadith al-thaqalayn,* which exists in many variants. Two of these have been combined in the following translation :

> The Prophet said : 'I am soon about to be received... I am telling you before I am taken up that I shall leave with you as representatives after me the Book of my Lord, and my progeny, the people of my household. The all-Gracious, all-Knowing told me that they [the two weights, al-thaqalayn] shall not be separated until they meet me [on the Day of Resurrection]—Do not precede them, for you would go astray, and do not fall behind them, for you would perish. Do not teach them, for they are of greater knowledge than you.'[18]

Huwayzi was a contemporary of the great Akhbari scholar al-Hurr al-'Amili (d. 1693) who mentions him as a scholar, *faqih,* reliable collector of *hadith,* pious, a poet and a contemporary master of the arts and sciences.[19] His death date is given as 1112/1700 in the present edition but there seems to be some confusion on this, since 'Amili refers to him as having died.[20] Not much is known about his life, but as indicated by his *nisba,* he was from the small town of Huwayza, near Ahwaz in southwest Iran and lived in Shiraz. Huwayza is remembered in history as the base of the fourteenth century Musha'sha 'kingdom brought into being by one who claimed to be the Mahdi.[21] One of the biographical works says that our author might have been a teacher of Sayyid Ni'mat Allah al-Tustari on the basis of an account of an argument which the latter witnessed in the Friday Mosque of Shiraz between one Ja'far al-Bahrani and 'my teacher' on the legality of extracting *ahkam* from the Qur'an. From the details of the discussion, it is clear that the unnamed teacher was loathe to apply reason to the interpretation of the Qur'an.[22]

The only known edition of *Nur* was edited by Hashim al-Rasuli al-Mahallati and printed in Qum during the years 1963-65. This edition is based on three manuscripts of varying completeness.[23] A preface by the highly regarded Shi'i scholar Muhamad Husayn al-Tabataba'i refers to the *tafsir* as 'one of the best if not the best' work of its kind.[24]

The author of *Dhari'a,* Agha Buzurg Tihrani, writes that *Nur* explains the Qur'an with transmissions from the *Ahl al-Bayt* and that he has collected these from such works as *al-Kafi, Tafsir al-Qummi, al-Ihtijaj* of Tabarsi, several works from Ibn Babawayh, the *Tahdhib* of Tusi, the *Kitdb al-ghayba* and the *Manaqib* (works of Ibn Shahrashub), and many others. Unfortunately, however, complete *isnads* are not provided, making it difficult to evaluate this or that specific report *(khabar).*[25] Tihrani also points out that Huwayzi makes no attempt at discussing the verses with regard to the standard (since Tusi) categories of *alfaz, i'rab,* and *qira''* contrary to the *Tafsir kanz al-haqa'iq*[26] The first part of the *tafsir* was completed by the author in the *madrasa* of the al-Muqayyimiyya Mosque in Shiraz, in the year 1065/1654; the second, up to

the *Surat al-Kahf,* was compieted in 1066/1655. The third part, from *Surat Maryam* to the *Surat al-Fatir (suras* 19-35), was also completed in 1066/1655. The boundaries of this third part may be conditioned by the equal rank assigned to Mary and Fatima *(al-Fatir)* in Shi'ism. About the date of the completion of the fourth volume Tihrani is silent, saying only that it covers the rest of the Qur'an.[27] This dating indicates that the work was probably extant while Muhsin Fayd was writing his commentary but it appears to have been unknown to him.

This work contains none of the systematized introductory material found below in the other three works. It does, however, contain a short prologue of some interest. This begins with a brief doxology that makes it clear the work is Shi'i and stresses that the Shi'a are a 'middle community' [Cf. Qur'an 2.143]. The Imams are described as those who nourish the wretched, the orphan and the prisoner. (Similar dire circumstances are to be referred to again later.) Huwayzi then explains that he undertook this project because of all the Qur'an commentaries available, some are concerned with grammar, others with *kalam,* others with lexicography, and so on, and he thought it important to add the traditions of the Imams which are indispensable for an understanding of 'the bright lights of the revelation and for revealing the mysteries of some of the *ta'wil.* The language here indicates that he is singling out the work of Baydawi (d.1286)[28] as being particularly deficient. He also says that if some of what he relates runs contrary to the *ijma'* of the Shi'i community *(al-ta'ifa al-muhiqqa),* he is not interested in this work in doctrine *(i'tiqad)* or (?judiciary) practice *('amal).* He has, nevertheless, included such material so that the enlightened reader will know 'how and from whom' it was transmitted. The book is meant to be helpful in arriving at basic disclosure *(kashf)* of the truth. Furthermore, Huwayzi defends his taking material from other books besides Tusi and Qummi on the grounds that these two did not transmit *hadith* for many verses of the Qur'an. He then cites a poem to the effect that what he is doing is out of love for the Shi'a. Since the author is described as a poet, it is possible that these lines are original, but I have not verified this. He closes the prologue by saying that despite numerous difficulties and calamities, his lack of resources - mental and physical, thanks to God's grace he was able to produce the book and he named it *Nur al-thaqalayn* hoping for some correspondence between, the meaning of the name and the value of the book so that by using it one might ultimately attain the 'stations of the Independent'. He then invokes the idea of the 'middle path' once more and hopes for deliverance from sin and error.[29] This preoccupation with correct belief and personal misfortune may indicate that our author was somewhat 'marginalized' in his milieu. In the very first *hadith* he cites, which is on the subject of the revelation of the *Fatiha* and the *ayat al-kursi,* this possibility gains more strength :'

> The Prophet said : 'When God desired to reveal the *Fatiha,* the *ayat at-kursi,* (Qur'an 2.255) the *shahida 'llah* (Qur'an 3.18) and [the verses] Say : 'Praised be God! Owner of Sovereignty! Thou givest sovereignty unto whom thou wilt... And thou givest sustenance unto whom thou choosest without stint' (3.26-27), these passages were hanging from the Throne, and there was no veil between them and God. They said [these verses] : 'O Lord! Thou art casting us down to the abode of sin and unto those who disobey you while we are dependent upon purity and holiness!' Then God said: 'By my power and glory! Any servant who recites you at the end of his *salat* I will cause to dwell in the *hazirat al-quds* according to what is in him. And I will look to him seventy times each day

Marfat.com

with my hidden eye, and I will award him seventy needs every day, the meanest of which will be [mere] forgiveness. And I will assist him to victory over every enemy. And he will never be prevented from entering Paradise'.[30]

Al-Safi

The second work to be considered is the most famous, namely the commentary of Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani (d.1680), the student and son-in-law of Mulla Sadra (d.1640). Muhsin Fayd was a member of the so-called Isfahan school, which was responsible for the elaboration of what became known as the *Hikmat-i ilahi* movement in philosophy. He was also the author of one of the 'three books' of later Twelver Shi'ism, namely *al-Wafi,* a compilation of and commentary on the canonical *hadiths* of the original 'four books' of Shi'i traditions.[31] He was also a teacher of Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi (d.1699), the compiler of the monumental collection of Imami lore, *Bihar al-anwar,* enemy of Sufism, most powerful religious figure of his time, and teacher of numerous prominent Shi'i *'ulama'.*

It is because such a thinker as Muhsin Fayd is counted among the Akhbaris, that it is difficult to consider the movement as 'fundamentalist' pure and simple.[32] Apart from his *tafsir,* Muhsin Fayd, as is well known, produced several other works expounding an intricate, rarified, and quite speculative, spiritual philosophy.[33] The question to be asked, therefore, is how such so-called Akhbari literalism can be associated with, or perhaps be productive of such an apparent incongruity.

In any case, *Safi* was completed in 1664,[34] well into the period of Safavid decline and the full title of the commentary is *al-Safi fi tafsir kalam Allah al-wafi*[35] It is introduced with twelve 'prologues' *(muqaddimat),* which contain the basic presuppositions informing the work. The titles of these introductions are listed here followed by page numbers which indicate the amount of space each topic takes up. Some material from these introductions will be translated as space allows.

1. On the prophetic injunction *(wasiya)* to cling to the Qur'an and the virtue of this (15-18).
2. That the knowledge of the Qur'an is all with the *Ahl al-Bayt* [19-23].

   From 'Ali: No verse of the Qur'an descended on the Prophet but that he recited it to me and dictated it to me so that I could write it in my own handwriting and he taught me its *ta 'wil* and its *tafsir,* its abrogating and abrogated verses *(nasikh wa-mansukh),* its clear laws *(muhkam),* its ambiguities *(mutashabih),* and he supplicated God on my behalf that he be able to teach me their full understanding *(fahm)* and that I be able to memorize them and not forget a single verse from the Book of God. So there is no knowledge which he dictated to me but I wrote it, and there is nothing he left out neither of command or prohibition, or of what was or what will be, nor was there any book which descended prior to Muhammad but that he taught it to me and I memorized it and I have forgotten not a single letter.

   Al-Baqir (the Fifth Imam, d.117/735—disputed) said : 'None but a liar can claim to have collected *(jama'a)* all of the Qur'an as it came down because none but 'Ali and the Imams after him collected it and memorized it as it came down'. [20][36]

Marfat.com

Al-Sadiq (the Sixth Imam, d. 148/765) said : We are the *rasikhun fi'l-'ilm* (mentioned in Qur'an 3.7 : those who are firmly grounded in knowledge) and we know the *la'wil* of the Qur'an. [21]

3. That most of the Qur'an came down about the *Ahl al-Bayt* and their friends and enemies and an explanation of the real meaning *(sirr)* of that. [24-28]

   Al-Baqir : 'The Qur'an came down in four fourths : one fourth concerns us, one fourth concerns our enemies, one fourth is *sunan* and *amthal,* and one fourth laws and regulations'. [24]

   Al-Baqir : 'The Qur'an came down in thirds : one third concerns us, one third concerns our beloved friends, one third concerns our enemies...'.[37][24]

   Al-Baqir : 'Whenever I hear God mention good people of the community it is us He means, and when bad people are mentioned it refers to our enemies'. [25]

4. Concerning the meanings of the aspects *(wujuh)* of the verses, and the establishing of the *mutashabih* and its *ta'wil.* [29-34] Here the familiar topics of *zahir, batin, naskh, muhkam/mutashabih, hadd,* and *matla'* are treated.

   Al-Baqir said : 'O Jabir, the Qur'an has an inner meaning, and an inner meaning to that. It also has an outer meaning which has again an outer meaning. O Jabir, nothing is further from the minds of men than *tafsir al-qur'an.* The beginning of a given verse may be about one thing while its conclusion is about something else. It is a speech containing many aspects *(wujuh).* [29]

   The Prophet said : 'The Qur'an has an outer meaning, an inner meaning, a prescriptive meaning, and a spiritual meaning'. [30].

   Al-Baqir said : 'The Qur'an came down in [the mode of] "[Even though I appear to be speaking to someone else] I really mean you, so listen to me well O neighbour! *(iyyaki a'ni wa'sma'iya jara)*"'[30].

   Muhsin Fayd explains this last *hadith* (which is a standard feature of the four commentaries studied in these pages) as follows : This is like the speaker who is addressing his speech to someone but really intends another. It is clearly seen in the case of the *hadith* from al-Baqir in answer to a query from a follower : 'God never reproved his Prophet but that he really intended the message for someone who is not mentioned explicitly in the Qur'an, as for example in the verse : "And had We not given, thee strength thou wouldst nearly have inclined to them a little."(Qur'an 17.74) That is, God means by this someone else. Perhaps the intention here is to those whose names have been removed from the Qur'an by the godless renegades *(mulhidun)'.* [30-31]

5. On the prohibition of *tafsir bi'l-ra'y.* [35-39]

   The Prophet said : 'He who interprets the Qur'an according to his own opinion has scored a direct miss with regard to the truth'. [35] The Prophet said : 'He who

Marfat.com

interprets the Qur'an according to his own opinion will be seated in Hell'. [35] From the Prophet and the Imams : 'It is not permitted to interpret the Qur'an except through sound traditions and and clear authority'. [35]

Muhsin Fayd adds : 'If someone claims that the Qur'an has only an exterior meaning, he speaks strictly from self and errs grievously... the Qur'an, the *akhbar* and the *athar* all point to the inner meanings *(ma'ani)* of the Qur'an'. [31-32]

6. On the collection of the Qur'an and its corruption. [40-55]

Al-Sadiq said : 'The Prophet said to 'Ali, "O 'Ali, the Qur'an is under my pillow in separate sheets... take it and collect it together, and do not lose it like the Jews lost the Torah." So 'Ali rushed and collected it in a yellow garment, then he put a seal upon it in his house...'. [40] From Salim b. Salma : 'A man was reciting for al-Sadiq, and I heard words *(huruf)* of the Qur'an which were not those that the people are reciting.

Al-Sadiq said : 'Cease that recitation[1] Recite as the people recite until the Qa'im arises. For when he arises he will recite the Book of God properly *('ala haddihi)*. And he will take out the *mushaf* which 'Ali wrote.' Then he said : 'When 'Ali had finished writing it, he went out to the people and said to them : "This is the Book of God as it was sent down upon Muhammad. I have gathered it together between two covers *(lawhayn)*" They said : "Look! We have a complete *mushaf* of the Qur'an. We do not need [your *mushaf*]!" Then 'Ali said : "You will not see it after today. Never. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon me to tell you about it after I have collected it so that you may [eventually] recite it." ' [40-41]

Al-Baqir : 'If the Book of God had not been added to and subtracted from, our right *(haqquna)* would not be obscure to anyone with understanding. When the Qa'im arises, he will correctly read the Qur'an'. [41]

Al-Sadiq said : 'If the Qur'an were read as it was revealed you would find us named in it'.[39][41]

7. That the Qur'an explains everything. [56-58]

Al-Sadiq said : 'God revealed in the Qur'an the explanation of everything and God did not leave out anything the servant might need so that a servant might not say "If only this had been revealed in the Qur'an...". Indeed, God has revealed it in it'.

Musa al-Kazim (the Seventh Imam, d.183/799) said : 'Everything is in the Book of God and the *sunna* of His Prophet'.

8. On the divisions of verses and their contents with regard to inner meaning and *ta'wil* and the types of language and the *qira'at,* and what we can gather from this. [59-63]

The Prophet : 'The Qur'an came down in seven *ahruf,* all of them sufficient and wholesome'.

Marfat.com

Muhsin Fayd says the meaning of this is disputed but the accepted opinion appears to be that the seven *ahruf* refer to seven types of verse : command *(amr),* rebuke (*zajr*), attraction *(targhib),* intimidation *(tahrib),* argument *(jadal),* story *(qissa)* and similitudes *(amthal)* (or : *zajr, amr, halal, haram, muhkam, mutashabih, amthal.)* Another tradition says that the Qur'an has seven levels of inner meaning. It is this interpretation that Muhsin Fayd thinks is the most useful. As for actual variants in reading the text, Muhsin Fayd says the best tradition is the easiest to pronounce and the clearest in meaning based on the *akhbar* of the Imams *(ma'sumin).* He is in any case interested in the meaning (*ma'na*), quite apart from matters of grammar. [62]

9. Concerning the actual period when the Qur'an came down. [64-66] It is established here that the Qur'an came down in the month of Ramadan, just like other holy books.

10. On the Qur'an as intercessor at the Day of Resurrection and the rewards for memorizing it and reciting it. [67-69]

    Al-Baqir said : 'Recite the Qur'an and elevate yourself, for when a verse is chanted, degree is elevated'.

    'Ali ibn al-Husayn (the Fourth Imam, also known as Zayn al-'Abidin, d.94/712) said : 'He who listens to a single letter of the book of God from any reading, God ordains for him by means of this a good and erases on his behalf a sin and raises his degree. And he who recites the book, no matter how it sounds, God decrees for him for every letter he pronounces a good and erases a sin and raises his station...'[67]

    The Prophet said : 'Illumine your houses with the recitation of the Qur'an and do not make them tombs like the Jews and the Christians did. They pray in their churches and synagogues but their houses are empty [of prayer]...'. [69]

11. On recitation and proper behaviour with the Qur'an. [70-74].

    Muhsin Fayd : 'He who recites the Qur'an and is not humble nor filled with tender feelings, nor cultivates sadness and fear in his soul *(sirr),* then he has badly misjudged the wont of God and incurred great loss. As for the reciter, he needs three things : a humble heart, a pure body, and an empty place. For when his heart is humble towards God, Satan flees from him; and when his body is free of extraneous things, his heart is purified for the recitation. If not, the impediment will keep him from the light of the Qur'an and its good effects. When he betakes himself to a mosque alone and withdraws from the masses after he has acquired the first two qualities and communes in his spirit and soul with God, then he experiences the sweetness of converse with God, and the knowledge of His grace and His station through the [resultant] receptivity for His blessings and the wondrousness of his allusions. And when he drinks of this chalice, he will not choose any state *(hal)* over this state, nor any moment *(waqt)* over this moment.[40] Nay rather, he will forego all [other] acts of obedience and worship because in him is conversation *(munajat)* with his Lord without intermediary. So heed how you recite the book of your Lord and the sharing of your [newfound] friendship [with him] and how its ordinances and prohibitions are incumbent upon

Marfat.com

you, and how you must appropriate the laws. It is a mighty book. Defile it not with any falseness—it is a wise revelation, praised, so recite it in "slow-measured rhythmic tones" [Qur'an 73.4] and heed its promise and threat, and meditate on its similitudes and preachings and beware that you put the sounds in their proper place.'[73]

From al-Sadiq : 'By God! Indeed God has manifested *(tajalla)* himself to his creatures in His speech but they do not see'. [73]

12. Explanation of the technical aspects of this *tafsir*. [75-78][41]

Musa al-Kazim said : 'When two *hadiths* which contradict each other come to you, compare them *(fa-qishuma)* to the Book of God and to the *hadiths* from us. Then the one that resembles these is true *(haqq),* and if it does not resemble them, it is false *(batil)'.*

Muhsin Fayd closes his introduction with the following words :

'Sometimes, in order to disclose the desired goal, it is necessary to take something from *al-Asrar* (the *tafsir* of al-Baydawi), even though I am not one of its people. But do not over-react to this because every people, even those, have a knowledge which may be useful... and hidden in the essence of their expressions is that which we have discovered through sincere love... And to God belongs praise'.

He then lists the abbreviations of the standard Shi'i works he cites and closes his introduction explaining that sometimes he has left out the *isnad* but that he verifies the *akhbar* through 'a method other than *isnads*'[42]:

> O my brothers, take what I give you with divine power, for an exhortation and healing for what is in the breasts has come from your Lord. God guides by it those who follow his good pleasure to the paths of Islam, and leads them out of darkness into light.[43]

It has been pointed out that Muhsin Fayd claims that the first transmitters of the exegetic tradition were limited in what they related by *taqiyya* ('pious dissimulation'), with the result that much of the true tradition might have been lost. 'This, of course, left great scope for new ideas in *tafsir* in the name of recovering the tradition'.[44] Elsewhere in this recent study, Muhsin Fayd along with Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, are described as 'extremists' for claiming that the Qur'an which we have has been altered.[45] This idea of an altered Qur'an is shared by the authors of the other works to be described. However, *Safi* is sufficiently ambiguous on the question to enable another author to cite it in support of his own argument that the Shi'a do not hold that the present Qur'an is somehow defective.[46] The relevant passages in *Safi* are as follows :

> The Qur'an which is in our hands is not the entire Qur'an sent down by God to Muhammad. Rather, there is in it that which contradicts that which God had sent down. There is, moreover, in it that which was altered and changed. There were many things deleted from it, such as the name of 'Ali in many places and the phrase Al Muhammad (the family of Muhammad), as well as the names of the 'hypocrites', where they occur....

Marfat.com

> The Qur'an, furthermore, was not arranged in accordance with the pleasure of God and his apostle.[47]

In a later passage, Muhsin Fayd offers a more or less standard practical solution to the problem.[48] This is explained as follows : Muhsin Fayd was bound by tradition, as represented by such venerated Shi'i scholars as Tusi and Tabarsi who had insisted on the authenticity of the text. Ayoub explains, paraphrasing *Safi* :

> The Qur'an as it now stands is the word of God which, if interpreted correctly, contains all that the community now needs in the way of legal sanctions and prohibitions, as well as the necessary proofs of the Imam's high office as its guardians and sole authorities on its exegesis.
>
> The Qur'an which is in our hands must, [Muhsin Fayd] argues, be followed during the occultation *(ghayba)* of the twelfth Imam. It must be assumed that the true Qur'an is with him.[49]

Apart from these considerations, this work is distinguished from others by the use of Sufi terminology (*e.g. hal, waqt, munaja'*) and an emphasis on the 'spiritual discipline' of reading the Qur'an as a means of approaching God 'without an intermediary'. We also see a rather liberal attitude to such sources as Baydawi and, in the course of the *tafsir* proper, there is more direct commentary from the author than is the case with either the previous work or the one immediately following.

Al-Burhan

It might be thought that *Safi* directly influenced the larger *tafsir* by Sayyid Hashim al-Bahrani (1695 or 1697), completed in 1683 during the reign of the Safavid Shah Sulayman (d. 1694) to whom the work is duly dedicated. It contains similarly arranged introductory material and repeats many of the same traditions at corresponding verses. However, its author neither cites *Safi* directly, nor mentions the work in the long list of sources included in his introduction.[50] Indeed, Banrani explicitly states that he is the first to gather the exegetical *akhbar* of the Imams in such number and that he was preceded in this only by 'Ayyash; and Ibn al-Hajjam.[51] Apparently the earliest source for his life is *Lu'lu'at al-Bahrayn* by the Akhbari scholar Yusuf al Bahrani (d.1772).[52] Sayyid Hashim was bora in the village of Tawbali, in one of the districts of Bahrayn. His father's name was Sayyid 'Abd al-Jawad al-Kattakani. His birth date is unknown. He died in the small town of al-Nu'aym, whence his remains were returned to Tawball for interment in a tomb which subsequently became a well-known place of visitation. Our source says that Bahrani gathered *hadiths* to a degree matched only by Majlisi and that he wrote a number of books demonstrating his strength in this. He also says that one writer mentions having met Bahrani's son in Isfahan and at that time was shown seventy-five works by our author.[53] The title of the work at hand is *Kitab al-burhan fi tafsir al-Qur'an,* and it is in four volumes.[54]

For each verse or group of verses, the author lists a series of pertinent *akhbar* from the Prophet or the Imams. As mentioned, the introductory material appears to be modelled after *Safi,* but this is doubtless not the case.[55] A more likely model would be Muhammad

Marfat.com

Baqir al-Majlisi.[56] Inasmuch as Muhsin Fayd was one of Majlisi teachers, the influence may be indirect. But this is only speculation, as Majlisi is not named by our author either. A brief prologue to the following sixteen chapters begins with a number of reports against *tafsir bi'l-ra'y,* and other reports which assert that only the Prophet and the Imams were able to interpret the Qur'an. 'God taught the Prophet the literal text (*tanzil*) and He taught 'Ali its interpretation (*ta'wil*)'.[57]

The author of this work laments that notwithstanding such a statement, he finds the people of his time persistent in interpreting the Qur'an according to their selfish needs to uphold their various sects and doctrines, without referring to the Imams, and cites the works of al-Zamakhshari (d. 1144) and al-Baydawi as examples of current *tafsir* authorities.[58] This statement might also be tacitly directed to such scholars as Mulla Sadra (d. 1640), who engaged in a style of exegesis quite different from that of Muhsin Fayd, his student, and the other Akhbari commentators. Mulla Sadra's commentaries, by comparison with these other works which ceaselessly refer to the *Ahl al-Bayt,* appear to ignore the Imams and the Prophet, even though his entire philosophy may be said to revolve around the institution of *Imama*; rather, he is concerned with elaborating his *Hikmat-i ilahi* philosophy. But his style is so strikingly different that it could generate doubts as to his 'orthodoxy' (from the Akhbari point of view) because the all-important *akhbar* are not explicitly marshalled to the task of interpretation. Obviously, the mere fact that Mulla Sadra composed a massive (if unfinished) commentary on the *Usul al-kafi* demonstrates his devotion to the material. This style of commentary could have rankled men like Bahrani, not necessarily because of any displeasure with this philosophy itself but because what was perceived as the true meaning of the Qur'an, viz., the Imamate, as represented by the *akhbar,* had been subordinated to it.[59] Bahrani's prologue closes with an apology for quoting such authorities as Ibn 'Abbas ('a little') 'since he was after all, a student of the Commander of the Faithful'.

Whereas Muhsin Fayd's introduction was divided according to the number of Imams revered by the Shi'a, Bahrani's work is introduced by sixteen chapters (sing, *bab)* which provide a useful summary of the major themes of his *tafsir*[60] A list of these will further illustrate the concerns of this work.

Chapter 1 : on the pursuit of knowledge *('ilm)*[61] [5-7]

'Ali said : 'I heard the Prophet say : "The search for knowledge is a religious duty for every Muslim, so seek it at those places where you may expect it to be found *(mazannihi),* and acquire it from its people'".[5]

The Prophet said : 'If a believer dies and leaves behind one page upon which knowledge is written, this single page will be interposed between him and hell until the Day of Resurrection. Then God will give him for each letter on it a city seven times larger than the earth.'[6]

The Prophet answered one of the Ansar as follows : He had been asked : 'O Messenger of God, what is the reality of knowledge?' He replied : 'Hearkening to it'. 'Then what?' asked the man. He replied : 'Heeding it'. 'Then what?' The Prophet answered : 'Memorizing it'. 'And then what, O Prophet?' He said : 'Acting upon it'. 'And then?' The Prophet answered : 'Promulgating it'. [7]

Marfat.com

Chapter 2 : on the Excellence *(fadl)* of the Qur'an. [7-9]

The Prophet : 'God will never punish the heart that contains the Qur'an'.

The Prophet : 'The best of you are those who study and teach the Qur'an'.

Al-Baqir said about the Qur'an : 'It is neither creator nor created, rather it is the speech of the creator'. [8]

'Ali said : 'In the Qur'an is information about what came before you, and tidings about what will come after you, and judgement on what concerns you now'. [9]

Chapter 3 : concerning the 'two weights'. This refers to the *Hadith al-thaqalayn,* related from the Prophet. [9-14]. A version of this *hadith* has been given above. This chapter lists no less than thirty-two variants of this report. The importance in this context is that it establishes the Imams as the sole interpreters of the Qur'an. This tradition, and its variants, provides support for the basic Shi'i notion of the 'Speaking Qur'an' (*i.e.,* the Prophet and the Imams) and the 'Silent Qur'an' (*i.e.,* the Qur'an itself).

Chapter 4 : on the *hadith al-thaqalayn* from the opposing point of view. [14-15] This view is summarized by Bahrani as 'whatever the believer needs is in the Qur'an,' the implication being that there is no need to consult the *akhbar,* and he lists eighteen *akhbar* to this effect from the Imams.[62] From the heading, however, it is obvious that our author does not agree with this doctrine.

Chapter 5 : that no one but the Imams collected *(jama'a)* the Qur'an as it was revealed and that the *ta'wil* of the Qur'an is with the Imams: [15-17]

Al-Baqir said : 'None but the *awsiya'* (the Imams) can claim to have collected all of the Qur'an, its *zahr* and *batn'.* [15]

Al-Sadiq : 'By God, I know the Qur'an from first to last as if it were in the palm of my hand. In it is information about heaven and earth, what was and what will be, as God himself has said about it : "It is an explanation of all things" (Qur'an 12.89)'. [15]

Al-Sadiq was asked if some of the Imams were more knowledgeable than others. He replied : 'Yes, but with regard to commands, prohibitions and *tafsir,* they are one'. [17]

Al-Sadiq : "All was the master of commands and prohibitions and the knowledge of the Qur'an. And we are the same'. [17]

The Prophet said : 'Among you is one who will fight for the to *ta'wil* of the Qur'an as I have fought for its *tanzil.* That one is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib'.[63] [17]

'Ali said : 'Whatever is between the two covers *(lawhayn),* indeed I know it'. [17]

'Ali said : 'No verse came down but that I know about whom it was revealed and where it was revealed, and upon what subject it was revealed. My Lord has given me a knowing heart and a speaking tongue'. [17]

Chapter 6 : on the prohibition of *tafsir bi'l-ra'y* and the prohibition of disputation *(jidal).*[64][17–19]

Marfat.com

The Prophet said : 'God cursed those who dispute in matters of religion through the tongues of seventy prophets. He who argues about the verses of God has committed *kufr,* as stated in the verse : "None can dispute about the verses of God but the unbelievers. Let not their strutting about the land deceive you". (Qur'an 30.4) He who explains the Qur'an according to his own opinion has insulted God. And he who gives *a fatwa* without knowledge, the angels of heaven and earth curse. Any innovation *(bid'a)* is an error, and error is the path to hell'. The Prophet was asked : 'O Prophet direct me to salvation'. The Prophet replied : 'When opinions differ, you should consult 'Ali. He is the Imam of my community and the Caliph over them after me. He is the distinguisher between truth and falsehood. Whoever asks of him is answered. Whoever seeks guidance from him is guided. Whoever seeks the truth from him finds it... All who object to him are destroyed... Indeed 'Ali is of me. His spirit is my spirit. His clay is my clay. He is my brother and I am his brother. He married my daughter Fatima, the queen of the women of paradise. And from him issue the two Imams of my community, and my two sons, the two princes of the youths of paradise, Hasan and Husayn, and nine others of the progeny of Husayn. The ninth one is the Qa'im of my community who will fill the earth with justice as it is now filled with iniquity and oppression'. [18]

Al-Baqir said : 'Nothing is more remote from the minds of men than the explanation *(tafsir)* of the Qur'an. The first part of a verse may be about one thing, the middle about another and the end about yet another...'. [19]

Al-Baqir said : 'None interprets one part of the Qur'an with another part but that he commits *kufr'*. [19]

Chapter 7 : that the Qur'an has an external and an internal meaning, and a general and particular application, and clear verses *(muhkam)* and ambiguous verses *(mutashabih),* and abrogating *(nasikh)* and abrogated *(mansukh)* verses, and, that the Prophet and the people of his House know these and they are 'those who are firmly rooted in knowledge' (Qur'an 3.7, *al-rasikhun fi'l- ilm*)-[19-21][65]

Al-Sadiq said : 'We are the people obedience to whom God has made obligatory. To us belongs the booty and to us belongs the best property, and we are the *rasikhun fi'l-'ilm* and we are the objects of envy alluded to in the verse : "Or do they envy mankind for what God has given them of his bounty?" (Qur'an 4.54)' [21]

Fudayl b. Yasar said to al-Sadiq : 'The people are saying that the Qur'an came down in seven *ahruf.* Al-Sadiq said : 'The enemies of God lie. The Qur'an came down in one *harf* from the One'. [21]

An appendix to this chapter entitled 'And from the *tariq al-jumhur*', offers a single *hadith* from the *Kitab hilyat al-awliya* which goes back to 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud who said : 'The Qur'an came down in seven *ahruf.* There is not a single letter but it has an exterior and an interior meaning and with 'Ali is the knowledge of these'. [21]

Chapter 8 : that the Qur'an came down in [several] parts *(aqsam)* [21][66]

'Ali : 'It came down in three parts : one third concerning us and our enemies, one third concerning *sunna* and one third concerning obligations and laws'.

Al-Sadiq : The Qur'an came down in fourths, one fourth about the permitted things, one fourth about the forbidden things, one fourth about the *sunna* and laws and one fourth concerned the stories of the past and prophecies about the future'.

Al-Baqir '[The Qur'an came down] in fourths, one fourth about us and one fourth about our enemies and one fourth about *sunna* and examples and one fourth about obligations and laws. And to us pertain the most important parts'.[67]

In addition to these *akhbar* (also quoted by Muhsin Fayd), Bahrani adds another appendix entitled *Min tariq al-jumhur*. He quotes from Ibn al-Mughazali[68] a *hadith* transmitted from Ibn 'Abbas according to whom the Prophet said, 'The Qur'an is in fourths : one fourth concerns us specifically, the *ahl al-bayt;* one fourth on *halal;* one fourth on *haram;* and one fourth on *fara'id* and *ahkam*. By God, the most valuable parts of the Qur'an are about us'. [21]

Chapter 9 : this chapter deals with the principle that some verses in the Qur'an were revealed in the mode of *iyyaki a'ni wa'sma'i ya jara*. [22]

Whereas Muhsin Fayd sought to explain this topic in his own words, Bahrani merely cites three *hadiths* which mention it, *e.g.* :

Al-Sadiq said : 'Indeed the Qur'an came down in the mode of *iyyaki a'ni wa'sma'i ya jara* ....

The example given is the same as in *Safi* : 'and had we not confirmed thee, surely thou wert near to inclining unto them a very little' (Qur'an 17.74)[69][22]

Chapter 10 : what pertains to the Imams in the Qur'an [22-23][70]

In addition to *hadiths* quoted by Muhsin Fayd in his sixth chapter (see above) 'On the collection of the Qur'an and its corruption', Bahrani quotes the following :

From Dawud b. Farqad : 'I said to al-Sadiq, "Are you the *salat* in the Book and are you the *zakat* and are you the *hajj?"* He said : "We are these as well as the fast and the sacred month and the sanctuary *(balad al-haram)* and the Ka'ba and the *qibla* and the face of God *(wajh Allah)* and the verses *(ayat)* and the clear verses *(bayyinat)*. And our enemies are designated in the Qur'an as indecency *(al-fahsha'* and *al-munkar),* insolence *(al-baghy)* and wine (*al-khamr*) and gambling *(al-maysir)* [etc ..."...' [22]

Al-Sadiq said : 'We are the source of every righteousness and our enemies the source of all evil... '.[71]

Chapter 11 : entitled simply 'Another chapter'. [23-26]

The purpose here is to nuance the ideas introduced in the previous chapter. Bahrani quotes a long *hadith* to the effect that it is not correct to imagine that such words and topics in the Qur'an as wine, prayer, and so on refer to people (the Imams and their opponents) if such a belief causes one to neglect the actual carrying out of the obligations

Marfat.com

of religion. This danger must be avoided at all costs. In addition, the following is offered :

Al-Sadiq wrote to Abu'l-Khattab (founder of the extremist group bearing his name, executed 135/755) : 'It has reached me that you allege that wine is a man, that fornication is a man, that *salat* is a man, that fasting is a man, but it is not like that. We are the root of good and its branches are obedience to God. Those who show enmity towards us are the root of evil and its branches are rebellion against God'. Then he wrote: 'How can one obey what (man) he does not know and how can one know what he does not obey?!'

This chapter closes with a statement from the Prophet which says that he who observes the laws without knowledge *(ma'rifa)* of the Prophet, this observance is void. [26]

Chapter 12 : on the meaning of *al-thaqalayn* and *al-khalifatayn* according to the *tariq al-mukhalifin*. [26-28].

This chapter lists sixteen reports from such works as the *Musnad* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the *Sahih* of Muslim and the *Tafsir* of al-Tha'labi, which support the above-mentioned idea of the 'two weights' bequeathed by the Prophet for the guidance of his community.

Chapter 13 : on the reason that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and that its miraculousness is in its arrangement *(nazm)* and that its meaning is newly applicable through the course of time. It contains, among others, the following *hadith*:

Al-Sadiq said : 'God did not make the Qur'an for one time to the exclusion of others, or for one people to the exclusion of others. Thus it is new for each time, and fresh for each succeeding generation until the Day of Resurrection'. [28]

Chapter 14 : any *hadith* which does not agree with the Qur'an is rejected *(mardud)*. [28–29]

Chapter 15 : on the first and the last *suras* sent down. [29]

Chapter 16 : the books from which material for this book was taken. [30-31] After listing a bibliography of over fifty works, he reproduces, *verbatim,* most of the introduction to al-Qummi's *Tafsir*. [31-41][72]

The problems treated here include those of abrogation *(naskh wa-mansukh,* including the question of *taqdim* and *ta'khir),* clear and ambiguous verses *(muhkam wa-mutashabih),* verses which fall into the category of generalities with specific applications (*lafz 'amm wa-ma'na khass),* and specific statements which have a general application (*lafz khass wa-ma'na 'amm*). Verses are cited which show that they were interrupted in the course of their revelation and continued later *(al-munqata a wa'l-ma tuf),* and which employ one word when another is intended *(harf makan harf)* such as Qur'an 2.150, where *illa alladhina zalamu minhum* should be read as *wa-la alladhina....* [32-33]

The problem of contradiction in the Qur'an *(ma huwa 'ala khilaf ma anzala 'llah)* is also treated. Here, an example is made of Qur'an 3.10 'You are the best nation ever brought forth

Marfat.com

to men, bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour, and believing in God . Al-Sadiq is reported to have said to the reciter of this verse : 'How is it that the best community killed 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn?' The anonymous reciter then asked, 'How was it really sent down then, O son of the Messenger?' Al-Sadiq said : 'Like this : "You are the best Imams *(a'imma* replaces *umma)* ever brought forth to men..."...'[73] Qummi, quoted by Bahrani, then lists several other similar cases. [34]

Another sub-section deals specifically with corruption *(muharraf)* of the text, perhaps implying that the above category describes verses which were accidentally misread. The example given here is Qur'an 4.166 : 'But God bears witness to that which He has sent down to thee; He has sent it down with his knowledge; and the angels also bear witness; and God suffices for a witness'. This verse was originally revealed as : 'God testi-fieth to that which He has sent down about 'Ali Then came 'He revealed to him His knowledge and the angels testify to this'. [34]

Qummi then treats the subject of quraric words which appear to be in the plural, but whose meaning is singular *(lafz jam'/ma'nd wahid)* and vice versa *(lafz wahid/ma'na jam')*. In addition, the problem of verbs in the past tense which actually refer to the future *(lofz madi wa-huwa mustaqbal)* is discussed, citing Qur'an 39.68 as an example, in which *wa-nufikha fi'l-sur* is to be read as 'For the trumpet shall be blown'. [34]

Qummi says also that the verses in one *sura* may be completed in another *sura;* or, that in the case of abrogation, one half of a verse may be affected while another is not. In other cases, it is possible to derive the interpretation *(ta'wil)* of a verse from the text of the Qur'an itself *(tanzil),* or by reference to this text. Elsewhere, the Qur'an has verses which indicate that its interpretation was already apparent in the common usage of the Arabs before the revelation codified this usage, while some verses show that the meaning of a particular verse came as something new after the revelation. [34-35]

Various other principles of exegesis are thus described by the author of this commentary, and the introduction is concluded by a series of refutations *(radd)* of various groups which include the *Zanadiqa,* by which astrologers are intended; the idol-worshippers; the *Dahriyya,* 'materialists ; those who deny divine reward and punishment; those who deny the ascension and night journey and the beatific vision of the Prophet : those who deny the existence of heaven and hell; those who deny the efficacy of man's will *(al-mujbira);* the Mu'tazila; those who deny the Return *(al-raj'a);* and those who describe God. [36-40]

Anwar

Al-Mawla al-Sharif al-'Adl Abu'l-Hasan b. al-Shaykh Muhammad Tahir b. al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Hamid b. Musa b. Ali b. Ma'tuq b. Abd al-Hamid al-Fatuni al-Nabati al-Amili al-Isfahani al-Ghawari was the author of the fourth and final work to be treated here. He is known as Abu'l-Hasan al-Sharif al-'Amili al-Isfahani, and his work is entitled *Mir'at al-anwar wa-mishkat al-asrar fi tafsir al-Qur'an.*[74] He was the son of the sister of al-Amir Muhammad Salih al-Khatunabadi, one of the more prominent scholars of the late Safavid period, and who himself was a student and son-in-law of Majlisi. This exegete was also a student of Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, from whom he had two *ijqzas,*[75] and al-Hurr al-'Amili.[76] In addition, Isfahani

Marfat.com

had *ijazat* from several other notable *'ulama'* of his time,[77] and was the teacher of students who would later influence the minds of such seminal figures as Sayyid Mahdi Bahr al-'Ulum (d. 1797).

He lived for many years in Najaf, where he died,[78] According to the author of *Lu'lu'at*, he was a subtle scholar, trustworthy and just *(muhaqqiq, mudaqqiq, thiqa, salih, 'adl).* Apparently, Isfahani and his father (who had come to visit his son in Najaf sometime after 1688) were known as something of a scholarly team, hosting meetings of the friends *(rufaqa').*[79] In short, his reputation as a scholar is firmly established."[80]

Apart from the book at hand, he wrote a *Kitab al-fu'ad al-gharawiyya* 'nothing of which remains except a portion on *usul al-fiqh'* (it is described as treating the laws which derive from the *akhbar),*[81] and a *Kitab diya' al-'alimin fi 'l-imam*[82] He also wrote on *furu' wa-usul*[83] and a *risala* on foster relationship in which there are some statements on the revelation *(al-tanzit).* He begins it by quoting al-Muhaqqiq al-Damad.[84] In addition to *a sharh on Al-Kifaya,* he wrote also a *Kitab shari'at al-shi'a wa-dala'il al-shari-a* which is a commentary on Muhsin Fayd's *Al-Mafatih al-shard'i'.*[85] Such titles suggest a stronger interest in *fiqh* than one might expect from an Akhbari. Isfahani is in fact compared with one Sayyid Muhammad ibn 'Ali Ibn Haydar al-Musawi al-'Amili al-Makki known as Sayyid Muhammad Haydar (d.1726),[86] who wrote a *tafsir* of the Qur'an dealing with *usul* and *furu',*[87] and was the student of our author from whom he received an *ijaza* or teacher's licence.

According to *Dhari'a,* one manuscript of the work comments on verses up to the middle of the *Surat al-baqara* while another takes the commentary up to 4.4.[88] The first volume, of over 20,000 lines, was published in Iran in 1303/1885, but was, 'due to the lack of information on the part of the publisher', attributed to one Shaykh 'Abd al-Latif al-Kazaruni, about whom nothing else is said. According to Tihrani 'In what concerns the quranic sciences nothing like it has been written'.[89]

This work is often referred to by Corbin in his magisterial study of Shri Qur'an interpretation.[90] Corbin, either contrary to *Dhari'a* or perhaps speaking of another edition, says that the work was lithographed in 1878 in Tehran, but agrees with *Dhari'a* that its authorship was wrongly ascribed. Thanks to the 'vigilance bibliographique' of Nuri Tabarsi, the work was re-edite [1] and printed in Tehran in 1955, under the correct name of Isfahani. This edition, according to Corbin, continued the tradition of treating the work as an introduction to *Burhan,* but Isfahani was apparently unaware of the *tafsir* by Bahrani.[91]

At some point, this later edition was published in an independent volume; its title page says that the work is 'like the introduction to the *Tafsir* of al-Bahrani'. In it, the editor promises to publish a second volume which would contain the balance of Isfahani's work, but this second volume has not yet appeared. It is this edition, containing only a lengthy introduction to the *tafsir* proper that is treated below.

The work is divided in three prologues *(muqaddimat),* two of which will be described in detail. The corresponding *maqalat* into which they are divided are designated by Arabic numerals. Finally, the *fusul* into which these *maqalat* are further sub-divided, are designated by lower case Roman numerals.

Marfat.com

Prologue I

All of the esoteric content of the Qur'an concerns the notion of *walaya* and the Imamate, just as its exoteric content concerns *tawhid* and *nubuwwa*. This prologue contains three *maqalat,* the first *maqala* has five *fusul,* the second also has five, and the third has none. [4-36]

Maqala I : that which is proven by the *akhbar* adduced in this prologue :

(i) The Qur'an has esoteric dimensions, the verses are susceptible of *ta'wil,* and that meaning of the Qur'an is not restricted to only one era, but continues at all times for all people. [4]

(ii) Several reports to the effect that the inner meaning of the Qur'an is related to the Imams, their *walaya,* and their followers. [4-6].

(iii) On the task of harmonizing *(tanasub)* the exoteric with the esoteric, and the similarity *(tashdbuh)* between the esoiericists *(ahl* al ta'wil) and the exotericists *(ahl al-tanzil).* [6-8]

(iv) The imperative *(wujub)* of belief in both the exoteric and esoteric content of the Qur'an. This is similar to the necessity of belief in both the clear *(muhkam)* and ambiguous *(mutashabih)* verses. [8-12]

(v) That the knowledge of the *ta'wil* of the Qur'an, or rather the complete knowledge of it, is with the *Ahl al-Bayt.* Also included here is the citation of *akhbar* forbidding *tafsir al-Qur'an* through personal opinion (*al-ra'y*)] or without heeding the Imams. [12-15]

Maqala 2 : the second essay deals with the doctrine that the general meaning of the word of God pertains to *tawhid* and *nubuwwa* on the surface *(sarihan wa-tanzilan),* and to *walaya* and *imama* in its inner meaning *(batnan wa-kindyatan wa-ta'wilan)* according to the *akhbar.* [19]

(i) Some of what our *'ulama'* have written about the greatness of the Imams and their *walaya,* and the disbelief *(kufr)* of their rejectors. [19-21]

(ii) A few of the *akhbar* concerning the imperative of the *walaya* of the *Ahl al-Bayt,* and of their love *(mahabba),* and obedience to them. This is the anchor of *iman* and the condition for God's acceptance of all deeds and for one's leaving (truly) the domain *of kufr* and *shirk.* Also included is a condemnation of the rejection *(inkar)* of *walaya* and doubt about the Imams. [21-23]

(iii) Confessing the *imama* of the Imams and their love and *walaya* comes after the confession of the *nubuwwa* of the Prophet in the course of correct religion and faith, just as the confession of *nubuwwa* comes after the confession *of tawhid.* [23-25]

(iv) *Walaya,* together with *tawhid,* was presented to all creation and the covenant implying it was imposed upon all creation, and all the prophets were sent with it for all creation, and that *walaya* was sent down in all the holy books and imposed upon all nations. [25-28]

(v) That the Prophet and the Imams were the first to be created and that their *walaya* is

Marfat.com

the cause in the process of creation *(al-'illa fi 'l-ijdd)* and *the* principle in obedience. [28-33]

Maqala 3 : the third *maqala* [which contains no subsections] says that the esoteric content of the Qur'an pertains to *walaya* and the Imamate, according to the *akhbar* which indicate that this community follows the practices *(sunan)* of pervious religious communities in all their deeds. [33, 36]

The object of this lengthy segment is to establish the recurring nature of the breaking of the covenant. Just as the Calf was worshipped in the time of Moses, so have the Muslims erred in misplacing their allegiances. A number of *hadith* are marshalled to explain two verses of the Qur'an : That ye shall journey on from stage to stage' (Qur'an 84.19) and 'That was the way of God in the case of those who have passed away of old–thou wilt find for the way of God aught of power of change' (33.62, cf. 35.43, 48.23)

'Ali said : 'This means that you will travel the road of the previous communities in perfidy *(ghadr)* towards the *awsiya' after* the *anbiya'*. Al-Baqir said : 'This community travelled after its Prophet stage by stage in the cause of *fulan and fulan and fulan'*.[92]

Al-Sadiq, in answer to a letter from al-Mufaddal on some problems raised by the *malahida* and the *ghulat,* wrote : 'As for what you mention towards the end of your letter, that they claim that God, the Lord of the worlds, is the Prophet, and your comparison with this belief and the belief of those who say about Jesus what they say, indeed, the ways *(sunan)* of the past are here and now repeated, just like sheep following sheep.[93] So know that this community will err like the community before them, etc'. [34]

A number of reports from *kutub'al-'amma* (Sunni books : the *Sahih, Musnad,* and so on), are then presented to support this idea.

Prologue II

This prologue has no *maqalat* and seeks to establish that there are some alterations *(taghyir)* in the Qur'an, 'and this explains why guidance is placed in the divine command *(amr)* of *walaya* and *imama,* and is also an allusion to the virtues of the *Ahl al-Bayt,* and the obligation of obedience to the Imams according to the esoteric content of the Qur'an and its *ta'wil* In the absence of explicit statements in the Qur'an on this matter, one arrives at this conclusion through metaphor and symbols and allusions in its literal text *(tanzil)'*. It comprises four *fusul* : [36-51]

(i) Concerning the collection of the Qur'an, its incompleteness and alteration from reports which our friends (*i.e.* the Shi'a) related. [36-39]

(ii) Concerning the collection of the Qur'an, its incompleteness and alteration, and the disagreement about this in the reports of the Sunnis *(mukhalifin)*. [39-43]

(iii) The report of the *zindiq* who brought 'Ali proof of the alteration of the Qur'an and the misdeeds of the hypocrites regarding the word of God. This report is long, containing many things which were deleted from the Qur'an. [43-48]

Marfat.com

(iv) A resume of the statements of our *'ulama'* concerning the absence of alteration of the Qur'an and its non-existence and the falseness of the argument of those who deny alteration. [49-51]

Prologue III

Prologue III [52-348] is composed of two *maqalat,* the first divided into seven *fusul* :

Maqala 1 : certain verses in the Qur'an are explained by *akhbar* which offer a *ta'wil* through metonomy and allusion. These require *al-majazat al-'aqliyya,* others are self-evident through *al-majaz al-lughawi*:

(i) What God means to be interpreted as *batin.* [52]

Al-Sadiq : 'Whatever is good in the Qur'an pertains to us or our Shi'a'.

(ii) What is to be interpreted through reference to the past. [53]

Al-Sadiq said : 'The "people of Moses" in the Qur'an means the people of Islam'.

(iii) That God intends in some speeches in the Qur'an, according to the principle of *ta'wil* and *batn,* an addressee other than that which the *zahir* would suggest. [53-54]

Al-Sadiq said : 'The Qur'an came down in [the mode of] *iyyaki a'ni...*:

Here Isfahani repeats the words of Muhsin Fayd (unascribed) : 'It is like a man who addresses a statement to one person and means another addressee'. Then the example of Qur'an 17.74 given by both Muhsin Fayd and Bahrani, adding that the *khabar* of the Zindiq supports this. He adds :

> Perhaps the meaning is in what 'Ali al-Rida (the eighth Imam, d.203/818) wrote to 'the Byzantine' that al-Sadiq said. Sometimes something is said about someone which is not applicable to him, but turns out to be applicable to that one's son. Following this reasoning, if we see the *Umma* in the station of the son of the Prophet and the Imam and there is something good or bad about it, then we turn to what has been related to the Prophet or the Imam. By contrast, what is ascribed to God about Himself by *majaz* is related to his near servants, and an expression of God's about rejection of *walaya* may be taken as referring to rejection of the prophethood of the Prophet. Therefore, because 'Ali, by relation to the Prophet, may be considered his son, it pertains to him as well. [53]

The Prophet said about the verse : 'Do you two cast into hell every rebel ingrate'(Qur'an 50.24) 'I and 'Ali cast into hell each of our enemies'.

Al-Sadiq said about the verse : 'Say : we believe in God and that which was revealed to us' [Qur'an 2.136] 'The speakers are the people of Muhammad'. And about 'And if they believe in the like of that which ye believe, then they are rightly guided' [Qur'an 2.137] 'these are the rest of humanity'.

In *al-Kafi* from al-Baqir (about the above two verses) : 'He means by "Say : we believe", 'Ali and Hasan and Husayn and Fatima and the rest of the Imams. And "if they believe" means humanity [in general] "in the like of that which ye believe", that is 'Ali and Fatima

and Hasan and Husayn and the Imams after them. And "then they are rightly guided. But if they turn away then they are in schism". (Qur'an 2.137)

And "there hath come unto you a Messenger, (one) of yourselves" (Qur'an 9.128) the addressee here is the Imams in general. Likewise, "Yet ye will not unless God willeth" (Qur'an 76.30) the addressee is the Imams. There are many such examples in the Qur'an. "Give thanks unto me and unto thy parents. Unto me is the journeying" (Qur'an 31.14). The two parents are the parents of knowledge and the bequeathers of laws, and mankind is commanded to obey them. "The journeying" is the journeying of the servants to God. He then quotes his teacher Majlisi, "author of the *Bihar"* to the effect that the two parents are the Prophet and 'Ali.

Isfahani invites us to think strenuously about the difference between this doctrine and the previous one. [54]

(iv) That many pronouns refer, according to *ta'will,* to something which is not explicitly mentioned such as *walaya,* 'All and the like. [54-55]

(v) Whatever God has knowledge of, past or future, He informs us about, even if it is by means of past events which we must interpret. [55]

(vi) That many things which God says of Himself in the Qur'an actually refer to the Prophet and the Imams. (*e.g.* Qur'an 43.25 and 88.26) [55-57].

Al-Sadiq said : 'God does not become angry as we do, but he created the *awsiya'* for himself to become angry (in his stead). They are his creation and vassals *(marbubun),* He also made their good pleasure represent His good pleasure'.

(vii) That many statements in the Qur'an which employ the words *ilah* and *al-rubb* refer to the Imams. [57-59]

This long section mentions several *hadith* to support this doctrine. One example : al-Sadiq said about the verse : 'Choose not two gods, there is only one God' (Qur'an 16.51), that it means 'take not two Imams, there is only one Imam'.

A long appendix *(tadhyil)* to the first *maqala* of this prologue is concerned with the repudiation (*daf*) of *ghuluw* and *tafwid* (immoderate attitudes toward the Imamate). [59-69] The gist of this section is perhaps best summed up by the support it draws from the famous *hadith* that underscores the difficulty of true belief, since it is obvious that there is a fine line between *ghuluw* and the beliefs so far enumerated. This *hadith* is as follows :

The Prophet said: 'Indeed the knowledge *('ilm; hadith* in other variants) of the People of Muhammad is overwhelming and exceedingly abstruse *(sa'bun mustas'abun).* None may be given to have true faith in it except the angels who have been brought near, or the sent prophets, or the faithful servant whose heart God has tested to be able to have faith. So whatever comes to you of knowledge of the People of Muhammad, your hearts must become supple for it.... And whatever your hearts recoil at, then take it to God, the Prophet, and to the Sage of the People of Muhammad'. [61]

This section also affirms that the Imams are indeed created by God and that nothing in the world resembles God. [68]

Maqala 2 : the second *maqala* of the third prologue is what Corbin calls a *clavis hermenevtica.* [69-348] In many respects, this is the most impressive portion of the volume. It is actually a 'dictionary' of over 1300 quranic words that are explained by the *hadiths* of the Imams. It shows an almost incredible erudition and ability for systemization, complete with cross references to both other dictionary entries and the introductory material. It is an invaluable aid in the study of Shi'ism.

Khatima [348-362]: this contains two *fasl* :

(i) On the *ta'wil* of tns disconnected letters. [348-353]

(ii) On some of the lessons *(fa'ida)* to be drawn [from all this]. This contains eight separate lessons that summarize the foregoing, the last of which is on the Return *(al-raj'a),* and quotes the famous *hadith* of al-Mufaddal on the events surrounding the return of the Mahdi. [358-362].

Conclusion

Enough has been offered of these commentaries to permit a few general observations. First, whatever else Akhbari scholars might have been, the results of their exegesis of the Qur'an cannot really be classified as 'literalist' in the usual sense of the word. That is to say, their so-called literalism must be seen to pertain to a veneration for the statements of the Imams on a given verse of the Qur'an. Many of these statements are concerned precisely with the 'inner meaning' of the text, and for that are usually not what one would describe as straightforward interpretations of the literal text Insofar as these interpretations by the Imams themselves are rigorously adhered to, the Akhbari project may be seen to be 'fundamentalist'. However, at this stage in the exegetic process the act of interpretation has already gone beyond the *ipsissima verba* of the Qur'an itself.

The concern with systematizing the material, evident in three of the four works is noteworthy in itself. The elaboration of such structures lends credibility to the actual arguments presented by presenting them in a measured (rational) form. The 'harmony' of the structure is meant to mirror and uphold the truth of the claims it conveys. The edifice thus constructed is convincing, even if many of the arguments presented are judged non-rational. Most, interestingly, it is clear that the length and complexity (and therefore the 'rhetorical value') of these introductions grew as the fortunes of the ruling power, the Safavids, declined.

Further, these structures address what was obviously felt to be a need of the times, namely, to enhance both the authority of the Qur'an text and the authority of the Imams. The exegetical project outlined above has attempted to fuse permanently these two elements so that, for example, the Qur'an could no longer be read without summoning forth the presence *(walaya, mahabba)* of the Imam. It has been argued that the act of reading/ interpretation is in any case a process of making present 'what otherwise remains absent' :

Marfat.com

> Effective symbols allow the hidden to shine forth or to emerge from concealment into 'the open'.... This presencing is the eventuation of truth or the occurrence of *aletheia*. *Aletheia* unites the interpreting subject and the symbolized object.[94]

Obviously such an insight is especially compelling in the context of Twelver Shi'i Qur'an interpretation which in some sense may be thought to have as its *raison d'etre* a compensation for the absence of its most important element--the Imam. As far as uniting the subject and the symbolized object is concerned, we have but to recall the words of Muhsin Fayd—admittedly perhaps the most mystically inclined of our authors—when he speaks above of unmediated access. Insofar as reading may be considered 'participation in a text' then the reading of the Qur'an for our authors becomes also a participation in the charisma of the Imams. Put another way, if it is true that a text is not only read by the reader, but also in come way 'reads' the reader, then we have with the Shi'i Qur'an and its encounter, a situation in which the believer is 'read' not only by the text, but also by the Imam, The bond thus is an expression of what may be called, in this case, 'the intimacy of reading' and constitutes the prime religious fact of Shi'ism, a fact which is, in corbin's words, *en acte*. Speaking of the commentaries of Bahrani and Isfahani, he has written :[95]

> Par tous les textes mis ainsi en oeuvre, le shi'isme se fait entendre essentiellement comme une religion d'amour spirituel a tel point, les textes y insistent, qu'en l'absence de cette devotion d'amour, il ne saurait etre question de la validite d'aucune oeuvre pieuse, ni meme de satisfaire aux obligations de la *shari'at*. Or, tout cela est dit sans qu'il soit meme question de soufisme : c'est un eleve de Majlisi qui parle, ou bien laisse la parole aux *hadith* des Imams dont il a une connaissance extraordinairement approfondie. Cette constatation aura une grande importance pour le profongement de ces recherches.[96]

Because of the fusion of Imam and text, the Quran then is also experienced as a charismatic text. Or more properly, its already considerable charisma is greatly enhanced. The act of reading then obviously involves, to some degree, an appropriation of this charisma by the reader. We see the 'logical' culmination of this process in the Qur'an commentaries of the Bab (d. 1850), who depended heavily on the *akhbar* in his early *tafsir,* but appears to have abandoned their explicit use in later similar works. In this later phase of commentary, it is virtually impossible to distinguish between commentary, text, reader, God, Prophet, and Imam. In short, the exegetical act became scripture.[97]

The Akhbari enterprise may be thought to have issued in another religjous movement that apparently sought to bridge the gap between the literalists and the traditionists. Although the early leaders of the Shaykhi school do not appear to have composed major commentaries on the Qur'an, they did write commentaries on well-known and sermons of the Imams.[98] Indeed, one of these the *Commentary* by Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (d. 1825), a native of Bahrayn. on the *Grand prayer of visitation* ascribed to the Fourth Imam, (Ali ibn al-Husayn, Zayn al-'Abidin is interesting here for the appearance in it of many of the doctrines about and attitudes to the Qur'an found in the works above. It is significant that the *Prayer* may have had during Shaykh Ahmad's time something of the of an alternative Qur'an, being arranged in 114 verses.[99]

Marfat.com

This points to one of the most remarkable results of the Akhbari project, namely the transformation of the Qur'an text into 'another Qur'an'. That is. the Qur'an of the Akhbaris becomes something of a New Testament for Islam, Such a phenomenon is surety not peculiar to the Akhbari approach, but it does give a most instructive example of tendencies found not only in Qur'an interpretation in general, but in any act of interpretation.

Another result of this type of interpretation may be seen in the writings of the second leader of the Shaykhis, Sayyid Kazim Rashti (d. 1843). This has to do with the basic notion of religious authority that may be thought the foundation of the Akhbari method, namely, that the only final authority is the Imam, and that this can permit a certain hermeneutical freedom otherwise nonexistent. This is seen expressed in the following statement :

> O my brother! Read the Qur'an and never abandon it. It is more valuable for you than anything else. If you persevere you will see the truth *(sirr)* of what I have said. After you have understood all this, you will have understood a certain portion of the knowledge of the Qur'an. But you will also have understood that it is not possible to read it as it is in itself, because this is impossible for us. the *muslimun* and *mu'minun.* This kind of reading is only possible for prophets and Imams... The relatively small understanding which you have should never be confused with the knowledge of the Qur'an. This is you must never oppose someone who affirms something and who seeks to prove his statement by reading the Qur'an differently to the way you read it. When you have understood that the true meaning, the spiritual Idea (*haqiqa*) of the Qur'an is a code (*ramz)* which only God Most High, the Prophet and the members of his House understand and thai it is the members of this House who teach this code to whoever resides in their House... then it will be clear that our under standing of this code varies according to the diversity of our faculties of understanding.[100]

Finally, it may be said with some justification that due to the vicissitudes experienced by the Muslim world community today - the challenges posed to it both from within and without, the uncertainty of the political situation, the problem of various Islamic nations within a community that longs for unity – that in some sense there exists a spiritual diaspora. The Muslim Holy Land is obviously geographically defined in the narrow sense as the Haramayn and al-Quds. But speaking broadly, Islam suggests that wherever the community exists, there too exists the Holy Land. It is precisely because of the stresses and dislocations brought about by 'Various Muslim communities' instead of the ideal one, that such a Holy Land does exist but elsewhere than in the geo-political realm. The tradition, and pre-eminently the Qur'an itself, function as the major features of this holy landscape, this *imaginaire.*[101] With this examination of Shi'i *tafsir,* we are permitted an insight into the statement that the Imam himself is the *balad al-haram.* This hermeneutical landscape, with all its distinctiveness, provides for the reader not only a home but a true paradise.

REFERENCES

1. Notable exceptions are Mahmoud Ayoub, 'The speaking Qur'an and the silent Qur'an', *Approaches to the history of the interpretation of the Qur'an,* ed. A. Rippin, Oxford 1988, pp. 177-198; Henry Corbin, particularly in his long discussion of Shi'i *tafsir, En Islam iranien,* Paris 1978, I, pp. 135-218; 3, pp. 214-32. In addition, Goldziher described many aspects of the type

Marfat.com

of *tafsir* under discussion here in *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegungen,* Leiden 1952, pp. 263-309.

2. These four books are : *al-Kafi fi'ilm al-din* by Kulayni (d. 939 or 940); *Man la yahduruhu al-faqih,* by ibn Babawayh (d. 991); *Tahdhib al-ahkam* and *al-Istibsar* both by Tusi (d.1067).

3. A fuller tabulation of the differences between the *Usulis* and the *Akhbaris* is in Moojan *Momen, An introduction to Shi'i Islam,* Oxford 1985, pp. 223-225.

4. Etan Kohlberg, 'Some Aspects of Akhbari Thought', *Eighteenth-century renewal and reform in Islam,* Syracuse N. Y. 1987, pp. 133-160.

5. Andrew Joseph Newman, III, *The development and political significance of the rationalist (usuli) and the traditionalist (akhbari) schools in Imami Shi'i history from the third/ninth to the tenth/ sixteenth century A. D.*. 2 pts. in 2 vols Ann Arbor 1988 [Ph. D. UCLA 1986]. See also Madclung, 'Akhbariyya', *EI2,* suppl. pp. 56-57.

6. He himself is credited with a *tafsir* (apparently unedited). Aglia Buzurg al-Tihrani, *al-Dhari'a ila tasanif al-Shi'a,* (25 Vols) Tehran and Najaf 1936-1978 *(Dhari'a),* XVIII, p. 365.

7. See for example Juan Cole, 'Shi'i clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780 : The Akhbari-Usuli conflict reconsidered', *Iranian Studies,* XVIII (1985) pp. 3-34. The author argues convincingly that the Akhbaris were never strong in major Iranian centres, that the conflict began after the migration of large numbers of Usuli scholars from Iran to the Shi'i shrine cities in Iraq as a result of the Zand invasion.

8. Furat ibn Ibrahim b. Furat at-Kufi (d. c. 912), *Tafsir Furat al-Kufi,* Najaf 1353/1934, p. 84.

9. Al-Sharif al-Radi, *Talkhis al-bavan fi majazat al-qur'an,* Cairo 1374/1955, p. 193.

10. Wilferd Madclung, 'Imamism and Mu'tazilite theology', in J. Aubin, (ed.) *Le Shi'isme Imamite: colloque de Strasbourg, 1968,* Paris 1970, p. 21.

11. But a more instructive type is that of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's *al-Durr al-manthur* written in the seventeenth century. My thanks to Norman Calder for pointing this out.

12. Kohlberg, *op. cit.,* pp. 147-8.

13. Kohlberg, *op. cit.,* p. 148.

14. *Anwar,* p. 324.

15. *Tibyan,* I, pp. 321-325.

16. Apart from the commentaries of these authors, we know of another *tafsir* project which has not yet been published but which is perhaps an even better example of the type under discussion here. Corbin draws attention to the work by Shaykh Husayn Yazdi, still in manuscript in Kirman, which comprises eight volumes in-folio but which covers no more than the *Surat al-baqara*. Corbin's interest in such works was restricted to the purely spiritual or *'irfani* motifs which they contain. He seems to have been thoroughly uninterested in the question of the 'alteration of the Qur'an', or other highly polemical aspects. Corbin, *Annuaire de ll'Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes: section des sciences religieuses,* Paris 1965-6, pp. 107-8.

17. 'Abd 'Ali al-Huwayzi, *Kitab tafsir nur al-thaqalayn.* 5 vols edited by Hashim al-Rasuli al-Mahallati, introduction by Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i. Financed by al-Hajj Abu al-Qasim, known as al-Salik, second edition, Qum, Matba'at al-Hikma, 1383-5 [1963-5].

Marfat.com

18. Ayoub's translation, 'Speaking', p. 180.

19. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Amal al-'Amil,* (2 Vols.) ed. Ahmad al-Husayni, Najaf, 1964, 2, p. 154; *Dhari'a,* XXIV, p. 345. He is called a staunch Akhbari in Madelung, 'Akhbariyya', *EI2,* (Suppl. Fasc. 1–2), p. 57.

20 *Amal al-'Amil,* II, p. 154; 'Abd Allah b. 'Isa (d. c. 1718), *Riyad al-'ulama' wa-hiyad al-fudala* (6 vols) Qumm 1401[1981], III, pp. 149-150.

21. Momen, *op. cit.,* pp. 99-100.

22. *Riyad al-'ulama',* III, pp. 149-150.

23. *Ibid., Nur,* I, p. iv and *Nur,* 5, p. ii.

24. *Nur,* I, p. iii.

25. *Dhari'a,* XXIV, p. 345, no. 1967.

26. *Ibid.* The *Tafsir kanz al-haqa'iq wa-bahr al-ghara'ib* by Mirza Muhammad b. Rida b. Isma'il b. Jamal al-Din al-Qummi al-Mashhadi, a student of Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi. Some manuscripts bear the title *Kanz al-daqa'iq. Dhari'a,* XVIII, pp. 151-152.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Viz., Anwar al-tanzil wa-asrar al-ta'wil.*

29. *Nur,* I, pp. 2-3.

30. *Nur,* I, p. 3.

31. The 'three books' are *al-Wafi, Wasa'il al-shi'a* by al-Hurr al-'Amili (d. 1104/1692); and *Bihar al-anwar* by Majlisi (d.1111/1699).

32. He is explicitly characterized by no less an Akhbari source than Yusuf al-Bahrani (d. 1772), *Lu'lu'at al-Bahrayn,* Beirut 1986, p. 121. Sec Corbin, *En Islam Iranien,* IV p. 250. Sec the reference to 'the stagnant and narrow-minded attitude of the Akhbaris' by Murtada Mutahhari in *Shi'ism : doctrines, thought, spirituality,* eds Nasr, Dabashi, Nasr, Albany N. Y. 1988, p, 32.

33. *e.g., Kalimat-i maknuneh;* etc. Sec also the condemnation of him in *Lu'lu'at,* p. 121 for holding to the belief in *wahdat al-wujud,* which he picked up 'from Ibn al-'Arabi, the *zindiq* and about which Muhsin Fayd wrote a 'clearly loathsome' treatise against which Yusuf al-Bahrani apparently wrote a refutation. The sources vary on his output, putting the total figure between 80 and 200 works. See now the translation of one of his political theory treatises : 'Two Seventeenth-Century Persian Tracts on Kingship and Rulers', translated by William C. Chittick in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.). *Authority and political culture in Shi'ism,* Albany N. Y. 1988, pp.269-284. As Kohlberg has pointed out, this figure needs to be studied more. Apart from the brief article in *Encyclopeadia Iranica,* see also Jane I. Smith, *An historical and semantic study of the term 'Islam' as seen in a series of Quran commentories,* Missoula 1975, pp. 146-159. Smith says that *tafsir* is less sectarian than other forms of religious writing (p. 142).

34. According to the 1898 Tehran edition, cited by Goldziher, *Richtungen,* p. 278.

35. *Al-Safi fi tafsir kalam Allah al-wafi,* 5 vols edited by Husayn al-A'lami, Beirut [1399/1979]. In addition to this, there is also a lithograph dated 1283 [1866]. This edition is in folio and runs to 495 pages of 37 lines to the page. It contains no indexes or divisions in the text (apart from

Marfat.com

those which occur at the beginning of a new *sura)* and is therefore somewhat difficult to use.

36. N.B. here the possible semantic equivalence between *hifz* and jam'. On this see Wansbrough, *Quranic studies*: *sources and methods of scriptural interpretation,* Oxford 1977, p. 46.

37. Quoted by Ayoub, p. 188.

38. *Zahr, batn, hadd, matla'.* Three variants of this follow, one from the Prophet, one from 'Ali and one from al-Sadiq. The report from 'Ali is virtually identical to the statement of Sahl Tustari (d. 896), quoted in Wansbrough, *Quranic studies,* p. 242. Cf. Tustari's *Tafsir,* pp. 2-3 where this statement is introduced with 'Sahl said:..."...The variant from al-Sadiq changes the elements completely: *'ibara, ishara, lata'if,* and *haqd'iq.* Each of the four is appropriate to a group of people: *'awwam, khawass, awliya',* and *anbiya'*"'.

39. Quoted in Ayoub, 'Speaking', p. 133.

40. Both *hal* and *waqt* are technical terms from classical Sufism.

41. *Safi,* I, pp. 15-79.

