

Murteza Mutahhari

**AN INTROOUCTION TO
THE ISLAM WORLD VIEW**

(3)

**Revelation
And
Prophethood**

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REVELATION AND
PROPHETHOOD

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the Merciful, the Compassionate*

INTRODUCTION

Belief in revelation (*wahy*) and prophethood (*nabuwwar*) results from a kind of insight about the universe and mankind which may be called 'the principle of universal guidance'. This principle is essential to the monotheistic world view of Islam, from which the principle of prophethood follows. God is a Necessary Being by His very Essence and what is necessary by essence is necessary in every aspect. He is the source of absolute Mercy and grants this to every kind of creature to the extent which is possible and suitable for that creature. He guides all beings on the path towards their perfection.

This guidance affects all beings from the smallest particle to the greatest star and from the lowest inanimate entity to the most sublime and advanced being, that is, the human being. That is why the Quran has used the word revelation to mean guiding mankind as well as guiding inanimate objects, plants and animals.

No being in this world is static and stationary. Every thing changes its status and position and flows or moves towards an end, destination or objective. At the same time, there is every indication that there exists a kind of 'desire' and 'attraction' in every being for such an end or objective towards which it is advancing. That is to say, all beings are pulled towards their objectives by a kind of mysterious inner force. This force is that very force that is interpreted as 'Divine Guidance'.

The Holy Quran narrates from the Prophet Moses who told the Pharaoh of his time, "*Our Lord is the one who gave every creature the nature it was worthy of and then guided it towards the right path.*" (20: 50)

Our world is an oriented, goal-directed world, that is, there is an inner attraction in all beings towards a goal of perfection. Being goal-directed is the same as having received Divine Guidance.

The word revelation is used in the Holy Quran repeatedly. The various usages of this word in the Quran indicate that revelation does not relate solely to mankind but it runs and flows in everything or at least in every living Creature. So, even in the case of bees, the Quran speaks of revelation. The difference is only in the degree of revelation and guidance which accords to the creatures' involvement.

The highest degree of revelation is the one enjoyed by the prophets. This kind of revelation is based upon the need of humanity for Divine Guidance. Divine Guidance, on the one hand, leads human beings towards a goal beyond the range of material objects and the senses and constitutes their way of life. On the other hand, it satisfies humanity's needs in social life which are constantly in need of guaranteed Divine Laws. Humanity's need for an ideology leads him or her to perfection. His or her weakness in arranging and compiling an ideology which would be able to do so has already been made clear in our discussions entitled *Ideology and Schools of Thought*.

Prophets act as receivers who convey messages to human beings; they are the chosen people who are qualified to receive these messages from the invisible world. Only God knows those who are so qualified. The Holy Quran says, "*God best knows where to place His Message.*" (6: 125)

Even though the phenomenon of revelation is beyond the reach of the senses and experiences of individuals, like many other forces, it can be known through its effects. Divine revelation leaves a great and wonderful impression on the bearer of revelation, namely the 'prophet' in fact, God 'actualizes' His messenger, that is, He provokes the prophet's powers and brings about a deep and great revolution in him. This revolution moves in the direction of the progress and interests of humanity. It takes place realistically and gives him (the messenger) a kind of decisiveness which is extraordinary. History can never show a decisiveness to compare with the one shown by the prophets and people who have been raised in their hands or through them.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPHETS

The prophets who are connected through revelation with the origin of existence have special characteristics which will be discussed below:

Miracles

Every prophet who has been appointed by God enjoys an extraordinary power with which he can accomplish certain actions beyond human power. These actions show that he has an extraordinary, divinely bestowed power and this is proof of the truth of his call and heavenly word.

These extraordinary accomplishments produced by God's permission by the prophets to show the truth of their word are called *ayat* or signs of prophethood by the Quran. Islamic theologians call these signs 'miracles' since they reveal the weaknesses and inabilities of common people.

