

Islam As I Understand

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Dedicated to:

The Greatest Man
Who Ever Walked This Earth
(570 - 632 CE)

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About the Book

(Note: Many of the quotes given in this book have been translated from languages other than English).

Besides the Qur'an and authentic Hadith, this book has been decorated with quotations from approx 150 non-Muslim Western scholars.

Countless books have been written for introducing Islam to young Muslims and non-Muslims, each promising a new approach. Yet, many of them keep on treading the irrational, tradition-based path, conveniently disregarding the only Authentic and Authoritative Book of Islam, Al-Qur'an.

The tradition-based books fail to appeal to the rational mind since they present Islam as just another religion with strange dogmas and themes, ritualism, fatalism and conjecture. At the end, one might well ask, "So what is new?" Further, most of these books confine themselves to preaching the ways of “worship” to Muslims, in great detail.

The main casualty of the traditional approach about Islam is its Universality. Islam is not the monopoly of one people. In fact, Islam is not a religion; it is a challenge to religion. It is the DEEN (Divinely

Prescribed Way of Life) and as such it is a treasure to be shared by all humanity.

ISLAM AS I UNDERSTAND is different from any other book written on the subject since, far from dwelling on individual acts of worship and ritualism, it highlights Islam as applied in our daily lives in relation to other members of the society. The book includes a Q & A session answering the common questions and objections about Islam.

Departure from the traditional ways is a hallmark of Dr. Shabbir Ahmed's writings. He is courageous, frank and honest about his subject matter. In this book, he convincingly proves Islam's claim as the Universal Faith with strong examples, references and logic. Blind faith has no place in Islam. From that perspective, the book is truly an iconoclast.

ISLAM AS I UNDERSTAND conveys the powerful Message of the Qur'an in such a simple manner that it instantly resonates with a modern thinking mind. The book has been translated in many languages worldwide.

Dr. Ahmed demolishes the mythology which has intruded into Islam at the hands of some great names, even the so-called "Imams", masquerading as Muslims during the first few centuries after the exalted Prophet Muhammad.

An unholy alliance of despotic monarchs, the rich elite and theocratic hierarchy added much to this mythology. The mystic culture too corrupted the Faith in no small measure. Dr. Ahmed expertly wipes off all this dust from the beautiful face of Islam, and thus, helps restore the reason-friendly, shining image of Islam. In short, the book is a masterpiece, a la other gems produced by a genius that dares to speak out.

Now that is a lethal combination!

Sincerely,
Shahid Mahmud,
Freeland, MD

December 2002

THE CURRENT STATUS OF MUSLIMS

Surely you will prevail if you are indeed believers. (Al-Qur'an 3:139)

1.3 Billion People

Islam is a universal Way of Life (DEEN). Besides Asia and Africa, Europe and North America have substantial populations of Muslims. It is proudly claimed that there are more than one billion Muslims in the world.

However, these more than one billion people are facing a global crisis. The crisis consists of political, economic, social, military, and scientific setbacks. The great Allama Inayatullah Khan Al-Mashriqi in the 1940's depicted the state of the East in general, and that of Muslims in particular, in this way:

“People ask me that having widely traveled the East for years, what have I seen. How shall I tell what I have seen! From this end to that end I saw towns in ruins, broken and shaken bridges, dirt clogged canals, dusty streets, abandoned highways. I saw wrinkled faces, under-nourished bodies, stooping backs, empty brains, insensitive hearts, inverted logic, aberrant reason. I saw oppression, slavery, poverty, pomp and vanity, detestable vices, clusters of disease, burnt forests, cold ovens, barren fields, dirty attire and useless hands and feet. I saw imams (religious leaders) without followings. I saw brothers who were foes unto one another. I saw days without purpose and I saw nights which lead to no dawns.”

Let's assess the situation from one more viewpoint. The noted Egyptian scholar Mufti Muhammad Abde Rabbuhu (d.1906) visited Paris a hundred years ago. Upon his return to Egypt he startled the world by declaring, "In Europe I saw no Muslims, I saw Islam. In Egypt I see Muslims, I see no Islam!" (By the way, he termed the rampant, counterfeit, manmade Islam as THE ESTRANGED RELIGION.)

Dear reader, although there are non-Islamic practices in the West, I can hear the echo of that declaration today. The so-called billion plus Muslims are Muslims without Islam! Their political, economic and social conditions paint a complete picture of misery and chaos wherever they live. Apparently the tree bearing such bad fruit should be blameworthy. Isn't a tree known by the fruit it bears? Let me say at the outset: The tree bearing this bad fruit is what I call THE NUMBER TWO ISLAM. Allama Mashriqi (d.1964) had termed it THE MAULVI'S WRONG RELIGION. Allama Iqbal (d. 1938) called it AJAMI (alien, Persian, non-Qur'anic) ISLAM. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, (d. 1897) had named it the MANMADE RELIGION.

Subjugation to kings, despots, and tyrants, slavery to the Sufi and the Mullah, submission to blind following of weird dogmas, fear, illiteracy, insecurity, lootings & killings, ethnic and sectarian hatred, webs of superstition - what is all this? Rule of slavery, total slavery of mind and body.

Sectarianism

Let's view the situation from another angle. The tree of sectarianism among Muslims has grown to such heights, and *fatwas* (religious edicts) of infidelity have become so popular that there exists not a single Muslim in the world today who would be unanimously accepted as a Muslim by the Ulema (or Mullahs) of any two sects! (According to a Turkish scholar now these sects number 190!) The followers of Islam, which introduced the concept of international brotherhood, are hopelessly divided among themselves.

Muslims by Birth

Many find consolation in, "We are born Muslims", or "Thank God! He created us among Muslims." But the Qur'an confers no value to Islam by inheritance. It reads:

4:136 O You who have chosen to be graced with belief! (and call yourselves Muslims)! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the Book He has revealed to His Messenger, and (the fact that He revealed) the Scripture before. [Belief to the point of Conviction can

only be attained through reason and not as a birth right 12:108]

12:108 Say (O Prophet), "This is my way. Resting my call upon reason, I am calling you all to Allah - I and they who follow me." (We do not invite through blind faith, vague dogmas or by stunning your intellect with miracles). Glory to Allah! And I am not one of those who ascribe divinity in any form besides Him."

The Qur'an is very particular on using our intellect and reason. It emphasizes on people not to accept even its own verses deaf and blind. (25:73)

Muslims should stop here and think for a moment. Have I ever tried to search for reality? Did I really find the Truth? Or, am I simply imitating the ways of my forefathers? It is only after due contemplation that Islam can be adopted. Unfortunately, today almost all the one billion plus Muslims in the world are Muslims by birth and by blind following, the kind of Islam which the Qur'an considers of no merit. It has to be a matter of choice based upon reason and understanding. Only then can a Muslim be an effective, enlightened member of the Ummah (Universal Brotherhood).

Reason and learning are like body and soul
Without reason soul is empty wind
Without learning body is a senseless frame.
(Kahlil Gibran, 1883-1931)

Comparison with the Status of Christians

Let us compare the current status of the Muslims with that of the Christians. While there is an increasing bias against Muslims, where are the Christians standing? Objectively speaking, one cannot help but marvel at their scientific, technological and political achievements.

The Bias against Muslims

I know as you do that bias against Muslims has been rising on a global scale. You may wonder why. Palestine, Bosnia, Kashmir, Kosovo, Chechnya have seen the most massive genocide and atrocities since the Holocaust. Anti-Muslim propaganda is on the rise everywhere. Some analysts are calling Iraq a laboratory for further annihilation of Muslims. And the Muslims are getting overjoyed on

President Clinton's felicitation on the Eid festival! Meanwhile, Christian missionary work has been stepped up worldwide.

Our response: Mosque upon mosque, religious school upon religious school, is opening. Yet, in these institutions, all is taught but the pristine and glorious Message of the Qur'an. The magnetic Qur'an, which contains the Message of global success, has been relegated to mere recitation without understanding. The Qur'an is being memorized, being sung in competition and being "finished" in so many hours. Muslim scholars and Ulema in great numbers are busy propagating the No.2, counterfeit, ritualistic, cultural, fatalistic, tradition-based Islam. The bearers of the Last Word of God have confined their faith to individual salvation by means of empty, ritualistic worship. Their resulting non-Qur'anic practices can hardly induce sympathetic or acceptable responses from scientific and rational minds.

“The Qur'an is the only book that can keep up with changing times. Who would like to travel in a bullock cart in the age of horse-less carriage?”
(Kahlil Gibran, Weekly News, Lebanon, 1921)

Moreover, to my knowledge, there is a great scarcity of books that would simply yet effectively introduce a non-Muslim (or even a young Muslim) to the extraordinary and dynamic practical teachings of Islam. If a non-Muslim is interested in learning about Islam, we either hand-over to him a copy of the Qur'an (which is not understandable because of wrong translations based upon a thousand year old conjecture-based narratives), or we provide him with a book on Islamic jurisprudence (FIQH). These books of Fiqh talk about menial issues and petty problems such as ways of ablution, size of the beard, type of the head-cover, rituals of worship, etc. These man-made books, unlike the Qur'an, cannot guide us to establish a workable system in the human society.

Unfortunately, the ignorant opponents and foolish friends of Islam wish to maintain the status quo. Since this kind of Islam proposes no system or way of collective life, it poses no threat to the ruling or dominant class, or to the priesthood. Rather it invigorates both!

We have respect for our Christian brothers and sisters. They are part of God's family. The exalted Messenger Muhammad said:

“All humanity is the family of God, so love them all.”

But, Muslims have failed miserably in conveying the highly rational Message of the Last Word of God to humanity. They have done even worse in defining the blissful objective of the Qur'an i.e. building Paradise in this life and thus achieving it in the Hereafter.

Therefore, even after the western scholars have seen a glimmer of the shining guidance in the Qur'an, all the above reasons contribute to bar them from looking any further. And noticing the abject political and socio-economic status of Muslims, our Christian brothers and sisters detract from Islam. How would they know that Muslims today are not lagging behind due to Islam but only because of a counterfeit, man-made set of dogmas, beliefs, rituals, customs and traditions, i.e. The Number Two Islam! Who is to blame?

The Status of Christians

Unlike the Muslims, the Christians are performing far better at the political, social, economic, and scientific levels. Their planning and action in these areas is much more organized and rationally based. Why is this?

Ponder that when God commanded the angels ("Forces of Nature" according to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan) to prostrate before Adam, they did. This means that Allah made the forces of nature subservient to mankind. In other words, man has been endowed with the capacity to understand and master the physical laws operative in Nature. This is called the "status of Adam" or "the potential of humanity." The West has attained this coveted status. Muslims, not yet attaining it, are scrambling through life at subhuman levels.

However, let us not ignore the glaring fact that the western civilization is not only imperfect, but according to top western minds, it is heading toward disaster. There is a catastrophic decline of morality. Crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, publicly advertised homosexuality, single parenthood, child abuse, domestic violence, decline of family values,

rampant divorce rate, and hard pornography are just a few examples of the evils infesting the materially advanced West.

Modernity without spirituality is taking its toll on the western psyche. It appears that, for the Western civilization, the party is over!

It is interesting to note that the Renaissance of the Christian Europe coincided with and heavily depended on the revolutionary thoughts of Martin Luther and John Calvin. When the Europeans moved away from the church they set their course toward becoming scientific and industrial giants. Conversely, Muslims who kindled the European Renaissance slumped into darkness as they departed from the Qur'an.

The status of the true believers (*MU'MINEEN*), however, is most glorious i.e. they harness the forces of Nature by mastering physical laws and then use these forces for the benefit of not one nation, race or color, but of all mankind as Allah commands.

Qur'an 13:17 The real existence on earth is of the one who benefits mankind.

Thus, the West has attained the status of Adam. The Muslims have lost both statures.

"Risen you have not to the human level, how can you find God (and the purpose of life)?"

- Sir Iqbal.

So we come to the question, why I am still a Muslim.

WHY I AM A MUSLIM

The Message of Mohammad is not a set of metaphysical phenomena. It is a complete civilization. (W.A.R. Gibb, Whither Islam)

Basically there are three reasons why I chose Islam to be my way of life and for the same reasons I am Muslim.

1. Islam is not to Blame

As opposed to other dogmas, Islam offers a workable and logical system of life. The Glorious Qur'an, which embodies the last Word of Allah, guarantees its followers signal victory, success and achievement in this world and in the Hereafter. Then what explains the Muslims' downfall? Is the Message of Islam outdated? I believe that Muslims, and not Islam, are to be blamed for their dismal condition in the last many centuries as we will soon examine.

More than one billion people who call themselves Muslims are so only by name. They have fallen from the high platform of DEEN (The Divinely Prescribed Way of Life) into the swamp of MAZHAB (rituals of worship to achieve individual salvation plus blind following of human 'authorities' and senseless non-Quranic dogmas). Thus, it is their non-Islamic practices that cause their decline and invite condemnation from rest of the world.

2:8 And of mankind are those who claim, "We believe in Allah and the Last Day", when they have indeed not attained belief.

Let us hear this truth in the words of the great Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of Aligarh, India:

The prevalent form of Islam is not the Deen that was revealed to the exalted Messenger and that which is preserved in the Qur'an ----- Muslims have chosen for themselves their ancestors' traditions and beliefs, their customs and practices, as gods besides God. They have acknowledged and invented countless prophets (jurists, mystics, sufis, imams, historians) after Mohammad, the exalted. They have taken books, written by men as equivalent of the Qur'an. We do not accept these false gods, fictitious prophets and fake qur'ans. We are the destroyers of these false gods, fictitious prophets and fake qur'ans just as our father Abraham, the exalted, was the destroyer of his father Azar's idols." (Hayat-e-Javaid, Afkar-e-Sir Syed)

Dear reader, if the conviction of Sir Syed has astonished you please reflect on some verses of the Qur'an that support him:

3:139 Do not ever, then, lose heart, and grieve not, for you are

bound to prevail if you are indeed believers.

4:141 ---- Allah will not give the rejecters (of the Qur'an) any way of success against the true believers.

10:103 ---- It is incumbent upon Us to save the community of true believers.

21:105 And indeed, after advising mankind, We laid it down in all the Books of Divine Wisdom that My able servants will inherit the earth.

24:55 Allah has promised that those nations who will believe in the Divine Laws and strengthen human resources, He will surely make them rulers in the earth - Just as He granted rule to the previous nations (28:6, 33:27). ----.

Now, let us think about the plight of Muslims world-wide. Are they truly prevailing anywhere? Aren't they subjugated slaves of foreign powers, even in their own countries? Are they not stagnant in their thought and action? Thus, either the Muslims are not true believers or the Qur'an is wrong by declaring that the believers will prevail.

First, it seems clear that Muslims are not fulfilling God's conditions to prevail in the earth. Professor A.N. Whitehead rightly points out that *accepting the customary thought without criticism is a form of idol-worship*. It brings the development of the human mind to a standstill. Amazingly, the Qur'an describes idols as *authan*, things that do not move. These statements support Sir Syed's assertion that Muslims have become victims of blind following and are, therefore, stagnant in their thinking and action.

Secondly, there is no doubt about the Qur'anic Truth that the believers will always prevail. When Muslims were adhering to the Qur'an they were the most dynamic force in the world to contend with. History is replete with their accomplishments in all walks of life, be it government, morals, philosophy, science, architecture, military, agriculture, medicine, surgery, physics, chemistry, optics, art, etc. In fact that era provided the most pragmatic test for the Qur'an with absolutely convincing results for humanity to behold. According to Robert Briffault, *the European Renaissance was triggered not from Italy but from the Muslim Spain*.

Conclusion: Sir Syed's claim, that today's Muslims are not true believers, is absolutely correct and confirmed by the Qur'an. How?

25:30 And the Messenger will say, "O my Lord! These are my people, the ones who had disabled this Qur'an making it of no account."

2. Islam Provides Guidance

While Muslims are to blame for their plight, Islam indeed guarantees salvation and success for all humanity. It explains the role of human beings in the Universe and provides unparalleled guidance. I respectfully submit that nothing but Islam offers to us:

- A rational, comprehensible relationship between the Creator, the Universe, and the Humans.
- Guidance to establish a political, social, economic and moral environment where one can grow up to one's full potential. This Guidance, transcending all temporal and spatial boundaries, is for all humankind and promises to solve every single problem of humanity.

These two reasons need further elaboration. Chapter III will further elaborate on Islam As I Understand.

3. Critical Issues With Other Belief Systems

Another reason why I am a Muslim: I find other religions to be extremely dependent on blind faith, supernatural phenomena and irrational mythology. They fail to propose or provide an equitable society free of man-made distinctions. They also fail to offer practical, workable solutions to the problems and crises that humanity is facing. On the other hand, Islam is a challenge to religion. And it is simple. *"If Islam means submission to the Will of God, don't we all live in Islam?"* (Johann Goethe)

While the foundation of Islamic theology is simple, that is, Pristine Monotheism and the Law of Requit (Cause and Effect), other religions offer inexplicably complex doctrines. For example, the Christian doctrines of Trinity, Original Sin, the physical son-ship of Jesus and the Vicarious Sacrifice of 'the Lamb of God' etc are so complex that the Christian Christology has been incessantly revisited

by the Church. Top Christian scholars and thinkers feel very uncomfortable with the nature of Jesus Christ as portrayed in the New Testament. This re-visitation is very likely to result in the nature of Jesus being redefined in conformity with that of the Qur'an. These points will be explained shortly.