42. Cf. below the possibly similar 'methodology' of Shaykh Ahmad al -Ahsa'i.

43. *Safi,* I, 78. Cf. Kohlberg, p. 142 for the use eslewhere by Muhsin Fayd of the idea of 'holy power' as a distinguishing feature of the true scholar.

44. Ayoub, 'Speaking', p. 186.

45. *Ibid.,* p. 182.

46. Maulavi Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'an,* pp. xci-xcii.

47. *Safi,* p. 13, translated in Ayoub, p.190.

48. *Safi,* p. 15.

49. Ayoub, *op. cit.,* p. 190.

50. *Burhan,* I, pp. 30-1.

51. *Burhan,* I, pp. 4.

52. Beirut 1986, pp. 63-66.

53. *Lu'lu'at,* p.64, see also *Burhan,* IV, p. 552. For a discussion of some of these works see *ibid.,* pp. 552-556.

54. Al-Bahrani, al-Sayyid Hashim, *Kitab al-burhan fi tafsir al-Qur'an,* 4 vols, edited by Mahmud ibn Ja'far al-Musawi al-Zarandi and Naji Allah ibn Karim Allah al-Tafarushi al-Bazarjani. (with the financial backing of al-Hajj Abu al-Qasim ibn Muhammad Taqi known as al-Salik al-Istahani) Tehran 1375 [1955]. It was first printed in 1290 [1873]. The second printing edited by Mahmud ibn Ja'far al-Musawi al-Zarandi, Naji Allah ibn Karim Allah al-Tafreshi al-Bazarjani, Muhammad ibn al-Marhum Mirza 'Ali Akbar, an Iraqi *mujtahid.* The third edition, containing marginal corrections to the second by Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Tafreshi Darudi was published at Qumm by al-Matb'at al-'Ilmiya, 1394[1974]. Bahrani wrote another work of *tafsir,* also in several volumes, entitled *Kitab al-Hadi wa-diya' al-nadi fi tafsir al-Qur'an.* This work is unpublished.

Marfat.com

55. *Burhan,* I, pp. 2-40.

56. *Bihar,* XCII and XCIII, pp. 1-145 = *Kitab al-Qur'an.* This material is a source for the author of the last work to be discussed below. It is arranged in 30 chapters of basic hermeneutic principles followed by separate chapters on the special virtues of each of the *suras.* Volume 93, mentioned by Ayoub, p. 185, contains a long treatise on interpretation ascribed to 'Ali (pp. 1-97) followed by the lengthy report of the Zindiq mentioned above, p.25 (pp. 98-142) and closes with a chapter entitled 'Miscellanies' (pp. 142-145) This material awaits detailed analysis.

57. *Ibid.,* p. 3.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Cf. Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir Sadra,* Shiraz 1332 [1914]. [Contents: *Tafsir al-Fatiha; Tafsir al-Baqara; Tafsir Ayat al-Kursi*]. Other works dealing with the Qur'an by Mulla Sadra are : *Asrar al-ayat,* edited with prolegomena and notes by Muhammad Khajavi, Tehran 1360 [1981], and is thematic rather than *seriatim; Tafsir Surat al-Waqi'a* (56), n. p., n. d. *Mutashabihat al-Qur'an* in *idem, Three treatises...,* edited with an introduction and notes by Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, English preface by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Mashhad 1392 [1973], pp. 75-121. On Mulla Sadra's 'Imamocentrism' see James Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne,* Princeton 1981, p. 14.

60. *Burhan,* I, pp. 5-40.

61. Cf. the equivalence *'ilm - hadith (akhbar).*

62. *Burhan,* I, pp. 14–15.

63. A similar tradition is quoted in *Richtungen,* p. 278.

64. *Burhan.,* I, pp. 17-19.

65. *Ibid.,* pp. 19-21.

66. *Ibid.,* p. 21

67. All three *hadiths* are from *ibid.*

68. D.1090-91, author of *Manaqib 'Ali ibn Abi Talib,* Tehran 1394 [1974].

69. *Ibid.,* p. 22. This subject does not appear to have been discussed by al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan.* It may be peculiar to Shi'i *tafsir.* See also *Sharh Ziyara,* (n. 94 below) p. 123.

70. *Burhan,* I, pp. 22 -3.

71. All five statements from *ibid.* pp. 22-3, nos. 3, 4, 5, 9, and 10.

72. *Burhan,* I, pp. 31-41; cf. al-Qummi, *Tafsir,* pp. 3-15.

73. Quoted in *Richtungen,* p. 282-283.

74. *Tafsir mir'at al-anwar wa-mishkat al-asrar,* introduction and table of contents by Mahmud ibn Ja'far al-Musawi al-Zarandi, (financed by al-Hajj Abu al-Qasim ibn Muhammad Taqi), Tehran 1374 [1954].

75. The first dated 1096[1684], the second 1107[1695] *(Dhari'a,* 1, 149:).

76. *Lu'lu'at,* p. 107.

77. See *Anwar,* pp. 2-3. He was apparently survived by a son of some reknown, al-Mawla Abu

Marfat.com

Talib ibn al-Sharif Abi al-Hasan al-Gharawi *(Lu'lu'at,* p. 108, n. 44), who is mentioned by al-Jaza'iri in *al-Ijaza al-kabira.*

78. Corbin says he spent most of his life in Isfahan, *Annuaire,* 1965-6, p. 107.

79. *Lu'lu'at,* p. 108.

80. 'My father was asked one day : "Who is the best scholar of Najaf, Abu al-Hasan oral-Shaykh Sulayman (d. 1120/1708)? "As for al-Sharif Abu al-Hasan, I have quizzed him several times in Isfahan and in Mashhad and in our town whenever we met, and he remained with us a long time, I consider him very learned'. Quoted *in Lu'lu'at* p. 107 from the *al-Ijaza al-kabira* of al-Jaza'iri

81. Bahrani, *Lu'lu'at al-Bahrayn,* 'It exists in our library in manuscript with two prologues : I : "On *usul al-din"* was written in the year 1111 in Najaf al-Ashraf. 2 : "On *usul al-fiqh"* dated 1112, Najaf'.

82. *Lu'lu'at,* p. 107, n. 43.

83. *Lu'lu'at,* p. 107, and I have this book. It was completed in 1112.

84. Doubtless the famous Mir Damad (d. 1631), the teacher and father-in-law of Mulla Sadra. The author *of Lu'lu'at* says that he has written a refutation of this particular *risala* (p. 108).

85. *Lu'lu'at,* pp. 107-109.

86. *Dhari'a* mentions him, II, p. 517.

87. 'It is a big volume, its like has not been written, on *usul, furu' al-faqhiya.* It is found in the library in Isfahan of al-Shaykh Abul-Majd Agha Riza al-Isfahani. He also wrote a *Tafsir surat Yusuf.* He inclined to the belief that the three caliphs were good Muslims in the time of the Prophet and not *munafiqun,* but they apostatized after the Prophet died'. *Ibid.*

88. *Dhari'a,* XX, p. 264.

89. See *Dhari'a,* Vol. 20, pp. 264–5 for a description of the manuscripts and their location. One of them was in the hand of Shaykh al-'Allama al-Nuri (al-Tabarsi al-Nuri) (d.1902) who also mentions Isfahani at the end of his *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il,* (a commentary or 'corrective to' the *Wasa'il al-Shi'a* (by al-Hurr al-'Amili) (5 vols) Cairo (1957-1962], III, p. 385. His *Fasl al-khitab fi thbat tahrif kitab rabb al-arbab* (Persia, 1298/1880), a book devoted to upholding the belief in the corruption of the Qur'an, is treated in E. Kohlberg, 'The Imamite Attitude to the Qur'an' in *Islamic philosophy and the classical tradition,* eds Stern, Hourani, Brown, Oxford 1972, pp. 209-224.

90. Corbin, *En Islam iranien,* see index *'Tafsir Mir'at al-Anwar'* & *idem, Annuaire,* 1965-6, pp. 106-108.

91. Corbin, *Annuaire,* 1965-6, p. 107.

92. The first three caliphs.

93. *Shat bar shat,* a rare lapse into Persian.

94. Mark Taylor, *Erring: A postmodern A/theology,* Chicago 1984, p. 57.

95. Corbin, *Annuaire,* 1965-6, p. 107.

Marfat.com

96. Corbin, *Annuaire,* 1965-6, p. 108.

97. Lawson, 'Interpretation as Revelation', *in Approaches,* pp. 223-253 and idem. 'The terms rembrance *(dhikr)* and gate *(bab)* in the Commentary on the *Sura* of Joseph', *Studies in honor of the late Hasan M. Balyuzi,* ed. M. Momen, Los Angeles 1988, pp. 1-63.

98. The most recent detailed account of the Shaykhiyya is Vahid Rafati, The development of Shaykhi thought in Shi'i Islam', Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles 1979; Corbin *En Islam iranien,* IV, pp. 205-300 and his earlier 'L'Ecole shaykhi en theologic shi'itc', *Annuaire de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes: section des sciences religieuse* (1960-1961), reprinted with Persian translation by Firaydun Mahmanyar, Tehran 1967, pp. 1-59, and *Terre celeste et corps de resurrection: de l'Iran mazdeen a l'Iran Shi'ite.* Paris 1960. Other important discussions of this subject are : Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and renewal,* Ithaca 1989, pp. 48-69; Said Amir Arjomand, *The shadow of God,* Chicago 1984, q. v. Index 'Shaykhism'; Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and dissent,* Syracuse 1982, pp. 37-58. Although his scholarship is frequently disparaged, one should also mention the even earlier works of A. L. M. Nicolas, *Essai sur le Cheikhisme II: Seyyed Kazem Rechti,* Paris 1914; *Essai sur le Cheikhisme III: la doctrine,* Paris 1911; Essai *sur le Cheikhisme IV: la science de Dieu,* Paris 1911; *Essai sur le Cheikhismc I: Chelkh Ahmed Lahcahi,* Paris 1910. A recent work, unavailable to me, is Aflatun Jalali, 'The Shaikhiyya of Hajji Muhammad Karim Khan in Kirman', Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Manchester 1982.

99. Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i, *Shark ziyara al-jami'a,* Tehran 1276/1859. An example of sanctifying a text by arranging it according to the number of quranic *suras,* may be seen in a recent edition of the *Ziyarat al-jami'a* which was divided into 114 verses by Muhammad Tha'rullahi (d.c. 1962), in his *Kitab sabil al-falah,* mentioned in *Corbin, Annuaire,* 1968-9, p 152. This may have been a long-standing practice, in which case Shaykh Ahmad's *Commentary* on the *Ziyara* might also have been seen, in some way, as a new Qur'an.

100. From Corbin's French translation of this passage of Sayyid Kazim Rashti, *Sharh ayat al-kursi,* Tabriz c. 1860, p. 3 in *En Islam iranien,* I, pp. 209-10.

101. See Mohammad Arkoun, 'Algeria', *The politics of Islamic revivalism,* ed. Shireen T. Hunter, Bloomington 1988, pp. 171-186; *idem,* 'The notion of revelation: from Ahl al-Kitab to the societies of theBook', Die *Welt des Islams,* XXVIII (1988), pp. 62-89.

Marfat.com

8

The Sura as a Unity

Twentieth-century Qur'an commentary makes a definite break with the traditional style of exegesis, which, in general terms, may be said to have lasted from the early Islamic centuries to the end of the nineteenth century.[1] One manifestation of this break is the view that the quranic suras are unities. I shall argue that this view is now fairly well-established in modern Qur'an commentary. I shall do so by looking at the works of a number of modern exegetes. The study is divided into four sections. The first section provides a brief historical background. The second section gives a descriptive account of the relevant aspects of the works of six modern Qur'an commentators. The third section offers an analysis of that account. A few general remarks make up the fourth, concluding section.

PRELIMINARY

In itself, the idea of the suras as unities is not new. Zarkash (745-794/1344-1391) in his *Burhan*[2] devotes a whole chapter to it, and so does Suyuti (d. 911/1505) in his *Itqan*,[3] an abridgment and revision of Zarkashi's work.[4] Zarkashi reports the disagreement of scholars on the subject. 'Izz al-Din ibn 'Abd al-Salam (577-660/1181-1262) argues that the Qur'an, revealed as it was under extremely diverse circumstances and in a period of more than twenty years, could not possibly have continuity and coherence (*irtibat*). One of Zarkashi's *mashayikh*, identified by Suyuti as Wali al-Din al-Mallawi,[5] rebuts the argument by saying that while historical circumstances determined the order in which the quranic revelations were sent down, considerations of wisdom determined the order in which those revelations were arranged : *wa-faslu'l-khitabi annahu 'ala hasabi' l-waqa'i'i tanzilan wa-'ala hasabi 'l-hikmati tartiban.*[6] Zarkashi himself speaks of what he calls *'ilm al-munasaba* in quite favorable terms, identifying a few types of *munasabat* one may find in the Qur'an.[7] But he admits that, because of its difficult nature, very few scholars have concerned themselves with the subject (*wa-qad qalla i'tina'u 'l-mufassirina bi-hadha' l-naw'i li-diqqatihi*).[8] Among those who have, he mentions Abu Ja'far ibn al-Zubayr, Abu Hayyan's teacher, who wrote a book on the subject;[9] Abu Bakr ibn al-'Arabi, who complained of people's lack of interest in the *ilm al-munasaba*; Abu Bakr al-Nisaburi, who criticized the scholars of Baghdad for their ignorance of that *ilm*; and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, who held that the arrangement of the Qur'an is full of subtleties (*aktharu lata'ifi 'l-Qur'ani muda'atun fi'l-tartibati wa'l-rawabiti*), and, in his commentary, regularly explains the interconnection of verses.[10] Zarkashi's account makes it quite clear, however, that the *'ilm al-munasaba* was cultivated by a few scholars only, and that it never acquired the status of mainstream exegetical thought. Works on the principles of exegesis, like Ibn Taymiyya's

Muqaddima fi usul al-tafsir,[11] make no mention of it. And Razi's attempt to win for the 'ilm a respectable place in the exegetical tradition met with failure. Here a word about Razi is in order.

Razi's method of establishing *munasabat* between the quranic verses may be described as linear-atomistic : with verse 1 of a sura he links up verse 2, with which he links up verse 3, and so on until the end of the *sura*. In doing so, Razi's attention is at any given moment focused on two verses (or two passages). Such a method, which merely aims at establishing *ad hoc* relationships between verses, ignores the wood for the trees—the sura for the verses—and so could hardly have been conducive to the development of an organic approach to the quranic *suras*.[12] No wonder that others who tried the same route—whether it was Nizam al-Din al-Nisaburi, Abu Hayyan, or Shirbini,[13] arrived at results no different than those reached by Razi.[14] And no wonder that, even after the work of Razi and others, traditional Qur'an exegesis retained its atomistic character.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY EXEGESIS : DESCRIPTIVE

A number of twentieth-century Qur'an exegetes regard the *suras* as unities, thus vindicating the received arrangement of the verses in the *suras*.[15] The following, perhaps, are the most important : Ashraf 'Ali Thanavi, Hamid al-Din al-Farahi, and Amin Ahsan Islahi of Indo-Pakistan; 'Izzat Darwaza and Sayyid Qutb of Egypt; and Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i of Iran.[16] All these writers, with the exception of Farahi, have written complete commentaries on the Qur'an, the commentaries of Thanavi and Islahi being in Urdu, those of the other three, in Arabic. Farahi planned to write a complete commentary, but death prevented him from doing so. His seminal work, however, lies behind the *tafsir* of his student, Islahi, who wrote his commentary, as he puts it, in order to complete the project his teacher had started.

Thanavi[17]

In the Introduction to his *Bayan al-Qur'an,* Thanavi says that, in writing his *tafsir,* he has made it a point (*bi'l-iltizam*) to explain how, in each sura, every verse is connected with the preceding and the following verses. To this end, he regularly uses the word rabt printed in bold type, as a heading to signal discussion of these connections. To take an example of his treatment of the subject, he explains the unity of *sura* 31 (*Luqman*) as follows : The *sura* speaks of the Qur'an and presents one of its major teachings, namely, the oneness of God (*tawhid*). The *sura* is divisible into four sections : verses 1-9, 12-19, 20-32, 33-34. The first section begins with praise of the Qur'an, and this praise leads to praise of those who believe in the Qur'an and criticism of those who disbelieve in it, and to a statement of the punishment for the disbelievers and the reward for the believers. The second section takes up the theme of *tawhid,* and the third section continues that theme by narrating the story of Luqman, who first instructs his son to be steadfast in the matter of *tawhid* and then gives him some practical instructions, which form a complement to the doctrinal teaching of *tawhid*. With the theme of *tawhid* is contrasted, in the same section, idolatry, which is condemned. In the final section the Idolaters are warned of the Day of Reckoning.[18]

Sayyid Qutb[19]

In the Introductions that he writes to individual *suras,* Sayyid Qutb frequently discusses

Marfat.com

what he calls the *mihwar* ('central thesis'; literally, 'pivot, axis') of the sura. The very choice of the word signifies that, in Sayyid Qutb's view, every sura revolves around a principal idea and is to be understood with reference to it.[20] *Sura* 25 (*al-Furqan*), according to Sayyid Qutb, consoles the Prophet (*inasun li-rasuli 'llahi*) in his struggle against the Quraysh, who made painful accusations against him. After citing, in the opening part of the commentary, instances of this *inas*, he remarks :

> *Hadhihi hiya zilalu 'l-surati, wa-dhalika huwa mihwaruha 'lladhi taduru 'alayhi, wa-mawdu 'uha 'lladhi tu'alijuhu. Wa-hiya wahdatun muttasilatun yas'ubu fasiu ba'diha 'an ba'din.*[21]

He then divides the *sura* into four sections (*ashwat*) : verses 1-20, 21—44, 45-62, 63-77. The *sura*, by providing a critique of the Quraysh, gives solace to the Prophet. In section 1, the beliefs of the Quraysh are shown to be untenable, so that when, immediately afterwards in the same section, the Quraysh's criticism of the Prophet is cited, that criticism has lost its sting. The second section, by reporting the Quraysh's criticism of God for not sending down the proofs they had demanded, and by stating the punishment that lies in store for the Quraysh, again serves to console the Prophet : the proud Quraysh are, in reality, defying God, who knows how to deal with them, and who is with the Prophet in his fight against the Quraysh. Section 3 shows how absurd, in view of the abundant contrary evidence found in nature, are the idolatrous beliefs of the Quraysh. This, too, is meant to console the Prophet, as is the last section, which says, among other things, that God does not care about (*hawan al-bashariyya 'ala 'llah*) those who defy him. Sayyid Qutb comments :

> *Wa-fi hadha 'l-hawani tahwinun li-ma yalqahu minhum rasulu 'llahi... fa-huwa yattafiqu ma'a zilli 'l-surati wa-jawwiha, wa-yattafiqu ma'a mawdu'iha wa-ahdafiha, 'ala tariqati 'l-tanasuqi 'l-fanni fi 'l-Qur'ani.*[22]

Marfat.com

Darwaza[23]

There are, says Darwaza, people who think that, in the quranic suras, verses and passages have been put next to one another quite arbitrarily. His own study of the Qur'an convinced him of the contrary : most of the verses and passages in the suras are interconnected (*bi-anna aktharaha mutarabitun wa-munsajimun*). In writing his Qur'an commentary, therefore, Darwaza takes special care to explain such connections (*al-ihtimamu li-bayani ma bayna ayati wa-fusuli'l-suwari min tarabutin*).[24] He divides sura 81 (*al-Takwir*) into two sections, 1-14 and 15-29. One might think that the second section is unconnected with the first. But this is not so : *wa 'l-ayatu faslun mustaqillu 'l-mawdu'i 'an sabiqatiha, ghayra anna 'l-irtibata baynaha wa-bayna hadhihi 'l-sabiqati qa'imun.* For the first section informs people of the impending Day of Resurrection and warns them of the reckoning that shall take place on that day, whereas the second section confirms the news of the Day of Resurrection and refutes the disbelievers' objection in regard to the warning.[25]

Tabataba'i[26]

Tabataba'i, like Sayyid Qutb, tries to identify the central idea of a given *sura*, calling it *gharad* ('objective, purpose, intent'). He does so by looking at the *sura's* opening (*bad'*), conclusion (*khitam*), and general course of discussion (*al-siyaq al-jari*). For example, using this method, he

describes the *gharad of sura* 29 (*al-'Ankabut*) as follows : The faith required by God is not the faith one professes by means of one's tongue, but true faith which remains unshaken by adversity and trial (*fitna*).[27] As a rule, Tabataba'i, too, divides a *sura* into sections. *Sura* 30 is divided by him into live sections.[28] Section 1 (verses 1-13) says that the believers shall not be spared tests and trials in this world, for putting people to the test is the *sunna* ('law, practice') of God. Section 2 (14-40) exemplifies that *sunna* with reference to seven former prophets and their nations. Section 3 (41-55) is a supplement to the preceding section, indicating the baselessness of the beliefs of the nations destroyed. Up to this point, the *sura* has been criticizing those believers who had apostatized for fear of *fitna*. The next section (56-60) addresses the rest of the believers, who were oppressed in Makka by the Quraysh, and instructs them to persevere and, if necessary, to migrate from Makka. The final section (61-69) addresses the Prophet—and, through him, the whole Muslim community - resuming the thesis presented in the first section.

Farahi and Islahi[29]

According to Farahi every *sura* has a central theme, which he calls *amud*. All the verses of a *sura* are integrally linked to its *'amud*, and reveal their full import only when that *amud* is discovered and its centrality in the *sura* is recognized. The *'amud* of *sura* 51 (al-Dhariyat), for example, is divine recompense, with emphasis on the retributive aspect of recompense. The seven sections into which Farahi divides the *sura* (verses 1-14, 15-19, 20-23, 24-37, 38-46, 47-51, 52-60) all deal with that theme, the first section stating it and the others providing evidence for it.[30]

Proceeding from the premise of *'amud* as set forth by his teacher, Islahi tries to identify the *'amud* of each and every *sura* of the Qur'an and interprets every *sura* with reference to the *'amud* proper to it. His is probably the most ambitious attempt made by any modern writer to establish the quranic *suras* as unities. Since I have dealt with his concept of unity in the *sura* elsewhere, presenting, in this connection, his treatment of *sura* 4 (*al-Nisa'*),[31] I shall here confine myself to reviewing briefly part of his analysis of *al-Baqara,* the second *sura* of the Qur'an.[32] According to Islahi, the *sura* is divisible into an Introduction, four main sections, and a Conclusion :

Introduction : 1-39
Address to the Israelites : 40-121
The Abrahamic Legacy : 122-162
The *Shari'a* or Law : 163-242
Liberation of the *Ka'ba* : 243-283
Conclusion : 284-286

We shall focus on the third of the four main sections (verses 163-242), which is the most difficult to explain from the point of view of coherence and continuity. After the Introduction (1-39), the first section (40-121) constitutes a critique of the Jews of Arabia. In this section, the Muslims are established as a community in opposition to the Jewish community. But in the second section (122-162) the claim is made that the Muslim community represents a continuation of the Abrahamic spiritual line. As such, the Muslims have a claim on the most

Marfat.com

conspicuous symbol of the Abrahamic legacy—the Ka'ba. The Ka'ba is, therefore, declared to be their *qibla*, with the clear implication that the Muslims should prepare themselves to liberate the Ka'ba from the hands of its unworthy custodians, the Quraysh. But first the new community needs a set of laws—or *shari'a* -and this brings us to the third section.

This section quite appropriately begins with a statement of the foundational principle of the new *shari'a*—monotheism (verses 163-64). Monotheism is then contrasted with idolatry, which is criticized (165-67). As elsewhere in the Qur'an, the subject of idolatry leads to that of lawful and unlawful food (168-76).[33]

After emphasizing that conduct should be imbued with piety (177), practical legislations crucial to the maintenance of peace and justice in society are furnished, beginning with legislations concerning *hurmat al-nafs* (respect for human life; 178-179) and *hurmat al-mal* (respect for the property of others; 180-182 [also the initial injunction concerning proper distribution of inherited property]). Respecting the life and property of others involves exercising self-restraint, and fasting is prescribed as a means of inculcating this discipline (183-87). By rooting out greed, fasting also keeps one from usurping others' property by using such means as bribery (188). The theme of fasting leads to those of *hajj* and *jihad*. The connection is obvious' all three are means of disciplining the soul. But *hajj* and *jihad* here have another relevance.

The Ka'ba, as noted above, was to be wrested from the hands of the Quraysh. In other words : *jihad*. But *jihad* for the Ka'ba raised several questions, *e.g.* what if *jihad* had to be undertaken during the sacred months?[34] (189-94) Then there was the issue of *infaq* or spending in the way of God, for *jihad* had to be financed (195). Verses 196-200 explain the true spirit, and the proper manner, in which *hajj* and *'umra* ought to be performed. Verse 200 also speaks of people who would use even the occasion of *hajj* for purely mundane purposes. Verses 204-14 contrast the character of these people—the Hypocrites—with that of true believers. But this passage is parenthetical, so that, beginning with verses 215, the discussion reverts to the themes of *jihad* and *infaq*. To shorten the account of the rest of this section : war brings with it many problems, among them the problem of orphans and widows, one way to solve which problem is to allow men to marry such widows. This paves the way for a treatment of general issues pertaining to marriage and divorce. This goes on until verse 237. Verses 238-42 conclude this section, providing some supplementary material. In the rest of the *sura* probably the only difficult part to explain from the standpoint of continuity is the story of the Israelites' battle against the Philistines (243-51). According to Islahi, the Israelites fought that battle to regain their *qibla*, the ark, and their struggle represents and prefigures the struggle of the Muslims to liberate their *qibla*. the Ka'ba.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY EXEGESIS : ANALYTICAL

1. If so many Qur'an exegetes, belonging to different parts of the Muslim world, hold the view that the quranic *suras* are unities, and then apply this understanding to the Qur'an, it would be reasonable to infer that the view has taken root. It is remarkable that there is hardly any evidence that, in holding this view, some of the exegetes have been influenced by others. Rather it is almost certain that each one of them arrived at the view independently.

Marfat.com

There is, however, nothing mysterious about this, for, as I shall suggest below, some of the intellectual pressures generated by modernity are common to the Muslim world and could have evoked a similar response from different quarters.

Not only do our six writers subscribe to the idea of the *sura* as a unity, they seem to share a broadly similar approach to the subject. For example, all of them employ an analytic-synthetic approach, first dividing a *sura* into sections, and then establishing links between those sections. One writer's sectional division of a *sura* may differ from another's, but the underlying assumption always is that the sections can be knit into a connected discourse. There are, however, some differences of approach as well. A closer look at their commentaries would show, for example, that the approach taken by some of the writers is more organic and holistic—and more consistently so—than that taken by others. If, using this criterion, one were to rank them, Farahi-Islahi would head the list, followed by Sayyid Qutb, Tabatabai, Thanavi, and Darwaza.

If the idea of the *sura* as a unity has struck root, and also appears to be gaining ground, it means that there is, among modern exegetes, a more-than-lurking dissatisfaction with the traditional approach to the subject. Interestingly, this dissatisfaction is hardly voiced, and, when it is, never takes the form of serious negative criticism. The impression given is that *some* people think that the Qur'an is disjointed, though, as we have seen, a more correct statement would be that *some* people think that the Qur'an is not disjointed. Respect for a centuries-old exegetical tradition, or fear of rocking the boat of that tradition at an inopportune time, may be responsible for such an attitude.

2. The view of the *sura* as a unity is indigenous to the Muslim intellectual world. Not only is there no evidence of any influence of western quranic studies on our six writers, whose largely traditional background would preclude such a possibility, there is nothing in those studies to account for the phenomenon. Noldeke was criticized by Bell-Watt for regarding the *suras* as unities,[35] but that is a different matter altogether : Noldeke neither understood the suras as unities in the sense in which Muslim scholars understand them, nor was Bell-Watt's criticism predicated on such an understanding.

A case may, however, be made for indirect western influence. It seems that at least some of the Muslim writers, in trying to dispel the notion that the Qur'an is discontinuous, have in mind western criticisms of the Qur'an, which may have reached them through secondary sources, such as Christian missionaries in the Muslim world. To these criticisms may be added the doubts and reservations expressed about the structure of the Qur'an by the so-called westernized Muslims. But perhaps a more important factor is at work. In the twentieth century there has been a growing realization among Muslims that the task of reinterpretation of Islam has to begin with the Qur'an. The Qur'an has always been regarded as the primary source of Islam. But when one notices numerous writings emphasizing this primacy, the message, it is not difficult to see, is that the extra-quranic sources, the use of which has so fundamentally conditioned Qur'an interpretation, have to be subjected to critical scrutiny. In other words, the quranic text must become the primary arbiter of quranic meaning. But if the rigour of the extra-quranic hermeneutical constraints is to be removed or relaxed, then other hermeneutical constraints must be supplied—from the Qur'an itself. This would

Marfat.com

logically, result in attaching decisive importance to the quranic context. But the context of the Qur'an cannot have this importance on the view that the Qur'an has an atomistic character and that the verse-by-verse approach to the Qur'an is the best approach. It can have that importance only it the Qur'an is regarded as a book possessed of a significant degree of coherence and continuity. Modernity thus may be said to have created conditions under which the view of the sura as a unity became a possible, even necessary, view to take.

3. The overriding question is : What difference does it make? What does it mean to say that the quranic *suras* are unities? Does the view merely make the Qur'an aesthetically more pleasing, so that qualities of coherence and continuity, generally not associated with it formerly, are now seen to be present in it, or does it have a definite hermeneutic significance as well? To this question a complete answer cannot be given at this stage. In a writer like Ashraf 'Ali Thanavi, who scrupulously relies on and regularly invokes the entire repertoire of tradition to interpret the Qur'an, there is little chance that the view would develop into a principle with hermeneutic value. But in writers like Farahi, Islahi, and Sayyid Qutb, who are quite 'radical,' the view does seem to develop into such a principle. For instance, the three writers often reject the *asbab al-nuzul* ('occasions of revelation') in favour of a context-based interpretation of the Qur'an. To take a specific example, Islahi takes issue with the generally held view that *sura* 96.1-5 was the first to be revealed. The *sura*, he argues, is an unbroken unity in the sense that all 19 verses of it must have been revealed at the same time. But verses 6-19, as a quick glance at their contents will indicate, could not have been the first to be revealed. It follows that verses 1-5 could not have been the first revelation either.[36]

The real test of the *sura*-as-a-unity thesis, then, is whether it gives rise to a new method for the study of the Qur'an. Is the thesis capable, on the one hand, of generating techniques that will help establish plausible links between the verses and passages of the Qur'an, and, on the other, of generating meaning that cannot otherwise be generated?[37] Here we may note that, in spite of the differences in their approach, modern writers, considered as a group, do view the sura in a way significantly different from traditional writers like Razi. Generally speaking, one could say, repeating expressions already used, that the approach of traditional writers (Section 1) is linear-atomistic, while the approach of modern writers (Section II) is organic-holistic. And this, no doubt, is a promising sign. At this point a few speculative remarks may not be out of place.

4. Referring to early Qur'an commentary Goldziher observes that one cannot speak of a standard or uniform traditional Qur'an exegesis, for no such thing exists, and that there are not only different but contradictory interpretations of the same quranic passages.[38] This is also true of later Qur'an commentary, which is in no small measure a reproduction of early commentary. Now the main reason for such divergent and heterogeneous interpretations, it would seem, is the atomistic approach of the exegetes. Since, usually, only one verse has to be explained at a time, it is not considered crucial to look at the preceding and following verses with a view to arriving at a contextually relevant and justifiable interpretation. Goldziher also points out that the possibility of placing all kinds of different interpretations on a quranic verse is regarded by Muslim scholars as a proof of the richness of the Qur'an.[39] But the fact is that application of the atomistic principle turns the Qur'an not into a rich layered cake but a

Marfat.com

shapeless mass of putty. The view of the *sura* as a unity, if properly developed, may help put an end to eccentric and wayward interpretations and provide for a more authentic and fruitful interpretation of the Qur'an. Two areas in which this may happen, though in different ways, are law and literature.

In law, it would be a logical entailment of the *sura*-as-a-unity view to assign, for purposes of interpretation, decisive importance to context. Two Egyptian scholars, Mahmud Shaltut and Abu Zahra, who cannot be accused of being unduly apologetic toward modernity, have made a contextualized study of the quranic verses pertaining to war and peace and have come to the conclusion, independently of each other, that, from the quranic perspective, the starting-point in international law is peace and not war, and that the Qur'an permits fighting only to ward off aggression or put an end to oppression.[40]

Certain literary features of the Qur'an, for example the dramatic element, can be profitably studied only on the assumption that the quranic composition is sustained. Toshihiko Izutsu remarks that the Qur'an is characterized by an 'intense spiritual drama'.[41] The foregoing assumption may result in studies showing that the Qur'an is characterized by an intense drama in a literary sense also. New ways of studying the Qur'an as a literary text may thus be opened up.[42]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have, I hope, succeeded in showing that a significant number of modern Muslim scholars regard the quranic *suras* as unities I have not tried to offer a detailed study of their methodologies, not only because it would have been unfeasible to do so in this paper, but also because the task I set myself, namely, to highlight a new phenomenon in Muslim Qur'an exegesis, did not require it. To make such a study, however, would be the next step. While the view that the quranic *suras* are unities seems to have entrenched itself and would be hard to dislodge, it is not entirely clear in what way or ways it will be developed. Most of the practitioners of the *sura*-as-a-unity approach are traditional scholars who might not be willing to explore beyond a certain point the possibilities suggested by it. Whether the view will become a mere undercurrent rather than a vigorous tide, an exegetical aside rather than an exegetical principle of profound significance, remains to be seen. It would be interesting to see how this new development in Muslim exegetical thought fares on western academic grounds. On the one hand, western scholars cannot ignore the development; on the other, Muslim scholars, in their attempt to ensure the integrity of this development, cannot afford to neglect western theories of the composition of the Qur'an. If this paper has brought home the need for Muslim and western scholars to discuss a modern development, then it has served its purpose.[43]

REFERENCES

1. Cf. Mohammed Arkoun, 'Jusqu'au XIXe siecle, la pensee arabe s'inscrit dans un espace mental qu'on peut qualifier, avec quelques correctifs, de medieval.' In *La pensee arabe*, 3rd ed., Paris 1985; (1st ed. 1975), p. 3.

2. Badr al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Bahadur al-Zarkashi, *Al-Burhan fi 'ulum al-Qur'an*, 4 Vols. in 2, 2nd printing; ed. Muhammad Abu 'l-Fadl Ibrahim, Egypt 1391?/1972.?

Marfat.com

3. Jalal al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abl Bakr al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'ulum al-Qur'an,* 2 Vols, Lahore 1974 (reprint of Cairo ed.).
4. Zarkashi's chapter is entitled, *Ma'rifat al-munasabat bayna 'l-ayat; Suyuti's, Fi munasabat al-ayat wa 'l-suwar.*
5. Suyuti, Vol. II, p. 108.
6. Zarkashi, Vol. I, p. 37.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 35, 36, 40–3, 45-51.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 36.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 35. Suyuti (II, p. 108) gives the name of the book as *Al-Burhan fi munasabat tartib suwar al-Qur'an.*
10. Zarkashi, Vol. 1, p. 36. To the names cited by Zarkashi, Suyuti (Vol. II, p. 108) adds that of Burhan al-Din Ibrahim ibn 'Umar al-Biqa'i (809-885/1406–1480), author of *Nazm al-durar fi tanasub al-ayat wa'l-suwar* (this Qur'an commentary has now been published in 22 volumes [Hyderabad 1389-1404/1969-19841), and says that one of his own books gives an exhaustive account of the subject.
11. Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim ibn Taymiyya (667-728/1262-1327), *Muqaddima fi usul al-tafsir,* Dar al-Qur'an al-Karim, Beirut 1392/1972.
12. It is true that Razi sometimes uses his understanding of the interconnection of verses to support or reject a certain Qur'an interpretation, and thus appears to establish *nazm* ('coherence') as a hermeneutical principle; for a good example, see Anthony Johns, 'David and Bathsheba : a case study in the exegesis of quranic story-telling', MIDEO, XIX [1989], pp. 245ff. As a rule, however, Razi (and others who talked in his footsteps) is prone to take what I have called an *ad hoc* approach to the subject, and hardly tries to develop *nazm* as a principle capable of being applied in a sustained manner. Cf. Razi's interpretation of 75.16-19, in my book, *Coherence in the Qur'an: a study of Islahi's concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-i Qur'an,* Indianapolis, Indiana 1986 pp. 114-115.
13. Nizam al-Din ibn al-Hasan al-Qummi al-Nisaburi (d. 728/1327), Athir al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Yusuf, known as Abu Hayyan (654-745/1256-1344), Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Shirbini (d. 977/1569).
14. See Mir, pp. 17-18,19. Another important name to be added to the list is that of Biqa'i (see n. 10 above), whose central concern in writing *Nazm al-Durar* was to prove that the Qur'an possesses a remarkable *nazm*. This *tafsir* deserves to be studied separately, and I plan to write a study of it in the near future. Here it would suffice to say that Biqa'i's *tafsir* was no more successful in establishing *nazm* as a generally accepted principle of Qur'an interpretation than Razi's or any other Qur'an commentator's.
15. Most of these scholars attempt to vindicate the received order of the *suras* as well, but that subject, though important and not unconnected with the one under discussion, falls outside the scope of this paper.
16. We may also note the names of Sa'id Hawwa, author of the Qur'an commentary *Al-Asas fi'l-tafsir* (11 Vols; Cairo 1405/1985), and of Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Hujjati and 'Abd al-Karim Bi-azar Shirazi, authors of a Qur'an commentary in Persian, *Tafsir-iKashif* (3 Vols., continuing;

Marfat.com

Tehran [13]63-/1984-), Vol. 1 of which is subtitled : *Tarsimi az chihrah-yi mawzun-i suvar-i Qur'an va ravabit-i ayat.*) This last work makes use of some 'special effects', explaining quranic verses by means of pictures and drawings (Cain threatening to kill Abel; Moses holding the Tablets of Torah on the Sinai; Jesus speaking to people in his cradle; Muslims confronting the Quraysh in the Battle of Uhud; men in space).

17. Ashraf 'Ali Thanavi (1280-1362/1863-1943) is one of the most famous religious personalities of Indo-Pakistan, and is reverently called by many of his admirers *hakimu'l-ummat* ('Sage of the Muslim community'). He is said to have written more than 800 works, which run the gamut of Islamic religious literature. His Qur'an commentary, *Bayan al-Qur'an* (12 Vols, revd Ed.; Karachi and Lahore 1353 [= 1932]; first published 1326 [= 1908j) is one of his major works. The commentary is simultaneously addressed to two categories of readers, scholars and laymen. The main text consists of an explanatory translation and discussions of important subjects, is intended for the common reader, and is in Urdu; the notes, which deal with a variety of technical issues, are aimed at scholars, and are in Arabic.

18. Thanavi, Vol. IX, pp. 16ff.

19. Sayyid Qutb (1324-1386/1906-1966), well-known leader of *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* of Egypt, was executed by the Egyptian government on charges of sedition. His Qur'an commentary, *Fi zilal al-Qur'an* (6 Vols; Beirut 1393-94/1973-74), which has some unique literary features, is very popular in the Arab and Islamic world.

20. Sometimes he does not use the word *mihwar*, but uses other descriptions to convey the same idea, *e.g.* (on *Sura* 26): *mawdu'u hadhihi'l-surati 'l-ra'isi huwa...* (Vol. V, 2583).

21. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 2546.

22. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 2547.

23. Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, *Al-Tafsir al-hadith* (12 Vols; Egypt 1381-83/1962-64). In this work the *suras* are commented on in the order in which they were revealed.

24. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 7.

25. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 129.

26. Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i (1312-1402/1903-1981), a distinguished modern Iranian scholar, has produced a voluminous Qur'an commentary, *Al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an,* 20 Vols, Beirut 1393-94/1973-74; Vol. 21, published in 1985, contains a detailed topical index (*Dalil*) to the commentary.

27. Tabataba'i, Vol. XVI, p. 98.

28. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 98-152.

29. Little known outside India and Pakistan, Hamid al-Din al-Farahi (1280-1349/1863-1930) has made a significant contribution to Qur'an exegesis. In a number of treatises, he presents and defends his view of organic unity in the Qur'an. Having developed a theoretical framework for interpreting the Qur'an, Farahi set about writing a commentary on it, but could cover only a small number of *suras* before he died. His commentaries on fourteen short *suras*, written (with one exception) in Arabic and published in separate volumes, are available in an Urdu translation, *Majmu'ah-yi Tafasir-i Farahi* (Lahore 1973), made by his student Amin Ahsan Islahi. Islahi (b. 1324/1906) has, following the principles and methodology laid down by his

Marfat.com

teacher, produced a complete commentary on the Qur'an, *Tadabbur-i Qur'an* (8 Vols; Lahore 1967-80). For a life-sketch of Farahi and Islahi, and for a more detailed treatment of their views, see my book. *Coherence in the Qur'an.*

30. For more details, see Mir, pp. 39-41.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-49.

32. The following account is summarized mainly from Islahi's explanation, given at various points in his commentary on the *sura*, of the connections between the sections into which he divides the *sura* For Islahi's own summary of the *sura*, see Islahi, Vol. I, pp. 32-36.

33. For worship of idols involves making offerings to them, which offerings are unlawful food. As 2.163-73 suggests, Satan inspires people to make such offerings, and people who make such offerings have no better support for their action than ancestral custom. It is in the same connection that the People of the Book (175-76) are criticized.

34. Islahi interprets the word *ahilla* inverse 189 to mean 'months', *i.e.* the 'sacred months', rather than 'phases of the moon.' See Islahi, Vol. I, pp. 427-28.

35. *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an,* revised and enlarged by W. Montgomery Watt (Edinburgh 1970), p. 111.

36. It is true that, according to certain reports, too, *sura* 96 was not ihe first *sura* to be revealed. But the point is that Islahi arrives at the conclusion not on the basis of the reports, but through application of the principle of *nazm.*

37. The work of Farahi and Islahi offers some good insights in this regard and points to some intriguing possibilities. In another study, now under preparation, I shall discuss this in detail.

38. Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen derislamischen Koranauslegung,* Leiden 1970 reprint, (first published 1920), p. 83.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85.

40. See Mustansir Mir, '*Jihad* in Islam,' forthcoming, Andrew Ehrenkreutz Festschrift, Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

41. Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and man in the Koran,* Ncw York 1980 reprint, (first published 1964), p. 74.

42. In his *Fi i'jaz al-Qur'an, Dirasa tahldiyya li-surat at-Anfal, al-muhtawa wa'l-bina',* Damascus and Beirut 1408/1988, Ahmad Mukhtar al-Bizra, proceeding from the *sura*-as-a-unity premise (*e.g.* [p.532]: *fa'l-suratu, wahdatun 'udwiyyatun dhatu binyatin hayyatin, 'anasiruha mutaddmmatun fi tala'umin wa-tawafuqin wa-'nsijamin, tatakamalu ayatan ayatan 'ala matni khattin muttasilin mina 'l-sababiyyati 'l-wathiqati*), analyses the literary features of *sura* 9.

43. I would like to thank Professor Wadad al-Qadi for her valuable comments on the paper.

9

Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza's Principles of Modern Exegesis

Among the numerous writings of the well-known Palestinian-Arab political figure, educator, and historian, Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza (1888-1984),[1] is a voluminous *tafsir* of the Qur'an. Like, many Muslim religious and political leaders[2] Darwaza had discovered the Qur'an in a new and compelling way during his incarceration in the prisons of Damascus by the French military authorities on the pretext of inciting people against British rule in Palestine. Although the British suppression of the Palestinian revolt of 1936 abruptly terminated Darwaza's active political career, his imprisonment in Damascus marks the beginning of a new life wherein the Qur'an became his major concern for the next several years. Describing the role of the Qur'an in his private and public life, Darwaza states :

> Since my youth I was fascinated by the Qur'an. I savoured its wonderful and wise style in its various subject matters : its call [to worship one God], its guidance and its pronouncements. I, therefore, consulted a number cf commentaries and other Arabic books, both ancient and modern, dealing with the Qur'an, its principles and objectives as well as the controversy surrounding [its revelation]. [Consequently], I was able to demonstrate many of its ethical, social, and spiritual marvels. The Qur'an served as a guide during [various] circumstances of my life, the years of my educational career and [political] struggle. Then, my imprisonment in Damascus by the French authorities before the Second World War,[3] because of the Palestine revolt, provided me with an opportunity [to read and reflect upon the Qur'an]. I seized this chance and considered it as an auspicious occasion to get myself occupied with the Qur'an more than before and to serve its cause. On the one hand, I considered [this opportunity] an act of divine [favour] and started reading whatever books of exegesis and quranic studies were accessible to me. On the other hand, during this time I compiled three books dealing with the Qur'an.[4]

The idea of writing a modern *tafsir,* according to his own statement, was conceived following the completion of the first drafts of those three works in the Damascus prison. After his release from prison Darwaza was unable to return to Nablus because the British authorities had issued an order preventing him from entering the country; hence he left for Turkey and stayed there until the end of 1945. His long sojourn in Turkey with its rich libraries gave him another opportunity to realize his dream of writing a modern exegesis. It was in Bursa that he completed the rough draft of his *tafsir* entitled *Al-Tafsir al-hadith.* Describing his objectives and the audience to which it is addressed, he states :

Marfat.com

> After we had completed the [aforecited] three works, the idea of writing a comprehensive exegesis, with a view to introduce the whole Qur'an, following those parts which we had presented according to the subject matter in those three books, occurred to us. In [this exegesis] we would uncover the wisdom of revelation, the fundamental concepts of the Qur'an, and the whole range of its subject-matter [and present it] in a new style and new sequential order.[5] It would [also] respond to the urgently felt need of most of our youth, who complain about the traditional style [of the commentaries] and turn away from them. [This, in turn,] has led them to sever their relation with the sacred book of their religion, which calls for concern and grief.[6]

After he had completed a rough draft of the *tafsir;* Darwaza wrote another volume, entitled *Al-Qur'an al-majid,* as an introduction to the former. It is this latter work wherein Darwaza outlined his methodology for a modern exegesis. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to scrutinize what the author calls 'the exemplary method for understanding the Qur'an and for its exegesis,' and to evaluate his contribution towards quranic hermeneutics.

The introduction, also written in Bursa, consists of four chapters : 1. the Qur'an, its style, revelation, and impact; 2. the collection of the Qur'an, its [variant] readings and arrangement; 3. the exemplary method tor understanding the Qur'an and for its exegesis; 4. comments on the works of earlier *mufassirun* and their methodologies. Before analysing his exemplary method, a brief summary of pertinent things discussed in the first two chapters are in order.[7]

In the first chapter Darwaza points out the close connection between the Qur'an and the Prophet's career *(sira)* on the one hand, and between the Quran and the pre-Islamic Arab milieu on the other,[8] He states that the Qur'an truthfully the biography of the Prophet in its twin aspects : his relation with the divine as a recipient of the divine message, and his relation with the people in terms of how his call to worship one God was received by them. The Qur'an also reflects the true picture of the pre-Islamic Arab milieu, its sodo-economic conditions, its intellectual and cultural life, and its religious, social and ethical mores.

Next, he discusses the quranic revelation and states that the precise nature of revelation, which is intimately connected the secret of prophethood, remains a mystery and cannot be perceived by the human intellect. The best one can do is to try to understand the Prophet's revelatory experience with the help of relevant quranic verses and then to enunciate it, as much as it is possible, in human language. After discussing all the verses describing the revelatory process, Darwaza emphasizes the quranic text which states that it was revealed to the Prophets heart.[9] He dismisses most *ahaduh,* which describe the Prophefs revelatory experience in vivid physical terms, except one, which states that the Prophet used to see an angel in human form speaking to him. He then interprets the Prophefs seeing an angel to mean some kind of mental perception.[10]

The second chapter deals with the collection of the Qur'an and its arrangement, Darwaza classifies the conflicting accounts about the collection of the Qur'an into three broad categories :

(i) the Prophet had died and the Qur'an had not been collected in one volume; its collection

Marfat.com

and arrangement took place after his death *(anna al-nabiyya 'alayhi al-salam tuwuffiya wa-lam yakun al-Qur'an qad jurmi'a fi shay'in, wa-inna jam'ahu wa-tartibahu innama ba'da wafatihi);*

(ii) recensions of the Companions differed not only in their arrangements but also in their additions and omissions of certain veises *(wujudu ikhtilafin fi tartibi masahifi ba'di 'l-sahaba wa-'an kalima za'ida kutibat fi ba'di'l-masahif wa-lam tuktab fi al-mushaf al-muladwul wa-'an aya kanat tuqra'u wa-lam tuktab);*

(iii) the Qur'an was recorded and its verse and suras were arranged during the lifetime of the Prophet by his order *(anna al-Qur'an kana yudawwanu wa-turattabu ayatuhu wa-suwaruhu fi hayat al-nabi 'alayhi al-salam wa-bi-amrihi).*

He, then, argues that the reports dealing with the first two categories are unreliable, because they are self-contradictory and are tinged with later religio-political bias. Hence, he considers the third category to be more reliable. Moreover, the latter category of reports is more in harmony with the nature of revelation and the circumstances surrounding it. He further elaborates his argument in support of these reports that the Qur'an was recorded and arranged by the Prophet himself by drawing internal evidence from the Qur'an itself. Next, he argues that, the Qur'an being the Prophet's miracle, it is inconceivable that the latter would have neglected its recording and its arrangement.

Darwaza contends that the present arrangement of the Qur'an (*i.e.,* both the order of the *suras* and the order of the verses in each *sura)* was dictated by the Prophet.[11] The task of Abu Bakr was to collect he Qur'an between 'two covers' *(bayna lawhayn)* and to transcribe it into one copy. 'Uthman's task was fixing the transcription and unifying it to prevent variant readings, Darwaza expresses his doubts that Ubayy b. Ka'b and 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud had separate codices, and that 'Ali b. Abi Talib, as it is alleged, had made a chronologically arranged collection.

It is worth noting that Darwaza, following the general Muslim tradition, avoids attributing the collection *(jam')* of the Qur'an to the Prophet because of the theory of abrogation *(naskh).* According to this theory, as long as the Prophet lived, a safe and certain recension of the revelations was unthinkable, because *naskh* remained a possibility. He therefore states that the present *mushaf,* in its 'Uthmani recension, contains all that was left behind by the Prophet. He emphasizes his use of those precise words in the latter statement and points out that he cannot assest that the *mushaf* contains all the revelations which were sent down to the Prophet.[12] *The reason for his distinction between those two positions is the quranic text itself which states: 'We do not cancel (ma nansakh)* any verse nor let it be forgotten; instead We bring something better than it or else something similar';[13] and 'Whenever We substitute *(baddalna)* one verse for another, God knows best what He sends down'.[14]

His exemplary methodology for understanding the Qur'an and for its exegesis is delineated in the third chapter. What follows is the summary.

The Qur'an and the Sira[15]

Darwaza stresses a close connection between the Qur'an and the biography of the Prophet

Marfat.com

(*sira*) and states that the Quran fully reflects various stages in the development of the Propbet's career.[16] It is this relationship between the Qur'an and the *sira* which helps the reader to better understand the subject matter dealt with in the Qur'an without losing sight of the actual background. Numerous passages of the Qur'an faithfully depict the Prophet's position vis-a-vis various opposition groups, such as the Makkans, the Jews, and the hypocrites in Madina. Further elaborating this point he states :

Observance of intimate connection between the qurenic revelation and the *sira,* through various phases [of the Prophef's life] and fluctuating circumstances, allows the Qur'an reader to be fully immersed in the events and [surrounding its revelation]. The reader finds that the quranic passages were revealed in accordance with the events of the *sira* and the circumstances surrounding the call. As those events and circumstances were contingent upon change and development, the reader, accordingly, notices the Qur'an's wisdom in change, alteration, and cancellation [of some verses], as well as harshness and leniency in its [tone of address]. He realizes that there is no room for debate about [change and cancellation of some verses], since evolution and change, both in the circumstances and human intellect, are in keeping with the nature of things and its inherent laws with which God created the universe. Divine wisdom, therefore, dictates that the quranic revelation be also in accordance with [the inherent laws of] nature. A keen observer of those things in the Qur'an will notice that its edicts were revealed in accordance with the changing events and circumstances in the most wise manner, and that the Qur'an does not enter into argument except to the extent that is necessary and appropriate depending upon the actual situation.[17]

The Qur'an and the Prophets Milieu[18]

Observance of close connection between the Prophet's milieu and his mission on the one hand, and between the quranic revelation and the pre-Islamic milieu on the other, is very essential for the understanding of the subject matter dealt with in the Qur'an. It was the prevailing conditions in pre-Islamic Arabia which, in the first place, necessitated the prophetic mission. The quranic message, therefore, is primarily addressed to the pre-Islamic Arabs with regard to their beliefs, customs, and practices.

To illustrate his point Darwaza gives the following examples. Several verses of the Quran stress the futility of accepting intercessors with God and warn those who recognize other deities as intercessors of dire consequences, because this belief was deeply rooted in that milieu. Next, he cites the pilgrimage rites mentioned in the Qur'an indicating that most of those rites were practiced in pre-Islamic Arabia. What the Prophet did was to modify some and purify others from their pagan association. Darważa goes even a step further and that the wisdom of certain rites upheld by the Prophet, such as the circumambulation of the Ka'ba, the tripping to and fro between Safa and Marwa, the casting of the pebbles, the kissing of the black stone, etc., cannot be grasped now. He adds that those were pre-Islamic practices and the Prophet retained them probably because the pilgrimage served as a unifying factor for the Arabs. Darwaza also points out that in contrast to the Makkan portion of the Qur'an, the Madinan portion contains a severe censure of the Jews, their bad conduct and deceitful behaviour, because they represented a strong opposition group in Madina.

The Quranic Language

The quranic language in its vocabulary, idiom, style and syntax is the language of the Prophet's milieu, familiar to the pre-Islamic Arabs and understood by them. Observation of this fact helps us in proper understanding of the quranic idiom. The Qur'an was addressed to the Arabs who were familiar with its language and understood it. It also reflects their intellectual, religious, social, and material achievements. Although the Qur'an was addressed to all the Arabs, since its primary discourse was aimed at the Quraysh of Makka it reflects the Qurashi dialect which had developed over a period of time. That dialect had absorbed non-Arabic as well as Arabic words from other dialects. This is the reason why the Quran contains various dialects of Arabic.[19]

Next, he argues that the quranic language is neither obscure, nor complex, nor difficult to understand. The Bedouins, the elite of the Hijaz, the oligarchy of Makka, which led the opposition against the Prophet, as well as the non-Arabs living there, understood the quranic language and its message very well. Unfortunately, today we not only its language difficult, but some of its expressions strange and unfamiliar, because we are far removed from its times and circumstances. Moreover, the Arabic language itself has undergone change in the course of fourteen centuries.[20]

The Qur'an, Its Principles (Objectives) and Means

The contents of the Qur'an fall into two distinct categories : the fundamental principles *(usul),* and the *(wasa'il)* [to implement them]. The former is the essence, because it comprises the goals of revelation and the prophet's mission. The sum and substance of the Qur'an was that the people should worship one God and they should be provided with a comprehensive code of conduct, the *shari'a.* The rest of the Qur'an such as the tales of the prophets, parables, exhortations, the promise of reward for the righteous and the threat of punishment for the evil doers, disputations, etc., are merely the supportive means to reinforce the principles and the objectives.

Most of the means employed in the Qur'an, such as the belief in the hereafter, with vivid depiction of its felicities and frights, the angels, the *jinn,* and the miracles of the prophets, are related to the Prophet's milieu and reflect the prevailing beliefs of pre-Islamic Arabs. Observance of this distinction between the principles and the means is very important for the reader of the Qur'an in order not to lose sight of the trunk and get lost in the undergrowth. The exegetes should pay more attention to what is essential, because any discourse about the secondary, auxiliary things, such as the nature of the angels, or *jinn,* or afterlife leads nowhere.

Darwaza states that he arrived at the above twofold division of the contents of the Qur'an after his own reflection on its style and spirit and taking a specific text into consideration. His reference is to the well-known quranic distiction between 'the decisive verses' *(ayat muhkamat)* and 'the allegorical *versus (mutashabihat).*[21] He states that this distinction is not new because some earlier exegetes, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, had pointed out that *ayat muhkamat* were the verses dealing with lawful and unlawful things, articles of faith, the faithfuls' obligations, prescribed punishments, and the *nasikh* verses, while the rest

Marfat.com

belonged to *mutashabihat*. To corroborate his argument that the basic principles enshrined in the Qur'an are its essence, he points out that the earliest revelations of the Qur'an, such as chapters 1, 87, 91, 92, 95, 101, 102, 103, 112, mostly contained those basic principles and objectives with the announcement of glad tidings for those who accepted the Prophet's call and warning of punishment for those who rejected it. The Qur'an itself demonstrates that its goal was to assert the fundamental truth and the basic principles. As the Prophet's mission progressed and the opposition grew more and more fierce, the means to reinforce the mission, viz., disputations, scathing criticism of the infidels, parables, exhortation etc., expanded.[22]

The Quranic Stories

With regard to the narratives of the patriarchs and messengers and tales of ancient nations mentioned in the Qur'an, Darwaza makes the following observations.

First, those tales were not totally unfamiliar to the Arab audience, because they, especially the Makkans, were well acquainted with the biblical as well as other stories.[23] Second, those tales were told in the Qur'an not for the sake of story-telling or recording history, but to draw a moral, to illustrate a point, to sharpen the focus of a tention, and to reinforce the basic message.[24]

The latter point is essential to the understanding of the quranic message and its principles without getting lost in the peripheral details of those stories. The question of discrepancies in those narratives between their biblical and the quranic versions, raised by some scholars, is therefore irrelevant.[25] He then adds that if there were major discrepancies in the quranic stories, the opponents of the Prophet would have surely raised the question and would have attacked the Qur'an, but there is no indication in the Qur'an that the Arabs disputed the contents of those stories.[26]

The Angels and the *Jinn*[27] in the Qur'an

The angels and the *jinn* mentioned in the Qur'an were not unfamiliar to the Arab audience. The Book reflects the pre-Islamic Arabs' belief in those invisible beings. They believed that the angels were the daughters of God and took them as intercessors with God. The *jinn,* on the other hand, were feared because they were believed to be the source of evil and injury. The angels were considered the source of hope and mercy while refuge was sought from the *jinn.* The Qur'an repudiates some mistaken beliefs, such as the angels being daughters of God and intercessors. Darwaza emphasizes that both the angels and the *jinn* are spoken of in the Qur'an not for their own sake, but to reinforce the Prophet's mission and its goals. He adds that those beings could not be perceived through the senses, hence the reader and the commentator should not dwell too much upon their creation, nature, etc. Suffice it to say that they belong to the category of invisible things and belief in them is an article of faith.

The Phenomena of Nature and Its Inherent Laws in the Qur'an

The phenomena and laws of nature are mentioned in the Qur'an in order to draw the attention of its audience to God's greatness, His power, and the marvels of His creation. The main goal of the Prophet's mission was not only to demonstrate the existence of God, but also to purify the concept of *tawhid* (unity, oneness of God) by dissociating Him from any partnership,

Marfat.com

sonship, or consortship. The purpose of asserting His *wahdaniyya* (uniqueness) is to state that He is unique, transcendent, omniscient, and omnipotent and that every creature in the universe submits to His Lordship *(rububiyya).*

The purpose of the Qur'an is not to expound any scientific theory about the creation of the cosmos and its inherent laws. This point is very important for the reader and the commentator, because he should neither try to deduce any scientific theory from it nor try to impose one upon it. By doing so he trivializes the Qur'an and deprives it of its sacred character. The Qur'an is a holy book of guidance and should not be made subject to disputation, or liable to scientific scrutiny. This is contrary to its very character.[28]

The Hereafter in the Qur'an

The vivid description of the Day of Judgement, with its accompanying portrayal of the state of bliss in the abodes of bliss and torment and everlasting fire in the inferno, is meant to arouse fear in the hearts of the erring and serenity in the hearts of the faithful. The lively pictures are drawn from the familiar Arab milieu using the rhetorical devices of the Arabic language in order to move and impress the audience with the message that they are accountable to the Almighty for their deeds. Of course, belief in the hereafter and the Day of Judgement is one of the pillars of faith. The wisdom behind this belief is the assertion that God did not create this universe in sport and that the people will be judged on that Day according to their deeds. This argument was one of the strongest means to warn the people and to exhort them in accepting the quranic message. One should avoid engaging in unnecessary disputes about it because the Qur'an uses it as a means to admonish, warn, and to awaken their consciousness. Darwaza states that this category, being the most powerful means of reinforcing the Prophet's mission, is widely ussd in the Quran.[29]

The Essence [And Attributes) of God in the Qur'an

All the physical attributes of God mentioned in the Quran are used to approximate the meanings of power, knowledge, etc. to the audience and should not, therefore, be taken literally. The ascription of human characteristics to God is similarly used as metaphor. Moreover, this is how the human language, in which the Qur'an was revealed, is capable of expressing those lofty spiritual concepts. The quranic verses, such as 'There is nothing like Him'.[30] or 'No vision can grasp Him',[31] or 'They embrace nothing of His knowledge, except whatever He may wish',[32] on the other hand, should be taken as decisive verses with regard to what can be expressed about His essence. This point is very crucial for the reader. Instead of getting himself embroiled in philosophical debate about the essence and attributes of God,[33] he should leave those expressions as they occur in the Qur'an and try to comprehend the quranic objectives behind their usage.

The Sequence and Context of the Quranic Verses

Most quranic verses and sections thereof, especially in the long chapters, are linked together sequentially, topically, stylistically, or chronologically. Hence, its correct meaning, temporal and situational circumstances, the extent of its juridical ruling, general and specific, cannot be properly grasped without consideration of its context. Treat ment of any single verse, or

Marfat.com

part of it, in isolation from its context leads to distortion not only of its meaning but also of the quranic objective. Darwaza then cites several examples as to how certain sectarian groups and scholastic theologians have tried to appropriate specific phrases and verses out of context and thereby have totally distorted the quranic message.[34]

Criticizing the traditional approach to the 'occasions of revelations' *(asbab al-nuzul),* Darwaza states that at times the reason given for the revelation of a particular verse does not concur with its context. After citing several examples he warns the reader against accepting those reports at face value. The occasions of revelations, he adds, if they are correct, only explain that there is a reference in the Qur'an to a particular incident which occurred prior to revelation : however it does not mean that a particular incident was the cause of revelation for that verse.[35]

He also vigorously refutes the allegation that the quranic verses are disconnected, or that there are inconsistencies in the Qur'an.[36] A certain amount of repetition is necessary for reinforcing its message as it was revealed over a long period of time.[37]

Understanding the Qur'an Through the Qur'an[38]

The best and most authentic way for an understanding of the Qur'an, its implications, instructions, and the circumstances of its revelation, is through the Qur'an itself, because its parts are interrelated. This method of exegesis should be applied, as far as possible, with respect to its vocabulary, style, viewpoints, ordinances, principles and means.[39] This is an important observation which will guard the reader against forced meaning and speculation. It will also enable him to distinguish between the correct and incorrect explanations while he is perusing different commentaries. Darwaza notes that similar juridical rulings should be taken into consideration whenever the meaning and implication of a particular verse is in doubt.[40]

He concludes this chapter by stating that the guidelines enunciated by him for an understanding of the Qur'an and for its exegesis are neither novel nor discovered by him, but are derived from the works of earlier *mufassirun.*[41] Unfortunately, he adds, there is not a single work of *tafsir* wherein all the aforecited rules were faithfully adhered to. Most *tafsir* works are known either for their linguistic and grammatical explanation, or for their juridical and theological exposition, or for their narrative exegesis.

The final chapter of the book, consisting of about eighty pages, deals with his comments on the works of earlier exegetes and their methodologies. Instead of commenting separately on each *tafsir,* Darwaza has organized his criticism of those *tafasir* thematically. His remarks on some of those themes, such as the tales of the prophets, the phenomena of nature, the angels and the *jinn,* have been dealt with before. His main criticism is that most exegetes have unnecessarily treated these subjects at length and their reports are filled with speculation and exaggeration to the extent that they have transformed those narratives into fairy tales and legends. Many sectarian and scholastic theologians have also used their *tafasir* as convenient pegs on which to hang their own doctrines, while others have laboured hard to unravel what they call 'the mysteries and symbols' *(asrar wa-rumuz)* contained in the Qur'an.

Marfat.com

Consequently, they have strayed from the quranic message and its objectives. It should be noted that hardly any commentator has escaped Darwaza's close scrutiny and criticism.[42]

Darwaza is very critical of some modern exegetes who have used certain verses of the Qur'an to deduce and support scientific theories. These people, he states, have done harm to Islam by trivializing the sacred character of the Qur'an. To reinforce his argument he cites al-Ghazali, who states :

> There are those things in which the philosophers believe, and which do not conflict with religious doctrines. Therefore, belief in the prophets and the messengers does not necessarily mean disagreement with the philosophers with regard to those things. For example their theory that the lunar eclipse occurs when the light of the moon disappears as a consequence of the interposition of the earth between the moon and the sun. For the moon derives its light from the sun, and the earth is a round body surrounded by heaven on all the sides. Therefore, when the moon falls under the shadow of the earth, the light of the sun is cut on from it Anothet example of their theory is that the solar eclipse means the interposition of the lunar body between the sun and the observer, which occurs when the sun and the moon are stationed at the intersection of their nodes at the same degree.
>
> We are not interested in refuting such theories, because it serves no purpose. He who thinks that it is his religious duty to refute and invalidate such things is in fact harming the religion and weakens its cause. For these things have been established by astronomical and mathematical evidence which leaves no room for doubt. If a man, who has studied these things - and having sifted through all the pertinent data is in a position to forecast when a lunar or a solar eclipse will take place, whether it will be total or partial, and how long it will last – is told that these things are contrary to religion, it will shake his faith in religion, but not in those things. An undisciplined helper causes greater harm to religion than an enemy, who keeps attacking regularly. For, as the proverb goes, a wise foe is better than an ignorant friend.[43]

Darwaza states that a large number of traditions attributed in the various classical *tafasir* to the Companions *(sahaba)* and Followers *(tdbi'un),* such as Ibn 'Abbas (d.c. 68/688), Mujahid b. Jabr (d. 104/722), Qatada b. Di'ama (d. c. 117/735), and Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728) are forged and reflect the religio-political conflicts which developed within the Muslim community during the early decades of Islam. Most exegetes have also relied too much on an incredible *hadith* which states that the whole Qur'an was first sent down from the Guarded Tablet *(lawh mahfuz)* to the lower firmament of the universe, wherefrom it was revealed piecemeal to the Prophet. Consequently, they have ignored the interrelation between the Qur'an and the *sira* and the Prophet's milieu. The dogma as to whether the Qur'an was created or uncreated was likewise raised by the scholastic theologians *(mutakallimun)* with regard to the question of God's attributes. Hence, it is futile to enter into such a controversy. Suffice it to say that we believe that the Qur'an is the word of God and that it issued from Him *(anna al-Qur'an kalam Allah wa-min 'inda Allah).* As for the essence and attributes of God, we can assert only that 'there is nothing like Him'. Any discussion beyond that belongs to the realm of mystery, which is associated with the mysteries of existence, the Necessary Being, revelation and

prophethood, and cannot be perceived by human intellect.[44] Finally, Darwaza concludes the introduction to his *tafsir* by stating :

> We sense a strong desire among the majority of the Muslim youth to have an understanding of the Qur'an, its meaning, and the circumstances [surrounding its revelation], through a modern *tafsir* which is in keeping with the spirit of the times, [and is written] in simple style, easy to comprehend, and without digressions and embellishments of technical sciences. Especially, this desire is growing among the Muslims in order to surmount [the barrier of] long centuries in which ignorance and indifference prevailed. During all those years the Muslims have stagnated and [confined themselves] to blind imitation and repetition. [They have also lagged behind] in understanding the goals of Islamic mission, its vicissitudes, and its directives [enshrined] in its timeless miracle, the noble Qur'an.[45]

Until his imprisonment in Damascus Darwaza had led a very active political life. His main objective in writing a modern *tafsir,* after he had completed a thematic study of the Qur'an in three voluminous and refreshing books, was to rejuvenate Islam in the lives of the faithful. In order to better understand his methodology as expounded above a brief summary of his life is in order. Darwaza started his career at a time when the quest for national identity and the struggle for political power in the Arab Fertile Crescent was conducted in the name of Arabism and the ideology of Arab nationalism was beginning to take shape. From a sympathizer he became an active supporter of Arab nationalism and joined radical groups and at times supported militant ideology. To put in perspective his loyalties to what apparently seemed contradictory ideologies of his day, namely Ottomanism, Arabism, Islam, pan-Arabism, Arab nationalism, and Palestinian nationalism, one can say that like most Arab Muslims of his day Darwaza was an Ottomanist. His loyalty to the Ottomans was based on feelings of identification with Islam and fellow Muslims within the empire. He felt that he belonged to the larger Muslim Ottoman *umma.* Being an Arabist, he was enthusiatic about the 1908 revolution and expected that the new regime would grant the Arabs their legitimate demands. His loyalty to the Ottomans slowly began to be eroded under the impact of Turkification and the repressive policies of the Young Turk regime and he was driven more and more to pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism. Until the outbreak of World War I, Arab nationalists did not advocate secession from the Ottoman empire, but rather demanded reform and autonomy within the framework of the empire. The Arab revolt of 1916 provided an opportunity to achieve an independent Arab state and to thwart Zionist danger to Palestine, hence Darwaza left the Ottoman civil service, went to Damascus and served in Amir Faysal's provisional government.

Ideologically, Darwaza became an Arab nationalist endorsing the concept of a single greater Syrian-Arab state. However, his experience in Damascus had proved that the universalism of Arab nationalism was not as concrete a reality as its advocates had thought and that there were pressing demands of local politics. Moreover, the policies and the military might of the colonial powers were an overwhelming force to contend with.[46] Thus, after Amir Faysal was deposed by the French, Darwaza went back to Nablus and became very active in the Palestinian national struggle, which during the British mandate period (1922-48), became separated from the general movement of Arab nationalism.