The Holy Quran narrates that whenever the people, seeking the truth, demanded a 'miracle' and a 'sign of prophethood' from the prophets of their time, they would answer positively because these requests were reasonable and logical, without which it was impossible to recognize the prophethood of the prophet. But if the request was made for reasons other than searching for the truth, for example, if it was suggested as a 'deal', the prophets would refuse. The Holy Quran cites many of the prophets' miracles, from giving life to the dead and healing hopeless cases to talking in the cradle, changing a staff into a snake and foretelling the unknown and the future.

The Quality of Guarding Against Sin or Infallibility, Immaculateness

One of the characteristics of the prophets is that they are exempt from sin (immaculate) and error (infallible). The prophets are neither affected by carnal desires nor do they commit sins nor do they err in their actions. Their being free from sin and error grants them the maximum credibility. Let us discuss these infallibilities.

To begin with, is there an invisible power who like a protective father prevents his children from making a mistake or committing a sin whenever they are on the verge of doing so? Or is it because of the special nature and mentality of the prophets that makes it impossible for them to commit a sin or make an error, just as an angel never commits adultery because of an absence of sexual desire? Or is it like a calculator which never makes a mistake because it lacks a brain? Or is it because of their understanding and the profundity of their belief and faith? Of course, the latter is correct. We shall discuss each of these infallibilities separately.

Freedom from Sin

The human being is a free being who chooses his actions according to the benefits and disadvantages discerned by him. That is why 'discernment' plays an important role in choosing and selecting one's actions. It is impossible for a human being to choose something which he has discerned as useless and even harmful. For example, a wise man, interested in living, will not throw himself knowingly from the top of a mountain or take poison.

Individuals vary in their faith and realization of the effects of sins. The stronger their faith and awareness of the outcome of sins, the lesser the possibility of committing a sin. If the degree of faith reaches the point of intuition and vision so that one can compare one's behavior at the moment of committing a sin to the behavior of somebody on the point of throwing himself down from the top of a mountain or taking poison, then the possibility of committing a sin will be zero, That is, he avoids sin. Such a state of mind is called immaculateness or freedom from sin, which issues from a perfect faith and an intensity of guarding against evil or sin.

Immaculateness cannot be attained by the coercion of outside forces or because of a natural inability and powerlessness. If a person cannot commit a sin or some compulsory power always prevents one from doing so, the compulsory avoidance will not be considered a virtue because one is like a prisoner unable to do wrong. Absence of sin in such circumstances cannot be taken to mean one's goodness and honesty.

Freedom from Error

This characteristic [of infallibility] originates from the special insight of the prophets. Errors always occur because man is connected to reality through his internal or external senses. He makes a series of mental images in his mind. Then he analyzes, combines and brings about changes upon them with the help of his reason. Sometimes an error occurs while arranging and using these images in recognition of external realities. But when man is directly faced with objective realities by a special sense, i.e., when understanding the reality is the same as being connected to the reality itself without invoking mental images, then there is no possibility of making an error.

The prophets are joined to the reality of existence from within. There is no possibility of making an error for they are within the very context of reality. For example, if we count a hundred beads and continue to do this a hundred times more, our memory may make a mistake believing that the counting was done 99 times or 101 times, but the reality itself will not be changed and the number of beads will not

become more or less even though the counting has been repeated a hundred times. Individuals who, because of their consciousness, are placed in the context of the flow of reality and are also joined and united with the origin of existence are free from any error.

Differences between the Prophets and Geniuses

The above considerations makes it possible to realize the differences between the prophets and geniuses. Geniuses are people who have a strong power of thought, reason and a nalysis. Through their senses, they contact objects. With the help of their analytical minds, they work out theories and come to conclusions. They sometimes, however, make mistakes.

Besides enjoying the power of intellect and reason, the prophets yet enjoy another power called revelation. Since geniuses lack this power, it is not possible to compare these two groups. The comparison will be correct only when the two parties belong to one and the same category. For example, one can compare two persons' power of vision or sense of hearing or power of reasoning. But one cannot compare one person's sense of vision to another's sense of hearing in order to decide which one is stronger. The genius of geniuses is related to their power of human thought, but the exceptional character of the prophets is due to revelation, their link with the origin of existence. Thus, a comparison between these two groups is wrong.