See how rational the Qur'an is!

85:15 Lord of the Supreme Throne.

85:16 Carrying out His Plan according to His Laws.

[In the World of Command He makes Laws as He wills. Then He implements these Laws in the World of Creation - the Universe (7:54). And then He neither changes them, nor makes any exceptions. (17:77, 33:38, 33:62, 35:43, 40:85, 48:23). His Rule is the Rule of Law and not of haphazard tantrums]

So, people do not walk on water, birds can fly, elephants cannot, fire burns, ice cools, water flows downstream, earth revolves around the sun, seeds grow to become plants, living beings taste death, babies are born when male and female gametes unite, seasons alternate in regular fashion, night follows the day and day follows the night etc. There are no such things as the demons or superstitions of any kind.

ISLAM AS I UNDERSTAND

The teachings of Islam can fail under no circumstances. With all our systems of culture and civilization, we cannot go beyond Islam and, as a matter of fact, no human mind can go beyond the Qur'an.
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the celebrated German poet and thinker, in his letters to J. Eckermann and Sir Henry Elliot)

Dear reader, Islam is DEEN, a perfect way of individual and collective life. All else is *mazhab* or call it religion. The Arabic word *mazhab* does not appear in the Qur'an. Islam is not a set of irrational themes, empty rituals and rites, myths and omens, pomp and magic, dreams and non-scientific phenomena. Nor, it is just "stories of the bygones". The Qur'an is the only Book that invariably gives the rational reason

behind each and every Command. In fact, Islam is so scientific that the noted Russian thinker, P.D. Ouspensky, stated that *any science that collides with the Qur'an will turn out to be false.* (Tertium organum)

Relationship of the Creator, the Universe, and the Human Being

1. The Creator:

The Creator is One, all else is creation. He is the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds and of all humankind regardless of family, race, sex, color, creed, geography, national origin, religion etc. (1:1, 114:1)

Also, God (Allah) is Omni-present and Omnipotent. He is not confined to the heavens. He does not have a man-like image. He is the Light of the heavens and the earth (24:35). He is High Above the human concepts of needing or having a consort/mistress (6:101) or children (112:1-4). And although Allah is Omnipotent, He uses his Power with Wisdom and Knowledge (2:209). He is the Wise and the Knower, and therefore, never repents on having made a wrong decision.

In the World of Command (*Al-Amr*), He makes Laws as He wills. Then, He implements these Laws in the World of Creation (*Al-Khalq* or the Universe 7:54). These Laws NEVER change (35:43, 48:23). If we reflect, the magnificent gains of science and technology would have come to naught if the proverbial apple of Newton fell on the ground yesterday and flew in the air today.

The entire Universe is operating according to the physical laws designed and implemented by Allah. When we discover some of these laws, we call them Science. Yet, all the creation that exists cannot defy these laws of nature. Senator John Glenn said well that *we can invent a compass but we cannot invent the law for the magnetic needle to point North.* And so, the water will flow downstream, the apple will fall to the ground, a stone will sink, a boat will float, the day and night will follow each other, the seasons will take their turns, fire will be hot, ice will be cold, the living beings will grow, reproduce and die. Similarly God's Laws in Nature make no distinction between Jews or Gentiles, Hindus or Christians, Muslims

or non-Muslims. But, those who submit their free will to His Guidance and try to establish peace, become harmonious with the Divine Plan. He calls those people Muslims. "Islam" embraces both meanings, Submission and Peace.

2. The Universe:

According to the Qur'an, the Universe is neither Brahma's dream nor Ramji's leela (Rama's play). God is not *Nut Rajan* (the Master Player). The Universe is for real. It is neither an image nor a shadow of the "World of Ideas" as proposed by Plato. It has not been created by chance.

44:38 For, We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in idle sport.

44:39 We have not created them without Purpose. But most of them know not.

The universe is too organized to be the result of an accident.

- Albert Einstein

The Qur'an further states that all things in the Universe are heading toward their appointed destinations and nothing is stationary. The heavenly bodies are "swimming along in their orbits" (21:33, 36:40). All this is taking place according to the physical laws designed by the Creator. The Universe itself is marching to a designated goal. (51:47)

There is a coherent plan in the universe, though I don't know what it's a plan for.

- British astronomer, author, Sir Fred Hoyle

3. The Human Being:

God has created the Universe in an organized manner and humans are a part of that great organization. However, He has granted free will to the human beings. They are free to choose their own way, and thus, make their own destiny. And, every action of ours must meet with a just recompense in the Hereafter as well.

2:256 There is absolutely no compulsion or coercion in religion. ----.

18:29 And proclaim, "This is the Truth from your Lord. Whoever accepts it let him accept it, and whoever rejects it, let him reject it." ---

-.

45:22 For, Allah has created the heavens and the earth with Purpose, and that every person shall be repaid what he or she has earned. And none shall be wronged.

Just as all other creations in the Universe are obeying Divine Laws fulfilling their assigned roles human beings must follow the Commands and harmonize themselves with the Divine Plan. To achieve this, humans could use their intellect and science. But the intellect and science are imperfect. Albert Einstein states, "*Science can tell what is, it cannot tell what ought to be. The code of permanent values can only come through Revelation to the chosen personalities (messengers).*" A.S. Eddington maintains, "*The acceptance of God does not mean believing in His existence. Rather, it means accepting God as the Source of guidance.*" Thus, in order to help us become harmonious with the Universe, Allah has compassionately shown us the Way. Only we humans can be the losers if we miss the Divine Train which is constantly moving toward an appointed destination.

The Guidance

Now that we have seen a glimpse of the relationship of the Creator with humans, let us take a look at the Eternal Guidance He has provided for us. Al-Qur'an 2:177 denotes that we must begin with having *IMAN* (Conviction) in Allah, the Life Hereafter, the Angels, the Book and His Messengers. Commonly these are called the Five Articles of Faith.

The Five Articles of Faith (given in 2:177)

1- *Belief in One God: How can we embrace that belief? The Qur'an invites us to *IMAN* only through reason. A tornado hitting a junk yard will not end up producing a Boeing 747. Even the "Big Bang" must have a Master Mind behind it.

12:108 Say (O Prophet), "This is my way. Resting my call upon

reason, I am calling you all to Allah - I and they who follow me." (We do not invite through blind faith, vague dogmas or by stunning your intellect with miracles). Glory to Allah! And I am not one of those who ascribe divinity in any form besides Him."

Watch this reason applied beautifully. *"The Universe is too organized to be the result of an accident,"* declared Einstein. And Carl Sagan, the renowned American philosopher, exclaimed, *"In order to make an apple-pie from scratch, we would have to reinvent the Universe!"*

2. *Belief in the Hereafter: This entails not only the Afterlife, but Nature's Law of Cause and Effect as well. As you sow so shall you reap! Our thoughts and actions make imprints on our personalities. Thus we start making our hell or paradise right here in this world.

20:124 But whoever will turn away from My remembrance, thus ignoring My Commands, his will be a narrow life. (Such individuals and nations will live in economic and moral poverty). And I shall bring such of them blind to the Assembly on the Day of Resurrection. (17:72, 20:102)

Accordingly, Sir Iqbal in his beautiful poem, *"A Stroll in the Heavens"*, wrote that when an angel (his tour guide) showed him a dark cold abode for hell, Iqbal looked perplexed! The tour-guide explained:

*Dwellers of the earth that come here
Carry with them own fuel to flare*

Thus, our good thoughts and deeds (actions that are beneficial to the society) culminate in great reward termed "Paradise." Conversely our negative thought and behavior prepare us for the hellfire. It is noteworthy that according to the Qur'an, the hellfire is such that its flames emanate from, and engulf the hearts.

104:6 A Fire kindled by Allah (His Law of 'As you sow, so shall you reap')

104:7 That originates in, and engulfs, the hearts.

Belief in the immortality of human personality (SELF) is, in fact, closely tied to the belief in the Hereafter. Johann Goethe rightly

pointed out, *"One who does not believe in the Afterlife is only a cadaver in this world."*

*3. Belief in Angels: This belief holds that the angels are sinless, eternally obedient creation of Allah. Unlike humans, angels do not have free will. The Qur'an does not expect us to define their exact nature. Sir Syed understood them to be "Forces of Nature" or physical laws of nature in the Universe. The Divine Message was revealed to God's messengers through the Angels. The exalted Prophet, explaining a verse, states that even thunder is one of the angels of God. That statement is completely in agreement with the Qur'an.

13:13 And the thunder and the (other) angels strive to glorify Him by carrying out their duties in awe of Him. And He it is Whose physical Laws let loose the thunderbolt to strike the earth. And yet they stubbornly argue about Allah's Laws (and fall for superstitions). Though Awesome He is in Power!

*4. The Book: The Message of God revealed to prophets through the angels is called a Book. The Divine Message that was conveyed through a chain of prophets like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Jesus, took its final form in the Qur'an. Therefore, the Qur'an is the Final Commandment, THE BOOK. It is for all times and for all nations.

Moreover, the Qur'an is the most authentic Scripture in all history. Numerous scholars from all religions agree that the Qur'an is word for word, letter for letter, the same unchanged, unaltered Message as revealed to and preached by Messenger Muhammad, the exalted.

I have studied Islam very closely. I believe from the depths of my heart that the existing Koran is exactly the Book, letter for letter, as written in the lifetime of Mohammad.

- Sir Williams Muir, *Life of Mohammad*

I am convinced that the Qur'an is THE WORD OF GOD in its truest and whole meaning.

- Rev. Bosworth Smith

Now, watch from another perspective. Dr. Maurice Bucaille, the renowned Christian scholar, historian, and surgeon from France wrote his revolutionary book, *The Bible, the Quran And Science* in the 1970's. He states that *the Qur'an is replete with scientific narratives such as creation of the Universe, Evolution, the Water Cycle, Geology, Astronomy, History, Embryology, Zoology, Botany, etc.* Dr. Bucaille asserts that *there is not a SINGLE instance in the Qur'an that is inconsistent with the established scientific knowledge.* On the other hand, according to Bucaille, *"Incongruities are encountered in the Bible at numerous places."* Dr. Bucaille's views will be presented in some detail in a separate chapter.

Furthermore, the Qur'an challenged all people 1400 years ago to help one another and make one Surah (chapter) like this (2:23 & 10:38). Since the great Arabic writers of that time, the challenge stands to this day with all its majesty.

*5. Messengers: I have avoided using the term "Prophet" here since it conveys the impression of a man making prophecies. The role of a Messenger of Allah is much more comprehensive and sublime. Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad (the exalted ones) were all chosen messengers of God. They all were (and still are) the role models for all humanity. They had spotless character and embodied human perfection. They never lapsed in their prime duty of conveying God's Message to mankind.

Contrary to the Bible, the Qur'an declares that all messengers were men of life upright. They did not commit sins, nor did they violate Divine Values. Therefore, unlike in the Bible:

Noah never drank alcohol, nor did his daughters made him commit sin with them.

David did not fall for the beauty of his neighbor's wife.

Nor did Solomon lean toward worshipping his wives' idols.

Jacob did not deceive his old father Isaac.

Nor did he have a wrestling match with God.

Lot's daughters did not make him drunk nor did they lead him to sin.

And Abraham did not tell any lies.

Moses did not kill the Coptic intentionally, nor did he strike him in bias.

And Jesus never rebuked his mother. Nor was he rude to his people.

[Moment of reflection: If these great messengers faltered in character, who, then, would be the role model of character for us? And how could we expect virtue among their followers and people in general?]

Further, God did not repent on creating such human beings. He never gets tired to need a day of rest. No sleep or slumber overcomes Him. He is not an angry, jealous, vengeful God. He favors no peoples or nations. His Laws support those who live by them. (2:255)

Let us reiterate that God sent His guidance to all nations and all peoples through His chosen messengers (10:47). His Message finally was perfected through His last Messenger, Muhammad, the exalted (33:40). The Message has been meticulously preserved in the form of Al-Qur'an for all places, times and peoples forever (5:3, 34:28, 62:3). The Qur'an calls Messenger Muhammad, "the best in conduct," (68:4) "the best role model for people," (33:21) and the "Mercy for the Worlds" (21:107).

But today, let us hear from some great non-Muslim scholars, writers and leaders. What do they have to say about this greatest and noblest of all humans that ever walked this earth? (Note: Some of the quotes throughout this book have been translated from other languages.)

These great minds rose above bias and prejudice to embrace the most glittering truth of human history. What is that truth? - That no person in the history of mankind ever came close to Muhammad (S) in greatness, character, wisdom and knowledge. Let us proceed with respect.

THE SAVIOR

1. *I have studied him. The wonderful man, and in my opinion, he must be called the Savior of humanity.* (George Bernard Shaw - *The Genuine Islam*)

2. *Philosopher, Orator, Apostle, Legislator, Warrior, Conqueror of ideas, the Restorer of rational belief, the preacher of a religion without images, the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one heavenly Empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards [I repeat, "ALL"] by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, "Is there any man greater than he?"* (Alphonse Lamartine, French poet 1790-1869, *Historie De la Turquie*, Paris, 1854)

3. *Muhammad was the most successful of all religious personalities.* (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 4th & 11th editions)

4. *Mohammad was the soul of kindness, and his influence was felt and never forgotten by those around him.* (Diwan Chand Sharma, *The Prophets of the East*, 1935)

5. [Mohammad was] *the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.* (Michael H. Hart - *The 100*)

6. *The greatest leader of all times was Mohammad.* (Jules Masserman, Professor of History, Chicago University)

7. *The word of Mohammad is a voice direct from nature's own heart--all else is wind in comparison.* (Thomas Carlyle 1795-1881, British author - *On Heroes, Hero-Worship And the Heroic in History*)

8. *The more I study, the more I discover that the strength of Islam does not lie in the sword.* (M.K. Gandhi, 1869-1948 - *Young India*)

9. *The Creed of Mohammad is free from ambiguity and the Quran is a glorious testimony to the unity of God.* (Edward Gibbon, British historian 1737-1794 – *The History of the Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire*)

10. *The towering personality of Muhammad has left bright and indelible imprints on all mankind.* (John William Draper, M.D. LL.D. - *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, London 1875)

11. *Absolutely unique in history, Muhammad is a threefold founder of a nation, of an empire and of a religion.* (Reverend Bosworth Smith - *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*)

12. *No man whose external conditions changed so much ever changed himself so little to meet them.* (R.V.C. Bodley - *The Messenger*, London, 1946)

13. *The man who of all men exercised the greatest influence upon the human race--Muhammad.* (J.W. Draper M.D. L.L.D. - *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, London, 1875)

14. *Among leaders who have made the greatest impact through ages, I would consider Muhammad before Jesus Christ.* (James Gavin - *Speeches of a U.S. Army General*)

15. *In the person of the prophet of Islam we see the rarest, rather the only phenomenon on earth walking in flesh and blood with a unique blend – the perfect union of the theorist, the organizer and the leader in one soul.* (Professor K.S. Rama Krishna Rao - *Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam*)

16. *The lies that we (Christians) have heaped round this man are disgraceful to ourselves only.* (Thomas Carlyle - *On Heroes and Hero Worship*)

17. *A man of truth and fidelity, true in what he did, in what he spake and thought - this is the only sort of speech worth speaking.* (Thomas Carlyle - *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, 1840)

18. *The greatest crime, the greatest "sin" of Mohammad in the eyes of the Christian West is that he did not allow himself to be slaughtered, to be "crucified" by his enemies. He only defended himself, his family and his followers; and finally vanquished his enemies. Mohammad's success is the Christians' gall of disappointment: He did not believe in any vicarious sacrifices for the sins of others.* (Edward Gibbon - *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*)

19. *The legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword is the most fantastically absurd myth that historians have ever repeated.* (De Lacy O' Leary - *Islam at the Cross Roads*, London, 1923)

20. *The sayings of Muhammad are a treasure of wisdom not only for Muslims but for all mankind.* (M.K. Gandhi - *Preface to The Sayings of Muhammad by Sohrawardi*)

21. *He was the Messenger of the One True God: And never to his life's end did he forget for a moment who he was! He was one of those happy few who have attained the supreme joy of making one great truth their very life-spring.* (Stanley Lane Poole - *Memoirs*)

22. *Those who believe that Islam was spread by force are fools who neither know the ways of Islam nor the ways of the world.* (Balbir Singh - *Navan Hindustan*, 1947)

23. *Mohammad was an enthusiast in the noblest sense.* (Stanley Lane Poole - *Memoirs*)

24. *He was Caesar and Pope in one, but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions and Caesar without the legions of Caesar - without a bodyguard, without a palace. If any one man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Mohammad.* (Reverend B. Smith - *Mohammad And Mohammadanism*, London)

25. *The Renaissance of Europe did not take place in the 15th century. Rather, it began when Europe learned from the culture of the Arabs. The cradle of European awakening is not Italy. It is the Muslim Spain.* (Robert Briffault - *The Making of Humanity*)

26. *Muhammad saved the human civilization from extinction.* (J.H. Denison - *Emotions As The Basis Of Civilization*)

27. *The height of human achievement and glory, Mohammad.* (Pringle Kennedy - *Arabian Society At The Time Of Mohammad*)

28. *Under his influence people became united in one bond which they knew not, the bond of true monotheism. (L.E. Browne - The Eclipse Of Christianity In Islam)*