Marfat.com

According to Darwaza the main constituents of Arab nationalism were the Arabic language, the Arab homeland, a common Arab history, and common Arab interests.[47] Darwaza, like most Arab nationalists of this period, did not consider Islam as incompatible with Arab nationalism, rather he maintained that both are inseparable and complementary to each other. In the history of Islam, he states, the Arabs and the Arabic language occupy a special position. The Prophet was an Arab, the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, and the Prophet preached first to Arabs. The quranic statements, 'Thus We have set you up as a moderate nation so that you may act as witness for mankind'[48] and 'You are the best community which has been produced for mankind. You command decency and forbid dishonour'[49], are primarily addressed to Arab Muslims.[50] After the rise of Islam, when Islam and the Arabic language spread, there spread with it spiritual, cultural, literary, and social norms which had an Arab-Islamic stamp on them.[51] Arab nationalism aims at uniting the Arabs, preserving their national identity and culture in the face of greedy aggressors and at freeing them from the yoke of foreign invaders so that they can live in freedom with dignity. These objectives, he adds, are the very essence of the Islamic call. Moreover, the Arabs formed 'the prime matter' of Islam and the glory of Islam spread under their banner. Thus, Arab revival and national pride serve, in fact, the revival and glory of Islam.[52]

The principles enunciated by Darwaza and followed through in his *tafsir* are, as stated by himself, to be found in several classical and modem *tafasir,* but were never taken seriously by any *mufassir* systematically. Almost all of the previous commentaries generally follow the pattern of a running commentary wherein the Qur'an is treated verse by verse, thereby risking atomism by taking individual words or verses out of context and their usage in the Qur'an as whole. Darwaza has allowed the Qur'an to speak for itself and be understood in the way it was understood by the Makkans of the Prophet's time. In following a chronological order of revelation for his *tafsir* rather than following the usual order of the 'Uthmanic recension Darwaza has charted a new course in the historical understanding of the quranic message. In the words of Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) there are two levels of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an : the first step is the concrete historical situation; the second step is the abstraction, or generalization from the specific case to a statement of general moral-social objective.[53] Darwaza also contends that the Qur'an should be studied and understood in its entirety with distinctive dictional and stylistic characteristics. He refuses to consider the occasions of revelation given by the classical exegetes as the cause or purpose of revelation for certain verses and considers them merely as the external circumstances of its revelation. He therefore emphasizes the universality of meaning and not the specificity of the circumstance. In his efforts to eliminate all extraneous elements from the understanding of the Qur'an he refuses to be engaged in the discussion of Biblical stories and tales of ancient nations. Those stories, he asserts, were never intended for the sake of story-telling or for history, but to draw a moral. Similarly he refuses to be drawn into speculative philosophical discussion about the Essence and Attributes of God, about the nature of the angels and the *jinn,* and about the hereafter.

Exegesis of the Qur'an has been one of the main concerns of Muslim modernist reformers beginning with Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) and Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905)[54]. In his book *Islam and modernity,* Fazlur Rahman rightly contends that the basic question of

Marfat.com

methodology in quranic hermeneutics was not squarely addressed by Muslims. He further contends that the imperfection and imprecision of tools used for deriving law and other matters resulted from the lack of an adequate method for understanding the Qur'an itself and a general failure to understand its underlying deeper unity.[55] In his extensive writings, Mohammed Arkoun has also been calling for a totally new approach.[56] Darwaza's principles of modern exegesis, considering his modest educational background and that he was writing during the early forties, is therefore refreshing and a significant contribution toward developing a comprehensive hermeneutical method for interpreting the Qur'an and for understanding its message. Danvaza was convinced that interpretation of the Qur'an was the only possible basis for any renewal and development of Islamic religious, social and political thought and that the Qur'an is the only resource for Muslim reinterpretaion of traditional norms in Islam and Islamic thought.[57]

REFERENCES

1. For his biography see *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* New Edition, s. v. 'Muhammad'Izzat Darwaza'.

2. For example sec the autobiography of Muhammad 'Ali, who led the Khilafat movement in India, *My life, a fragment,* Lahore 1942, pp. 107-28; Kenneth Cragg and Marston Speight, *Islam from within: anthology of a religion,* Bel-mont, Calif. 1980, pp. 14-17. Abu 'l-A'la Mawdudi's (d. 1979) *Tafsir* also owes much to his incarceration in the Multan Jail, see Charles Adams, Abu'l-A'la Mawdudis *Tafhim al-Qur'an,* 'in *Approaches to the history of we interpretation of the Qur'an,* ed. Andrew Rippin, Oxford 1983, p. 307.

3. According to his own statement he was incarcerated from June 5, 1939 to November 3, 1940. *'Asr al-nabi* (1964), p. 10; for its full citation see note 4 below.

4. Darwaza, *al-Qur'an al-majid,* Sidon/Beirut n. d., p. 141. The three books compiled during his incarceration are : *'Asr al-nabi wa-bi'atuhu qabl al-bi'tha: suwar muqtabasa nun al-Qur'an al-karim wa-dirasat wa-tahlilat Qur'aniyya,* 2nd ed. rev. Beirut 1384/1964, p. 15; the first draft was finished in Muharram 1359/March 1940 and was first published in 1946; it was followed by *Sirat al-rasul: suwar muqtabasa min al-Qur'an al-karim wa-tahlilat wa-dirasat Qur'aniyya,* 2nd ed. rev., Cairo 1384/1965, I, p. 5, 12; the first draft was completed in Ramadan 1359/October 1940 and was first published in 1947; and *al-Dustur al-Qur'ani wa'l-sunna al-nabawiyya fi shu'un al-hayat,* 2nd ed. rev., Cairo 1386/1966; was first published in 1956 entitled *al-Dustur al-Qur'ani li-shu'un al-hayat; al-sunna al-nabawiyya* in the title and the related material from *hadith* works were added later in response to suggestions from the readers. It should be noted that all these works are based primarily on the Qur'an, hence Darwaza calls them *silsila Qur'aniyya* (the Our'an series). His biography of the Prophet is quite unique in this respect.

5. What he means by new style is that for explanation and comments he has divided the verses of each *sura* into appropriate smaller, logical units according to content, context, and rhyme rather than following the traditional pattern of verse by verse explication. Similarly, what he means by new sequential order is the chronological order of the *suras* according to their revelation and not the standard arrangement of the *suras* in the 'Uthmanic recension of the Qur'an.

   The chronological order adopted by Darwaza is that given in the printed copy of the Qur'an (published with the permission of Egyptian Interior Ministry and the Office of the Shaykh of the Qur'an Reciters) transcribed by the calligrapher Baqdar Ogli with minor changes. This

Marfat.com

chronology is at variance with other older sources and that offered by western scholars such as Gustav Weil, T. Noldeke, F. Schwally, R. Blachere and R. Bell using different criteria. It was quite uncommon to follow a chronological order for the whole *tafsir,* hence Darwaza had to justify his position by seeking a *fatwa* from the *Muftis* of Aleppo and Syria. Explaining his preference for it, he states :

We see that this [chronological order] is in keeping with the methodology we believe is best suited for the understanding of the Qur'an. With it it is possible not only to follow the Prophet's career through various periods but also to follow the stages of revelation more precisely and clearly. It also [helps] the reader to be fully immersed in the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the Qur'an, its meaning and its scope. This [in turn] reveals the wisdom of revelation to the reader.

Darwaza, *al-Tajsur al-hadith,* Cairo 1381/1962, I, pp. 6-16. For a detailed table of various chronologies see Darwaza, *Sirat al-nabi,* I, pp. 153-57.

6. Darwaza, *al-Tafsir,* I, p. 5. *Asr al-nabi,* pp.13-14, is also directed towards Muslim youth.
7. Both these chapters take up almost one-half of the book with detailed discussion of the topics covered therein. What follows is a brief summary of important issues.
8. Both these points are further developed by Darwaza in the third chapter, see below.
9. See Qur'an 26.192-95; 53.11.
10. Although Darwaza lacked the necessary training and sophistication to formulate and articulate his views on the nature of revelation whereby he could safeguard its 'otherness,' objectivity, and verbal character on the one hand and at the same time can maintain its intimate connection with the religious personality of the Prophet, his views are very similar to those expressed by Fazlur Rahman in his *Islam,* London 1966, pp. 30-33.
11. In his *The collection of the Qur'an,* Cambridge 1977, John Burton arrived at the same conclusion, although he started his inquiry from a different premise.
12. Darwaza states : *Annana ista'malna ta'bir jami ma mata al-nabi 'anhu wa-huwa al-Qur'an, wa-lam nasta'mal ta'bir jami al-Qur'an alladhi nazala 'ala al-nabi.* For more details on this question of *nasikh wa-mansukh,* see Burton, *The collection of the Qur'an,* pp. 46-104, 225-40; David Powers, *Studies in Qur'an and hadith : the formation of the Islamic law of inheritance,* Berkeley 1986, pp. 143-88, where older sources are cited.
13. Qur'an 2.106.
14. *Ibid.,* 16.101.
15. It should be noted that Darwaza's approach in his *Sirat al-rasul* (cited in note 4) is very rational and that he has severely criticized previous biographers for their fictitious and miraculous narratives.
16. It is now accepted by many that the Qur'an is the most reliable contemporary record for the life of the Prophet. Some western scholars, who have cast doubts on the historical value of early Muslim sources, have gone to argue that the Qur'an is the only reliable source for the life of Muhammad.
17. Darwaza, *al-Qur'an al-majid,* p. 144. This line of argument is quite common among the exegetes since it accounts for the theory of *nasikh wa-mansukh.* However, it poses a difficult theological

Marfat.com

problem, because it calls into question God's wisdom by attributing a change of mind to the theoretically changeless and eternal divine will. Muslim theologians have responded to this problem in different ways and some have rejected this doctrine of abrogation in its entirety. See note 12 above for the sources.

18. See his *'Asr al-nabi* cited in note 4. R. B. Serjeant, among others, has argued that for better understanding of the genesis of Islam and of classical Islamic texts knowledge of pre-Islamic Arabia is indispensable; see his articles reprinted in *Studies in Arabian history and civilisations,* London 1981.

19. The well-known *hadith* states : The Qur'an was revealed in seven modes of reading (*inna hadha al-Qur'an unzila 'ala sab'ati ahruf*), so recite according to what comes most easily. Al-Tabrizi, *Mishkat al-masabih, Damascus* 1961–62, I, *p. 679; English trans. James Robson, Mishkat al-masabih,* Lahore 1975, I, p. 466. Muslim exegetes and traditionists *(muhaddithun)* differ widely as to the meaning of *ahruf,* but a common interpretation is that it meant seven modes of reading, or seven tribal dialects. For details see al-Tabari, *tafsir al-Tabari,* ed. M. M. Shakir, 2nd ed., Cairo 1969, I, p. 13ff.

20. Unfortunately, Darwaza does not explain how the original meaning of the quranic vocabulary and expressions as understood by the Prophet's audience is to be achieved. Would it involve the use of extraneous sources, such as pre-Islamic poetry recorded in later times which exhibits certain vocabulary characteristics and stylistic usages different from those of the Qur'an? The Arabic lexicons of later times which exhibit later semantic developments also cannot be trusted. The safest guide to resolve those difficulties seems to be the Qur'an itself. See the last two principles below which further clarify this point.

    It is to be noted that Darwaza tries to play down the theory of the *i'jaz,* especially its stylistic aspect, in the sense that its high idiom was such that it could not have been comprehended by Arabs from all walks of life. To him the real *i'jaz* of the Qur'an consists of its spirituality, and the whole range of its subject matter. For further discussion on this aspect see Darwaza, *'Asr al-nabi,* p. 396ff. ; Ismail K. Poonawala, 'An Isma'ili Treatise on the I'jaz al-Qur'an', *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* CVIII (1988), pp. 379-85. In his *'Asr al-nabi, p. 406, Darwaza states that when the Makkans accused the Prophet of being a poet they probably saw in the early revelations some resemblance to poetry since their conception of poetry was not limited to the idea that it consists of meter and rhyme.*

21. Qur'an 3.7.

22. The following verses of the Qur'an indicate intense arguments between the Prophet and the infidels about the quranic revelation : 68.9-15; 81.19-29; 25.1-6, 32; 26.192-226; 17.45-47, 105-111; 10.15-17, 37-40; 11.13-14; 32.1-3; 34.31; 41.40-45.

    It is interesting to note that Muhammad 'Abduh had made a distinction between *usul and furu'* in religion, the former being matters of doctrine, worship rituals and ethics while the latter were matters relating to human transactions and social relations. The Egyptian scholar Muhammad al-Nuwayhi, basing his views on 'Abduh's above distinction, goes a step further and states that *furu* may be changed in accordance with the needs of changing circumstances: He thus extols the second caliph 'Umar who stopped applying certain injunctions of the Qur'an because the circumstances of his day were different from those of the Prophet. Muhammad al-Nuwayhi, *Nahwa thawra fl'l-fiki, al-dini,* Beirut 1983, pp. 145-48; Issa Boullata, *Trends and issues in contemporary Arab thought,* Albany, New York 1990, pp. 66-67.

Marfat.com

23. To support his contention he cites Qur'an 30.9; 40.21; 22.45-46; 37.133-38; 28.58; 29.38; 89.6-11; 11.100.

24. To support his contention he cites Qur'an 7.101, 163-66, 175-77; 5.32-33; 8.53–54; 26.8; 9.69-70; 10.13, 71-98; 12.111; 13.38-42. See also Darwaza, *'Asr al-nabi, p. 466. For a similar view that all Isra'iliyyat* (Jewish-Christian material), forced on the *tafasir,* are to be avoided, see Bint al-Shati' in note 39 below.

25. Darwaza states that the Arabs were familiar with the quranic version of those stories. To illustrate his point he cites the story of Abraham and Ishmael as the ancestors of the Arabs who built the Ka'ba. Darwaza states that the latter story, although not found in the Torah, is mentioned in the Qur'an-because it was prevalent among the Arabs. Darwaza, *al-Qur'an al-majid,* pp. 174-75. For the western works about biblical stories in the Qur'an and their sources see *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* New edition, s.v. 'al-Qur'an'.

26. It is worth noting that Darwaza handles the question as to whether the Prophet knew those biblical stories before his call because they were prevalent in that milieu, or whether he learned about them by way of personal contact, in a very rational manner. His answer is that the Prophet being a very sensitive and perceptive person must have learned those stories from his milieu. Moreover, as implied in Qur'an 16.103 and 25.4, the Prophet had personal contact with some persons who were knowledgeable about the Bible. Those verses assert that the Prophet was in contact with them, but they flatly deny that he was instructed by them. For details see Darwaza, *al-Qur'an al-majid,* pp. 180-83. In his 'A note on the Qur'an from a comparativist perspective' in Hallaq, W. & Little, D. (eds), *Islamic studies presented to C.J. Adams,* Leiden 1991, pp. 183-92, W. C. Smith states that Westerners by employing their generic and static concept 'scripture' have interpreted the Qur'an as simply one more instance of it, thereby dealing with similarities by tracing 'influences' or 'borrowings' from Jewish and Christian forerunners, while treating differences as distortions or misunderstandings. He contends that the generic concept does not fit the Islamic category and that the Qur'an should be recognized as culminating the process of scripturalizing and that the Qur'an might have carried Jewish and Christian material further. He then illustrates his case by examining the story of Abraham.

27. For quranic usage see Lane, *Arabic-English lexicon,* London 1863, s. v., *j-n-n;* Fazlur Rahman, *Major themes of the Qur'an,* Chicago 1980, pp. 121-23.

28. Darwaza notes that adherence to the above rule gives the Muslims freedom from subscribing to any particular scientific theory, thinking that it is derived from the Qur'an or supported by it. Thus, the Muslims remain free to experiment and to develop science and technology. The only requirement is that in doing so they should remain within the bounds described by the quranic principles and goals. Darwaza, *al- Qur'an al-majid,* p.192. See also F. Rahman, *Major themes,* pp. 65-79, for a detailed treatment of nature in the Qur'an. For a survey of science in Islam, see S. H. Nasr, *Islamic sciences : an illustrated study,* Westerham, England 1976.

29. See the chapter on eschatology in F. Rahman, *Major themes,* pp. 106-20.

30. Qur'an 42.11.

31. *Ibid.,* 6.103.

32. *Ibid.,* 2.255.

Marfat.com

33. About this debate among the *mutakallimun* and *falasifa* see *Encyclopaedia of Islam* New Edition, s.v. Allah; H. A. Wolfson, *The philosophy of the Kalam,* Cambridge Mass. 1976, pp. 112-234.

34. For example the verse 'God created you and whatever you do' (37.96) is lifted out of its context and used by some theologians to refute their opponents' claim that man is a free agent responsible for his deeds. Another verse, 'Fight the polytheists to a finish' (9.36) is likewise taken out of its context by many exegetes and theologians and described as *ayat al-sayf* abrogating all previous rulings about not fighting the polytheists.

35. He cites some examples, such as the occasions of revelations for 9.79; and 41.22. In the fourth chapter while pointing out the shortcomings of earlier exegetes, Darwaza devotes more space to this category and states that most reports dealing with the occasions of revelation are highly coloured to suit the later factional conflict within the Muslim community and therefore are unreliable. Darwaza, *al-Qur'an al-majid,* pp. 217-24.

36. A number of western scholars have commented on the composition of the Qur'an stating that it is incoherent. It should be pointed out that Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1209) was one of the early commentators who was aware of the problem of unity of the quranic sura and of its importance in *tafsir.* Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut (d. 1963) has also hinted at this unity in his *tafsir.* For the structural analysis of *surat al-shu'ara'* see Irfan Shahid, 'A contribution to Koranic exegesis,' in *Arabic and Islamic studies in honor of H. A. R. Gibb,* ed. George Makdisi, Leiden 1965, esp. p. 575 ff.; idem, 'Another contribution to Koranic exegesis,' *Journal of Arabic Literature,* XIV (1983), pp. 1-21.

37. Muhammad 'Ali, who led the Khilafat movement in India and had also discovered the Qur'an in a new and compelling way during his imprisonment by the British, writes in his autobiography :

> To us, therefore, who read such small portions every day, even when for the first time we had abundant leisure, it never seemed to lack freshness, and its repetitions and the variety of ways in which its main theme was presented to us day after day, as it had been presented to the Arabs thirteen centuries ago, only served to enable us to learn a much-needed lesson that we were apt to forget and even ignore in the distractions of the world. Ever since, this Book, which so many European critics pronounce to be incoherent, disjointed and dull, has had the invariable effect of intoxicating us by its simple grandeur, its intense directness and its incessant flow of motive power for the manifold activities of life.
>
> Muhammad 'Ali, *My life,* cited by Kenneth Cragg and Marston Speight, *Islam from within,* pp. 14-17.

38. This refers to the old dictum *al-Qur'an yufassiru ba duhu ba 'dan,* held by many classical *mufassirun* but never practised by them systematically, see note 39 below.

39. In this respect *al-Tafsir-al-bayani li'l-Qur'an al-karim,* 3rd ed., Cairo 1968, I, pp. 10-11, by 'A'isha 'Abd al-Rahman (also known by her pseudonym Bint al-Shati'), should be noted. Her methodology, acquired from her husband Amin Khuli, consists of four points : the objective treatment of any subject to be studied in the Qur'an begins by collecting all the references about it in the Qur'an; to understand a particular quranic notion, in context, all the verses about it are placed in the chronological order of their revelation to determine the circumstances of revelation; to understand the meanings of words the original linguistic meaning is sought first, then the quranic meaning is noted by collecting all forms of the word in the Qur'an, and studying their particular context in specific verses and their general context in the Qur'an as

a whole; to understand the subtleties of expression, the text in its quranic setting is studied first, then various *tafasir* are examined and only what agrees with the text may be accepted. See also Issa Boullata, 'Modern Qur'an exegesis : a study of Bint al-Shati's Method,' *Muslim World,* LXIV (1974), pp. 103-13.

40. He cites an example for the punishment of adultery, and states that the verses 4.15-16 do not specify the exact punishment, while the verse 24.2 does define the penalty, which is a hundred lashes. That means that the latter verse was revealed later as the quranic legislation developed. By studying all the related verses together one also discovers that the verse 4.25, describing the sexual offence of a believing married handmaid, states that her punishment is half that of a free believing woman, and therefore must have been revealed after the revelation of verse 24.2.

41. He states that the commentaries of the following authors were either fully or partly consulted by him. *Tafsir* ascribed to Ibn 'Abbas (d. c. 68/688), *Riwaya* of Abu Salih (F. Sezgin, *Geschichie des arabschen Schrifttums,* Leiden 1967, I, p. 27); Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Bukhari (d. 256/870), chapter on *tafsir* in his *Sahih; Abu Ja'farMuhammad b. Jariral-Tabari(d. 310/923), Jarni'al-bayan 'an ta 'wildyal-Qur'an,* also known as *Tafsir al-Tabari;* Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi (d. 460/1067), *tafsir al-tibyan;* al-Husayn b. Mas'ud al-Baghawi (d. c., 516/1122), *Ma'alim al-tanzil;* Abu al-Qasim Jar Allah Mahmud b. 'Umar al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144), *al-Kashshaf 'an haqa'iq ghawamid al-tanzil wa-'uyun al-aqawil fi wujuh al-ta'wil;* Abu 'Ali al-Fadl b. al-Hasan al-Tanzil al Tabarsi (d.c.548/1153), *Majma'al-bayan fi tafsiral-Qur'an; Fakhr* al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1209), *Mafatih al-ghayb* also known as *al-Tafsiral-kabir,* Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Qurtubi (d. 671/1273), *al-Jami' li-ahkam al-Qur'an;* 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar al-Baydawi (d. c., 685/1286), *Anwar al-tanzil wa-asrar al-ta'wil* also known as *Tafsir al-Baydawi; 'Abdalldh b. Ahmad al-Nasafi (d. 710/1310), Madarik al-tanzil wa-haqd'iq al-ta wil;* 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Khazin (d. 742/1341), *tafsir al-Qur'an al-jalil;* Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi (d. 745/1344), *al-Kitab al-kabir,* Abu 'l-Fida' Isma'il b. Kathir (d. 774/1373), *Tafar al-Qur'an al-'azim;* Abu al-Sa'ud (d. 982/1574), *Irshadal-'aql al salim;* Mahmud b. 'Abd Allah al-Alusi (d. 1854), *Ruh al-ma'ani fi tafsir al-Qur'an;* al-Shaykh al-Tantawi Jawhari, *al-Jawahir fi tafsir al-Qur'an al-karim;,* Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1935), *Tafsir al-manar,* Muhammad Mustata al-Maraghi (d., 1945), *Hadith Ramadan*: *Tafsir jami' li-khams suwar min al-Qur'an,* Muhammad Farid Wajdi (d. 1954), Safwat al-'irfan fi tafsir al-Qur'an.

42. For example Fakhr al-Din al-Razi is criticized for his uver classification and sub-categorization of various issues either closely or remotely connected with the meaning. The *Tafsir al-manar* is likewise faulted for unnecessary digressions, especially the debates between the Muslims and the Christians.

43. Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut al-falasifa,* 6th ed., Cairo 1980, p. 80; English translation is by S. A. Kamali, *Tahafut al-falasifa (Incoherence of the philosophers),* Lahore 1963, p. 6, with minor adaptation.

    Al-Shaykh al-Tantawi Jawhari's *Tafsir* comes under scathing criticism in this respect. Amin al-Khuli, Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad and Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut were also opposed to this trend in *tafsir.* See also 'Iffat M. al-Sharqawi, *Ittijahat al-tafsir fi Misr fi'l-'asr al-hadith,* Cairo 1972, pp. 366-91.

    Among the most recent attempts to adapt quranic notions to modern scientific theories Mustafa Mahmud's, *al-Qur'an : muhawala li-fahm 'asri li'l-Qur'an,* Cairo [1970], should be noted; it was refuted by 'A'isha 'Abd al-Rahman, *al-Qur'an wa'l-tafsir al-'asri,* Cairo 1970, and by 'Atif Ahmad, *Naqd al-fahm al-tasri li'l-Qur'an,* Beirut 1972. See also Maurice Bucaille, *La Bible, le*

Marfat.com

Coran et la science, 14th ed., Paris 1989; it is translated into English, Arabic, Persian, Urdu. Turkish, and Indonesian; Mohamed Talbi and Maurice Bucaille, *Reflexions surle Coran,* Paris 1989. This trend is quite common in the newsletters published by the Muslim Associations of Southern California.

44. Darwaza, *al-Qur'an al-majid,* p. 297.

45. *Ibid.,* p. 305.

46. For the experiment of the pan-Syrian dream under Faysal and its eclipse see M. Maslih, *The origins of Palestinian nationalism,* New York 1988, pp. 115-54.

47. Darwaza, *Nash'at al-haraka al-'arabiyya al-haditha,* 2nd ed., Sidon 1971, pp. 20, 38-39. Outlining a long history of Arabism, Darwaza contends that Arab nationalism is not a new concept borrowed from the West. He further asserts that the constituents of Arab nationalism are stronger than those which make up the modern nationalism.

48. Qur'an 2.143.

49. *Ibid.,* 3.110.

50. Darwaza, *Nash'at al-haraka,* p. 42.

51. *Ibid.,* p. 46.

52. *Ibid.,* p. 50. The nationalism of this period was not completely secular and the religious foundation of Arab nationalism was strong. The sense of the past which lies at the heart of any national movement could not, among the Arabs, be anything but a sense of the Islamic past, in the sense that Islam was what the Arabs had done in history. Rashid Rida justified his Arab nationalism in religious terms : an Arab revival was necessary for an Islamic revival. Albert Hourani, *Arabic thought in the liberal age, 1708-1939* Oxford 1962, pp. 260-323; idem, *The emergence of the modern Middle East,* Berkeley 1981, pp. 179-92. According to some political scientists, Islamic thinkers, like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh, did contribute to the nationalist cause and their Islamic activism did play a significant role in the early formulations of Arab nationalism.

53. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and modernity*: *transformation of an intellectual tradition,* Chicago 1982, p. 6.

54. F. Rahman, *Islam,* pp. 212-34; *Tafsir al-manar* by Rashid Rida was started by Muhammad 'Abduh; Daud Rahbar, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's principles of exegesis,' *Muslim World,* XLVI (1956), pp. 104-12; pp. 324-35; C. W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan* : *a reinterpretation of Muslim theology,* New Delhi 1978, p. 144ff.

55. F. Rahman, *Islam and modernity,* pp. 2-4, 5-11.

56. See especially his *Lectures du Coran,* Paris 1982; *L'Islam, morale et politique,* Paris 1986; for the analysis of his approach see I. Boullata, *Trends,* pp. 79-85.

57. Darwaza, *al-Dustur al-Qur'ani,* introduction to the 2nd edition.

Marfat.com

10

Interpreting the Bible Through the Qur'an

It is commonly stated that Muslims approach the Bible with the attitude that when the biblical text agrees with the Qur'an, the statements may be accepted, but when it disagrees, the Qur'an is to be preferred.[1] The aim of this paper is to sketch out the ramifications this attitude has had in practice and to put it in historical perspective. This paper is no more than an attempt to outline a field of study and investigate some of its potential directions.[2] Clearly, there is a lot of work to be done here, both conceptually, in discovering new approaches to the material, and constructively, in bringing disparate sources together for analysis. It is significant to note that Muslims themselves have generally not separated out this field of biblical interpretation-allusion within their own intellectual systematizations; this is not a 'genre' of *tafsir*. From a Muslim perspective, it may well be said that this question cannot be separated from the notion of quranic interpretation in general. Yet, from a modern academic perspective, such a topic seems to have legitimacy by virtue of the way in which it reflects an investigator's own interests and construction of reality. That is, quranic studies as a modern, academic discipline cannot, even must not, stay within the intellectual constraints (as it often does) of what are frequently the medieval Muslim efforts towards the categorization of knowledge (as represented, for example, in the works of al-Suyuti). Our intellectual efforts to make sense of the world around us must reflect our own understandings and form our knowledge into meaningful elements of our own world view.

I

There are essentially three areas of literature which need to be covered under the rubric of Muslim interpretation of the Bible : the use of biblical material in the Qur'an itself, its use in *tafsir* material especially the *qisas al-anbiya'*, and its use in polemical literature. The modern context provides what might be considered an additional area for study, because of the manner in which it frequently brings all three of these elements together into one unit.

Within itself, the Qur'an provides Muslims with a view of the Bible. Mention is made of the 'scrolls' of Abraham and Moses, the *Tawrat* (Torah) of Moses, the *Zabur* (usually understood as the Psalms) of David and the *Injil* (Gospel) of Jesus, all conceived as direct revelation from God to the prophet concerned : 'Surely We sent down the Torah, wherein is guidance and light' (Qur'an 5.48); 'And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus son of Mary, confirming the Torah before him; and We gave to him the Gospel, wherein is guidance and light' (Qur'an 5-50). In this way, all previous scriptures are pictured within the revelatory and compositional image of the Qur'an itself. Additionally, the Muslim scripture is seen to be a confirmation of

Marfat.com

these earlier revelations; it also serves to make disputed matters clear : 'We have sent down to thee the Remembrance [*i.e.* the Qur'an] that thou mayest make clear to mankind what was sent down to them' (Qur'an 16.46). The Qur'an also serves a correcting function : humans have misinterpreted and tampered with the works of Moses and Jesus especially, people have been 'perverting words from their meanings' (Qur'an 5.45). The Qur'an thus presents an uncorrupted version of the word of God and all scripture culminates in the Qur'an, according to Muslim interpretation of these verses.[3]

The Qur'an retells stories found in the Bible in a recognizable form but the accounts are always shorn of their overall biblical narrative context. Frequently the stories are truncated to such an extent that reference to the biblical tradition is necessary in order to make sense of the narrative elements provided in the Qur'an. Some of the stories are clearly influenced by the exegetical tradition within Judaism and, to a lesser extent, Christianity.[4] The exact source of the stories–variously suggested to be Arabian Jews or Christians, Samaritans, remnants of the Qumran community, Jewish-Christian groups and so forth–remains a matter of debate,[5] but a great deal of emphasis in contemporary research falls on the oral nature of the transmission of the biblical material into the Arabic context in accounting for the form and the content of the narrative.[6]

Scholarship has not, as yet, it seems to me, paid much attention to the actual issue of the interpretation of the Bible from within the quranic perspective. Of far greater concern up to this point has been the attempt to establish the sources of the basic information itself. A few generalities may be suggested, however. It is clear that the biblical stories are cited not for their narrative or historical significance but for their spiritual and moral guidance, most especially in emphasizing the notion of God's determination of, and involvement in, history. The constant suggestion in the citation of the stories of the prophets of the past (starting with Adam and mentioning Noah, Isaac, Ishmael, Lot, Aaron, Ezra, Zechariah, John and so on, for example) is that God has sent messengers in the past with their message but the people have rejected both the message and the messengers. As a result, punishment has come down upon each community and God has thereby triumphed in the end. This stylized narrative plot line is illustrated by isolated episodes or single details from the life of individual prophets, stories which are familiar from the biblical tradition as a whole. Muhammad's own career is frequently pictured in terms of this plot. Combined with this constant narrative element in the Qur'an is a reworking of the Abrahamic tradition in the light of Muhammad.[7] Abraham becomes the pivotal figure in the quranic picture of salvation history, seen as living before the Judaism of Moses and the Christianity of Jesus. This is the true faith, *hanifiyya,* which Muhammad revives in Makka, where Abraham had established the shrine known as the Ka'ba to the glory of God. The sense in which the Qur'an 'reworks' this biblical material is limited, however; for the most part, the quranic position on Abraham is assumed or hinted at, rather than explicitly detailed and proven on the basis of proof-texts or the like.

II

Because of the truncated and referential style in the quranic citation of biblical material which presupposed knowledge on the part of its audience of the actual details of the narratives,[8] the emergent Muslim community was faced with the problem of how to

Marfat.com

understand its own scripture once the original Judeo-Christian environment was left behind and Islam was established as the religion of the newly-formed and widespread Arab empire. On the evidence of extant literary sources, this matter became problematic some 150 years after the death of Muhammad; at this time, we see the emergence of *tafsil* written works providing interpretation of the Qur'an and thus, given the content of the scriptural text itself, providing a view of Muslim interpretation of the Bible.[9]

One of the earliest such works still extant is that ascribed to Muqatil ibn Sulayman (d. 767), which clearly displays the way in which biblical materials were interpreted and incorporated into the Muslim tradition in order to complete and supplement the bare bones of the Bible as presented in the Qur'an.[10] The interpretation of the biblical text is generally left on the level of providing the narrative elements which were needed to embellish the Qur'an text; certainly the Bible never becomes of relevance to legal issues within the Muslim community itself, nor, generally, for any theological judgements.[11]

Many early Muslim writers, including such people as Ibn Ishaq (d. 767),[12] al-Jahiz (d. 869)[13] and Ibn Qutayba (d. 889),[14] display a certain measure of acquaintance with the actual text of the Bible itself. The recent publication of the book by Abu 'Ubayd (d. 838), *Kitab al-khutab wa'l-mawa'iz,*[15] provides an interesting illustration of this type of knowledge. In recounting various speeches of the ancient prophets, Abu 'Ubayd often indirectly cites biblical passages; sometimes these are cited as being 'quotations' from the 'scrolls of Abraham and Moses'[16] *but on other, more interesting, occasions, the passages provide what might be best termed 'allusions'*:

> Abu 'Ubayd told us that Yazid ibn Harun said on the authority of Abu Ma'shar on the authority of Sa'id ibn Abi Sa'id al-Maqburi that he said : 'A man came to Jesus, son of Mary, and said "O teacher of good deeds! Teach me something which you know but I do not, which will serve me well but not harm you." Jesus said, "What might that be?" The man said, "How can the servant be faithful to God?" Jesus replied, "That is simple. You should love God truly from your heart, work for God through your exertion and strength as much as you are able, and treat your brothers *(banu jinsika)* compassionately through your mercy and selflessness." The man said "O teacher of good deeds! Who are my brothers?" Jesus replied, "All of the offspring of Adam. Whatever you consider to be inappropriate for yourself, do not inflict upon others. In this way, you are truly faithful to God."'[17]

This sort of passage cannot be taken simply as imaginative quranic exegesis : its allusion to the New Testament is evident and while it may not prove the case for actual knowledge of the biblical text itself, it does demonstrate that Muslims were, at an early stage, working with more raw material in their elaborations of the Qur'an than their imaginations. Indeed, one of the purposes of citing the Bible as these authors did, may have been to provide a check on the more imaginative embellishments which were being made in the interpretation of the Qur'an in general which were often claimed to stem from the Bible or Jewish and Christian sources. These exegetical excesses, at times, went to the extent of creating wholely spurious texts going under the name of *Tawrat* or *Zabur,* examples of which still exist.[18]

Marfat.com

The tendency to incorporate biblical materials into the Islamic tradition, and to Islamicize them in doing so (and thus, it might be suggested, picking up on the Qur'an's own way of retelling biblical stories), sees its ultimate manifestations in the genre of literature known as the *dala'il al-nubuwwa,* the 'proofs of prophecy', and especially the *qisas al-anbiya',* the 'stories of the prophets'. These latter tales, several of which are available in whole or in part in English translation,[19] display the end result of the exegetical process : a history of the prophets of the past, recounted in an order which for the most part accepts the biblical chronology, focused around passages of the Qur'an supplemented by the biblical and most especially biblical-exegetical tradition. Much of this material has become known, pejoratively, as the *isra iliyyat,* stories supposedly transmitted in the Islamic world by Jewish (and Christian) converts, although the material included within this term generally encompasses far more than that.[20] Frequently viewed with suspicion by Muslims, the material has provided the basis for the legendary expansion of the picture of the past prophets, but it is always filtered through a Muslim perspective : characteristics of the Islamic conception of prophets, for example their sinlessness, mould every image; the Arabian context becomes the focal point of many stories. The stories themselves must always agree with the quranic version of the events, even if this reconciliation requires a certain amount of interpretational ingenuity.[21] Overall, it may be said that the point of all these *qisas al-anbiya'* books is to demonstrate the continuity of the prophets from the time of Adam down to Muhammad. In the recounting of the lives of the prophets, there is certainly a tendency to avoid any Christian symbolic prefigurements in the events of the 'Old Testament'. Likewise, there is no emphasis on Israel as a land and Judaism's connection to it. The stories are retold, once again, for their value in enhancing the spiritual and moral guidance implicit in the Qur'an itself. Their function is always to interpret the Qur'an by providing an authoritative,

Muslim account of earlier history. The end result of this writing down of the interpretational process as embodied in the *tafsir* works, the spurious bibles and the *qisas al-an-biya'* genre—was that it was never necessary for Muslims to consult the Bible itself nor write commentaries upon it, for the necessary material had early on been incorporated into the Muslim exegetical literature. Another aspect of this is reflected in the way in which Muslim elaborations have then re-entered Jewish and Christian circles, especially in the exegetical material of those two religions,[22] but also, according to some, into translations of pseudepigraphical books such as the Ethiopic version of the *Life of Adam and Eve.*[23]

III

There was one specific issue, however, which caused the Muslims to look at the Bible itself and provide a more self-conscious biblical interpretation. The Qur'an suggests that Muhammad was spoken of in the Bible ('... the Messenger, the Prophet of the common folk, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel', Qur'an 7.156). The notion arose in Islam, certainly with some support from the Qur'an itself, that these references had been removed or hidden by the Jews (rarely are the Christians attacked in this manner) : 'Why do you confound the truth with vanity, and conceal the truth and that wittingly?' says Qur'an 3.64. This alteration of the text of scripture was denoted by the term *tahrif.* Despite what would seem to be the consequence of this stance that there would thus be no references to

Marfat.com

Muhammad found in the Bible, Muslims were quick to try to isolate any evidence of 'fulfilment' of earlier scripture that could be proclaimed by the coming of Muhammad. The stimulus for this was undoubtedly Christian polemical pressure to provide proof of the validity of Islam. The earliest apologetic treatises—which are some of the earliest pieces of Islamic literature available—speak at some length about the biblical passages which refer to Muhammad. The most famous of these, *The book of religion and empire,* written by 'Ali al-Tabari probably in the mid-ninth century,[24] details a large number of passages from both Jewish and Christian scriptures which are interpreted in light of Muhammad. Prominent passages and ones which recur throughout this type of literature down to the modern day include Genesis 17.20 : 'I have heard your prayer for Ishmael. I have blessed him and made him fruitful. I will multiply his descendants; he shall be a father of twelve princes and I will raise a great nation from him', (the 'nation' was, of course, the Arabs to whom no greater promise God ever made, according to the author);[25] Deuteronomy 18.15 : 'The Lord your God will raise up a prophet from among you like myself'[26] (and similarly in verse 18), interoreted to be a reference to Muhammad rather than any of the other prophets or Jesus none of whom, it is suggested, are actually 'from among you like myself'; Deuteronomy 33.2, with its mention of Mount. Paran, identified as 'the land which Ishmael inhabited', frequently further glossed (in light of the Qur'an) as Makka;[27] and John 14 26: 'but your Advocate [Paraclete], the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything,' glossed as Muhammad, often connected to Qur'an 61.6 with its reference to Jesus designating 'Ahmad' as the one to come after him.[28]

This tendency to find Muhammad in the Bible, despite its rather obvious apologetic nature, remains a popular topic in contemporary Muslim circles. This is evidenced not only by the recent editing of a series of medieval texts dealing with the topic[29] but also by works from the Muslim world in Arabic[30] and from elsewhere in, for example, English and French. All are really no more than continuations of medieval polemic. A widely circulated pamphlet by the South African Ahmed Deedat entitled 'What the Bible says about Muhammad (Peace be upon him)' uses Deuteronomy 18.18 as its major discussion point; the prophet 'most like' Moses here is Muhammad, not because of issues of descent as in 'Ali al-Tabari, but because of such similarities as Moses and Muhammad having a mother and father and Jesus not; Jesus having a miraculous birth and the other two not; Jesus not marrying as compared to the others, and so on. Emphasis also falls on the latter part of the biblical verse, 'I will put my words into his mouth,' as a reference to the mode of revelation of the Qur'an to the illiterate Muhammad. Another instance of this is in the Arabic work by al-Tahtawi, *Muhammad nabi'l-Islam fi'l-Tawrat wa'l-Injil wa'l-Qur'an.* This work contains extensive quotations from the Bible and elaborates them in a straight-forward manner. Al-Tahtawi has included a number of typical passages in his work, which provide an interesting example of this mode of interpretation. The following details a prophecy in Micah (chapter 4, verses 1-7) :

> It will be in the last days that the mountains of the Lord's house shall be established at the top of other mountains, lifted above the hills.
> Peoples shall come streaming to it and many nations shall come and say :
> 'Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob.
> He will teach us his ways and we will walk in his paths.'

Marfat.com

> Because from Zion comes the law and out of Jerusalem comes the word of the Lord.
> He will be judge between many peoples

and so on to verse 7 :

> And on that day, says the Lord, I will gather the lame, and I will assemble the exiles and those who were forced (to leave).
> I will make the lame a remnant and those driven away a powerful people.
> The Lord shall rule them on Mount Zion now and for ever.

On this, al-Tahtawi comments :

> This is a message that the special temple of the Lord at the end of time shall be revealed on the tops of mountains and this is a precise description of the mountain of 'Arafat and the pathway of the *hajj* to the Holy Mosque which Abraham and Ishmael (upon whom may there be peace) built. That message points to the word of the Lord that He will gather all the lame, assemble the exiles and those who have been harmed and taken away, so that He may begin to produce a powerful nation of them. Those descriptions can only be connected to Hagar when she and her son Ishmael were sent far away to the land of the Hijaz. From his offspring comes die community of Islam,[31]

Another aspect to this polemical debate is found in attacks on the Bible and its veracity, a topic frequently subsumed under the notion *tahrif*.[32] Ibn Hazm (d. 1064), for example, while responding to supposed Jewish attacks on the Qur'an[33], retaliates with a collection of attacks on the Bible. Muslim apologist pointed to instances of immorality in the biblical text, logical inconsistencies, absent doctrines (*e.g.,* life after death in the Torah) and anthropomorphisms as evidence of the corrupt character of the scripture. Many of the characteristics that are seized upon by Ibn Hazm are precisely those which Christians especially had cast at Muslims in attacks on the latters' own scripture.

The modern world has produced other areas of thought in which the Bible is contemplated by Muslims; all such situations are tinged by polemic and apologetics. Social organization, family structure and science are some of the issues in which the attitude of the Qur'an and the Bible are compared. Most famous in this regard is certainly Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, the Qur'an and science.*[34] Abu'l-A'la al-Mawdudi (1903-79), a prominent Pakistani religious and political leader, also uses the text of the Bible in his commentary on the Qur'an. The purpose is not only to provide explanation of various items in the Muslim scripture but also to illustrate the errors of the Bible and the greater reliability of the quranic text; the criterion used to determine this, it is always asserted, as would be expected, is that where the Bible and the Qur'an agree, the Bible is right; where the two disagree, the Bible is wrong.[35]

One of the few attempts made by a Muslim to write a commentary on the actual text of the Bible itself was that by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898). Called *The Mohomedan commentary on the Holy Bible,* it was published in 1862 and 1865. Two parts, the first being the 'Preliminary Discourse' (covering the history of the biblical text and questions of dogma) and the Second (covering Genesis 1 to 11) were published in Urdu with English summaries. A portion covering

Marfat.com

Matthew 1 to 5 together with a short history of Christianity was apparently prepared at the same time but was not published until 1887 and is available in Urdu only.[36] Ahmad Khan's general attitude is that the Bible should have a positive role in Muslim life as long as it is read in light of the quranic message, so that any distortions which have occurred as a result of Jewish and Christian misinterpretation (the only extent to which he considers *tahrif* to have occurred) can be corrected. His work is remarkably free of polemic and is aimed at bringing about a common understanding and inspiration through revealed scripture within the Judeo-Christian-Muslim tradition. Such tendencies continue in contemporary works such as that by the Groupe de Recherches Islamo-Chretien, *The challenge of the scriptures: the Bible and the Qur'an,*[37]

REFERENCES

1. The idea dearly stems from the notion of *tahrif,* alteration of scripture; see further below.
2. This paper attempts to expand, and expose to a wider, specialist audience, my article called 'Muslim interpretation of the Bible', in R. Coggins, L Houlden, eds, *Dictionary of biblical interpretation,* London 1990. All translations from the Qur'an are from A. J. Arberry, *The Koran interpreted,* London 1955; Arberry's verse numbering is also used. Bible translations are from *The new English Bible* (unless translated from the Arabic). I should like to express my appreciation to Professor John Burton, University of St Andrews, for his detailed and helpful response to this paper at the *Colloquium;* his continued interest in, and encouragement of, my work is greatly appreciated.
3. A good treatment of the data related to this issue is to be found in A. Jeffery, 'The Qur'an as scripture' *The Muslim World,* XL (1950), pp. 41-55, pp. 106-34, pp. 185-206, pp. 257-75; reprinted in book form with a supplement, *The Qur'an as scripture.* New York 1952.
4. There are, of course, many works which attempt a summary and an analysis of the material. A concise treatment is to be found in J. Jomier, *The Bible and the Koran* (French original : *Bible et Coran),* New York 1964, chapter 10. Noteworthy for its general reflections is Franz Rosenthal, 'The influence of the Biblical tradition on Muslim historiography', in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt, eds, *Historians of the Middle East,* Oxford 1962, pp. 35-45. M. S. Scale, 'How the Qur'an interprets the Bible : towards a Christian-Muslim dialogue' in his *Qur'an and Bible: studies in interpretation and dialogue,* London 1978, pp. 71 -7, is rather superficial.
5. See the excellent discussion of this subject, with extensive bibliography, in Tryggve Kronholm, 'Dependence and prophetic originality in the Koran,' *Orientalia Suecana,* XXXI-XXXII (1982-1983), pp. 47-70.
6. See *e.g.* M. R. Waldman, 'New approaches to "Biblical" materials in the Qur'an', *The Muslim World,* LXXV (1985), pp. 1-13. Also see W. M. Brinner, S. Ricks (eds), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic traditions. Papers presented at the Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies, Center for Judaic Studies, University of Denver,* Atlanta 1986; Haim Schwarzbaum, *Biblical and extra-biblical legends in Islamic folk-literature,* Beitrage zur Sprach-und Kulturgeschichte des Orients, Bd. 30, Walldorf-Hessen, H. Vorndran 1982; this work has an extensive bibliography.
7. See A. Rippin, *Muslims, their religious beliefs and practices,* volume 1, *The formative period,* London 1990, chapter 3, for a discussion of this in the context of the mythic dimension of the Qur'an.
8. See the discussion of this in John Wansbrough, *Quranic studies: sources and methods of scriptural*

interpretation, Oxford 1977 and A. Rippin, 'Literary analysis of Qur'an, *sura* and *tafsir* the methodologies of John Wansbrough', in R. C. Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in religious studies,* Tucson 1985, pp. 151-63.

9. For a recent example of a study displaying this aspect of Muslim exegesis, see Reuven Firestone, 'Abrahan's son as the intended sacrifice *(al-Dhabih,* Qur'an 37.99-113): issues in Qur'anic exegesis', *Journal of Semitic Studies,* XXXIV (1989), pp. 95-131.

10. *Tafsir Muqatil ibn Sulayman,* ed. A. M. Shihata, Cairo [1969], volume 1 only, volumes 1-5 published Cairo 1979-89.

11. However, the 'biblical' elements of the Qur'an text are certainly relevant in the overall scheme : see Roger Arnaldez, 'Les elements bibliques du Coran comme sources de la theologie et de la mystique musulmanes', in *Aspects de la foi de l'Islam,* Brussels 1985, pp. 29-55.

12. See *e.g.,* A. Guillaume, 'The version of the Gospels used in Medina circa 700 A. *D.,' Al-Andalus,* XV (1950), pp. 289-96.

13. See his *Kitab al-radd 'ala'l-Nasara,* ed. J. Finkel, Cairo 1926 (under the title : *Thalath rasa'il li... al-Jahiz),* and J. Finkel, 'A Risala of al-Jahiz', *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* XLVI) (1927), pp. 311-34.

14. See G. Lecomte, 'Les citations de l'ancien et du nouvcau testament dans l'oeuvre d'ibn Qutayba', *Arabica,* V (1958), pp. 34-46.

15. Edited by Ramadan 'Abd al-Tawwab, Cairo 1986. On the text see Claude Gilliot, Textes arabes anciens edites en Egypte au cours des annces 1985 a 1987', *MIDEO,* XIX (1989), pp. 319-21.

16. *e.g., ibid.,* p. 125, paragraph 37.

17. *Ibid.,* p. 153, paragraph 73; the editor notes that this tradition, as with many others in this book, is found in Ibn Hanbal *Kitab al-Zuhd.* Cf. Matthew 22.34-40.

18. See J. Sadan, 'Some literary problems concerning Judaism and Jewry in medieval Arabic sources,' in M. Sharon, ed., *Studies in Islamic history and civilization in honour of Professor David Ayalon,* Jerusalem/Leiden 1989, esp. pp. 370ff. and the section entitled The "genuine" Pentateuch (*tawrat*) of Moses, as rediscovered and reshaped by Islamic literature'.

19. See *e.g.,* W. M. Thackston, Jr. (trans.), *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisa'i,* Boston 1978 and W. M. Brinner (trans.), *The History of al-Tabari,* volume 2, *Prophets and Patriarchs,* Albany 1986.

20. The rise and employment of this term *isra'iliyyat* deserves a special study, my impression is that it comes into wide circulation as a pejorative term in *tafsir* - material which is not to be accepted as valid in interpretation – only with writers as late as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and Ibn Kathir (d. 1373). This fact seems to be ignored in works such as Gordon Newby 'Tafsir Isra'iliyat', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* XLVII (1979), supplement, pp. 658-97. On the rise of the term, see A. J. Johns, 'David and Bathsheba. A case study in the exegesis of Qur'anic story-telling', *MIDEO,* XIX (1989), p 263, and Norman Calder's contribution to this volume.

21. See Norman Calder, 'From Midrash to Scripture: the sacrifice of Abraham in early Islamic tradition', *Le Museon,* Cl (1988), pp. 375-402, who points also to the status of the quranic narrative itself as a link in the centuries old interpretational process.

Marfat.com

22. See *e.g.*, the EI 1st ed. articles of J. Heller on various biblical figures for illustrations.
23. See the references provided in J. Charlesworth, *The pseudepigrapha and modem research,* Missoula, MT 1976.
24. *Kitab al-din wa'l-dawla,* ed. A. Mingana, Manchester 1923, English translation, 1922, reprinted Lahore, Law Publishing Co., n. d. Doubts have occasionally been uttered regarding the authenticity of the text but see 'Notes and News', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester,* LXIX (1986), pp. 1-7.
25. English trans., pp. 77-8.
26. English trans., pp. 85-6.
27. English trans., pp. 86-7.
28. English trans., p. 140.
29. Ahmad Hijazi'l-Saqqa has been most active in this respect; see the prelaces to those editions and the citations of them in a number of G. Anawati's annual articles 'Textes arabcs anciens edites en Egypte', in *MIDEO* (e.g. XVII, pp. 188-9, XVIII, pp. 292-5). One example of a text which I have at hand of al-Saqqa's editing is Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni, *Shifa'al-Gholil bayan ma waqa'afi'1- Tawrat wa'l-Injil min al-tabdil,* Cairo 1979.
30. See *e.g.*, James Robson, 'Does the Bible speak of Mohammed?', *The Moslem World,* XXV (1935), pp. 17-26.
31. Mahmud 'Izzat Isma'il al-Tahtawi, *Muhammad nabi'l-Islam fi al-Tawrat wa'l-Injil wa'1-Quran,* [Cairo c. 1978], p. 24.
32. See *e.g.*, Jean-Marie Gaudeul, Robert Caspar, 'Textes de la tradition musulm-ane concernant le *tahrif* (falsification) des centures', *Islamochristiana,* VI (1980), pp. 61-104, which covers aspects of falsification of the text as well as the meaning of scripture. Also see Norman Roth, 'Forgery and abrogation of the Torah : a theme in Muslim and Christian polemic in Spain', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research,* LIV (1987), pp. 203-36; Harry Gayiord Dorman Jr, *Towards understanding Islam. Contemporary apologetic of Islam and missionary policy,* Columbia University, New York 1948 for a valuable overview of Muslim treatments.
33. The status of this refutation continues to be a matter of dispute; see Sarah Stroumsa, 'From Muslim heresy to Jewish-Muslim polemics : Ibn al-Rawandi's *Kitab al-Damigh', Journal of the American Oriental Society,* CVII (1987), pp. 767-72. Also see the citations from Ibn Hazm's *Kitab al-fisal* in Gaudeul and Caspar, *op. cit.,* pp. 78-82.
34. English translation from French original, American Trust Pub., Indianapolis 1979.
35. See C. J. Adams, 'Abu' *l*-A'la Mawdudi's *Tafhim al-Qur'an',* in Andrew Rippin (cd.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an,* Oxford 1988, esp. pp. 317-20.
36. For some details, see Christian W. Troll, 'Sayyid Ahmad Khan on Matthew 5.17–20', *Islamochristiana,* III (1970), pp. 99-105.
37. Translated from the French by Stuart E. Brown, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N, Y., 1989, originally published as *Ces ecritures qui nous questionnent: la Bible et le Coran,* Paris 1987.

Marfat.com

11

Two Citations of the Qur'an in 'Historical' Sources for Early Islam

The Arabic literary sources *(ta'rikh, futuh, ansab,* etc.) for the early history of Islam frequently appear to cite, or allude to, the text of the Qur'an. The most common context in which this occurs is when the sources are reporting what are presented as the actual words of the protagonists involved – caliphs, governors, rebels *et al.* In the course of a speech the speaker is often made to introduce phrases or words which we recognise as a part of the quranic text, and, when this happens, the practice of most modern editors is to indicate the chapter and verse of the Qur'an where we may find the phrase or word. This is obviously useful for those many modern readers who have not been brought up on the Qur'an and would, otherwise, have to spend time consulting a concordance or, worse, may fail to spot the diction as quranic. The editorial practice may have a disadvantage, however, if it leads the reader merely to sit back and register the 'quotation'.

It is not so much the form of such 'quotations' or 'allusions' with which I am concerned here, although it is worth drawing attention to the number of occasions on which what is signalled as quranic material diverges from the text of the Qur'an in remarkable and interesting ways. Sometimes the wording differs to a greater or lesser extent from the Qur'an as we 'know it; sometimes a quranic text leads into or comes out of a passage which is not quranic but not notably distinct in style or content; and sometimes passages which appear in the Qur'an in quite separate contexts are linked together as if they form one continuous whole. There are various ways of explaining such features but at least on some occasions it seems worth considering whether what is before us might be understood, not as a quotation from or allusion to the Qur'an, but rather as a variant and uncanonical version of a text which is better known to us in its quranic guise.[1]

My real concern here, however, is with the possible value of quranic citations in our 'historical' sources for elucidating the significance of the citations themselves. It seems to me that these sources sometimes contain not only variant citations of quranic material but also what may be regarded as variant interpretations of quranic material. By this latter phrase I refer to the use of quranic material in a way which implies an understanding of it which is rather different from that to be found in the exegetical tradition. Protagonists in some of the events of early Islam are shown sometimes to use quranic material in ways which would not be obvious from the discussions in the works of *tafsir*. What makes this especially interesting is that on some occassions the quranic material is used in a way which related to a theme in

the historical sources which is not immediately obvioius. Sometimes when reading the historical sources it is possible to sense a level of meaning which is inherent in the reports which they contain, but which is not made explicit. It is when a quranic passage is cited in these reports in a way which relates to this deeper level that it seems noteworthy. I have two examples.

Qur'an 39.65

This verse reads, 'It has been revealed to you and to those who were before you that, if you commit "association" (*la-in-ashrakta*), your deeds will surely be futile and you will be one of the lost (*al-khasirin)'*. We are told that it was used by the Khawarij against 'Ali in the course of polemics following his agreement at the battle of Siffin to accept arbitration, and before the battle of Nahrawan when he inflicted a bloody defeat on the Khawarij.[2] An obvious question is why the verse should have been introduced in this context : what is its relevance to the point at issue between 'Ali and the Khawarij?

The root *sh-r-k* is usually understood in the quranic context to refer to polytheism, the association of other gods with God. The charge of *shirk* and the designation *mushrik(un),* when they occur in the Qur'an are usually understood to refer to Muhammad's polytheistic opponents, often the Quraysh of Makka. Tabari's commentary on Qur'an 39.65 is linked to the immediately preceding verse, 'Say : "Is it other than God you bid me serve, you ignorant ones?"' This is glossed by Tabari, 'Say, oh Muhammad, to the *mushrikun* of your people who are calling you to the worship of idols, "Is it other than God, you ignorant ones, whom you bid me serve? The worship of anything else is of no avail."'[3] Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi glosses *la-in ashrakta* in Qur'an 39.65 by 'if you associate with the worship of God idols other than God' (*la-in ashrakta bi-'ibadat Allah ghayrahu min al-asnam).*[4] *Such an interpretation of shirk* clearly derives from and supports the traditional view of the milieu in which the prophet's mission was carried out and in which God revealed the Qur'an. But why would the Khawarij have accused 'Ali of being an idol worshipper or polytheist?

It is obvious that in the case of the dispute between 'Ali and the Khawarij we are dealing with the use of *shirk* in the context of a religious argument and might therefore expect it to be used polemically (the same, in my view, ought to be expected of its use in the Qur'an also). We are familiar with a variety of polemical contexts where the accusation of *shirk* is made with reference to different errors or sins on the part of the opponents—it is directed by Muslims against Christians with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity,[5] by the Wahhabis against other Muslims with reference to what the former saw as excessive veneration of holy men or saints and visits to their tombs, it is used to refer to the sin of pride, etc.[6] In each case the word does not refer to polytheism or idol worship in a real sense, but neither is it being used in a completely general and non-specific sense. There always seems to be some conceptual link between the sin or error which is being attacked and the notion of the association of something with God : Christians are charged with associating the worship of other 'persons' with the one God; ordinary Muslims, according to the Wahhabis, associate the worship of mere men with God; someone who is proud takes account of the views of his fellow men when he should have regard only to his relationship with God; etc.

Marfat.com

I have argued in another article that our accounts of the *Fitna* which followed the murder of 'Uthman contain, at several points, a sub-text which appears to be concerned with the relative status as sources of authority of what may be called Scripture (usually designated as the Book of God) and Oral Law (usually indicated by reference to the authority of men).[7] I attempted to bring out this sub-text by drawing attention to parallels between the way a number of key terms are used in our sources for the *Fitna* and the way similar terms were used among various groups within Judaism. In particular I was impressed by the way in which the word *hudud* is used by (or attributed to) certain Muslim protagonists in the *Fitna* and the use of the word *gebul* in certain writings associated with the Jewish sect of the Karaites. The most prominent topic of dispute between the Karaites and their Rabbinical opponents was precisely the issue of the relative status of Scripture (Torah) and Oral Law as sources of authority. Theoretically the Karaites insisted on Scripture as the sole source of authority while the Rabbis recognised the authority of Oral Law alongside Scripture. I suggested that the language attributed to the Kharijites, especially their well known slogan *la hukma illa li'llah,* should also be interpreted as expressing a scripturalist fundamentalist position.

Part of the polemic of the Karaites against the Rabbin was that the latter were guilty of worshipping idols *(gillulim).*[8] It seems clear that this charge was based on the idea that the Oral Law was merely produced by men (the Rabbis and their predecessors) and that, in allowing the Oral Law a position of authority alongside that of the word of God (the Torah), the Rabbis were, in effect, elevating mere men to the status of God. In the article referred to above, I did not draw attention to any parallels to this Karaite usage in the Muslim sources about the *Fitna*. I now suggest that the Kharijites' accusation of *shirk* against 'Ali should be understood as such a parallel: the story of the agreement of 'Ali to the idea that two men (Abu Musa and 'Amr b. al-'As) should 'arbitrate' *(h-k-m)* in the dispute between himself and Mu'awiya embodies the idea that he was prepared to give men an equal status with God, whom the Kharijites saw as the only legitimate authority—*la hukma illa li'llah*. Ali was, therefore, in their eyes guilty of 'association'.

I draw attention to this here not simply to amplify the argument of an earlier article, but because it seems to me relevant for our understanding of the notion of *shirk* in the Qur'an. While it is, of course, possible to envisage that Qur'an 39.65 originally referred to *shirk* as signifying polytheism and that the Khawarij adapted the verse for their own purposes, I suggest that its use in the reports of the polemic of the Khawarij against 'Ali indicates to us the way in which the allegation of *shirk* may have been used generally in the Qur'an. My supposition is that it would have been used in a polemical sense against fellow monotheists (but not necessarily always with exactly the same implications as it contains when the Khawarij accused 'Ali of *shirk),* but this has been overlaid in Muslim tradition as the notion of the *Jahiliyya,* with its stress on the polytheism of the pre-Islamic Arabs, became elaborated.

The idea that the *Jahiliyya* is an historical construction which is unlikely to reflect, indeed obscures, the milieu in which Islam emerged, is clearly something which does not depend merely upon the quranic use of *shirk*. To argue in favour of it is not my intention here, and it has been mentioned merely to indicate a framework for the suggestion which has been

Marfat.com

made. It does seem clear, however, that the Kharijites' accusation of *shirk* against 'Ali is to be understood in the context of the debate about the relative authority of the book of God and of 'men'.

Qur'an 2.54/51

The verse reads, 'And when Moses said to his people, "My people you have done wrong against yourselves by taking the Calf (as an object of worship); now turn to your Creator in repentance and kill yourselves *(uqtulu anfusakum)*. That will be better for you in the sight of your Creator and He will relent towards you. For He is the Relenting One, the Merciful'". It is the significance of the expession 'kill yourselves' which is the issue here.

The most common exegesis of the verse is well known. When Moses descended from Sinai and found his people worshipping the Golden Calf, in his anger and on God's command he ordered them to kill themselves. This they did by dividing into two groups and killing each other–father killing son and son father–with swords and daggers (or, in some versions, unspecified 'weapons', *silah)*. Eventually, when a large number had thus perished. God relented in response to the prayers of Moses and Aaron.[9]

The main point here is that the expression 'kill yourselves' is taken literally but is slightly reinterpreted to mean 'kill one another'. This raises some puzzling questions. The most obvious one is where the idea that the Israelites had to 'kill themselves' as a punishment for, or in atonement of, the sin of the Calf, comes from. Western scholars seeking a source have suggested that it is a development of the biblical account (Ex. 32.25–29) of the slaughter by the Levites of those who had worshipped the Calf.[10] In the biblical story Moses ordered the Levites to go through the camp slaying those who had worshipped the Calf, and the story refers to the slaying of 'brother, friend and neighbour'. While one cannot rule out the possibility that Qur'an 2.54/51 and its exegesis reflect this story, the link is not all that obvious and the Levites do no' seem all that relevant to quranic concerns. It is also puzzling to find God apparently ordering the Israelites to commit suicide; perhaps the exegetical story of the division into the two groups and the interpretation of *anfusakum* as 'one another' is a way of getting around the difficulty of having God seem to order the Israelites to break His own law? While perhaps obscuring the issue, however, it does not remove it. There is also a semantic problem. While *anfusakum* does seem to be used elsewhere in the Qur'an in connection with the root *q-t-l* to mean 'one another' or 'each other',[11] in Qur'an 2.54/51 it occurs twice in a short space and we are told that it should be understood differently each time : *zalamtum anfusakum* is understood to mean something like 'you have done wrong to yourselves' (or 'your souls'), while *uqtulu anfusakum* is understood as 'kill one another'. While not impossible, that does seem awkward.

In the historical tradition, Qur'an 2.54/51 is closely associated with the group known as the Tawwabun which, in 64–5/684–5, marched from Kufa in Iraq to meet a vastly superior Umayyad army in battle at 'Ayn al-Warda (identified as Ra's al-'Ayn) in Mesopotamia, and was virtually destroyed as a result.[12] It is by examining the use of the verse in the context of the Tawwabun movement, I suggest, that we can attain a better understanding of it and its command *uqtulu anfusakum*. The motivation for the Tawwabun, according to the sources,

Marfat.com

was their desire to purge themselves of the feeling of shame and sin from which they suffered as a consequence of their failure to help al-Husayn b. 'Ali when he and his small band were massacred by the Umayyad authorities in Iraq at Karbala' on 10 Muharram 61 (10 October 680).[13] The key to an understanding of their movement is their desire to make atonement for their failing—the theme of atonement is, as it were, the sub-text of the reports about the Tawwabun.

At first it may seem as though their use of Qur'an 2.54/51 supports the literal interpretation of *uqtulu anfusakum*. They cite the verse and go into battle apparently eager to shed their own blood as a way of washing away their guilt and shame. Words are attributed to at least one of them, however, which seem to call into question the view that they saw themselves as committing an act of self immolation following the example of the Israelites who had worshipped the Calf. One of them is made to say that if he knew that killing himself *(qatli nafsi)* would release him from his sin, he would do it—'but that is something with which a people who were before us were commanded while we have been prohibited it'.[14] This is rather ambiguous. On the one hand, it could be said that it confirms that *uqtulu anfusakum* was understood literally, in the sense that the Israelites were actually told to commit suicide. On the other, it makes it seem that the Tawwabun did not see their own action as constituting the same thing, and it makes one wonder why, therefore, they made such play with the quranic material.

The answer to this last question is surely because the story of Moses and his descent from the mountain with the Law to find the Golden Calf being worshipped is closely associated with the idea of atonement in the monotheistic tradition generally, and it was with the idea of atonement that the Tawwabun were fixated. The idea that Moses offered himself to atone for the sin of his people in worshipping the Calf is reflected at a number of places in the Bible.[15] A common 'historical' explanation of the Day of Atonement in Rabbinical Judaism was that it is a commemoration of the descent of Moses from Sinai with the second tablets of the Law, signifying God's mercy on Israel in forgiving His people in response to the intercession of Moses.[16] An important part of the liturgy of the Day of Atonement consists of the recitation of the great theophany of Ex. 34.6–7 where God manifests Himself to Moses on Sinai as at once merciful and forgiving, stern and demanding. In Qur'an 2.54/51 God is referred to as al-Tawwab, 'The one who relents' or 'The one who turns away (His wrath)', and in Ex. 22 Moses uses the Hebrew cognate of the Arabic root when begging God to turn away His anger from *(shub min)* His people.

In the Jewish tradition the notion of atonement is most prominent in the annual Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which is marked generally by fasting. The institution of the Day of Atonement is linked in Jewish tradition with Lev. 16.29, seen as the biblical verse which lays down the regulations for the day. That verse reads, 'In the seventh month, on the tenth day, you shall afflict yourselves (or 'your souls'; *te'annu et-nafshotekhem)* and do no manner of work...'. The use of Qur'an 2.54/51 by the Tawwabun and the centrality which the idea of atonement had for them indicate that *uqtulu anfusakum* might better be understood as a reflexion of *te'annu et-nafshotekhem* than as a literal injunction to commit suicide.

Marfat.com

In the Jewish tradition the significance of the Hebrew phrase was a matter of dispute between different religious tendencies. While the Rabbis insisted that it involved no more than the duty of fasting, others argued that it implied the necessity to perform other works of self affliction such as standing for a long time in prayer, plucking out the hair and rending the garments.[17] The most recent English translation of the Ethiopic version of the Book of Jubilees (presumed to have been originally in Hebrew), which quotes the Leviticus text in justification of its view that the Day of Atonement involved rigorous works of self affliction beyond mere fasting, renders (34.18) the presumed original *te'annu et-nafshotekhem* by 'mortify yourselves' – no more than a latinised form of 'kill yourselves'.[18] In other words, what seems to have happened with regard to the interpretation of Qur'an 2.54/51 is that in the course of transmission and translation the metaphorical sense of the Hebrew has been replaced with a more literal one. This is comparable with my suggestion regarding *shirk* above.

In Muslim tradition, too, a possible non-literal understanding of the expression 'mortify yourselves' survived alongside the literal interpretation which is exemplified in the standard *tafsirs* on Qur'an 2.54/51. In connexion with the exegesis of Qur'an 4.29, the expression which we find there, *la taqtulu anfusakum,* is variously understood : alongside the literal interpretation ('do not kill yourselves' or 'do not kill one another') we find the phrase is sometimes said to mean 'do not carry your fulfilment of the demands of the law to inappropriate extremes'. An amusing story tells us that the companion Amr b. al-'As, understood it in that way : having been sent by the Prophet on campaign, 'Amr contracted a state of ritual impurity on a bitterly cold night. In the morning he could not face the prospect of performing *ghusl* (ritual ablution with water) before prayer—he was afraid thai he would 'die' if he did *(ashfaqtu an ahlika).* He therefore adopted the alternative mode of removing a state of ritual impurity—*tayammum* (cleansing oneself with sand). When he returned to Madina he was summoned by the Prophet to account for his behaviour (evidently someone had informed on him), and he did so by describing the circumstances and reminding the Prophet that the revelation commands 'do not kill yourselves'. The Prophet's reaction was laughter.[19]

In both of the instances discussed here, therefore, examination of the way in which quranic texts are used in the historical sources seems to shed light on the background and significance of the texts in a way in which the *tafsir* tradition alone does not. It may also be relevant for discussions of the nature of the milieu in which the quranic materials were elaborated.

REFERENCES

1. One example which contains a number of interesting features should suffice for illustration. In the course of a speech made during his struggle against Mu'awiya at the time of the battle of Siffin, 'Ali says (or is made to say by the narrator), 'But He (God) has made this world the place of works and He has made [the next world - with Him it is the place of repose] [so that He may requite those who have done evil according to their deeds, and reward those who have done good fairly]' *(wa-lakinnahu ja'ala 'l-dunya dara 'l-a'mal wa-ja'ala* [*'l-akharata 'indahu hiya daru 'l-qarar*] [*li-yaiziya 'lladhina asa'u bima 'amilu wa-yajziya 'lladhina ahsanu bi'l-husna*]). The two passages enclosed within square brackets are indicated by the editor of this part of the Leiden edition of Tabari's *Ta'rikh,* E. Prym, as Qur'an 40.42/39 and 53.32/31, although in

the text he does not supply any vocalisation for *'indahu,* presumably to signal that that word is not found in the quranic passage which is indicated. Apart from the presence of the 'deviant' *'indahu,* the interest of this passage lies both in its linking together of non-quranic phrases with two separate quranic portions to make a continuous text unified as to theme and style, and also in its apparently arbitrary use of quranic and non-quranic phrases. If the creator or elaborator of the speech wished to convey the sentiments which the passage conveys, and saw Qur'an 40.42/39 as an apposite quotation at this point, one may wonder why he did not simply use the whole quranic passage, 40.42–43/39-40, which seems to convey virtually the same sentiment in very similar words : 'O my people, surely this present life is but a passing enjoyment *(ya qawmi innama hadhihi l-hayatu 'l-dunya mala'un)* and surely the next world is the place of repose. Whoever does something evil will be requited with its like, and whoever does something beneficial... shall enter Paradise *(man 'amila sayyi'atan fa-la yujza illa mithlaha wa-man 'amila salihan... fa-ula'ika yadkhuluna 'l-janna)'.* Why substitute (if that is what is being done) a non-quranic phrase for one part of this passage, and another quranic phrase for its latter part?

2. Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh,* first series, Vol. VI, Leiden 1898, 3362, 3363, and cf. 3377 where the messenger of Ali tells the Khawarij that they have done a terrible thing in 'witnessing against us that we have committed *shirk,* for *shirk* is a terrible evil *(wa'l-shirk zulm 'azim;* cf. Qur'an 31.13/12: *inna 'l-shirka la-zulmun 'azimun)'.*

3. Al-Tabari, *Tafsir,* Bulaq 1321-28, XXIV, p. 16.

4. Al-T usi, *Tibyan,* Najaf 1963, IX, pp. 43ff.

5. *Sura* 39 itself begins with what seems an obvious polemic against Christians—'those who take *awliya'* apart from Him [and defend themselves by saying,] "We only serve them that they might bring us closer to God in union"'. The *tafsirs,* though, tend to favour identification with idol worshippers.

6. Goldziher, I., *Vorlesungen uber den Islam,* 2nd ed. Heidelberg 1925, pp. 41-2, p. 107 (Eng. tr. *Introduction to Islamic theology and law,* Princeton 1981, pp. 42, 95).

7. Hawting, G. R., 'The significance of the slogan *la hukma illa li'llah...; BSOAS,* XLI (1978), pp 453–63.

8. Wieder, N. *The Judaean scrolls and Karaism,* London 1962, pp. 151-3.

9. Al-Tabari, *Tafsir,* Cairo 1958, II, pp. 72-9.

10. Speyer, *H., Die biblische Erzahlungen im Qoran,* 1931, repr. Hildesheim 1961, p. 327; Katsch, A. I., *Judaism in Islam,* New York 1954, p. 52; Goitein, S. D., 'Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting', in idem, *Studies in Islamic history and institutions,* Leiden 1966, p. 98; F. Rosenthal, 'On suicide in Islam', *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* LXVI (1946), p. 241, n.9 refers to the 'agreement' of the Muslim exegctical story with the account in Exodus.

11. *e. g.,* Qur'an 4.29, cf. F. Rosenthal, *op. cit.,* p. 241 ff.

12. Wellhausen, J., *Die religios-politischen Oppositionsparteien,* Berlin 1901, pp. 71-4 (Eng. tr., *The religio-political factions in early Islam,* Amsterdam 1975, pp. 121-24).

13. AJ-Tabari, *Ta'rikh,* second scries, Vol. II., p. 497 : 'they thought that their shame and sin *('druhum wa'1-ithm)* would only be washed away *(yughsalu)* by killing those who had killed him (al-Husayn) or by death in the attempt'.

Marfat.com

14. *Ibid.*, p. 501.
15. Ex. 32.11-13, 30-32; Deut. 9.18; Ps. 106.23 (cf. 99.6).
16. Babylonian Talmud, *Taanith*, 30b, *Baba Bathra*, 121a; Friedlander, G., (tr.), *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, New York 1971, pp. 362-66.
17. Cf. Mishnah, *Taanith* 4.8 with the materials in Wieder, *Scrolls*, pp. 167-70.
18. The translation of Jubilees by R. H. Charles revised by Rabin, C, in Sparks, H. F. D., *The apocryphal Old Testament*, Oxford 1984, p. 106 (34.18-19); the original Charles translation *(The Book of Jubilees or The little Genesis*, London 1902) has 'afflict yourselves', while E. Littman *(Das Buch des Jubilaen*, Freiburg im Breisegau 1899) has simply 'dass sie trauem'.
19. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, Beirut 1966, II, p. 254.

Marfat.com

12

Law and Exegesis

I choose to examine the penalty for adultery since it affords the opportunity to investigate the precise connection between law and revelation formed in the minds of the first Muslims who initiated the complex and lengthy processes that led to the creation of Islamic law.

The Arabic term, *fiqh*, clearly brings out that, whereas law results from human decision, sacred law originates in the attempt to comprehend a datum given to man from outside. *Fiqh,* which means 'understanding', begins from man's contemplation of divine revelation. It is born of exegesis, the bridge between divine utterance and human interpretation. *Tafsir* is the record of this dialogue and *fiqh* is the result of a partnership consisting of divine input and human contribution.

Few topics in the *fiqh* represent a greater tension between divine communication and human contribution than the Muslim discussions on the penalty for adultery. I say this because the penalty which, in the oldest stage of Islamic intellectual activity, was almost universally adopted—death by stoning—is nowhere mentioned in the Qur'an texts. I propose to claim that it was precisely the manner in which the old exegetes reacted to an indirect, indeed, a vague general reference in the Qur'an to an earlier legal code derived, like Islam itself, from revelation, that set in train a prolonged discussion which culminated in the adoption by the Muslims of an item of legal material that historically had nothing whatever to do with Islam.

This brings me to my central thesis which is that exegesis is entirely and wholly a literary activity. Depending upon a book whose texts it undertakes to clarify, exegesis is an abstract, theoretical intelletual pursuit. Its raw material is words, sentences and ideas. By nature, content, and objective, exegesis is both distinct and distinguishable from history whose business is with persons and events. I have mentioned the old commentaries; one of the striking features of the ancient exegeses of the Qur'an is what is referred to in histories of *tafsir* as *la'yin al-mubham,* literally, the identification of what God deliberately left unidentified Those who know the Qur'an texts best, will recognise the general, universal, usually anonymous cast of its declarations. Ta'yin, on the other hand, testifies to the insatiable human demand for ever more detailed information. Since the book being explained in *tafsir* is of divine authorship its statements must be regarded as factually true. Each assertion, description or narrative, whether concerned with the creation of the universe, the dawn of human history, previous prophets and earlier communities, the events in the life of the latest prophet and his relations with his contemporaries, conditions in the world to come and even the detailed contents of earlier revelations, can contain no element of fiction or fancy, invention

Marfat.com

or imagination. All is literally true. Men therefore hungered to probe every detail and nuance, not, indeed, from mere vulgar curiosity. Those who hoped to save their immortal souls by deriving from the Qur'an a programme of impeccable belief and a code of unimpeachable conduct most likely to guarantee model, blameless lives pleasing to their creator, law-giver and judge, took no risks with the afterlife, but were careful to interpret the Qur'an in the most literal and direct sense. To do this, men had to supply the fullness of the sparse text, to actualize its verses, making them live before the eye and the ear. Public teachers sought to ensure that their listeners missed nothing of the richness of the divine book. Preachers gave themselves the task of guiding the faithful to live, not merely by the book, but so far as possible, in it, to experience in person through the imagination its entire dramatic potential. To be thus projected into hearts and minds, the Qur'an had to be made to live and be meaningful for each audience. It had to be theatricalized. As a result of the activities of the *qass,* part popular preacher, part folk-historian, the Qur'an came to be seen to be concerned with actual events, precise situations, identifiable places and historical persons. In connection with each of these, the Qur'an verses had been revealed. To these, the verses referred. In a regime designed to supplement the Qur'an, for the most innocent and praiseworthy of mass-education motives, *ta'yin* was brought to bear not merely on the affirmatives of Qur'an narrative. It went far beyond that to be applied as well to the Qur'an's imperatives and prohibitives, and even affected the Qur'an's hypothetical sentences. Thus, hearing that piety does not consist in entering houses from the rear, popular expounders of the Qur'an taught their listeners that the pre-Islamic unbelievers used to enter their houses from the rear. Others taught that the early converts to Islam, imagining that there was something pious in the practice, used to observe it, until the verse said that it was nothing of the kind. So they stopped doing it.[1] Since the Qur'an prohibits intimate relations with women to men who are observing a religious retreat in the mosque, others taught the people that that too had once been the practice until this verse came down to end it[2]

Countless examples of paraphrase, recycling of the Qur'an's own vocabulary for the production of narrative or pseudo-history, merely emphasize human eagerness, indeed, impatience to learn as much as can be recovered of the contemporary background to the revelation of the individual verses and *suras.* Enthusiastic reflection on the verses led men to confuse assumption with fact, and to mistake exegesis for history.

The Qur'an presents a global view of the contemporary reactions to the successive historical revelations made to man up to and including God's latest messenger, Muhammad. It is therefore not at all surprising that the pride and optimism of being identified with the latest divine revelation led men to believe they could capture the divine word on the wing. It does not follow that, because God knows everything, to know the Book of God will make a man omniscient, although many of the exegetes give their readers the chilling impression that that is exactly what they thought of themselves. It was a kind of forgiveable vanity, but it did lead to a blurring of the line between *tafsir* and prophetic biography. Exegesis aspiring to become history, gave *us sira,* and in exactly the same sort of way, exegesis aspiring to be law, gave *us fiqh.* In this connection, it must be noted, since one cannot afford to ignore the fact, that by extension, ancient *tafsir* became itself part of that past actuality now attached to the contents of the Qur'an, with the consequence that the *tafsir* came to be regarded as

Marfat.com

beyond question or doubt, there having occurred, by its long association with the Book of God and the prophets of God, a sanctification of *tafsir* which bestowed upon it also, along with Qur'an and *sunna*, a creative licence to participate in the building of the sacred law of Islam and to pontificate on the sacred law of others.

We must test these assertions I have been making against a specific case. It is noticeable that in his *Muwatta',* Malik organises his materials for the discussion of the stoning penalty into three disiinct sections corresponding to three assertions, namely that the stoning penalty had originated in one of three sources : the Torah, the *sunna* of the prophet Muhammad, or the Qur'an.[3]

1. According to a report traced to 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, the Jews came to the Prophet with a man and a woman of theirs who had committed adultery. Muhammad immediately enquired what they had found in the Torah. When they replied that their practice was to humiliate offenders and then flog them, 'Abd Allah b. Sallam, a recent convert from Judaism, drew attention to the Torah's 'stoning verse'. They brought out the scrolls but, when they unrolled them, one Jew placed his hand over part of the text, reciting what was before it and what was after it. When Ibn Sallam made him remove his hand, there was the 'stoning verse' for all to see. The Jews were obliged to acknowledge it, wnereupon, the Prophet commanded that the Jewish offenders be stoned.

At the elementary level, we note the actualization of the Qur'an's frequent charge against the rabbis of *kitman,* of concealing from people what God had revealed to them. There is also the *tafsir* and the *ta'yin* of the Qur'an's claim that some of the People of the Book had accepted Muhammad's claim to prophethood. At a more advanced level, there is the assertion that, if approached and asked to give a legal judgement in some matter involving Jews, Muhammad would agree to act and would base his ruling on the Book that God had revealed to form the basis of the Jewish sacred law.

The second section of Malik's discussion makes no reference to Jews. It extends the application of the stoning penalty to Muslims, males and females, and shows this to have been the practice of Muhammad who invariably based his legal rulings on the Book of God. The motif is underlined by its repetition in a report from Abu Hurayra, the Companion.

2. Two men brought a dispute before Muhammad. One of them requesting the Prophet to judge between them on the basis of the Book of God, explained that his son had been employed by the other. The son had had sexual relations with his employer's wife and the husband informed the father that his son had incurred the stoning penalty. The father had redeemed the son by paying the offended employer one hundred sheep and a slave girl. Scholars whom he had consulted had, however, since informed the father that his son's penalty should, in fact, have been one hundred strokes of the lash and a year's banishment. It was his employer's wife who had incurred the stoning penalty.

Prefacing his verdict with the assertion that it was based on the Book of God, the Prophet declared that the man's sheep and slave girl were to be returned to him. He flogged the son one hundred lashes and banished him for a year. Questioned, the wife did not deny her offence and on the Prophet's orders, she was stoned.

Marfat.com

The most significant information derived from Malik's third section is that some Muslims had already rejected the stoning penalty on the very interesting grounds that they could not find two penalties in the Book of God, with the implication that they were satisfied with one penalty that they did find in the Book of God. The further implication is that they considered that only the Book of God was the legitimate source from which to derive the legal provisions of Islam. No less a personage than the magisterial 'Umar b. al-Khattab is put up to rebut this rejection of the stoning penalty.

3. In the solemn setting of a public sermon delivered before the Muslims at Madina, in the final days of his life, 'Umar warns them not to overlook 'the stoning verse'. The Prophet had stoned and after him, the caliphs had stoned. It was only the fear that he might be accused of adding to the Book of God that prevented 'Umar from inserting there and then the verse : 'the mature male and female, stone them.' Umar insists that, in the lifetime of the Prophet, the Muslims had recited this 'verse'.

Malik is in no doubt that the penalty is indeed stoning. His materials clearly show an earlier generations belief that the stoning penalty for adultery was firmly rooted in a revealed source, the Book of God. In the meantime, men had differed as to which book of God was meant and Malik is content to set out three glosses that had been suggested without apparently thinking the matter of the source had to be driven to a single definite answer.

The attempt to refer a central element of Islamic penal law to one of the two bases of Islamic law, the Qur'an or the *sunna* is understandable, especially in the context of a dispute as to the legitimacy of the stoning penalty and its rejection by those who insist that only Qur'an is source. Their opponents had responded in one of two ways : admitting that it is not quranic, some argued that stoning derived from the *sunna*. The expression 'Book of God' need not necessarily refer to the Qur'an. It could equally well apply to those decisions of the Prophets based on that aspect of revelation that is not recited or written down, *al-wahy ghayr al-mathi,* which is part of the *sunna* of the Prophet.[4]

The reply of a second group was more adventurous and was certainly more hazardous. They argued that stoning is not found today in the Qur'an, but it nevertheless was quranic, having been brought down to Muhammad by Gabriel as part of *al-wahy al-matlu*. The 'stoning verse' had been revealed, it was part of the Qur'an, it had been recited by Muhammad and his followers. It had merely not been written into the record. The wording has survived : 'the mature male and female, stone them'.

What, however, is less easy to understand is the appearance of Jews and the Torah in a Muslim discussion about the law of Islam. How, one wonders, did the early Muslims think these stories relevant to their concerns? Malik had reproduced his version as from 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar. In the *Sira,* Ibn Ishaq cites the very same story from the very same source.[5] There are a few minor variations in the wording, two of which are worth mentioning here. Where Malik has merely, 'The Jews came to the Prophet' (although that sentence has its own importance as will be seen), Ibn Ishaq has, 'The Jews in this instance appointed Muhammad arbiter *(hakkamu)* the Prophet asks the Jews a question, absent from Malik's account : 'What made you abandon the decision of God, when you knew it?' Further, Ibn Ishaq concludes his

Marfat.com

account by attributing to the Prophet the proud boast, 'I am the first to revive God's ruling and His Book and to apply it.'

A second, longer, more circumstantial account in the *Sira* is traced to Abu Hurayra and also involves expressions of interest to us here. 'The Jews authorized the Prophet to pronounce sentence in this case of adultery *(walluhu 'l-hukm)'*. Even more significant is the phrasing of the following :

> If Muhammad acts in accordance with your current legal practice.... you may follow him, for he will be but a human leader; but, if he imposes the stoning penalty, he will be a real prophet, so beware of him, for he will deprive you of what you now control.[6]

This imports into the story an element of pro-Islamic propaganda woven into what, in effect, is, as will be seen, the exegesis of two quranic expressions. What, however, Ibn Ishaq unmistakeably provides that is lacking in Malik's account, is the indication of the ultimate source of the stories. For the *sira* quite specifically shows for certain that these stories relate to the exegesis of Qur'an 5.40-47.[7] Reference to this passage will clear up the problem of the relevance of these stories about Jews and their Torah.

> Oh Prophet, do not grieve at those who hasten to disbelief from among those who say with their mouths, 'We believe', while their hearts do not believe. Some Jews are avid for untruth, ready to listen to others who have not come to you. They twist words around and say, 'If you are given this, accept it; but, if you are not given it, beware.'

This passage is followed shortly by another :

> Ever ready to hear untruth, exposed by their acts to divine wrath – if they come to you, either judge between them or ignore them. If you ignore them, they cannot harm you, but if you judge between them, judge between them justly, for God loves the just. But how should they appoint you arbiter, when they possess the Torah in which is God's ruling, and then turn their backs. They are no believers. We revealed the Torah in which is guidance and light and by which the prophets who have submitted to God's rule will judge the Jews. So also do the rabbis and priests judging on the basis of what they have been entrusted with preserving, namely, the Book of God. They have been sworn to this. So do not fear men. Fear Me alone and do not exchange My signs for a paltry gain. Whoever does not judge on the basis of what God has revealed is an unbeliever.

We now compare this with the reports set out in the *sira* :

> Abu Hurayra informed them that when the Prophet arrived in Madina, the Jewish doctors assembled in their college, for a *muhsan* male and a *muhsan* female of theirs had had illicit sexual intercourse. The Jews said, 'Send these two to Muhammad and ask him what penalty they have incurred. Appoint him their judge. Should he apply your current practice of flogging and humiliation, you may follow him, for he will be merely a secular leader. But if he should impose the stoning penalty, he will be a true prophet and so beware of him lest he deprive you of what you now have.' The Jews came to Muhammad, explained the case and appointed him to judge it. The Prophet went to the rabbis in

Marfat.com

their assembly and asked for their most learned scholar. They sent 'Abd Allah b. Suriya, their most learned surviving Torah expert. The Prophet interrogated him rigorously, adjuring him by God and His favours to Israel and demanding to know whether it was not the case that God had decreed in the Torah that the penalty for the *muhsan* adulterer was stoning.[8] Muhammad's persistence constrained the man to admit that that was indeed the case. 'Abd Allah added that the Jews were perfectly well aware that Muhammad was a prophet sent by God but that they kept away out of jealousy and envy. Muhammad ordered that the two be stoned.

Some versions of the story add that this now occasioned the revelation of Qur'an 5.41.[9] Commenting on that very verse, Ibn Ishaq states that it refers to those who sent others to the prophet without coming to consult him themselves. They are the people who ordered the Jews 'to distort the ruling', as God says, 'They twist the words around and say, "If you are given this, accept it; but if you are not given it"—that is, the stoning penalty "then beware."'

In similar vein, Muqatil b. Sulayman states in his *Tafsir*:[10]

Ever ready to lister, to others, the Jews of Khaybar. 'They twist the words around'—the stoning penalty, 'after it had been set out' *i.e.* they twist the statement in the Torah.

In Muqatil's account, which is substantially that of Ibn Ishaq, the full effect of the operation of *ta'yin* is clear :

A Jew called Yahudha and a women called Busra, both high-born members of the Khaybar community had committed adultery. The Khaybar people declined to stone them on account of their rank. They therefore decided to send them to Muhammad whose code involved flogging rather than stoning, and to appoint him to judge them. They said to each other, 'If he imposes flogging, we shall accept that; but if he imposes stoning we should be on our guard.' They wrote to the Jews at Madina, Ka'b b. al-Ashraf, Ka'b b. Usayd, Malik b. al-Dayf and Abu Lubaba.They sent a delegation to consult Muhammad about the penalty for adultery, telling them that if he ordered flogging, they should accept it, but, if he imposed stoning, they should beware lest he strip them of what they now enjoyed. When the delegation questioned the Prophet about the penalty, Gabriel came down and informed him about stoning and advised him to direct his questioning at 'Abd Allah b. Suriya. Assembled in their college, the Jews sent 'Abd Allah accompanied by Abu Yasir b. Akhtab, and Wahb b. Yahudha as their most learned scholars. Interrogating them, Muhammad constrained them to admit that 'Abd Allah was their greatest living Torah expert. The Prophet was accompanied by 'Abd Allah b. Sallam as he now interrogated 'Abd Allah b. Suriya, adjuring him by God than whom there is no other God, the God of Israel who brought them out of the land of Egypt, cleaving asunder the sea and delivering them while drowning the people of Pharoah, who sent down His book to set out what is lawful and what is unlawful. He had shaded them and sent down manna and quails to sustain them. Finally, Muhammad forced 'Abd Allah to divulge that the penalty in the Torah was stoning. 'Abd Allah volunteered the addition, 'But that I feared I should burn in hellfire or be destroyed by

Marfat.com

some punishment, I should certainly have concealed this from you and should not have disclosed it when you questioned me.' To this Muhammad replied, 'God is greatest! So am I the first to revive one of God's *sunnas*.'

Despite his presence, 'Abd Allah b. Sallam is here unemployed. 'Abd Allah b. Suriya's confession of *kitman* leaves Ibn Sallam redundant. Whereas the starting point of these narratives in both *sira* and *tafsir* was the Qur'an's 'if they should come to you', both stories begin, "The Jews came to the Prophet', thus instancing what was said earlier about the actualization even of the Qur'an's hypothetical sentences.

'If they should come to you' Muhammad, concerning the stoning penalty, 'judge between them or ignore them'... this was abrogated by the later, 'so judge between them on the basis of what God revealed'—that is, to you, in the Book, to the effect that the penalty for the *muhsan* male and *muhsan* female is stoning. 'Do not follow their whims', the whims of Ka'b b. al-Ashraf, Ka'b b. Usayd and Malik b. al-Dayf. 'But how should they appoint you to judge, when they have the Torah in which is God's ruling', stoning... 'then turn their backs', ignoring what is set out in the Torah.[11] 'So judge them on the basis of what God has revealed', to you, in the Qur'an.[12]

Whilst Malik had been in no doubt that the Islamic penalty was stoning, he had declined to commit himself as to which of three revelations had been the source of the penalty. His pupil, al–Shafi'i, has no such hesitation. He knew of no disagreement among the *sira* experts on the nature of Muhammad's political arrangement with the Jews on his arriving at Madina. That had, at first, not been a *dhimma* but a treaty between equals between the Prophet and all the Jewish groups.[13] God's saying to Muhammad.

'If they apply to you, then either judge between them or ignore them,' refers to these treaty-related Jews who as yet paid no *jizya*. Nor had they assented to the application to them of the writ of Islam. Some of the scholars state that this verse refers to the two Jewish adulterers which seems probable in view of the verse : 'But how should they appoint you to judge when they have the Torah in which is God's ruling (and then turn their backs)' and the second verse, 'So judge between them on the basis of what God has revealed and do not fellow their whims. Beware lest they beguile you (into ignoring part of what God has revealed to you)' which appears to mean their turning away in the event that Muhammad hand down a decision not to their liking. Rejection of a judge's decision is more likely to occur in the case where litigants freely select a judge than in situations where they are obliged to apply to a specific judge, and have no choice in the matter. Those who applied to Muhammad in the case of the two adulterers, had come of their own free choice to him, and were under no compulsion. The penalty in the Torah was stoning, and they applied to Muhammad in the hope that that would be his verdict. In this instance. Muhammad did stone them.

Thus, where the Muslim leader enters into treaty-relationship with non-believers without stipulating that the writ of Islam apply to them, he will be free, should they apply to him for legal judgement in any matter, to hear them or to ignore them. Should he elect to hear them, he must, however, apply to them precisely the ruling he would apply to the Muslims, because god said, 'If you do judge, then judge on the basis of *qist*', and *qist* is

Marfat.com

the ruling of God which He revealed to Muhammad.

In stoning the two Jews, Muhammad was applying the penalty applicabe to the Muslim adulterer.[14] In instituting stoning as the Islamic penalty, Muhammad had said, 'I shall judge between you on the basis of the Book of God.' For Shafi'i, the presence of a 'stoning verse' in the Torah is completely irrelevant, for Muhammad had stoned two Jews on the basis of the *sunna* which he had instituted as the penalty that would apply to Muslim offenders.[15] His consistent denial that the Prophet or any one of the caliphs had ever agreed to judge a case involving *dhimmis* is essential to his argument that, in stoning Jews, Muhammad was applying not the Jewish but the Muslim code.[16] Besides, a case involving *dhimmis* would involve *dhimmi* witnesses. Shafi'i would sooner listen to evidence from honest, fair-dealing heathens than from *dhimmis* whom God Himself had described as neglecting His revelations or even distorting them. People who can lie against God Himself in that way, would have no scruples about lying against fellow humans.[17]

This question of the religion of witnesses presumably accounts for the role of 'Abd Allah b. Sallam; a recent convert to Islam from Judaism who had informed Muhammad that there was a 'stoning verse' in the Torah. An even more acceptable informant was Gabriel, for some were worried about the Prophet's having to rely on Jewish informants for this piece of information. Ibn 'Abbas is alleged to have warned against seeking information from the People of the Book :

> How should you ask them anything when your own book which God revealed to your Prophet is the latest divine communication which you recite in its authentic, unadulterated form. Has not God informed you in your own book that they have distorted the Book of God, altered it and entered their own contributions with their own hands pretending for the paltry profit that what they wrote comes from God Doesn't the revelation that has come to you prevent you from asking them? I don't see any of them asking what God revealed to you.[18]

What Shafi'i shows us is that by the end of the second century the stoning penalty had already exerted its independence of the *tafsir* in which it had originated and had completed its transfer from *tafsir* to *sunna*. As *sunna*, stoning was seen as being Islamic in origin. It had formed part of Muhammad's legal system. Since he had instituted that penalty for the Muslims, the Prophet had applied it on occasion to Jews also.

Malik was in no doubt that stoning was the Islamic penalty. Some earlier scholars had alleged that it originally derived from the Torah; others that it had been instituted as part of the *sunna* of the Prophet, while a third group of Muslims had rejected stoning, since, not finding it mentioned in the Qur'an, they preferred the penalty that was mentioned there. They would be referring doubtless to Qur'an 24.2 : 'The fornica-tress and the fornicator, flog each one of them one hundred strokes of the lash.' Following the recruitment of stoning into the Islamic penal system, the ruling of this verse was restricted to the unmarried offender, as we saw among Malik's materials in the story in which the employer's wife was stoned, while the young employee was flogged and banished for a year. The scholars, in other words, had distinguished fornication from adultery and applied separate penalties to each offence. The Qur'an makes no such distinction.

Marfat.com

Shaybani asked 'Abd Allah b. Abi Awfa, 'Did the Prophet ever stone?' 'Abd Allah said, 'Yes,' and Shaybani asked, 'Before or after the revelation of Qur'an 24?' 'Abd Allah said, 'I do not know.'[19]

We know from Ibn Hajar that some had actually worded this, 'Before or after Qur'an 5?' which is strongly suggestive of an inkling of the exegetical origin of the stoning penalty.[20'] The specification of the historical situation which allegedly had provoked the revelation of a particular Qur'an passage, *ta'yin al-sabab,* is determined by how the passage is interpreted. Some claimed that Qur'an 5.41 was revealed in response to the treachery of Abu Lubaba who, when the Prophet was besieging Qurayza, had signalled to them that they should not surrender on Sa'd's terms, as that would mean their physical destruction.[21] Others held that the verse concerns a Jew who had killed a fellow Jew and asked his Muslim confederates to find out for him Muhammad's ruling in the case of killing a co-religionist.

If he has been sent with the relief of the payment of blood money, I shall apply to him; but, if he has been sent with the law of retaliation in kind, I shall not go to him.[22]

Others thought the verse refers to the apostasy of 'Abd Allah b. Suriya who had assured Muhammad that the Jews acknowledged that he was a true prophet and for that reason were jealous. That amounted to a confession of faith from which, later, 'Abd Allah relapsed into disbelief.[23]

It was also held that the verse mentioned Muhammad's grief at the contempt the Jews had shown for the Book of God in substituting their man-made flogging penalty for the stoning penalty revealed to them.[24] On their consulting him, the Prophet had exclaimed, 'I shall judge between you on the basis of the Torah.'[25] That too, is *ta'yin,* the further specification of Malik's 'I shall judge between you on the basis of the Book of God.'

Some interpreters could even cite the wording of the Torah's 'stoning verse' : 'When one of you commits adultery, stone him'[26] or even, 'The mature male and female, stone them outright if they commit adultery.'[27] Since that is the very form of words which, according to Malik, 'Umar had insisted had been revealed to Muhammad as part of the Qur'an, there has clearly been a disputed *tafsir* of the expression Book of God.

A further striking feature of Islamic *tafsir* is what I call its atomism, by which I refer to that minute, microscopic focusing of vision on the single sentence, phrase or word which can reach such a pitch of intensity that the rest of the context slips completely out of the field of vision. Qur'an 5.40-44 has undoubtedly suffered this kind of treatment. When the Qur'an asks,

'How should they appoint you judge, when they have the Torah, in which is God's ruling, then turn their backs? They are no believers.' 'We revealed the Torah in which is guidance and light and on the basis of which the prophets who have submitted to God's will *(alladhina aslamu)* judge the Jews, as do the rabbis and the priests, on the basis of what they have been entrusted with preserving, namely the Book of God...'

'Those who do not judge on the basis of what God has revealed are unbelievers...'

Marfat.com

but then goes on to specify that what God imposed on the Jews in the Torah was

> a life for a life and an eye for an eye and a nose for a nose and an ear for an ear and a tooth for a tooth and all wounds are subject to retaliation...

it provided scope for an alternative body of exegesis which had nothing to do with adultery or the stoning penalty.

'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ud explained that many people had interpreted the Qur'an 5 passage in relation to a topic unconnected with that to which the verses actually refer. Taking up 'the eye for an eye' motif, the alternative *tafsir* generated a parallel series of reports.[28] There had long reigned a custom whereby the stronger tribe could exact from the weaker double the amount of blood-money it was prepared to disburse in settlement of homicide accounts. Taking advantage of Muhammad's arrival in Madina, the weaker tribe challenged their stronger neighbour to submit the matter to Muhammad's adjudication. The stronger tribe prevailed upon some of the nominal followers of the Prophet to find out his attitude to this differential scale of blood payments before they would agree to consult the Prophet formally. God revealed this plot to His Prophet and consoled him by revealing Qur'an 5.41–47.

> According to Qatada, when Nadir killed any of Qurayza they would not permit retaliation in kind, owing to their social superiority, but they would agree to blood money. If, however, Qurayza killed any of Nadir, Nadir insisted on retaliation in kind. One such dispute was raging between the two groups when Muhammad arrived at Madina, and they thought of referring the dispute to him. However, they were advised by some nominal Muslim that it was likely, since this was a case of deliberate homicide, that the Prophet would insist on retaliation. Their advisor told them, 'If he is content with blood money, then accept his decision; if he does not accept blood money, then beware'[29]

Ibn Zayd attributes the differential blood money scales to a decision rendered by Huyayy b. Akhtab. But God advised the Prophet of the regulation revealed in the Torah. This report from Ibn Zayd almost imperceptibly fades into a statement on the Jews' wilful setting aside of the Torah penalty for adultery.[30] Similarly, Tabarfs comment on Qar'an 5.44 interweaves both themes in his summary of the interpretation of the verse.

> Those who do not judge on the basis of God's ruling revealed in His Book to govern the affairs of His creatures—concealing it and ruling otherwise, as the Jews humiliated the *muhsan* adulterers, concealing the stoning penalty. In addition they awarded some full blood money and others only half, and granted the aristocrat the right to retaliation in kind while restricting the lower orders to blood money payment when one of them was killed, whereas, in the Torah, God had declared that all shared in exactly the same rights.[31]

Tabari repeats general comments of this kind throughout his examination of the Qur'an 5 passage.[32]

> God said to His Prophet : 'How should these Jews gladly accept your judgement when they come to you to appoint you formally to arbitrate, when they possess the Torah

Marfat.com

which they acknowledge to be My Book and the revelation which I sent down to My prophet Moses, which contains My ruling imposing the stoning penalty on *muhsan* adulterers, together with My decree that the reward of deliberate and wrongful homicide is the forfeiture of the killer's own life; that the unjust plucking out of an eye, as will also the cutting off of a nose be requited by the cutting off of the nose, the knocking out of a tooth by the knocking out of a tooth, that whoever wounds another will himself be exposed to an identical wounding. Although in the Torah they possess My ruling, they turn their backs on it; they are all the more likely to refuse to accept your ruling, Muhammad, and to treat your, decision with wrathful contempt'.

In drawing attention to what I would call the versatility of the *tafsir* which can draw out of a single Qur'an context, two quite unrelated sets of rulings on unrelated topics of the law, what must be emphasized is that one of the two sets of assertions, in this case, the stoning penalty for adultery–which of the two, appears to be less relevant to the context under discussion than its rival which concerns retaliation, the topic that is actually covered by the Qur'an statements–nevertheless graduated into a *fiqh* where it was to cause untold problems for the students of *usul al-fiqh*.

It posed no problem for those early scholars who insisted on the principle that the only legitimate source from which Islamic law might be derived was the Islamic Book of God and who, not finding stoning in the Qur'an, simply rejected it. The majority of the *fuqaha',* on the other hand, were convinced that stoning was the Islamic penalty and those who sought to pronounce on its precise documentary origin, having been told that it derived from the Book of God which to them meant the Qur'an, but not finding it in the Qur'an, assigned it to a proto-Qur'an, not all of whose contents had survived, although the wording of the 'stoning verse' had been preserved.

There is refreshing irony in witnessing one group of people who have replaced a flogging penalty that is in the Book of God by a stoning penalty, vilifying a second group of people for replacing a stoning penalty that is in the Book of God by a flogging penalty.

Ibn Ishaq set out both interpretations of Qur'an 5 and concluded his account of the *tafsirs* by refusing to commit himself as to which was the correct one.[33] His quotation of these *tafsirs* occurs in the course of a review of a series of debates between the Prophet and the rabbis as these are reflected in both Qur'an 2 and Qur'an 5. The stories are generally designed to show the Prophet, or God on the Prophet's behalf, scoring points against the Jewish scholars.

In the present instance, the duplication of interpretations for the Qur'an 5 passage, one interpretation which makes the verses refer to the settlement of homicide or wounding cases presents little difficulty, since the Qur'an discusses the same points of law. Both interpretations discuss the ruling set out in the Torah. Here again, there is no difficulty, since that is precisely what the Qur'an is discussing : the rulings on retaliation laid down in the Torah and imposed on the Jews. It is rather more difficult to explain the references in the *tafsir* to the ruling of the Torah on stoning for adultery, in the absence of a relevant reference in the Qur'an to such a penalty. However, the spirit of the stories in the *sira* with which the

Marfat.com

tafsir is associated, that concentrate on showing the embarrassment and discomfiture of the rabbis at the hands of the new prophet, suggests comparison with an existing story in which a new religious teacher scores a similar triumph over the rabbis.

> Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they said unto him, 'Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?' This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last : and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, 'Woman, where are those, thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?' She said, 'No man, Lord.' And Jesus said unto her, 'Neither do I condemn thee : go and sin no more.'[34]

This ready-made story could well have furnished the literary model for the *tafsirs* which identified the stoning penalty.

REFERENCES

1. Qur'an 2.189. See Abu Ja'far, Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-bayan 'an ta'wil ay al-Quran,* 15-vols, Cairo 1374/1955, III, pp. 556-60.
2. Qur'an 2. 187 See al-Tabari, *op, cit..* III, pp. : 541-2.
3. Malik b. Anas, *al-Muwatta,'3 vols in 1, Cain 1303/1885, III, pp.38-43 (Kitab al-hudud, ma ja'a fi'l-rajm,* nos 1, 6, 10).
4. Ahmad b. 'All, ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari,* 13 vols, Cairo 1348/1929, XII, p. 115.
5. Muhammad b. Ishaq, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya,* 3 vols, Cairo 1355/1936, II, p. 215.
6. *Ibid.,* p. 213.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 214.
8. See my The meaning *of ihsan', Journal of Semitic Studies,* XIX, no. 1, 1974, pp. 47-75.
9. *Sira,* loc. cit., p. 214. The compressed expression should be understood to read : 'If you are given flogging, accept it; if you are not given flogging, beware.'
10. Muqatil b. Sulaiman, *tafsir,* ed. 'Abdullah Mahmud Shihata, 4 vols, Cairo 1979-87, 1, pp. 474-5.
11. *Ibid.,* p. 478.
12. *Ibid.,* p. 481.

Marfat.com

13. Abu 'Abd Allah, Muhammad b. Idris al-Shafi'i, *K. al-Umm, 7* Vols, Cairo (Búlaq), 1321/1903, IV, p. 129.
14. *Ibid.,* p. 125.
15. *Ibid.* p. 126.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 127.
17. *Ibid.,* p. 128.
18. *Ibid.,* p. 129.
19. Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Bukhari, *al-Sahih,* 9 Vols. in 3, Cairo 1314/1896, VIII, p.165 *(Kitab al-muhdribin min ahl al-kufr wa'l-ridda; bab: rajm al-muhsan,* no. 2).
20. *Fath al-Bari,* loc. cit., p. 140.
21. Muqatil, *tafsir,* loc. cit., 474; cf. Tabari, *op. cit.,* X, p. 301.
22. *Ibid.,* p. 302.
23. *Ibid.,* 303, 308; cf. *Sira,* loc. cit., p. 214.
24. Tabari, X, p. 313, 314.
25. *Ibid.,* p. 340.
26. *Ibid.,* p. 310.
27. *Ibid.,* p. 328.
28. *Ibid.,* p. 352.
29. *Ibid.,* p. 315.
30. *Ibid.,* p. 327.
31. *Ibid.,* p. 345.
32. *Ibid.,* p. 359.
33. Loc. cit., p. 216.
34. John, 8. 1-11.2.

Marfat.com

13

The Impact of the Qur'an on the Epistolography of Abd al-Hamid

That the Qur'an had a noticeable impact on classical Arabic literary prose is a claim with which few, if any, scholars disagree, although little work has been actually done to ascertain the exact nature and magnitude of this impact. What has consequently been virtually ignored so far is the attempt to answer the question of whether the Qur'an's impact increased or decreased with time, say from the second/eighth until the fourth/tenth century, or whether time had nothing to do with this phenomenon, it being contingent solely on the temperament, inclination, education, or needs of the individual prose writers at all times. But, of course, researchers in the later periods have advantages which researchers in the earlier periods do not have : the texts they study are well preserved, well attested to, and have no problems of authentication, since they were contemporaneously recorded by historians of various kinds; and, besides, by the third/ninth century, or perhaps slightly earlier, the state of the quranic text in Muslim society had become permanently defined and unquestionably clear. In order, then, to start attempting to answer the above mentioned question, the challenge lies in trying to elucidate the impact of the Qur'an, as a literary text, on the works of the prose writers of the earlier periods, beginning with the second/eighth century and then going back to the first/seventh century, the periods in which there was much flux in the definition of Islam, and ones in which recording was only gradually becoming the standard mode of preserving originally oral or partially written literary materials.

It is in this spirit that I would like to present this contribution. In an earlier work, I have tried to examine the impact of the Qur'an on a Yemeni prose writer, Bishr b. Abi Kubar al-Balawi, whose letters date to the second half of the second/eighth century, between 154/772 and 202/817.[1] In the present work, I would like to go back one half-century earlier, to Umayyad times, and study the same impact on letters which have been written between 106/724 at the latest and 132/750 at the latest also. These are the letters of 'Abd al-Hamld b. Yahya al-Katib (d. 132/750), the author who has long been considered the founder of Arabic prose. My purpose in this is threefold : to identify the nature of quranic usages in 'Abd al-Hamid's epistolography, the places in which they occur, and the reasons for their occurrence there and not in other places in this corpus. I would then like to end with some remarks on a number of conclusions which this kind of study can help us to reach. Because of the relatively large amount of material we have, I will limit myself to the *textual* quranic occurrences; for the conceptual ones, there will I hope be a different occasion. This paper also presupposes

two things which will not be discussed : that 'Abd al-Hamid's letters are, with a few exceptions, authentic, as I have already shown in an earlier paper;[2] and that 'Abd al-Hamid knew the text of the Qur'an.

But let me begin with brief statement on 'Abd al-Hamid.[3] Born a Muslim around 69/688 of non-Arab descent in Iraq, 'Abd al-Hamid studied in Kufa and elsewhere and was an avid memorizer of good literary prose, including the eloquent words of 'Ali b. Abi Talib. He worked as a peripatetic teacher and then perhaps as a private tutor, before he ended up as an apprentice secretary in the chancery *(diwan al-rasa'l)* in Damascus, shortly before the death of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik in 86/705. He was promoted, and, by 106/724 at the latest, he was already writing letters on behalf of the caliph Hisham (reg. 105-125/723-742). In 114/732, he was assigned to the position of secretary to Marwan b. Muhammad, the Umayyad governor of Armenia and Adharbayjan and commander-in-chief of the Muslim armies there. He remained in the service of Marwan abroad until 126/743, when Marwan hurried back to Damascus to put an end to the rupture in the Umayyad house, and to be elected the last Umayyad caliph. From that date, 'Abd al-Hamid headed Marwan's chancery, and, when Marwan's regime was defebated by the 'Abbasids, 'Abd a!-Hamld was killed shortly after Marwan by the agents of the 'Abbasids in 132/750.

For about three decades, then, at least, 'Abd al-Hamid wrote letters on behalf of one Umayyad or another, in addition to writing personal ones. According to Ibn al-Nadim,[4] these letters filled one thousand folios. Of these, only about fifty folios,[5] *i.e.* one twentieth of them, have survived, and, it is thanks to Ihsan 'Abbas that we have them now in a scholarly edition.[6]. The letters which I have considered to be authentio are forty in number. They are of varying length (between two lines and forty pages), deal with topics which are mainly public in nature (letters on conquests, obedience, civil discord, and so forth), in addition to a few letters which are personal, and. whereas most of them are complete, others are fragments of longer letters.[7]

In this admittedly incomplete yet invaluable, indeed exciting, corpus, 'Abd al-Hamid has some specific things to say about the Qur'an in two instances, each of which is quite revealing about his vision of it. The first occurs in his famous 'Letter to the Secretaries', in the section in which he speaks about the education that a secretary should have. There the secretaries are advised (in the imperative) to 'begin [their education] with the knowledge of the Book of God *(kitab Allah);* after which come the knowledge of religious duties *(al-fara'id),* Arabic language, good handwriting, poetry, the histories of the (pre-Islamic) Arabs and non-Arabs *('ajam),* and finally arithmetic (238.3-8).[8] At the end of this same letter, 'Abd al-Hamid says that it is incumbent upon the one who gives advice to act according to his advice *(manyalzamu 'l-nasihata yalzamuhu 'l'amal;* 288.3-4). As a senior secretary, then, 'Abd al-Hamid must have possessed, among other things, this 'knowledge of the Book of God', and he must have been known to possess it, otherwise he could not have posed as a 'lawgiver' to other secretaries with regard to it. In this citation, however, it is not quite clear what 'Abd al-Hamld means exactly by 'knowledge' of the Qur'an.

In the second instance, this 'knowledge' is fully clarified, in spite of the fact that it appears in a somewhat different context. This instance occurs in 'Abd al-Hamid's other

famous, long 'Letter to the Crown Prince', the one which he wrote in *129/747* on behalf of the caliph Marwan to Marwan's son and heir apparent, 'Ubayd Allah (or 'Abd Allah). There 'Abd al-Hamid advises the crown prince to thank God in the morning of every day God grants him the grace to reach in good health, 'and to recite a section *(juz')* of the Book of God' (219.4). 'Abd al-Hamid then goes on to elaborate on the benefits of this daily recitation. There is, firstly, the literary value of the Qur'an : 'so that you examine its literary formulation *(adah)* time and again *(turaddidu)* with your judgement (ra'y), and you adorn your words *(lafz)* by reciting it' (219.5-6). Secondly, there is the benefit of knowledge : '[so that] you bring your mind *(aql)* to it, looking at its *muhkam,* and you understand it, reflecting on its *mutashabih'* (219.6). Then there is the religious benefit : 'for in it there is the healing of the hearts from their illnesses, the dislodging *(jala)* of the devil's insinuations *(wasawis)* and his wicked, vile thoughts *(safasif),* and the shining *(diya')* of the vestiges *(ma'alim)* of light' (219.7-8). The section then ends with a citation from the Qur'an.

This is a very revealing paragraph. 'Abd al-Hamid considers the Qur'an, certainly not only for the crown prince but for himself and Muslims in general, one can safely assume, as a psychological and moral deterrent to irror and sin a source of wisdom and law and above all, a literary text of the highest calibre. Examining this last point of 'Abd al-Hamid's, which is at the centre of our concern here, we note that he believes that repeated recitation of the Qur'an makes one pass from passive admiration of its art *(turaddidu. ra'yaka fi adabihi)* into active emulation of it *(tuzayyinu lafzaka bi-qira'atihi).* Now, a crown prince surely has use for adorning his words by the beautiful art of the Quran; but, let us ask, is not the secretary in need of that much more than the crown prince, knowing that it is he, rather than the latter, who writes for the crown prince (and the caliph) their 'words'? If we consider the superior position which 'Abd al-Hamid assigns to the secretaries *vis-a-vis* their masters, in his 'Letter to the Secretaries' (285), we must assume that what he considers 'useful' for the crown prince with regard to the Qur'an he must consider 'necessary' for the secretary. And with that we come to a clear understanding of what 'Abd al-Hamid has asked the secretaries to master of the Qur'an : not merely its contents (for this is, after all, what all Muslims should know), but above all its literary formulations. He further must have thought that, with repeated practice, good secretaries can learn quranic formulations to the point that their very styles become affected by them in a literarily positive way : they become 'adorned' by them. And, again, 'Abd al-Hamid would not have left himself outside the realm of good secretaries. And, with this theoretical background on 'Abd al-Hamid's vision of the Qur'an. and its 'functional' role for people in positions of authority who have to communicate on a public level, both in writing and in speech, we come to the heart of our topic, and we can begin to investigate how 'Abd al-Hamid's 'knowledge' of the Qur'an filtered into his prose work.

Let me begin with a general remark, namely, that although 'Abd al-Hamid uses quranic formulations in most of his letters, there are some letters in which none of these appear– setting aside common, formulate expressions such as *in sha'a 'llah* or *al-hamdu li 'llah.* A careful examination of these letters yields a very interesting result : that, with the exception of two, all of them are personal, not public, *i.e.* they are not written on behalf of one ur another Umayyad master of his. Thus Qur'an is completely absent from his very short, 'mechanical'

Marfat.com

letters, such as those dealing with a recommendation (no. 36) or an answer to the sender of a gift (no. 40), in the same manner that it is absent from his signatory notes *(tawaqi;* nos. 41 and 60). This is quite understandable, for neither the occasion nor the space calls for it. Understandable too is the absence of quranic references in other of his personal, short letters addressed to friends where the subject is some kind of malaise at the waning of the sense of amicability on the part of the addressee (no. 37), or a communication to the addressee to stop bothering the author with his supplications to intercede on his behalf to the caliph (no. 14). Still personal but of a more general nature are two other letters of 'Abd al-Hamid's in which Qur'an does not occur, namely the one describing the flooding of the Euphrates (no. 6) and the one describing a hunting trip (no. 23). Although both these letters are addressed to the 'Commander of the Faithful', they look to me to be more of exercises in stylistics than actual letters sent to particular caliph(s) : their style is somewhat different from 'Abd al-Hamid's style in his other letters; it is more tortuous, artificial and pedantic; it gives one the impression that they were written expressly to impress their readers and make them admire the writer's mastery of vocabulary, formulation, imagery and imagination. I tend to think of them as early, 'pre-secretarial' works of 'Abd al-Hamid's, perhaps even among the 'credentials' he used to be admitted to secretarial apprenticeship in the chancery in Damascus.

Of 'Abd al-Hamid's public letters, Qur'an is absent from only two of them (nos. 7 and 15). But this comes as no surprise at all, since they are essentially instructions to the addressees to purchase slave women of particular qualities for the caliph, and here there is no room for Qur'an. Aside from these two, Qur'an appears in one form or another in all of 'Abd al-Hamid's public letters.

The forms in which 'Abd al-Hamid uses Qur'an in his letters are so varied and numerous that they seem to defy structure : sometimes he cites quranic *ayas,* sometimes he rephrases them; his citations are mostly of parts of *ayas,* but he does cite at times complete *ayas;* he interrupts the text of one cited *aya,* but he also links two *ayas* together; he normally uses one *aya* as a referent, but he does refer to more than one *aya* sometimes; he amplifies some *ayas,* but he reduces others; most of the ayas he cites are not formulaic, but some indeed are. In spite of that, there is one phenomenon in his usage of quranic formulations which is overwhelmingly conspicuous in his work. This is the fact that, except in six cases (in one hundred pages of text), 'Abd al-Hamid does not explicitly state that he is drawing on the Qur'an in his prose; rather, quranic formulations blend into his text, flowing naturally into it, and having such a tremendous influence on his own style that, if one does not know them to be quranic to start with, one could be deluded into thinking that they are of his own composition. Because of that, it is impossible to take away these formulations and still have a meaningful text : the Hamidian text and the quranic formulations in it from an unbreakable, organic unity. For where do 'Abd al-Hamid's words end and the Qur'an's begin in such a sentence: 'And God is the Protector of Islam, the One who renders it victorious over its enemy, the One who takes upon Himself its consolidation and prevalence over all religion, however much the polytheists may be adverse' (211.7-8)? If one does not already know that the phrase 'all religion... adverse' is actually nothing other than Qur'an 9.33, one could mistake it for one of 'Abd al-Hamid's. And actually, even when 'Abd al-Hamid does explicitly state that he is citing the Qur'an, he does not depart from this general observation of textual

Marfat.com

integration. The best testimony to that is the fact that he uses a variety of ways in formulating his statements, these being (1) 'preceding introductions' followed by literal citations in four cases (194.20; 210.19; 212.21 : 272.16), (2) 'antecedent information' preceded immediately by the rephrasing of an *aya* in one case (211.1-2), and (3) 'posterior comment' on a distantly rephrased *aya* in the last case (211.11-13). In fact, evcn within the four cases where the cited *ayas* are introduced as quranic, a variety of expressions are used as an introduction ('for He says', 'and said', 'for God, may He be exalted, says', and 'for He says in His truthful Book', respectively). Because of that, I believe we can take all the varied quranic occurrences in 'Abd al-Hamid's texts and draw on them for examples.

An examination aimed at finding the underlying principles behind this major phenomenon reveals that there are three criteria governing 'Abd al-Hamid's usage of quranic formulations. Going from the simple to the more complex, these are : (1) syntax, which dictates that the borrowed quranic material should fit the basic structure of the Hamidian sentences; (2) style, which dictates that this material be subjugated to the stylistic preferences of the author : and (3) purpose, for 'Abd al-Hamid does not use Qur'an for its own sake but for what it helps him achieve through his writings. In order to fulfil the needs of these criteria, *'Abd* al-Hamid resorts to different techniques, each set of which serves a particular criterion, although some do serve more than one.

Let us begin with the syntax techniques. Here we note that, when 'Abd al-Hamid's sentence structure permits the citation of a quranic phrase as it is, he cites it without hesitation. This citation would normally have at its beginning some kind of 'connecting mechanism', so that it merges well with the sentence preceding it, thereby keeping the syntax intact, This mechanism could be a simple conjunction *(wa,* and), as in his saying (235.12–13),'... and to Him (the Commander of the Faithful) entrusts his affair, [and God is sufficient as a Helper][9] (4.45)'. It could be also the causative particle *li* (so that), if the syntax requires a statement of purpose, as in his citing Qur'an 8.42 after saying that 'God sent messengers to His creatures with warning and promise, [so that he who perishes might perish by a clear proof, and he who survives might survive by a clear proof] (265.12-13; also cited in 211.14)'. Since this statement of purpose can be expressed grammatically in Arabic by the mere usage of the accusative of purpose, 'Abd al-Hamid simply cites a quranic phrase which begins with it. Thus, at the end of the paragraph in which he describes the benefits of the daily Quranic recitation mentioned above, he adds (219.8-9), '[as an exposition *(tibyanan)* of all things and a guidance and a mercy] (16.89)'. The syntax permitting, 'Abd al-Hamid could even cite an *aya* which is not introduced by some 'connecting mechanism', such as in the following sentence (202.11),'... for He is the Generous with gifts, and the Grantor of wishes, [He has no partner] (6.163)'.

In most cases, however, the quranic phrases used by 'Abd al-Hamid prove to be syntactically unaccommodating. Here, 'Abd al-Hamid resorts to several techniques to make them accommodating. The simplest one comprises adding a conjunction to his text and then linking to it the quranic phrase. It can be a *wa* (and); for example (216.2-3), 'and they violated the sanctity of Islam out of contempt,' and [they gave the grace of God in exchange for thanklessness] (14.28)'. More frequently, however, it is a *fa* (for, because, so); thus we read

Marfat.com

at the end of a letter on condolence (280.8), 'so [Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds] (1.2)'. And this is indeed the technique which 'Abd al-Hamid uses in his 'introductions' to the four *ayas* which he explicitly states are quranic, as can be noted from their translations given above.[10] Two other complementary techniques used by 'Abd al-Hamid consist of the deletion of some words from the *aya* to be cited, either without replacing them so that the *aya* fits syntactically into his speech (as in 234.15: 'with Him are the keys of goodness; [in His hand is sovereignty, and He is able to do all things] (67.1)', where the words *tabaraka 'lladhi* (blessed be He who) are deleted and not replaced), or by rephrasing the deleted part of the *aya* in such a way that it makes the rest of it flow naturally (in 211.9-10, where Qur'an 33.62 is cited, the words *sunnata 'llahi* of the *aya* are dropped because the syntax does not permit a definite noun; they are replaced by the indefinite alternative *wa sunnatan madiyatan).* As can be seen from this example, 'Abd al-Hamid, more often than not, tends to make his replacements closely associated with the deletions he makes (see also 211.7–8, where *wa izharihi* replaces [*li-yuzhirahu*] of 9.33).

All the above examples deal with quranic *ayas* which are mainly cited. Although an examination of them shows a general tendency on the part of the author to cite *ayas* in part not in full, this is *by* no means a hard and fast rule, for there are indeed instances in which full *ayas* are cited (*e.g.* 272.16-19, citing 6.59 and 280.8, citing 1.2). The full or partial citation is not a matter of concern for the author. The same can be said about the length of the citation. It is true that most of them are short, but there seems to be no express intention of excluding longer citations (see, for example, 212.21-213.2, citing 13.31). Indeed, even the distinction between cited *ayas* and rephrased ones is not an absolute one. We have already seen, the introductory alterations the author brings to some *ayas* for syntactical reasons. This is further confirmed in the cases in which 'Abd al-Hamid mixes citation with rephrasing. In 211.16-17, for example, 'Abd al-Hamid replaces the beginning of Qur'an 3.110 *(kun-tum)* with another phrase *(wa-ja'ala ummatahu)* for syntactical reasons, then he cites part of the aya *(khayra ummatin ukhrijat li'l-nas),* then, seeing that the following part of the *aya* uses the second person while his syntax requires the third person, he rephrases it, keeping its words but changing the person in them. The result is that, instead of the quranic [You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind; you enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency], we get 'and He made His community [the best community that has been raised for mankind]; they enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency' (see also 236.10-12).

This brings us to the phenomenon of rephrasing, a major technique which 'Abd al-Hamid uses in order to ensure that his syntax remains intact. This technique dictates more serious changes in the quranic borrowed material, sometimes to the point of obscuring it. Changes in person are quite frequent, as we have seen in the last cited example. Only rarely do they occur with an attestation of their quranic origin by the author, as in 211.1-3, when he changes the quranic second person in 8.26 to the third person, then adds, 'as God, may He be exalted, described them in His Book'. Most often they occur without any clue as to their origin, and there they become very obscure, especially since the author makes the changes in short, quick expressions, such as *wa-ilahiyarghabu* (274.5), which changes the second person of Qur'an 94.9 *[wa-ila rabhika fa'rghab]* into the third person. But this last example also portrays

Marfat.com

another manner of rephrasing, namely that of replacing the quranic noun *rabbika* by a pronoun *–hu,* because of syntax.

'Abd al-Hamid again rephrases Qur'an by changing the number of nouns, making what is singular plural and what is plural singular. This happens most frequently not only in single, peculiarly quranic words (the quranic plural *sarabil* in 14.50, 16.81 vs. the singular *sirbal* in 282.5, the quranic singular *al-qari'a* in 13.31 vs. the plural *al-qawari'* In 212 16), but also in sentences, for syntactic reasons. Thus, Qur'an 7.157, which reads [And those who believe in him, and honour him, and help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him], is rendered in the singular in every single verb (except for one which is dropped)[11] in 211.1 (hence *amana, 'azzaza, nasara, itiaba'a,* instead of *amanu, 'azzazu, nasaru, ittaba u).*

'Abd al-Hamid also replaces a quranic noun with a verb, or vice versa. Thus, the well-known quranic nominal expression [the seal of prophets] (33.40) is changed in 211.16 into the verbal 'sealed the prophets', and the verbal [to that which enlivens you] (8.24) is changed in 265.13 into the nominal 'to the enlivening'. Along the same lines, syntax can also dictate the change of quranic indefinite nouns into definite ones, as in 212.4, where the definite article is dropped from *ridwan, na'im,* and *muqim,* which are definite in Qur'an 9.21.

Other rephrasings for syntactical reasons could occur in grammatical structure and in mood. The quranic nominative *kana sa'yuhum mashk-uran* in 17.19 is changed into the accusative *sa'yan mashkuran* in 206.8. And several times quranic phrases in the imperative mood are changed into the indicative mood, as we see it in 'Abd al-Hamid's text (201.17) : 'so He confirmed my strength with him', which is nothing other than a rephrasing of Qur'an 29.31 [Confirm my strength with him!].

Whereas the above shows, at least in part, how frequently 'Abd al-Hamid resorts to quranic formulations in his epistoiography, it also tells us how keen he is on remaining independent in his use of these formulations, imposing changes on them rather than his own text, and making his text decide what to keep, delete, add, exchange or rephrase of them. This in itself can be indicative of the kind of 'presence' the Qur'an has for him; but this is a point to which I shall return later.[12]

When we come to the area of the style techniques which 'Abd al-Hamid uses in borrowing from the Qur'an, we find ourselves on more subtle ground. Not only is style difficult to define by itself, but it is also not easy to talk about a unified 'Hamidian style', because of the stylistic varieties his works display. And yet, an examination of the shaping of quranic formulations in 'Abd al-Hamid's letters for stylistic purposes is not impossible. For one thing, no matter how much 'Abd al-Hamid diversifies his stylistic techniques, one of them remains constantly conspicuous in his prose, namely parallelism or pairing, *izdiwaj;* this leads to what I call 'amplification' in his quranic usages. For another, 'Abd al-Hamid, particularly but not exclusively, as a public spokesman for a ruling house, must aim at effectiveness in his style, as indeed he does; this leads to the 'reduction' of some quranic formulations in his works. Thirdly, there is also the element of personal taste and preference in matters of word choice, word order, music and imagery; it influences the quranic usages in his prose, leading to the usage of synonyms, antonyms, word and sentence reordering, and sentence sequence,

and, in the last, the question of the music becomes decisive. All of these stylistic techniques are not totally divorced from the techniques of syntax; in fact, they presuppose them and are built upon them thus going one degree higher than them in complexity. Let us examine them one by one.

By amplification I mean that 'Abd al-Hamid would take a quranic expression and then pair it with an expression of his own in order to make it fit his style with its heavy leaning towards parallelism. The simplest way he does this is to take a two-word expression, break it up, bring a synonym for each word, then add a conjunction in the middle, thereby ending with a pair of parallel expressions. Thus, the quranic *dar al-qarar* (the home of enduring; 40.39) becomes *dar al-khafd,* wa manzil al-qarar (the home of ease, and the house of enduring; 203.19-20). On a more complex level, he takes a quranic sentence which has the potential of a pair, separates the segments of the pair, adds a few words, and ends up with an amplified sentence which keeps the original, quranic meaning practically intact. One of the best examples is that in which Qur'an 22.75 reads : [God chooses messengers from the angels and from people], 'Abd al-Hamid makes use of the pair: angels/people, assigns to each of them its proper physical realm (the heavens/the earth), then adds the idea of both being sent (as messengers), and this permits him to come up with a fairly long, paired sentence (210.18-19) : 'And it is He who ordained messengers to the inhabitants of His heavens from His angels, and to the people of the earth from His prophets, then He sent them'.

To amplification also belongs a technique which can be called analogy; it has been briefly mentioned by Ihsan 'Abbas. What 'Abd al-Hamid does here is to take a quranic expression, then to add to it one or more expressions of his own, following the same structure of the quranic expression, thereby amplifying his text and enriching it with parallelism. The clearest example is his saying, borrowing from the Qur'an the expression [And We erased the portent of the night] (17.12), 'then the torrent will seep away in the ground, and the portent of the night will be erased' (289.11). Less obvious is the quranic borrowing in his description of the secretaries' status *vis-a-vis* their masters; they are 'their ears with which they hear, their eyes with which they see, their tongues with which they speak, and their hands with which they strike' (281.12-282.2). This long sentence is undoubtedly structured analogically after Qur'an 7.179 and 195, both of which speak; among other things, about [the eyes with which they see] and [the ears with which they hear].

There are other complex forms of amplification in 'Abd al-Hamid's letters, but, since amplification in them clearly serves ideological purposes in addition to style, they will be discussed in the next section.[13]

Whereas amplification adds to the borrowed quranic material, reduction takes away something from it, making the Hamidian sentence based on it shorter. This might seem to go against 'Abd al-Hamid's general preference for prolixity, but it is easily explained by his powerful versatility as a prose writer and his scrupulous professionalism as a secretary, one who knows when to be brief and when to be long-winded; hence his tendency to use reduction in ivocations, particularly within condolence letters, for how much does one invoke God for assistance, and for how long can an embarrased man go on talking to the bereaved? In addition, 'Abd al-Hamid's tremendous loyalty to the Umayyads, indeed his identification

Marfat.com

with them, and the ruling Umayyads' need to impress their divided subjects, the Muslims, with their achievements, must have made him choose brevity at times, for brevity is far more effective in public communications, especially at times of very grave civil unrest, as the late Umayyads' times indeed were; hence 'Abd al-Hamid's resorting to reduction in his political, public letters written on behalf of one or another of the Umayyads. Some of these letters argue for ideological positions, and will hence be dealt with later.[14] Some others, however, are more straightforward, for they offer thanks to God on the conquests He has granted the Muslims; they thus furnish us with good material for clarifying the basic manner in which 'Abd al-Hamid uses reduction.

Let me begin with the invocations. In a public letter written on behalf of the caliph on the occasion of the beginning of the month of Ramadan, 'Abd al-Hamid ends the letter by invoking God to grant the caliph 'the acceptance of his work' *(taqabbula 'amalihi;* 206.18). This is nothing other than a reduction of Qur'an 46.16 [Those are they from whom We accept the best of what they do] *nataqabbalu 'anhum ahsana ma 'amilu.* In another letter, one on condolence, an even longer quranic sentence is reduced. Qur'an 33.43 has [He it is who blesses you, and His angels, that He may bring you forth from darkness unto light; and He is ever merciful to the believers]. 'Abd al-Hamid reduces the whole aya into practically two words, saying that he asks God to grant us (*i e.*, the family of the deceased) 'from His blessings and His mercy; *min salawatihi wa rahmatihi'* (195.3). He even resorts to the reduction of two distant quranic sentences in the two segments of a parallelism. Thus, in his invocation in the same condolence letter that God should 'overlook his (*i.e.*, the deceased's) evil deeds, and double his good deeds' (195.2), the first part of the parallelism is taken from Qur'an 46.16, and the second from Qur'an 4.40. Each one of these two ayas is much longer than the whole of 'Abd al-Hamid's sentence with both its segments.

Going to the conquest letters, we meet almost a flood of instances where the reduction technique is used, particularly since they are written in the *tahmid,* or *te deum,* genre. One long example should suffice. In the first *tahmid* cycle of a public letter written on the occasion of the achievement of a conquest by the Muslims (presumably in Armenia), 'Abd al-Hamid begins with the standard *al-hamdu li 'llahi 'lladhi,* then he enumerates some of God's attributes or actions for which He is being thanked (272.10-11). Now each of these qualities is made up of two words; some of them are reductions of whole quranic sentences, thus :

al-muniri burhanuhu = from Qur'an 4.174 [O mankind, now has a proof *(burhen)* from your Lord come unto you, and We have sent down unto you a clear light (*nuran*)];

al-thabitati lalimatihu = from Qur'an 14.27 [God confirms those who believe by a firm saying *(bi'l-qawli 'l-thabiti)* in the life of the world and in the hereafter, and God sends wrong-doers astray; and God does what He will];

al-shafiyati ayatuhu = from Qur'an 41.44 [And if We had made it a Qur'an in a foreign tongue they would assuredly have said : If only its verses *(ayatuhu)* were expounded! Say : For those who believe it is a guidance and a healing *(shifa')*...].

There are two last, unique techniques of reduction which appear in 'Abd al-Hamid's prose, the first of which I would call 'coining', and the second 'grammatical translation'.

Marfat.com

'Coining' consists of the creation of single-word terms, which are summations of whole quranic phrases, normally formulaic ones. These coined terms are derived from one or more key words of the same root in the quranic phrases, in the same way as one came to say *basmala* for *bi 'smi llahi 'l-rahmani 'l-rahim*. Now, it is difficult to say at the present stage of research in early Islam how new these terms used by 'Abd al-Hamid were; it is possible that they were already in use by his time, but it is not impossible that it was he who introduced them into literary Arabic, and probably into religio-ideological epistolography. For, significantly enough, these coined terms, like the other reduction forms, occur mainly in letters of condolence or ideology. Three examples have to be given here.

The first is important because in it 'Abd al-Hamid indirectly 'explains' his technique, a thing which might indicate that he felt he was embarking on a new, unfamiliar manner of expression. In a condolence letter he asks God, among other things (194.19-21), 'to accept what He has taught us concerning *istirja'* at the time of misfortune'. He then adds, 'because He said [Who say, when a misfortune strikes them : Lo, we are God's, and lo, unto Him we return] (2.156)'. Now, there is no doubt whatsoever that the term *istirja'* is coined after the quranic expression/formula *inna li 'llahi wa-inna ilayhi raji'un, r-j-* being the common root between the two; and the fact that 'Abd al-Hamid cites the *aya* immediately after mentioning the term, introducing it with 'because', shows that he is offering an explanation for the source of his (new?) term. Another term whose explanation does not occur in such an obvious way is *al-tabam mina 'l-hawli wa'l- quwwa* (200.23-24). This is little other than a coining of the quranic formula *la quwwata illa bi llah* (39.18). What is particularly interesting in it is the mention of *al-hawl,* in addition to *al-quwwa,* although both are synonymous but here perhaps an extra-quranic source *(hadith?)* has been used. In a similar way, I think, we can deduce that 'Abd al-Hamid's usage, in a condolence letter, of the strange term *hisba* (194.15) is also a coining of the quranic formulaic expression *hasbiyya 'llahu* (9.129, 39.38), although the context is not fully clear on that, for the whole letter (194-195) is shrouded in a heavily predestinarian gown, in which God's supreme will is portrayed as dominating man's existence, especially at the moment of death.

The 'grammatical translation' technique is also unique in early Arabic literature. It consists of taking one or more quranic *ayas* of a particular mood or an indirect expression thereof, and then 'translating' the mood briefly into words, thereby causing the quranic statements to be reduced. In most cases, the 'translated' mood is the imperative mood, as one sees in 'Abd al-Hamid's saying (211.5) 'and He *ordered* them to obey Him', which is nothing other than a translation of the numerous imperative quranic *ayas* commanding people to obey God *(ati'u 'llaha...)*. Even if the imperative mood is indirect, it gets translated too, as in his saying (205.10),'... what God prescribed for him of the pilgrimage of Islam', which is a translation of Qur'an 3.97 prescribing pilgrimage : [And pilgrimage to the House is a duty unto God for mankind, for him who can find a way thither], A more striking case is the one in which 'Abd al-Hamid takes the long aya 24.55, which is constructed in the 'emphatic' mood (with three verbs taking the doubled, heavy *nun al-tawkid)* in asserting God's promise to the believers to consolidate them in several ways, and then translates it briefly into, 'a matter which He made incumbent upon Himself (273.7).

Before ending this section on amplification and reduction, I must add that sometimes 'Abd·al-Hamid employs both reduction and amplification in one sentence, as he does when he invokes God (195.17-18), again in a condolence letter, to put the deceased 'in the highest point of *'illiyyin,* and in the happies; company of the prophets' (195.17-18). Now the first segment of the pair draws from Qur'an 83.18 [the record of the righteous is in *'illiyyin],* except that 'Abd al-Hamid adds *a'la'* (the highest point), thereby using amplification. The second segment is a clear reduction of Qur'an 4.69 [Whoso obeys God and the Messenger, they are with those unto whom God has shown favour, of the prophets and the saints and the martyrs and the righteous; the best of company are they].

The rest of 'Abd al-Hamid's stylistic techniques are also subtle and perhaps more difficult to pin down. What is clear is that, although his text is filled to the point of saturation with peculiarly quranic words like *ala* (201.1). *nafila* (205.11) and *tanzil* (200.8) he tends sometimes to use synonyms or antonyms of them. Thus, although the Qur'an consistently uses the verb *albasa* for the action of obscuring truth by falsehood *(haqq-batil;* 2.42,3.71), 'Abd al-Hamid consistently uses the verb *jama* in order to convey the same meaning (214.20,271.16). On the other hand, 'Abd al-Hamid changes the verb used in the Qur'an for the souls of the believers who get killed for the sake of God from 'to buy' (2.207, 9.111) to its antonym 'to sell' (273.12-13); but in the former it is God who buys *(shara),* and in the latter it is the believers who sell *(al-mubaya'a).* The meaning then is constant; it is only that the terms have been changed.