Leadership

Although prophethood begins with spiritual awareness, gaining nearness to His Essence) and cutting oneself off from people and their ways which necessitates alienation from the outside world and paying attention to the inner, yet, finally, this mission will end by returning to the people and the outside world in order to organize and lead man's life towards the right path.

The word *nabi* means messenger or prophet in Arabic; in Persian the word *payambar* has the same meaning and the word *rasul* means envoy or apostle in Arabic. The prophet conveys God's message to the people, awakens and organizes their powers, calls them towards *God* and His Will which is peace, reformation, freedom from anything that is other than God, truth, honesty, affection, justice as well as other virtues. He will break the chains that bind man to carnal desires, idols and false gods.

Iqbal Lahouri describes the differences between the prophets and people who aspire towards God (gnostics) but do not have any prophetic mission and whom Iqbal calls 'mystics', " The mystic does not wish to return from the repose of unitary experience and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large. The prophet's return is creative, He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history and thereby to create a fresh world of ideals. For the mystic, the repose of 'unitary experience' is something final; for the prophet, it is the awakening of forces, calculated to completely transform the human world."¹

As a result, leading the people, managing and putting human powers into action in the direction of God's Will and to the benefit of human beings are inseparable parts of prophethood.

Sincerity of Intention

The prophets because they enjoy Divine support, are extremely 'dedicated' in their mission. They do not have any intention or aim other than guiding people which is God's Will. They do not ask for any reward for what they do. They never forget that God has entrusted them with a prophetic mission and they are doing His work.

The speeches of many of the prophets confronting their people are summed up in surah 26 in the Holy Quran. Of course, each prophet has had a special message for his people due to the problems blocking his way, but one of the topics repeated in every prophet's message is, "*I do not ask for any reward or money from you.*" (26: 127) Because of such dedication, which is one of the characteristics of the prophets, their messages are always accompanied with an unusual decisiveness.

Since the prophets felt they were appointed or actualized in prophethood by God and they did not have any hesitation about their mission and its necessity and fruitfulness, they delivered and defended their messages with such decisiveness that it is impossible to find a likeness for it.

Moses, the son of Imran, with his brother Aaron, dressed in woollen garments and carrying wooden sticks went to see the Pharaoh. All of their apparent equipment was limited to these. They invited him to convert, saying decisively that if he did not accept this invitation, his rule would certainly decline, but if he accepted and entered the path asked by them, his honor would be guaranteed. The Pharaoh said with wonder, "Look at them who are speaking of guaranteeing my honor provided I follow them or else destroying my rule!"²

In the early years of his prophetic mission, when the number of Muslims was perhaps not more than the fingers of two hands, Muhammad the Holy Prophet, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, gathered the chiefs of the Bani Hashimi in a meeting recorded in history as *yaum al-anzar*. He conveyed his mission to

them and announced decisively and frankly that his religion would encompass the world and that their happiness lay in accepting his invitation. This speech was so unbelievable and grave that the crowd looked at each other with surprise, said nothing and dispersed.

When Abu Talib, the prophet's uncle conveyed the message of the Quraish to him saying that if he stopped delivering his messages, they would be ready to choose him as the king, to give him their most beautiful daughter as his wife and to make him the richest man of the tribe, he answered, "I swear by God that even if they put the sun in my one palm and the moon in the other, I shall never give up my mission."

Yes, just as freedom from sin and freedom from error in leading mankind are the characteristics of prophets, enjoying revelation and connection to God, sincerity and decisiveness are the other characteristics.

Constructive

The prophets give energy to people's powers and orient them only to train and guide individuals and to construct human society. In other words, they lead them in the direction towards man's well-being. It is impossible for a prophet to work in the direction of destroying individuals or corrupting society. If the result of his claim to prophethood is the decay of man and the disabling of man's powers, or lewdness and prostitution or corruption and the degeneration of society, these all show that he is a pretender and not true to his word.