29. *Kingdom of God on Earth! God's messenger serving as the greatest proponent of human brotherhood, His viceroy on earth in the form of Muhammad. (Philip K. Hitti, American historian and philosopher - History of the Arabs)*

30. *The message of Mohammad, Islam, is nothing but a blessing for mankind -The usher from darkness to light and from Satan to God. (Rev E. Stephenson - My Reflections)*

31. *The noble founder of a nation, an empire and a religion. The unlettered one bestowed upon the world the Book which is a miracle, the eternal miracle and the true miracle. (Rev. Bosworth Smith)*

32. *Mohammad brought an end to idol worship. He preached Monotheism and infinite Mercy of God, human brotherhood, care of the orphan, emancipation of slaves, forbidding of wine. No religion achieved as much success as Islam did. (Sir William Muir - Life of Mohammad)*

33. *Mohammad's religion reformed all existing dogmas and brought the Arabs ahead of the super powers of the time. (Dr. Marcus Dods - Mohammad, Buddha and Christ)*

34. *Mohammad was the greatest Executive Officer for implementation of the Divine Will. Like other prophets he knew that time will come when all mankind will become one community. (H.N. Spalding - Civilization in East and West)*

35. *He laid the foundation of a universal government. His law was one for all. Equal justice and love for everyone. (George Rivorie - Visages de L' Islam)*

36. *The Arabian Prophet Mohammad is the founder of a revolution unparalleled in history. He founded a political state that will ultimately embrace the entire planet. The law of that Government will rest on justice and kindness. His teachings revolve around human equality,*

mutual cooperation and universal brotherhood. (Raymond Lerouge - Life de Mohamet)

37. Mohammad introduced the concept of such Glorious and Omnipotent God in Whose eyes all worldly systems are pieces of straw. Islamic equality of mankind is no fiction as it is in Christianity. No human mind has ever thought of such total freedom as established by Mohammad. (Dr. Mawde Royden - The Problem Of Palestine)

38. Islam is a forceful spiritual energy. Its true meaning will manifest itself when it will be implemented on a large scale. (Tor Andre - Muhammad, The Man And His Faith)

39. Islam does not set impossible goals. There are no mythological intricacies in this message. No hidden meanings or secrets and absolutely no priesthood. (Phillip Hitti - History of the Arabs)

40. In Islam the believer is a worshiper and a soldier ever ready to go to the battlefield but only for that battle which is waged to eradicate the evil. (Spalding - Civilization in East and West)

41. The Message of Mohammad is not a set of metaphysical phenomena. It is a complete civilization. (W.A.R. Gibb - Whither Islam)

42. The Book revealed to Muhammad is one and unique of its kind. It has left indelible impression on the hearts of humanity. Nothing can overcome its majesty. The Quran has given new dimensions to human thinking - Surprising reforms, stunning success! (Rev. B. Margoliouth - A Biography of Mohammad)

43. The Book revealed to Muhammad defines an unalterable guide to individual and collective lives of people. (Sir Richard Gregory - Religion In Science And Civilization)

44. The Christian World came to wage crusades against Muslims but eventually knelt before them to gain knowledge. They were spellbound to see that Muslims were owners of a culture that was far superior to their own. The Dark Ages of Europe were illuminated by

nothing but the beacon of Muslim civilization. (F. J. C Hearushaw - The Science of History)

45. Greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results- Mohammad established a system based upon true and immortal ideology. Is there any like he? (Alphonse Lamartine - Historie De la Turquie)

46. The power that created in Muslims a ravenous appetite for knowledge sprung from the Quran. (Rev. B. Margoliouth)

47. In my view, Islam is the only religion in the world that will remain eternally practicable with changing times. (George Bernard Shaw - The Genuine Islam, 1936)

48. I believe that if today an autocrat of Mohammad's caliber assumes world leadership, he could solve all problems facing humanity. I predict that tomorrow's Europe will embrace Islam. (George Bernard Shaw)

49. Mohammad never assigned himself a status more than a common man and a messenger of God. People had faith in him when he was surrounded by poverty and adversity and trusted him while he was the ruler of a great Empire. He was a man of spotless character who always had confidence in himself and in God's help. No aspect of his life remained hidden nor was his death a mysterious event. (M.H. Hyndman - The Awakening of Asia)

50. The teachings of Islam can fail under no circumstances. With all our systems of culture and civilization, we can not go beyond Islam and, as a matter of fact, no human mind can go beyond the Qur'an. (Letter of Goethe to Eckermann, Sir Henry Elliott's collection, 1865)

51. The solution to all international conflicts lies only in embracing Islam en masse because Islam is the only religion that can transcend nationalism. I see, with great dismay, that nationalism is gaining grounds even among the bearers of the Qur'an. I will hope for the day when all humanity will break this idol and unite all as the children of God. (Arnold J. Toynbey - The World and the West, 1952)

52. *Think and ponder! Which person is it who taught mankind the way to establish the greatest society; the society in which blessings descend upon every individual . . .* (J.H. Dennison - *Emotions as the Basis of Civilization*) [We may respectfully recall that the Qur'an entitles the exalted Messenger as "Grace for the Worlds"]

53. *Fellow inhabitants of the planet! Search for the ideal Prophet, who in the 7th century, has shown you the way to total success.* (Lewis Mumford - *Transformation of Man*)

54. *The message of Mohammad is flowing toward its noble destination like a pure, fresh and transparent rivulet.* (Johann Goethe)

55. *The critics are blind. They cannot see that the only sword Mohammad ever wielded was the sword of mercy, compassion and forgiveness.* (Pundit Jai Anand - *My Religion, Hinduism*)

56. *All religions, save the word of Muhammad, are broken boats. They cannot take humanity to the shore of serenity.* (Dr. E.B. Hocking - *The Universal Faith*)

57. *Islam is the only religion that gives dignity to the poor.* (Ramsey Clark, Former U.S. Attorney General)

For the unbiased reader, glimpses from the great non-Muslim minds given in this chapter should suffice to reiterate why I am a Muslim. Further discussion of the subject, however, will shed more light on the subject and I will also explain why I am a Muslim by choice, not by birth.

[Some of the well known scholars who had the blessed fortune of having learned Arabic by socializing with the Bedouins:

- The Swiss Muslim Johann Ludwig Burckhardt in the 1810s.

- The British Muslim Sir Richard Burton in the 1850s.

- The German (openly non-Muslim, confidentially Muslim) Heinrich von Maltzan during 1860s.

- The Austrian Muslim Leopold Weiss (Muhammad Asad) in the 1920s.
- The French surgeon Maurice Bucaille in the 1950s]

The Five "Pillars" of Islam

The term "Pillars of Islam" does not appear in the Qur'an. According to a saying attributed to the exalted Messenger, "The building of Islam rests on five." (Broken Arabic in Bukhari)

1. Tawheed (The Creed of Islam): There is no god but the One True God.

2. Salat (Closely following the Divine Commands): Establishing Salat would entail submission to Allah's Commands given in the Qur'an and striving collectively to form a social order where no one in the society sleeps hungry (107:1-7). Salat is not mere five times a day ritual prayers. (Saabiq = The winning horse. Musalli (from Salat) is the closely following runners-up).

3. Zakaat (Spending our surplus wealth on the needy): The government and people will keep their wealth and resources open for the betterment of the society and for the fellow human beings. People will give "whatever is more than they need." (2:219)

4. Saum (Abstinence, not mere fasting): Yearly training program of Abstinence during the month of Ramadhan (2:185). Saum is not mere fasting. It entails Abstinence from food and drink and intimate husband wife relationship from dawn to dusk, emotional restraint, cultivation of good manners, perseverance, all as a pre-requisite to establish the "Kingdom of God" on earth.

5. Hajj (Pilgrimage): An invitation to those who have the means among all mankind (3:97) to gather in Makkah. The central idea here is mutual consultation, realize the blessings of the unity of mankind (22:28) and confer how to make the planet a better place to live.

[Note: There are much more important Commands in the Qur'an than these five "Pillars" chosen by the Hadith collectors. Maintaining peace and fulfilling human rights are just two such examples]

However, even these five "pillars" of Islam have currently been reduced to mere acts of ritual worship. Famous Mullahs such as Abul Kalam Azad never thought of Islam as a collective way of life. Unfortunately, most Muslims even today think that just verbal proclamation of "the Articles of Faith" and the (five "Pillars") ritual acts of worship constitute the whole Islam, and this will absolve them of their duty to God. What would any 'pillars' do without constructing a building on them!? Hence, we see no tangible results from the verbal proclamations and rituals of worship. No wonder the Muslims remain confused and the non-Muslims have a weird impression of Islam. They equate the erroneous or merely the non-productive ritualistic practices of Muslims with Islam - a religion of the orthodox, illiterate, fatalistic people riding on camels with flowing robes and beards, rosaries in their hands, drenched in worship, masters of terror, keepers of four wives, their women clad in burqas etc, etc.

Even staunch Muslims dismally fail to show a beautiful structure on these famous "Pillars".

THE STRUCTURE

The exalted Messenger Muhammad shunned all stereotypical images of priesthood and ritualism by declaring, "There is no Islam without a unified collective Way of Life." And according to the Qur'an the ideal collective Way of Life is where members of the society enrich the life of one another (59:9).

Dear reader, does any other religion offer a workable collective system of life? Being Deen (The Prescribed Way of Life), not religion, Islam does as we shall soon discover.

The exalted Messenger said:

"The best among people is he who serves mankind."

"The best of all activities is service of humanity."

Along the same lines, Umar Farooq, the great second Caliph of Islam, advised:

“Judge not people by their worship. Judge them by their dealings with fellow human beings.”

“If you see someone praying regularly, you can call him a worshipper, but you may not attest to his piety.”

It follows that the establishment of an ideal society of mankind is the prime objective of Islam. When we strive to that end, our life as a whole becomes an act of worship. It is obvious that when mankind returns to the Glorious Qur'an, the world will see its true splendor again as it saw in the early era of Islam. That brings us to summarize in one sentence that,

ISLAM IS A COLLECTIVE WAY OF LIFE in which all people enrich the lives of one another in the Light of Divine values.

The Status of Humans

The Articles of Faith and the “Pillars” are not all. An exemplary structure must be built on this foundation and pillars. The Glorious Qur'an is the owner's manual of life for all human beings. It declares that we humans are the topic of this Book!

21:10 O Mankind! Now, We have revealed unto you a Book that is all about you and it will give you eminence.

So, let us briefly view the assigned status of man in the life of this world.

- "We have created all human beings worthy of dignity and honor" (17:70). (Note here there is no distinction of Jew or Gentile, Muslim or Christian, black or white, rich or poor, male or female.)
- Mankind is all one community (10:19).
- After naming 15 messengers of God, including Jesus, the Qur'an re-asserts that all human beings belong to one brotherhood (21:92).
- The only criterion of superiority among people is one's character (49:13).

Thus, the Qur'an negates all unfair, manmade standards of distinction between people whether it is race, color, family, wealth, or nationality.

All human beings are equal in the Sight of God. All children are born free and equal to one another.

Besides placing people at par with one another, Allah has decreed humans to be born sinless. Contrary to the Christian belief, all children are born into this world with a clean slate. The Qur'an negates the concept of ORIGINAL SIN. No child harbors the sin of Adam and Eve because:

No person will bear the load of another's deeds (53:38).

Every person is accountable only for one's own actions (53:39).

The exalted Messenger elaborated, "No son or daughter will be punished for his/her parent's fault." Therefore, according to Islamic teachings, a newborn neither brings with him/her the stigma of a previous life (as in the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation) nor is he/she born tainted with anyone else's doing.

Scholars of the West have reached the same conclusion. R.F. Johnson writes, *"The Original Sin is the Original Evil. It keeps mankind disinclined from doing good and inclined toward doing evil. This belief impels man in Martin Luther's words to 'SIN HARD BUT BELIEVE HARDER'."* Then, R.F. Johnson asks rhetorically, *"If belief in Jesus dying on the Cross for me absolves my sins why not adopt the exciting path of lust and desire?"*

And the great thinker, A.E. Taylor, unfortunately could not get a copy of the Qur'an till the day he died. He sighed, *"I wish I could find the true religion that would save me from the fallacies of the Original Sin."*

So, all humans are born with a clean slate. What does the human existence consist of?

1. BODY, which is mortal and
2. SELF, which is immortal. (One may choose to call it I, Mind, Soul, Ego, "I-am-ness", Psyche, Personality - The Qur'an terms it NAFS.)

The basic principle is that our bodies grow by taking; air, food and drinks, for instance. But our SELF grows by giving i.e. by fulfilling the needs of others. We may call it "service to humanity".

The exalted Messenger said, "The best of people are those who benefit humanity." According to the Qur'an, any act that facilitates the growth of the self is BIRR (good or righteousness). Conversely, any act that retards the development of human personality is ITHM (Sin).

By distinguishing between acts of ITHM and acts of BIRR, pointing them out and defining them, the Qur'anic Guidance becomes very clear instead of the vague 'good' and 'evil'. This clarity of understanding helps people establish an ideal society wherein the Divine Values rein Supreme in human life just as the Divine Laws are Supreme in the Universe (God's Kingdom on earth). In such a society it will become easy for individual human beings to grow their "SELF" to the maximum potential, for, everyone therein will strive for a common goal - giving for personal and collective growth.

The great American sociologist and thinker of the 20th Century Abraham Maslow understood this development beautifully. What the Qur'an calls *TAZKIA* (derived from *zaku* meaning development of personality 2:232), he terms as Self-actualization or fulfillment of the human personality.

THE WESTERN THOUGHT

Now let us examine what other great Western minds have to say about the close relationship between TAZKIA (Self-actualization) and the society.

T. Carlyle, A. Lamartine, W. Muir, B. Shaw and numerous other Western scholars have said in various terms that:

Islam is the only Ideology that provides a practical and coherent social system meeting all needs and solving all problems of humankind.

Therefore, Islam is Deen (the Divinely Prescribed Collective Way of Life). All else is religion. In fact, Islam is a challenge to religion. Great minds are echoing the Qur'an when they say:

1. The teachings of Islam can fail under no circumstances. No human mind can go beyond the Qur'an. (Johann Goethe - *Letters to Eckermann, Sir Henry Elliott's Collection*)
2. The code of permanent values can only come through Revelation to chosen personalities (messengers) of God. (Albert Einstein 1879-1955 - *Out of My Later Days*)
3. The word of Mohammad is a voice, direct from nature's own heart . . . all else is wind in comparison. (Thomas Carlyle - *On Heroes and Hero Worship*)
4. If the society is not conducive to the growth of human personality, people would remain slaves even if such a society were perceived to be free. (Nicholes Berdyeau - *Destiny of Man*)
5. For the development of SELF I need a society where others' benefit feels like my own. (Hastings Rashdall - *Theory of Good and Evil*)
6. The development of the human personality [NAFS] can take place only collectively with other members of the society. (Robert Briffault - *The Making of Humanity*)
7. The purpose of life is the development of humanity in a collective social order. (Prof A.N. Whitehead, British author teaching at Harvard in 1920s - *Adventure of Ideas*)
8. Development of the self [self-actualization] can take place only in an equitable social system. (Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*)
9. International order for all mankind is the time's foremost demand. (John Reves - *Politics in Future*)

10. The world needs not only for its development but also for its very survival a universal "way of life" in which economic, social, and moral values are uniform for all. (Frederick Hertz - *Nationality, History and Politics*)

11. The purpose of life is development of the person and thereby, of all humanity en mass. (Prof A. N. Whitehead - *Adventure of Ideas*)

12. The real progress entails development of an international social order in which every individual can grow to one's full potential. (Hastings Rashdall - *The Theory of Good and Evil*)

13. Islam offers a beautiful collective system which says Yes to Life. (Nicholes Berdyeau - *The Divine and the Human*)

14. A complete way of life which would be universal is neither present in human instinct nor can we devise it through intellect. It can only come through Revelation. (Prof Alfred Cobban - *The Crisis of Civilization*)

15. We need a religion that can transcend nationalism and make the world one Nation. (Robert Murray - *The Individual and the State*)

16. Only Islam can transcend the boundaries of nationalism. (Arnold Toynbee, *The World and the West*)

17. In order to make true progress, man must exercise his free will in accordance with the Divine guidance. Man must do this, not to put God under any obligation, but for the evolution of his own SELF. (British astronomer, Sir Arthur S. Eddington 1882-1944 - *Science and the Unseen World*)

18. The time for nations has already passed. The era of mankind as one community is about to dawn. (W. Chardin - *Building of the Earth*)

19. The solution to humanity's problems lies not in internationalism. It rests in the Qur'anic teaching of universal brotherhood of all men. (Neveres Emery - *The Anatomy of Peace*)

20. The world will shortly see a single government without borders in which the affairs of human beings will be a matter of counsel. (Gummer Murdael - *Beyond the Welfare State*)

21. No tangible forces, no intangible powers, can stop Islam from becoming the universal faith. This is because only Islam can march along with the evolution of human civilization. (German born, American psychoanalyst, 1900-1980, Erich Fromm - *The Sane Society*)

22. It is the sacred duty of our civilization that we revive the true human brotherhood which existed at the beginning of life and after which people divided. (Professor Hugh Miller - *Country and State*)

23. The ideal society will be one where the wellness of others will feel like my own wellness. (German philosopher, Immanuel Kant 1724-1804 - *Critique of Practical Reason*)

The Qur'an Goes Further: Dear reader, the Qur'an recognizes these goals but it takes us far beyond.