'Abd al-Hamid also follows the Qur'an closely in ordering words and expressions when he cites Qur'an or even rephrases it, as we have already seen in several examples. He, however, may choose to change that order once in a while, out of stylistic preference. The simplest example of reordered word is his saying that 'God is the One who takes care of *sarf al-su 'i 'anka'* (195.18). The last three words appear in Qur'an 12.24, albeit with the prepositional sentence coming at the end, rather than in the middle, *li-nasrifa 'anhu 'l-si'la.* Again, the simplest example of the reordering of expressions occurs in 'Abd al-Hamid's invocation that God should grant the Commander of the Faithful 'the remittance of his evil deeds, and the forgiveness of his sins' (206.19). The last of these two requests comes first in Qur'an 3.193, and the first last : [forgive us our sins, and remit from us our evil deeds]. A more complex situation of reordering is seen in 'Abd al-Hamid's saying that the Prophet was 'full of concern for them (*i.e.* the Muslims), kind to all of them, grievous about their overburden, full of pity, merciful' (266.6-7). Now, all but the second of the five segments in this sentence are found in Qur'an 9.128; but the first segment here comes second in the aya, the third first, and only the last two come last in both texts.

When we come to sentence sequence, we note that 'Abd al-Hamid's preference for a certain musical ring in the cadence of his sentences dictates, to a great extent, the manner in which he juxtaposes them when he draws heavily on the Qur'an, musical effect being-a matter of great importance for a public writer. It is this factor, I believe, which makes him at times interrupt the citation of a single *aya,* and connect two *ayas* together at others. Now, although 'Abd al-Hamid cites quraric *ayas* or parts thereof without interruption sometimes, as we have seen, he at times does interrupt his citation, and that by adding a word at a particular place within it. This added word does not normally add anything substantial to

the meaning, neither does it serve the purpose of pairing. An example of this is his interrupting the text of the last part of Qur'an 7.195 by the word *jami'an* (all of you), so that it reads : *thumma kidurijami'an, fa-la tunzirun* (214.17), instead of the quranic *thumma kiduni, fa-la tunzirun.* The function of this interruption, as far as I can see, is certainly not semantic, nor basically stylistic (parallelism); it is essentially musical. Through it, 'Abd al-Hamid causes a difference in length between the two segments of his sentence, the first one becoming long while the second remains short, and this leads to a difference in musical effect between his text and that of the Qur'an. Along the same ones, 'Abd al-Hamid does sometimes, though only very rarely, quote two *ayas* successively (see 280.8-9, where Qur'an 1.2 and 2.156 are cited), but he more frequently connects the two *ayas* he cites with a word or more of his own, again for musical effect rather ihan anything else, for his additions have no particular extra-musical value. A good example of this would be his addition of the words *min 'ibadihi,* when connecting Qur'an 2.222 and 42.13. His text then reads : *fa-[inna 'llaha yuhibbu'l-tawwdbina] min 'ibddihi [wa-yahdi ilayhi man yunib]* (200.20).

One particular case of sentence sequence is worth studying separately, not only because of its complexity, but also because it sheds light on 'Abd al-Hamid's awareness of the stylistic potential of the Qur'an; including music, and his almost calculating attitude when he draws on it. I shall quote it first in its original language, breaking it into separate segments (236.10-12) :

1. *sa'a ma kasabat yadahu*
2. *wa-ma 'llahu bi-zallamin li'l-'abid*
3. *wa-bi'sa-ma sawwalat lahu nafsuhu 'l-ammaratu bi 'l-su'i*
4. *wa-llahu min ward 'ihi bi 'l-mirsad*
5. *[wa-saya'lamu 'lladhina zalamu ayya munqalabin yanqalibun].*

Now, the first two segments are rephrasings of either one of two almost identical *ayas* (3.182 and 22.10; the first has the plural a*ydikum,* the second the *dual yadaka).* The rephrasing has been done in three places. The first concerns the very first two words, which in the Qur'an are in the indicative mood *dhalika bi-ma,* while they are an interjection of some sort in the Hamidian text. Interestingly enough, this interjection is itself peculiarly quranic, and it is frequently used there (see 'Abd al-Baql, 367-368). The second concerns the word *kasabat,* which in the Qur'an is *qaddamat;* it consists, then, of the usage of a synonym. The third concerns segment 2. Here the negative is achieved in 'Abd al-Hamid's text by the usage of *ma,* while in the Qur'an it is achieved by *laysa.* Segment 3. is a rephrasing of a combination of Qur'an 12.18 and 53, except that its first, interjectory word, *bi'sa-ma,* which is also a peculiarly frequent quranic usage ('Abd al-Baqi, 113-114) is added, in order to make it match the beginning of the first segment. Segment 4 is a straightforward amplification of Qur'n 89.14. As for segment 5, it is a direct citation of Qur'an 26.227.

What has 'Abd al-Hamid achieved with this sentence sequonce? He has first broken up one a*ya* into two clearly defined, equally short segments, introducing the first with a powerful quranic interjectory word. He has followed these two with a long segment, beginning equally with a quranic interjectory word, causing the text to come to a musical 'semi-finale', for

Marfat.com

more should come if the interjectory mood is still present. There follows next another rephrased, short segment, and only after that comes an unadulterated, long quranic citation, which brings the text to final rest with an *effective grand finale,* a perfect ending for a major section of the 'Letter to the Crown Prince'

'Abd al-Hamid, then, is extremely aware of the musical value of the Qur'an, and indeed several of his letters, or major sections thereof, end with quranic citations (see the endings of letters nos,: 10,25, *26,* 27,33, 34, and pp. 234.15,235.13,236.12-13 in no. 21), not to mention rephras-ings. And even when he interferes with the structure of quranic sentences, he is, *au fond,* emulating the Qur'an.

Just as 'Abd al-Hamid draws on the Qur'an in words and music, he draws on it in his imagery too. Since, however, the vast majority of his quranically-inspired images occur with a clear ideological.purpose, they shall be dealt with momentarily in the next and final section of the present paper, the one dealing with ideology.

This is a difficult subject to handle here, because ideology is essentially concerned with thought, and I have already stated that, within the space constraints of a paper, I have to limit myself to areas where the impact of the Qur'an is literally present in 'Abd al-Hamid's text. Besides, as I mentioned before, the stylistic techniques which 'Abd al-Hamid uses may very well serve ideological ends. Therefore, what I shall do in this section is, first, give examples of the various types of style used by 'Abd al-Hamid for definite ideological objectives, and then explore new techniques introduced by him solely for the purpose of ideology. It should be added that what I mean by ideology in this particular context is the clear, systematic intellectual stance of the author with regard mainly to questions of politics, but also to those of theology and law. What is actually quite remarkable in 'Abd al-Hamid's epistolography is that the impact of the Qur'an is conspicuously more apparent in his letters which are ideological than in those which are not. One should always keep in mind that, no matter what the area of ideology is, 'Abd al-Hamid endorses it from the perspective of his staunchly pro-Umayyad stance. The significance of this phenomenon will be discussed in the conclusion.[15]

Let me begin with the areas in which stylistic techniques are purposely geared towards establishing 'Abd al-Hamid's ideological position. 'Abd al-Hamid resorts to amplification very frequently in his ideological letters. A good example of this occurs in a letter written to a rebel against the Umayyads. Here, 'Abd al-Hamid draws on Qur'an 37.172-173 : *Innahum la-humu 'l-mansurun, wa-inna jundana la-humu 'l-ghalibun.* This two-segment sentence is amplified into a three-segment sentence, each of which is internally further amplified, so that we get the following description of the Umayyad armies who are going to crush the rebel; *fa-sataridu 'alaykajunudu 'llahi 'l-muqarrabun, wa-awliya'uhu 'l-ghalibun, wa-yaridu 'alayka ma'a dhalika hizbuhu 'l-mansuru mina'l-kuhul* .... (214.3). Reduction is not less frequent. Thus, in the same *tahmid* letter cited above, in which 'Abd al-Hamid reduces whole ayas to enumerate God's attributes and actions, we find the expression *al-thabitati kalimatuhu* (272.10), which is a reduction of Qur'an 14.27, one of those ayas which have a strong ring of predestinarianism, a theological stance which 'Abd al-Hamid consistently defended in his letters and precisely meant by his expression here. Reduction by 'coining' is also common in 'Abd al-Hamid's prose, so that we get the term *istidraj* (199.14), whose root verb is in Qur'an 7.182 and 68.44

Marfat.com

(sa-nastadrijuhum): This is a theological concept which means God's luring the sinners on to further sinning, whereby their destruction becomes imminent. 'Abd al-Hamid uses this term in a political context to describe the 'Abbasid rebels; he also explains it indirectly (199.14-15). Similarly, 'Abd al-Hamid resorts to the 'grammatical translation' technique quite often. As a persistent spokesman for obedience (to the Umayyads, of course), and against civil discord (in their realm), he calls frequently for the unity of the Muslims (under the leadership of the Umayyads). Thus, in a letter on obedience, he takes the quranic imperative *aya* (3.103) [And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of God, and do not separate], and he translates it into 'He ordered them... to hold fast to His cable' (211.5).

As for the rest of the stylistic techniques (word choice, word order, and sentence sequence, with its musical component), I believe that the five-segment example I have cited above is ample proof of 'Abd alHamid's usage of them. After all, the example is taken from the section of the 'Letter to the Crown Prince' which talks about the Khariji rebel whom the Crown Prince is going to face in battle: he is'... your enemy, the one who takes on (only outwardly) the name of Islam, the secessionist from the community of its people, the pretender of the support of religion...'. (236.4-5).

'Abd al-Hamid also uses other techniques in order to expound his ideology. One of these is heavy borrowing from the Qur'an (outside sentence citations) of certain 'loaded' key words and expressions, which have a strong potential for being used as 'slogans', especially in the political realm, such as *hizb Allah, awtiya' Allah, dhikr Allah, bagha, dalala, ashrar, fitna, ma'siya al-haqq,* and so forth. This borrowing is, however, not haphazard, but rather meticulously calculated : whatever is applied in the Qur'an to the believers is applied by 'Abd al-Hamid to the Umayyads and their supporters, and whatever is applied to the non-believers is applied to the enemies of the Umayyads. Thus, for example, the leader of the 'Abbasid revolt is called a *shirrir* and his supporters are *ashrdr* (199.1,5,12); his action is a *dalala* (198.17) and *a fitna* instigated by *al-shaytan* (198.14), and his opinion is *mubtadi'* (199.6); he and his supporters are *muharrifun* of religion (199.7, 200.9), and they do not believe in the *jumla* (entirety) of the Qur'an (200.9). On the other hand, the opponents of these rebels, the pro-Umayyads, that is, are *musad-diqun* in God's *tanzil,* they and their fathers (200.8); they are going to fight the rebels, armed with *sabr* (200.2), *dhikr Allah,* (200.3), *tawba* (200.18), and *ghadab* Allah (199.20) : they are certainly going to be victorious, for *yad Allah* controls *al-haqq,* and it is they who are closer to *al-haqq* than the rebels (199.19).

Now, in order for 'Abd al-Hamid to achieve his purpose from borrowing such expressions from the Qur'an, he has to change frequently the contexts in which they occur, as, for example, in his attributing the *tahrif* of God's word to the Abbasid rebels when this phenomenon is specifically an action of the Jews in the Qur'an (2.75, 4.46, 5.13, 41). But this 'Abd al-Hamid does without any hesitation, and with the utmost ease, conceptually and stylistically. For what he actually does, firstly, is to 'isolate' these expressions, thereby taking them out of their original context. Once isolated, they become 'neutral', and consequently usable in a broad spectrum of contexts. With a powerful stylist and an unscrupulous ideologue such as Abd al-Hamid behind them, they become like pieces of clay that can be moulded in any way their moulder wishes them to be. But what is most important in this whole process

Marfat.com

is that their 'isolation' and 'neutralization' does not affect their symbolic, compelling, originally quranic ring. Indeed, their persistent, systematic clustering in 'Abd al-Hamid's political prose enhances their 'slogan-like' value. Its hearers—who are Muslims also find themselves being constantly swayed between the Qur'an's powerful words and 'Abd al-Hamid's unrelenting, torrential flow; they give up the attempt to distinguish one from the other, and they forget everything about 'original contexts'. What is most important is that they arc convinced of what they hear 'Abd al-Hamid, through this technique, proves himself a first rate propagandist.

But 'Abd al-Hamid goes even further than that. In his great enthusiasm to defend the Umayyads and to launch an offensive against their opponents, he finds that he needs more striking propagandistc expressions than the Qur'an provides. But, aware of the value of bringing in quranic terms, he resorts to another technique, one that I would call 'analogous coining' This technique consists of introducing new, short expressions which are structured along the same lines as some quranic, slogan-like expressions, and which are intended to produce the same effect they do. Thus, 'Abd al-Hamid finds in the Qur'an several constructs made of *ahl* ('people of) plus some verbal nouns, such as *ahl al-dhikr, ahl al-taqwa, ahl al-maghfira.* He coins other politically useful expressions which are analogous in structure to them, such as *ahl al-riba 'a* (212.9), *ahl al-baghy, ahl al-hasad* (224.8), *ahl al-islam* (210.10, 11-12, 16), *ahl safwatihi* (210.17), *ahl al-kufr li-ni'matihi* (198.18), *ahl al-riba wa'l-shakk* (211.12-13), and *ahl al-ma'siya wa 'l-khilaf wa'l-mufaraqa li'l-haqq wa-ahlihi* (212.16-17). He also finds in the Qur'an *[hizb Allah]* and *[hizb al-shaytan],* but he is not satisfied solely by using them; he also invents *hizb al-ta'a* (212.3), and, along the same lines, *awliya al-ta'a'* (212.3); he finds *libas al-taqwa,* so he coins *libas dinihim* (213.13). In a different manner, he finds a useful quranic adjective, *al-akbar,* connected with such words as *al-'adhab,* so he coins the expression *al-sharr al-akbar,* and he even further couples it, for the sake of parallelism, with another : *al-halakal-a'zam* (210.5-6). In a more daring analogy, he coins from the quranic expression *al-walaya li-Allah* two new expressions which he makes even more striking by putting them in construct : *walayat al-din* and *walayat al-salihin* (199.7-8).

But there are situations when 'Abd al-Hamid uses a technique which results, for all practical purposes, in manipulating the quranic statements; I would call in 'deceptive interpretation'. Two examples should suffice. The first occurs in his letter on obedience (no. 17), where more than one third of the beginning is devoted to recounting of history of the rise of Islam, and where almost every sentence is a citation or a rephrasing of a quranic *aya.* By the time the reader gets to the subject matter, obedience versus disobedience, he would have become accustomed to a certain straightforwardness in quranic usages, and it is at this very point that 'Abd al-Hamid traps him. Speaking of obedience, he says that one should 'perform the rightful duty which God has proscribed on him to its *wali'* (212.14), this wali being clearly the (Umayyad) caliph. Now there is no doubt that 'Abd al-Hamid is referring here to Qur'an 4.59: [Obey God and obey the Messenger and *uli 'l-amr* from among you]. 'Abd al-Hamid has pretended to be simply exchanging the quranic plural *(awliyd)* by the singular (*wali*), which, in essence, should not be contrary to the quranic dictum. In reality, he has embarked on a much more serious willful, deceptive 'interpretation' of the *aya* for ideological purposes, since the quranic *uli 'l-amr* has got nothing to do with the word *wali:*

Marfat.com

the two are similar only in appearance. The second example occurs in a *tahmid* letter, where, again, straightforward quranic borrowings in the first, long *tahmid* cycle renders one far from alert. Suddenly, in the second, short cycle, deception creeps in : 'And thanks be to God, who honoured Muhammad by what He guarded of the affairs of his community, so that He chose for the inheritance of his prophethood what he gave to the Commander of the Faithful...'. (273.15-16). The first part of this sentence is certainly quranic, but the second is not, and it certainly does not follow logically from the first. Indeed, it has got nothing to do whatsoever with any quranic statement. It is a sheer ideological deception.

Another, more subtle ideological technique which 'Abd al-Hamid uses is 'allusion', in which the author hints at a quranic referent with seemingly 'neutral' words. We see it best in his letter, written on behalf of the Commander of the Faithful, prohibiting the playing of chess. Here, 'Abd al-Hamid says that among the things the people were forbidden to do is 'paying devotion to these figures of chess' *(al-i'likaf 'ala hadhihi 'l-tamathil mina 'l-shitranj;* 266.20-21). Now, i'tikaf and *tamathil* are each the most perfectly suitable words for the action they describe : they are 'neutral' words; in fact, the word *tamathil* is the technical word for the chess pieces. However, by putting the two words together, 'Abd al-Hamid is undoubtedly, indeed intentionally, alluding to the story of Abraham, who, according to the Qur'an 21.52, [And he said unto his father and his folk : what are these images *(tamathil)* unto which you pay devotion *('akifun)?].* 'Abd al-Hamid further confirms this by using for the chess players other derivatives of the root *'-k-f(mu'takifun,* 267.2; *ahl al-i'tikaf,* 267.20). He then equates the 'idols' of Abraham's folk with the 'figures' of chess, both of which can have the same Arabic word, *tamathil.* With this subtle yet strong allusion, 'Abd al-Hamid is sure to arouse negative images in the minds of his Muslim listeners, and at that point, the caliph's decision to prohibit chess becomes all the more ideologically plausible since it is religiously correct.

The last item I would like to discuss is the complex technique of imagery. Like all creative artists, 'Abd al-Hamid's prose is filled with images of his own creation, but in the ideological letters in particular, his main images become heavily dependent upon quranic images. One example is illuminating enough, that of 'the devil'.

The image of the devil appears mainly in four of 'Abd al-Hamid's sarviving letters : no. 8, which is written on behalf of the caliph Marwan to the governor of Khurasan, concerning the ('Abbasid) rebellion there; no. 13, which is written also on behalf of Marwan, but in his capacity as governor of Armenia, concerning the spread of Qadarism there; and nos. 16 and 18, on civil strife *(fitna).* In painting this image, 'Abd al-Hamid probably draws on extra-quranic material, as I have shown elsewhere,[16] and he does make it more elaborate than the quranic image, especially since the latter is spread out in several places in the Qur'an. In spite of this, the quranic image remains strikingly conspicuous in his letters, carrying its fundamental lines and even its words. Four such lines can be discerned.

The first is the connection of the devil with *fitna.* In the Qur'an, this connection is made in 7.27 : [O children of Adam, let not the devil seduce you *(yaftinannakumu)* as he caused your parents to go out from the Garden]. In 'Abd al-Hamid's eighth and sixteenth letters, it is stated that the devil sends the people of *fitna* out (198.14) and incites *fitna* (210.2). As for letter no. 18 (213.9-16), the devil is not mentioned by name at all, rather, it is *fitna* which is

Marfat.com

the 'instigator' of the actions described. Nevertheless, these actions are exactly the same as those of the devil as they will be discussed below. *Fitna,* then, is equated with the devil in this letter. But does *fitna* in the Hamidian; text have the same meaning it has in the quranic text? Not so, for in the first it points unequivocally to 'civil discord', while in the latter it means 'seduction'. Are we then in front of another 'deceptive interpretation'? Perhaps, but not necessarily, for three connecting elements can be found between the two meanings. The first consists of 'Abd al-Hamid's equating of *fitna* with disobedience in his sixteenth letter *(fa 'nzuru.. madha taf alu 'l-fitnatu wa 'l-ma'siyatu',* 210.1-2). In the Qur'an, the devil is described as 'disobedient' *('asiyya;* 19.44), and 'Abd al-Hamid uses the same root *'-s-y* as the Qur'an. The second is that there is an aya which makes the devil a sower of 'enmity and hatred' between people, although his action there is restricted to matters of wine-drinking, gambling, and prevention from prayer (5.91). Even so, the relationship between 'enmity and hatred' and 'discord' is close enough. The third is that, when 'Abd al-Hamid attributes to *fitna,* in his eighteenth letter, that which he attributes to the devil elsewhere, he makes the central line of the image there 'guile' or 'seduction'. This brings us back to the original quranic meaning in 7.27 cited previously.

The second line of the devil image deals with the nature of the devil's approach to man. 'Abd al-Hamid uses the verb *dabba,* to creep, twice (210.2, 10). This is not the quranic verb proper; there we have was wasa (7.20, 20.120), which 'Abd al-Hamid uses in the nominal form, *wasawis,* only once, outside the four ideological letters we are examining (219.7), and in a different context. Hence, I tend to think of 'Abd al-Hamid's usage ot the verb *dabba* as a reduction of two other quranic *ayas* which outline in detailed imagery the action of 'creeping'. The devil speaks to God, [He said : Now, because you have sent me astray, verily I shall lurk in ambush for them on your right path; then I shall come upon them from before them, and from behind them, and from their right hands, and from their left hands, and you shall not find most of them grateful] (7.16–17).

The third line consists of the essence of the devil's actions. In the Qur'an, this is expressed in two main words 'leading them to error', *(la-udillannahum),* and 'making false promises to them', (*la-umanniyannahum),* in addition to ordering them (*la-amurannahum)* (4.119). In the following *aya* (4.120), the Qur'an describes the devil's actions thus [He promises them and he stirs up desires in them, and the devil promises them only to beguile]. In 'Abd al-Hamid's text, the same roots of the verbs are used. Thus we read in the eight letter (198, 16-17) that the devil 'makes them hasten [to him] with false promises, and calls them to error' *yastakhiffuhum bi'l-amani, wa yastad'ihum ila 'l-dalala;* and in letter no. 18 (213.11), *fitna /* (the devil) 'promises them lies, and makes by deceptions false promises to them' *(ta'iduhumu 'l-kadhiba wa tumannihumu khida'a)* 'Abd al-Hamid after that elaborates, much more than the Qur'an, on the devil's guile, and that, of course, for ideological purposes.

The last line of similarity in the devil image lies in the idea that, once people fall into the devil's deceptions, he gives them up. This idea is painted vividly in three *ayas* in the Qur'an (14.22, 25.29 and 59.16) and in two of 'Abd al-Hamid's letters (nos. 13 and 16). However, in the first of these two (207.10–11-, only one, distant quranic verb (*yuqi'a,* in 6.43) is used : *wa-innama raghghabahum li-yuqi'a bihim thumma yaqa'u bihim wa-yatakhalla 'anhum* (he incites them

Marfat.com

to covetousness in order to assault them, and then he would drop them and give them up), while, in the second, two central ones are used, from *b-r-'* (to dissociate from), and *kh-dh-l* (to disavow). Thus the Qur'an's *inni bari'un minka* (59.16) and *wa-kana 'l-shaytanu li 'l-insani khadhula* (25.29), become in 'Abd al-Hamid's image *takhallat 'anhum khadhilatan, wa-tabarra'at minhum mu'ridatan 'anhum* (213.12).

It is clear from the above how much 'Abd al-Hamid draws on the Qur'an for depicting the image of the devil in his literary prose. If his image (much of which has not been mentioned here) is more developed than that of the Qur'an, this is in part due to his application of it to the political realm. It is the enemies of the Umayyads who are worked upon by the devil so that they engage in civil strife and disobedience; and 'Abd al-Hamid, in perhaps the most crucial part of Umayyad history, had quite a few occasions to write about disobedient rebels within the Muslim community.

Let me end with some conclusions. Perhaps the most obvious conclusion one arrives at, after reviewing samples from 'Abd al-Hamid's prose in relation to the Qur'an, is that the Qur'an had, unquestionably, a tremendous influence on it. The samples studied having been essentially textual rather than conceptual, one should note that this impact, as presented above, is a literary one. The examples show how the quranic text is used by 'Abd al-Hamid as a literary text. But, as always in good literature, text and concept are impossible to separate : the 'devil in 'Abd al-Hamid's epistolography is not merely an image—it is also a concept. The Qur'an, then, can be considered to have had a general impact on 'Abd al-Hamid's work. The details of the Qur'an's conceptual impact, however, have to be studied separately, not only because they are tremendously complicated, but also because 'Abd al-Hamid exhibits in them techniques which are different from the textual techniques to which he resorts in his letters.

These techniques, as we have seen, cover a wide area of syntax, style and ideology. I articularly in the first two areas, the nature of 'Abd al-Hamid's quranic usages betrays a number of things. To begin with, he comes out as a superbly independent writer. He incorporates quranic formulations in his text, but he does that only on his own conditions of syntax and style; the quranic text never leads him; it is his text which decides what to include of the Qur'an, and how to include it. Thus, daringly, he cites Qur'an whenever it suits him, and he rephrases it whenever it suits him, too. He cites *ayas* in full whenever he finds it useful to do so, and he cuts out their beginnings or their endings whenever his text is satisfied by parts of them. He tells his readers that his words come from the Qur'an when he finds it fitting, and he refrains from so doing when he does not find it fitting. As for rephrasing, he does it in countless, daring ways, almost playing with nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and so forth, as he wishes, as his syntax and style dictate.

But no one could be a master at drawing from the Qur'an in the manner that 'Abd al-Hamid is without having full control of three things : Arabic language, a definite style, and a thorough knowledge of the text of the Qur'an. We are not concerned here with the first two. As for the third, it is perhaps not difficult to ascertain. For one things, 'Abd al-Hamid must have been exposed to the Qur'an from a young age. Learning it relatively late in life (say, at the time when he became an apprentice in the chancery) could not have given him

Marfat.com

the almost frightening dexterity he portrays in his acquisitions from it, a dexterity which makes his quranic borrowings so elusive to the point that one sometimes fears that one is making a mistake in attributing them to the Qur'an, rather than to his own diction. But what the close examination of his epistolography reveals is that there came a time for 'Abd al-Hamid when quranic words, expressions, *ayas,* images, and so forth, had become fully 'interiorized' by him, so that he could resort to them with the utmost ease; they had become 'his own' as much as they had been originally the Qur'an's.

In fact, this dexterity resulting from 'interiorization' can lead us to a further conclusion, namely that it could not have come but from *memorizing* the Qur'an, for the physical availability of a copy of its text at his disposal, even if it happened, could not have permitted him to keep on jumping, sometimes hectically, from one *aya* to another, regardless of where these *ayas* are located in the Qur'an, in which *suras,* dealing with which topic, or painting what image, and I believe that 'Abd al-Hamid's terms in depicting the image of the devil provide a good example of this 'jumping'. A better, and more solid proof could be attained if one were to take a complete letter of his, and then try to locate the quranic referents sentence by sentence in it. Unfortunately, this is something I could not do in the present paper due to constraints of space; I hope to do it at another occasion.

But even with only what we have here, I think it can be convincingly proved that 'Abd al-Hamid was depending on his memory in his borrowings from the Qur'an. This is demonstrated best in the nature of his reproduction of the following borrowed sentence (210.71-211.1) :

> So the Messenger of God communicated the messages of his Lord, and he advised His community, and judged by His command. He fought for his right those who went against him and opposed him and sought a way other than his own. Then he (*i.e.* the believer) had faith in him, believed him, honoured him, helped him, and followed the light which was sent down with him.

What is interesting in this text is that 'had faith in him' until 'sent down with him' is actually Qur'an 7.157, changed into the singular from the plural—except that the second expression, 'and believed him' *(wa-saddaqahu)*, is not in the aya. Now, the addition of one verb in the middle of a string of successive verbs connected by conjunctions cannot be a 'rephrasing' of any sort on the part of 'Abd al-Hamid; it is completely different from any of the techniques of rephrasing he uses. It must be, thus, in all probability, a mistake of memory. The Qur'an does indeed have the term *saddaqa* for the believer (39.33), but there the context is different, and so is the syntax.

Ideology as a purpose for 'Abd al-Hamid's constant recourse to the Qur'an has been amply attested to in the above. What can be added here is that a close examination of the places where quranic referents, in any form, occur, shows a much higher frequency of their occurrence in his ideological letters than in the other letters, excluding, perhaps, the letters of condolence. These latter, however, are generally short (none of them exceeds eleven lines), while the ideological letters can go on for several pages. And, besides, whereas leaning on the Qur'an in condolence letters is easily explainable by religious motives (the helplessness

Marfat.com

of man in the face of death), in the ideological letters it is not. For the conspicuously heavy leaning on the Qur'an in them there must be a different reason.

At this point, I would like to go back to what I have mentioned before, namely that many of 'Abd al-Hamid's personal letters do not have quranic references in them while all of his public ones do (except for those on slave women), and that, in all probability, his two letters on the flooding of the Euphrates and on a hunting trip, both of which have no Qur'an in them, were written before he embarked on his secretarial career.[17] What this actually tells us is that 'Abd al-Hamid probably began to use Qur'an in his prose only after he had become a public servant; and when he became accustomed to using Qur'an in his public letters this soon became part of his style and started to show in his personal letters. The degree to which 'Abd al-Hamid uses Qur'an, thus, may be a guiding light, at least in part, that can help us date approximately several of his so far undatable letters.

But tracing Qur'an in 'Abd al-Hamid's letters permits us to be more specific. A further examination of 'Abd al-Hamid's public letters shows that, as time went on, he came to draw on the Qur'an more. This can be proved rather well as follows. There are two letters of 'Abd al-Hamid's which date back to the early part of the caliphate of Hisham, before 'Abd al-Hamid went to Armenia, *i.e.,* they were written between 106/724 and 113/731. The first (no. 11, pp. 205-206) was written for certain in 106/724, because in it the caliph informs his unidentified addressee that he has just finished performing the pilgrimage, and we do know from historical sources that Hisham was the last Umayyad caliph to perform the pilgrimage in the last month of 106/724.[12] The second (no. 29, pp. 275-276) was written on behalf of Hisham also to the governor of Yemen, Yusuf b. 'Umar al-Thaqafi, who was governor there from 106/724 till 121/738, informing him that he has become well after an illness. This letter must have been written, then, between 106/724 and 113/731, when 'Abd al-Hamid was still in Damascus writing for Hisham. To these two, another, short letter is probably to be added (no. 12, p. 206). It was written on behalf of the 'Commander of the Faithful', to an unidentified person, thanking this person for congratulating him on the occasion of the beginning of Ramadan. This and similar 'court gestures' were closely adhered to by Hisham, so that we can fairly safely assume that this letter belongs also to the early pre—114/731 period of 'Abd al-Hamid's career.

Now, what is remarkable about all these letters is that, although they all are clothed in a glaring religious garb, due, undoubtedly, to the nature of the occasions on which they were written, specific quranic references in them are relatively few; in fact, there is surprisingly very little indeed which can be clearly pinned down to the Qur'an in no. 12 (on Ramadan). Does this not show that 'Abd al-Hamid had not yet begun by then to use Qur'an systematically in his prose?

We might seek some assistance in answering this question from his letter no. 13 (p. 207) on the Qadarites of Armenia, addressed to Hisham, and written on behalf of his governor there, Marwan. This letter mentions right at its beginning the army which Hisham had sent with Marwan to Armenia. Since this took place on the first day of the first month of 114/731, the letter must have been written shortly after that, probably in the same year, or, at the latest, in 115/732, *i.e.* in the very early days of the 'Armenian period' of 'Abd al-Hamid's

Marfat.com

life. In the letter, Marwan complains about the religio-political activities of the Qadarites, and he enumerates some of their anti-predestinarian, and ultimately anti-Umayyad ideas. Now, this would have been an excellent occasion for 'Abd al-Hamid to use quranic material. But, of all that is mentioned in the letter that is clearly traceable to the Quran, nothing is present except the image of the devil, and only partially too; the rest is, to be sure, highly religious and clearly so, but it is not *textually* quranic. I think that this, together with the above, gives us ample proof that 'Abd al-Hamid's heavy reliance on the Qur'an came gradually; it did not happen until after some time in the Armenian phase of his career.

From that time onward, Qur'an becomes more and more conspicuous in 'Abd al-Hamid's epistolography. The initial thing which triggered it, I believe, was the zeal for Islam, and a sense of elation at the resounding victories which the Muslims in Transcaucasia were scoring against their enemies, the non-Muslims, in the latters–'the Turkish Khazars' (278.5)—lands, and under very difficult living conditions 'Abd al-Hamid talked about in two personal letters to friends of his (nos. 10 and 31). For these epistles (nos. 25, 26, probably also 27), he chose the *tahmid, te deum,* genre, and this gave him an immense amout of room, in principle, to refer constantly to the Qur'an. In fact, the way this genre is formulated indicates that the prose pieces written according to its rules were read out in public in the various parts of the caliphate. This means two things : that they were essentially addressed to all Muslims; and that they were the bases for public *orations.* But orations require stylistic techniques which are different from those of written epistles. Orations appeal mainly to the *ear,* more than to the mind, and they have to be strikingly convincing, for they are heard only once. And it is here that the Qur'an became a valuable reference point for 'Abd al-Hamid. By using its *ayas,* images, and symbols, he could appeal to what *is familiar* to his audience and evoke favourable responses from them, and he could effectively convince them alongside that the Umayyads were the champions of Islam, the ones who, once again, made it victorious over the non-Muslims, with God's assistance, just as God had made it victorious over its enemies in the past. This actually must be kept in mind, when one reads the historical sources' assertion that 'Abd al-Hamid was the first in Arabic literature to develop the *tahmid* genre and make it more long-winded. What has survived of his epistles and this is admittedly not much–testifies to this only partially. I estimate that if we were to discover more of his epistles of this *genre,* the quranic component in them would be quite large.

The last step in this 'journey' for 'Abd al-Hamid was the 'caliphal period', when he became Marwan's chief secretary in Syria, after Marwan had been declared caliph in 126/74. By that time, 'Abd al-Hamid had become a friend of Marwan's, and not merely an official in his bureaucracy, and it was clear that their fates were to be connected. It was at this point that 'Abd al-Hamid emerged, more than any time before, as a staunch defender of the Umayyad cause, a spokesman for them and one who identifies his welfare with theirs. To make things even more binding for 'Abd al-Hamid, the Umayyads, or more specifically Marwan, faced the most turbulent times of Umayyad history. Within the land of Islam, rebellions against his rule sprung up everywhere and Marwan was engaged almost all the time in suppressing the revolts of one rebel after another. And it was precisely in these times that 'Abd al-Hamid's prose became loaded with quranic references. But the situation he had to face now with his epistles were new, and quite different from those he had faced during

Marfat.com

the Armenian phase. For one, his epistles were frequently not to be heard but to be read, for they were addressed to specific addressees (nos. 8, 19, 21, 22, 24, and 43), and, for another, they did not deal with a clear cut subject such as that of the Muslims versus the non-Muslims at moments of clear victory, but rather with a controversial, crucial, inter-Muslim subject, that of the legitimacy of the Umayyads as caliphs of the Islamic community at moments of grave uncertainty (nos. 17, 18, 19 and 38). In such a situation, 'Abd al-Hamid's need for quranic formulations was greater than it ever was before. He used them, therefore, for the sake of effectiveness, as he had done earlier with his orally-oriented materials. What is more is that he made them testimonials to the legitimacy of the Umayyads, where true Islam if identified with their cause, and obedience to them leads to salvation not only in this world but also in the next.

In view of this 'history', I would suggest that, although heavy reliance on the Qur'an began almost spontaneously with 'Abd al-Hamid during the Armenian phase, it soon reverted to being a carefully calculated one in the caliphal phase, in a society in which rival groups vied with each other for the 'true representation' of Islam. But, by that time, 'Abd al-Hamid had already made his choices; artistically, he used his style to point out to these irrevocable, existential choices.

REFERENCES

1. W. al-Qadi, *Bishr b. Abl Kubar al-Balawi: namudhaj min al-nathr al-fanni al-mubakkir fi 'l-Yaman,* Beirut 1985, esp. pp. 99-148.

2. W. al-Qadi, 'Late Islamic state letters : the question of authenticity,' in *Studies in late antiquity and early Islam, Papers of the First Workshop, October 20-21, 1989;* ed. L. Conrad and A. Cameron, Princeton, Darwin Press, forthcoming.

3. The best study published so far on 'Abd al-Hamid is that of Ihsan 'Abbas in his *'Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya al-Katib wa-ma tabaqqa min rasa'ilihi wa-rasa'il Salim Abi al-'Ala',* Amman 1988, pp. 25-60 (henceforth : 'Abbas); also good is the study of D. Latham, "Abd al-Hamid al-Katib,' in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period,* Cambridge 1983, pp. 164–179. Other studies include, in chronological order, Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, "Abd al-Hamid al-Katib', *Revue de l'AcademieArabe de Damas,* IX (1929), pp. 513-531, pp. 557-600; *idem,* "Abd al-Hamid al-Katib', in his *Umara' al-bayan,* 2 volumes, Cairo 1355/1937), I, pp. 38-98; Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur,* Supplementband l, Leiden 1937, p. 105; 'Umar Farrukh, "Abd al-Hamid al-Katib,' in his *al-Rasa'il wa al maqamat,* Beirut 1942, pp. 6-17; Francesco Gabrieli, 'Il katib 'Abd al-Hamid Ibn Yahya e i primordi della epistolografia araba,' in *Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche,* no. 8, 1957, pp. 320-338; Shawqi Dayf, *al-Fann wa-madhdhibuhu fi al-nathral-'arabi,* third edition, Cairo 1960, pp. 113-12; H. A R. Gibb, "Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya,' *El* 2, 1 (1960), pp. 65-66; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums,* 9 Vols, Leiden 1967-1984, I, p. 595; Muhammad Nabih Hijab, *Balaghat al kuttab fi'l-'asr al-'abbasi,* Cairo 1965, pp. 66 ff.; 'Umar Farrukh, *Ta'rikh al-adab al-'arabi,* 3 Vols, Beirut 1965-1972, Vol. I, pp. 723-731; Anis al-Maqdisi, *Tatawwur al-asalib al-nathriyya fi'l-adab al-'arabi,* fifth edition, Beirut 1974, pp. 146-167; Ghanim Jawad Rida, *Al-Rasa'il al-fanniyya fi 'l-'asr al-islami hatta nihayat al-'asr al-umawi,* Baghdad 1978, *passim;* Hannelore Schonig, *Das Sendschreiben des 'Abdallhamid b. Yahya (gest. 132/750) an den Kronprinzen 'Abdallah b. Marwan II,* Stuttgart 1985, pp. 1–3. All of the

controversial points in the life of 'Abd al-Hamid, as stated above, follow my conclusions in the first chapter of my forthcoming study, *State and Statecraft in Early Islam.*

4. Ibn al-Nadim, *Kitab al-fihrist,* ed. Rida Tajaddud, Tehran 1391/1971, 131; ed. Gustav Flugel, Leiden 1870-71, 117; English translation by Bayard Dodge, *The Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadim,* New York 1970, 1, p. 257. The statement was copied by Ibn Kathir in his *al-Biddya wa 'l-nihaya,* 14 Vols. Beirut and Riyad 1966, X, p. 55. Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din, in his *Ta'rikh al-islam,* 6 Vols, Cairo 1367/1947–8, V, p. 270, says that 'Abd al-Hamid's letters fall into 100 notebooks *(kurrasa).* A notebook is normally made up of an average of 10 folios; see 'Abbas, p. 63.
5. See 'Abbas, p. 64.
6. See no. 3 above.
7. See my article mentioned in no. 2 above.
8. All through the paper, the number preceding the full-stop refers to the page number and the one following it to the line number. All references are to the 'Abbas edition.
9. The brackets [ ] are used all through the paper to indicate quranic texts. References to the Qur'an are indicated by the number of the *sura,* followed by a full-stop, after which comes the *aya* number.
10. See above, p. 290.
11. See more on 'Abd al-Hamid's rephrasing of this *aya* on p. 308 below.
12. See below, p. 307.
13. See below, p. 300f.
14. See below, p. 300f.
15. See below, p. 308f.
16. See my article, *Mafhum al-fitna wa-masadiruha wa suwaruhu fi adab 'Abd al-Hamid al-Katib,* Festschrift for Nasir al-Din al-Asad, Amman, The Jordanian University; forthcoming.
17. See above, pp. 288-9.
18. See 'Abbas, 31-32.

Marfat.com

14

The Qur'an and Its Impact on Human History

The Holy Qur'an claims to be a Book of *Hidayah, i.e.* Guidance, for man. It is a Book that is available to all mankind—indeed it addresses itself, by and large, to the totality of mankind. Its message is relevant to different peoples living in different parts of the world. Further, its message is valid for all times to come—in other words, it is not a Book that will ever be out of date. Such a claim, in principle at least, as can be appreciated, should be capable of being substantiated by appeal to historical evidence. If the Qur'an is at all a Book of Universal Guidance in the sense that its message is relevant to all peoples in all ages and climes, it must have had, in the course of these fourteen hundred years of its existence, a decisive impact on human history—in particular, it must have had a liberating and transforming influence on the lives of those who may have come under its spell. I submit that clear historical evidence in support of the claim of the Holy Qur'an exists and I shall endeavour to offer a broad survey of it in these pages.

But before I do that, it is necessary to point out that over and above the test of historical evidence to which appeal could be made, there are within the Divine Book itself numerous indications which ought to enable a discerning and perceptive student to appreciate the truth of the claim of the Qur'an, namely, that it presents a message of universal significance. These 'intrinsic' tests, it must be admitted, are valid within the framework of religious beliefs and practices sanctioned by Islam and are, therefore, available only to the faithful—that is to say, they are valid only for those who believe in the Divine Word and hold that it has been authentically revealed to the Prophet of Islam and has been preserved down the ages without any alteration having been effected in its text. The 'extrinsic' test of history, however, which I propose to apply in an endeavour to outline the extent of the impact which the Holy Qur'an has made upon human history, is a *sui juris* one, and, in my submission, if properly appreciated, it is bound to appeal even to those who, not being themselves believers, are nevertheless open to conviction upon the premises of an argument based on the unimpeachable historical evidence that is furnished to us when we examine impartially and contemplate objectively the remarkable revolution that has been wrought in human history by the message that is contained in the Holy Book.

From this perspective, I submit the whole post-Muhammadan era of human history would appear to be a commentary on the claim of the Qur'an that it is a Book of Guidance for the whole of mankind and that its teaching is relevant for all time to come. After all, God is, according to the Holy Qur'an, God both of the East and of the West and the Truth

Marfat.com

revealed by Him has percolated deep into the warp and woof of the thought-life of all the peoples of the world—be they the inhabitants of the eastern or the western regions. And the Qur'an assures us that where the truth appears the lie disappears—for, verily it is in the nature of a lie that, in its confrontation with truth, it disappears.

(1)

The birthplace of the Prophet and, therefore, the rise of Islam, is strategically placed in the 'geographical' middle of the then prevailing civilisations of the times—the Graeco-Roman civilisation of the West and the Egyptian, Babylonian, Phoenician and Persian civilizations of the Near East and the Indian and Chinese civilisations of the Far East. The emergence of Islam from the landscape of Arabia in the larger vista of history is to be likened to the radiant light emanating from a brilliantly lit lamp placed in the middle of a world that had sunk into thick and impenetrable darkness. The Prophet of Islam, no wonder, is described in the Qur'an as *a shining lamp* and in that image is befittingly addressed as a 'Mercy' to all the peoples. Mankind cannot be grateful enough to him for what he has done for it.

The greatest Divine favour to man is that he has been taught the Qur'an : indeed, the claim that God is Merciful is attested by no other credential than the one which says that He has taught the Qur'an to man (see al-Qur'an, 55 : 1 and 2). The whole Book, regarded from that point of view, is to be construed as a sort of Instrument of Instruction which has been issued to man in his capacity as God's vicegerent to enable him to conduct his life's operations on earth in such a manner that he is able to obtain success in this world and the reward of eternal bliss in the Hereafter.

The distinctive feature of the Qur'an as a religious scripture lies in the undeniable fact that it *affirms and completes the total process of revelation which has come from the Divine for the guidance of the human race.* God says to the Prophet in the well-known *Surah al-Ma'idah,* a *Surah* which is one of the very last to be revealed to the Prophet : 'This day We have perfected your religion and completed My favour' (al-Qur'an, 5 : 3). Similarly, in *Surah al-A'la* (87 : 14-19), the Qur'an declares that the truth mentioned by it was also contained in the earlier scriptures—even as in the scriptures of Abraham and Moses. The process of revelation had begun since times immemorial and has been brought to mankind through the Prophets of universal religions by, as it were, a process of periodic installments, to stimulate its growth and development.

The necessity for revelation is attested by the facts of life : the very condition of finitude, in which we find ourselves, calls for Divine help. In the short span of life that is ours, having regard to the limited range of our capabilities and powers of perception, it would be impossible for us without assistance from the Divine to understand our role here below and to plan wise and intelligent action with a view to servicing the essential needs of our being. In order to be meaningfully aware of the necessity for revelation, one has merely to think of the obvious facts of man's dependence on the outer environment in which his lot is cast. Indeed, the very possibility of man's survival depends upon food and shelter which he has to provide to himself from the resources that are available to him from the world outside. If earth did not produce for him the food on which he lives, how can man at all hope to survive? Similarly,

Marfat.com

man finds himself in a universe which he knows has been there over millions of years before he himself arrived and, what is more, he is fully cognizant of the fact that it will continue being there after his own little 'day will have been done' and he will have 'vanished into the night' leaving things pretty much the same as they have always been. It is clear then that the universe is necessary for his survival but he is not necessary for the life of the universe! What is the meaning of the drama in which man is called upon to play his part. In particular, is he expected to play any part at all—and if so, is his role significant or is it something that is inconsequential? To questions such as these man must find the answers, if he is at all going to fruitfully employ the opportunity and time that is at his disposal while his life lasts. Before the end overtakes him, he must learn to regard his moment as a serviceable means for the fulfillment of the purpose for which he has been created—that, of course, provided if there be any for which he has been created. Reflection shows that even the most trained philosophers, despite considerable bulk of time they have devoted in finding answers to these questions, have found it difficult to return convincing answers. And yet while solutions to these problems are being sought, the river of life of man is continually moving relentlessly on and every moment that elapses for the son of man seems to hurl him on to ever new vistas of experience and opportunity. A tragedy of life is that every moment that passes is gone, never to return. What must man do in order to fulfil the law of his being? Without knowing what that law is, what can he do? Such is the state of helplessness in which man finds himself that from all sides and quarters difficult questions crop up—questions to which there are no satisfactory answers available. The Qur'an refers to this very situation of man when it says : 'Verily, We have created man in difficulty.' Hence the need of 'revelation'. Religion provides answers to these questions of life on the authority of the Prophets of universal religion. Man has been guided by the Lord himself—even as Merciful Sustainer of the Universe He has guided the whole of creation.

The Qur'an as a Book of Guidance has itself commented upon the full implications of the concept of *Hidayah*. *Hidayah* literally means 'to guide' and 'to show the way'. In *Surah al-A 'la* of the Qur'an reference is made to all the relevant aspects of the process of development through which all created beings pass. 'Praise the name of the Lord, the Most High, who has created and then *equiliberaied* all things, Who has appointed their *destinies* and Who *has guided* them' (al-Qur'an 87 : 1-2). This *Hidayah* in its wider sense, may be regarded as a principle of internal development of the species. To the lower animals have been given instincts and senses through which they are led on to balance or equilibrate themselves. And it is through seeing, hearing, feeling and smelling that they adapt themselves to their environment—and thus to sustain themselves and to procreate their species. With man, additionally, *Hidayah* takes the form of conferment by God of the gift of Reason upon him,—a sort of a capacity which controls and limits the expression of instinctive life of the animal in him. It is by means of this control which reason enables man to impose over his lower nature that he is elevated to a higher status. Great as this gift of reason is, by itself it does not and cannot suffice—for reason only operates within the framework of instinctive life conditioned as it is by the sensory apparatus. It has, therefore, its own limits and beyond those limits it is dangerous for it to go. Thus the Prophets have brought *Hidayah* to man from the Divine in yet one more form. And this form has reference to the message concerning those injunctions, the disregard

of which would involve man in wasteful friction with the universe; nay, in a veritable war against his own potentialities. Armed by this *Hidayah* man is capable of being liberated from the narrower precincts in which his reason operates. He is able, thanks to this guidance, to contemplate his total destiny and regulate his individual conduct and the conduct of his fellow beings in the light of the revealed truth which has beer brought to him by the Prophets of universal religions. It would appear that each succeeding phase of guidance is intended to limit the earlier one : thus senses correct the instincts, reason corrects the sense, and the revealed truth corrects the operation of reason itself. The prophetic consciousness mirrors for man the higher truth which it is incapable of attaining by the operations of unguided reason. Man is informed of the limits within the circle of which he must move if he is to be saved. He is thus educated and initiated into the scheme of things in which he is to strive for the fruition of his appointed destiny. The Qur'an, no wonder, says : 'Truly, it is for Us to show the way to man and truly Ours is the future and truly the past' (al-Qur'an, 2 : 12 : 13). Similarly, it goes on to assert : 'Whose makes effort to follow in Our ways, We will *guide* them; for God is assuredly with those who do righteous deeds' (al-Qur'an, 29 : 69). Far more explicit than these references to man's dependence on Divine guidance are the following :

> Say, verily *guidance* is from God. That is the true *guidance'; and* we are indeed to surrender ourselves to the Lord of all beings. (al-Qur'an, 6 : 71).

Then, again :

> But until you follow their religion, neither the Jews nor the Christians will be satisfied with you. Say, *verily guidance* is from God—that is the guidance. (al-Qur'an, 2 : 120)

The irreducible minimum requirements for the successful discovery of the solution of life's problems thus would appear to be two. First of all there is to be a *question* in the soul, a waving find answers to the problems of life, *a prayer at* the altar of the Divine for the way being shown. And it is this that imparts to *Surah al-Fatihah* the importance that has been assigned to it by those who have thought deeply about the strategy of the Qur'an : each time man has to pray : he asks : 'Show us the way'—in other words 'Grant us the guidance'. If a man with a pure soul, with a feeling heart, asks for guidance and proceeds to read that portion of the Qur'an that is bound to issue forth from the Book he will get an answer to his question. And, *secondly,* one has to have the will to walk on the way that is revealed. For not the whole path would be shown to man if he would not even walk on that part of the way which is being shown to him : capacity to receive truth ultimately depends upon *man's efforts to implement the truth that comes to him.* He who sees the way, but would not negotiate it, will stay where he is—indeed, such is the law, the rest of the way will never be shown to him.

The strategy of religion precisely consists in that it enables man to find his way to the goal that counts. Man, by the flickering light of his feeble powers—which is all that is furnished to him by his meagre resources—cannot be expected to discover the way on his own, much less have the *energy* and the *inclination* to follow the way. It is his faith in the revealed truth that has come to him from the Prophets of universal religion that is capable of coming to his rescue in this regard and this is so because the natural reach of his own personality is such

Marfat.com

that in respect of the essential questions of life it cannot, by itself, find any valid answers.

The process of revelation, as remarked earlier, has been consummated in the message that has been brought by the Prophet of Islam to mankind. So much is this true that it may be said that Islam itself provides for the education of the human race. Man has evolved and has been a witness to various phases of his own evolution. Different Prophets have brought different messages for their people, if only because, having regard to the different conditions in which humanity has found itself, the message in question could only be addressed to particular people in certain well-defined epochs of human history. Only by some such teaching was it possible to secure man's further development. In Islam religion has been perfected. That is another way of saying that with Islam the age of new revelation has come to a close, and that the age of realization of the principles of revealed religion ha been inaugurated. That is why in all the earlier scriptures references and to be found to the advent of the Prophet of Islam. Students of the Bible, for instance, know that Jesus had said : 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now ... He will guide you unto all truth : for he shall not speak of himself; but of whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak (John 15 : 12-13).

Further, the New Testament bears testimony to this very truth : 'Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts, 3 : 21). The Holy Qur'an itself affirms this reference in chapter 61, verse 6, when it says : 'And that Jesus, son of Mary, said : "O children of Israel, surely I am the messenger of Allah to you verifying that which is before me of Torah and giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad." '

That then is the meaning of the fundamental tenet of Islam which enjoins that the Prophet of Islam is the *last* Prophet. The Holy Qur'an thus embodies the most final communication from the Divine. After the Prophet of Islam came to mankind the need for continuing the process of Divine communication itself had come to an end. For Islam signifies in the history of mankind that phase of human development which corresponds to the period of majority in the life of the individual. A few words by way of explanation of this distinctive feature of the Holy Book which consists in its address being directed to fully grown-up individuals are called for—and are offered in all humility as an aid to those who would like to understand the grand strategy of the Qur'an for bringing about the moral and mental regeneration of mankind on earth.

The very fact that the Qur'an claims itself to be a Book of Guidance assumes that it is not a book of Ten Commandments as is, for instance, the Old Testament. The Prophet was called upon to *purify* the people, to teach them the Book that is their destiny and to make them wise (at-Qur'an, 2 : 129 and 151; also 3 : 163.). He was to warn and to guide. The Qur'an unmistakably places the burden of making a choice between good and evil fully and squarely on the shoulders of man. It says : 'Have We not shown to you the two ways'—the easy way and the difficult way. The Qur'an further declares that nothing belongs to man except his effort : that he is going to be judged by what he does here and now. Does this not suggest that the

Marfat.com

Qur'an assumes man to have reached a level where he is regarded as being capable of choosing between the right and the wrong. The Qur'an is also called *al-Furqan*—which merely means it is the book which helps one to discriminate—between the scale of values, pointing out which acts are good, better, and best and which ones are bad, worse, and worst. All this shows that the Qur'an addresses itself to people who can choose!

(2)

One way of demonstrating the indispensability of the message contained in the Qur'an to the modern world is to take up, one by one the present-day standards of excellence—that is, values and ideals which are accepted and upheld by enlightened sections of contemporary humanity and to ask the question : What is the genesis of those values and ideals? Whence have they come? And, in particular, one must ask whether those values and ideals were at all commended or enjoined by pre-Islamic religious teaching. If we were to reach the conclusion that the present-day set of ideals and values which is considered worthy by a civilized man to adopt and accept was revealed for *the first time* by Islam, then the fact that even after fourteen hundred years that message continues, at least in principle, to be followed still, would be proof positive of the claim that what the Qur'an proclaims to the world is *even today the acceptable gospel.*

Negatively, if it could be shown that what the Qur'an enjoins is out of date today so far as the practice of civilized people is in issue, or that some new values and ideals have gained currency in modern times which are not stressed by the Qur'an, we still have to say that the Qur'an was an ephemeral book and its message is out of date today.

If I were asked to state what are the values which the enlightened consensus of mankind upholds in the mid-twentieth century, I would put them in the following order :

(1) Equality, dignity and brotherhood of man.

(2) Value of universal education with emphasis on spirit of free enquiry and the importance of scientific knowledge.

(3) Practice of religious tolerance.

(4) Liberation of the woman and her spiritual equality with man.

(5) Freedom from slavery and exploitation of all kinds.

(6) Dignity of manual labour.

(7) Integration of mankind in a feeling of oneness irrespective of their differences in race and colour (that is, the programme of securing integration of mankind on the basis of moral and spiritual principles).

(8) The devaluation of arrogance and pride based on superiority of race, colour, wealth, etc., and the founding of society on the principle of justice.

(9) Rejection of the philosophy of asceticism.

Marfat.com

Each one of these items on the agenda of modern man's heroic and noble endeavour, I submit, is fully and adequately supported by various injunctions of the Qur'an and ably illustrated by the kind of life that the Prophet of Islam himself lived.

The Prophet of Islam is exemplary precisely because he is a man-prophet. The Qur'an emphasises again and again that he is a man like any other man except that he receives the *Wahi,* God's revelation. He is the one Prophet who is not only not interested in performing miracles, but makes the non-performance of miracles his passport to distinction. He does not claim any Divine origin. For himself he is content to be just an ordinary human being. He lives a life of honest and earnest endeavour throughout his life. To the very end he preserves a high sense of moral rectitude and conducts the enterprises of life with great human dignity He is an able warrior, an excellent soldier, a loving husband, a reliable friend, a wise ruler. *He sanctifies life in all its aspects, omitting nothing from its embrace.* He treats the whole earth as a prayer-carpet, denies that the Arabs have any superiority over the non-Arabs. He makes one and only one decisive test about the grandeur, the loftiness, and greatness of the human soul—which consists in its capacity to control itself so as to be able to practise righteousness. And even when he becomes the ruler of the whole of Arabia he never discards his old simple way of life and incessantly enjoins upon himself and upon his followers the supreme necessity of giving away the good things of life to their fellow men who might need them. 'So give,' says he, 'that your left hand may not see what your right has given.' He forbids his followers from renouncing the world. Indeed, God is everywhere and His earth is very wide and man is to serve Him wherever he likes.

Adverting to the importance the Qur'an attaches to the educational process, the matter is too obvious to need any elaboration. The Book itself begins with an imperative to read : 'Read in the name of your Lord Who created man from a blood-clot' (al-Qur'an, 96 : 1,2). 'Read and your Lord is most generous who taught man by the pen' (al-Qur'an, 96 : 3 and 4). It emphasises the value of *the ink and the pen and what they write* (al-Qur'an, 68 : 1). The Qur'an is full with repeated emphasis on the value of thinking, of pondering, of rationalization, of discrimination. In a way, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the whole of the Book is concerned with outlining the methodology and technique by which man is to read the Book of Nature and to witness within himself the Signs of the Divine. All universe is one and man is called upon to look at it and to learn from it. How many times does not the Qur'an call upon us to look at the various phenomena in nature—and challenges us to throw our glance at the creation of the Lord and to say if we find any flaw therein. Not content with asking us to threw our first glance at the universe, we are invited to throw a second glance at the universe. We are told that : Verily our vision will return weary upon us and that we shall not be able to see any flaw in the Master's creation (see al-Qur'an, 67 : 3 and 4). Then we are called upon to see the Signs of the Lord in the rhythm of change that is discoverable in nature—between the night and the day, as though one is chasing the other. We are asked to notice the way in which the dead earth is brought to life by the rainfall. We are asked to consider the motions of the seasons, the sun and the moon, each one running its course. The Qur'an enjoins that there are signs in nature for people who reflect (al-Qur'an, 13 : 3-4). In the magical words of the Qur'an : 'And He it is who spread the earth, made in it firm mountains and rivers. And of all fruits, He has made it in pairs, two (of every kind). He

Marfat.com

makes the night cover the day. Surely there are signs in this for people who reflect. And in the earth are tracts side by side and gardens of vines and corn and palm trees growing from one root and distinct roots—they are watered with one water and we make some of them excel others in fruit. Surely there are signs in these for people who understand.'

It was this constant call to see nature and to understand the secret of its operations which enabled the earlier Arabs to become pioneers of science and scientific methods. Nowadays, of course, everything is attempted to be explained by the historians of human culture as though Arabian science did not so much as exist. Everything is supposed to have been found for us by the Greeks!

The moral and intellectual flowering of the European culture and civilization has had a source other than the one that is generally invoked by scholar. European civilization itself is a 'post-Protestantism product. Of course, every school-boy in Europe is today taught to believe that Reformation was the result of Renaissance which in its turn is supposed to have been ushered in, thanks to the revival of learning that took place after the fall of Constantinople. Somehow, the dark ages of Europe suddenly ceased and the light of Renaissance came to be.

That is all taught in the universities of civilized Europe and America in the name of liberal education; and as to the origin of this 'Renaissance' itself all kinds of false explanations exist and continue to be concocted—but an honest attempt at historical analysis will in the wise words of Robert Briffault, show that :

It was under the influence of the Arabian and Moorish revival of culture, and in the fifteenth century, that the real Renaissance took place. Spain, not Italy, was the cradle of the rebirth of Europe. After steadily sinking lower and lower into barbarism, it had reached the darkest depth of ignorance and degradation when the cities of the Saracenic world, Baghdad, Cairo, Cordova, Toledo were growing centres of civilization and intellectual activity. It was there that the new life arose which was to grow into a new phase of Human Evolution. From the time when the influence of their culture made itself felt, began the stirring of a new life.

It is highly probable that but for the Arabs modern European civilization could never have arisen at all; it is absolutely certain that, but for than, it would not have assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution. For although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which decisive influence of Islam is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the Modern World and the Supreme Source of its Victory—Natural Science and the Scientific Spirit. *(The Making of Humanity,* pp. 183-90).

Not merely in the direction of intellectual evolution of Modern Europe alone is the influence of Islam to be acknowledged and understood. 'To the intellectual culture of Islam', says the same author, which has been fraught with consequences of such moment, corresponded an ethical development not less notable in the influence which it has exercised. The fierce intolerance of Christian Europe was indeed more enraged than humiliated by the spectacle of the broad tolerance which made no distinction of creed and bestowed honour and position of Christian and Jew alike, and whose principles are symbolized in the well-

known apologue of the Three Rings popularized by Boccacio and Lessing. It was, however, not without far-reaching influence on the more thoughtful minds of those who came in contact with Moorish civilization. But barbaric Europe confessed itself impressed and was stung to emulation by the lofty magnanimity and the ideals of chivalrous honour presented to it by the knights of Spain, by gentlemen like the fierce soldier, Al-Mansur, who claimed that, though he had slain many enemies in battle, he had never offered an insult to any—an ideal of knightly demeanour and dignity which twentieth-century-England might with profit emulate. The ruffianly crusaders were shamed by the grandeur of conduct and generosity of Saladin and his chivalry. The ideal of knightly virtue was adopted, the tradition of *Noblesse Oblige* was established. Poetry and Romances deeply tinged with Arabian ideas formed the only secular literature which circulated and appealed to the popular imagination; and a new conception of the place and dignity of women passed into Europe through the Courts of Provence from the Moorish world, where she shared the intellectual interests and pleasures of man . . . Thus, shocking as the paradox may be to our traditional notions, it would probably be only strict truth to say that Mohammadan culture has contributed at least as largely as to the actual practical, concrete morality of Europe as many as more sublimated ethical doctrine' (see *ibid.*, pp. 307-9).

Similarly, the position of the woman in the pre-Islamic era was so pathetic that it is impossible to get the modern man to realise how much of advance has Islam made in enjoining upon humanity the necessity of respecting and honouring the woman. The Arabs found it difficult to let daughters grow up in their house. This was supposed to be something derogatory to their status. They used to bury them alive. With Islam all this was prohibited. The *daughter* was admitted to be a sharer with her brother in the law relating to inheritance. This is rather significant considering that in as civilized a country as England, not until 1922, was a married woman entitled to own property. Islam gave to the woman not only the right to inherit property but to own it even against her husband, so much so that if a husband is guilty of misappropriating her property she is entitled to obtain a divorce from him on that account alone. As a widow she gets a share in her husband's property. The rights of wives are to be acknowledged by her husband and are clearly mentioned (see al-Qur'an, 2 : 228; 4 : 34; and 2 : 229). She was given a right to claim a divorce fourteen hundred years ago whereas under the Ecclesiastical law sanctioned by the Church of Christ it is impossible for her to obtain a divorce even now. The modern secular legislation which recognizes divorce in Christian countries is an indirect acceptance of the wisdom of the Qur'an on this subject.

There was a time when of woman, it was said : 'He for God and she for God in him.' But now with Islam woman has been declared an independent personality as she has been made directly accountable to God. The Qur'an has honoured woman so much that there is a chapter in it entitled 'Woman' and numerous references to her status and dignity are to be found therein. This was a radical departure from the position of pre-Islamic woman—and, indeed, if only a comparative study upon that subject were made it would seem that her position in the framework of Qur'anic teaching is much above even the present status of woman anywhere in the world. Such triumphs as the cause of the liberation of woman has made in the annals of human history, I submit, are directly traceable to the impact of the Qur'an.

Similarly, Islam came to terminate the age of slavery. Indeed, the freeing of the slave is the highest point of honour to which the Qur'an invites man (al-Qur'an, 90: 13). The Qur'an deals with the question of the emancipation of man so very comprehensively that it can be called the *Testament of Human Liberty*. Man is declared free and he is brought in such a direct relationship with God that even 'priesthood' has been thrown overboard. How can man worship God freely unless he be free from political, economic, social and religious exploitation? God says He is nearer to us than the veins of our necks . . . how can anyone intervene to interpret His will to us. Man is to be made free to be able freely to worship the Lord!

The whole world today believes in religious tolerance, and whatever be the extent of its conformity to the ideal postulated by religious and intellectual tolerance, all civilized countries the world over subscribe to man's inherent right to pursue, in the light of his own feeble powers and resources, the goal which he has kept before himself. Indeed, the Qur'an is the only religious Book, I know, which has, on the one hand, commanded the followers of Islam to *spread* their faith by resort to the use of beautiful words of persuasion and, on the other hand, *prohibited* them against the vice of being intolerant of other people's religious beliefs and practices. It candidly says that there is no compulsion in religion. Further, it enjoins the Prophet say 'Your God and my God is one God'; still further, when all arguments fail and the detractor of Islam refuses to listen to reason, the Muslim is admonished to say, even as the Prophet said to his detractors : 'You have your own religion and I have my religion.' Indeed, the Qur'an has gone farthest in this direction when it declares : 'Revile not those whom they call on besides God, lest they, in their ignorance, despitefully revile Him. We have so fashioned the nature of man that they like the deeds they do. After all they shall return to their Lord and He will declare to them what their actions have been' (al-Qur'an, 6 : 109). This sort of religious tolerance preached by Islam and practised by Muslims stems from, and is the consequence of, a larger truth—the truth that the *Din,* that is, the *way of life commanded by God to be revealed by the Prophets to mankind* has been in essential aspect one and the same. 'To each amongst you,' declares the Qur'an, 'Have We prescribed the law and an open way. If God had willed He would have made you all of one pattern; but He would tes. you by what He has given to each. Be emulous then in good deeds' (al-Qur'an, 5 : 48). Similarly, the Holy Qur'an points out the great truth, namely, 'To every people We have appointed observances which they deserve. Therefore let them not dispute this matter with you; but bid them to their Lord for you are on the right way' (al-Qur'an, 22 : 67).

To various peoples in different climes various Prophets have been sent, all of whom have revealed the same *Din* (the way of life) to them, although the observances sanctioned for the realization of the *Din* in their own time have been different. 'There has not been people who have not been visited by the warners,' says the Qur'an (al-Qur'an, 35 : 24). 'And, indeed, the Prophet of Islam himself is nothing more than a warner and a guide.' (al-Qur'an, 13 : 7). 'Several of these Prophets the Lord has sent amongst the people as of old' (al-Qur'an, 63 : 5). Some of these Prophets have been mentioned by name in the Qur'an and of others, says the Lord to the Prophet, 'We have told thee nothing' (al-Qur'an, 40 : 78).

Indeed, the tolerance preached by Islam reaches its high watermark when the Qur'an declares 'Verily, those who believe (that is Muslims) and they who follow the Jewish religion,

Marfat.com

Christians and the Sabians... whosoever believes in God and the Last Day and does that which is right shall have their reward with the Lord. Fear shall not come Upon them, nor shall they grieve.' (al-Qur'an, 2 : 62). Could spirit of religious toleration go any further?

The greatest contribution which the Qur'an has made to human history, in my submission, concerns the clarification it has offered of the only foundational principle on which mankind as a whole can be brought to live together in peace and harmony. The Qur'an has emphasised over and over again the supreme necessity of mankind getting together, for after all 'Have We not,' says the Lord, 'created mankind as though it were one self.' The internecine warfares that have gone on between groups and groups, communities and communities, nations and nations, and sects and sects appear to stem from man's inveterate desire to uphold not *what* is Right, but merely to decide *who* is Right. The Qur'an invites all of us to adhere to the Law of God with a happy and apt metaphor, of sticking to one and the same rope of the Lord. The Qur'an admonishes us against forming cliques and being privies to schisms and developing spirit of partisanship. Indeed, the Qur'an mercilessly denounces those who form sects and *sponsor group formations* and as to those who split up their religion and become parties to the founding of sects, it tells the Prophet : 'You have nothing to do with them. Their affair is with God. Hereafter shall We tell them what they have been' (al-Qur'an, 6 : 160). It goes on to enjoin in another place : 'But men have rent their great concern (the one religion which was made for all mankind), one among another, into sects and every party rejoicing in that which is their own' (al-Qur'an, 23 : 53).

These internal divisions and schisms which have disrupted the peace of the world result from mankind disregarding the supreme fact of its own constitution, namely, that all of us are from God and to God is our return. Similarly, the racial pride is discounted by the Qur'an when it proclaims that *all mankind is form Adam and Adam is made from dust,* Satan is exhibited as an accursed one precisely because he argues, for the superiority of his *high* origin as contrasted from what he believes in the *lowly* origin of man. 'Man, after all,' says he, 'was created of dust whereas I am created of a fire.' This sort of sense of exclusivism which also comes to a people purely out of a desire to claim superior and high quality of blood in their being has been denounced by the Qur'an in no unmistakable terms and no matter what the detractors of the Prophet might say, the supreme fact of post-Islamic history is that Islam alone of all possible creeds has successfully devalued the importance of race, colour and privilege. It has admonished its followers not to organize mankind into groups based on principles of blood or geographical contiguity or particular privilege which they might claim for themselves. According to Islam, he alone is exalted who is *muttaqi*—that is, one who is a self-controlled individual, one who lets the law of God rule him. All other trimmings and trappings of individual life are false credentials and mean nothing.

Today in a world, divided by all manner of groupings, and accursed as it is, by the worship of a false God called 'nationalism', the realization has come to mankind that the brotherhood of man is capable of being founded only upon a spiritual principle—not on the basis of colour, race, privilege. That spiritual principle highlights the importance of organizing the brotherhood of man upon the only basis that he is a man—not because *of what he has* but because *of who he is*: Those who believe in the superiority of race are being roundly condemned

Marfat.com

everywhere : those who believe that greatness of a nation is measured by its economic and industrial potential are being hated everywhere and, what is worse, they are not even at peace with themselves. The institution of pilgrimage sanctioned by Islam is the only illustration I know of the operation of the spiritual principle for securing integration of mankind; gathering of Muslims in Makka every year is the only model upon which a move towards a supra-national synthesis of mankind can be stimulated.