Iqbal Lahouri has a valuable statement about this, "Another way of judging the value of a prophet's religious experience (the truth of his mission as well as the reality of his inner link to God), therefore, would be to examine the types of manhood that he has created and the cultural world that has sprung out of the spirit of his message."³

Conflict and Struggle

Another sign of a prophet's sincerity in his claim is fighting against polytheism, superstitions, ignorance, fabrications, oppression, cruelties, and injustices. It is impossible for a true prophet chosen by God to have a message which has a taint of polytheism, helps an oppressor, confirms cruelty and injustice, remains silent and does not fight against polytheism, ignorance, superstition and cruelties.

Monotheism (*tawhīd*), wisdom and justice are the principles of every prophet's call and only the invitation of those who follow this path is worth considering and questioning. That is, an individual's message does not have any value if it conveys something against monotheism and justice and truly accepted facts or confirming cruelty. Thus, if an aspirant to prophethood makes a mistake or commits a sin or does not have the ability to lead people, even though the origin of this inability lies in a physical defect or an abhorrent disease such as leprosy or if his invitation is not in the path of man's constructiveness, his message will not be worthy of asking for any proof and miracles. So wisdom does not permit one to follow such people even though they present many miracles.

The Human Aspects

Even though the prophets have the extraordinary characteristics of the ability to perform miracles, immaculateness, infallibility, unmatched leadership, unparalleled constructiveness, unmatched struggle with polytheism, superstitions, and tyrants, they are, after all, human beings. That is, they have all the characteristics of a human being. Like others, they eat, sleep, walk, beget and finally die. They have all the human needs. The prophets themselves, like other people, are required and bound to do the duties which they have conveyed to the people. Forbidden and permissible actions are also applicable to them and sometimes they are required to do more exacting duties. For example, it was obligatory upon the Prophet of Islam to perform the obligatory prayer at night (*naflah*) and also contemplation.

The prophets never exclude themselves from religious duties. Like others, and even more than others, they fear God, pray and worship Him, fast, and struggle upon God's Way, pay their religious tax (*laical*), struggle for their own and others lives and do not lead a parasitic existence.

The difference between the prophets and common people lies only in revelation and its requirements. Revelation does not cut off the prophets from humanity but makes them examples of the: universal man for others. Because of" this, the prophets become their pioneers and leaders.

Prophets Who Bring a Divine Law

Prophets are generally divided into two groups. The first group, who are the minority, have been inspired by God to lead the people by these rules. These prophets are called 'prominent prophets' according to the Quran. Their exact number is not known, especially since the Holy Quran specifies that only stories of some of them are narrated. If the Quran had narrated the stories of all the prophets or if at least it had claimed that all the important prophets were mentioned in the Quran, then it would have been possible to know the number of prominent prophets.

All we know is that Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the last Prophet, Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, were the prominent prophets and prophets of the Divine Law (*shari'ah*). These prophets were inspired by God to convey a set of rules and orders to people and to train them according to these rules.

The second group are the prophets who did not have any Divine Law or religious orders, but were appointed to spread and publicize the existing canons and laws. The majority of the prophets like Hud, Salih, Lot, Issac, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, Josiah, Shuayb, Aaron, Zachariah and John belong to this group.

Notes:

1. Iqbal Lahouri , *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, (Lahour: Ashraf Press, 1962). p. 124. N.B. The quotations cited from Iqbal are taken from the original copy of the book written in English, The author has used the Persian translation of Ahmad Aram.

2. *Nah j al-Balaghah*, Sermon 190.

3 *OP. eit.*, Iqbal, p p. 124-125.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF THE PROPHETS

Have the prophets played a positive or a negative role in the course of history or have they been completely without any role?

No body, not even the opponents of religion can deny the fact that the prophets have played an important role in history and have been influential. In the past, the prophets were the manifestation of a great national power. National powers - contrary to the powers originating from wealth and might - were limited to powers originating from blood and tribal tendencies which considered the chiefs of the tribes and national leaders to be their representatives. Other power resulted from religious beliefs and tendencies which considered the prophets as their representatives.