The believers give preference to the needs of others over their own even when they themselves are needy. (59:9)

And thus, righteous people are those who make their SELF (*NAFS*) grow by fulfilling the needs of others. And they do so because of IMAN (Conviction) in Allah's Promise. They know that they will be rewarded manifold in both worlds. Wasn't Goethe right that no human mind and no system could go beyond the Qur'an?

And, the exalted Messenger said:

"The best among people are those who serve humanity."

"The best of the works is service of humanity."

"The only person who exits the circle of Islam is the one who knowingly helps the oppressor."

If we do not make progress toward self-actualization, the development of our personality stalls. This state of being left behind and cessation of progress is termed by the Qur'an as *JAHEEM* (The

Insurmountable Barrier, a term repeatedly used in the Book for Hellfire).

"If I march I am, if I don't I am not."
-Sir Iqbal

It has been stated before that according to the Qur'an, the development of the human "SELF" (*TAZKIA*) can only take place by giving, by serving humanity. If any kind of worship and rituals do not lead a person to that noble end, those acts will turn out to be vain. Accordingly, Sheikh Sa'adi, the renowned Persian poet-philosopher said,

Worship is naught but service of creation
Rosary, rug and robe are not devotion.

The real existence on earth is of the one who benefits mankind
(13:17)

Dear reader, don't these quotations from some of the greatest minds resonate with the Book? According to the Qur'an, mankind was, and will become, one community (2:213, 9:32-33, 10:19). Based on that authority and on my own reflection, I believe that the masses will, in the near future, see what the great thinkers are seeing today. People will lay aside their biases and prejudices. Nations in search of solutions to their political and socio-economic problems will turn to the Qur'an and find the Light. East or West, all people will recognize that **THE QUR'AN IS THE PROPERTY OF NOT ONLY MUSLIMS BUT OF ALL HUMANITY**. While the Muslims are badly entangled in trivial disputes, schisms and blind following, the West will probably see the Light first. They will recognize that the downfall of Muslims is despite Islam, and not because of it. It is their abandonment of the Wise Qur'an. Then, in Sir Iqbal's words they will say to Muslims:

Your ancestors were honored for being Musalman
And you are miserable for leaving the Qur'an.
-Sir Iqbal

Then, there no longer will be a League of Nations or the United Nations. These manmade organizations have failed, and will continue

to fail, in becoming harbingers of peace, security and justice to the world. Instead, it will be the United Mankind. That is what the destiny of humanity is. And that is the direction humanity has been moving in during the last 14 centuries. The Qur'an predicts the pleasant outcome on three occasions.

All people will recognize that the Qur'an is the ULTIMATE TRUTH and that the Qur'anic System will prevail over all other systems of life (9:32-33, 48:28, and 61:9).

A glance at history can easily dispel any doubts about this Qur'anic claim. Just a few examples will suffice to show that Islam has been marching on through the past fourteen centuries. This has been so despite the Muslims lagging far behind the Qur'an and even trailing the developed nations. These examples are being presented in the next chapter now.

THE GLORIOUS MARCH OF ISLAM

The ideas that inspired the French Revolution and the Declaration of Rights that guided the framing of the American Constitution and inflamed the struggle for independence in the Latin American countries [and elsewhere] were not inventions of the West. They find their ultimate inspiration and source in the Holy Koran.

- Robert Briffault

Sometimes people wonder if Islam has run its course. The bullet has been fired. What remains is just the empty barrel. This is a dangerously false assumption. Dangerous because it deprives humanity of the only hope it has. An examination of history bears out the fact that Islam has not failed, Muslims have. And Muslims have failed because they abandoned the Qur'an in favor of manmade books written centuries later! The moment they return to the Book, the Muslims will attain their lost glory. Or, whichever nation for that matter, embraces the Qur'an will establish the ideal state on the planet. Let us recall what George Bernard Shaw had said, "Mohammad, the wonderful man - in my opinion he must be called the Savior of humanity." -- "I predict that tomorrow's Europe will embrace Islam." Thus, the exalted Messenger will prove to be the

Savior of humanity as he did 14 centuries ago. His sublime Message is perfectly alive and well. The Divine Laws are not biased for or against any group of people. Any nation that adopts them reaps the harvest.

As we have discussed, all universe and our own planet have been created as parts of a Master Plan. They will keep moving to their appointed destinations. Likewise, the human civilization has been evolving throughout history. When the humans follow Divine Revelation, times are shortened and emergent evolutions take place. What would otherwise take centuries by trial and error, can materialize in years. In Sir Iqbal's words, "*Revelation economizes human effort.*"

Without the benefit of the Qur'anic Light the world is still moving, though slowly, toward its destination of unity of mankind. Who is not aware of "globalization and the global village"? Evolution of the human civilization is taking place. Islam is on the march.

Now let us examine a few glittering examples from history and see how correct Robert Briffault is in his observations and conclusions. It is interesting to note that Aristotle had pointed out 2,500 years ago, "A time will come when human ways will coincide with Divine ways."

ISLAM IS ON THE MARCH

1. Despotism: At the time of the advent of Islam in 610 CE, kings and tyrants were ruling countries, nations and tribes. There was no idea of human liberty and rule of law, no concept of people having any say in the government. Islam's was the first voice against that universal exploitation of the masses.

No person has the right to command obedience of people even though he be a messenger of God (3:79).

Command belongs only to (the Law of) Allah (6:57).

Now look at the recent history. Isn't the world moving away from despotism, kingdoms and autocracies?

2. Democracy: It is often thought that Bacon, Rousseau, Locke and other European thinkers laid down the foundations of modern democracy. But the Qur'an decreed 14 centuries ago:

The affairs of the believers are a matter of counsel (42:38).

This Injunction was meticulously observed in the seventh century Islam. The Muslim rulers had to be elected and then obtain allegiance of the masses. They always worked with an advisory council.

Today, mutual consultation in political matters is the hallmark of democracy. (Ironically kingdoms, sheikdoms, despotism and autocratic rule today are seen mostly among countries that call themselves Muslim. This is another instance of the Muslims' departure from the Qur'an).

It may not be out of place to mention here that mutual counsel in today's democracies will soon take one more vital step; all legislation would take place in the Light of Divine Guidance. Whichever country takes that vital step will formulate a truly Islamic government and become a model state for the rest of the world. Other nations will follow suit. This is no utopia. Please see the conviction in Al-Qur'an 2:213, 9:32-33, 10:19.

3. Human worship: The exalted Messenger broke the idols of personalities. The greatest man who ever walked this earth kept repeating,

"I am but a human like you." (18:110)

"O People! I am only Muhammad son of Abdullah."

"I am the son of an ordinary Quraishi woman who used to (save and) eat dry meat."

Further, Muhammad (S) said, "One who loves that people keep standing before him, should seek his abode in hellfire."

We observe that since the exalted Messenger's advent human worship has been dwindling throughout the world. (Ironically again,

today it is mostly Muslims who are prostrating before religious people, before their ancestors' graves or humbling themselves in front of those in power and authority).

4. Racism: 14 centuries ago the whole world was drenched in racism. Aristotle taught around 500 BC that the Greeks were superior to all nations. The Romans divided their own people among classes. There were about 8 slaves per Roman elite. India demonstrated racism to the extreme degree where a newborn's whole life depended on whether he was born into a Brahman, Khatri, Vaish, or Shudra family.

Muhammad (S) toppled the world of false ideas, "There is no superiority of a black over a white or a white over a black. All of you humans belong to the same single stock. The best among you is the one who is best in conduct." (Farewell Address)

Now let us think. Is not the world moving away from racism? At least open expression of racial bias has become condemnable in most parts of the world.

5. Human Rights: Here I suggest that the reader examine three most celebrated documents on human rights:

- The British Magna Carta
- The American Constitution
- The United Nations Charter of Human Rights.

Then study only the brief "Farewell Sermon" of Messenger Muhammad, the exalted, and compare. The intelligently written human documents seem to fade away and pale in comparison to just one sermon of Muhammad (S)! Please see Robert Briffault's quote at the beginning of this chapter.

Haven't human rights become a vital issue at the international scene? True, the world including Muslims have to go a long way. But, Islam is on the march. The Qur'an had declared in the 7th century, "Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on all children of Adam (as their birth-right)." (17:70)

History stands witness to the blessings of the Qur'anic Way of Life. In the truly Qur'anic era of Islam, the (emancipated) black slave of Ethiopia, Bilal, the poor laborer of Rome, Suhaib, and the lonely wanderer of Persia, Salman, were equal to, and had the same rights as, the most powerful man of the time. Umar Farooq the Great, the second Caliph of Islam, used to address Bilal, "O My master!" He requested that Suhaib lead the Caliph's funeral. And the exalted Messenger had himself honored Salman by calling him a member of his own household.

A brief resume of human rights given in the Qur'an will now be given. These points also reflect the Moral Code of Islam.

- a. Equal human dignity by birth (17:70, 95:4)
- b. Gender equity (4:32, 33:35)
- c. Superiority by character only (49:13, 46:19)
- d. Rule of law, not of individuals (3:79)
- e. Full compensation of work (53:39, 53:41, 39:70, 37:39)
- f. Provision of basic needs (20:118-119)
- g. Security of faith, life, mind, honor, and property (6:109, 6:152, 2:269, 17:36, 24:2, 22:40, 6:152, 5:90, 2:195, 5:32, 17:32, 17:35, 17:29, 83:1)
- h. Choice of spouse (4:3, 4:19)
- i. Freedom of religion (22:40, 6:109, 2:256)
- j. Freedom of expression (2:42, 3:71)
- k. Redress of grievances (4:148)
- l. Privacy (33:53, 24:27)
- m. Care of the handicapped (4:36, 70:24)
- n. Presumption of innocence (49:6)
- o. Sanctity of name and lineage (49:11, 33:4)
- p. Right to residence (4:100, 2:85, 6:41)
- q. Aesthetic choice (18:31, 76:13-15)
- r. Protection of chastity (17:32, 24:2)
- s. Race, color, gender, lineage, wealth are no criteria of superiority.
- t. Degrees of people according to their deeds (2:212, 3:163, 6:132)

It is noteworthy that the United Nations and the UNESCO Commission subject human rights to certain conditions and

limitations. They further differentiate between a person owning those rights and application of those rights according to the local law. Human rights outlined in the Qur'an are not subject to the whims of nations or individuals.

6. The Caste System: The exalted Messenger declared and established human brotherhood and equality by personal example. He belonged to the noblest of tribes and families. Yet, he humbly repeated "I am a human just like you." He further advised his closest family members that being a relative of Muhammad will be of no avail to them. Last, he established that the only criterion of superiority among men and women is their conduct. Color, creed, family, gender, wealth would not impart honor to any individual.

Now which way is the world moving? India, which has been the chief cradle of the detestable caste system, is trying to get rid of this curse of humanity. The Untouchables are being called "Harijan", 'the bearers of Divine Spirit'. And India is just one example. Remember what happened to apartheid in South Africa?

7. Slavery: The exalted Messenger shook up the so-called masters of men, "Their mothers had born them free. How could you enslave them? What if you were made their slaves and they were made your masters!"

The Qur'an, while explicitly pronouncing equality and brotherhood of all men, ordered to "Free all slaves for ransom or better as kindness" (47:4). Few people know that the Islamic methodology resulted in the emancipation of slaves (male and female) without the least friction and bloodshed. Islam initiated a noble revolution in the hearts of people. Without the Divine Light, the 19th century America, even under the great leadership of Abraham Lincoln, had to sacrifice one million dead and wounded attempting to abolish slavery!

8. Priesthood: At the Dawn of Islam, priesthood was the worst oppressor of humanity. They were considered to possess infinite occult powers. They were thought to know the Unseen and supposed to be intercessors between man and God. They enjoyed greater authority than the kings did. Well, they knew what was in a person's heart! They could condemn the "Children of God" to be hanged,

crucified or burnt alive! Their tyranny outlasted their own lives. Their tombs remained centers of worship and exploitation.

The Qur'an announced that Allah is the only Knower of the Unseen (72:26). There is no medium between man and God because He is "closer to him than the Vena Cava" (50:16). Now we see that humanity has been gaining freedom from priesthood the world over. (Ironically once again, Muslims, not currently heeding the Qur'an, are lagging behind even in this arena.)

The modernization of my nation consists
Of what has been outworn by all creation
-Sir Iqbal

9. Womens' Rights: In the times when the woman was considered the property of the man and was treated worse than slaves; when "Eve" and "evil" were thought to be synonymous and woman was a "shameful load of sin", when she spent her life in bondage first to her father, then to her brothers and eventually to her husband; when Christian conferences were discussing questions such as

- Does the woman have a soul?
- Is she human?
- Will she be resurrected?

The Qur'an thundered that Allah has created people males and females.

"Women have rights unto you as you have rights unto them."
(2:187)

"Every person will be rewarded according to one's actions; male or female." (4:32)

And the "Mercy for the Worlds" Muhammad, the exalted taught:

"Paradise lies at the feet of your mothers."

"The best among you is the one who is best to his wife."

"O Men! You will be questioned about your treatment of women."

On the other hand, Michael Hart notes that the New Testament still teaches: "Let the woman learn in silence . . . She is to keep silent . . . Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children (Timothy 2:11-15). "The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband . . . for if a woman will not veil herself then she should have her head shaved . . . woman [was created] for man" (Corinthians 11:3-10).

Now, look back with an open mind. Which way has the mankind moved in the last 1400 years? Surely, Islam is on the march! It may also be of interest to note here that in the USA women gained the right to vote in 1920. When did Muslim women attain it? In the 7th century!

10. Science: While Europe was struggling through the Dark Ages, Muslims were performing scientific miracles under the Qur'anic teaching that natural laws had been made subservient to man. (This topic of the Qur'an and Science will be further discussed in a later chapter). Here is an example of the scientific guidance in the Qur'an: Until recently, the sun was thought to be stationary in the center of the solar system. The Qur'an had, however, revealed 1400 years ago, "The sun is moving along toward its appointed destination."(36:38) The great Russian philosopher, astronomer and scientist, P.D. Ouspensky, maintained that any science that contradicted the Qur'an would turn out to be false. Then, during Ouspensky's lifetime, it was discovered that the sun is moving toward a specific destination at 12 miles per second i.e. 43,200 miles per hour! This destination has even been assigned names, the Solar Apex, the Constellation of Hercules. Guess what Ouspensky did! He embraced Islam.

"Roger Bacon owed his illumination to the Muslim Moors of Spain. The great figures of European Renaissance could see further because they stood on the shoulders of the giants of the Muslim world. -- Those achievements represent what the Muslim world has been in the past. They also point to what it could become in the future." (Richard Nixon - *Nixon's Ten Commandments*)

11. Nationalism: Arnold Toynbee in his 1952 work, *The World and the West*, called nationalism a form idol worship. In his writing and lectures he repeatedly urged the world leadership to break this idol. After all, who is unaware of the devastation caused to our planet by the World Wars I and II. Nationalism was the obvious root cause of this massive trauma to humanity.

Years before Toynbee, Sir Iqbal, on the authority of the Qur'an, called nationalism "the modern idol which the humanity has sculpted". The Qur'an ordained all mankind to be one nation and declared that all believers in the Final Revelation, regardless of where and when they live, are tied in the sacred bond of brotherhood and sisterhood (49:10). That announcement left no room for manmade geographical boundaries.

It is heartening to note that great western minds such as Nicholes Berdyeau, Henry Bergson, A.C. Ewing, Rene Guenon, Alfred Cobban, Frederick Hertz, H.G. Wells, and numerous others, not only support the unity of mankind but also predict it!

12. Pragmatism: At the dawn of Islam, Greeks were the torchbearers of knowledge in the world. Many scholars including Briffault and Higgins have correctly remarked that the Greek knowledge rested on theory and logic. Experimentation had no place in the Greek system of learning. Aristotle had written that women were deficient in intellect because they had only 28 teeth. He never even bothered to look! He also stated that an egg would float in the ocean! It was only Islam that taught mankind of the necessity of testing a theory or ideology by way of experimentation.

17:36 And you shall not follow blindly any information of which you have no direct knowledge. (Using your faculties of perception and conception) you must verify it for yourself. In the Court of your Lord, you will be held accountable for your hearing, sight, and the faculty of reasoning.

"The Renaissance of Europe did not take place in the 15th century. Rather it began when Europe learned from the culture of the Arabs. The cradle of European awakening is not Italy. It is the Muslim Spain." (Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*)

For the sake of brevity, our list has been kept very incomplete. Now let us turn to some objections that non-Muslims often raise against Islam.

SOME OBJECTIONS TO ISLAM

“Whenever a hadith (quotation) is presented to you in my name, verify it with the Qur'an. If it agrees with the Qur'an accept it and if it is in conflict, discard it.”

- Prophet Muhammad (S), *Al-Tibiyan wat Tabayyen*, vol II, p. 28)

Now we will address some objections and criticism that non-Muslims, and even some ignorant Muslims, often raise about Islam. Some of these objections might have been answered in the last four chapters. The Christian criticism of Islam, in my experience, is mostly based on:

- Wrong translations of the Qur'an
- Books of history and tradition that were written centuries after the exalted Prophet. Many narratives in those books are erroneous or blatant fabrications and, therefore, do not stand up to the Criterion i.e. Al-Qur'an. (Prophetic traditions that agree with the Qur'an, provide us with valuable insight into history).
- Cultural, un-Islamic practices of Muslims branded as Islam.