The spiritual principle upon which mankind can be grouped, according to Islam, takes the form of devotion to the ideal of justice. There are innumerable references in the Qur'an to the supreme necessity of establishing *a just* society, a *just* order. We, the individual men and women, are invited to be just, to hold scales of justice evenly, and are forbidden from employing false measures in weighing things or artificially tilting the balance in our favour. We are called upon to advance the cause of justice by offering testimony should the need to do so arise, even against our own kith and kin, our own near ones and dear ones. There was a time when the highest ideal for man was to extend hope and offer comfort to persons who were suffering because of the iniquitous and unjust conditions to which they were subject. The, religious duty was merely to *comfort* the victims of injustice with the assurance that God is with the lowly and humble and that because of their suffering they will be rewarded in the Hereafter. The Qur'an would not accept any organizational synthesis of mankind which is not based on the ideal of justice—which consists in giving to each nation or community what is its due. The Christian society in the conception of its present professions could only be founded by upholding the value of meekness, or rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is of God—of charity, of compassion—not upon the foundation of justice which consists in the enforcement of last laws by just people. Islam enjoins upon its votaries to inflict duly sanctioned punishments on the transgressors of the law and admonishes us to call upon the perpetrators of the wrong to compensate those who have been wronged by the unjust exercise of their power. It says all power is God's and anyone who has it must exercise it not for his *personal aggrandizement but in His holy name for the advancement of His purpose.*

(3)

The Qur'an manifesto is thus there for all to see. Willy-nilly, it has been accepted in principle by the whole world. The world swears by its ideals and in fact cherishes the values sponsored by it. It is true that here, as elsewhere, there is a great deal of discord between our 'professions' and 'performance'. It is also true that in the sphere of practice, the teaching of the Qur'an is least followed by those who call themselves Muslims. No book in the world down the ages has been adored more than the Holy Qur'an has been by the Muslims. The respect they show for the Book, however, is not the only response that is demanded by the Book. Far more important is the claim of the Qur'an that the guidance furnished by it should be *understood* and *applied* to the details of our daily conduct.

If the Qur'an is a Book of *Hidayah* is it not obligatory for all of us to know what is contained in it, and what it has enjoined upon us. And how can we, I ask, know what it has enjoined upon us unless we are able to understand what it says. This is not the place to indicate in any measure of details what are the pre-conditions which have to be fulfilled before the Qur'an can have appeal to the heart of man. A great deal of discipline in the

nature of internal purity and a great deal of devotion to the Lord Who has revealed it to mankind is required before mere knowledge of Arabic can be serviceable. It is true that knowledge of Arabic is necessary and the more we know Arabic the better will it be—but then, knowledge of Arabic is not to be confused with a close study of its syntax, of its grammar, and of its lexicographical superfine distinctions. The Arabic of the Qur'an is simple—therefore such is its miracle that it cannot be understood easily by the sophisticated ones!

The Qur'an is the best evidence that there is for all of us to believe that God exists, that Muhammad is His Prophet. It is also a Book of Hope in the sense that it presents to us the image of our Maker Who forgives us and protects us against our own follies.

Marfat.com

15

The Koran

As to the Koran, it consists exclusively of the revelation or commands which the Prophet professed, to have received from time to time, as a message direct from God : and which, under divine direction, the Prophet delivered to those about him.

Every syllable of the Koran is of divine origin, eternal and 'uncreated' as the Deity Himself. It is one of the Mohammadan arguments against the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, that they are not exclusively oracles professing to proceed from God.

The Prophet himself neither read nor wrote. His being an illiterate man, enhances the marvel of his revelation.[1] 'Learning' says the Rev. Margcliouth, 'he had one, or next to none.[2]

At the moment of inspiration or shortly after, each passage was recited by the Prophet in the presence of friends or followers, and was generally committed to writing by someone amongst them, at the time or afterwards, upon palm-leaves, leather, stones, or such other rude material as conveniently came to hand. These divine messages continued throughout the twenty-three years of his prophetic life, so that the last portion was not received till near the time of his death

The Koran being the divine revelation and the corner-stone of Islam, the recital of a passage from it formed as essential part of daily prayer, public and private; and its perusal and repetition were considered to be a great privilege. The preservation of the various chapters during the life-time of the Prophet, was not altogether dependent on their being The Koran committed to writing. The Koran was committed to memory by so many adherents of Islam, and the extent, to which it could be recited, was one of the chief sources of distinction, in the early stages of Islam. Amongst a crowd of warrior martyrs, he who had been the most versed in the Koran, was honoured with the first burial. The person who in any company could most faithfully repeat the Karan, was ipso facto entitled to conduct the public prayers, and in certain cases to pecuniary rewards.

The retentive faculty of the early Arabs favoured the task ; and it was applied, with all the ardour of an awakened spirit, to the Koran, Several of the Prophat's followers could, during his life-time, repeat with scrupulous accuracy, the whole as then in use. Four or five such persons are named ; and several others also who could very nearly repeat the whole, before the Prophet's death.[3]

"However retentive the Arab memory, remarks Sir William Muir, we should still have

regarded with distrust a transcript made entirely from that source. But there is good reason for believing, that many fragmentary copies, embracing amongst them the whole Koran, or nearly the whole, were during his life-time made by Prophet's followers.

"Such was the condition of the text during Mohammed's life-time, and such it remained for about a year after his death, imprinted upon the hearts of his people and fragmentary transcripts increasing daily."[4]

Further the same writer states ; "The contents and arrangement of the Koran speak forcibly for its authenticity. All the fragments have with artless simplicity, been joined together.

"Even the frailties of the Prophet, as noticed by the Deity, have with evident faithfulness been entered in the Koran....."

"In fine, we possess every internal guarantee of confidence (namely in the authenticity of the Koran, as it exists in the present copy)."

"....There is otherwise every security, internal and external, chat we possess the text which Mohammed himself gave forth and used".

"So carefully, indeed, has it been preserved that there are no variations of importance—we might almost say no variations at all—to be found in the innumerable copies scattered throughout the vast bounds of the Empire of Islam."

"Yet, but One Koran has been current amongst them ; and the consentaneous use by all of the same Scripture, in every age to the present day, is an irrefragable proof, that we have now before us the very text prepared by command of the unfortunate Calliph (Othman who was murdered some time after the compilation of the Koran)."[5]

There is probably in the world no other work, which has remained twelve centuries (1801) with so pure a text. This is only because the various revelations in the Koran, regarding its divine nature, and its remaining for ever free from corruption or contradiction, are rightly confirmed. Here are a few verses bearing on this point :

"We have surely sent down the Koran ; and we will certainly preserve the same from corruption." (Chap. XV)

"This Koran could not have been composed by any except God; but it is a confirmation of that which was revealed before it, and an explanation of the scriptures; there is no doubt thereof; sent down from the Lord or all creatures. Will they say, (Mohammad) hath forged it? Answer, Bring therefore a chapter like unto it; and call whom ye may (to your assistance), besides God. if ye speak truth."

"Say, Verily if men and genii were purposely assembled, that they might produce (a book) like this Koran, they could not produce one like unto it, although they assisted each other. And we have variously propounded unto men in this Koran, every kind of figurative argument; but the greater part of men refuse to receive it, merely out of infidelity."

The Rev. Rod well states :

Marfat.com

"It must be acknowledged too, that the Koran deserves the highest praise for its conception of the divine nature, in reference to the attributes of Power. Knowledge and *universal Providence* and Unity—that its belief and trust in the One God of Heaven and Earth, is deep and fervent."[5]

"It is due to the Koran, that the occupants, in the sixth century, of an arid peninsula, whose poverty was only equalled by their ignorance, have become not only the fervent and sincere votaries of a new creed, but, like Amru and many more, its warlike propagators."[6]

"The simple shepherds and wandering bedouins of Arabia, are transformed, as if by a magician's wand, into the founders of empires, the builders of cities, the collectors of more libraries, than they at first destroyed, while cities like Fostat. Baghdad, Cordova and Delhi, attest the power, at which Christian Europe trembled. And thus, while the Koran, which underlies this vast energy and contains the principles which are its springs of action, reflects to a great extent the mixed character of its author, its merit as a code of laws, and as a system of religious teaching, must always be estimated by the changes which it introduced into the customs and beliefs of those who willingly or by compulsion, embraced it. In the suppression of their idolatries, in the substitution of the worship of Allah for that of the powers of nature and genii with Him, in the abolition of child murder, in the extinction of manifold superstitious usages, in the reduction of the number of wives to a fixed standard, it was to the Arabians an unquestionable blessing, and a revelation of Truth; and while every Christian must deplore the overthrow of so many flourishing Eastern churches by the arms of the victorious Moslems, it must not be forgotten that Europe, in the middle ages, owed much of her knowledge of dialectic philosophy, of medicine and architecture to Arabian writers, and the Moslems formed the connecting link between the West and the East for the importation of numerous articles of luxury and use....

"For if he (Mohammad) was indeed the illiterate person the Moslems represent him to have been, then it will be hard to escape their inference, that the Koran is, as they assert it to be, a standing miracle."[7]

The Koranic Conception of Man

The Holy Koran represents man as a tree and responsible being, gifted with the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong. Then according to the Koran, man is capable of obeying the law of God. He needs nobody to atone for his sins, but himself; for the Lord is merciful and will forgive him his sins. The Holy Book of Islam mentions no original sin which we inherit at our birth. It does not represent man as coming into the world with a load of sin on his back. On the contrary, it represents him as an unconscious Moslem, at the moment of creation. The Prophet of Islam says : "Every child is born with a Moslem heart," and it is the external influences that makes it what it becomes afterwards in life. If bad influences happen to be at work, the child generally surrenders to such influences, unless God Himself undertakes to nurture the little soul. When the child grows into manhood, he may use the God-gifted faculty of discrimination and may become what he chooses in life. Indeed, God gives him many a chance in life, that he may recover himself from sin and iniquity. He may make or mar his fortune, even in the spiritual sense. If in him, Faith assets

its power, if true repentance places him in the right attitude towards God, if the spirit of God impels him to do virtuous deeds, if he feels the hand of God working in the smallest concerns of his life, and. above all, if he accepts death with a smilling countenance, and loses himself to save himself, why this is sufficient atonement in the sight of the Lord, whose pre-eminent attribute is Mercy.

To understand the Koranic conception of man, a reference to the following verses is necessary : "Of goodliest fabric We created man, then brought him down to be the lowest of the low; save who believe and do things that are right, for theirs shall be a reward that faileth not." These verses indicate that man, at the moment of his creation, is perfectly sinless. It is afterwards, that sin tries to assert itself and bring him down to the level of the brutes. But he has also the divine in him,—the power to offer, if he so wills, a stubborn resistance; and by the help of this power, he may "grow up to a saint." Although his own force is feeble, there is the Spirit of God, which will cooperate with him in this work of self-regeneration, only if he shows genuine desire to turn to God, to believe, and to do things that are right. The Holy Koran is very-clear on this point. It does not ask us to belleve in the doctrine of original sin; and so atonement, in a Christian sense, has no place in the Islamic Scripture. What God wants of us, is this, that we for our part, should make the utmost endeavour to secure His pleasure and grace, while He for His part, undertakes to direct us into His way. "And whose maketh his utmost endeavour towards Us, We will surely direct him into Our ways," says the Koran. This utmost endeavour on our part, to reach God, involves the idea of personal atonement and sacrifice which the Moslem is required to offer. We find the same thought clearly expressed elsewhere in the Word of God : "They who set their face with resignation God-ward, and do what is right,—their reward is with their Lord : no fear shall come on them, neither shall they be grieved." Turning his face towards God, gradually proceeding towards Him, till he realises himself in Him — herein lies the salvation of man, according to the Koran. The Moslem is taught the high truth, that "the good drives away the evil in man." and so he requires not anyone, to take the burden of his sin and to undergo punishment as his substitute'. He develops his faculties, and tries his very best, to make use of them in doing good deeds and working out the will of his Maker; and hopes that his little will be accepted as much by the Most Merciful Lord.

Everywhere, in the Holy Koran, man is represented as the crown and glory of creation. He is the central figure of this beautiful universe. In Adam, he is God's vicegerent on earth. Out of love, God hath created man. And He hath created for him the heavens and the earth, and sendeth down water from the heaven, and so bringeth forth the fruits for his food. And to him He hath subjected the ships, so that *by* His command they pass through the sea ; and to him He hath subjected the sun and the moon in their constant courses; and to him He hath subjected the day and the night; of everything which he may ask Him, giveth He to him; and if man would reckon up the favours of God, man can never count them.

"And the cattle, for you He created them; from ye have warm garments, and they are useful in many ways; and of them ye eat; and they obey you well, when ye fetch them home and when ye drive them forth to pasture : and they carry your burdens to lands which ye could not else reach, but with travall of soul : truly, your Lord is full of goodness, and merci-

Marfat.com

ful : And He hath given you horses, mules and asses, that ye may ride them, and for your pleasure : And things, of which ye have no knowledge, hath He created. It is God who shows the right way, since some other ways are misleading. Some (of you) turn aside from it ; but had He pleased, He would have guided you all aright"[8].[9]

According to the Koran, God hath endowed us with the power of self-government which is an almost incredible trust By this power, God not only trusts our destinies to ourselves, but He actually trusts or seem to trust, the whole final outcome of His creative work to our treatment of it. This earth, at least, is put into our hands, to make what we will of it and of ourselves, its inhabitants. It is stored with all possible helps to us, in natural forces and materials; we are given intelligence, to find them out and to use them for the enrichment and beautilying of our lives; we are given the understanding of a Rule of Right in our conduct towards each other, that will keep us in perfect harmony and happiness together, for the common good : we are given a complete code of regulation, to guide us as to what is right and what is wrong; we are drawn towards well-doing, in accord with the Rule of Right, by a feeling created in us, which will not let us forget it or violate it, without wilfull intent; but (and here lies the grandeur of the part man performs in creation) we are trusted with the freedom, to do with all this what we will. The .outcome, good or evil, is what we and our fellows of the human race, past and future, are helping, or have helped, or will help, to make it. The glory of triumph or the shame of failure in the creation of mankind is to belong to the race itself.

The Realities of Human Nature

The Koran also dwells on the weaknesses, to which the fresh is heir, and constantly reminds man of his inconstancy, injustice and ingratitude. "Man is created weak." "Surely man is unjust and ungrateful." "Man is hasty." "Man is covetous," "Verily, man is created extremely impatient." "Verily, man is ungrateful unto his Lord." It must, however, not be inferred from verses like these, that man stands condemned before his Creator, as deserving only death and perdition. These verses rather breathe a noble sympathy for the weakness of man and the infirmities of the flesh. They contain in them promises of God's grace and forgiveness. In reminding man of the infirmities of his nature. God desires, that man should realise his weakness and powerlessness, bow down his head before the Lord, turn to Him for strength and assistance, and pray constantly, that He may guide him into the right, straight path. Indeed, the Moslem is enjoined to throw himself in this attitude towards his Maker, and to offer such prayers repeatedly day and night. He is taught to say : "Praise be to.God, Lord of the worlds; the Compassionate, the Merciful, King of the day of Reckoning.

Thee only do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help. Guide Thou us in the right path, the path of those, unto whom Thou hast been gracious;—and not of those, who are convicted nor of those who go astry".[10]

As will be seen, this human prayers is full of sympathy towards the weakness of man. In it the Lord teaches His servants, to beg of Him spiritual blessings. In it He indirectly asks them not to sink in despair, and indirectly promises, to guide them into the path of holiness and to give them strength, to bear the yoke of His law. What an uplifting hope is breathed

Marfat.com

into our hearts. when He tells us, that He was gracious in the past, unto those who sought Him, and even so to-day He is ready, to be gracious unto us, if we only turn to Him and look up to His Grace, as our true saviour.[12]

But, as Shakespeare said : "The course of true love never did run smooth" with equal truth it may be said of divine love, that its course never runs smooth. Trials and tribulations are bound to come. Many a trial the seeker after God has to undergo, before he can expect to receive the grace of God. "Think ye," says the Lord, "to enter Paradise, when no such things have come upon you, as on chose who flourished before you? Ills and troubles tried them; and so tossed were they by trials, that the Apostle and they who shared his faith, said, 'When will the help of God come ?—Surely the help of God is nigh !".[12] Even the Patriarch Abraham, was tried by God, when He commanded him to leave his home and country, and to offer his beloved son as a sacrifice.

No doubt, it is rather a difficult task, to secure the blessings of God, and to perform the divine laws. But, let not man stagger under the difficulty of the task that lies before him. Let him take courage, and, with a firm trust in God and a cheerful heart, under-take the performance; and above all fear the Lord; for it is God's promise, that "He will make His command easy to him who feareth Him." The God of Islam, it should always be remembered, is not a niggardly, exacting God. but "He is gracious unto His servants." elsewhere, we read a surpassingly comforting verse, which comes a message of hope to each and all of us. God desireth, to be gracious unto you.... God desireth to make your burden light; for man hath been created weak".[13] Again we read; "God wisheth you ease and never wisheth you discomfort." A world of mercy and forgiveness is surely concealed behind, and breathed out *by* these verses. God is offering His grace, we have only to throw ourselves in the right attitude of Faith, and give ourselves up to God, and His Hand will lead us to His blessings. We have but to confess our weakness and ask from our Lord power and strength, and His spirit will descend upon us.

There is another remarkable passage in the Holy Koran which presents to us a just, but at the same time a merciful God, and then gives a most beautiful prayer, so comforting to the helpless man who, toiling up the spiritual heights, sits down totally unnerved, looking up to God for strength and support : "God will not burden any soul beyond its power," so run the words of God, "It shall enjoy the good which it hath acquired, and shall bear the evil, for the acquirement of which it laboured. Our Lord, punish us not if we forget, or fall into sin ; Our Lord, lay not on us a burden, like that which Thou hast laid on those who have been before us : neither make us. O Lord, to bear what we have not the strength to bear; but blot out our sins, and forgive us, and have pity on us. Thou art our Patron : help us, therefore, against those who do not believe".[14]

THE KORAN AND THE DOCTRINE OF PERSONAL HOLINESS

Islam has taken due cognisance of the frailties of human nature, and this constitutes its chief excellence as a system of religion. Thus the laws of Islam exhibit an elasticity which is a proof of their beneficence and usefulness. Though Islam no doubt points to a lofty idealism it is at the same time, thoroughly practical. The merit of Islam, as a religion, consists, in a happy

Marfat.com

harmonious blending of the ideal and the practical. It favours no form of asceticism, and never asks any man, to do what he has not the power to do. There is, however, one thing, on which it lays the greatest emphasis. It is personal holiness and purity of heart. It is the grand purpose, for which the Prophet was sent down, as it appears from the prayer of Abraham : "Our Lord, raise up among them an apostle who may rehearse Thy signs unto them, and teach them the Book, and the Wisdom, and purify them".[15] The reader will observe, that the verse gradually ascends to a climax. Purification of men being put last, as the most important part of the functions of the Prophet of Islam. "He who is purified, hath obtained felicity," says the Koran elsewhere.[16] Again, after mentioning the blessing if heavenly life, the Holy Book adds : "And this shall be the reward of him who shall be pure".[17] That a very important place is given to purity of mind and personal holiness, will be seen from another verse, where sinners are threatened with the punishment, that God shall neither speak unto them nor shall He purify them : "Moreover, they who conceal any part of the scripture which God hath sent down unto them—God shall not speak unto them, on the day of resurrection, neither shall He purify them, and they shall suffer a grievous punishment".[18] It is clear, then that communion with the Deity and personal holiness are the keynote of Islam.

But even here, man is not held responsible for the evil thoughts that inspite of himself, pass through his mind, like flashes of lightning. To render man responsible for such passing fancies, over which he has little control, would be sheer injustice. Commission of a wrong act, without previous intention and deliberation, does not make one a sinner, far less a passing thought that rises like a bubble only to die and disappear the next moment. Adam ate of the forbidden fruit and thereby committed a mistake, as all men are liable to commit mistakes; but he was never guilty of committing sin, and the Holy Koran clears him of the false accusation, just as it has cleared other prophets, like Moses and Jesus, of similar charges. For It says. "We heretofore gave a command to Adam, and he forgot it; and We. found no intention in him (to disobey) our command)".[19]

This, indeed, is an important principle, and it has important bearings on the doctrine of sin, as presented by the Holy Koran, For, elsewhere we read : "God will not punish you for an inconsiderate word in your oaths; but He will punish you for that which your hearts have assented unto it,[20] This verse clearly lays down, that a wrong act, or an evil thought, is a sin, if it is deliberate. Shorn of intention and deliberation, a wrong act or an impure thought is a mere accident which, however deplorable, cannot prove the doer a guilty sinner in the sight of God.

But, if the element of intention is present, even the faintest thought is enough, to reder a man guilty before his Maker, not to speak of a deed which is manifestly wrong. God forbids both kinds of sin—open and secret—equally in the same verse; "Draw not near unto neither open nor secret".[21] "Leave both—the outside of iniquity and the inside thereof.[22] Again : "Say, verily, my Lord hath forbidden, sins, whether open or secret, and iniquity and unjust violence".[23]

These verses sufficiently establish the doctrine of personal holiness in Islam; but to crush the objection of the critics absolutely, we give one more verse which shows, that not only the eyes and the ears, but also the heart, will be required, to give evidence on the Day

Marfat.com

of Judgment, if any sin has been committed through them. And the verse is this : "And follow not that, whereof thou no knowledge; for the hearing and the sight and the heart—each of these shall be examined".[24]

Personal holiness, it must be remembered, depends largely on a thorough belief in the Omniscience and Omnipresence of God, And nothing is more striking to the reader of the Holy Koran, than the force with which it impresses upon us these two attributes of the Deity. The belief, that the Supreme Being sees our actions and knows even the innermost secrets of our hearts, is a most powerful check upon the tendency to commit sin. So long as a man realises, that he works and moves under the great Task-master's eyes, he keeps himself from vice : but whenever this consciousness in him grows dim, and he thinks he is not watched by God, he exposes himself to constant danger.

REFERENCES

1. Sir W Muir. Life of Mohammad of the koran.
2. The Rev. Margoliouth's introduction to Rodwell's translation.
3. Sir Muir's Life of Mohammad.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Sir. Muir's Life of Mohammad.
6. Rodwill's"Life of Mohamed".
7. *Ibid.*
8. Cf. Rodwell's Life of Mohamed
9. Koran xvii. 5-9.
10. *i.e.* were it not that God has *given* man free will to choose between right and wrong (Author).
11. This is the prayer with which the Holy Book of Islam opens.
12. Koran. ii : 214.
13. Koran, iv : 23
14. Koran : last verses of Chap, ii.
15. Koran, chap. ii : 123.
16. Koran, ixxxvii : 14.
17. Koran, xx : 78.
18. Koran, ii : 175.
19. Koran XX : 14
20. Koran, VII :34.
21. Koran, II : 225.
22. Koran, VI : 38.
23. Koran. VII : 34.
24. Koran, XVII : 38.

Marfat.com

16

Belief in the Apostles of God

The fourth article of the Mohammedan creed is faith in all the Apostle of God. A Moslem must believe, that the Merciful Creator sent in divers ages certain messengers or apostles, to reclaim mankind from infidelity and superstition, and to teach them the religion and laws of God, and to give them good tidings and admonitions. The number of these apostles is given as 313. Twenty five of them must be remembered, since their names are distinctly given in the Koran; but it is not necessary to learn them by heart. The following are the names, according to chronological order :

Adam, Noah, Houd (Heber), Saleh (Methuselah), Lot, Abraham, Ishmail, Isaac, Joseph, Jacob, Shu'aib (Jethro), Haroun (Aaron), Moses, David, Solomon, Ayoub (Job), Zulkifi (Isaiah), Younis (Jonah), Ilias, Alyas'aa (Elisha), Zacharias, Yehia (John the Baptist), Jesus and Mohammad.

If a Moslem is asked about anyone of these men, he must confess his belief, that he was an apostle of God.

Moslems must also believe, that the apostles of God were truthful, faithful and intelligent, and that they delivered in full God's message to their respective people. A Moslem must further believe, that all apostles of God were, by their prophetic characteristics, free from (1) telling lies, (2) committing unlawful deeds, (3) stupidity, laziness or cowardice, (4) and from concealing any part of the message they were ordered to deliver.

The apostles of God were subject to the same human wants as the rest of mankind, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, marrying, etc. They were also liable to ordinary but not disgusting maladies etc.

Since the nature, as well as the story, of Jesus Christ were matters of dispute between Christians and Mohammadans, I must give a summary of the Moslems' belief in this respect, according to the teachings of the Koran and the interpretation of the Prophet.

Moslems hold, that Jesus Christ was the blessed Apostle of God who was sent to reclaim the people of Israel. He was a spirit from God, His messenger, His servant and prophet, illustrious in this world and in the next. He was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary. The Jews having spoken ill of Mary, and charged her with unchastity, Jesus Christ, speaking in the cradle, vindicated his mothers' honour. Jesus performed miracles by God's power; giving life to a clay figure of a bird, healing the blind, curing the leper, quickening the dead, and

causing a table of food to be brought down from Heaven. He was sent by God, to confirm the law of Moses, and to preach the Gospel to the people of Israel. He proclaimed his mission by many manifest signs, being confirmed by the Holy Spirit. He foretold the advent of another apostle to succeed him, named Periclete of Ahmad. The Jews intended to crucify Jesus, but God saved him from the plot, took him up to Heaven, and stamped his likeness on a treacherous Jew who was apprehended and crucified in his stead. It is the constant doctrine of the Moslems, that it was not Jesus who underwent crucifixion, but someone else, resembling him in shape, namely, Judas, who agreed with the Jews, to betray Jesus for some pieces of silver and led those who were sent to take him. After the crucifixion of the wicked Judas and the taking up of Jesus into Heaven, Christ, the Apostle of God, was sent down again to the earth, to comfort his mother and devoted disciples, and to tell them, how the Jews were deceived; and he was taken up a second time to Heaven.

"It is supported by several", writes Mr. G. Sale "that this story was an original invention of Mohammad's; but they are certainly mistaken; for several sectaries held the same opinion, long before his time. The Basilidians, in the very beginning of Christianity, denied, that Christ himself suffered, but that Simon the Cyrenean was crucified in his place. The Cerinthians, before them, and the Carpocratians next, (to name no more of those who affirmed Jesus to have been a mere man) did believe the same thing; that it was not himself, but one of his followers very like him, that was crucified. Photius tells us, that he read a book entitled. The Journey of The Apostle', relating the acts of Peter, John, Andrew, Thomas and Paul; and among other things contained therein, this was one, that Christ was not crucified, but another in his stead, and that therefore, he laughed at his crucifiers, or those who thought they had crucified him".[1]

St. Barnabas relates this part of Jesus Christ's history with circumstances approximating to the Mohammadan view. In that Gospel it is related, that : "the moment the Jews were going to apprehend Jesus in the garden, he was lifted up to heaven, by the ministry of four angels; that he will not die, till the end of the world, and that it was Judas who was crucified in his stead; God having permitted that traitor, to appear so like his master, in the eyes of the Jews, that they took and delivered him to Pilate. That this resemblance was so great, that it deceived the Virgin Mary and the disciples themselves; but that Jesus Christ afterwards obtained leave of God, to go and comfort them: That Barnabas having then asked him, why the divine goodness had suffered the mother and disciples of so holy a prophet, to believe, even for one moment, that he had died in so ignominious a manner. Jesus returned the following answer. "O Barnabas, believe me, that every sin, however small, is punished by God with great torment, because God is offended by sin. My mother, therefore, and faithful disciples, having loved me with a mixture of earthly love, the Just God has been pleased, to punish this love with their present grief, that they might not be punished for it hereafter in the flames of hell. And as for me, thought I have myself been blameless in the world, yet other men having called me God and the son of God; therefore God, that I might not be mocked by the devils on the Day of Judgment, had been pleased, that in this world I should be mocked by men with the death of Judas, making every body believe, that I died upon the cross. And hence it is, that this mocking is to continue till the coming of Ahmad, the messenger

Marfat.com

of God; who, coming into the world, will undeceive everyone who shall believe in the law of God, from this error".[2]

The Moslems are also taught, that after Jesus had left this earth, his disciples disputed among themselves concerning his nature, some calling him God and others the son of God. They believe, that he will come again into the world, will slay antichrist, and will reign as a just king for many years, marry and have children and die.

The following are a variety of translated passages of the Koran bearing on the story of Jesus Christ, and the disputed nature and life of the Great Teacher of Christianity :

1. Promised to Mary

(a) "And when the angels said : O Mary, verily, God hath chosen thee and hath purified thee, and hat raised thee above all other women of the world : O Mary, be, therefore, devout towards thy Lord, and prostrate thyself and bow down in worship with those devotees who bow down to Him."

(b) "And when the angels said : O Mary, verily, God sendeth thee good tidings; thou shalt bear a word from Him, Whose name will be Jesus, the son of Mary, and who will be illustrious in this world and in the next, and one of those men who are honoured with approach to the presence of God; and he shall speak to men alike when in the cradle and when he is grown up; and he shall be one of the most righteous : she said, How, O my Lord, shall I have a son, since a man hath not touched me? The angel said : Thus God will create what He will; when He decreeth a thing. He only saith Be', and 'it is'. He (God) shall teach him the scripture and wisdom and the law and the Gosple; and He shall appoint him an apostle to the children of Israel, and he shall say to them : Verity, I come unto with a sign from you Lord, for I will make before you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird; then I will breathe into it, and it shall become an animated bird, by the will of God; and I will heal the blind and the leper, by the will of God, and I will raise the dead, by the will of God; and I will tell you what ye eat and what ye store up in you houses. Verily, this will be a sign to you, if ye believe. And I will come to confirm the law which was revealed before me, and to allow unto you as lawful, part of what hath been forbidden you; therefore, fear God and obey me. Verily, God is my Lord and your Lord; therefore serve Him. This is the right way. But Jesus perceiving their unbelief, said : who of you will assist towards the way to God? The disciples said : We are your helpers towards the way to God : we do believe in God, and do thou bear witness, we are true believers. O Lord, we believe in what Thou hast sent down, and have followed Thy apostle; write us down, then, with those who bear witness (of his) message.

2. Birth of Jesus

(a) "And make mention, in the scripture, of Mary; when she retired from her family eastward, and drew a veil upon her to conceal herself from them; and We sent our spirit (Gabriel) to her, and he appeared to her in the form of a perfect man. She said : 'I fly for refuge 'How shall I have a son, when man hath never touched me, and I was never unchaste"?. He said : "So shall it be. Thy Lord hath said, it is a simple thing with Him, and that He will make him a sign to mankind and a mercy from Him : This is a thing already decreed'.

Marfat.com

Wherefore she conceived him; and she retired aside with him (in her womb) to a distant place, and the throes came upon her near the trunk of a palm—tree. She said 'Would to God, I had died before this and had become as one lost in oblivion'. And he who was below her (namely the newly born babe) came to her, saying, Be not grieved. Thy Lord hath provided for thee a rivulet at thy feet; and do thou shake the trunk of the palm—tree towards thee : it will drop fresh ripe dates to eat. Therefore, eat and drink and cheer thyself; and shouldst thou see any human being, say, 'Verily, I have vowed a fast to the Most Merciful; wherefore I will by no means speak to human being this day. So she came with the babe to her people. And they said to her 'O Mary, thou has committed a grave thing. O sister of Aaron,[3] thy father was not a bad man, nor was thy mother unchaste'. And she made a sign to him (the infant). They said : 'how shall we speak to him who is an infant in the cradle.' He said : 'Verily, I am the servant of God : He hath given me the Book (the Gospel), and He hath appointed me a prophet. And He hath made me blessed, wheresoever I may be, and hath commanded me to pray to him and to give alms, as long as I live; and hath made me dutiful towards my mother; and He hath not made me cruel or wicked. The peace of God was on me the day I was born, and it will be on me the day I shall die and the day I shall be raised again to life.' This was Jesus, the son of Mary, the world of truth, concerning whom they dispute.

(b) "Verily, the case of Jesus with God is the same as that of Adam. He created him (Adam) out of the dust, and then said to him 'Be', and he was. This is the truth from the Lord; be not, therefore, one of those who dispute."

One of the Miracles of Jesus

Remember, when the disciples said. 'O Jesus, son of Mary' is the Lord able to send down to us a table of provisions from heaven?" He said : 'Fear God, if ye be true believers'. They said : 'We desire to eat therefrom, and to have our hearts assured, and to know that thou hast undeed spoken truth to us, and to be witnesses thereof, Jesus, the son of Mary, said : 'O God, our Lord' send down a table to us from heaven, that the day of its descent become a recurring festival to us, to the first of us and to the last of us and a sign from Thee; and do Thou provide food for us, for Thou art the best provider'. God said : 'Verily I will cause it to descend unto you; but whosoever among you shall disbelieve hereafter, I will surely punish him with more severe a punishment than I will punish any other of my creatures.

The Mission of Jesus

"We formerly sent our apostles with evident signs and miracles, and We sent down with them the Scriptures and the balance, that men might observe justice.

(a) "And We caused Jesus, the son of Mary; to succeed them and We gave him the Gospel : and We put in the hearts of those who followed him, compassion and mercy : but as to the monastic life, they invented it themselves : We did not prescribe it to them; they did it out of design to please God, yet this they did not properly observe. And We gave to such of them as believed, their reward : but many of them were evil doers."

(b) "We also caused Jesus caused Jesus, the son Mary, to follow the footsteps of the Prophets, to confirm the Law which was sent down before him; and We gave him the Gospel,

Marfat.com

containing guidance and light and confirming the preceding word and a direction and admonition unto those who fear God : so that they who have received the Gospel might judge according to what God hath revealed therein. And whoso will not judge according to what God hath revealed, they are certainly transgressors."

(c) "Some of the apostles We have endowed more than others. Those, to whom God hath spoken, He, hath raised to the loftiest position. And to Jesus, the son of Mary, We gave manifest signs, and We strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. And if God had pleased, they who came after them, would not have wrangled, after the clear signs had reached them. But into disputes they fell : some of them believed, and some were infidels : yet, if God had pleased, they would not have wrangled : but God doth what He Will."

(d) " And Jesus, the son of Mary, said : 'O children of Israel. Verily, I am God's apostle to you who came to confirm the law which was given before me, and to announce an apostle who shall come after me whose name shall be Ahmad. But when he (Ahmad) presented himself with clear signs of his mission, they said; This is manifest sorcery'. 'I come to attest the law which was revealed before me, and to allow you part of that which had been forbidden you; and I come to you with a sign from you Lord : therefore, fear God and obey me; verily, God is my Lord and your Lord; therefore, worship Him : this is the right way."

Jesus Not Crucified

(a) " The Jews were cursed for their unbelief and for their having spoken a grievous calumny against Mary and for their saying; 'Verily, we have slain Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the apostle of God'; yet they slew him not and crucified him not, but he was represented to them by one in his likeness, and verily, when who disputed about him, were in doubt, concerning this matter; they had no sure knowledge thereof, but followed only an uncertain opinion.[4] They (the Jews) did not really kill him; but God took him up to Himself and God is Mighty and Wise."

Jesus and the Divinity

(a) "He (Jesus) is no other than a servant of God whom We favoured, and set forth as an instance (of divine power) to the children of Israel; an if We pleased verily, We could have even produced angels from your selves, to succeed you on earth."

(b) "And when Jesus came with manifest signs, he said : 'Now I am come to you with wisdom, and to explain to you part of those things, about which you disagree; therefore fear God and obey me. Verily, God is my Lord and you Lord; wherefore worship ye Him : this is the right path'. But the different parties fell into disputes among themselves,[5] but woe to those who thus transgressed, because of the punishment of a grevious day."

(c) "The Jews say : 'Ezra is the son of God'; and the Christians say, 'Christ is the son of God'. This is their saying with their mouths, following the example of those who misbelieved before them. May God resist them! How are they infatuated! They take their priests and their monks for their Lord, besides God and (take) Christ, the son of Mary, (for their Lord besides God) although they are commanded to worship one Deity only; there is no Deity but He (the true God); far be those form Him whom they associate (with God)."

Marfat.com

The Trinity Condemned

(a) "They are surely infidels who say, 'Verily, God is Christ the son of Mary; since Christ said, O ye children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord; whoever, shall associate aught with Him, God shall forbid him paradise, and his habitation shall be hell fire; and the ungodly shall have none to help them. They are certainly infidels who say, God is the third of three, for there is no Deity, but God alone. And if they do not desist form what they say, a painful torment shall surely be inflicted upon those who misbelieved among them. Will they not turn unto God, and ask His pardon? Since God is Gracious and Merciful. Christ, the son of Mary, is no more than an apostle : Other apostles preceded him, and his mother was a true believer; they both used to eat food (as all other human beings do). Behold, how we declare unto them the signs (of God's unity); and then behold, how they turn aside (from the right path). Say, (O Mohammad) unto them, will ye worship, besides God, that which can cause you neither harm nor profit? God heareth (every thing) and seeth (every thing) Say. O ye who have received the Scriptures, exceed not the just bounds in your religion, by speaking beside the truth, neither follow the desires of people who have heretofore erred, and who have seduced many and have gone astray form the right path."

(b) "O ye who have received the Scriptures, exceed not the just bounds in your religion, neither say of God otherwise than the truth. Verily, Christ, the son of Mary, was the apostle, of God and His World which He conveyed to Mary, and a Spirit coming from Him. Believe, therefore, in God and his apostles and say not : 'There are three (Deities)' desist : it will be better for you. God is the only Deity. Far be it form Him, that He should have a son; unto Him belongeth whatever is in heaven and on earth; and God is the best Protector. Christ doth not proudly disdain to be a servant to God."

(c) "It beseemeth not man, that God should give the Scripture and the wisdom and the gift of Prophecy to him, and that then he should say to the people 'Be ye worshippers of me, as well as of God', but rather, 'Be ye perfect in things pertaining to God, since ye know the Scriptures, and have studied deeply."

(d) "And when God shall say (namely unto Jesus on the Day of Judgment), O Jesus, son of Mary, hast thou said unto the people, 'Take me and my mother for two deities, beside God?' He shall answer 'Glory be to Thee, it is not for me, to say that which I ought not in truth; it I had said it, Thou wouldst surely have known it : Thou knowest what is in me, but I know not what is in Thee; for Thou art the knower of all secrets. I have not spoken otherwise, than Thou didst command me. I said to them : Worship God, my Lord and your Lord; and I was witness against them as long as I stayed amongst them; but when Thou causest me to die, Thou hast been the Watcher over them, as Thou art the Watcher over all things. If Thou punish them, they are surely Thy servants, and if Thou forgive them, Thou art the Almighty and the All-wise."

CONTRADICTORY TEACHINGS OF CHRISTIANITY FROM MOSLEMS' POINT OF VIEW

The following would illustrate certain contradiction in the fundamental principles of Christianity, as viewed by Moslems :

Marfat.com

The first and the foremost Christian principle is Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. This, in itself, is but a clear illustration of the principle of compromise, of which a divine religion should be free. The Romans believed in three gods, whilst the Jews believed in one. When the Romans showed their readiness to adopt Christianity, a compromise was, it seems, at one arrived at. Apparently for the sake of the Romans, the Unity of God, as believed by the Jews, underwent a change; it was assimilated to the tri—headed Godhood and so the two creeds became merged into one. No Moslem person can think of reconciling such contradictions.

The second instance of contradictory principles is, that Jesus has been called a man and God, at the same time; while the fact is, that the Creator and the created cannot be one and the same. Therefore, Jesus cannot be God and man, at the same time.

The third principle, where contradictions have been brought together, is that, on the one hand, Jesus declares in the Gospels, that violation of even the least commandment of the law dooms a man to eternal perdition, while it is taught by Paul, that the Law was a curse.

The fourth example of contradictory principles, is the Christian doctrine, that God cannot forgive sins, hence the necessity of the crucifixion of His only begotten son for the redemption of the sins of mankind, while maintaining, at the same time, that God would forgive us our trespasses, only when we forgive those that trespass against us. A Moslem cannot understand, how God both can and cannot forgive trespasses. If He cannot forgive, then vain is our forgiving or condemning; for that is of no avail. If He can, then a Moslem does not see that there is any need of Atonement.

The fifth contradictory principles is the teaching that Jesus has taken away all our sins by suffering crucifixion for mankind at large, impressing upon us, at the same time, the necessity fo doing good. If Jesus by his unnatural death has atoned for our sins, then there should be no need for us to trouble ourselves about good or bad deeds any more. It matters little whether we do good or evil. We are quite at liberty, to revel and carouse at will. On the one hand, Christianity teaches us the doctrine of Atonement, thus making us independent of all good deeds, while on the other hand, it imposes upon us the obligation to perform good deeds.

The sixth contradictory principle that Christianity offers to the world is, that it holds Christ as accursed, dying (as he is believed by Christians) an accursed death on the Cross; yet it holds him up as the very paragon of excellence, the son of God—His dearest one. It is impossible for a Moslem, to comprehend how an accursed man can be the son of God. Curse betokens divine vengeance, a great gulf between Him and the person accursed. To reconcile these two contradictions passes the wit of a Moslem.

The seventh contradiction is that Jesus is called the son of God, as well as the son of David. How can a man possibly, be the son of two distinct personalities? He must be either of one or of the other, but not of both at the same time.

THE GODHEAD OF JESUS CONDEMNED BY ISLAM

The above has been the doctrine of the Mohammadan Religion with regard to the personality

of Jesus Christ. After thirteen centuries the same doctrine is now adopted by some Christian Churches, namely, the Unitarian. Probably it will not be out of place to quote here a few statements form a lecture, delivered before the Cooper Literary Institute, Philadelphia, on March 4th, 1913, by Er. A. Geo, Naker, late President of the Institute :

"We have now arrived at a time when the literature of all nations, and their history, are being carefully studied by those who are fitted for the task. The many frauds which the Christians churches have practised in the past are all being exposed now and the result is that many of the wisest and best have forsaken the orthodox doctrines of the Christian churches. We have here in the United States, a large and intelligent body of believers who are called Unitarians, *i.e.* believers in one God and who object to the old doctrine of a trinity or person in the Godhead, and reject the same. They look upon Christ as a great prophet and a good man, but still only a man. Our ex-President Taft belongs to this Unitarian church. In taking his farewell from the Unitarian congregation in Washington, he said in his last speech to them : 'It has always been a wonder to me, why all the world is not Unitarian.' The President, of course, meant by all the world', all the Protestant world of the United States, because the Catholic church is under the power of the Pope, and admits of no change of creed or dogma.

"The Unitarians consider Christ as a mere man, inspired as other great men are, though in a greater degree; they reject the doctrine of original sin, the belief in miracles and generally the whole supernatural elements of Christianity. There are many of the so—called liberals in the churches who hold Unitarian doctrines, but do not separate form their old connections. President Taft is, therefore, entirely justified in asserting that the trouble we suffer from—if it be trouble—is, that there are so many Unitarians in other churches who do not sit in the pews of our church. But that means ultimately that they are—coming to us. There seems to be every prospect that President Taft's prophecy may be fulfilled in regard to the Protestant world.

"Charles Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard University, made a similar prophecy in a pamphlet called The religion of the Future' Printed by the American Unitarian Association. Mr. Eliot says : 'The religion of the future will not be based on authority, either spiritual or temporal,' (namely on neither Pope not King). It is hardly necessary to say that in the future religion, there will be no personification of the forces of nature. There will be in the religion of the future, no identification of any human being, however, majestic in character, with the Eternal Deity.'

"The ordinary consolations of constitutional Christianity no longer satisfy intelligent people whose lives are broken by the sickness or premature death of those they love....".

The lecturer quoted above goes on to say : "Jesus Christ prayed (John xvii, 3) 'And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom hast sent' (namely, Thine apostle). There are many other places to prove, that Christ did not claim to be God. But Christians cannot see it in that light, because they went three Gods instead of one...".

Marfat.com

"Of course, there are points, at which all religions touch each other but the Christian fails to see this. The Moslem believes in one God and also in Christ as one of God's great prophets. The Christian says, he also believes in one God, but He has a trinity of persons. This is evidently derived from the Hindu religion, from Bram, Vishnu and Siva. The Jewish religion knew of no trinity in the Old Testament, and yet the Christian pretends, that his religion is founded on the Jewish religion. The Jewish religion knew of no Saviour, besides the one God. He was their Saviour and Redeemer. See Isaiah, 43 : 3, 'I am the Lord, the God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour' and Isaiah 42, 8, 'I am the Lord that is my name : and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to given images', and again Is. 43 : 11, 'I, even I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour' and Is. 44 : 6. 'Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God'. There are many other passages in Isaiah, and other Old Testament books which insist that there is no God, but one God, and He is the Saviour and Redeemer, and there is none beside Him. The Christian who take Christ their Saviour and Redeemer are, therefore, outside of the promise of the Scriptures which they themselves acknowledge to be the word of God. But all this with the many passages in the New Testament, where Christ distinctly says that he is not God, does not convince them."

WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT HIMSELF IN RELATION TO HIS ALLEGED DIVINITY

According to the Koran,[6] Jesus, on the day of Judgment, wil be asked by God, whether he told his people to consider him and his mother[7] as two Gods, besides, God Himself. Whereupon, Jesus not only dis-avows his claim of divinity, but also asserts he never preached such a doctrine to his disciples, when he was with them. Fortunately the narrative of the Teacher of Nazareth as reported in the four gospels, though in the consideration of Islamic judgment not genuine in its entirely, still contains sufficient evidence to corroborate the statement of the Koran. The 'following are the sayings of Christ about himself as reported by the Evangelists :

"I do nothing of myself". (John viii. 28).

"My Father is greater than I". (John xiv. 2).

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent". (John xvii. 31).

"The Lord our God is one Lord". (Mark xvii : 29).

"Thou shalt worship thy Lord the God, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. iv. 10).

"Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, that is God."

"I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

"I by the finger of God cast out devils". (Luke XL 20).

"Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said, it, they may believe that Thou hast sent me." (John XL 41, 42).

"The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." (John v. 36).

"If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world". (John XLL. 47).

"Jesus then went a little further, fell on his face, and prayed saying."

"O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. XXVI : 38, 39).

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani –My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me". (Matt. xxvii. (46)).

"Father, into my hands I commend my spirit." (Luke xxiii. 46).

These expressions confirm to a great extent the Islamic notion of the Holy Jesus Christ, namely, that he was true servant and a messenger of God, and one of His humble creatures, and never a god. Jesus admits his limited knowledge and power. He looks to God even for his daily sustenance. He expresses his complete submission to the divine will. He disavows all goodness for himself, when speaking of God. A messenger, no doubt, he was of God. He spoke to the children of Israel what he heard from God. He has been reported to perform certain miracles; but these he performed by the help of God. He is said to have raised Lazarus to life, but he has to pray to God and thank Him on being heard. When he was asked, he admitted that such miracles could be done only through fasting and prayer to God.

Speaking of himself, Jesus also is reported to have said :

"Foxen have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

In another instance he is reported to have said :

"Of myself I can do nothing; of that day and that hour knoweth no man. . . . neither the son."

Moslems fail to understand, how, in the presence of these admissions on the part of Jesus, divinity can still be attributed to him. This is a problem which can only be solved by the words said of Jesus :

"I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast kept these things form the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

PRIESTCRAFT AND ISLAM

Islam is the Faith of works, of approach to God through self-endeavour, and not through any intermediary. In Islam there is no such teaching as that of "The Holy Spirit descending in the greatest degree to the elected Pope, and in lesser degrees to bishops, deans and clergy." That every soul must labour for it own salvation, is the keystone of Islamic teaching. Islam has no monasticism, no apostolic succession, no body of men whose very livelihood

depends upon their claim that, after ordination as priests, they have the Spirit of God in them, and that, as Jesus was the chief intercessor between God and man, so the priest is intercessor between the people and Jesus and the saints. While other religions believe, that man cannot approach God, and cannot even confess his sins to Him, but that he must confess to a priest, who, having the "Spirit of God, has the power to assure him that he is forgiven". Islam teaches that "He who is best among men is he who does most good works". In such a religion the priest is not needed. Truly, mosques require attendants, and some men love to devote their lives to religion; but the doctrine of priesthood itself is not, and never had been found, in the religion of Islam. With Islam, a man may attain to spiritual closeness to God, not through his having been ordained a priest, but by living a life of religion, piety and good works.

The simple worship of the One True God Who rules over all, Who hears the prayers, 'both of the most cultured and the most ignorant, requiring nothing but a pure heart and sincere motive, is the chief characteristic of the religion of Islam. The absence of the priest in the religion of Islam is one of the reasons which helped Moslems to be better acquainted with their religion.

SUPPOSED DIVINITY OF JESUS

Modern Christian Divines agree with Islamic views, as to the supposed Divinity of Jesus.

The following extract is taken from 'The Graphic' of August 20th, 1920 :

"During the last few days orthodox Christianity has received the greatest blow it has suffered for many years. Outside the Church, scores of People, learned and skilled in the ways of theology, have been attempting to prove, that the basis of Christianity was all wrong, and that modern science had destroyed its very foundation. This time, though, a blow has come from the inside itself; and three highly-placed theologians, all avowed members of the Church of England, in which they live, preach and have their being, have united, to use words which lay men take to mean, that Christ was not the son of God, but a Palestine Jew. . . .

"Now, what Renan argued in 'The Life of Jesus' what all scientists outside the faith have expressed in learned terms, has been suddenly put into a bomb which, thrown at the Modern Churchmen's Congress at Cambridge not a week ago, has staggered the Anglican Church so much, that the reverberations of the shock will be felt for years . . . . Dr. Rashdall, the Dean of Carlisle. Dr. Bethune-Baker, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, the Rev. R. G. Parsons of Rusholme, have stood up at an Anglican Conference, and—if their words have been reported rightly—denied the God head. . . .

"Christ was not divine but human', said Dr. Rashdall. 'I do not for a moment suppose, that Christ ever thought of himself as God', Said Dr. Bethune-Baker. 'Jesus was a man, genuinely, utterly, completely, unreservedly human', said the Rev. R. G. Parsons—'A Palestine Jew who expressed himself through the conditions and limitations lifem and though peculiar to his own time."

These three men are not people whose opinions can be disregarded even by the most

Marfat.com

orthodox of all Christians. They are men of the highest intellectual attainments, men of brilliant achievements in the world of theology; all of them men who, as lecturers and fellows and professors, have instructed scores of Anglican divines before their ordination and since."

CANON BARNES ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

In its issue of January 6th, 1992, the Daily Graphic has dealt with a speech delivered by the Canon of Westminster at the Association of University Women Teachers. The following is an extract of the speech as inserted in the above issue :

" . . . . .In this connection it was most important, that the true nature and value of the Old Testament should be explained to children. It was Jewish literature; and was valuable for us, mainly, because it showed how the Jewish prophets were led to the idea of God, which Jesus accepted and emphasised, and because, in its vague expectations of a Messiah, fore-shadowed the advent of Christ. But in the Old Testament were also *to be found folk-lore history, half-savage morality, obsolete forms of worship based upon primitive and erroneous ideas of the nature of God*, and crude science. The whole, however, was valuable, as showing the growth of a pure monotheism among the Jews—a religious phenomenon, as remarkable and inexplicable as the great intellectual development of the Golden Age of Greece. It was very difficult to convey truths, like this, to children, and so it seemed to him (to Canon Barnes), better, to postpone the Old Testament part of religious teaching, to the later stages; otherwise, children would learn stories, like that, with which the Book of Genesis opened, which they would afterwards to be untrue."

The same paper goes on to say :

"He (Canon Barnes) had come reluctantly to the conclusion, that it was highly dangerous, to use for didactic purposes such allegories, as the creation of women, the Daniel stories and Jonah; it encouraged the prevalent belief, that religious people had a low standard of truth."

Thus, the Reverend Doctor condemns the Old Testament, and desires to eliminate it from the course of studies. He considers that, among other stories, that of Jonah is dangerous to teach to human intellect while in its infancy and growth. He acknowledges, that to accept stories, like that of Jonah and Daniel, as genuine pieces of history, would betray a low standard of truth in the believers of Christianity.

WAS CHRIST DIVINE?

Dr. Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle, recently delivered a remarkable speech at the Modern Churchman's Congress on 'Jesus as the Son of God' and in the course of his address, he said :

"There is a growing demand, that liberal theologians should speak in quite definite language about the divinity of Christ. The following are some of the things that we do not cannot mean, by ascribing divinity to Christ :

1. Jesus did not claim divinty for himself. He may have allowed himself to be called Messiah, but never in any critically well attested sayings, is there anything which suggests, that his conscious relation to God is other than that of *a man towards God.*

Marfat.com

The speeches of the fourth Gospel, where they go beyond the synoptic conception, cannot be regarded as history.

2. It follows from this admission that Jesus was in the fullest sense a man, and that he had not merely a human body, but also a human soul, intellect and will.
3. It is equally unorthodox to suppose that the human soul of Jesus pre-existed. There is simply no basis for such a doctrine, unless we say that all human souls existed before their birth into the world, but that is not the usually accepted catholic position.
4. The divinity of Christ does not necessarily imply virgin birth, or any other miracle. The virgin birth, if it could be historically proved would be no demonstration of Christ's divinity, nor would the disproof of it throw any doubt on that doctrine.
5. The divinity of Christ does not imply omniscience. There is no more reason for supposing, that Jesus of Nazareth knew more than his contemporaries about the true scientific explanation of the mental diseases which current belief attributed to diabolic possession, or that he knew more about the authorship of the Pentateuch or the Psalms. It is difficult to deny, that he entertained some expectation about the future which history has not verified."

The Rev. H.E.A. Major, Principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, who opened the discussion was as outspoken as the Dean.

"It should be clearly realised," said the Rev. Major, "that Jesus did not claim in the Gospels to be the Son of God in a physical sense, such as the *narratives* of the virgin birth suggest, nor did he claim to be the Son of God in a metaphysical sense, such as was required by the Nicene theology. He claimed to be God's son in a moral sense, in the sense, in which all human beings are sons of God, as standing in filial and moral relationship to God.

Dr. Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle, who is recognised as one of the most fearless and outspoken of Modern Churchmen, had a distinguished university career. He was a theological tutor at Balliol, and preacher at Lincoln's Inn, for five years. He was Dean of Hereford before his transfer to Carlisle, in 1917.[8]

The glory of Jesus naturally does not lie in being a God, because he cannot be a God, but his whole triumph lies in being a man, a perfect man, a holy man, and in the words of the Holy Koran, a Model for the people to whom he was sent.

BIBLICAL PROPHECIES AS REFERRING TO THE ADVENT OF THE PROPHET MOHAMMAD

Although Moslems hold, that the original Old and New Testament s have largely been corrupted by the interference of prejudiced men, or otherwise, as has already been pointed out else where in this book, they still believe, that the existing Scriptures contain, to such and extent as they are confirmed and supported by the Holy Koran, the True Word of God.

The following are therefore, a few extracts of the safe contents of the Bible which Mohammadans take to refer directly to the Holy Prophet Mohammad :

Marfat.com

"The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Paran and He came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand went a fiery law for them." (Deut. xxxiii-2).

"God came from Teman, and the Holy one from Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise." (Hab iii. 3).

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deut. xvii. 18).

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come he will guide you into all truth : for he shall not speak of himself : but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak : and he will show you things to come". (John xvi. 12.....13).

While Moses promises to the children of Israel the coming Epiphany of God in the person of a "Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee," Jesus characterises the promised one as the Spirit of truth, who will guide them into all truth. The description of the Holy one in the words of Moses and Jesus, however, is strikingly similar : "I will put words in his mouth and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deut. xviii. 18). "He shall not speak of himself but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." (John xvi. 13). These words make the promised one a messenger form God, and a Prophet rather than one abstract and impersonal Divine Epiphany, and if "The Lord came from Sinai" in His revelation to Moses, and "He rose up from Seir" according to His message from the Nazarene, should we not look for some other son of man "from Paran", to stand for the shining forth of God from the same?... especially when the prophet Habakuk calls him 'The Holy One from Paran' "(Hab. iii. 3). The Prophet spoken of by Moses, has however, wrongly been confused with Jesus, in later Christian theology. The house of Jacob always distinsuished Christ from the Prophet spoken of in Deut. xviii. 18 as it appears from the following we read about John the Baptist. "What then, art thou Elias"? and He said : 'No' "Art thou that Prophet? And He answered, "No...." and they asked him. "Why baptised thou, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that Prophet?" (John I. 21...22). These words speak distinctly of three different personalities, namely Christ, Elias and 'that Prophet'. Jesus himself did not claim to be "that Prophet." If Jesus was the Christ and John the Baptist Elias, as Jesus himself makes him to be, we are quite justified in concluding that the appearance of Jesus was the promised Prophet. Event he first followers of Jesus were of the same opinion. "And He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you : Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever, he shall say unto you." (Acts. iii. 20...22). Though the writer of these words looks to the second advent of Jesus for the fulfillment of the Mosaic prophecies, so far it is undisputed that the first advent of Jesus is not the advent of "Prophet like unto me." The second advent of Christ as well cannot be the fulfillment of the words in Deuteronomy. Jesus, as it is believed by the Church has to appear of the judgment and not for giving the

Marfat.com

law, while the Prophet like unto Moses, has to come with fiery law in his right hand. Like Moses, he will bring the law; besides, the Promised Prophet was to be raised not from amongst the Israelites, but from amongst the brethren of the Israelites, namely the Ishmaelites.

In ascertaining the personality of the promised Prophet, the other prophecy of Moses is, however, helpful, in which he speaks of the shining forth of God from Paran. In Deuteronomy xxxiii. 2, the Lord has been compared with the sun. He comes from Sinai, he rises from Seir, but he shines in his full glory form Paran, where he had to appear with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Non of the Israelites, including Jesus, had anything to do with Paran. Hager, with her son Ishmael, wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba, who afterwards dwelt in the wilderness of Paran. (Gen. xxi. 21). He married an Egyptian woman, and through his first born, Kedar, gave descent to the Arabs who, from that time till now, are the dwellers of the wilderness of Paran. Admittedly on all hands, the descent of the Holy Mohammad, is traced to Ishmael through Kedar, he appeared as a Prophet in the wilderness of Paran, and re-entered Mecca with ten thousand saints, and gave a fiery law to the people, so that the prophecy has been fulfilled to its very letter. The words of the Prophecy in Habakkuk are especially noteworthy. His-the Holy One from Paran glory covered the heaven and the earth with full praise. The word 'praise' is very significant; the very name 'Mohammad,' as already stated elsewhere in this book, means 'the highly praised'. Again the inhabitants of the wilderness of Paran had been promised a Revelation : "Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit : let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands. The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war : He shall cry, yea, roar, He shall prevail against His enemies." (Isa. Xlii, 11. 12. 13).[9]

Moreover we read in Isaiah two other prophecies worthy of note where references have been made to Kedar. "Arise, shine, for they light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee... The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephak; all they from Sheba shall come...All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaiath shall minister unto thee : they shall come up with acceptance on Mine Altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory." (Isaiah lx. 1-7). The other prophecy runs thus : "The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye traveling companies of Dedanim. The inhabitants of the of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread *Him that fled*. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail ". (Isaiah xxi, 13—16).

The above two revelations read in the light of the one in Deuteronomy, will make the meaning quite clear : It is acknowledged, that Ishmael inhabited the wilderness of Paran, where he gave birth to Kedar, who is the ancestor of the Arabs. The sons of Kedar had to receive revelation from God. The flocks of Kedar had to come up with acceptance to a divine altar, to glorify "the house of my glody", where the darkness had to cover the earth for centuries, and then that very land had to receive light from God. All the glory of Kedar had

Marfat.com

to fail, and the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, had to diminish within a year after they fled from the swords and from the bent bows. Therefore, the Holy one from Paran (Hab. iii. 3) should be no one else than the Prophet Mohammad. He is the holy offspring of Ishmael through Kedar, who settled in the wilderness of Paran,[10] the Prophet Mohammad is the only Prophet, through whom the Arabs received revelation at the time when the darkness had covered the earth and gross darkness the people.[11] Through him God shone form Paran, and Mecca is the only place, where the house of God is glorified by the flocks of Kedar who come up with acceptance on its altar. The Prophet Mohammad was persecuted by his people and had to leave Mecca. He was thirsty and fled from the drawn swords and the bent bows; within a year after his flight, the descendants of Kedar met him at Badr, the field of the first battle between the Meccans and the Prophets.[12] There the children of Kedar and their number of arches diminished, and all the glory of Kedar failed. Besides, the house of 'my glory', referred to in Isaiah 1x is the house of the God at Mecca, and not the Church of Christ, as thought by Christian theologies. The flocks of Kedar, as mentioned in verse 7, have never come to the Church of Christ. It is a fact, that the villages of Kedar, and their inhabitants are the only people in the whole world who have remained impenetrable to any influence of the Church of Christ.[13] Again, the mention of ten thousand saint, in Deuteronomy xxxiii, is very significant... "he shined forth from Paran and he came with ten thousand of saints". The whole history of the wilderness of Paran shows that there was no other event, but when Mecca was conquered by the Prophet. He came with ten thousand followers from Medina and reentered the "house of my glory." He gave a fiery law to the world which has superseded and cancelled all other laws. The comforter—the Spirit of Truth—spoken of by Jesus was no other than the Prophet Mohammad himself, It cannot be taken to be the Holy Ghost, as the Church theology says. "It is expedient for you that I go away," says Jesus, "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The way, in which Jesus described the Comforter, makes him to be a human being, and not a ghost. "He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that he shall speak." The words of Jesus clearly refer to some messenger from God. He calls him the Spirit of Truth, and so the Koran speaks of the Prophet Mohammad. "Nay he has come with the Truth and verified the apostles."

The above prophecy of Jesus has also been reported in the Koran in the following words : "Jesus, the son of Mary, said : O children of Israel I am the apostle of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of the Torah, and giving the good news of an apostle who will come after me, his name being Ahmad". The word 'Ahmad' which is another name of the Prophet Mohammad, is derived from the same root, namely 'Hamd' which signifies praising, and it means a person whose personal qualities are such as to be worthy of praise. It should not be supposed, that Jesus uttered the very words which are reported in the Holy Koran, for he spoke in Herbew, and not in Arabic. The actual words of Jesus not being preserved, we should depend on a Greek version, in which we find the word paraclete, which is translated in English as comforter. It is a well known fact, that translations are sometimes misleading, and therefore the use of the word paraclete in the Greek version, or that of comforter in the English, does not positively show, what the textual word spoken by Jesus was. Anyhow the qualifications which are reported in John xvi. 16 and xvi. 7, are met

Marfat.com

with in the person of the Holy Prophet Mohammad. He is stated to be one who shall abide for ever, and it is the Prophet's law, for after him comes no prophet, to promulgate a new law. He is to teach all things, and it was with a perfect law, that the Holy Prophet came. The prophecy in Johan xvi. 12 – 14, about the Spirit of Truth[14] which is the same as the comforter, mentioned in John xiv. 17, clearly established the following points : Jesus could not guide into all truth, because his teaching was confined to reform the Israelites, and he denounced only their crying evils : but the teaching of the Comforter would be a perfect law, guiding men to all truth; and the Holy Koran is the only book which claims to be a perfect Book of Devine Laws. That the Comforter would not speak a word of himself, but that which he shall hear, he shall speak, a qualification which is met with only in the person of the Prophet Mohammad. That he will glorify Jesus, and the holy Prophet did glorify Jesus by denouncing as utterly false all calumnies which the Israelites indulgingly attributed to Jesus and his mother.

THE BELIEF IN THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

The fifth pillar of the Mohammadan creed is belief in the Day of Resurrection, Reckoning of Judgment, which day shall be the beginning of an eternal life after death. The dead shall be restored to life. Every human being shall have to render an account of his or her action on earth. The happiness or misery of individuals will depend upon the manner, in which they have performed the commandments of God.

The Arabian Prophet, being the seal of God's Messengers of mankind, has given several prophecies in detail, with respect to the state of being from the time a man is dead, until the resurrection, and also an account of the eternal destiny of mankind, beginning from that day. Faith in all such prophecies is essential to complete the creed of a perfect Moslem. Before entering into the main subject under discussion, it is desirable to make a few preliminary remarks.

Some people are apt to think that prophecies relating to matters connected with the after-life must be examined by pure reason before they can be adopted. There, however, should be no excuse for rejecting any prophecy on the mere assumption that it is difficult for human reason to comprehend it. Human power of discernment, penetration or discrimination on all questions raised by prophets must be restricted merely to deciding whether the information obtained through such an agency is or is not an impossibility. By impossibility is meant those things which human beings cannot be expected top believe, such as a camel passing through a needle's eye. But once it is no longer a question of impossibility, and the prophetic commission is rightly established there should be no excuse for human reason to reject any prophetic statement.

The Mohammadan School avails itself of the following suggestions with regard to the nature of prophecy and the obligation of mankind thereto.

The mind of a newly born infant is so undeveloped, that he had no knowledge of the wondrous world around him. As he grows up he gradually acquires knowledge of things through the various channels of comprehension. The first sense created in him is that of feeling by which he can comprehend certain species of things such as heat and coldness,

Marfat.com

dampness and dryness, softness and coarseness etc. But colours or sounds do not come in the domain of the sense of feeling. Sight is the next to come into operation by which one can comprehend colours and forms and it is the most comprehensive of all the senses. Then hearing is open by which one can distinguish different voices. The child then acquires the power of discriminating different tastes. When a human being approaches his or her seventh year his or her intellect is further awakened. Through this new agency, one acquire knowledge of things, beyond those dependent exclusively on the senses, and of which nothing exists in the world of sense. The child then developed into a still higher state of being, namely the state of reasoning by which necessities, possibilities, impossibilities and other things which the senses cannot teach by themselves, are comprehended. Beyond reason, there is still another independent faculty, by which a new agency is given, to see the unseen and things of the future, and other things, from which reason is absolutely a different thing, inasmuch as understanding is different from those things belonging to reasons, and as the power of reasoning is from things known only through the senses. A man born blind may well ignore the existence of anything like colours, and a man born deaf may ignore things like voices, merely on account of the lack of the particular senses capable of comprehending them. Inasmuch as it is unreasonable for a man born blind, to deny the existence of colours, or for a man born deaf, to deny the existence of voices, so too it is illogical for a man, to deny the prophetic gift, simply because he himself is lacking in spiritual gifts. God has made it easy for his creatures, to have some idea of the prophetic nature, by giving them a picture or type thereof, namely, sleep. When asleep, a man sometimes foresees things, either directly or symbolically. In the former, the meaning is clear; in the latter, it may be found by interpretation. This is a wonderful state of comprehension which, if not personally experienced by any particular person, but told to this person by another man, who falling asleep, like the dead, could comprehended unseen things, would certainly be rejected by this person by another man, who, falling asleep, like the dead, could comprehended unseen things, would certainly be rejected by this person who would set forth proofs against the possibility of the information. It would be asserted that, as the sensitive faculties are the only source of comprehension and that even with their presence, a man cannot acquire any knowledge of unseen things, he would all the more and most assuredly be incapable of knowing such things. This is a reasoning by analogy which is, however, contradicted by actuality and practice. Even as reason is a state of human being, by which an insight is created in man, enabling him to know species of reasonable things, the comprehension of which lie beyond the power of the senses, so prophecy is another state of being by which a still further source of knowledge is created, a peculiar light, capable of making visible unseen things, in comprehensible by reason.

The doubt in prophecy may be connected either with its possibility, its existence and occurrence, or with its occurrence to a certain person. The proof of its possibility is its existence. And the proof of its existence is the existence of branches of knowledge in the world that cannot be acquired by mere reason as for instance, the science of medicine or astrology. Deep study of these sciences is sufficient to tell us of the impossibility of their being acquired, except by divine inspiration and guidance from God, and never by mere experience and practice. There are certain astronomic phenomena which do not take place but once every thousand years; but these have been accurately foretold. How then can such be got by

Marfat.com

practice? The same argument applies to medicine. Hence it is clear, that there is some supernatural power, by which we acquire the knowledge of things, which cannot be comprehended by mere reason. In this way prophecy can be illustrated. But prophecy does not consist only in these things. The comprehension of certain things, beyond the limits of reason, is but one of the various faculties of prophecy, and represents but a drop in the ocean of the prophetic nature. All men have in themselves a natural example of the prophetic faculty, namely what they foresee of future events while asleep. The two sciences of medicine and astronomy are also examples of the prophetic faculty. Prophecies are the miracles of prophetic, which ordinary men can by no means attain by human reason. The nature of prophecy cannot be comprehended, except through a course of Sufism, that is Mohammad mysticism. By taking a course of Sufism a man, in the early stages of the course, acquires a clear notion of the nature of prophecy. This prepares his mind for a better appreciation of this wonderful subject.

If one doubts a particular person being a prophet, one cannot be convinced that he is so, except by knowing his character, either by person observation or by hearing of it repeatedly. If a man has knowledge of medicine he can easily distinguish between physicians and their statements. A man cannot fail to know that Galens was a physician or that Shakespeare was a poet—a knowledge based on experience and not on hear say if he is acquainted with medicine or poetry. By reading their books and words he can then have a full knowledge of the subjects they treat. The same thing applies to prophecy. If a man carefully goes through the Koran, and closely studies the sayings of the Arabian Prophet, he will surely acquire a true knowledge of his character, and will necessarily admit, that he must have enjoyed the highest degree of prophecy. The above knowledge may still be confirmed, by testing what the Prophet said concerning the magical effect of carrying out the practical religious obligations of cleansing and purifying the heart. He will thereby Know, how true the Prophet was, when he said : "To him who shall put into practice what he has been taught, God shall give knowledge of what he did not know"; and how truly he said : "Him who, when getting up, forgets all his cares, except the care of God's duties, God shall relieve form the cares of this life and the next." If a man has tested the truth of the above promise, and of thou sands and thousands of others, he will surely have a perfect knowledge of the character of the prophet who foretold them. This is the way to attain conviction of the reality of prophecy, and not by seeking to see a rod turned into a serpent, or the moon divided into parts : because, by confining his researches to such wonderful acts alone, without their being corroborated by numerous other evidences, a man might mistake mere acts of sorcery and imposture for prophetic miracles.

Now it is time, to resume the statements of what a Moslem should believe will take place after death according to the teachings of Islam. The Prophet of Islam prophecied that, when a man is put into the grave, he shall encounter two angles, that he will be greatly frightened. They shall cause the dead man, by divine power to sit upright, and examine him concerning his faith in the unity of God and the mission of the Prophet Mohammad. These angles are called the 'tempters of the grave, as they appear to require the man examined, to give wrong reply. If he answers rightly, he will rest in peace; until the resurrection. If not, he will remain suffering till that day. It is also be believed, that some of the dead who were

sinners but did not repent during their life, are liable, in their sepulcher, to some torment. Only the righteous and the repentant are saved form the torment of the grave. Some people would object to the above prophecy, that the answers of the dead, under such examination, have never been heared; or ask, how those can undergo it, whose bodies are burnt or devoured by beasts or birds, or otherwise consumed without burial. The answer is that it is possible notwithstanding, since men are not able to perceive what takes place in the next world unless they have been told of it by prophecy; and God, the all. Powerful who created man from dust, and dust from nothing, is able to restore life to the dead so that he may understand any question put to him.