There is no question that the prophets, with the help of religious support, have been a great power. The question is. On the usage of this power about which different opinions are given.

One group, with a simple premise in their writings, claims that the role of the prophets has been negative. That is, to say, the prophets' viewpoint is spiritual and nonsecular. The core of a prophet's instruction is to dispense with the world, to pay attention to the after-life, to turn towards the life of the soul, to let go of the external world, to incline towards subjectivity and to run away from objectivity. The power of religion the prophets being its manifestation, has always been used to discourage man from living and to act as a brake on man's development. Thus their role has always been negative in history. Usually those with a pretense of being an intellectual present such an opinion.

Another group describes the role of the prophets as negative, but contrary to the first group, they believe that the prophets have secular inclinations and their spiritual tendency is a cover for the secular one. They claim that this secularization is always trying to keep the status quo for the benefit of the ruling class and against the oppressed

and that it has been fighting with the gradual evolution of society. They claim that history, like every other phenomenon, has a dialectical movement, that is a movement caused by inner conflicts.

As soon as ownership came into existence, society was divided into two hostile classes: One was the ruling and the exploiting class and the other was the deprived and the exploited. The ruling class has always advocated the status quo in order to preserve their own privileges. Despite the inevitable improvement of the tools of production, the ruling class wants to keep society as it is. With the improvement of the tools of production, the deprived class wants to overturn the status quo and substitute a more complete one for it. The ruling class plays its role in three different forms: religion, government, and wealth. In other words, it has been a factor of deception, a factor of wealth and a factor of oppression.

The role of the prophets has been to deceive people for the benefit of oppressors and exploiters. The prophets' concern with the other world is not real; it is just a lie to cover their worldliness in order to control the consciences of the deprived and the revolutionary class. So the historical role of the prophets has been negative because it supported the conservative class in order to keep the situation as it is for the benefit of the owners of wealth and might. This is the Marxist thesis explaining history. From the point of view of Marxism, the three factors: religion, government and wealth, [accompanying the principle of ownership] have opposed the masses throughout history.

Some interpret history differently and contrary to the above mentioned opinion. At the same time, they believe that the role of religion and its representatives, the prophets, is negative. They claim that the law of evolution of nature and history is based upon the strengthening of the strong and the weakening of the weak. The strong are the progressive factor in history and the weak have been and continue to be the factor of decline. Religion has been the invention of the weak to apply the brakes on the strong. The prophets invented concepts such as justice, freedom, truth, honesty, equity, kindness, pity and cooperation. These concepts, in other words, which are part of a 'slave morality', are for the benefit of the corrupted and antievolutionary class and a loss to the Strong and progressive class which is a supporter of evolution. The factors of

progress and influence upon the conscience of the strong impede the elimination and destruction of the weak and, as a result, the human race improves and supermen are created.

Thus the role of religion and the prophets have been negative because of their supporting the 'slave-morality' and opposing the 'aristocratic morality' which is the factor of development in history and society. The famous German materialist philosopher, Nietzsche, supports this thesis.

In addition to the three mentioned groups, other groups, even those denying religion, believe that the rule of the prophets in the past has been positive, beneficial and in the direction of the evolution of history. These groups, on

the one hand, have paid attention to the moral and social context of the prophets' instructions, and, On the other, to the objective facts of history and concluded that the prophets have played the most fundamental role in the development and reform of societies.

Human civilization has two aspects: material and spiritual. The material aspect of civilization relates to its technical and industrial side which has developed little by little up to now. The spiritual aspect of civilization is related to the human relationships of man. This aspect is indebted to the instructions of the prophets. Because of this aspect, the material side can progress. Thus the prophets play a direct role in the gradual perfection of the spiritual aspect of civilization and an indirect role in the material aspect.

According to their opinions [the fourth group] there is no doubt about the positive role of the prophets' instructions in the past, but some of them consider this positive role as something related to the past and believe that the time for such instructions has ended. They claim that with the development of the sciences, religious instruction has lost its role and will lose even more in the future. Some others claim that faith and religious ideology have made such an impression that scientific development will not be able to replace it just as no philosophical school could do.