The Truth is lost in nonsense

This Nation is lost in tradition

- Sir Iqbal

Even non-Muslims have been lost in our fable and legend. Any historical narrative or reported prophetic tradition that contradicts the Criterion between the Right and Wrong (the Qur'an 3:4), could not have originated from the exalted Prophet since he could never have gone against the Book revealed to him. Not once could even his staunch enemies accuse the Prophet (S) of violating the Qur'an. The Book of Allah describes him as “best in conduct” and “the best role model” for humanity.

68:4 For, verily, you are of the noblest moral character!

33:21 Verily, in the Messenger of Allah you have a most excellent example, for everyone who looks unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much.

I will answer these objections in the Light of the Glorious Qur'an. Those who do not practically accept it as the only Authentic Source of Islam should feel free to honor me with their verdicts of infidelity.

1. Islam was spread by sword.

A. See Chapter III. Muslims today are weak all over the globe, yet Islam is spreading faster than any other religion. Can you think of a Muslim invasion in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, the homes to the greatest number of Muslims today? *"The legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword is the most fantastically absurd myth that historians have ever repeated."* (De Lacy O'Leary, *Islam at the Cross-Roads*, London, 1923)

2. Muslims are 'Mohammadans' and they worship Allah, a strange God.

A. Muhammad, the exalted, was not the founder of Islam. The founder of Islam is none but God Himself. Allah is the same God as that of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Allah's Message has always been Islam (Peace and Submission to God).

3. Prophet Muhammad is resting in the earth while Jesus ascended to the heavens. So, who is superior?

A. The Qur'an does not say that Jesus was raised up in body. 4:157 describes that he was saved from the Cross. 3:55 points to his physical death, absolving him of all slander and honoring him. Raf'a here means raising him in honor, and not in body. 19:33 again tells of his physical death. Further 3:144 reads, "Muhammad is but a Messenger. Messengers before him have passed away." Most explicitly 21:34 states, "We have not granted immortality to any person before you." And if God is Omnipresent, ascension to Him becomes meaningless.

(The reader is referred to explanation of the Qur'an by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Asad, Ubaid Ullah Sindhi, and Abul Kalam Azad for further details and confirmation on the subject)

4. Men will get the heavenly beauties "Houris" in Paradise. What will become of women?

A. "Hoor" in the Qur'an refers to intelligent and virtuous companions, male or female. Hoor is common gender plural. The male singular is AHWAR and the female singular is HAURA.

5. The Qur'an states that men will be seated with their wives in bountiful atmosphere. Why doesn't it say that women will be seated with their husbands?

A. This is an excellent example of wrong translation. *Azwaaj* does not mean wives. It stands for couples or companions.

4:57 Those who attain belief and translate their belief into action by helping people thus creating balance in the society, We shall soon admit them to the Gardens underneath which rivers flow. They will dwell therein forever. For them are virtuous companions, and We shall make them enter the pleasing shadows of Our Grace.

6. Things you call "the pillars of Islam" such as Faith, prayers, fasting, poor-due and pilgrimage are failing to improve the lot of Muslims world-wide. Why don't they stop and think?

A. You are right! Muslims should stop and think. Millions upon millions are steadfastly going through rituals of worship.

a. The Muslim is praying. He is not establishing Salat, which is closely tied up to establishing a society which guarantees the Qur'anic order, where no one sleeps hungry and socio-economic justice prevails in the society (107:1-7).

b. The Muslim is fasting i.e. ritualistically abstaining from food and drink in the month of Ramadhan. We forget it's a mighty training program. The Muslim is not observing Saum which entails perseverance, self-control, character building and establishing the "Kingdom of God" on earth (2:185).

c. Poor-due is being given by many affluent people as 2.5% of their wealth per year. The Muslim is forgetting that Allah ordains us to keep open for the community all that is surplus (2:219).

d. Pilgrimage or Hajj has become a massive ritual instead of being a dynamic step toward the unity of all mankind. Please note that the Qur'an invites all mankind to consider the Ka'bah as the symbol of one God and a united humanity.

Thank you for bringing up a very important point!

7. What kind of a religion is Islam? The entrance to this building is open but there is no exit. If someone wants to get out of it, or if your Ulema disapprove of the beliefs of a person, he is declared a heretic and thereby declared worthy of execution.

A. The Qur'an invites people through reason (12:108). It clearly states "There is no compulsion in Deen/religion" (2:256). This rule has no exceptions. If you come across reports about the execution of certain "heretics", either those reports would be false or they would be a wrong non-Qur'anic act of someone corrupt in political or religious power.

Quaid-e-Azam M.A. Jinnah said, "Theocracy is the worst form of despotism."

8. What is the position of mysticism in Islam?

A. According to the Qur'an mysticism, was invented by people. God did not ordain it (57:27). There is no *Rahbaniah* (monasticism or mysticism) in Islam, said the exalted Messenger. Sir Iqbal on the authority of the Qur'an reiterated, "Tasawwuf (Mysticism and Monasticism) is an alien plant in the soil of Islam."

9. Look at the glory of Jesus! Even for Muslims he will descend from the Heavens. Your prophet seems to depend on him.

A. It is amazing to notice that the followers of all religions keep waiting for the coming of a "promised one." Hindus are waiting for "Kalki Awtar", Jains for "Mahavira Tri Thankra", Buddhists for "Meeta", Zoroastrians for "Mithra". Jews are looking for the "true Messiah" and Christians for the second coming of Jesus!

According to the Qur'an, Deen (Religion) has been perfected (6:116). The last messenger Muhammad, the exalted, has been sent (33:40). The complete code of life has been preserved in the Final Word of God i.e. Al-Qur'an. The Book does not even mention the advent of another figure in any form be it Jesus or anyone else. And common

sense tells us there is no need for anyone to come since the Guidance, Al-Qur'an, is present in its original perfect form among us (15:9).

The dogma of a "promised one" is the invention of defeated minds. People lacking in self-confidence and self-esteem try to find solace in the thought that someone will eventually come and raise them to glory!

If any historical narratives or traditions speak about the second advent of Jesus or a promised one, those narratives and traditions are non-Quranic. They must be considered fabrications foreign to Islam. (For details, please check my booklet, WHEN IS THE MESSIAH COMING?)

10. It is claimed that the Qur'an is unchanged since its origin but don't Muslims believe that some of its verses have been rescinded?
A. Not a single verse in the Book has been rescinded or revoked. This claim is one of the most shameful conspiracies against the Book. In 2:106, where it is stated that Allah brings new verses in place of others, the meaning is clear. All it indicates is that the former Divine books and commands have been updated in the Final Book, the Qur'an.

2:106 Any Message (of aforesaid) that We revoke or cause to be lost to history, We replace it with a better or similar one suitable to the times. Do you not know that Allah is the Supreme Controller of all things and events in Time and Space?

11. Islam is the only religion that ordains four wives.
A. Nothing can be further from truth. There is only one verse in the Qur'an where the possible number of wives is described. It reads, "If you fear that you will not be able to do justice to the orphans, marry among permissible women two, three, four" (4:3).

It is very clear in this verse that emergent circumstances may leave too many orphans and widows in a society such as happens in times of wars, revolutions, and mutinies. Under those circumstances it will be the duty of the state to declare emergency and provide the

security of home to these orphans and widows, an amicable solution to a massive social challenge. Some men will be encouraged to marry more than one wife. Such men will be carefully selected in terms of their ability to do justice to their wives and family. Muslims who marry more than one wife under ordinary circumstances violate the Qur'anic rule of monogamy.

Again, if some "pious" person confounds this clear ordinance of the Qur'an, it must be discarded for being contrary to the Qur'an.

It is noteworthy that the exalted Messenger and some of his companions married more than one wife in times of social and military turbulence. In addition to slain men, there were examples where a woman would embrace Islam and her husband would not. The Qur'an does not allow a Muslim woman to marry or remain in marital bond with a non-Muslim. That had created a large number of divorced women. So, it was a matter of providing shelter rather than sensual desire.

Interesting to note is the fact that when millions and millions of men were killed in World War II, innumerable European scholars and politicians strongly suggested that men of sound financial and emotional health be allowed to marry multiple wives to save the society from chaos!

12. "Fatawa Alamgiri" writes that only the wine made out of grapes and dates is forbidden.

A. The Qur'an forbids "Khamr" (5:90) which means all intoxicants. Please note that manmade books including those on jurisprudence (FIQH) are no authority. The only authority is the Word of God (Al-Qur'an).

13. The Gospel teaches that we should love our enemy. Can Islam match such nobility?

A. Loving one's enemy is impractical, good only for a sermon. The Qur'an commands to do justice even with the enemy (5:8). This is a practical and workable principle.

14. Islam allows marrying 6 and 9 year old girls. Isn't that absurd?

A. More than absurd if Islam allowed that. The Qur'an ties up mental and physical maturity which is the first prerequisite for marriage, whether male or female (4:6). Verses 6:153 and 17:34 prohibit even touching the wealth and property of minors. The candidates to marriage must be mature enough to handle their own finances. The Qur'an terms marriage as "*Meethaqan Ghaleeza*" (a most solemn pledge 4:21). How can minors enter into a solemn pledge and covenant? How can minors give consent which is an absolute condition for marriage according to the Qur'an? (4:19)

The Divine Wisdom enshrined in the Qur'an makes things so sensible. It sets up three rational criteria: 1 - Sufficient maturity to grant consent. 2 - Ability to sign a legal contract. 3 - Competence to take care of one's own finances.

4:6 Train and educate the orphans well and test them. When they reach the age of marriage and attain sound judgment, release their property to them. The marriageable age shall mean attainment of physical and mental maturity when one can legally make a solemn contract 4:21).

4:19 O You who have chosen to be graced with belief! It is not lawful for you to force women into marrying or holding on to them in marriage against their will. --.

4:21 And how could you take the marital gift back from her after you have lived intimately with each other and after she has taken from you a very Solemn Pledge of the marital contract?

15. Didn't your prophet marry a 6 year old girl, Ayesha and consummated the marriage when she was 9 years old?

A. Believe it or not my Prophet is also your Prophet because he was sent for all mankind (34:28). No act of the exalted Messenger was ever contrary to the Qur'an. Allah attests that the Prophet (S) had sublime morals (68:4). And Hazrat Ayesha is reported to have said, "His character was the Qur'an."

Contrary to the Imamist propaganda, the exalted Prophet had no more than one wife at a time. And Hazrat Ayesha was a sister, not daughter, of Hazrat Abu Bakr. The Prophet (S) did not marry for three

years after Hazrat Khadijah's demise in Makkah three years before Hijrah. Hazrat Ayesha was the widow of a martyr, Saleh bin Saleh Al-'Ataib. She was 48 years old at the time of marriage to the exalted Prophet. Sahaba Kiraam including Hazrat Abu Bakr strongly recommended that the Prophet (S) and she got into the solemn union of marriage. The blessed wedding took place in 622 CE when Muhammad (S) was 52 years old. Ref: *Kitab-e-Dalail-e-Nabawwut Syedna Muhammad (S)*, by Abdul Jabbar Qaramati, written 150 years before Tabari (the first ever 'canonized' but Zoroastrian historian). *Azwaaj-in-Nabi wal-Ashaab*, by Sheikh Hammad bin Hakam. The rest is nothing but slanderous imagination of the Zoroastrian "Imam" Tabari and the Jewish biographer Ibn Ishaq and his Parsi follower Ibn Hisham.

Any reports contrary to the Qur'an should find their way into the trash can.

COMMENTS ON THE PAULINE DOCTRINE AND THE NICEAN CREED

Trinity had so dimmed the vision,
Of the great scholar who was German,
That true monotheism he couldn't grasp,
Peace in Trinity he never could earn,
Life to him was a stinging wasp
-Rabindranath Tagore

The Hindu laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, refers to the great German thinker and philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Nietzsche became so disenchanted with the Pauline doctrines of Trinity, Original Sin, Blood Atonement, "Begotten" son-ship and Ascension of Jesus Christ that he blurted out, "I had to stain my hands with the blood of Christianity by crucifying it at the 'Mount Calvary' of Reason." (Beyond Good and Evil)

In this chapter, only the thoughts and ideas of Non-Muslim scholars will be presented. Ponder on what great Christian minds have to say about the Pauline Doctrine.

1. If through my falsehood, God's truthfulness abounds to His glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? (St. Paul, Letter of Paul to Romans 3:7.) (It is worthy of note that, according to Michael Hart, St. Paul is "considered the principal founder of Christianity".)

2. About political and economic matters the teachings of the Bible are sadly and pitifully ambiguous. Through the gospel you can support anything and prove it to be Jesus's teaching, whether it is slavery, torture, or even burning alive. (Professor C.M. Joad, Decadence.)

3. All four gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John openly contradict each other. (Earnest Renan, Essay on Nationality.)

4. I counted 30,000 contradictions in the New Testament. (Dr. Maile, Confessions of a Skeptic.)
5. I wish I could find one instance of Messiah showing love and kindness to his opponents in his entire gospel life! (Claude Montefiore, Dynamics of Human Behavior.)
6. But even more tragic is the character of Jesus that the gospels portray. (Professor C.M. Joad, Good and Evil.)
7. Jesus and his disciples spoke Aramaic but the gospels were written in Greek!
8. If the moral code given in the gospels is implemented in a society, there will be only one result of that undertaking, Sudden Death! (Professor A.N. Whitehead, Adventure of Ideas.)
9. In the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.), 34 gospels and 113 letters attributed to the disciples were presented under the tyrannical presence of Constantine the Great. All this literature was dispersed on the floor at night. The morning sun saw a few books and a few letters lying on the table. These are the four gospels and the letters that have been canonized! (Reverend Isaac Boyle)
10. Pauline Doctrine is nothing but propagation of a dogma. It does not concern itself with building moral character. All a person has to do is confess that Jesus was cursed and crucified for my sins. If mankind were relieved of all their higher obligations with such impunity, the planet would become a living pyre. (Bertrand Russell, Lecture on Hopes for a Changing World, 1908.)
11. What is the New Testament? Paul, Paul, and Paul, who never met Jesus during his ministry! (Menkin, Analysis of the New Testament)
12. The resurrection of Jesus was witnessed only by Mary Magdalene. Who was Mary Magdalene? - The same woman from whom Jesus had expelled seven demons. (Dr. Marcus Dods, Muhammad, Buddha and Christ)

13. The Pauline Dogma of Original Sin is the Original Evil.
(R.F. Johnson, Confucianism and the Modern China)

14. I don't find it strange anymore that there is a four thousand year-old legend among the Zoroastrians; the legend of Mithra. He is supposed to have been born of a virgin on December 25th. Mithra was considered as the "lamb of god." He atoned for the sins of people by dying. Then he resurrected on the third day!

There is strong reason to believe that Saint Paul fabricated the belief system of Christianity from the Zoroastrian mythology. In order to hide Paul's plagiarism . . . the Christians burned the library of Alexandria in 390 A.D. Books in that library kept Mithra's original story of which the Pauline Doctrine is an almost exact carbon copy.
(George Sarton)

15. It is imperative that to accept the gospel the intellect must be blindfolded. There is nothing in the gospel but insult to a critical seeking mind. (Julian Huxley, Religion without Revelation.)

16. The son-ship of Jesus Christ is the greatest fiction of human history. (Lord Bishop of Canterbury Commission, The Spiritual Head of England 1910)

17. In Christianity, first an inexplicable belief system is laid down. Then the intellect keeps wandering in vain search of reason and logic. (Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes and Hero Worship)

18. Mankind needs to turn to God. Unfortunately, the gospel can provide no guidance in that direction. (Henry Bergson, Creative Evolution.)

19. In Christianity you may find a reflection of sympathy for the oppressed. What you won't find is condemnation of oppression or the oppressor. (Dr. Falta D' Garcia)

20. According to the Christian Doctrine women cannot enter Paradise. Question arose what would happen of Mary. Saint Thomas came up with an easy solution. Women will be converted into men. (Reverend Bosworth Smith)

21. The son-ship of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, the blood sacrifice of the lamb of God, atonement are not the teachings of Jesus. These are all inventions of Saint Paul who never really met Jesus. (Hastings Rashdall, The Theory of Good and Evil.)

22. For the redemption of humanity we will have to look toward the owner [Mohammad] of the Qur'an not toward Christianity. (Lewis Mumford, Faith for Living.)

23. Our civilization is standing at dangerous crossroads. The Bible cannot provide workable foundations for the survival of mankind. (Lord Snell, The New World.)

24. The Bible cannot lead us to an international religion, nor can it unify all mankind. (Ehrich Fromm, The Sane Society.)

25. Countless people were burnt alive on the altar of Christianity just because they proclaimed that the Earth moves around the sun; . . . that man came into existence only 7,000 years ago; you can preach this only in the church . . . If Eve was made from Adam's rib, the very question of women's rights should not arise. (Adrian Huxley, The Conscious Rebellion.)

26. Newton taught the Gospel. If he also believed in it he would never have been a scientist. (Lord Litton, A Closer Look at Religion.)

27. If I have been born tainted with the sin of Adam, then God has been very cruel to me. (Mark Italy, The Hindu India.)

28. How powerless is the God of Christendom! He cannot forgive man without shedding the blood of his own son! (Vladimir Lenin, The Development of Capitalism in Russia, 1900.)