As the resurrection, Moslems believe, that both body and soul will be raised. The time of resurrection is a profound secret to all, but God alone. However, the Prophet has foretold some signs of its approach. These signs are :

1. The decay of faith among me;
2. The advancing of the meannest persons to positions of dignity;
3. That towards the end of the world, men shall be much given to sensuality;
4. Tumults and seditions;
5. Great distress in the world, so that a man, when he passes by anothers' grave, shall say : "Would to God, I were in his place."
6. The appearance of an extraordinary beast which shall be able by God's power, to speak to men. This signs of the approach of the resurrection is mentioned in the 87th chapter of the Koran.
7. The buildings of Yathrib (Medina) shall reach Mecca etc.

These are the lesser signs, the greater sings being :

1. The sun's rising in the west.
2. The advent of Antichrist or the false christ by whom people shall be tempted. He will do many apparent wonders and perform false miracles, sufficient to make people mistake him for the true Christ and, consequently they shall perish through their mistake.
3. The descent of Jesus on earth. He shall kill Antichrist, and there shall be under him great security and plenty in the world.
4. The appearance of Gog and Magog. These barbarians will come to Jerusalem and there, greatly distress Jesus and his companions, till at the request of Jesus, God will destroy them.
5. The advent of Al Mahdi. The Prophet said; "The world should not have an end, till one of his family should govern the Arabians, whose name should be the same as his own name and whose father's name, should be also same as his own father's name; and who should fill the world with righteousness."

Marfat.com

These are some of the greater sings which, according to the prophecies of the Apostle of God, are to precede the Day of Resurrection; but the oxact time of it is perfect secret to all, but God. The immediate sign of the coming of the Resurrection will be the first blast of a trumpet which will be sounded three times : (1) the blast of consternation; (2) that of examination; (3) the blast of Resurrection. At the first blast, all creatures in heaven and earth shall be struck with terror, except those whom God shall please to exempt from it. The earth will be shaken, all buildings and mountains levelled. Women who give suck shall abandon the care of their infants.

At the second blast, all creatures in heaven and earth shall die, or be annihilated, except those whom God shall please to exempt form that common fate. The last to die will be the angel of death. Forty years of rain will follow, when the third blast is sounded, and all dead bodies shall be raised for judgment. The resurrection will be general, and extend to all creatures, angels, genii, men and animals.[15]

Mankind shall then be assembled for reckoning. The ungodly and the wicked will appear on that day with certain distinguishing marks fixed on them. These will come under ten headings namely *(a)* the backbiters, *(b)* they who have been greedy of filthy lucre, and who have enriched themselves by public oppression, *(c)* the userers, *(d)* unjust judges, *(e)* they who exult in their own works, *(f)* the learned men or preachers whose actions contradicted their sayings, *(g)* they who have injured their neighbours, *(h)* the false accusers and informers, *(i)* they who have indulged their passions and voluptuous appetites, *(j)* the proud and the arrogant people.

The first men to be sentenced to hell fire, will be the hypocrites who deceived people, by falsely pretending to do good words for the sake of God, though they did them only in order, that their fellow-men might extol their actions.

The object of Resurrection is, that they who are so raised, may give an account of their actions, and receive the reward thereof.

On that day, mankind are all assembled together. They will not be immediately brought to judgment. They have to wait for that purpose a long time. During this period of waiting, the resuscitated shall suffer both the just and unjust; but the sufferings of the former shall be light in comparison. Men shall resort to their respective prophet for intercession, that they may be redeemed from that painful situation, and be called upon for trial. Eventually the Prophet Mohammad shall accept the office of intercession, after it has been declined by former prophets who shall beg deliverance only for their own souls. Belief in the Prophet's intercessions is enjoined upon Moslems, as part of the fifth article of faith.

The above intercession accepted, men shall be ordered, to appear for judgment. On the occasion, the books, wherein the actions of every person had been recorded by their guardian angels, will be distributed to their respective owners. God will command the various Apostles, to bear witness against those, to whom they have been respectively sent. Then every person will be examined concerning his actions in this life : not, as if God needed an information in this respect, but to oblige the person to make public confession and acknowledgment of God's justice.

The next event to take place after the resurrection is over, is the ordeal of the resurrection balance, wherein the weights of all men's actions shall be weighed. According as the good or evil actions shall preponderate, sentence will be given; those whose balances are laden with good works, will be saved; but those whose balances are light, will be condemned. Belief in this balance also forms an essential part of the fifth article of Faith.[16]

The above examination being past, and every one's actions weighed in a just balance, mutual retaliation will follow, according to which all persons will have satisfaction for the injuries they suffered. The manner of giving this satisfaction, will be by taking away a proportionate part of the good works of him who did the injury and adding it to those of him who suffered. It, after this is done, there remains of a person's good works as much as equals the weight of an ant, God will, of His mercy, cause it to be doubled to him, that he may be admitted to Paradise. But if, on the contrary, a person's good works be exhausted, and there remain evil works only and there be any who have not yet received satisfaction from him, God will, of his justice, order, that an equal weight of their sins be added to his, that he may be punished for them in their stead, and be laden with both. This will be the method of dealing with mankind.

As to brutes, after they have been punished for the injuries which they caused each other, God will command them, to be turned into dust. Wicket men, being reserved for more grievous punishment they shall cry out, on hearing this sentence pronounced on the brutes : "Would to God, that we were dust also."

After the trial is over, those who are to be admitted into paradise, as will as those destined to hell, shall have to pass to their respective abodes, over a bridge, laid over the midst of hell. This bridge is so wonderfully fashioned, that the good shall cross with ease and swiftness to paradise, while the infidels and the wicked shall miss their footing and fall down headlong into hell.

Belief in this bridge is essential, to complete the article of creed of the Day of Resurrection.

The infidels alone shall be doomed to eternal damnation. Those who have embraced the true religion of God, even if they have been guilty of atrocious crimes, shall be delivered from hell, after have expiated their sins by their sufferings. The orthodox doctrine of the Moslem Religion is, that no infidel who denied the existence of God, or anyone who did not believe in the unity of God, shall ever be redeemed; but no person who has believed in the existence and unity of God, shall be committed to eternal punishment.

As to whether paradise and hell are already existent, or are to be created hereafter, the orthodox doctrine of Islam is, that they wee created even before the world.

The felicity of the righteous in paradise, and the pains of the wicked in hell, will vary in degree, according to their merits or demerits, respectively. The happiness and felicity of the dwellers of paradise, on the one hand, and the anguish and pains of the inhabitants of hell, on the other, are according to the orthodox doctrine, sensuous and material, both body and soul being entitled or subject to them, respectively. But, the most happy will find the joy of joys, to consist in the beautific vision of the soul in the presence of God. The Prophet said :

Marfat.com

"The most favoured of God will be he who shall see the face (the glory) of his Lord, night and morning, a felicity which will surpass all the pleasures of the body, as the ocean surpasses a drop of sweat." The reward of virtue will not be confined to an exact measure of man's good works; it will far exceed his desserts. But the recompense of evil will be strictly proportioned to what a man has done "They who do right, shall receive a most excellent reward and a superabundant addition; neither darkness nor shame shall cover their faces : these shall be the inhabitants of paradise; they shall continue therein for ever. But they who commit evil, shall receive the reward evil, equal thereunto, and they shall be covered with shame, as though their faces were veiled with pieces of nights of profound darkness."[17]

The foregoing is all that is incumbent upon a true Moslem to believe, concerning the Day of Resurrection.

Finally I must, before quiting this chapter, refute a falsehood of vulgar imputation on Mohammadans who are reported, by some Christian writers, to believe, that women have no souls, or, if they have, that they will perish, like those of brutes, and will not be rewarded in the next life. Commenting on this false charge, Mr. G. Sale made the following pertinent observation :

". . . . It is certain that Mohammed had too great a respect for the fair sex, to teach such a doctrine : and there are several passages in the Koran which affirm, that women, in the next life, will not only be punished for their evil actions, but will also receive the rewards of the good deeds, as well as the men, and that in this case God will make no distinction of sexes".[18]

PREDESTINATION

The sixth pillar of the Mohammadan faith is the belief in predestination. Whatever has, or shall, come to pass in this world, whether it be good or evil, proceeds entirely from the divine Will, and has been irrevocably created after a fixed decree. The Koran distinctly states :

"All things have been created after a fixed decree." (Ch. IV : 49).

"No one can die, except by God's purpose, according to the Book that fixeth the term of life." (Ch. III : 139).

"The Lord hath created and balanced all things and hath fixed their destinies and guided them". (Ch. XXXVii : 2).

"Say : By no means can aught befall us, but what God hath predestined for us." (Ch. IX : 51).

"God creates what He will". (Ch. XXIV : 44).

".....nor is there any thing not provided beforehand by Us, or which We send down, otherwise than according to a foreknown decree" (Ch. XXII : 41).

".....and Who (God) created all things, and determined respecting the same, with absolute determination". (Ch. XXV : 2).

Marfat.com

The following are also a few sayings of the Holy Prophet, bearing on God's Predetermination :

"....and God said to Adam : 'I have created this family for paradise and their actions will be like unto those of the people of paradise and God said to him : 'I have created this family for hell and their action will be like unto those of the people of hell'." Hearing the above teaching of the Prophet, a man said to him : "of what use then will deeds of any kind be?" The Prophet said : "When God createth His servant for Paradise, his actions will be deserving of it, until he die, when he will enter therein; and when God createth on for the fire, his action will be like those of the people of hell, till he die, when he sill enter therein."

The Prophet of God also said to his companions :

"There is no one amongst, you whose place is not predestined by God, whether in hell or in paradise." The companions said, 'O Prophet of God, since God hath pre-appointed our places, may we confide in this belief, and abandon our religious and moral duties?' He said : 'No' because the righteous will do good works and be obedient to God, and the wicked will do bad works' : after which the Prophet recited the following verses of the Koran : "To him who giveth alms, and feareth God, and yields assent to the excellent creed, to him will we make easy the path to happiness. But to him who is worldly, and is indifferent, and who does not believe in the excellent creed, to him we will make easy the path to misery."

The Prophet of God also said : "The first thing which God created, was (divine) pen, and He said to it, Write,' it said, 'What shall I Write?' And God said 'Write down the fate of every individual thing to be created', and accordingly the Pen wrote all that was, and that will be, to eternity."

The Prophet also said : "God hath predestined five things to his servants; their duration of life, their actions, their dwelling places, their travels and their portions."

If happened, that one of the companions said to the Prophet : "O Prophet of God, inform me respecting the medicines which I swallow, and the shields which I make use of for protection, whether they can resist any of the decrees of God?" The Prophet answered : "These also are by the decree of God."

The Prophet of God once came out of his house, when the companions were debating about fate, and he was angry, and became red in the face. And he said, "Hath God ordered you to debate of fate? Was I sent to you for this? Your forefathers were undone through debating about fate and destiny. I conjure you not to argue on those points."

The doctrine of predestination, as forming an essential part of the Mohammadan orthodox faith, may by summarized in the following terms :

A Moslem should believe in his heart, and confess with his tongue, that the most exalted God hath decreed all things; so that nothing can happen in the world, whether it respects the conditions and operations of things, or good or evil, or obedience or disobedience, or sickness or health, or riches or poverty, or life or death, which is not contained in the written tablet

Marfat.com

of the decrees of God. But God hath so decreed, good works, obedience, and faith, that He ordains and wills them, that they may be under his decree. His salutary direction, His good pleasure and command. On the other hand, God hath decreed and does ordain and determine evil, disobedience and infidelity; yet without His salutary direction, good pleasure command; but only by way of temptation and trial. Whosoever shall say, that God hath not indignation against evil and unbelief, he is certainly an infidel.

The doctrine of predestination, or the absolute decree of event, both good and evil, is a recognised element in many creeds.[19] This doctrine has given rise to as much controversy among the Moslems, as it did among Christians; but the former, generally, believe in predestination, as being in some respects, conditional.[20]

Five points, however, arise form the doctrine of predestination, as given in detail in the following formula :

1. If the destiny of man is determined by the divine purpose, how can we explain man's freedom of choice. Man is absolutely conscious of personal freedom of action, which it is impossible to deny.
2. If man is affected, in all his actions, by eternal predestination, what then is the meaning of human conduct, and the individual accountability which is the mainspring of moral life?
3. If what is to be, must be, with the overruling and irrevocable Decree of God, what is the use of divine commands and prohibitions, rewards and punishments, promises and threats, and after all, what is the use of Prophets, Books etc.
4. Some acts man are bad, such as tyranny, polytheism, robbery, etc. If these are predestined and predetermined by God, it follows, that to tyrannise, to ascribe plurality to God, or to rob is to render obedience to Him, which obviously enough, is not the case.
5. If infidelity and sin are decreed by God, it follows that God is an favour of sin and infidelity, but to speak thus of God is blasphemy.

I will answer these questions as briefly as possible, not from a philosophical point of view, but from a strictly religious aspect, this book being devoted exclusively to matters of purely religious nature.

The apparent contradiction involved in the doctrine of predestination, may be reasonably solved by considering, that man is not acquainted, in this life with anything of what has been predestined for him by the Almighty God. Therefore, it cannot be suggested, that under the doctrine of predestination, man's personal freedom of choice and action is affected in any way. Man is so created by All-Powerful God, that he is sensible of a personal free will, choice and action, so that belief in predestination by no means interferes with his moral freedom. To speak of man as a free agent, we mean that he is not withheld from action by any external cause, that, morally, he is neither a prisoner, nor a slave, nor paralysed, nor otherwise disabled. Next, we may apply them "free" to the eternal or psychological decision;

Marfat.com

which he is externally free to carry out. In this sense, the freedom of an action evidently consists in the fact, that the action proceeds form the intelligent choice of the agent, and such choice is plainly and strongly contrasted with the mechanical determination which exists in the physical world.

As God's predestination is altogether ą secret to man, human beings are in all ages, made acquainted, through God's prophets, with what duties they should perform, and what prohibitions they must respect, so that no act of disobedience, on the part of man, can be justified on the plea of ignorance of what he ought or ought not to do, or on the plea, that man was actuated to disobey or to sin, by divine decree. Man is not cognisant of anything he was Predestined to do, whether it be good or bad, until he has committed, it by his own choice and own freedom of will, of which he was quite conscious. It is then, and only then, that a man realizes that his act was predestined. On the other hand God's predestination has ever been associated with divine fore-knowledge of all human character and conditions. As the Almighty God predestined a man to sin, God at the same time, foreknew that man would commit the sinful deed, while acting by his won free and intelligent choice. A sinful man can on no account shun the moral responsibility for his deeds, on the plea of having acted upon irrevocable divine predestination, of which he was totally ignorant. Being absolutely conscious of a personal freedom of will and action, an evil doer cannot reasonably justify his action by referring to predestination. In fact, belief and faith in divine predestination can neither necessitate denial of human consciousness of freedom of will, or eliminate the factor of individual responsibility from human conduct. So long as man is conscious of personal freedom of will, choice and action within himself, the sense of individual accountability which is the mainspring of moral life, always remains untouched. The said belief, therefore, should neither interfere with man's enthusiasm for progress, nor deprive him form freedom of will, which faculty he is, undoubtedly, conscious of enjoying.

To believe in heart, as an orthodox Jew, Christian or Moslem is bound to, that whatsoever one had to do, right or wrong, whatsoever has befallen one, the minutest of man, and the meanest event of his life, has been irrevocably predestined by God from eternity; and that no amount of effort to the contrary can alter the course of events predestined by the absolute divine authority, such a purely religious dogma can, on no account, interfere with any amount of human morality. The doctrine of predestination does not imply denial of man's freedom of will and action. Each component part of man is bound by religion, to fulfil some function : the heart and conscience, to believe in God, His attributes and His predestination; the other external members of man, to work, each according, to its respective faculty and aptitude, as recommended by the law. Now, if the heart fulfils its proper function, namely: to believe that nothing whatsoever that has happened, or will happen, in the universe, is contrary to the will of God, the function of no other member is necessarily offended or retarded, as it cannot be suggested, that, under such a religious belief in God and His divine attributes, the eyes shall be prevented from seeing, the ears from hearing, the feet from walking, the tongue from speaking, or any other part of man, from the proper discharge of its respective duty.

Therefore, it is quite unfair and illogical for anyone to claim, that faith in predestination,

Marfat.com

as required by orthodox religion, tends to damp all enthusiasm for progress. Such a claim might be reasonably admitted, only if a man were given accurate foreknowledge of his fate and destiny. If he knew, for instance, from the beginning, that he was doomed to perdition, he might, very naturally, make no effort to resist his destiny, and no attempt at progress : or seeing that he was predestined to salvation, he might make no effort to deserve it. Man, having no foreknowledge whatsoever of his own destiny, his duty lies absolutely in adherence to the law. As far as man's intelligent free action is concerned, he has nothing more to do with the eternal decree of God, than to have perfect faith in them.

Reason and logic, both dictate to man the belief in God, the One, the sole Creator, the absolute Disposer. In like manner, as a cultivator, cannot rightly claim to be the creator of his own harvest, so it is the case with man : he cannot rightly claim to be independently the originator of actions. The Islamic doctrine of predestination may be reduced to two distinct beliefs :

1. That God has determined the destiny of man, not only according to the foreknown character of those whose fate is so determined but also according to God's own will. There is no dispute on this point between divines of all creeds. Judaism, Orthodox Christianity and Islam, all not only agree and acquiesce in this, but they unreservedly admit it, and emphatically declare any possible notion to the contrary to be blasphemy.[21]

2. That man is directly responsible for his own actions, so long as he is master of his free choice. As man is certainly sensible, that he is morally a free agent, he is accountable for all actions affected by his volitional power. In the Koran we read, that God does not saddled a man with responsibility beyond his capacity to bear it. There is a vast sphere of human activity, where man's apparent will enjoys freedom of control and direction. Consequently, a man is held responsible, by religion, for the right or wrong exercise of his faculties. It is, therefore, a matter of the deepest concern to man, to ascertain the rules and regulations which should guide his conduct in that connection. To supply this need, the All-Merciful God has endowed man with intellect, and revelation. By the help of intellect man endeavours to work out his moral and spiritual evolution in all his dealings with his Creator and his fellow creatures. But man's obligation towards God and man, surely involve complication too delicate for unaided human reason. The result of an intellectual error might be the violation of human or divine laws. Hence, the absolute necessity of direct guidance and laws from God to make up for the frailties of reason, and to enlighten man, as to how he ought to regulate his relation with his Maker, as well as with his fellowmen. In obedience to these laws, man can carry out his duties, and attain what is best in life Laws relating to human life, have been summed up in the following verse of the Holy Koran : "Surely God orders justice and good works (to all), and (orders) kindness to relation, and He condemns indecency, illicit deeds, an all wrong. He admonishes you, that you may be mindful."

With regard to man's guidance as to his relation to God, the Holy Koran tells us : "Say : my prayers, my sacrifice my life, my death, is for God, the Lord of the worlds Who has no partner with Him. This I have been ordered, and am the first to submit." In carrying out his duties in life, man must not lose sight of God's ordinances, and of what. He desires

Marfat.com

of him, so that he should in no way satisfy himself or his fellow creatures, by disobeying the Universal Cherisher of all, the Creator of all.

Through his faith in predestination, man can behave faithfully and righteously, since he is confident, that all power, help and sustenance lie only with Him. Man's duty is, to spare no effort in observing the injunctions of his Maker and then he is quite safe.

Prosperity and plenty often tempt man, to turn away form God. Touching this point, the Holy Koran says : "O believers let not your wealth or your children make you forget to remember your God". Man makes use frequently of wealth or your these blessings of God, as a means to encroach upon the rights of others, or as an encouragement to neglect his devotional duties towards God. Therefore the Holy Book wishes it to do be-remembered, the temptation lies hidden under the enjoyment of wealth and offspring.

Even as man is liable to temptation by abundant prosperity, so is he apt to be retarded from the fulfillment of his duties by misfortunes. However, having perfect faith in predestination, a true believer will not forget, that what happens, good or bad, has been predetermined and decreed by God, and that the inevitable must come to pass, in spite of human efforts to the contrary. Therefore he is bound to submit himself cheerfully and resignedly to all trials. Referring to this, the Holy Koran says : "And We will most certainly try you with some fear and hunger and loss of lives and fruits (therefore), O Prophet! give good tidings to the patient who, when misfortune befalls them, say : Verily, we belong to God, and to Him we shall verily return. Those (the patient) are they, on whom heavenly blessings and mercy form their Lord will descend and those are the followers of the right course." Thus Islam teaches, that misfortunes serve as good tidings, and as fore-runners of heavenly blessings. And with a heart full of faith in predestination, a true believer cheerfully submits to hardships and trials. Those having a submissive frame of mind under adverse circumstances, 'On them," says the Holy Koran, "descend the blessings of God". With Islam, a calamity is a mercy in disguise. Alive to the purpose of divine will, a believing Moslem resigns himself with a cheerful heart to his fate. It is God who alone govern the universe and disposes thereof, according to His eternal and irrevocable will. One of the comfort-giving verses of the Koran reads as follows : "Say : O God, Who art the Owner of the Kingdom : Thou givest authority, to whom Thou wilt; and Thou takest away authority, to whom Thou wilt; Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt and Thou humblest whom Thou wilt; in Thy hand is all the good, and Thou art Omnipotent. Thou makest the night to enter into the day, and Thou makest the day to enter into the night. (Thou) bringest forth the living out of the dead, and (Thou) bringest forth the dead out of the living, and (Thou) providest sustenance, to whom Thou wilt, and even so without limit." Thus, under conditions of hardship and misfortune, a true believer will not neglect his duties towards God. With the utterance of his noted formula. "To God we belong, and to Him shall we return", he submits to adversity, and goes on with his duties uninterrupted. On the other hand, if good fortune and prosperity be his luck, he is not to put distrust in abundance and plenty, and so forget his duties towards his Maker, Sustainer and Nourisher. He is warned by revelation, not to make these very blessings of God a pretext for encroachment upon the rights of others, and thou change them into a curse for himself.

Marfat.com

With regard to freedom of human will, the Holy Prophet of Islam has positively declared man's undisputed right, to make a choice between good and evil. Again and again, in the Holy Koran, this point has been emphasized, lest man should forget his own responsibility for his conduct. Indeed, the whole trend of Koranic ethics points in this direction. "Say the Truth is from your Lord, whosoever may wish, he may believe; and whosoever may wish, he may disbelieve," says the Holy Koran. God has moreover pointed out to man the right path, and ordered him to follow it, and the wrong one and warned him against taking it. In this respect the Koran says : "Verily, we have shown to man the right path; he may be grateful or ungrateful" : meaning there is no compulsion, on the part of God, felt by man to bear upon him to adopt this course or that. Again we read: "Verily this is a reminder to all people; for those of you who wish to take the right course." Here too, man has been let alone in the matter of selection. Further on : "It is for God only, to furnish strong proof, and if He so pleased (to influence man) He would have guided you all." This means that Almighty God has chosen to let each man feel, that he is a free agent who acts under an intelligent free will. Denial of interference cannot be made in clearer terms. If God were so pleased, as to enforce His own desire upon man, by depriving him of his personal moral freedom. He would not.have let a single man go astray. "If God were pleased, He would have brought together the whole of humanity into one and the same path", namely, the path of righteousness. But he has so ordained that He made man to feel that there is no compulsion brought to bear upon him, to incline him this way or that. Man is absolutely conscious of being master of himself and the organiser of his own career. He is given power, by which he can accomplish his own desires, in virtue of the moral freedom which he enjoys. However, according to Islam, the power of self-government, with which we are endowed, is a trust, and not a free gift. It not only entrusts our own destiny to ourselves, but it actually trusts, or seems to trust, the whoel final outcome of God's creative work to our treatment of it. This earth, at least, is put into our hands, to make what we will of it and of ourselves, its inhabitants. To this effect, the Holy Koran say : "We have proposed the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they refused to undertake the same, and were afraid to undertake it; but man undertook it, (yet) he is verily unjust and ignorant". This means, that of all God's creations man alone accepted the trust of moral freedom which makes him master of himself, and dignifies and exalts him among the creatures of God. Gifts of all other sorts are nothing, to compare with it. If we had not the power to rule our own actions by our own will, we should be infinitely poorer in moral worth than we are now. Therefore, man should be anxious to be dignified in this respect, but the Holy Koran, in the above verse, asserts, that man is unjust and ignorant in this connection. He is unjust, in that he abuses his moral freedom, in choosing to do wrongful deeds, instead of righteous ones. And he is ignorant, in that he gives no heed to the consequences of his choice, because doing what we know that we ought to do, is not only for the good of the world, but likewise and far more, for the good of ourselves. We derive infinitely more benefit form out own performance of an act of uprightness; and infinitely more harm from an act of wrong, than the good we bestow, or the harm we inflict. The good or ill we do, goes deeply into our nature—refines or coursens it, lifts or lowers it, and is either inspiring or deadening to all that is best in soul and mind. Few men reach old age without saying sadly. "Oh that I could live my life again," because,

Marfat.com

time has shown them their youth for a different development of themselves and a different shaping of their lives. In this connection the Holy Koran says :

"Says, O, my worshippers, who have transgressed against your own souls, despair not of the mercy of God : seeing that God forgiveth all sin : for He is Gracious and Merciful. And be turned unto your Lord, and resign yourselves unto Him, before the punishment comes suddenly upon you, and ye perceive not (the approach thereof); when a soul shall say 'Alas' for that I have been negligent in my duty towards God; verily, I have been one of the scorners; or say : 'If God had directed me, verily, I had been one of the pious'; or say, when it seeth the prepared punishment : '*If I could return once more into the world, I would become one of the righteous*'. But God shall answer : '*My signs came unto thee heretofore, and thou didst charge them with falsehood and was puffed up with pride*; and thou becamest one of the unbelievers." (Koran, Ch. XXXIX).

Conclusion

In brief, it is reasonable, as well as it is universally religious, to believe, that nothing whatsoever, be it a circumstance, an action or a thought, can take place against the will of God. Again, nothing can happen in the world either as proceeding from a human being an animal, or a thing, which God had not, from eternity, known and willed it to be. By "willed" is here meant proper acceptation of the world merely, 'allowed'; it does not mean God's pleasure, nor acceptance or inclination in respect to man's evil deeds.

There is nothing contradictory, in holding the belief in absolute predestination and the belief in self responsibility.

REFERENCES

1. See G. Sale's, Translation of the Koran, chap. III, P. 38 (F. Warne and Co.)
2. See G. Sale's Prelim. Discourse to his translation of the Koran.
3. Mr.G. Sale rightly comments on this phrase "O sister of Aaron" as follow :

   (See Sale's Translation of the Koran).

   Several Christian writers think, the Koran stands convicted of a manifest falsehood in this particular, but I am afraid, the Moahmmadans may avoid the charge, as they do, by several answers. Some say, the virgin Mary had ready a brother named Aaron, who had the same father, but a different mother; other suppose Aaron, the brother of Moses, is there meant, but say, Mary is called his sister, either because she was of the Levitical race (as by her being related Elizabeth; it should seem she was) or by way of comparison; others say, that it was a different person of that name who was contemporary with her, and taken up to heaven, and others, that his manhood only likened her to him, either by may of condemnation or reproach.
4. For some maintained, that he was justly and rally crucified; some insisted, that it was not Jesus who suffered, but another who resembled him in the face others said, he was taken up to heaven, and others, that his manhood only suffered, and that his godhead ascended into heaven.
5. Either referring to the Jews in the time of Jesus who opposed his doctrine or to the Christians, who have fallen into various opinions concerning him; some making him to be God, others the son of God, and others one of the persons of the trinity etc.

Marfat.com

6. Koran : Chap. VI : 113—118.
7. From the Koranic description of Mary being taken for a God by the Christians, some Christian critics of the Koran conclude that the doctrine of the Trinity, according to the Koran, consists of three persons : God, Jesus and Mary, but this is an unwarranted conclusion, Mary is spoken of as being taken for an object of worship by the Christians; but the doctrine of the Trinity is not mentioned here; the Divinity of Mary is not mentioned where the Trinity is poken of Had Mary not been worshipped by the Christians at the "Mother of God", the conclusion would have been safe, that the Koran mistook Mary for the third person of the Trinity. But the doctrine and practice of Mariolatry, as it is called by Protestant controversialists, is too well known. In the catechism of the Roman Church, the following doctrines are to be found : "That she is truly the mother of God, and the second Eve, by whose means we have received blessing and life; that she is the mother of Pity and, very specially our advocate; that her images are of the utmost utility. (Encye Brit. 11th ed. Vol. 17. 813). It is also stated that her intercessions are directly appealed to in the Litany. And further that there were certain women in Thrace, Scythia and Arabia, who were in the habit of worshipping the Virgin as a goddess, the offer of a cake being one of the features of their worship.
8. The Islamic Review August 1921.
9. Reference to the Life of the Prophet in part II of this Book shows how distinctly this prophecy has been fulfilled.
10. See The History of the Arabs in this book or anywhere else.
11. George Sale : Perlim, Discourse.
12. See Sir William Muir's "The Life of Mohammad".
13. See George Sale's Prelim, Discourse.
14. It is to be noted, that the message of the Holy Prophet Mohammad is frequently called "the Truth" in the Holy Koran, as in xvii : 81 : "And say, The Truth has come, and the falsehood has vanished."
15. Koran, Ch. ixxxi.
16. "The old Jewish writers make mention as well of the books to be produced at the last day, wherein men's action are registered, as of the balance, wherein they shall be weighed; and the Scriptures themselves seem to have given the first notion of both". (G. Sale Prelim. Disc.)
17. Koran, ch. x.
18. G. Sale : Prelim, Disc.
19. We read the following statement in Chamber's Encyclopaedia :
    "The doctrine of predestination is explicity enunciated in Rom. 8 : 29f 9, 10, 11, and Eph. 1 : 4f, 11, and it is a recognised element in many creeds (*e.g.* Conf. of Faith, III : Chruch or England Atricles, XVII). Further we read in the some work. "The Apostle Paul was doubtless aware of inconsistency for it was a crux of Jewish theology (see Ederstein's Jesus the Messiah, 1 : 316ff.); but the Apostle was accustomed, to isolate any particular doctrine, as occasion required, without being careful, to reconcile to with the real or apparent antithesis. (See Chamber's Cye. Art. Predestination).
20. See, "The manners and customs of the Modern Egyptian" by Ed. Lane, p. 69.
21. Chamber's Molesworth's Encyelopaedia art. Predestination.

17

Exposition of the Religion of Islam

The word Islam which literally signifies 'resignation' (to God's will), is a comprehensive name commonly applied to the religion of the followers of the Prophet Mohammad. It embodies the various sections of the Mohammadan Law which God has established for the guidance of the people, both for the worship of their Lord, and for the duties of life.

These sections are five in number, namely : Beliefs; Practical Devotion; Transactions; Moralities; and Punishments.

Section—I. BELIEFS

Belief embraces the six articles of the Mohammadan faith, namely : *(a)* God; *(b)* His angels; *(c)* His books; *(d)* His prophets; *(e)* The day of Resurrection; *(f)* Predestination:

Section—II. DEVOTIONS

Devotions are sub-divided into five articles of practice : *(a)* Recital of the Creed; *(b)* Prayer to God; *(c)* Paying legal alms; *(d)* Fasting the month of Ramadan; *(e)* Pilgrimage to the Mosque of Mecca once in a lifetime, if means allow it.

Devotion also embrace legal warfare for the defence of the religion of Islam.

Section—III. TRANSACTIONS

Transactions include such duties as are required between man and man, and may be divided into three sub-division, namely : Contests; Nuptials; and Securities. Almost all the various sections of civil jurisprudence relating to barter, sale, agency, larceny, marriage, divorce, dower, partnership, claims etc., are embraced under those three heads.

Section—IV. MORALITIES

Moralities embrace the consideration of all those moral excellences which are enjoined in the Koran and in the teachings of the Prophet, such as, Sincerity; Confidence in God; Humility; Resignation; Keeping worldly ambitions within bounds; Giving good counsel and advice; Contentment; Liberality; Love to God and man; Patience; Ethical instruction and rules of Conduct relating to (1) salutation, (2) asking permission to enter a house, (3) shaking hands, and embracing, (4) rising up, (5) sitting, sleeping and walking, (6) sneezing and yawning, (7) laughing, (8) names, (9) poetry and eloquence, (10) backbiting and abuse, (11) promises, (12) joking, (13) boasting and party spirit.

Marfat.com

Section—V. PUNISHMENTS

Punishments include (1) penalties exacted for manslaughter or serious bodily injuriec, (2) punishment for theft by the loss of a hand, (3) punishment for fornication and adultery : stoning for a married person, and one hundred lashes for an unmarried person, (4) punishment for slander by eighty lashes, (5) punishment for apostasy by death, (6) punishment for inebriation by eighty lashes.

My object in writing this volume, however, is quite limited. It is to deal only with the first section of the religion of Islam, namely Beliefs-which embrace all matters of faith.

Devotions which include all matters of practice, as well as the articles embodied in the rest of the sections shall be the subject of volumes II to follow.

DIGEST OF THE MOHAMMADAN CREED

The creed of Islam demands faith in the following :

(1) God; (2) The Angles of God; (3) The Books of God; (4) The Apostles of God; (5) The day of Judgment or Resurrection; (6) Predestination.

I will now deal with each of these articles separately :

1. Belief in God

Belief in God is best represented by the follow formula which every sunni, or orthodox Moslem must profess sincerely :

God is one and has no partner; Singular, without any like Him; Uniform, having no contrary; Separate, having no equal; Ancient, having no first; Everlasting, having no end; Ever-existing, without termination; Perpetual and constant, with neither interruption nor termination; Ever qualified with the attributes of supreme greatness; nor is He bound to be determined by lapse of ages or times. But he is the Alpha and Omega (the First and the Last), and the Evident[1] and the Hidden.[2]

What God Is Not

God is not a formed body; nor a measurable substance, neither does He resemble bodies, either in their being measurable or divisible. Neither is He a substance, nor do substances exist in Him; neither is He an accidental form, nor do accidentals exist in Him.

He is not like anything that exists, neither does anything resemble Him. He is not determined by dimensions, nor contained within bounds; nor is He surrounded by sides; nor is He comprised within the heavens or earth. He sits upon the throne, after the manner which He Himself has described, and in that same sense which He Himself meant : it is a sitting, far removed from any notion of contact, or resting upon, or local situation; but both the throne itself, and whatsoever supports it, are sustained by the goodness of His power, and are conquered by His will. He is above His throne and above all things, but so above, as at the same time not to be a whit nearer to the throne and the heaven, or farther from the earth.

Marfat.com

God is exalted by infinite degrees above the throne, no less than He is exalted above the earth, and at the same time, He near to everything that has a being; nay, he is nearer to men than their jugular veins, and is witness to everything : though His nearness is not like the nearness of bodies; neither is His essence like the essence of bodies. He does not exist in anything, nor does anything exist in Him; but He is too exalted, to be contained in any place, and too holy, to be determined by time; for He existed before He created time and place; and He is now as He always existed. He is also distinct form the creatures by His attributes neither is there anything besides Himself in His essence, nor is His essence in any other besides Him.

He is too holy to be subject to change, or nay local motion; neither do any accidents dwell in Him, nor any contingencies befall Him; but He abides through all generations with His glorious attributes, free form all dissolution. As to the attribute of perfection, He wants no addition of perfection. As to being, He is known to exist by the apprehension of the understanding, and seen as He is by the eyes, through a favour which will be vouchsafed out of His mercy and grace, to the holy in the eternal mansion, competing their joy by vision of His glorious presence.

God's Life and Power

God is living, powerful, mighty, omnipotent, not liable to any defect or impotence, neither slumbering nor sleeping, nor being subject to decay or death. To Him belongs the Kingdom, the power and the might. His is the domination and the excellence and the creation and the command. The heavens are folded in His hands, and all creatures are held within His grasp. He is the sole creator of beings and producer of things, and He is the communicator of existence, and from Him everything has its beginning. He created men and their works, and destined their maintenance, and determined their lives. Nothing that is possible, can escape His grasp, nor can the vicissitudes of things elude His power. The effects of His might are innumerable, and the objects of His knowledge infinite.

God's Knowledge

God knows all things that can be known, and comprehends whatsoever comes to pass, from the extremities, of the earth to the highest heavens : even the weight of an atom cannot escape His knowledge, either in earth or heaven. He knows all things hidden or manifest. He knows the number of leaves of the trees, of the grains of wheat and of sand. Events past and future are known to Him. He knows what enters into the heart of man, and what he utters with his mouth. He alone, except those to whom He has revealed them, knows the invisible things. He is free from forgetfulness, negligence and error. His knowledge is eternal, it is not posterior to His essence.

God's Will

God wills those things to be that exist, and disposes of all accidents. Nothing passes in the earth or in the heavens, neither little nor much, nor small nor great nor good nor evil, nor profitable nor hurtful, nor faith nor infidelity, nor knowledge nor ignorance, nor prosperity nor adversity, nor increase nor decrease, nor obedience nor rebellion, but by His determinate

counsel and decree, and His definite sentence and will. Nor does the wink of him that sees, nor the subtlety of him that thinks, exceed the bounds of His will; but it is He who gave all things their existence or being. He is the Creator and Restorer and the sole operator of what He pleases; there is no one to reverse His decree, or delay what He has determined, nor is there any refuge for man from rebellion against Him, but only His help and mercy; nor has man any power to perform any duty towards Him, but through His love and will. Though men, genii, angles and devils should conspire together, either to put one single atom in motion, or cause it to cease its motion, without His will and approbation, they would not be able to do so. His will subsists in His essence, with the rest of His attributes, by which He willed from eternity the existence of those things that He decreed, which were produced in their proper seasons, according to His eternal will, without any Before or After, and with agreement both with His knowledge and will, and not by methodising of thought, nor waiting for a proper time, for which reason no one thing is in Him a hindrance from another.

Cod's Hearing and Sight

God—praised be His name—is Hearing and Seeing, and Hears and sees. No audible sound however still, escapes His Hearing; nor is anything visible so small as to escape His sight; for distance is no hindrance to His hearing, nor darkness to His sight. He sees without pupil or eye-lid and hears without any passage or ear, even as He knows without a brain and performs His actions without assistance of any corporeal limb and creates without any instrument, for His attributes are not like those of men, any more His Essence is like theirs.

God's Word

God commands, forbids, promises, threatens by an eternal word, subsisting in His essence. Neither is it like the word of the creatures, nor does it consist in a voice, arising from the commotion of the air and the collision of bodies; nor in letters which are separated by the joining together of the lips, or the motion of the tongue. The Koran, the Law, the Gospel and the Psalms are Books sent down by Him to His Apostles. The Koran, indeed, is read with tongues, written in books and kept in hearts : yet, as subsisting in the essence of God, it does not become liable to separation and division, when it is transferred into the hearts and the papers. Thus Moses also heard the Word of God, without voice or letter, even as the saints behold the essence of God, without substance. And since these are His attributes, He lives and knows and wills and hears and sees and speaks, by life and knowledge and will and hearing and sight and word, not by His simple essence.

God's Works

God—praised be His name—exists after such a manner, that nothing besides His has any being, but what is produced by His operation, and flows from His justice, after the best, most excellent, most perfect and most just model. He is, moreover, Wise in His works, and Just in His decrees. But His justice is not to be compared with the justice of men. For a man may be held to act unjustly by invading the possessions of another; but to God, inasmuch as there is nothing which may belong to any other besides Himself, no wrong is imputable, for He cannot be considered as meddling with things not appertaining to Him. All things, Himself only expected, genii, men, devils, angels, heaven, earth animals, plants, substance and their

Marfat.com

attributes, all are His creation. He created them by His power out of nothingness and brought them into existence, when as yet they were nothing at all, but He alone existing from eternity, neither was there any other with him. Now, He created all things from the beginning, for the manifestation of His Power and His Will, and for the confirmation of His word which was true from all eternity; not that He stood in need of them, nor wanted them; but He manifestly declared His glory in creating and producing and commanding, without being under any obligation, nor out of necessity. Loving, *kindness, favour, and grace and beneficence,* belong to Him; whereas it is in His power to pour forth upon men a variety of torments and to afflict them with various kinds of sorrows and diseases; and should He do this, His justice would not be arraigned, nor would He be chargeable with injustice. Yet He rewards those who worship Him for their obedience, on account of His promise and beneficence, not for their merit of necessity, since there is nothing which He is under an obligation to perform; nor can any injustice be supposed in Him, nor can He be under any obligation to any person whatsoever. That His creatures, however, should be bound to serve him, arises form His having declared by the tongues of the Prophets, that it was due to Him by them. The worship of God is not simply the dictates of the understanding, but He sent messengers to carry to men His commands and promises and admonitions : the veracity of these messengers He proved by manifest miracles, whereby men are obliged to give credit to them in those things which they relate.

Mr. George Sale rightly comments on the Mohammadan notion of God as follows :

"That both Mohammed and those among his followers who are reckoned orthodox, had and continue to have, just and true notions of God an His attributes, appears plain form the Koran itself and all the Mohammedan divines, so that it would be loss of time, to refuse those who suppose the God of Mohammed to be different from the true God and only a fictious deity or idol of his own creation."[3]

I will now give interpretation of some quotations from the Koran, bearing on the essence of God; this subject forming such an important feature of the teaching of the religion of Islam :

The Unity of God; "Say : He is God, the Singular, God the Support He begettheth not, nor is He begotten, nor is anything equal unto Him."[4]

"Truly your God is but one.[5] Lord of the Heavens and of the Earth, and of all that is between them[6] and Lord of the East and of the West.[7] God, There is no deity but He, Most excellent are His attributes."[8]

Proofs of His existence "The (God) bringeth forth the living out of the dead, and He bringeth the dead out of the dead out of the living, and He quickeneth the earth after it hath been dead; and in like manner shall ye be brought forth (from your graves). Of His signs (one is), that He hath created you dust; and behold, ye (are become) men, spread over the face of the earth. And of His signs (another is), that He hath created for you, out of your selves, wives, that ye may cohabit with them; and hath put love and compassion between you : verily herein are signs unto people who consider. And of His signs (are also), the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variety of your languages and of your

Marfat.com

complexions; verily herein are signs unto men of understanding. And of His sings (are), your sleeping by night and by day and your seeking (to provide for yourselves) of His abundance; verily herein (are signs unto people who hearken. Of His signs (other are) that He showeth you the lightning, to strike terror, and to give hope (of rain), and that He sendeth down water from heaven, and quickeneth thereby the earth, after it hath been dead : verily herein are signs unto people who understand. And of His signs (this also is one, namely) that the heavens and the earth stand firm at His command : here-after, when He shall call ye out of the earth at one summons, behold, ye shall come forth..."[9]

When adversity befalleth men, they call upon their Lord, turning unto Him; afterwards, when He hath caused them to taste of His mercy, behold, a part of them associate (other deities) with their Lord; showing themselves ungrateful for the favours which We have bestowed on them".... (Koran).

"When We cause men to taste mercy, they rejoice therein; but it evil befalleth them, for that which their hands have before committed, be hold, they despair. (It is) God Who Hath created you, and hath provided food for you; hereafter will He cause you to die; and after that, will He raise you again to life". (Koran).

"(It is) God Who created you in weakness, and after weakness hath given (you) strength; and after strength, he will (again) reduce (you) to weakness, and grey hairs : He createth that which He pleaseth; and He (is) the Wise, the Powerful" (Koran).

God's Omnipresence Asserted

"There is no private discourse among three persons, but He is the fourth of them; nor (among) five, but He is the sixth of them; neither (among) a smaller number than this, nor a larger, but He is with them, wheresoever they be : and He will declare unto them that which they have done, on the day of resurrection; or God knoweth all things" (Koran).

God's Omnipotence

"God, There is no deity but He, the Living, the Eelf—subsisting : Neither slumber seizeth Him nor sleep; His, whatsoever is in the heavens, and whatsoever is on the earth. Who is He that can intercede with Him, but by His permission? He knoweth what hath been before them and what shall be after them; yet nought of His knowledge shall they grasp, save What He willeth. His seat reaches over the heavens and the earth, and the upholding of both is no burden unto Him; and He is the High and the Great" (Koran).

Creator of All Things

"He causes the dawn to appear, and hath ordained the night for rest, and the sun and the moon for computing time. The ordinance of the Mighty, the Wise" (Koran).[10]

"And it is He Who hath ordained the stars for you, that ye may be guided thereby in the darkness of the land and of the sea. Clear have We made Our signs to men of knowledge" (Koran).

"And it is He Who produced you from one man and hath (provided for you) and abode and resting place. Clear have We made our signs for men of in sight" (Koran).

Marfat.com

"And it is He Who sendeth rain from Heaven, and We bring forth by it the buds of all the plants, and from them bring We forth the green foliage, and the close growing grain and palm trees with sheaths of clustering dates, and gardens of grapes, and the olive and the pomegranate, like and unlike. Look ye on their fruits, when they ripen and bear fruit. Truly herein are signs unto people who believe. This is God your Lord. There is no deity but He, the creator of all things, therefore worship Him alone; and He watcheth over all things..." (Koran).

"We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, and no weariness touched Us" (Koran).

Perfect in His Works

"Blessed by He in Whose hand is the Kingdom, and over all things is He potent.

"Who hath created death and life, to prove who of you will be most righteous in deed; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving" (Koran).

"Who hath created seven heavens one above another. No defect canst thou see in the creation of the God of mercy; repeat the gate : seest thou a single-flaw? (Koran).

Then twice more repeat the gaze : they gaza shall return to thee dulled and weary".

The Light of Heaven and Earth

"God is the Light of the Heavens and of the Earth, His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp—the lamp encased in glass—the glass, as it were a glistening star. From a blessed tree it is lighted : the alive tree neither Eastern nor Western, whose oil shines out as it were, even though fire touched it not. It is light upon light. God guideth whom He willeth to His light, and God setteth forth parables to men, for God knoweth all things" (Koran).

Provides for All

"Whoso chooseth this quickly passing life, quickly will We bestow thereon that which We please—even on him We choose; afterwards We will appoint hell for him, in which he shall burn—disgraced, outcast.

"But they who choose the life to come and strive after it, as ti should be striven for, being also believers –as for these, their striving shall be grateful (to God).

"To all—both to these and those—will We prolong the gifts of (Us We) you Lord; for not to any shall the gifts of thy Lord be denied.

"See how We have caused some of them to excel others; but the next life shall be greater in its grades, and greater in excellence.

"Set not up another Lord with God, lest thou sit thee down disgraced, helpless (Koran).

The Lord ordained that ye worship none but Him...." (Koran).

His Words are Countless

"Say : Should the sea become ink, to write the words of my Lord, the sea would surely fail,

Marfat.com

ere the words of my Lord would fail, though we brought (other seas) like it in aid....(Koran).

"If all the trees that are upon earth were to become pens, and if God shoult after the swell the sea into seven seas (of ink) His words would not be exhausted; for God is Mighty and Wise." (Koran).

Has No Offspring

"And they say, 'God hath a son' : No; Praise be to Him. But—His is whatever is in the Heavens and the Earth. All obey Him. (Koran).

"Sole make of the Heavens and of the Earth And when He decreeth a thing, He only saith to it, 'Be' and it is..(Koran)

"Yet have they assigned the jins to God as His associates, though He created them; and in their ignorance they have falsely ascribed to Him sons and daughters. Glory be to Him and high let Him be exalted above that which they attribute to Him. (Koran).

"Sole maker of the Heavens and the Earth; how, when He hath no consort, should He have a son? He hath created every thing, and He knoweth every thing.

"This is God your Lord. There is no deity but He, the creator of all things; therefore worship Him alone, and He watches over all things. They say; 'The God of Mercy hath gotten offspring'. Now have ye done a monstrous thing. Almost might the very Heavens be rent thereat, and the Earth cleave asunder and the mountains fall down in fragments, that they ascribe a son to the God of Mercy, when it beseemeth not the God of Mercy to beget a son..."

Created All Beings to Adroe Him

"I have not created Jins and men, but that they should worship Me". (Koran).

How He Speaketh with Man

"It is not for man that God should speak with him, but by vision, or form behind a veil : Or, He sendeth a messenger to reveal, by Hhis permission, what He Will : for He is exalted (and) Wise.

"Thus have We sent the Spirit (Gabriel) to thee with a revelation, by our command; Thou knewest not, ere this, what the 'Book' was, or what the (true) faith was. But We have ordained it for a light : by it will We guide whom We please of Our servants. And thou (O. Mohammad), shalt guide their feet into the right way." (Koran).

God is Creator of Good and Evil Deeds, and Yet Good is from Him, but Evil from Man in Consequence of his Ignorance or Disobedience :

"By the sun and his noonday brightness; By the moon when she followeth him; By the day when it revealeth his glory; By the night when it enshroudeth him; By the earth and Him Who spread it forth; By a soul and Him Who perfected it revealed to it the way of Wickedness and the way of piety (to choose between them)—Blessed now I she who hath

Marfat.com

kept it pure, and undone is he who hath corrupted it." "If good fortune betide them, they say, 'this is from God' and if evil betide them, they say 'this is from thee (the Prophet). Say : All is from God : Whatever good betideth thee, is from God, and whatever betideth thee, of evil, is from thyself; and We have sent thee to mankind as an, apostle : God is thy sufficient witness." (Koran)

Omniscient and Omnipotent

"And with Him are the keys of the secret things; none knoweth them, but He : He knoweth whatever is on the land and in the sea; and no leaf falleth but He knoweth it; neither is there a grain in the darkness of the earthy, nor a thing green or sere, but it is noted in a distinct writing".[11]

All-Seeing but Unseen

"The eyes do not reach Him, but He reaches the eyes : and He is the Subtle, the All informed."

"It is He who in six days created the Heavens and the Earth, then ascended Hid throne. He knoweth the Which entereth the earth and that which goeth forth from it, and what cometh down from Heaven, and what mounteth up to it; and whatever ye are, He with you, and God beholdeth all your actions.

His is the Kingdom of the Heaven and the Earth : and to God shall all things return He causeth the night in pass into the day and He causeth the day to pass into the night; and He knoweth the very secrets of the boom."

The Existence of God

Of all the doctrines and beliefs that have been objected to in this age of materialism, the greatest is the belief in the existence of God. The first demand which an atheist makes is : "If you show God to me, I will believe in Him. How can I believe in him without seeing Him?" Western influence have gone a long way towards effacing from the hearts of many young men, the imprint of the Divine Being, and hundreds of college students are others, have begun to deny existence of God. There are thousands of persons who, though refraining from an open declaration of their news through fear of the community, have really noaith in Him; therefore, I submit the following suggestions on the subject, that haply some foutunate soul may be benefited thereby.

Man knows different things by means of different senses. Some things we know by means of seeing, some by tasting. A colour is known by seeing, not by smelling, touching or tasting. If anybody should say, that he will acknowledge a colour, only if he is made to hear the sound of it, would not such a proposition be considered unreasonable? Similarly, fragrance is known by means of smelling. Now, if anyone should say that he will consider a rose to be fragrant, only if he is made taste its fragrance, would such a person be regarded as wise? On the other hand, if any body seeks to know, by smelling, things which can be known by tasting, such as sourness and sweetness, bitterness and saltiness, he will never be able to do so. Therefore it is not right, that we should accept those things only which we can behold with our eyes, and disbelieve those things which are not recognizable by the eye. How absurd is, then the demand that God must be shown to us before we believe in Him.

Marfat.com

Moreover, there are certain things in man himself, the existence of which he recognises, without having seen them. We do not know all things merely by seeing, but they are known by means of five different senses. Now, there are many things which are not knowable, even by these gateways of knowledge, there being other ways of knowing them. For instance, reason, memory and intelligence are things which are not denied by anybody; yet nobody has ever seen, heard, tasted, smelt or touched them. How did we, then, come to know that there were such things as reason, or memory, or intelligence? Again, has anybody ever seen, smelt, touched or tasted energy. Even the simplest man can see that we have not known these things by means of the five senses, but that there are other evidences that have led us to the knowledge of their existence. We see that when a man is confronted with a difficulties, he thinks for a while, and then devises a plan, by which he is able to solve his difficulty. When we see difficulties being removed in this way, we conclude that there is something in man which is of service to him on such occasions, and we call it reason. Thus, we do not become aware of the existence of reason directly through the five senses, but we obtain a knowledge of it by means of its wonderful manifestations. Similarly when we see a man able to carry heavy loads, and some man, able to carry heavier weights than others, we infer that there is a capacity in man, which enables him to bear these burdens, and which some persons possess in a greater degree than others. This capacity we call strength. We have not seen strength, but we have seen the deeds that are done by strength, and from these we have concluded its existence.

Thus, we find that the more subtle a thing is, the more hidden it is from the human eye, and it is by actions, and not by the five senses, that we perceive the existence of such things.

But God is the subtlest of all. How unjust is it, then, to say that we cannot believe in the existence of God, unless He is shown to us. Has anybody ever seen electricity? But can we, then, deny the transmission of messages and signals to long distances, lighting and the working of machinery by means of electricity? The discovery of either has brought about a revolution in the world of physical science, but has any scientist been able to find it by means of his five senses? But if we deny its existence, we find ourselves unable to explain, how the rays of the sun reach the earth. How unjust is, then, the demand that in order to be believed in, God must be visible to the eye, while there are so many things which are believed in, though they are not visible to the eye, or perceptible by any other of the five senses. God is visible, but only to the eyes that are capable of seeing Him. But if anybody is desirous of seeing Him, He is before the whole world through His powers, and in spite of His being hidden, He is the most apparent of all. This fact has been briefly, but very exquisitely mentioned in the Holy Koran in the following words :

"The eyes do not reach Him, but He reacheth the eyes : and He is the Subtle, the All informed."

In this verse, God draws the attention of man to the fact, that his eyes are not capable of seeing Him, for He is subtle, and subtle things cannot be perceived by the eyes. What, then, is the way of knowing God? The Koran answers this question by saying : "And He reacheth the eyes :" namely though the eyes of man are not capable of seeing Him, yet he reveals Himself to man by a display of His powers, and by a manifestation of His attributes. Manifold

Marfat.com

are the ways in which He reveals Himself to man. He displays His unlimited power sometimes by terror-striking signs, some-times by signs of mercy, and at others, by accepting prayers. If God were to be believed in, only if He were perceptible by the eye, then we should have to deny the existence of about four-fifths of the things of the world, or the existence of all things, if we accept as true the view of certain philosophers who allege, that nobody can see the substance of anything in the world, and that it is only the form that we see.

We know very little of God, and yet we know that God exists; that there is a Great Mysterious Power, at work behind the Universe.

In ancient times, Nature, or the forces of Nature, were deemed to be freakish, capricious powers, personified, to popular intelligence, as demons, and the like. Now we know that there is nothing freakish or capricious about Nature, that Nature works in accordance with a fixed law—the law of the Universe, that law laid and established by the Great Mysterious Power at work behind the Universe.

All we know of that Great Mysterious Power is compounded of all we know of the various laws—discovered from time to time—which govern the Universe.

There are three main laws in the Universe—the Law of Creation, the Law of Substance and the Law of Evolution; so if we seek, as it were, to personify the Great Mysterious Power, and clothe Him with attributes that we moral men can comprehend, we shall endeavour to visualise him as Creator, Sustainer and Evolver.

The Arabic language has one word which comprises all three ideas—*Rabb-ul-Alameen*; the word *Rabb* signifying Creator, Sustainer, and one who has endowed every object with the capacity of ultimate development,—thereby anticipating the doctrine of Evolution, many centuries before Darwin gave his theories to the world.

At every evolutionary stage of matter, however transient it be, we find a course prescribed, and an organisation pre-ordained....Nature everywhere obeying the Law.

As the Holy Koran says : "And to Allah does obeisance whatever is in heaven and earth—willingly or unwillingly."

Over and over again, the Holy Koran lays down with great clarity, that a Reign of Law exists, dominating the whole material world; and every day, fresh discoveries of science do but prove inspired accuracy of the Sacred Book. For after all, this is the sum-total of all scientific discovery,—that all growth and all development of every element in Nature, is under the Rule of the Law.

Is, therefore, this Reign of Law,—this mechanism, as it were, of rule and regulation,—intentional? Or is it accidental?

Call it mechanism if you will; but can you dissociate mechanism, from mind?

The machine itself cannot think; but what of the mind that made it? Mechanism cannot construct itself.

In all human mechanism, we believe in the priority of laws and principles, on which

Marfat.com

certain mechanism is working. We acknowledge the pre-existence of the mind that devised the machine, and set it working.

Why do we hesitate, when we come to the great mechanism of Nature? I suppose, we are afraid lest, if we once make such an admission, we shall have to accept Law, as separate from Matter,—to admit that Mind has priority over Substance.

About seventy years ago, the Atomic theory was the popular craze. The Atom was our great God, our first cause and origin; but later, we found his god itself a slave to Law. It was found to be not an origin, but a product of some electronic specialization, which in its turn receive its birth, not as an accident, but under a Law—the Law of Condensation—from the collocation of ethereal specks. But this ether, as it is called, is, in its turn, a law—ridden entity.

Ernst Haeckel and others, refusing to admit the priority of Mind to Matter, sought a way out by regarding matter and energy as one and the same thing, with "law-abidingness" as a permanent characteristic and calling it Law-Substance. Law-Substance, therefore, is a first cause, self-creator, and the creator of other things,—self-existing, and the maintainer of subsequent growth, omnipresent, and all-pervading, indestructible and infinite; add to these the attributes of all-knowing and all-powerful, designer and regularizer, though you style yourself atheist or free-thinker, you believe in the God of Islam. As the Hoy Koran says : "And to Him doth obey what is in the heavens and the earth. And a sign to them is the night; we draw forth form it the day, then lo, they are in the dark; and the sun runs on to a term appointed for it; that is the ordinance of the Mighty and the knowing. And as for the moon. We have ordained for it stages, still it becomes again as an old dry palm-branch. Neither is it allowable to the sun, that he should overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day. All float on in a sphere" (Koran XXXIV, 37 : 40). Thus is the whole Solar System under, Divine Ordinance.

What was that Law—the Law of Gravity,—"evolved from accidence," what made the earth stand on its orbit, with its axis inclined?

What a contradiction in terms—law and accident. To what lengths will we not go 'to avoid belief in the Divine Ordinance.

Is the camera an accident? The lens, the sensitive paper. The light regulating contrivance, and so forth, all suggest design and mind; and yet the camera is but the crudest copy of an eye which is, presumably, a thing evolved at random. And what about the feeling that the image reflected produces? The lens of the camera reflects the image, but it does not see, it does not feel; whereas the eye sends a thrill into the very soul, when we see anything beautiful.

Can we give or receive a telephone message with out an "exchange"? Some *design* to connect the giver and the receiver is indispensable.

The brain of an army—known in modern parlance as General Head Quarters—is preeminently the product of design. Is the brain of man just a haphazard contrivance, meaningless in its inception?

We sign a distict design to every one of the hundred and one pipes fixed, in the machinery of an ordinary steam engine. Are the million and one nerves that work so miraculously in our own bodies, purposeless and without intent?

Yet, I could even worship this Fetish of Accident, if all these defined movements of our planet had failed to produce desirable results, making for our benefit. And this being so, I am compelled, to believe in some Will, under whose control Nature works, not blindly. The alternation of day and night—which causes changes in the weather, affecting the atmosphere, changing the course of the winds, bringing the rainy seasons and the dry weather, in a desired order; the withering of nature, and its resuscitation; these, and the life of man himself, depending on the peculiar bend of the earth sphere towards its orbit, are these all at random?

You will not find a single thing in the realm of Nature which is unconnected with your own existence. As the Book says : "Those who remember Allah... And reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, (say) : Our Lord—Who looks to our sustenance and maintenance, —Thou hast not created all this in vain. Glory be to Thee." (Koran III, 190).

The unintelligible phenomena of yesterday are, today, instinct with a great and real purpose; and so it will be with the milliards of things which still baffle us. This being the case, I have every right to suppose that every object in Nature admits of my using it for my benefit—if only I know how,—and is subservient to me under the ordinance of some mind, which I call Allah; for, did you ever think of a contrivance, or scheme out a design, in the working out of which you did not find the necessary aids already existing in Nature?

But you will say, things in themselves are not subject to design; it is only man's intelligent use of them that makes them useful.

We all know that light, and the colour known as green, strengthen the sight; and green is the prevailing colour in Nature after light. But, it is said, the green colour was not made intentionally to strengthen sight; rather the eye became accustomed to it, and so derived benefit from it.

But consider the case of the mole. The mole has eyes, but being generally away from the light, it is blind. It cannot make its surroundings subservient to its sight. Whence it may be seen, to what an extent the eye is indebted to light and green colour.

In support of his theory, that Nature is not with purpose intrinsically, but that its purpose is, as it were, of man's contriving. Ernst Haeckel adduces the illustration of powder.

Powder was for ages lying useless and unused;—by finding use for it we have invested it with a purpose. But that is tantamount to asserting that inquiries have invested powder with its properties, or in other words that the purpose of the explosive was already in it, but in a dormant state; and that it is due to us, that it he become active. All of which tends rather to prove design, than otherwise. But there are other ways of looking at it.

If a mind works upon material, giving it shape to serve a certain purpose, it is impossible for another person, to use, that material in a way other than that in which it was designed by

Marfat.com

its maker. If you deny the design of its maker, you are looking for trouble and wasting your effort.

Here are pieces of iron and wood before me : I use them in making a machine and any person desirous of using that machine, must do so in the way intended by me and in that way only.

Can you use the things that God has made, otherwise than in the way intended by Him?

Your body is a wonderful machine,—endowed with numerous faculties, to which are added Free-will, and the power of discretion. But can you use your nose for seeing? Or can you eat through you ear?

This machine of your body had been fashioned by an Intelligence and a Mind, and if you act contrary to its designs, your actions will not be acceptable in the realm of Nature. For thus says the Holy Koran : "Is it, then, other than Allah's way that they seek to follow; and to Him submits whoever is in the heaven or on the earth, willingly or unwillingly....And whoever desires a way other than submission (Islam) it shall not be accepted from him; and in the end, he shall be the loser." (Koran III, 82-84).

Again, if a particular form of matter involves, in its being, certain principles, the knowledge and application of which, alone make the realisation of that purpose possible, then it is certain that a mind has preordained it. If the small form of matter had existed independently of such principles and if there had been no need of their knowledge, nor had any advantage accrued to us in our application of such knowledge, then one might, perhaps, deny the purpose behind it.

The Holy Koran tells us, that everything in Nature is for our benefit, and further apprises us of the principles which will enable us thoroughly to make use of them : "The Beneficient God taught the Koran. He created man, taught him the mode of expression. The sun and the moon follow a *reckoning and the herb do obey* (*Him*). And the heaven : He raised it on high; and He made the *measure*; that you may not be *inordinate in respect of the measure*; and keep up the *balance* with equity, and do not *make the Measure* deficient. And he earth He has set it for living creatures; therein are fruit and palms having sheathed clusters, and the grain with (its) husk and fragrance. Which then of the bounties of the Lord will you reject"? (LV, 1-13).

Not the words in italics. The Whole universe has been regulated with mathematical precision; and that we may derive the best advantage from it, we must respect the *measures*,—find out these *reckonings* and *measures*, and not make them *deficient*.

Every created thing, from the stars of heaven to the smallest herbs that grow on the earth, observes rules laid down with mathematical reckoning, and observes measures, prescribed for its creation and development.

In short everything that is created in this universe, is based on mathematical principles; and all our scientific researches owe their existence to this science of measure and reckoning.

I could agree with Ernst Haekel, if man, in this search for purpose in Nature, could

Marfat.com

disregard these mathematical principle. In reality we did not create purpose for Nature; we simply discovered those measures and rules which had been laid down for the working out of the purpose.

Can we, then, deny, behind the working of Nature, the existence of some Great Mind.....the Regularizer, the Reckoner and the Measurer? Let us, in the words of the Holy Koran, " glorify the Name of Our Lord Most High, Who crates, then balances; Who measures, then guides."

Does evolution of matter really consist in the development of its potentialities? Is not the human organism proved, by biological research, to be the final and best evolution of matter?

The consciousness which is evolved out of animated matter, in the animal kingdom, in the form of impulses, evolves into natural passion in man. But this is not the final growth. In its turn, it must evolve ethics and high philosophy. Where, then, is the constructive ability, inherent in matter, which should now work all the more vigorously, to sublimate my consciousness into high moral and philosophic growth? Do I possess a nature which automatically distinguishes between Right and Wrong? Or must I cultivate such an nature, through guidance? Do I, by nature, nauseate at wrong philosophy? Do I, by instinct, spurn things injurious to my intellect? Do I discern between wholesome and unwholesome food, without, guidance? Man, who represents the highest possible form of evolved matter, is hopelessly destitute of that constructive ability for the evolution of this intellect, which discriminates so unerringly in the physical building of organism. The very fact that, as far as the unconscious growth of matter goes, this constructive ability works so splendidly, but disappears on the rise of consciousness, proves conclusively, that it was not an inherernt faculty in matter, but an external guidance—guidance form the Source that has been called *Rabb*—Who is the God of Islam.

If, then, the scientific world agree, that Law predominates in matter, force and energy and if it, also believes in Monism, it follows that it must believe in one design and in one mind. There may be a hundred and one laws at work in Nature, but they all coverge on one purpose. On short, Law is, and must be obeyed, if the world is to go on at all. Law is the "Obeyed" Entity and in this connection, the reader may be interested to learn, that the word Allah, Who is the object of worship with Moslem, literally means "The Obeyed."

"God says," according to the Prophet "do not abuse the Universe, because *I am the Universe*".—a great truth and undeniable reality! It means, that all the manifestations of Nature are the manifestations of the God-head, and that all the forces and laws of Nature are the features and characteristics of that Great Being.

To be in touch with Nature, is the secret of all success, of all felicity in life; and if in Islam, the dictum has been pronounced, in a somewhat different language, "to imbue ourselves with Divine Attributes," it means the same thing. For the attributes of God, as mentioned in the Holy Koran, do perfectly and completely index the working of Nature; and if, to believe in God, is to accept Him, as the Source of all Law and to worship. Him means simply to obey His Law, how can we disbelieve in the God of Islam?

2. Belief in the Angels of God

The angels are created light, and endowed with life, speech and reason. They are free from carnal desire and the disturbance of anger : they disobey not God in what He has commanded them, but do all that they are commanded. Their food is, to celebrate God's glory; their drink, to proclaim His holiness; their conversation, to commemorate God; their pleasure, to worship Him. The angels are created in different forms and with different powers.

The number of angels is very great; it can be known to no one except to God. Four of the angles are archangels, namely, Jibril (Gabriel), the angle of revelations; Mikhail (Michael), the angle of rain; Israfil, the angel who will announce the advent of Resurrection; Azrail, the angel of death.

Every man is attended by two recording angels, called the " Kiram-ul-Katibeen," or the illustrious writers, one of whom records his good actions, and the other his evil actions. There are also two other kinds of angels, called 'Monkar' and 'Nakeer', who examine the dead in the grave.

There are also two celebrated angels, 'Radwan' who is in charge of Paradise, and 'Malik' who is in charge of Hell.

The angels intercede for men, while they celebrate the praise of God; they implore forgiveness for the dwellers of earth. They also act as guardians for men. Each man has a succession of angles before and behind him, who watch over him by God's behest.

3. Belief in the Scriptures of God

The fundamental position, on which the superstructure of the Mohammadan Religion is erected, is that, from the beginning to the end of the world, there has been, and for ever will be, but one true orthodox religion. This true religion consists as to matter of faith, in the acknowledgement of the only true God, and in the belief in, and obedience to such messengers or prophets of God, as He has been pleased to send from time to time, with credentials, to reveals His will to mankind; and as to matter of practice, the religion of God consists in the observance of the immutable and eternal laws of right and wrong, together with such other precepts and ceremonies, as God obtained as fit, for the time being, according to the different dispensations in different ages. These precepts and ceremonies were in themselves non-essential, but they became strictly obligatory be God's positive command; and were, therefore, temporary and subject to alteration, according to His will and wisdom. Hence, the name 'Islam', signifying absolute surrender to the will of God, is used commonly to denote the Mohammadan Religion. This name, however, (Islam) also applies to God's religion, since the beginning of the World, inasmuch as all true religion is nothing, but absolute submission to God's will.

As to scriptures, the Moslems, are taught, that God, in diverse ages of the world, gave relvelations of His will in Books, to several prophets. The number of these sacred Books is said to be 104 : ten Books were given to Adam, fifty to Seth, thirty to Idris (Enoch), ten to Abraham; and the other four, being the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Gospel and the Koran, were successively delivered to Moses, David, Jesus and Mohammad. No further revelation

Marfat.com

to mankind is to be expected. The Prophet Mohammad is, as taught by the Koran, the seal of God's messengers and prophets.

All of those divine Books, except the four last, are believed to be now entirely lost. As to the Pentateuch, the Psalms and the Gospel, the Moslems give no credit to the present copies of these Books, which they believe to have undergone many alterations and corruptions, thought there might possibly be some part of the true word of God therein. Any passages in the present copies which in sense are not in harmony with the teachings of the Koran, as far as matters of faith are concerned, are held by Moslems to be not true revelation. Hence, such statements in the present copies of the Old and New Testaments, as attribute to God a son, or to the Divinity a plurality or a corporal form, are dogmatically and emphatically condemned as schismatic.

On the other hand, if any precept, tenet, law or regulation, relating to mode of worship, or rules of right and wrong, found in the Koran, is in harmony without similar precepts, as taught by the Testaments, it is because such tenets are immutable and eternal, and relate to that part of God's one, true and orthodox religion which is subject to no change or alteration, inasmuch as such laws were saved from corruption.

Apparently it is due to the misunderstanding of this fundamental superstructure of the Mohammadan Religion (to wit : that from the beginning to the end of the world, there has been, and still for ever will be, but one true religion), that some of the prejudiced class of Western historians and commentators have been apt to wrongly describe such systems, rites or rules of the Religion of Islam, of which the like exist in the Jewish Scriptures, as 'borrowed' from these books. Such critics, if absolutely innocent, conscientious and well-informed, must needs admit, that these common precepts are but confirmed by the Koran as immutable in themselves.