Among the different roles of the prophets in the past, some cases are occasionally found where man is free from religious support because of the progress of the social conscience of mankind, yet the most fundamental roles are the ones which have been in the past and will be in the future.

Now the cases of the influence of the instructions of the prophets on the evolution of history will be mentioned below.

Education

In the past, education had a religious nature. This nature was a help to teachers and parents. This is one of the cases whereby the development of a social conscience eliminated the need for a religious motive.

Confirming Agreements and Treaties

The social life of man is based on respecting agreements and treaties and being loyal to promises. Respect for agreements and promises is one of the human aspects of civilization. Religion has always undertaken this role and there is still no substitute for it. Although Will Durant is against religion, in his book, *Lecture on History*, he confesses to the fact that, "Religion... with the help of its traditional values transferred man's promises to respectful relations between man and God resulting in firmness and stability."¹

Religion has generally been a strong support for moral and human values. Moral values without religion are like money without backing which very soon becomes worthless.

Freedom from Social Oppression

The most fundamental role of the prophets is struggling against dictatorship, oppression and fighting with the representatives of those who rebel against God's Commands. The Quran has put more emphasis on this role, because in the first place, the establishment of justice is pointed out as the aim of a prophetic mission. In the second place, the conflict between the prophets and the representatives of despotism is repeatedly cited and in some of its verses, it is specified that the despotic class has always opposed the prophets.

The remarks of Marx and his followers who say that religion, government, and wealth are the three fates of the ruling class, which oppose the oppressed class, is absurd and overruled by indisputable historical facts. Dr. Arani, while explaining Marx's view, says, "Religion has always been an instrument in the hands of society. In order to defeat

the subjugated class, rosary and cross are always linked with bayonet." ²

There is only one way to accept such justifications and philosophies of history and that is by closing one's eyes and ignoring historical facts.

Ali, the first Imam, is the hero of the prayer beads as well as the sword. But which class does he want to defeat? The oppressed and deprived class or the ruling and dominant class? What is Ali's motto? His motto is, "Always be the enemy of the cruel and the friend of the oppressed." ³ Throughout his life he was close to the sword and the prayer beads and against gold. His sword was used against the owners of wealth and might. According to Dr. Ali Alvardi's book, *Manzalat al- 'Aql al-Bashari*. "Ali, by his character has rejected Marx's philosophy."

Nietzsche's remark is even more absurd than this and completely contrary to Marx's view. Nietzsche believes that the mighty are the only progressive and advanced class of society and religion, by supporting the weak, has been a means of corruption and anti-development as if only when the law of the jungle takes control does human society move rapidly towards perfection.

From Marx's point of view, the only cause of revolution is the deprived class and the prophets have supposedly opposed this class; from Nietzsche's point of view, the mighty are the cause of the evolution of history and therefore the prophets supposedly opposed this class. Marx says, "Religion is the invention of the strong and wealthy." Nietzsche says, "Religion is the invention of the weak and deprived."

Marx's first mistake is that he has explained history solely on the basis of class conflict and has ignored the human aspect of history. ⁴ His second mistake is that he has considered the oppressed class as the only factor of evolution. His third mistake is that he has classified the prophets with the ruling class.

Nietzsche's mistake is that he has considered the factor of power as the cause of evolution in history, that is, the superman is equal to the strongest and the strongest man is the only progressive cause in history.⁵

Notes

1. The editor has not given a footnote for this quotation so it has been translated from the Persian.
2. Internationalist magazine quoted from Dr. Arani's book, *The Principles of the Science of the Saul*.
- 3 *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Letter 47, part of Imam Ali's will after he was fatally wounded by Ibn Muljirn.
4. Refer to the article, "The Revolution of the Mahdi from the Viewpoint of the Philosophy of History" by the author and the book *Society and History* from the series: *The Islamic World View*,
S. We have to be satisfied with this brief discussion concerning the philosophy of history and the role of prophets in the evolution of history, This subject will be discussed in detail under the title of *The Philosophy of History from the View Point of Islamic Culture* the notes of which are ready.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE GOAL OF PROPHETHOOD AND PROPHETIC MISSIONS

So far the role of the prophets in the evolution of history has been clarified to a certain extent. Now, other questions arise: What is the real goal of the prophets' missions and the revelations of God's Word? What is the final message of the prophets?