29. The most difficult question ever in mathematics is that God is one in three and three in one! (Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil.)

30. Why do you call Jesus' siblings his stepbrothers and stepsisters? Why do you try to prove them his cousins? Perhaps, to

save the mother of God from carnal relations. The reality is that Jesus and his siblings were children of Mary and Joseph, the carpenter. Since Mary had been sent to the monastery against her will, she married Joseph the carpenter secretly. And Jesus was born according to the laws of nature. The book of Islam is more realistic in this sense where it states, "How can God have a son when He has no mate?" (6:101). By the same token, how can Mary have a son without a husband!

(John Servatus, The Unitarian Truth)

A SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

In Islam, science and religion have thrived like twin sisters. Therefore, during the Qur'anic glory of Islamic civilization, science made incredible progress from which the West was later enlightened.
- Dr. Maurice Bucaille, "The Bible, The Qur'an and Science"

Dear reader, in the last chapter we have reviewed the thoughts of some Christian scholars and thinkers about the Bible. Let's now focus on the Qur'an. To be fair we will have a renowned Christian scholar from France say what he thinks of the "Book from beyond." Dr. Maurice Bucaille wrote his best seller in the 1970's- "The Bible, The Qur'an and Science." The great scholarly work has been translated into several languages. The subject of his book is similar to what Ouspensky had spelled out, "Any science that contradicts the Qur'an will turn out to be false." Dr. Bucaille exclaims that there is not a single instance in the Qur'an that disagrees with established Science!

Dr. Bucaille reveals that he had always been intrigued and fascinated by scientific statements found in the Divinely inspired books. He especially learned the ancient and contemporary Arabic language to enable himself to study the Qur'an directly.

The results of his direct study of the scriptures are very convincing. Dr. Bucaille is also an established scholar of the Bible. He concludes that the Bible is replete with scientific contradictions and impossibilities which Biblical scholars and narrators so painstakingly try to conceal or apologetically try to explain away.

We will now review the highlights of Dr. Bucaille's general observations and research on the Qur'an. (My own humble research on the Qur'an and Science will not be presented here.)

Dr. Maurice Bucaille writes:

1. When I began my research on the Qur'an I quickly experienced that among some Christian circles prejudice and bias run so high that referring to the Qur'an is tantamount to referring to the Devil!

2. On the contrary, the Qur'an magnanimously admonishes Muslims to believe in messengers and scriptures of the old in the light of the Last Revelation.

3. The gospels cannot be compared to the Qur'an. They can only be compared to Hadith (the traditions of Mohammad, the Exalted). This is because the gospels were written a long time after Jesus just as the Hadith were written a long time after Muhammad, the exalted. (Ubaidullah Sindhi, the great Muslim scholar made exactly the same observation.)

4. There is no book in Christianity that was revealed from God and committed to the pen right away. In Islam, the Qur'an meets that requirement of authenticity.

5. Dr. Buccaille states that there are not very numerous scientific statements in the Bible, but they repeatedly collide with established principles of Science. St. Augustine had advised the Church to rid the Bible of all non-scientific verses but his advice was not heeded.

6. It is amazing to see that among the numerous scientific verses in the Qur'an, not one, not a single one turns out to be contrary to the established science!

7. According to the Bible, Adam was created around 3700 B.C. You can only preach this gospel in the church. Today even a child knows that the creation of humans is far more ancient than that. Who told Mohammad [the Exalted] not to include such Biblical errors in the Qur'an if it was based on the Bible as some Christian missionaries zealously preach?

8. In Islam, science and religion have thrived like twin sisters. Therefore, during the Quranic glory of Islamic civilization, science made incredible progress from which the West was later enlightened.

9. The Bible indicates that the earth had green plant life before the sun was created. This is a gross scientific error. And the Qur'an is perfectly free of this and such other mistakes. Obviously, no vegetation could sprout without sunlight.

10. A study of the Evolution of Life has proven beyond doubt that the earth was first inhabited by quadrupeds and birds evolved from them later on. But, the Bible tells us that life on the planet began with sea animals and birds! The Qur'an talks extensively about evolution of life beginning from the unicellular level and it does not make the mistakes the Bible does.

11. According to the Bible, the Great Flood of Noah occurred in 2100 B.C. and destroyed all people and animals on earth. But it is a well-known historical and archaeological fact that during those times, active civilizations were flourishing in Egypt, Babylonia, China and South America.

The Qur'an on the other hand describes the great Flood involving only the people of Noah. Recent research indicates that the Flood occurred only in the lands of Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which the nation of Noah inhabited.

12. The Gospels of Mathew and John do not even mention the ascension of Jesus Christ to the Heavens. Luke only describes resurrection of Jesus on the Day of Judgment (with rest of the creation). And Mark depicts the ascension of Jesus in a way that even the most forgiving Christian scholars of today find totally unacceptable. The Book of Acts mentions the resurrection of Jesus forty days after crucifixion, which is a completely unscientific proposition.

The Qur'an rightly refrains from condoning the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ. If God is Omnipresent, the ascension of Jesus to the Heavens becomes a completely illogical myth that makes no scientific or intellectual sense at all.

13. Galileo was tried in court and imprisoned in his home only because he accepted and supported Copernicus's theory that the earth moves around the sun. This is because the Bible declares the

earth to be a static body around which the sun, the moon and the stars are revolving. The Qur'an on the other hand, perfectly agrees with the Earth being an ovospheric body that revolves around the sun.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille, while giving these accounts, repeatedly asks the rhetorical question: How could an unlettered man living in the remotest of the deserts, cut off from all civilization, contemplate the universal phenomena with such clarity and accuracy 14 centuries ago?

14. The Christians try to evade the shining reality that between the 8th and 12th centuries students from all over Europe were attracted to Cordova of Muslim Spain to attain knowledge. It was exactly as the world looks up to the U.S. for advancement of learning today.

We are indebted to Muslims that they imparted to us knowledge and civility. In Math, Chemistry, Astronomy, Geology, Physics, Botany, Algebra, Medicine and all sciences the West must acknowledge the Arabs and other Muslims as their teachers.

15. Dr. Bucaille exclaims that even the least knowledgeable westerner harbors a great collection of misinformation about Islam and Muslims!

16. The learned Dr. Bucaille makes a very pointed observation that the old translators and commentators of the Qur'an made grievous errors in their works especially about the verses pertaining to science. The modern translators and commentators are, unfortunately, no better since they blindly follow the trail of their ancestors.

17. For scholars of the Qur'an, knowledge of the Arabic language is not enough for its understanding. We must know the Arabic that was in use at the time of Mohammad, the Exalted. It is also imperative that one is conversant with relevant facets of contemporary science. In Arabic, "Alim" [a person of knowledge] in fact means a scientist. And the Qur'an calls those people Ulema who reflect upon the heavens, clouds, rains and water cycle, patterns of earth, mountains, animal life, etc. and then feel the awesome glory of the Creator

(35:28). This verse of the Qur'an strongly endorses people with scientific knowledge as Ulema and not any kind of priesthood.

18. The Bible indicates that at the time of Genesis (creation of the universe) the spirit of God was moving over waters. The Qur'an on the other hand, refers to a huge cloud of smoke, meaning a huge cloud of gas consisting of very fine particles. Modern science is in total agreement with this statement regarding the origin of the universe. One cannot help but appreciate that the term "smoke" (Surah 44) is simple enough for the lay person and descriptive enough for the scientist! The Qur'an is a miracle of literature and linguistics as well, but that is not the scope of my book.

19. Numerous verses in the Qur'an refer to "the Earth and the Heavens and that which is between them" (emphasis added) (for instance 20:6, 25:59, 32:4). The great U.S. telescope Mount Wilson only in the 20th century has started describing the Interstellar Galactic Material. Who could have even thought of its existence even until 200 years ago!

20. While the Bible conveniently refers to the sun and the moon as the greater light and the lesser light and moves on, the Qur'an strikingly terms the sun as Siraj. "Siraj" means a lamp that gives off its own light. But the moon is Munir that refers to a body that reflects light! (27:61, 71:15, 78:12).

21. It is amazing to note a 1400-year-old book describing the sun and the moon, not only moving, but rather swimming along in their assigned orbits (21:33, 36:40). Who but the Creator could have had that knowledge at the time when science had no concept of orbits in the space. The Greeks thought of the sky as a revolving dome on which the sun, the moon and stars were studded fixed!

22. "Allah wraps night over day and wraps day over night . . ." (39:5). That is a clear exposition of the earth being spherical as is evident from the word "Yukawwir" which is derived from Koora = sphere. Astronauts have observed the phenomenon happening exactly as stated in the Qur'an and photographed the night and day "wrapping around" each other!

23. In 70:40, the Qur'an talks of the Easts and the Wests (in plural). How many people in the 7th century knew that the points of sunrise and sunset keep changing in different seasons!

24. The verse 51:47 mentions a wonderful astronomical fact. "We have created the heaven with power and We are expanding it."

Dr. Buccaille pauses here to point out that this is such a glorious statement that even the 20th century Muslim commentators of the Qur'an hesitate to explain. Hameedullah has even placed a question mark right after translating this verse.

(My note: Only in 1929, did the great U.S. astronomer Edwin Hubble present convincing evidence of the fact that the universe is truly expanding)

25. From Plato to Seneca to Descartes, countless thinkers and scientists kept amassing erroneous theories about the water cycle. Some thought that with every rain the water content of the planet kept increasing. Others suggested that an underground huge pipe (Abyss tartarus) carried the rainwater back to the oceans, etc etc.

The Qur'an had already corrected all these fallacies and described the water cycle as we understand today. Falling of rains, its dissipation into the earth, gushing forth of springs, running of rivulets into oceans, evaporation, and cloud formation is all perfectly scientific as revealed in this 1400 years old book!

Let us stop and think for a moment how Dr. Maurice Buccaille was able to do such brilliant research that some Muslim scientist should have done! I believe there are three reasons:

(i) The centuries old collective trait of blind following has taken away from the Muslim Ummah their ability to think independently. We have been accepting without criticism what the old commentators of the Qur'an have written.

(ii) Religious knowledge among most Muslim scholars and laypersons has become synonymous with knowledge of ritualistic

religious trivia such as ways of ablution, prayer and fasting, the minor detail about dress code, etc.

(iii) Most of the time and energy of the Ummah is being spent on learning about man-made religious books. The Qur'an has been reduced to mere recitation.

Now let us hear Dr. Buccaille again.

26. At the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, and until centuries later, no scientist in the world knew about the "barrier" between salt water and fresh water. Today we know that at numerous places on the globe there is a distinct barrier between the salt water and fresh water. The two streams of water travel side by side yet they do not mix!

"It is He who has let free the two bodies of flowing water one palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter; yet has He made a barrier between them a partition that is not to be passed" (25:53; 55:19-20).

[Without this barrier all water on earth would have been undrinkable. It is noteworthy that Surah 55 calls this barrier a blessing of the Beneficent]

27. Surahs 78:6 and 21:31 describe the mountains as supports and pegs for the Earth's crust. Only modern geology has discovered that the mountains have "roots" that delve deep down one to 10 miles in the earth so that the earth's crust would remain steady.

28. The Qur'an describes the feelings of a person who rejects Islam as if his chest were getting tight upon ascending toward great height. Scarcity of Oxygen and the resulting tightness in the chest with difficulty in breathing on great heights is only a phenomenon experienced by man in the aerospace age.

29. "And We have created all living things of water." (21:30)
The biological and evolutionary science strongly attest to this fact. We know that 80-85% of the protoplasm is water. The science of evolution also proves that life on the planet initially began from water.

30. The Pharaoh of the time of Moses (about 1300 B.C.), was drowned while chasing the Israelites. The Bible tells us that but doesn't talk of the Pharaoh's remains. There is a verse in the Qur'an which is very revealing.

In 1898 A.D., archaeologists discovered a mummified body in the "Valley of Kings" near Cairo. This mummy has been identified to be Merneptah, the son of Ramses II. Merneptah was the Pharaoh who chased Moses and his people and was drowned.

In June 1974, Dr. Buccaille, with due permission of the Egyptian government thoroughly examined the mummy along with his colleagues. What was the result of the examination? This man died of drowning in a state of horror!

While no Biblical or historical reference is found anywhere about the Pharaoh's body, the Qur'an had this to say 1400 years ago:

This day We shall save you in your body so that you be a sign to those who come after you (10:92).

There is much more convincing scientific evidence that Dr. Buccaille has presented in his masterpiece work. Almost all areas of science, including Zoology, Botany, Astronomy, Physiology, Embryology, Atmosphere and Space, Geology, etc., have been well covered. The examples that we have selected above are sufficient to prove even to the most ardent opponent of the Qur'an (if he or she happens to be blessed with an open mind) to agree with Sir Iqbal:

Look! This Qur'an is not just a book.
It is something beyond.

The author has recently learned that Dr. Buccaille eventually did embrace Islam and passed on a few years ago.

QUESTION BOX

Just as students are a great source of learning for a teacher, readers are a precious asset for a writer. I feel indebted to all those respected

readers who have come up with questions and comments on the first edition. This Q & A chapter will help us explain some important points. The readers should be reminded once again that many of the misunderstandings and misinformation about Islam stem from the books of history and tradition. All these narratives of history and tradition must be checked against the Qur'an which is the Criterion of Right and Wrong (3:4).

1. Why did you choose to call Muhammad "the exalted," instead of the customary "Peace be upon him"?

A - "Peace be upon him" is neither the correct translation of the Qur'anic greetings to the exalted Prophet, nor does it make any sense. Of course, he is in sublime peace and glory. We are the ones who need to follow his sacred footprints to attain and promote peace. We direly need to move on from mere recitation to understanding and action.

Now focus on 33:56 which is usually translated as "Allah and His angels send blessings on the prophet. O You who believe! Send blessings on him and salute him with all respect." Here is the closer understanding of the verse.

33:56 Verily, Allah and His angels bless the Messenger and support his Mission. O You who have chosen to be graced with belief! Bless him and give yourself up to him and his Mission in total submission. (4:65, 7:157)

2. When a blind man comes to Jesus Christ he gives him sight. When a blind man comes to your prophet, he frowns and turns away.

A - You have read some wrong translation. The exalted Messenger would never frown upon any seeker of the Truth. The reason for this grievous mistake is, once again, blind following of false traditions, and the conjecture of *SHANE NUZUL* (the so-assumed circumstance of a revelation).

Surah 'Abasa does not name the person who frowned. Through *Tasreef*, it becomes obvious that a proud Qureshite leader was in the habit of frowning at people (74:22). 'Abasa (80:1), then, actually addresses the arrogant, and all those who would like to invite people to Allah. Assigning this incident to the exalted Messenger is one of the early conspiracies against him.

Allah's Messengers invariably paid special attention to the poor, the disabled, the deprived, and always refused to turn them away even though pressured by the elite to do so. (6:52, 8:62-64, 11:27, 18:28, 26:111-114)

Jesus giving sight to the blind is an allegory meaning that he enabled people to see the Truth as other prophets did. We are dealing here with vision of the heart. (Miracles of Jesus - 3:48-49, 5:110)

3. Is it true that marriage and divorce can take place even in joke and anger?

A - A solemn covenant cannot be bound or unbound by non-solemn means. (See the previous Q & A session) The exalted Prophet is reported to have said, "*La Talaqa Fil Ighlaaq.*" [There is no divorce under duress, suddenly or without the Qur'anic procedure which entails at least three months - Ibn Majah]

4. Does the Qur'an permit the husband to beat his wife?

A - No! This is a common misconception.

4:34 Men are the protectors and maintainers of women. They shall take full care of women with what they spend of their wealth. Allah has made men to excel in some areas and women to excel in some areas. Men must see to it that women are provided for, and that they are able to stand on their feet in the society. So, righteous women are obedient to Allah's Ordinances and guard their moral values even in privacy, the Values that Allah Commands to be guarded. If you experience rebellion from women, and they stand up against you, apprise them of possible consequences. Next, leave them in their resting places apart from you. And keep admonishing them with examples that they stop rebelling. If they pay heed to you, seek not a way against them. Allah is Most High, Great.

['Nushooz' = to stand up 2:259, 58:11; to stand up against, to rebel / 'wa'az' = to apprise of consequences 2:231, 3:66 / 'dharb' = example 13:17, 16:74, 36:13; 'dharb' = to stop 18:11, 43:5 = To embark upon a journey 4:101 = Strike the road (begin to travel) 4:101 = To give examples 4:34, 13:17, 16:74, 36:13, 43:58 = To abstain from something 43:5 = To stop or prevent 4:34, 43:5]

5. According to Bukhari, Eve was created from Adam's rib and if you try to straighten her out, she will break (and still not reform).

A - The first part is a Biblical statement. The Qur'an does not say that woman was created from Adam's rib. In fact, the name Eve is nowhere found in the Qur'an. It does talk of Adam's wife. As stated earlier, Bukhari or any tradition must be checked in the Light of the Qur'an. Adam and his wife are used symbolically in the Qur'an to indicate the early humankind.

6. What is the definition of a Muslim?

A - Any person who believes that:

- The Last Message of the One True God was revealed to Muhammad (S)

- And that this Message is fully preserved as the sole Authority of Islam, the Qur'an. Conversely, anyone accepting human "authorities" beside the Book of Allah is in manifest error. And anyone claiming to receive direct revelation from God in any form must be considered a lunatic or an impostor. This includes claims of divine inspiration of the mystic or fortuneteller.