It must be again re-iterated until the basis of the Religion of Islam is well understood, that this religion does not profess to be a new religion, formulated by the Prophet Mohammad, but a continuation of the true religious principles, established by God through His revelations to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and to other inspired Messengers of God. The revelations of God's prophets, prior to the advent of Mohammadanism, are held to have been partly corrupted by the hand of man, throught the various renderings and divers versions of same. All protions of the Word of God that were by chance, or otherwise, saved from corruption,.....such as relate to that part of God's religion which is eternal and immutable,..... have been preserved and confirmed by the Koran, together with other corrected beliefs and dogmas of faith, and such additional rules of practical devotion, as God judged fir for the new and eternal dispensation. Hence, it is out of place and entirely misleading, that any critic should suggest, that Mohammadanism is 'indebted,' either to the Jewish or any other dispensation, for any elements in its system.

In brief, it is enjoined upon every Moslem, to believe in God's previous Books of revelations, from Adam to Jesus, in so far as the contents of any extant book of them are not contradicted by the Koran.

Marfat.com

At the advent of Islam, the World of God, as revealed in the Old and New Testament, was wrapped up in various superstitions, and was spoiled by an admixture of ungodly beliefs and imaginations. The Jews were openly charged, in the early chapters of the Koran, with having corrupted their Scriptures, with stiffing passages. They obstinately and impiously denied the advent of Jesus. They believed that Christ was yet to come. They spoke ill, and most wrongly and indecently, of the acknowledged Jesus Christ and of his revered mother, the Virgin Mary. They attributed to God the adoption of a son in the person of Ezra.

With regard to Christianity, its real and pure doctrines were exceedingly and abominably corrupted.[12] A sect substituted the Virgin Mary for God, or worshipped her as such. These were called the Mariamites.[13]

Christians also believed in the divinty of Jesus. They worshipped him as God, called him the son of God, and even God Himself.

Dr. Hughes, commenting on the state of degradation, into which the Christians Church had fallen, at the advent of Islam, writes as follows :

"The bitter dissensions of the Greeks, Nestorians, Eutechians and Monophysites, are matters of history, and must have held up the religion of Jesus to the ridicule of the heathen world. The controversies, regarding the nature and person of our Divine Lord, had begotten a sect of Tritheists.....

"The worship of the Virgin Mary had also given rise to a religious controversy between the Antidues. Mariamites and the Collyridians; the former holding that the Virgin Mary was not immaculate and the latter raising her to a position of a goddess. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising to find that the Arabians reformer turned away from Christianity."[14]

The Gospel of St. Barnabas commonly considered by Christian theologians as "apocryphal,"—is most in harmony, as to matters of faith, with the Koran. Jesus Christ is spoken of in that Gospel as the servant of God the word of God and a Spirit from God. His miraculous birth, being born without a father was even less supernatural than the creation of Adam who was created by God's Power with neither father nor mother.

The crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews is entirely refuted, according to St. Barnabas and the Koran.

In that Gospel, it is asserted, that Judas, the traitor, was he who was crucified, in the place of the Lord Jesus. "Of this Gospel," writes Mr. Sale, "the Moriscoes in Africa have a translation in Spanish, and there in the library of Prince Eugene of Savoy, a manuscript of some antiquity, containing an Italian translation the same Gospel made, it is supposed, for the use renegades..... "[15]

In St. Barnabas' Gospel, the Prophet Mohammad is foretold by name, as the Perielyte, that is, the famous or illustrious, that being the signification of the name of Mohammad in Arabic; thereby justifying the passage in the Koran where Jesus is formally asserted to have foretold his coming; under his other name of Ahmad, which is derived from the same root as Mohammad and of the same import.

Geogre Sale states that he inspected a Spanish translation of the Italian copy to St. Barnabas' Gospel, of which he gives the following account :

"There is a preface prefixed to it, wherein the discoverer of the original MS., who was a Christian monk called Fra Marino, tells us that, having accidentally met with a writing of Irenacus (among others), wherein he speaks against St. Paul, alleging for his authority the gospel of St. Barnabas, he became exceedingly desirous to find this gospel; and that God, of His mercy, having made him very intimate with Pope Sixtus V (1521-1590) one day, as they were together in that Pope's library, His Holiness fell asleep and he, to employ himself, reached down a book to read, the first he laid hand on proved to bet the very gospel he wanted; overjoyed at the discovery, he scrupled not to hide his prize in his sleeve, and on the Pope's awaking, took leave of him carrying with him that celestial treasure, by reading of which he became a convert to Mohammadanism.

"This Gospel of Barnabas contains a complete history of Jesus Christ, from birth to His ascension, and most of the circumstances of the four real gospels are to be found therein, but many of them turned, and some artfully enough, to favour the Mohammedan system...The passages produced from the Italian MS, by M. de la Monnoye, are to be seen in this Spanish version almost word for word."[16]

THE KORAN

The practical side of both the Jewish and Christian dispensations, as concerning social matters and civil law, is mot deficient; and deficiency is made good by the Koran, it being the last divine Word of God.

Let us now make a swift survey of the Koran, as far as our limited space in this work allows; for to describe it in detail would require unlimited time and space. For various reasons, all being much to the advantage of the non-Moslem reader,—I shall content myself with a number of quotations of what was written on the Koran by the pen of non-Moslem critics, whose writings on the subject can be passed by a Moslem, as giving sufficiently true picture of the Holy Koran. However, it must be remembered that, as a miraculously Divine Book, the Koran, when translated into a foreign language, necessarily loses a great deal of its supernatural elegance and purity of Style.

Mr. Sale addresses the reader of his English version of the Koran in the following words :

".....though the reader must not imagine the translation to come up to the original, notwithstanding my endeavours to do it justice."

In another place, the same writer comments on the Koran as follows :

"The Koran is universally allowed to be written with the utmost elegance and purity of language, in the dialect of the tribe of the Koreish, the most noble and polite of all the Arabians; but with some mixture though very rarely, of other dialects. It is confessedly the standard of the Arabian tongue and, as the more orthodox believe and are taught by the book itself, inimitable by any human pen, and therefore insisted on as a permanent miracle,

Marfat.com

greater than that of raising the dead, and alone sufficient to convince the world of its origin.

"And of this miracle Mohammed himself chiefly appealed for the confirmation of his mission, publicly challenging the most eloquent men in Arabia which was at the same time stocked with thousands whose sole study and ambition it was, to excel in elegance of style and composition, to produce even a single chapter that might be compared with it I will mention but one instance out of several, to show that this book was really admired for the beauty of its composition by those who must be allowed to have been competent judges. A poem of Labib Ebn Rabia, in Mohammeds' time, being affixed to the gate of the temple of Mecca, an honour allowed to none but the most esteemed performances, none of the other poets durst offer anything of their own in competition with it. But the second chapter of the Koran, being affixed near it soon after, Labib himself (then an idolater) on reading the first verses only, was struck with admiration, and immediately professed the religion taught therein, declaring that such words could proceed from an inspired person only. This Labib was afterwards of great service to Mohammad, in writing answers to the satires and invectives that were made on him and his religion."[17]

Von Goethe, the renowned German author, speaking of the Koran in his West-Oestlicher Divan, states :

"However often we turn to it, (the Koran), at first disgusting us each time afresh, it soon attracts, astounds and, in the end, enforces our reverence.... Its style, in accordance with its contents and aim, is stern, grand, terrible,—ever and anon truly sublime—Thus, this book will go on exercising, through all ages, a most potent influence."[18]

Dr. Steingass, the learned compiler of an English. Arabic and Arabic-English Dictionary (W. H. Allen and Co.) has recorded his opinion on the Koran in Dr. Hughes' Dictionary of Islam. After alluding to the above words of Goethe Dr. Steingass writes : "These words seem to me so much the more weighty and worthy of attention, as they are uttered by one who, whatever his merits or demerits in other respects may be deemed to be, indisputably belongs to the greatest masters of language of all times, and stands foremost as a leader of modern thought and the intellectual cultural of modern times." (Here Dr. Steingass quotes the words of Goethe and then says) "A work, then which calls forth so powerful and seemingly incompatible emotions, even in the distant reader,—distant as to time, and still more so, as to mental development—a work which not only conquers repugnance with which he may begin its perusal, but changes this adverse feeling into astonishment and admiration. Such, a work must be a wonderful production of the human mind indeed and a problem of the highest interest to every thoughtful observe of the destinies of mankind. Much has been said, in the preceding pages, to acknowledge, to appreciate, and to explain the literary excellences of the Koran and a more less distinct admission, that Buffon's much—quoted saying : "Le style est I'homme," is here more justified than ever, underlies all these verdicts. We may well, say, the Koran, is one of the grandest books ever written, because it faithfully reflects the character and life of one of the greatest men that ever breathed. "Sincerity, writes Carlyle, 'sincerity, in all senses seems to me the merit of the Koran.' This same sincerity, this ardour and earnestness in the search for truth, this never-flagging perseverance in trying

Marfat.com

to impress it, when partly found, again and again upon his unwilling hearers, appears to me as the real and undeniable 'seal of prophecy' in Mohammad..."[19]

But the approaches to truth are many, and he who devoted all his powers and energies, with untiring patience and self-denial, to the task of leading a whole nation by one of these approaches, from a coarse and effete idolatry, to the worship of the living God, has certainly strong claim to our warmest sympathies, as a faithful servant and noble champion of truth.

It is, however, not my intention to dwell here any longer upon this side of the question. Praise has been bestowed in his work on the Koran and is author, without stint or grudge, and the unanimity of so many distinguished voices, in this respect, will no doubt impress the general reader in favour of the sacred book of the Mohammadans which until now he may have known only by name.

Dealing with the opinion, expressed on the Koran by some European authors who dwelt upon the pretended inferiority of the later portion of the Koran in comparison with the earlier chapters, Dr. Steingass ably remarks as follows :

"Not being an Arabic scholar himself (Geothe), he knew the Koran only through the translations existing at the time which follow throughout the order of the received text...Those critics, on the other hand, who view the Koran with regard to the chronological order of its constituents, follow the descending scale in their estimate. But if we consider the variety and heterogeneousness of the topics, on which the Koran touches, uniformity of style and diction can scarcely be expected; on the contrary, it would appear to be strangely out of place. Let us not forget that in the book, as Mohammad's newest biographer, Ludolf Krehl (Das Leben des Mohammed, Leipzig, 1884) expresses it, 'there is given a complete code of creed and morals, as well as of the law based thereupon. There are also the foundation laid for every institution of an extensive commonwealth, for instruction, for the administration of justice, for military organisation, for finance, for a most careful legislation for the poor : all built up on the belief in the one God Who holds man's destiny in His hand. Where so many important objects are concerned, the standard of excellence, by which we have to gauge the composition of the Koran as a whole, must needs vary with the matter treated upon in each particular case. Sublime and chaste, where the supreme truth of God's unity is to be proclaimed; appealing to high-pitched, strains to the imagination of a poetically—gifted people where the eternal consequences of man's submission to God's holy will, or of rebellion against it, are pictured; touching in its simple, almost crude earnestness, when it seeks again and again encouragement or consolation for God's messenger, and a solemn warning for those, to whom he has been sent, in the histories of the prophets of old : the language of the Koran adopts itself to the exigencies of everyday life, when this everyday life, in its private and public bearings, is to be brought in to harmony with the fundamental principles of the new dispensation.

"Here, therefore, its merits as a literary production should, perhaps not be measured by some preconceived maxims of subjective and aesthetic taste, but by the effects which it produced in Mohammad's contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. If it spoke so powerfully and convincingly to the hearts of his hearers, as to weld hitherto centrifugal and antagonistic

Marfat.com

elements into one compact and well organised body, animated by ideas, far beyond these which had until now ruled the Arabian mind, then its eloquence was perfect, simply because it created a civilized nation out of savage tribes, and shot a fresh woof into old warp of history.

"When a long period of conquests scattered the Arabs to the farthest, East and to the farthest. West, their spoken language might deviate form its pristine purity, slurring over unaccented syllables and dropping terminations. But the fine idiom of there forefathers, as deposited in the Koran, remained the language of their prayer and their pious mediation, and thus lived on with them, as a bond of unity, an object of national love and admiration, and a source of literary development, for all times."[20]

The Koran, therefore, is the last Scripture from God which has superseded by its new dispensation all preceding Scriptures, containing all comprehensible instructions and laws, all matters concerning the relation between the Creator and His creature, and between man and man. It is a miraculous book which is a poem, far beyond the power of poets to imitate, a code of laws bearing on every institution of an extensive commonwealth, on instruction, on the administration of 'justice, on military organisation, on finance, on a most careful legistlation for the poor; and a complete code of beliefs and morals; all built up on the perfected belief in the one God Who holds man's destiny in His Hand. It embodies a correct summary of the true religion which former prophets from the time of Adam had taught to their respective countries, and a solemn warning to all mankind, to whom the "Seal of Prophets" had been sent to reclaim and to reform. It exposes and refutes the pretensions and incorrect interpretations of rabbins and priests who had misled their people. These latter were often called upon, in the Koran, to come to a reasoning with the followers of the new faith and, then, to judge for themselves, as to whether Mohammadanism was to be rejected by pure reason cleared of every grain of partiality. But the high voice from Heaven was not hearkened to and differences of religious nature still continue between Moslems and non-Moslems.

The Koran is a Divine Book which from the day of its revelation through the message of the Arabian Prophet and Apostle of God, up to this moment, has undergone no alteration whatever.[21] It is the Sacred Book that continues to reign over the hearts of its hearers, to convince them, through their own conscience and spiritual nature of its Divine origin. No human pen, however powerful, can venture to imitate it. The miraculous nature of the Koran has, long ago, been solemnly confirmed those who were the most competent judges. The Arabians could boast of no other literature than witty poems of eloquence in their own language,—though as they paid due honour to any distinguished poem by their famous poets—were struck with infinite admiration, when they heard the Prophet of God rehearsing certain portions of God's new Gospel to them. Their own celebrated Rabiaa, whose poem was attached to the Sacred Pantheon of the Kaaba, could, without much trouble or hesitation judge that the Koran of Mohammad was rightly a Divine Book, and that the illiterate orphan was the true messenger of God. From the perusal of the concise, but accurate history of the Prophet, in part II of this essay, it is clear enough, how the obstinate minded Arabs of the Desert received the Book with adoration and perefect reverence. Again, the contents of the

Marfat.com

Koran most readily answer all questions that may be raised on religious or civil matters. I will quote here some interpreted passages from that Holy Book, as specimens of the rest, and leaver them to recommend themselves :

1. *Calling the Jews and Christians to Come to Agreement*[22] *with the Moslems*: "Say. O ye who have received the Scripture (Jews and Christians) come to a just determination between us and you; that we worship not any except God, and associate no creature with Him; and that the one of us takes no other for Lord,[23] beside God. But if they turn back, say; Bear witness that we are true believers."

2. *Ordering the Prophet to Praise God* : "Say, O God, possessor of the Kingdom, Thou givest dominion to whom Thou wilt, and Thou takest away kingdom from whom Thou wilt : Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou Humblest whom Thou wilt, in Thy hand is Good, and Thou art the Almighty : Thou causest the night to succeed the day, and Thou causest the day to succeed the night : Thou bringest forth the living out of the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead out of the living and thou art the provider of substinance to whom Thou wilt, without measure."

3. *God and Evil Deeds*: "Say, whether ye conceal that which is in your hearts, 'on whether ye show it, God knoweth it : He knoweth whatever is in heaven and whatever is on earth : and He is the Almighty. On the Day of Judgment, every soul shall find present and be happy with the good which it wrought while the evil which it wrought, will cause it such a disgrace, that it shall wish that there was a vast distance between itself and that evil."

4. *Belief of the Faithful*: "The Apostle (Mohammad) believeth in that which hath been sent down unto from his Lord, as do the faithful (also). Every one (of them) believeth in God and His Angels, and His Scriptures, and His Apostle : We make no distinction between any of His Apostle. And they say 'We have listened, and so we obey. Thy mercy, O Lord, for unto Thee (O Lord) must we return.' God will not burden any soul beyond its power. It shall enjoy the good which it hath gained and shall bear the evil which it hath wrought. O Lord, punish us not, if we forget or fall into sin; O Lord, lay not on us a burden, like that which Thou hast laid on those who have been before us, neither make us, O Lord, to bear what we have no strength to bear, but be favourable unto us, and spare us, and be merciful unto us. Thou art our patron help us therefore against the ublelieving people."

With regard to the New Testament, Moslems hold the belief that, although God revealed the Gospel to His Messenger Jesus Christ, the So-called gospels ascribed to the four saints do not represent the true word of God as revealed to the Teacher of Nazareth. With Moslems these books are mere historical works, dealing with the history of Jesus, and they contradict each other in certain statements. Three of the authors of the four gospels, did not see Jesus at all. (1) St. Mark did not see Jesus, until the year he was taken up to heaven. After the ascension of Jesus, St. Mark wrote in the city of Alexandria, his gospel, in which he gave an account of the birth and life of the Master of Christianity, mentioning several events which are not to be traced in the other three gospels. (2) St. Luke also did not see Jesus, but he was converted to Christianity by St. Paul, the latter being an Israelite who himself had not seen Jesus, but was converted by St. Ananias. (3) St. Matthew also did not see Jesus, but was

Marfat.com

converted to the Christian faith by St. Peter, some time after the ascension of Jesus : he took his gospel from St. Peter in the city of Rome. St. Matthews' gospel contradicts several statements of the other three Gospels.

St. John was the nephew of Jesus. It was at he wedding of John, that Jesus converted water into wine. Witness the miracle, John immediately became a Christian proselyte, left his wife and followed Jesus. He was the author of the fourth gospel, called after him, written in the Greek language, in the city of Ephesus.

There are the four gospels of the Christian New Testament, although Moslems do not believe them to contain the uncorrupted word of God. They are nothing more than biographical works which are liable to defects and errors. There was but one Gospel, namely, the "Evangel" which God vouchsafed to give to Jesus, for him to preach to the Israelites. The Book containing the True Word of God must need be free from all discrepancies; yet it written in St. Mark's gospel, that in the book of the Prophet Isaiah it was said by God : 'I have sent an Agnel before Thy face', namely, before the face Jesus; whereas the words are not in the book of Isaiah, but in that of Malachi (see St. Mark). Again it is related in St. Matthew's gospel (Matt. xii, 40) that Jesus and said 'My body will remain in the belly of the earth three days and three nights after my death, just as Jones was in the whale's belly,' and it is evident this was not true, for St. Matthew himself agrees with the three other writers of the gospels, that Jesus died at the sixth hour on Friday, and was buried at the first hour of the night and rose form the dead early on Sunday morning, so that he remained in the belly of the earth two nights only.

REFERENCES

1. As to His obvious existence.
2. As to His reality.
3. Vide, G. Sale's introduction to his translation of the Koran.
4. Koran, CXII : 1-4.
5. Koran, 2 : 163.
6. Koran, 44 : 7.
7. Koran, 55 : 17.
8. Koran, 20 : 8.
9. Koran.
10. "The above lines contain a magnificent description of the divine majesty and providence, but it must be supposed that the translation comes not up to the dignity of the original. This passage is justly admired by the Mohammedans who recite it in their prayers, and some them wear it about them." (G. Sale, Trans. of the Koran).
11. On the preserved tablet, on which are written all the deceed of God.
12. Vide G. Sale's Prelim, Discourse.

Marfat.com

13. Vide Dr. Hughes' Dict. of Islam, p. 53.
14. See Hughes' Dictionary of Islam, p. 53.
15. Sale's preface to his translation of the Koran.
16. *Ibid.*
17. See Sale's Prelim, Discourse in his translation of the Koran.
18. See Goethe's West-Oestlicher Divan. These words of Goethe were placed by Mr. Rodwell by way of motto on the reverse of the little page of his translation of the Koran.
19. Cf. Dr. Steingass as quoted by Dr. Hughes in his " Dictionary of Islam."
20. Vide Dr. Hughes' Dict. of Islam, pp. 526-530.
21. See Sir Muir's Life of Mohammad; Dr. Hughes' Dict. of Islam.
22. That is to come to such terms of agreement as are indispensably consonant to the doctrine of all the prophets and scriptures, and therefore cannot be reasonably rejected.
23. The Jews and Christians used to pay rather blind obedience to their priests and monks who took upon them to pronounce what things were lawful and what were unlawful, and to dispense with the laws of God. (George Sale).

Marfat.com

18

Islam and the Four Gospels

As already pointed out, Moslems do not admit the authenticity of the Gospels, or the creed contained therein, or the leading events in the life of the Holy Prophet Jesus, as depicted by these same Gospels. In this attitude Moslems are supported by the scholarly researches of devout Christians even.

It seems, however, that the laity in Christendom are generally as ignorant, with regard to these vital questions, as non- Christians, to whom Christian literature is inaccessible in the main. A brief account of these questions is, therefore, likely to be of interest and use.

According to the doctrines of Islam, the four Gospels are not revealed by God. Nor was it was it the Holy Ghost that moved the writers of the said Gospels to write them. But it was the example of other writers, that inspired them with the desire of compiling brief biographies of Jesus.

1. St. Luke's Gospel

St. Luke's own words to this effect are :

"For as much as many have take in hand to set forth, in order, a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us.

"Even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word;

"It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things, from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.

"That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" St. Luke : i-4.

St. Luke as very plainly set forth the grounds of his inspiration, namely : (1) the example of other writers of Jesus, life; (2) his consciousness of possessing "perfect understanding of all things from the first"; and (3) to impart reliable information to Theophilus. Thus, St. Luke does not call his Gospel a divine revelation, but he claims for it *(a)* diligence in collecting all available material, *(b)* fullness, *(c)* careful investigation, *(d)* orderly arrangement and *(e)* accuracy.

The Rev. Grieve, M.A., D.D., Principal of the Congregational Hall, Edinburgh, and a joint Editor of Peake's famous Commentary, explains Luke's preface in the following

words : 1. 1-4. "The writer, *influenced by the attempts* of others, to record the primitive tradition of Christianity, as it was handed down by the first generation of disciples, essays the same task, and having taken pains to collect, examine, sift and arrange the contents of the *written oral tradition*, presents the result to Theophilus, a Roman official of some standing—a literary patron of the Evangelists—who needed fuller acquaintance with the historic basis of the oral teaching about Christianity which he had received."[1]

God reveals books for the guidance of a nation or nations, as the case may be, but St. Luke dedicates his books to the "most excellent Theophilus."

The Encyclopaedia Biblica throwns further light on this dedication : "The dedication of Luke (i. 1-4) shows, that we have passed into a new literary province. The Muratorian fragment calls attention to the fact, that the author writes *in his own name*, a novelty among Evangelists. He also dedicates his work to someone who, if not a imaginary 'God beloved,' would appear to be a patron, a man of rank. The apostles—the[2] 'eyewitnesses and ministers of the word'—appear to have delivered their testimony by oral tradition, and to have passed away. To supply their places, (I-i) 'many' had attempted to draw up a formal narrative concerning the matters fully established in the Church. These writers had clearly not been eyewitnesses, nor were they, in Luke's judgement, so successful as to make unnecessary any further attempts. Apparently they had failed in the three points, in which he hopes to excel : (1) they had not traced everything up to the source, and this (2), as far as it went, not 'accurately' and (3) they had not written 'in order.' "

The same book further discusses the point whether or not the work of St. Luke's justifies the claims of that Apostle : We are led to the conclusion that, though Luke attempted to write 'accurately,' and in 'order', yet he could not always succeed. When deciding between an earlier and a later date, between this and that place and occasion, between metaphor and literalism, between what Jesus himself said and what he said through his disciples, he (Luke) had to guided by evidence which sometimes led him aright, but not always."

We further read in the same work : Luke's absolute omission of genuine and valuable traditions—especially in connection with Christ's appearance to women after the Resurrection, and with Christ's promise to go to 'Galilee'— . . . seriously diminishes the value of his work. It is probably the best adopted for making converts. But it bold bare facts are in question, it is probably the least authoritative of the Four."

Luke's failure has evidently been ascribed to his attempts being human, and his sources mortal, which could 'not always' guide him aright. If his work had been revealed, he could not have been accused of having omitted some most important incidents, or of his book being "the least authoritative."

The quotations cited above clearly buttress the Islamic belief, that the Christian gospels are but human attempts to draw up accounts of the life of Jesus, and as such are neither complete nor satisfactory. Revelation alone can make a recipient immune from error; for it suspends, for the time being, all other mental activity of the person, upon whom the Word of God descends. His Word and Will were revealed to holy prophets, like Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad. But the followers of Jesus were animated, or inspired, to compile

what was already known to them. They had but to collect, sift and arrange the material which was in the possession of the people. As such the works of the Apostles are necessarily characterised by mortal shortcomings. Even the devout Christian scholar admits it, and is ready to bear testimony to the fact, that the record of the gospels is not altogether complete and reliable. We cannot do better than quote some of the most scholarly and popularly admitted opinions which carry weight and conviction in this connection.

The Rev. Dummelow, M. A., expresses his opinion as follows :

"Speaking broadly, the Christians means by their inspiration an impulse from God, causing 'certain persons to write, and direction them how to write, for the edification of others. Though it is closely connected with *revelation*, it is not identical with it. By *revelation*, God makes known to a soul truths which were unknown to it before. But it is not at all necessary, that an inspired writer should receive any new truths by way of revelation. Thus St. Mark was inspired to write his Gospel, but he was inspired to *write down truths* which were already familiar to him and to others through the instruction given by St. Peter."[4]

2. The Gospel of St. Matthew and that of St. Mark

The foregoing also applies to both St. Matthew's and St. Mark's Gospels, "St. Mark is the oldest of the Synoptists, and has been used by St. Matthew and St. Luke, who have incorporated the bulk of his Gospel into their own with comparatively few alterations."[5] It is thus plain, that Christian scholars of sacred literature do not claim divine origin for Christian Gospels. They, on the other hand, admit that the said books were compiled by mere men who were by no means experts. They were consequently liable to mistakes. I quote the Rev. Dummelow once more on this point : "We must not regard the Bible as an absolutely perfect book, in which God is Himself the author, using human hands and brains only as a man may use a type writer .... Their inspiration did not involve a suspension of their natural faculties, nor abolish differences of training and character; it did not even make them perfectly free from earthly passion Therefore, we find that their knowledge sometimes is no higher then their contemporaries, and their indignation against oppression and wrongdoing sometimes breaks out into desire of revenge. It surprises us in the Bible, because of our false theory of Verbal Inspiration".[6]

The same Commentary further throws light upon the insufficiency and incompleteness of these sacred records, and thus precludes any chance of their claiming divine origin. "Today we realise, that the life of Jesus can never be written. The material is wanting. Neither in quality, nor in extent, do the Gospel satisfy the requirements of a modern biography. At best, they offer us certain memorabilia of the public ministry of Jesus, hardly adequate to construct the story of the year or years, during which he evangelised his people, and barely sufficing to mirror the chief feature of his message. Where the modern mind is most curious the Gospel seem to be least communicative. Men would fain trace the development of innermost convictions which condition his activity as a prophet. But the facts that the Gospels tell us little or nothing of the carly life of Jesus, and that almost every story consists of a simple record of outward act and utterance, with few hints as to inward feeling or historical setting, seem at first sight to defeat the hopes of analysing motive, and tracing growth"[7]

Marfat.com

3. The Four Gospels

Dealing with the sources of the four Gospels of the Christian faith, the Encyclopaedia Biblica comments as follows :

"These documents are of varying value from a historical point of view. Critical opinion is much divided as to the fourth, that which bears the name of John, the judgment of many critics being, that it is the least Trust-worthy as a source, whether for works or for the acts of Gesus. By comparison, the first three, from their resemblances called synoptical are regarded by many as possessing a considerable measure of historical worth, but even these, from a critical point of view, are not of equal value, nor do the contents of any of them possess a uniform degree of historical probability. They present to the critic a curious, interesting, and perplexing problem, still far from final solution. By their resemblances and differences, agreements and disagreements, they raise many questions as to origin, relative dates, and literary connections, which have called forth a multitude of conflicting hypothese and a most extensive critical literature".[8]

In the opinion of the best English scholars of the New Testament, the Gospels are not to be looked upon as revealed books, the sole source of which should have been God and not man. But they are to be regarded, on the other hand, as inadequate attempts, made by pious but not talented followers of Christ, at the description of his life. It is a great pity, that the world never availed itself of the collection of those life inspiring words that were uttered by the Holy Prophet of Nazareth. However, piety and veneration, for a long time, assured the credulity of the early Christians, that the Gospels revealed the World of God, and in consequence were infallible. There was a time, when every article of it was firmly and reverently believed to have directly proceeded from God.[9] In short, what had been written by man, passed for the word of God. This is clear to those clergy who have undergone university training. But the pity of it is, that they have not the moral courage to enlighten their congregation on the subject. It would only seem, that pious anxiety dictates that a character of infallibility should still be given to what has been written by human hands, and that crude attempts at the biography of the Holy Prophet of Nazareth, should continue to be believed to have been revealed by God Himself.

Anyhow, what scholarship and research have now brought to light, was revealed over thirteen centuries ago in the Koran :

" Do they not know, that God knows, what they keep secret, and what they make known; and there are among them ignorant, who know not the Book, but only idle stories, and they do but conjecture; woe, then, to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say, this is from God, so that they may obtain therewith a small gain; therefore, woe to them, for what their hands have written, and woe to them, for what they have earned."[10]

Dr. Murray's illustrated 'Bible Dictionary' which is a valuable commentary, enlightens us thus :

Gospels : The first point which attracts our notice in reading the Gospels is, that the

Marfat.com

first three Gospels are distinct from the fourth. The first three Gospels confine themselves almost exclusively to the event which took place in Galilee, until Christ's last journey to Jerusalem. If we had three Gospels alone, we could not definitely say, that our Lord went to Jerusalem during his ministry, until he went there to die. The difference in character is no less, than the difference in scene. Further, *the synoptists do not* claim to be eyewitnesses of our Lord's work; the first three Gospels are usually called the synoptic Gospels..... It is obvious, that not only all the three synoptic Gospels differ from John, but they differ widely from each other. The account of the birth and infancy of Christ in Matthew differs widely from that in Luke. The incidents of the temptation of our Lord are recorded in a different order in Matthew and Luke, and the temptation is recorded without these incidents in Mark. All three Gospels give a slightly different account of the inscription on the cross, and the words spoken by the centurion at the death of Jesus, vary in Luke from the words in Matthew and Mark. Also the language differs and differs in a very singular manner".[11]

From the above quotation is very clear, that the material for Mark's Gospel was supplied by St. Peter's preaching, and that Mark was freely drawn upon by Matthew and Luke; which establishes the fact, that the synoptic Gospels are no revelations at all, but are purely and simply human compilations. It remains to deal with St. John's Gospel.

The Twentieth Century New Testament makes the following observation on John :

"The writer apparently proposed to himself" to illustrate the spirit of the 'Gospel of Love' by such incidents in the life of Jesus, as best suited his purpose. There is no attempt at a regular connected narrative; and the writer allows himself such freedom, in commenting upon the teaching of Jesus, that it is not always easy to tell where that teaching ends and the writer's comments begin. It is to the great struggle between Light and Darkness, Death and Life,—words much in use and much debated in the current philosophy of Ephesus,—that the writer devotes his attention, rather than to the external incidents of a story which has already been told, and which is plainly viewed by him from a greater distance of time, than is the case with the compilers of the three other Gospels."[12]

Another eminent authority, namely Dr. Weymouth, in his Introduction to John, observes :

"It must owned that, although the fourth Gospel makes no assertion which contradicts the character of Teacher and Reformer attributed to Him by the synoptists, it presents to us a personage so enwrapped in mystery and dignity, as altogether to transcend ordinary human nature. This transcendent personality is, indeed, the avowed centre of the whole record, and his portrayal is its avowed purpose."[13]

Now, these quotation point very clearly to the fact, that there is a general agreement, as to John having played the role of an interpreter or a commentator of the three other Gospels. There is not an allusion or a reference, made to John having been inspired to furnish the world with an explanation of the doctrines of Christ. We learn on the other hand, that, while the authors of the three other Gospels complied the incidents of the life of Jesus, John gave a mystical meaning to them. He himself does not lay claim to revelation, or to consequent perfection. He has, on the contrary, confessed the imperfection of his attempts, to depict the

incidents of the life of Jesus. Likewise, he admits that he is but a recorder of incidents or signs. 'There were also a great number of sings which Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book; but these have been recorded, in order that you may believe, that he is the Christ, the son of God, and that, through believing, you may have life through his name.'[14] This text, which reveals the object of the fourth Gospel, announces that this is a partial record of some of those signs which Jesus performed before his disciples. To record events or signs which are known to many, or all, of the disciples and others, does not require the aid of revelation which supplies information which is not already in the possession of human beings.

Some Important Discrepancies

Jesus said to them (who took offence at him and who were not prepared to recognise his claims simply because he was carpenter's son and had other humble ties) : "*A prophet* is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (Mark). This statement was curtailed by Matthew and still more by John. Luke ignored it altogether.

"But of the day and that hour knoweth no man, not, not the angles which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii, 32). This text embodies, a confession by Jesus, eloquent of his limited knowledge and avowed ignorance; while Luke and John, however make no mention of that humiliating reference.

The Rev. Dummelow's Commentary makes he following remark on "Neither the Son" : "This is the true reading not only here (in Mark) but in Matthew xxiv, 36, where it has been *altered* in many MSS., probably as being a difficulty to faith." Peake's Commentary offers the following note one it :

"Mark xiii. 32—This is one of 'Schmiedel's pillar-passages.' A passage admitting a limit to Christ; knowledge must be trustworthy history, according to Schmiedel. Certainly later commentators found the verse difficult."

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? (Mark xv. 34) These words have been copied by Matthew only. They picture the inborn weakness of Jesus. This expression of his human nature was unworthy of record, in the opinion of Luke and John.

Interpolations

Of many interpolations, mention will be made here of a few only :

(A) John vii. 53 and viii. 1—11, that is, the last verse of the seventh chapter, with its continuation in the first eleven verses of the eighth chapter, which relate the story of an adultress, is an interpolation. This is admitted universally. The Rev. Dummelow's Commentary had the following observations on it : "The woman taken in adultery. All modern critics agree, that this section (vii. 53—viii. 1—11) is no original part of the fourth Gospel. It is not in the authors style; it breaks the sequence of our Lord's discourses and is omitted by most of the ancient authorities."

Marfat.com

Peake's Commentary comments on the story at the end of John vii. 53-vii-1-11, *Jesus, and the woman accused of sin*: "The well known story of the woman taken in adultery has no claim to be regarded as part of the original text of this....It is supported by no early Patiristic evidence. The evidence proves it to be an interpolation of a 'western' character."

Dr. Weymouth's 'New Testament in modern English' marks the section as an interpolation. 'The Twentieth Century New Testament' has excised it, and placed it in such a place as indicates clearly, that it has no connection with John. The Complete Bible in Modern English' writes in a footnote : "The narrative of the sinful woman (chap. vii. 53 to viii-1-11) is rejected by the most competent authorities as a spurious interpolation.

(B) John xxi :—In the opinion of the Rev. Dummelow, the last two verses at least, 24, and 25—are really doubtful, and they "may have been added by the Ephesian elders, who first put the Gospel in circulation, after the death'of the Apostle, and who wished to testify to its genuineness and trustworthiness."

(C) Mark xvi. 9-20 is another interpolation. Dummelow's Commentary observes that " Internal evidence points definitely to the conclusion, that the last twelve verses are not by St. Mark." It further supplies the following information on the subject : "When at the close of the apostolic age, an attempt was made (probably in Rome) to collect the authentic memorials of the Apostle and their companions, a copy of the neglected second Gospel was not easily found. *The one that was actually discovered, and was used to multiply copies, had lost its leaf, and so a* fitting termination (*the present appendix)* was added by another hand."

The unanimous verdict given in the New Testaments of Dr. Weymouth, Dr. Moffat, Ferrar Fenton, and in the Twentieth Centuries New Testament, is that Mark VXI-9-20, is an addition.

(D) Luke xxiv. 51 is another interpolation, as is conceded on all hands. It elicits the following comment form the Rev. Dummelow : "A few ancient authorities omit these words. If they are omitted, *it is possible to regard this event*, not as the ascension, but as a miraculous disappearance of Jesus at the end of the interview begun in verse 36."

Peake's Commentary makes similar remarks; "The words 'and was carried up into heaven' are omitted in some of the best MSS...and have probably crept in form Acts. i. 9. f."

The Twentieth Century New Testament and Dr. Moffat's "New Testament" mark is an interpolation.

Ascension

Our co-religonist, Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din, B.A., from whose interesting essay, "Are the Gospels inspired."[15] I have chiefly reproduced the above chapter, makes the following conclusion to his work :

"If according to Christ and Mohammad (peace be upon them and all the other prophets), the essence of religion lies in our perfect love of God, which can only be manifested in our willing obedience to His Divine will, we must be assured, as rational beings, of the genuineness and credibility of God's message, as much as of the soundness of the truth, that

it reveals. It is this natural craving, that had led to what is known as the higher criticism of the Bible. A similar test has been applied to the Holy Koran as well, to which reference has been made previously. The result of the higher criticism of the four Gospels has partially been presented in this treatise, with the object of making the laity and non-Christians in general acquainted with it. In doing so, I have purposely refrained from quoting the opinions expressed in the learned commentaries of the Nonconformists, and in the books issued on the subject by the Rational Press. I have, on the contrary, restricted the treatment to the views expounded by the Cergy of the Church of England in the main, and to the views of those who are rather conservative. I have also deliberately overlooked the question, whether we can ascribe with certainty the authorship of the Gospels to the Evangelists, whose names they bear now. All the commentaries are agreed upon the fact, that the original copies of the Gospel, were without indication as to the author's names. It was guessed, later, who were the most probable writers of them. The probable conjecture has not yet reached certainty. The authenticity of the names, to which, the Gospels are attributed, is open to doubt, as can be seen by referring to any commentary."

What, we have learnt with respect to the origin of the Christian Gospels, and the creed preached therein, can be recapitulated in few words. Mark was the first Gospel, and not Matthew as is generally indicated by the present arrangement of the four books. Mark, who was a convert and interpreter of St. Peter, penned at the instance of 'his hearners,' what St. Peter had adopted and preached to his Roman audiences. Mark has been incorporated into Matthew and Luke. But Matthew has represented the words and works of Jesus as fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament. No less than sixty-five reference have been made to Old Testament texts, to establish that the advent of the Messiah was in strict accordance with the Jewish ideals. This conception and purpose pervade the whole of Matthew, and distinguish it from the there three. Luke represents St. Paul's views, which are in conflict with St. Peter's. Thus we have in Luke an altogether different point of view. It opposes Matthew and Mark most boldly, and places its litteral and Catholic description of Christianity in a striking contrast to Matthew and Mark, who confine God's blessings and ministrations to the elect alone. John strikes an entirely different note. It offers, to interpret Christianity for us. We may respect his opinion, as an individual one, and as different from the other three; but we cannot be assured that his vague and mythical representation of Christianity is identical with the definite and plain teachings of the holy Prophet Jesus. In a word, the Gospels are as divergent, in expressing the Christian doctrines, as their versions are discrepant in the reproduction of the words and works of Jesus. They have not been safe-guarded against mistakes and interpolations. On the contrary, they are replete with extraneous matter. Sometime glosses and editorial notes have been absorbed in the body of the book, and sometimes irrelevant additions have been made. Matthew and Luke have either toned down or omitted what they deemed objectionable in Mark. They do not teach that, because the deepening anxiety of Jesus, in alliance with a fear of treacherous betrayal on the part of some of his disciples, led to his sudden and skillfully planned disappearance, we should believe that he soared upwards to heaven. Their accounts of the incident of the crucifixion do not show that God saved Jesus from the cursed death on the cross. The plain and useful teachings of Jesus, as pronounced in the Gospels, however make the belief in the atoning and propitiating

Marfat.com

powers of the crucifixion unnecessary. His disciples also betray ignorance of such a dogma as the vicarious atonement. Jesus himself believed in one God, worshipped Him, and prayed to Him, and laid all possible stress on good living and cherishing love for one's neighbours.

This brings the treatment to a close, with my sincerest hopes that it will be some interest and benefit to God's people.

REFERENCES

1. Peake's Commentary, p. 725.
2. Encyclopaedia Biblica, p. 1700.
3. Eneyelopaedia Biblica, p. 1793.
4. The Rev. Dummelow's Commentary p. 71.
5. The Rev. Dummelow's Commentary p. 133.
6. Rev. Dummelow's commentary p. 71.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Encyclopaedia Biblica.
9. Dr. Ph. Schaff's Companion to the Greek Testaments and the English version pp. 88 and 89.
10. Sale's Translation of the Holy Koran II. 72; 73 and 74.
11. Murray's Bible dictionary.
12. The 20th Century New Testament.
13. Dr. Weymouth's Introduction to St. John's Gospel.
14. John, xx : 30.
15. For a fuller treatment of the subject of the higher criticism of the New Testament see a very interesting treatise entitled "Are the Gospel inspired?" by Maulvi Sadar-ud-Din, B.A. reproduced.

INDEX

A

Abbasid rebellion, 202
Abbasid rebels, 200
Abbaside period, 3
Abd al-Hamid, 188
Abd al-Hamid's letters, 188
Abd al-Hamld b. Yahya al-Khatib (kd. 132/750), 187
Abd Allah b. Abi Awfa, 182
Abd Allah b. Sallam, 180
Abd Allah b. Suriya, 180, 182
Abd Allah b. Umar, 176, 177
Abraham, 231
Abu Ali Ibn Sina, 3
Abu Bakr, 51, 141
Abu Hurayra, 176
Abu Othman, 3
Abul-ala al-Mawdudi, 162
Adam, 220, 231
Akhbari Shii approaches to *tafsir*, 96-121
  Abul-Hasan al-Isfahani, 99
  Abul-Hasan al-Sharif al-Amili al-Isfahani, 113
  Abul-Khattab, 112, 112
  adl, 114
  Ahl al-Bayt, 98, 102, 103
  akhbar, 109
Akhbari project, 121
Akhbari *tafsir*, 98
Akhbari usuli debate, 96
Al-Baqir, 103, 105
Al-Burhan, 107
Ali, 109, 111
al-Kafi from al-Baqie, 117
Al-Mawla al-Sharif al-Adl Abu-Hasan, 113
al-munqata a wal-ma tuf, 112
al-Qummi's *Tafsir*, 112
al-rasikhun fil-ilm, 110
al-Sadiq, 104, 111, 117
al-Safi fi tafsir kalam Alllah al-wafi, 102
al-sharif al-Amili, 99
Anwar, 113
aql, 96
Bahrani's work, 108
categories of *hadith*, 96
commentary by Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsai, 120
corruption (*muharraf*), 113
Dharia, 100
dharia, 114
face of god, 99
family of Shism, 98
faqih, 100
first principles (*mabadi*) of Shiism, 99
good (*hasan*), 96
grand prayer of visitation, 120
Hadith al-thaqalayn, 109
hadith materiaf, 98
hadith, 96, 99, 103, 111, 112
hajj, 111
harf makan harf, 112
Hasan, 110
Hashim al-Bahrani, 99

Marfat.com

Hashim al-Rasuli al-Mhallati, 100
Husayn, 110
huwayzi, 100
ijazat, 114
ijma, 96
ijqzas, 113
ijtihad, 96
Imamiyya Akbariyya, 97
Imams (*aimma*), 113
ipsissima verba, 119
Jafar al-Bahrani, 100
jiha, 99
khabar, 98
kufr, 110
legal decision (fatwa), 97
madelung's view, 97
mahabba, 119
maqala, 115, 116
marja al-taqlid, 97
meaning of al-thaqalayn, 112
mode of *iyyaki ani wasmai ya jara*, 111
mudaqqiq, 114
Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, 107
muhaqqiq, 114
muhkam, 110
Muhsin Fayd Kashani, 99, 103-108
muminun, 121
murdud, 112
Musa al-Kazim (the Seventh Imam, d.183/799), 104, 106
muslimun, 121
mutashabih, 110
nasikh, 110
nazm, 112
Nur, 100
nural-thaqalayn, 100
progeny of Husayn, 110
prologue, 117
prologue I, 115
prologue II, 115
Prophet, 117, 118
Quran explains everything, 104
recitation and proper behaviour with the *Quran*, 105
repudiation (*daf*) of *ghuluw* and *tafwid*, 118
resikhum fil-ilm, 103
revelation of the Fatiha and the ayat al-kursi, 101
rufaqa, 114
safi, 102
salih, 114
Sayyid Hashim al-Bahrani,107
Shaykh Ahmad, 120
sound (*sahih*), 96
spiritual idea (*haqiqa*), 121
Sufi terminology, 107
tadhyil, 118
tafsir, 107, 114
taqiyya (pious dissimulation), 106
thiqa, 114
time of al-Sharif al-Radi, 97
tradition, 97
truth (*sirr*), 121
types of Shii Tafsi, 98-99
umma, 113
usulis, 96
verbatim, 112
walaya, 119
wasiya, 102
weak (*daif*), 96
will of the *Quran*, 109
zakat, 111
zanadiqa, 113
Al Azhar University, 8, 9
Al-Ayn, 77
Albeithar, 3
Alberuni, 3
Ali al-Tabari, 161
Ali, 40
Al-Jahiz (d. 869), 159
Al-Mansur, 218
Al-Quran al-majid, 140
Al-*Quran*, 213, 214, 219
Al-Tafsir al-hadith, 139
Al-Tahtawi, 162
Antichrist, the Man of Sin, the Little Horn, 8
Arab Fertile Crescent, 148

Marfat.com

Arabian and Moorish revival of culture, 217
Arabian Prophet, 8
Arabian science, 215
Assamh, 3

B

Bafum, 7
Bayan al-Quran, 129
Belief in the Apostles of god, 231-260
belief in the day of resurrection, 247-253
biblical prophecies as referring to the advent of the prophet Mohammad, 243-244-247
birth of Jesus, 233-234
Christ divine, 242-243
contradictory teachings of Christianity from Moslems point of view, 236-237
godhead of Jesus condemned by Islam, 237-238
Jesus and the divinity, 235
Jesus not crucified, 235
Jesus says about himself in relation to his alleged divinity, 239-240
mission of Jesus, 234-235
Old Testament, 242
one of the miracles of Jesus, 234
predestination, 253-254
priestcraft and Islam, 20-241
promised to marry, 233
supposed divinity of Jesus, 241-242
trinity condemned, 236
Beneficial effects of Islam, 3
Beneficial influences of Islam, 6
Bestial habits, 60
Bible, 161
Bible, the *Quran* and science, 162
Biography of the prophet, 141
Bishr b. Abi Kubar al-Balwi, 187
Book of God, 176, 177, 181, 184
Book of guidance, 212, 214
Book of Hidayah, 210
Buddhism, 4
Burhan, 128

C

Cave in the Tihamah mountains, 60
Chinese civilisation, 211
Chinese Empire, 4
Christ, Jesus, 29
Christendom, 3
Christian Europe, 217, 225
Christian faith, 1
Christian Gospel, 294
Christian missionaries, 1, 5
Christian sects, 3
Christian society, 221
Christian writers, 2
Christianity, 1, 5, 232, 295
Christians, 167, 217, 256
Civilization of Islam, 77
Concept of *Hidayah*, 212, 213
Confession of *kitman*, 180
Confucianism, 4
Culture of Islam, 217

D

Darwaza, 141, 142, 146, 147, 148
Daughter, 218
Death of Muhammad, 159
Death of the Prophet, 77, 87
Devotion to the ideal of justice, 221
Dictionary of Islam, 25, 26
Dimensions of the *Quran*, 35-57
Abd Allah al-Ansari, 48
Abd Allah ibn Masud, 48
Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani, 50
abrogated verses, 47
Abu Said al-Khudri, 48
advent and development, 47-48
Alif, 39
applicability and validity of the *Quran*, 47-48
Ata ibn Abi Rabah, 49
book of decrees, 46
capacities of man's comprehension, 37
chapter III, 37
chapter VII, 35
chapter XI, 37
chapter XLIII, 37
chapter XVII, 37
chapter XXII, 35

Marfat.com

chapter XXXVI, 35
commentaries of the Imams, 40
commentary of the Imams of the prophet's family, 40-41
death of the Prophet, 48
dream of the king of Egypt, 43
entitled *al-Kashshaf*, 50
exegesis, 42
existence of abrogating and abrogated in *Quran*, 46-47
explicit verses (*ayat muhkamah*), 39
explicit, 38
Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, 50
fifth groups, 49
fourth group, 49
ha, 39
hadiths, 48
Hasan al-Basri, 49
Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 49
implicit verses, 38
implicit verses, 39
Kab al-Akhbar, 48
kinds of *Quranic* verses, 37-38
king of Egypt, 43
Lam Ra, 39
Lam, 39
mansukh, 47
meaning of exegesis in the tradition of *Quranic* Science, 44-45
meaning of exegesis, 41-42
meanings of the explicit and the implicit verses, 38
messenger, 44
method of guidance and explanation, 38-39
methods used by the Shiite commentators, 50
Mim Alif, 39
Mim, 39
Muhammad ibn Kab al-Qurazi, 49
muhkam, 43
mutashabih, 41, 42
occasions in the story of Joseph, 43
possesses revelation and exegesis, 41
Quran lend itself to interpretation, 51-52
Quran with the aid of the *Quran*, 54-56
Quranic Science as *jary*, 48
revelation, 47
Ruh al-bayan, 50
second group of commentators, 49
Shaykh al-Tabaisi, 51
Shiite commentators, 50
Shykh Ismail Haqqi, 50
sixth groups, 49
source book, 46
story of Moses and Khidr, 43
suitable for different levels, 37
Sunni commentators, 48
tafsir, 42
tanzil, 41
tawil, 39
tawil, 41, 42, 44
teachings of mankind, 36
third group, 49
third group, 51
tradition, 41
transmission of the traditions, 49
two facets of the *Quran*, 35-36
two facets of the *Quran*: god affirms this in chapter 111, 36
two hundred questions of Nafi ibn al Azraq, 48
Ubayy ibn Kab, 48
validity of the commentary of the Prophet and the Imams, 56-57
validity of the *Quran*, 42
verses by al-Zamakhshari, 50
wisdom of abrogation within the *Quran*, 47
XVI, 48
Zayd ibn Aslam, 49
Din (the way of life), 219
Divine help, 211
Divine revelation, 12, 61
Doctrines of Muslim faith, 2

E

East Indian Archipelago, 4
Eliot, Charles, 238
Exposition of the religion of Islam, 262-285
beliefs, 262

Marfat.com

devotions, 262
digest of the Mohammadan creed
belief of god, 263
god is not, 263-264
god's life and power, 264
god's knowledge, 264
god's will, 264-265
god's hearing and sight, 265
god's word, 265
god's works, 265-266
god's omnipresence asserted, 267
god's omnipotence, 267
creator of all things, 267
perfect in his works, 268
light of heaven and earth, 268
provides for all, 268
words are countless, 268-269
has no offspring, 269
created all beings to adore him, 269
speaketh with man, 269-270
omniscient and omnipotent, 270
all-seeing but unseen, 270
existence of god, 276
belief in the angels of god, 277
belief in the scriptures of god, 277-278
digest of the Mohammedan creed, 263-264
Koran, 280-285
belief of the faithful, 284-285
calling the Jews and Christians to come to agreement, 284
god and evil deeds, 284
ordering the prophet to praise god, 284
moralities, 262
punishments, 263
transactions, 262

F

Fenton, Ferrar, 293
Fiqh, 174, 175
Fiqh, 96
Forces of bad as Satan and the *Jinn* (invisible entities), 61

G

Gabriel, 60, 177, 179
Gagneir, 8
Genesis, 161
Genre of Tafsir, 96
Geo, A., 238
God is Merciful, 211
Gospel, 232
Graeco-Roman civilisation,211
Growth of the *Quranic* Science, 79-94
Abu Bakr Shaubah ibn al-Ayyash, 91
al-Fatihah, 80, 85
Ali ibn Abi Talhah, 85
Al-Makki, 91
Al-Qurab, 92
Al-Zarkshi, 91
Banu al-Nadir, 81
calligraphy, orthography and diacritical marks used in the *Quran*, 93-94
capability (ftrah) of man, 88
chapter and verses are Meccan and some Medinan, 80
chapter, 81
clans, 85, 86
clear proof, 86
cloaked one, 80
clot, 80
congregation, 86
content of chapter, 86
contents of the chapters and verses, 79
coursers, 81
coursers, 86
cow, 80, 93
death of the prophet, 87-88
defrauders, 85
defrauders, 86
diacritical marks for vowels, 94
different groups of recites, 90-91
fifth group, 91
fourth group, 91
Kufa, 90
Mecca, 90
second group, 90
third group, 90
divorce, 86

Marfat.com

family of Imran, 79, 80, 86, 93
first group, 90
four of the Ansars, 90
further traditions concerning the order and place of revelation of the chapters, 85-86
gathering of the *Quran* into one volume, 86-87
prophet was inviting the people to Islam in Mecca, 79
heights, 85
hypocrites, 86
Ibn Abbas, 81
ijtihad, 81
importance Muslims attached to the *Quran*, 88-89
iron, 86
kufic script, 94
law of the Shariah, 86
light, 85,
man, 86
Medinan and Meccan chapters, 86
method used in describing, 82
migration, 79
mother of the book, 93
mudhammatan (dark green with foliage), 80
mutual disillusion, 86
names of the chapters, 93
night journey, 93
number of verses in the *Quran*, 92-93
opening of the book, 93
order in which the verses of the *Quran* were revealed, 79
order of revelation, 82
pilgrimage, 85, 86
private apartments, 86
Qatadah, 86
qurra, 88
ranks, 86
reasons for the revelation, 80-81
recitation, memorization and transmission of the *Quran*, 89
repentance, 79
sayings by both Sunni and Shiah source, 87
seven oftrepeated verses, 9
seven reciters, 91-92
Abu Jafar, 91
al-Bazzi, 91
faithful Ali, 91
Ibn Abbas, 91
Ibn al-Kathir, 91
Yaqub, 91
Snni's there are many traditions, 81
spirits of war, 85, 86
spoils, 79
study and devotion to the *Quran*, 87
table spread, 85, 86
Umm Waraqah bint Abd Allah ibn Harith, 90
unity, 93
when the earth shakes, 86
women, 79, 85, 86
Guidance is from god, 213

H

Hadith, 196
Hidayah, 221
Himself into an idol of gold, and under the name of Mawmet, 7
Histories of *tafsir as layin al-mubham*, 174
Holy Koran, 257, 258
Houd (Herber), 231

I

Ibn Bajja (Anempace), 3
Ibn Ishaq (d. 767), 159, 178
Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), 159
Ibn Rushd (Averroes) of Cordova, 3
Ibn Zayd, 183
Idol-worship, 35
Impact of the *Quran*, 187-208
Abd al-Hamid, 192
active emulation, 189
al-mubaya, 197
al-muniri burhanuhu, 195
al-shafiyati ayatuhu, 195
al-thabitati lalimatihu, 195
amplification, 194
amplification, 197
Arabic language, 204
aya, 190

Marfat.com

ayas, 192
beautiful art of the *Quran*, 189
born a Muslim around (69/688), 188
civil strife (*fitna*), 202
condolence letter, 196
conquest letters, 195
devil image, 203
dexterity, 205
enthusiasm, 201
epistolography, 204
fitna, 202, 203
grammatical translation, 196
ideological technique, 202
ideology, 205
including music, 198
istidraj, 199
juz, 189
khayra ummatin ukhrijat lil-nas, 192
killed shortly after Marwan by the agents of the Abbasids (132/750), 188
la-amurannahum, 203
leading them to error (*la-udillannahum*), 203
letter to the crown prince, 189
letter to the crown prince, 199
letters, 193, 207
manners, 204
Marwan's chancery, 188, 207
Marwan's regime, 188
memorizer of good literary prose, 188
musical effect, 197
musical value of the *Quran*, 199
nafila, 197
parts of *ayas*, 190
passive admiration of its art, 189
public letters, 190
Qadarites of Armenia, 206
Quranic formulations, 193
Quranic phrase, 191
rabbika, 193
rephrasings for syntactical, 193
replaces *Quranic* noun, 193
segments, 198
shara, 197
studied in Kufa, 188
stylistic techniques, 197
tamathil, 202
tanzil, 197
technique, 201, 204
tracing *Quran* in Abd al-Hamid, 206
Umayyad, 189
unique techniques of reduction, 195
verb *dabba*, 203
wa (and), 191
wa izharihi, 192
yaftinannakumu, 202
Impostor Mohammed, 8
Indispensability of the message, 215
Interpreting the Bible through the *Quran*, 157-163
Arabian Jews, 158
areas of literature, 157
bare bones of the Bible, 159
biblical materials, 160
Christian polemical pressure, 161
Christians, 158
exegetical tradition within Judaism, 158
genre of Tafsir, 157
hanifiyya, 158
interpretation of the Bible, 158
isra iliyyat, 160
Jedeo-Christian environment, 159
Muhammad in the Bible, 161
Muslim account of earlier history, 160
qisas al-anbiya, 160
retells stories found in the Bible, 158
reworking of the Abrahamic tradition, 158
scrolls of Abraham and Moses, 157
source of the stories, 158
tafsil, 159
tafsir material, 157
tahrif, 162
Tawrat (Torah) of Moses, 157
view of the Bible, 157
Zabur, 157
Isaac, 231
Ishmail, 231
Islam and the four gospels, 287-295

four Gospel, 290
ascension, 293-295
Gospel of St. Matthew and that of St. mark, 289
interpolations, 292-293
Luke's Gospel, 287-288
some important discrepancies, 292
Islam came to terminate the age of slavery, 219
Chinese province of Yunnan, 4
gave to the woman, 218
in the West, 2
Islamic civilization, 78
Islamic law, 177

J

Jesus and Mohammad, 231
Jesus Christ, 232, 295
Jew called Yahudha, 179
Jews, 39, 176, 180, 217
Jinn, 143
Joseph, 231

K

Khalil ibn Ahmad al Farahidi, 77, 94
Knowledge of dialectic philosophy, 225
Koran by sale and Savary, 8

L

Land of the Hijaz, 162
Law and exegesis, 174-185
case of adultery (*walluhul-hukm*), 178
convert to Islam from Judaism,1 81
dhimmis, 181
global view of the contemporary reactions, 175
Hakkamu, 177
Ibn Ishaq, 177
Jews, 182
Malik's account, 177, 178
Muhammad's grief, 182
muhsan female, 178, 180
muhsan male, 178, 180
Muqatil's account, 179
paraphrase, 175
recycling of the *Quran*, 175
role of Abd Allah b. Sallam, 181
Shafi shows, 181
tafsir, 179
Torah's stoning verse, 182
Ubayd Allah b. Abd Allah b. Utba b. Masud, 183
Leonard, Arthur Glyn, 2
Leone, Sierra, 6
Life of *Adam* and *Eve*, 160
Life of Mahomet, 26
Luther, 8

M

Malaterra, 7
Maphomet, 7
Mark, 294
Matthew, 294
Mawmet, 7
Merciful, 260
Miracle of the *Quran*, 89
Mohamedan commentary on the Holy Bible, 162
Mohammad, 1, 8
Mohammed appears with the chief of the Pagan Gods, 7
Mohammed Arkoun, 150
Mohammed, the fanatical destroyer of all idolatry, 7
Molaccas, 4
Moorish civilization, 218
Moses or Elija or Isaiah, 8
Moses, 1
Moslem, 256
Mosque, 6
Muhammad ibn Muslim, 51
Muhammad Izzat Darwaza, 139-150
allegorical versus (*mutashabihat*), 143, 144
angels and the Jinn in the *Quran*, 144
asbab al-nuzul, 146
companions (*sahaba*), 147
concept of *tawhid* (unity, oneness of god), 144
decisive verses (*ayat muhkamat*), 143
divine wisdom, 142
draft of the *tafsir*, 140
essence (and attributes) of god in the *Quran*, 145

Marfat.com

fundamental principles (*usul*), 143
hadith, 147
hereafter in the *Quran*, 145
hypocrties in Medina, 142
Ibn Abbas (d.c. 68/688), 147
lawh mahfuz, 147
Madinan portion, 142
Mujahid b. Jabr (d. 104/722), 147
mutakallimun, 147
phenomena of nature and its inherent laws in the *Quran*, 144-145
prophet's life, 142
Quran and the Prophet's milieu, 142
Quran and the *sira*, 141-142
Quran, its principles (*objectives*) and means, 143
Quranic langauge, 143
Quranic stories, 144-145
rububiyya, 145
sequence and context of the *Quranic* verses, 145-146
sira, 142
suras, 141
tafsir, 146
understanding the *Quran* through the *Quran*, 146-147
wahdaniyya (uniqueness), 145
wasail, 143
Muhammad, 24
Muhammad's political arrangement, 180
Muhammed, 11
Muir, 26
Muir, William, 223
Muqatil b. Sulayan states, 179
Muqatil ibn Sulayman (d. 767), 159
Muslim adulterer, 181
Muslim civilisation under the Arabs, 3
Muslim creed - a creed which strictly, forbids the worship of images, 7
Muslim interpretation of the Bible, 159
Muslim School, 7
Muslims approach the Bible, 157
Muslims in Makka, 221
Muslims to be found in Sierra Leone, 5
Muslims, 2
Muttaqi, 220

N

National Epic of France, 7
New Testament, 121, 214, 291
Noah, 231
Noblesse oblige, 218
Non-Arabs (*ajam*), 188
Normal conquest, 5

O

Old Testament, 160, 214, 294

P

Paganism, 5
Peace and harmony, 220
Philippines, 4
Philosphers of Arabic, 3
Physician and philosopher, 3
Polygamy is allowed by the Koran, 6
Portugal, 4
Position of the woman in the pre-Islamic, 218
Post-Mohammadan era of human history, 210
Post-protestantism, 217
Prayer at the altar of the divine, 213
Preliminary discourse, 26
Process of divine, 214
Process of revelation, 214
Profundity of meaning in the *Quran*, 89
Prophet of Islam is the last-Prophet, 214
Prophet, 2, 18, 87, 89, 176, 223
Prophet of Islam, 211
Prophet's career (*sira*), 140
Prophet's companions, 87
Prophet's death, 5
Prophet's laws, 6
Prophet's mission, 47, 145
Purify the people, 214

Q

Question in the soul, 213
Quran, 11-27, 223-230
Abd Allah ibn Zubair, 15
abrogated (*nusikhat*), 19
Abu Bakr, 17
al-isharat-al-saria, 11
al-Nahl-a Makka, 17

Marfat.com

amr or *nahy*, 19
Anas son of Malik, 15
Arabic literature, 24
arrangement of oral recitation, 14
arrangement of the *Quran*, 14
basis of abrogation, 19
called *al-Quran*, 11
chapter, 22
chapter, 23
Christian sense, 226
collective testimony of the purity of the *Quranic* text, 17
committed to writing, 223
companions, 17-19
complete written copies of the *Quran*, 14-15
corner-stone of Islam, 223
crown and glory of creation, 226
differences of readings, 16
divine message, 12
divine revelation, 223
divisions of the holy *Quran*, 22-23
Egyptian Ulama, 27
European writers on the *Quran*, 25-26
faith in an omnipotent and ominpresent god, 23
Fauz al-Kabir, 20
forms of divine revelation to men, 12-13
Gabriel, 12
Hadith on abrogation, 18-19
highest form of revelation, 11-12
how and when the Holy *Quran* was revealed, 11
Hudhaifa, 15
Ibn Masud, 17
ilqa fi-lrau, 11
influence of the Holy Spirit, 12
interpretation of the *Quran*, 21-22
Itqan, 20
Jews or the followers of previous revelations, 18
Koran and the doctrine of personal holiness, 228-229
Koranic conception of man, 225-226
Lailat-al-Qadr, 11
language, 24
Makka and Madina Suras, 23
manzils or portions, 23
nature of prophet's revelation, 13
place of *Quran* in world literature, 24-25
Prophet passes, 23
prophet's experience of revelation, 13
prophet's followers, 224
Quranish, 15
qurra or reciters, 15
realities of human nature, 227
revelation or commands which the prophet professed, 223
ruku, 23
Said ibn al-As, 15
sayuti on abrogation, 19-20
Sayuti's twenty-one verses, 20
Shah Wali Allah's verdict on five verses, 20-21
standardization of the Holy *Quran*, 15-16
sura, 22
Tabrasi, 18
tabut, 15
theory of abrogation, 17-18
theory of abrogation, 21
translation of the holy *Quran*, 27
Umar, 15
use of the word Naskh, 19
value of Hadith and commentaries in interpreting the *Quran*, 22
wahy khafiyy or *inner revelation*, 12
wahy matluww, 12
words *except what Allah pleases*, 18
Zaid ibn Thabit, 15, 16
Quran and its impact on human history, 210-222
Arabic of the *Quran*, 222
din, 219
prohibited, 219
spread, 219
way of life, 219
Quran as a shining lamp, 211
Quran has been preserved from change, 89
Quran in historical sources for early Islam, 166-171
al-khasirin, 167

Marfat.com

anfusakum,1 69
Arabic literary sources (*tarikh, futuh, ansab*), 166
arbitrate (h-k-m), 168
association (*la-in-ashrakta*), 167
gillulim, 168
kharijites accusation of *shirk* against Ali, 168
Khawarij accused *Ali of Shirk*, 168
oral law, 168
Quran (2.54/51), 169
Quran (39.65), 167
scripture (Torah), 168
uqtulu anfusakum, 169, 170, 171
use of shirk, 167
works of *tafsir*, 166
zalamtum anfusakum, 169
Quran is neither poetry nor prose, 89
Quran on a Yemeni prose, 187
Quranic pronunciation and reading (*tajwid* and *qiraah*), 76
Quranic revelation, 12, 13, 16

R

Rabbis of *kitman*, 176
Racial pride, 220
Realities of Islam, 78
Relationship of the *Quran* to the science, 75-78
Arabic language, 77
changes, 77
hijrah, 76
interdependence of beings, 75
muhkam (clear)
mutashabih (ambiguous), 76
poetry is the court of the Arabs, 77
praise of knowledge and the stimulation of the desire to study, 75
Sanskrit into Arabic, 77
sciences of the *din* of Islam, 76
sciences particular to the study of the *Quran*, 76
sciences which developed because of the *Quran*, 76-77
sciences which the *Quran* invites men to study, 75
truth and reality, 75
Religion of the Arabian Prophet in Europe and America, 2
Religious duties (al-faraid), 188
Religious toleration, 220
Renaissance, 217
Revelation of the *Quran*, 60-74
Adam Nuh (Noah), 73
Alyasa (Elisha), 73
angel Gabriel, 63-64
angels and the devils, 64-65
blame, 64
call of conscience, 65
civil codes, 71
day of reckoning, 71
divine *din* of Islam, 71
divine revelation, 62
faithful spirit, 63
feeling was always present with the Prophet, 61
forces of good and happiness, 61
Gabriel, 74
geniuses of history, 61
guidance is that of revelation, 70
guidance towards the law, 69
Harun (Aaron), 73
hidden reality of revelation, 73
Hud, 73
Ibrahim (Abraham), 73
Ilyas (Elias), 73
intellect is not sufficient in guiding man towards respect of the law, 68-69
Ismail (Ismael, Ishmael), 73
jalaliyah period, 62
jinn (elemental spirits or invisible beings), 64
Lut (Lot), 73
man as a social being, 67-68
man's innate nature, 66
man's path in traversing the road of life, 66-67
manifestation of social differences and the necessity of law, 68
meaning of revelation and prophecy, 66-67
miraculous nature as the Prophet, 62
Musa (Moses), 73

Marfat.com

Muslims concerning the revelation of the *Quran*, 60
non-Muslim writers concerning the revelation and prophecy, 60
non-Muslim writers, 64
path of revelation is protected against mistakes, 72-73
power of revelation and prophecy, 61
prophet was social genius, 60-61
punishment, 64
questions answered, 70-71
Quran itself says concerning this matter, 61-62
Quran was revealed, 73-74
reality of the prophet's mission, 65-66
refusal of Satan to prostrate himself before Adam, 64
respect for the law, 72
Salih (Methusaleh), 73
social law, 68
transmittance of revelation, 63
truth, 70
utterance on behalf of god, 73
violation of the law, 70
Yahya (John), 73
Yunus (Jonah), 73
Yusuf (Joseph), 73
Revelation of Truth, 212, 225
Right of wives, 218
Rise of Islam, 211
Romance of Turpin, 7
Romances of Baphonet, 7

S

Sale, G., 232
Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), 162
Science of *Quranic* commentary and the difference groups of commentators, 48
See al-*Quran*, 211
Self-conscious biblical interpretation, 160
Shakespeare, 7
Shiahs, 78
Simon the Cyrenean, 232
Sira, 178
Smith, Bosworth, 3
Spain, 4
Spiritual principle, 220, 221
St. Peter, 294
Stoning verse, 177
Students of *usul al-fiqh*, 184
Sunna, 89, 176, 177
Sura as a unity, 128-135
al-Ankabut, 131
ashwat, 130
fitna, 131
preliminary, 128-129
suras, 129
twentieth-century exegesis-analytical, 132-135
twentieth-century exegesis-descriptive, 129-131
Darwaza, 130
Farahi and Islahi, 131-132
Sayyid Qutb, 129-130
Tabatabai, 130
Thanavi, 129
Surah al-Ala, 212
Surah al-Fatihah, 213

T

Tabari, 183
Tafsir of the *Quran*, 96, 139, 174, 175, 184, 185, 200
Taoism, 4
Taught the *Quran*, 21
Tawrat or *Zabur*, 159
Tayin, 176
Testament of Human liberty, 219
Textual Quranic occurrences, 187
Theory of abrogation (*naskh*), 141
Three rings, 218
Tolerance preached by Islam, 219
Torah and the Gospel, 160

U

Umar, 177
Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik (86/705), 94, 188
Usulis, 96

V

Values and ideas, 215
Values which the enlightened consensus of mankind, 215

Marfat.com

W

Westerner's sense of duty and justice in judging Islam and the Muslims, 2
Weymouth, 291
Woman
called Busra, 179
in Islam, 218
inherit property, 218
share in her husband's property, 218
Works of al-Suyuti, 157
World War II, 139
Worship of Allah, 225
Writings and works of propagandists hostile to Islam, 2

Y

Younis (Jonah), 231

Z

Zarkash, 128
Zayd ibn Thabit, 88
Zion, 162

Marfat.com

ROLE OF QUR'AN IN ISLAM

Edited by

Masood Ali Khan . Shaikh Azhar Iqbal

Marfat.com