7. Who can be called a practicing Muslim?

A - The popular misconception equates ritualistic worship with practice. The praying, fasting ones wearing *hijab* or sporting beard are erroneously thought to be practicing Muslims but,

9:71 And the believers, both men and women, are colleagues one of another. They enjoin the doing of Right and forbid the doing of Wrong (by personal example. The distinction between right and wrong will never be arbitrary. The Qur'an is the eternal Criterion of what is right and what is wrong. 2:185) Together, they help establish the Divine System, and set up the Just Economic Order of Zakat (9:60). This is how they obey Allah and His Messenger. These are the men and women on whom Allah will shower His Mercy. Allah is Mighty, Wise.

8 - Verse 4:34 reads, "Men are in charge of women." And 2:228 reads "For men there is a degree over women."

A - The verses do not read like this. Some translations do. In the first instance, the Qur'an uses the term *Qawwaamoon*. This means

providers, sustainers, maintainers and protectors. Men must see to it that women are able to stand on their feet in the society.

In the second instance, please read the complete verse. It clearly indicates that men have a degree in one sense that after divorce they do not have a waiting period (*Iddah*) before remarriage. *Iddah* is appointed for divorced or widowed women for a possible pregnancy to manifest itself.

9. How could Muslims have managed to conquer the world and advance in sciences if they were having civil wars such as Jamal, Saffain, and Karbala?

A - The histories of *Jamal*, *Saffain*, and *Karbala* were fabricated centuries after the supposed incidents.

- You have a good point that the Islamic State could have made no advancements if Muslims were entangled in civil wars. Much of that history is fiction. These reported disputes were forged by the politically motivated authors of the time, in the third and fourth century after the exalted Messenger.

- People from different countries were embracing Islam because they witnessed the true blissful Islamic civilization.

10. What was the real status of Mirza Ghulam Qadiani?

A - Hear from him, ". . . a self-sown seed, a self-grown plant of the British Empire."

11. What is the position of the burka (cloak) and head scarf in the Qur'an?

A - Surahs 24 and 33 describe the etiquette of socialization between men and women. While both genders have been commanded to lower their gaze, women should wear loose-fitting garments when outdoors (33:59). They should cover their bosom with a sash or shawl in the presence of men that do not belong to the family (24:30-31). However, the Qur'an does not ordain veiling or head cover. Modern psychology, too, rules out the scalp hair as a means of arousal in the male or the female. No woman becomes a lesser Muslim by refusing to veil. Likewise, no woman becomes a greater Muslim by observing *purdah* (veil and cloak).

12. The Qur'an states that humans and *Jinn* have been created for nothing but worship. What kind of worship and what are *Jinn*?

A - Verse 51:56 states that God has created Jinn and mankind for *Ibadah*. *Ibadah* is not worship. It means obeying Allah by serving his creation. As for the "Jinn", the term literally means "hidden".

According to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Allama Aslam Jairajpuri, Imam Raghīb Isfahani, Allamas Inayatullah Khan Al-Mashriqi, Sir Iqbal, G.A. Parwez, Obaidullah Sindhi, Tamanna Imadi and many other scholars, *Jinn* refers to nomads, uncivilized people, dwellers of the deserts and jungles, those of fiery temperament and all people who lived far away from urban life, hence mostly remaining out of sight from the city dwellers. The Qur'an refers to the urbanites as *Ins* and the nomads as *jinn*.

13. What is the position of magic in the Qur'an?

A - Very scientific. It is either hypnotism of the modern science or illusion and trickery. For example,

Pharaoh's magicians cast a spell on the people's eyes so that pieces of rope appeared to them as if they were serpents (7:116).

The term magic or *sihr* is used in the Qur'an and Hadith to describe any surprising event. Sir James Fraser in his book, "Occultism and the Manifest", writes that magic is nothing but falsehood and trickery, and he confesses reaching this conclusion after studying "the most pragmatic book" he came across, namely the Qur'an. Fraser does acknowledge the effect of suggestion on susceptible individuals. Black magic, voodoo, etc and their counter measures thrive only on superstition.

14. Wasn't Prophet Muhammad influenced by magic according to Hadith?

A - The Qur'an states it's only the wicked who utter such nonsense (25:8, 17:47). This kills the malicious reports in Bukhari.

15. Does the bad or evil eye really afflict people? Are there people who become demon-possessed? And does reciting some verses of the Quran cure them?

A - There is no such thing as the evil eye or possession of people by demons. The highly pragmatic and scientific Laws given in the

Qur'an reject these mythical phenomena as hoax. And the Book nowhere states that by reciting such and such verses, 'magic', 'evil eye' or 'demon-possession' can be cured. It is a Book of guidance, not of conjecture.

In 12:67, Prophet Jacob advises his eleven sons to enter the town through different gates. So, many commentators have wrongly concluded that he was concerned about 'evil eye' from the envious inhabitants. However, as historically narrated in the Bible, the brothers had been suspected of spying on a previous trip to Egypt, and, hence, Prophet Jacob's cautious advice.

The only demon that can possess a person is our uncontrolled desire called Iblis or Satan. The so-called demon-possessed people are mental patients. The exalted Prophet is reported to have said, "There is no such thing as *GHOUL*." It includes all mythical creatures such as evil spirits, Dracula, witches, haunting creatures, Frankenstein, etc.

16. How about the miracles of Moses, Jesus and Mohammad, the exalted?

A - One must remember that the Qur'an has made it abundantly clear that some of its verses are allegorical (3:7). This especially applies to the world of the Unseen, the past and the future. Then it becomes easy to understand that the white bright hand of Moses was symbolic of his truth that shone like the sun. His staff was the power of his faith and reason. Likewise, Jesus gave life to people who were suffering from spiritual death and he restored sight (vision of the heart) so that one could see the truth. The Qur'an rebuffed those who asked the exalted Messenger to show miracles: To bring forth a fresh spring from the ground, have a lush garden, set forth running streams of water, have fragments of heavens fall upon them, bring God and the angels in front of them, show them his palace of gold, or to have a ladder high enough to reach the heavens from where he would bring a preprinted book from God (17:90-93).

Let us recall that according to the Qur'an, all things in the universe follow the Divine Laws of nature. And those Laws never change.

And you will never see Allah's Laws changing or deviating (6:34, 6:116, 10:64, 17:77, 18:27, 33:38, 33:62, 35:43, 40:85, 48:23).

"The universe is the creation of a Master Mathematician who neither errs nor makes any exceptions."

-Galileo Galilei

Another point of interest is that the Qur'an invites people to believe through understanding and reason (12:108) while miracles would have quite the contrary effect i.e. stunning the human intellect.

17. But does not the Qur'an in the very beginning state that the believers have faith in the unseen?

A - Faith in the unseen through reason and reflection, not blind faith (12:108). More importantly, faith in the unseen refers to the Qur'anic law of requital. The right similitude could be that of a farmer who sows a seed and does all the requisite work believing that he will get the desired crop.

18. If the Qur'an is easy to understand, why don't all people understand it? And why do they say Hadith is essential for its comprehension?

A - The translators immediately take you to fabricated Hadith and history.

i The Qur'an itself claims that it is easy to understand. (54:17)

ii Its verses have been made simple and plain. (41:3)

iii The Qur'an has been presented in plain, simple Arabic language. (43:3)

iv "It is for Us to explain it and to make it clear." (75:19)

v The Qur'an advises that no one touches this Book but those who approach it with a clear mind uncontaminated with preconceived notions (56:79). Unfortunately, the translations and commentaries of the Qur'an until this day are only sub-editions of what men of old wrote a thousand years ago. If it is claimed that the first commentators wrote their commentaries based upon the exalted Messenger's sayings, we will have to remember that they compiled their works based upon fabricated traditions in or after the third century after him.

In the era of despotism and tyranny, royal interests heavily influenced those writers. Some of those writers, like Imam Ibn Shahab Zahari, confessed at their death-bed that tyrannical rulers forced them to concoct and pen down Ahadith and traditions that served the political interests of the elite.

vi. Sir Iqbal observes that Allah terms the Qur'an, "the Light." And light needs no help to show itself.

vii Mufti Azam Pakistan Mohammad Shafi writes "One part of the Qur'an explains the other. No explanation of the Qur'an other than its own is permissible for anyone." (*Ma'arifil Qur'an* vol-II page 596)

For further understanding of the answer, here is Preface to my humble work, QXP = THE QUR'AN AS IT EXPLAINS ITSELF.

PREFACE

The Author of the Qur'an is none but Almighty God. However, since the Book before the reader is an English rendition by an ordinary servant of God, Shabbir Ahmed, he is the author of the rendition.

The work before you, although close to a translation, is also an understanding from within the Qur'an itself. This Divine Writ calls itself AN-NUR (The Light) and light needs no extrinsic sources in order to shine. Therefore, I have based my presentation on two principles:

1. Focus on the Language in which the Qur'an was revealed.
2. Make use of TASREEF (how the Qur'an repeats its messages / verses in various ways).

I have rendered the terms and linguistics of the Qur'an using the Quraish dialect since it is the Arabic dialect in which the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad bin Abdullah, the Final Prophet, Messenger and Apostle of God. (570-632 CE)

The first ever commentaries of the Qur'an were written in the third and fourth centuries after the Messenger, during the Abbasid Dynasty, when Zoroastrian influence held sway in Islamic politics, society and the Arabic writings.

The commentators of the Qur'an, the historians, MUHADDITHIN (Tradition collectors) and FUQAHA (Jurists) overwhelmingly originated from among non-Arab Persians.

The late Allama Ahmad Amin Al-Masri sums up the end result in his excellent work FAJRIL ISLAM:

“Very surely, the reader will agree with me that the Persian literature gave an entirely alien complexion to the Arabic linguistics.”

Many celebrated thinkers and authors in the Islamic world strongly agree with the great Egyptian scholar on this score. We need not go into details since the point will become sufficiently clear soon, when we cite some examples.

HOW WAS MANKIND ROBBED of the Creator's Final Revelation - the Revelation that He Himself defines, “And this Grace of your Lord (the revealed Guidance) is better than all the (treasures) that they may amass (43:32)?

By 'robbing' I mean: Giving alien, erroneous and misleading meanings and concepts to the original matchless, powerful and glorious Qur'anic terms. Here is how it happened:

One - THE FIRST DILEMMA: While the language of the Qur'an remained untouched, its words and terms were made to lose the splendor that they so beautifully conveyed in the original Arabic. So much so, that the weak and erroneous concepts prevalent in the once Zoroastrian culture of Persia, and then given to the Qur'anic terms became 'MA'RUF' (well-known and accepted) even among the Arabs!

This staggering TRAGEDY explains why, how and where, even the ARABIC SPEAKING PEOPLE FALL AND LOSE THEIR TOUCH WITH THE QUR'AN! The Qur'an describes this STAGGERING TRAGEDY most eloquently,

"And the Messenger will say: O my Lord! These are my people, the ones who have disabled and made this Qur'an of no account." [(25:30). MAHJUR = They immobilized it like villagers who bind a cow by tying her front foot to her

horn]

This ill treatment of the Divine Message and filling the consequent void with conjecture is THE cause of their downfall, and that of the Muslims in general, on a Global scale.

Any nation that stays with or implements this Divine Writ in letter and spirit can make the world a paradise on earth. The early Islamic history is a great testimonial to this claim but we will explore this point a little further.

HOW, THEN, DO THE OTHERS (NON-MUSLIMS) CONTINUE TO MAKE PROGRESS?

Naturally, a very important question arises here. In the last several centuries, the West and some other non-Muslim countries have been making spellbinding advances in education, science and technology and in their governmental systems without the Qur'an! The short answer is that they have been making great use of their human faculties of reasoning and intellectual inquiry.

Another very significant factor has also played its role in this regard. The Qur'an has been, perceptibly and imperceptibly, making its Universal Impact on human civilization and history during the last fourteen centuries. The celebrated thinker and historian, Robert Briffault has very convincingly demonstrated this truth in his remarkable book, "The Making of Humanity."

Muslims, on the other hand, after disabling the Divine Revelation, have also paralyzed their intellect, falling for utterly irrational and senseless themes and traditions fabricated and recorded on hearsay centuries after the blessed times of the exalted Prophet and his noble companions.

However, the Golden Rule holds good for all nations that the Qur'an, the last REVELATION OF GOD, ECONOMIZES HUMAN EFFORT. It can give them EMINENCE they have never imagined before: scientific and moral achievements side by side - and in a short span of time - without going through a prolonged ordeal of learning through trial and error. And thus, they can adopt a

Progressive System of Life that embraces that which is good and promotes the well-being of humanity, and avoids that which is evil and harmful to humanity. Furthermore, this Divinely-inspired System of life is fully sustainable and durable.

HOW DOES THE CURRENT ARABIC ROB THE QUR'AN?

"Behold, this is indeed a revealed Word in the dialect of a noble Messenger." (69:40)

First of all it is of paramount importance to know that the mentioned dialect is not extinct. It is very much alive and well in the Pre-Islamic and 'Para-Islamic' poetry and well preserved in outstanding dictionaries such as TAJIL 'UROOS, LISANAL ARAB, QAMOOS, LANE'S LEXICON, AL-MUFRIDAT FI GHARIBIL QUR'AN and LUGHATIL-QUR'AN. The first of these practically embraces the next two and the last one is from Arabic to Urdu. Edward Lane's Lexicon is primarily based on Tajil 'Uroos.

I will keep this discourse brief since nothing is more convincing than citing relevant examples. Plenty of such examples are given throughout the rendition for the reader to see for himself how the Ajami (Non-Arab, and more specifically, the non-Qur'anic) concepts rob the Qur'anic terms of their clarity, power and grandeur.

Herein are given only a few of those examples:

- 'Taqwa' is usually translated as: 'Righteousness, God-consciousness, warding off evil, piety, fear of God, doing good' etc.

Now a non-Muslim, or even a bright youngster from Muslim parents may ask, "Well, the Qur'an in the very beginning claims that it is a guidance for the righteous, the God-conscious, he who wards off evil, the pious, he who fears God, he who does good'. But, how come such people need any guidance?"

The answer lies in the Quraish dialect that describes 'Taqwa' as 'walking in security', like a person who strolls through the garden but watches out that his garment might not get entangled in bushes and thorns. All of a sudden the

verse now makes beautiful sense - that the Qur'an is a Guide to those who wish to journey through life in honor and security.

- 'Manyyasha' is almost invariably translated as 'whatever God wills.' Since this term appears in the Qur'an very frequently, its wrong translation lays down the foundation of FATALISM in Islam. Such erroneous translations can only convey abject messages and results like this: 'God honors whomever He wills and humiliates whomever He wills.' Or, 'God sends astray whomever He wills and guides whomever He wills.' An intelligent reader has every right to ask, "Why did God reveal His Message, then, in the first place?"

The original Qura'nic meaning of 'Manyyasha' is, 'according to His Laws'. God has appointed Laws for success vs. failure, and for guidance vs. straying. (And these Laws are given in the Qur'an. See 4:88).

- Such terms as 'Sayyeh', 'Ithm', 'Zanb', 'Fisq' and the like are all blanketed together as the vague term 'SIN'. I have let the Qur'an explain the true meanings of each term repeatedly in the text, at times in parentheses.

- 'Zulm' has almost always been given a very vague meaning, 'wrongdoing'. But the Qur'anic concept of 'Zulm' is extremely clear and appealing: 'To displace something from its rightful place – to harm one's own self – violation of human rights – living in darkness - oppression – distortion of the Truth – to hurt anyone's well being. These meanings become crystal clear in their context in every single related verse.

- 'Hasanah', 'Khair', 'Salehat', 'A'mal-e-saleh', 'Birr' etc are all blanketed together as the vague 'good deeds'. The correct Qur'anic meanings I have incorporated in the text along with explanations.

- In addition, the true Qur'anic understanding of terms such as ANGELS, ADAM, SATAN, JINN, SALAT, ZAKAT, SAUM, HAJJ, THE UNSEEN, THE PHENOMENA OF THE OCCULT, BELIEF, KUFR, QIYAMAT, RESURRECTION, THE LAW OF REQUITAL, DUNIYA, THE HEREAFTER,

HARAM, HALAL, JIHAD, ISLAM, IMAN, and many more, you, the respected reader, will repeatedly find in the text just as the Qur'an explains them.

Two - NOW, THE SECOND DILEMMA: It occurred when the commentators of the Qur'an, centuries after its revelation, tried to connect every verse with a certain historical event, calling the process 'SHAN-E-NUZUL' (Circumstances of a revelation). Here the words and terms of the Qur'an were given tailor-made meanings to fit the supposed story, with total disregard for their original vibrant meanings, concepts and messages.

This deplorable practice only attempted to bind the verses of the Timeless Qur'an to some supposed incidents, and chain the Word of God in another set of shackles!

A very significant Islamic jurist, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, in those early times saw the chaos and raised a very strong voice against this awful practice.

He said: All the books that have been written on Battles ('Maghazi'), dreams and prophecies ('Malahim') and on Explanations of the Qur'an (Tafsirs) are completely false and unfounded.

- "Tazkaratil Maudhua'at", Ash-Shaikh Muhammad Tahir Al-Makki.

- "Maudhua'at", Mullah Ali Qari.

Worst of all, and inevitably so, this conjecture of 'Shan-e-Nuzul' was attributed to the Prophet and his companions. This led people into believing that this was how they (the Prophet and his companions) used to understand the Qur'an!

Hence, the foundation of an Islamic decline was laid down and MANKIND WAS ROBBED of the Supreme Gift of Guidance bestowed upon them by the Creator!

Three - NOW THE THIRD DILEMMA: The later generations of translators and commentators have uncritically followed the men of old and this tendency has been consistently taking its noxious toll. They have been thinking of the AJAMI Arabic as the known Language of the Qur'an. By Ajami Arabic I mean applying Zoroastrian or any

alien concepts to the Arabic words and terms of the Qur'an. Please recall that this deplorable practice of "Shan-e-Nuzul" was given legitimacy during the Abbasid Dynasty to the extent that the alien, empty and erroneous concepts given to the Qur'anic terms became widely known and well accepted. The Mighty Word of God, the great Equalizer of humanity, threatened the vested interests of the elite, whereas a 'disabled' Qur'an very well suited the ulterior motives of the Royalty, the Elite and the Islamic priesthood. A formidable coalition of this 'eternally' sinister TRIO thus made their inroads into Islam and supported each other toward a common goal, that is, exploitation and enrichment at the expense of the masses.

The later commentators whether Arabs or non-Arabs, have since looked at the Qur'an with the tinted glasses of the earlier MUFASSIRIN (explainers or exponents.) This dilemma has only helped perpetuate the pathetic state of mental slavery of the "Islamic" world to this day.

THE BEWILDERMENT: Muslims, then, keep wondering: What went wrong? What has happened to us? How can we stand up? Which way to go? What brought upon us the current, in fact, the last many centuries of Global humiliation? Is a Renaissance possible? If yes, how?

The answer is one word, Al-Qur'an – in its true meanings as the companions of the Prophet understood and strove to apply it and, thereupon, success embraced their feet at every step and in every walk of life.

Respected reader! Right before you is our sincere effort to break free of those "time-honored" shackles of mental slavery, and to breathe in some fresh air - THE QUR'AN AS IT EXPLAINS ITSELF.

A PROJECT DONE IN FULL PUBLIC VIEW:

"The Qur'an as it explains itself", with its first edition completed in April 2003, is the first ever rendition of the Qur'an into any language that has been done in full public view. From the very first letter in Dec 2001, it has been made available on the Internet. This proved to be a great blessing since it helped us improve the clarity of expression

whenever a viewer thought it was warranted. Furthermore, input from some great scholars of the Qur'an and of the Arabic linguistics, as well as criticism and questions from the viewers have helped the author and his team to make the exposition as clear and accurate as possible.

Respectfully, here is THE SECOND EDITION, and In-Sha-Allah we hope to continue working for another improved edition. When it comes to the Qur'an, we can only do our best, and there is a definite limit to our abilities. Hence, we will keep learning and improving. Any errors will be corrected in the subsequent edition and we will most assuredly value our readers' feedback.

- Shabbir Ahmed, M.D

19. If Allah will guide whom He will, and lead astray whom He will, then where comes the role of human effort and accountability? Isn't this similar to St. Augustine's philosophy of predestination and fatalism?

A - I think you have read some wrong translations of the Qur'an. As explained in Chapter III of this book, Allah designs His Laws in the World of Command as He wills. In the World of Creation He implements them, and then He never changes His Laws. The root word used for His "Will," *Tasha* and *Yasha*, throughout the Book stand for appointing due measure. So verses like the one you have pointed to (14:4) mean that God has created laws, rules and principles for guidance, for getting astray, for honor/dishonor etc.

20. How could mischievous people slander the mother of believers and that too in the life of the exalted Messenger? I am referring to Surah 24.

A - Surah 24 An-Noor does not mention the mother of believers at all. It talks about slander on some lady in the town. The name and the story were forged by mischievous people in the guise of Muhaddithin and found its way in our books of history and tradition.

21. Zodiac signs, palm reading, astrology, psychic powers; where do these things find their place in the Qur'an?

A - Nothing but conjecture. Allah alone is the Knower of the Unseen (and the future), and He makes known to none His secret (72:26).

The exalted Messenger is reported to have said, "Anyone who goes to a diviner or fortune-teller denies what has been revealed to Muhammad."

22. It seems weird that people perform acts of worship on behalf of their dead ancestors or in proxy for others.

A - To a critical mind, it should seem weird. The Prophet (S) said, "Actions are based upon intentions". The dead cannot have intentions. Also, the Qur'an makes it very clear that every person will be responsible, and compensated, for one's own actions alone. (53:39)

23. How did Islam divide into sects? Do you consider Yazid kafir or Muslim?

A - To answer your second question first, the Qur'an states, "You shall not be asked about what others used to do (2:141). Sectarianism came into Islam through our clergy's treatment of history for personal and political motives. Suffice it is to say that the Qur'an calls all companions of the Messenger (S) true believers (8:74). And that their mutual relationship was that of mutual love and kindness (3:103). Finally, Allah is pleased with them and they were pleased with Him (9:100). If Muslims had stuck to the Qur'an instead of falling for manmade books, there would have been no sects in Islam. In view of some sects criticizing the noble companions, it must be clarified that the hypocrites had been recognized in the life of the Prophet. (3:179, 47:30)

24. In Christianity, salvation is by grace. In Islam, it is based upon deeds. But isn't man imperfect?

A - The Qur'an does not understate Allah's Grace. In fact, it states that Allah's Grace encompasses all things (7:156, 40:7). At the same time, God did not choose to make humans as predestined, programmed robots. They have been given free will. As far as imperfection is concerned, the Qur'an makes it simple. It is the intention and effort that will be seen (53:40).

25. Why is the share of a woman one half of a man's in inheritance and why does Islam insist on two women's witness where one man's witness would suffice?

A - Please recall that men have been placed providers for women in the Islamic society. When the woman gets married, her husband will provide her for. Her brother will remain in charge of provision to his family on the parent's side. To further clarify the point, the inheritance share of the mother and the father is equal. For your question on witness, please see verse 2:282. First of all, the matter under discussion only pertains to a deed of loan. The verse says that two men (not one) should witness the signing of the document. If two men are not available, then one man and two women of whom you should choose, so that if one forgets, the other one will remind her.

Hence, the second woman will not be a witness in, and she won't speak to, the court. She will only be there to remind in case the witnessing woman gets distracted, let's say, by a suckling baby.

26. In the first edition you answered, since God is Omnipresent, ascension of Jesus unto Him makes no sense. Why do you then believe in the ascension of Muhammad?

A – ASRA (night journey) is often mixed up with MI'RAJ (Ascension). Since Allah is Omnipresent, the notion of anyone going to meet with Him over the skies does not stand up to reason. "ASRA" signifies night journey and it refers to the beginning of the exalted Messenger's emigration from Makkah to Madinah by night. Verses 20:77 and 26:52 use the same term for migration of Prophet Moses along with his followers across the sea. Also consider 17:2. Then, 17:60 refers to a dream of the Prophet (S).

Masjid Al-Aqsa means, the Remote Mosque and refers to the 'Remote Mosque' in Madinah, the place where Muslims used to establish congregational prayer before the Prophet's arrival to the city. "Masjid" here may also be understood as Madinah being the place of collective submission to Allah's Commands.

The word 'Mi'raj' (Bodily Ascension of any human being) nowhere occurs in the Qur'an. Yet, under erroneous traditions it is a popular, though non-Qur'anic, belief among Muslims that the exalted Messenger was taken up physically unto the heavens to meet with Allah!

The exalted Messenger never ascended to the heavens. Allah is everywhere. Our brilliant Muhaddithin and historians bring a lot of irrational and contradictory material on this subject:

01. Me'raaj happened in Madinah. But the word Me'raaj is not found in the Qur'an.

02. No sorry! It happened in Makkah.

03. It happened just before Hijrah.

04. Sorry! It happened 9 years before Hijrah.

05. The Prophet was sleeping at Umm Hani's house. Gabriel held his hand and took him to Allah up there in the heavens.

06. Oh' no! (That would be a slander). He was sleeping in the Ka'bah.

07. Gabriel opened his chest and poured faith and wisdom from a platter of gold before taking him up there.

08. Sorry! That surgery was performed when he was 3 years old.

09. Gabriel took him straight to the heavens. Sorry again! The angel first took him to Jerusalem.

10. No, it was not Gabriel. Burraq (The Santor with the head and face of a beautiful woman and the body of a horse) carried him to the heavens at lightning speed.

These are not even 1% of the insults. The real ascension of the exalted Messenger was his character, and not some kind of Greek Mythology.

The Divine Laws are unchangeable under all circumstances. Bodily Ascension is a Biblical and not a Qur'anic theme at all.

27. What is the position of terrorism in Islam?

A - Islam and Terrorism are mutually exclusive. While terrorism is the antithesis of Islam, Islam is the antithesis of terrorism. The Qur'an declares in no uncertain terms, "Terrorism or persecution is a crime

more grievous than killing" (2:217). The Mighty Book also advises all mankind that the best way to ensure peace and to avoid fear and grief is to benefit the fellow humans and do justice even with the enemy (5:8).

And the exalted Prophet advises: "Avoid extremism in religion. It has been a destroyer of nations."

28. Is there any living model state of Islam anywhere in the world?
A - Unfortunately not. The Taliban of Afghanistan (1996 to 2001) presented a glaring picture of the *Ajami* Islam. Ritualism, burqas and beards, religious police, compulsion in religion, poverty, hunger, subhuman existence, all these things are fruits of the Number Two Islam. So is lack of education, especially of women. Islam is a great liberator of humanity. Religions including N2I are nothing but shackles for the human mind and soul.

29. Please clarify the difference between Islam and the *Ajami* Number Two Islam.

A - Islam is DEEN (the Prescribed Way of Life) revealed by God and preserved in the Glorious Qur'an. It guarantees total success in both lives. N2I or No. 2 Islam is a set of empty rituals, senseless dogmas, cultural baggage, inherited irrationalities and blind following. It revolves around Mullahs and Mystics (the Muslim clergy). It guarantees subhuman life, misery and chaos. Mullahs and Mystics bar people from the Way of Allah (9:34). In fact, the entire history of mankind is a story of the battle between DEEN and RELIGION. All prophets' DEEN has always been, "God is One and mankind is one community." After the prophet departs the clergy distort this simple Message. Rulers and the wealthy always prefer religion over Deen. This is because religion (mazhab) promotes manmade distinctions within humanity.

30. How is Satan viewed in Islam?

A - Satan is our uncontrolled selfish desire that rebels against Divinely ordained values. The Prophet (S) once stated, "Everyone has an *iblees* (Satan) within." Companions respectfully inquired, "O Messenger of Allah! Even you have it?" Muhammad (S) replied, "Yes, I have made him a Muslim." So, he had his desires submit to Allah's Commands and, thus, he had complete self-control.

31. The Qur'an calls the wife as a tilth of her husband. Doesn't that reflect ownership?

A - Verse 2:223 is referring to women in general, and not to wives (*Nisaa not Azwaj*). Their likeness is that of gardens that turn the seeds into flowery plants. Women in the society are the custodians of future generations. This is another reason why they must be treated with respect.

32. Why did God create evil?

A - God does not create evil. It is our actions that determine the good or evil of things, emotions, power, wealth etc. Using a cliché, a knife in the hands of a surgeon is life-saving, but in the hands of a killer it is evil. Verse 113:1 refers to the evil aspects of things.

33. Are religious teachers (Mullahs) in the West any different from Mullahs in the East?

A - Not at all! They all are molded in the same factory. All of them represent the manmade Number Two Islam. I can suggest a litmus test. Any person who preaches beard and veiling belongs to the Counterfeit, *Ajami Islam*, and, thus is a Mullah/Mullani at heart. The Qur'an neither ordains beard, nor veiling.

34. Is not the beard a *Sunnah* (tradition) of the Prophet?

A – No! It has been a part of the Arab culture. Abu Jahl, Abi Lahab, Waleed bin 'Atbah, 'Aas bin Waael, 'Atbah bin Rabee', Waleed bin Mugheerah as well as Jews and Christians of Arabia all kept beards.

35. What is the 'factory' you referred to?

A - The so called "Deeni Madaris" or *Madrasahs*. Everything about *Mazhab* (ritualistic religion) is taught in them but the pristine, unadulterated Qur'an. Who is the criminal behind this conspiracy? The criminal here is Nizamulmulk Toosi (1018-1092 CE), the grand Vizier of Saljuk rulers. This *Ajami* Zoroastrian under the guise of a Muslim name established the NIZAMIYA University in Neshapur and Baghdad. Until this day the religious curriculum designed by him (Dars-e-Nizami) is being taught in Madrasahs throughout the world, (8,500 Madrasahs in Pakistan alone). What is their product? - TALIBAN. Ironically, the most famous and ancient "Islamic" University

in the world, Al-Azhar at Cairo, is whole-heartedly devoted to teaching the manmade, Hadithi Islam!

36. What are the true sources of Islam?

A – The only Authentic Source of Islam is the Book of Allah, Al-Qur'an. Sunnah (the acts of the exalted Prophet) and Hadith (his sayings) are often cited as the second source of Islam. But they were collected centuries later, and they are self-contradictory and strongly differ between sects. Moreover, they are loaded with irrational themes that collide with the Qur'an.

THE MISSION STATEMENT

Among the many wonderful chapters of human history, let us briefly examine one glittering page. At the outset of his prophethood, Muhammad, the exalted, issued a mission statement. And with marvelous glory and accuracy, he accomplished that mission during his lifetime. What was that noblest mission statement?

"We will establish a state in which a young maiden laden with jewelry and ornaments will travel alone from San'aa in Yemen to Busra in Syria (a distance of more than 1500 miles), yet, she will have no fear but the fear of Allah."

Dear reader, we are talking of times when no highway in Arabia was considered safe even for armed caravans. Robbery, looting, killing, and dishonoring women were rampant. Abduction, ambush, and enslavement were considered a matter of pride. The noble goal of the exalted Messenger not only meant establishing the rule of law, but also entailed changing the hearts of people. It also meant that the common person would have total confidence in the state, in the government, in the system, and in the individuals who had lived in that blessed society.

The Savior of humanity achieved that and more in a brief span of time. The eyes of the heavens have yet to see the like of that sacred era again. Very soon a time had come in the Islamic empire where it was next to impossible to find a needy person. People went from village to village, town to town to look for someone who would accept their charity, and found none. Sounds Utopian Doesn't it?

The Second Caliph of Islam, Umar Farooq the Great (R.A.) used to say, "If a dog died of hunger by the Euphrates River, I am afraid Umar will be held accountable." He also said, "I have been appointed your Amir so that I may stop your prayers from reaching the heavens". This displays the conviction he instilled into his subjects; the confidence that the Islamic state will meet all individuals' basic needs and they won't have to grieve and feel wanting in any area of their life as far as humanly possible.

Can any civilization in history or today's Europe, Japan, and America boast of such abundant economy, mutual brotherhood and total security of life, honor, and property?

Messenger Muhammad, the exalted, succeeded in establishing a just and equitable society by inculcating a deep-seated faith in the hearts of people; the faith that giving will be rewarded manifold in both worlds. Professor Hawtrey and Dean Inge have remarked that "the prosperity of any society has and always will depend on the incentive provided for work. In Islam, a person will work hard so he can give more".

Many readers will find it refreshing to know that in the true Dar'ul' Islam (Islamic State), it was the obligation of the state to fulfill the basic individual needs such as:

- a. Food
- b. Clothing
- c. Shelter
- d. Education
- e. Employment (or Unemployment Allowance)
- f. Requisite Tools
- g. Transportation to and from the place of work
- h. Medical Care
- i. Retirement benefits

This subdued the capitalistic evils (such as usury, profiteering, fear of poverty, insecurity, insurance worries and provision for the survivors etc.) while guaranteeing enough individual freedom to avoid the

socialistic evils (such as subjugation to the state). How could such an environment fail to produce selfless individuals and the ideal society!

I respectfully propose that the world leadership ponder over the noble mission statement of the exalted Messenger, and what was done to achieve it, as our fountain spring of life for the coming millenniums.

CONCLUSION

More than one and a quarter billion people in the world today believe in the Qur'an as the Final Word of Allah. My own reflections and a study of the brightest non-Muslim minds, the glimpses of which we have seen in this book, lead me to believe that the 21st century will prove to be the dawn of an era where all humanity will see what the 20% of it is seeing today. Moreover, Muslims will come to break the chains of false traditions, blind following, stagnant cultures and empty rituals. They will disown and discard the number two Islam

People will then establish the ideal society on the planet in which rule of law will prevail. The Divine moral values will become the natural way of human life. Individuals in that unified society will have exemplary character and they will enrich the lives of one another.

Mankind would then progress from the "status of Adam" to the "status of Mu'min." To recapture briefly, the status of Adam is harnessing the forces of nature. The status of Mu'min (believer in the Qur'an) is to harness the forces of nature and use them for the benefit of, not a few people, not one or two nations, but all mankind.

I know that this giant step can only be taken in the light of the Qur'an. The world is doubtless moving in that direction. It has to happen and it will. Instead of being a silent spectator, I want to be an active part of that glorious triumph of all mankind. This is why I am a Muslim. And this is why I am not a non-Muslim.

Shabbir Ahmed, M.D.