It might be said that the real purpose is to guide people as well as to bring them happiness, salvation, goodness and prosperity.

There is no doubt that the prophets have been appointed to guide people towards the true path and to give them happiness and freedom. The question is what sort of a goal is this true path leading to? Where does the happiness of the people lie in regard to this school of thought? What kind of bondage has this school of thought recognized for human beings from which it wants to release them? According to this school of thought, in what does the final happiness and salvation of human beings lie?

All these points have been cited directly or indirectly in the Holy Quran but two concepts have been specifically pointed out as the real goals. These concepts are: (1) recognition of God and growing closer to Him, (2) establishment of justice and equality in human society. All the instructions of the prophets are a kind of introduction to these two concepts.

On the One hand, the Holy Quran says, "*O, Prophet, We sent you forth as a witness (witness to the body of the believers), bearer of glad tidings, messenger of danger and one who shall invite people to God by His permission and as a shining light, "* (33:45-46) Among all the aspens mentioned in this verse it is obvious that 'the invitation of God' is the primary goal.

On the other hand, in regard to all the prophets, the Quran says, " *We have sent Our prophets with clear reasons and with them, We have sent down the Book and the balance so that people would establish justice and fairness...*" (57: 2 5) This verse has clearly presented the establishment of justice and fairness as the goal of prophethood and prophetic missions.

Calling to God, knowing Him and growing closer to Him are the same as theoretical monotheism and individual, practical monotheism. But setting up justice and equality in a society means the establishment of practical and social monotheism. Now one may ask whether the real goal of the prophets is knowing and worshipping God and everything else including justice and social equality are an introduction to it, or whether the real goal is the establishment of justice and equality and knowing God and worshipping Him as an introduction and a means to fulfill such a social ideology. If we want to speak as we did previously, the question should be presented as: Is the real goal theoretical monotheism and individual, practical monotheism, or is it practical, social monotheism? Several opinions can be expressed here.

First, the prophets have dual goals, that is, they have two independent objectives. One of these destinations is related to life and happiness in the next world (theoretical

Monotheism and individual, practical monotheism). The other is related to secular happiness (social monotheism). On the one hand, the prophet's have been concerned with social monotheism because of man's secular happiness and on the other hand they have been concerned with theoretical monotheism and individual, practical monotheism which is only spiritual and subjective, in order to prepare man's happiness in the next world.

Second, the real goal is social monotheism and its essential prerequisites are theoretical monotheism and individual, practical monotheism, Theoretical monotheism is, dependent on the recognition of God. It is not necessary for a man 'with in the limitedness of his nature' to know or not to know God ; to have God as the only factor stirring his soul or a thousand other things; as it does not make any difference to God whether He is recognized by man or not, or whether He is worshipped or not. But because the perfection of man lies in changing from 'I' to 'we' in social monotheism, which is not achieved without theoretical monotheism and individual, practical monotheism God has made His recognition and worship a requisite for the establishment of social monotheism.

Third, the real goal is recognition of God and growing closer to Him, so social monotheism is a prerequisite and the means to achieve this sublime goal, because as it was mentioned before, in a monotheistic world view, the world has a 'from Him' and 'to Him' nature. So the perfection of man lies in going towards Him and growing closer to Him.

Man enjoys a special privilege, that is, his reality is rooted in the Divine and his nature is to seek God according to this verse, "*I breathed unto him from My own spirit [the sublime and superior reality]!*" (15:29)

Therefore, man's happiness perfection, salvation and prosperity is dependent on knowing God, worshipping Him, and treading the path towards Him. If man is separated

from society he will no longer be a man because by nature he is social and because man's God-oriented nature will not be realized unless balanced social institutions govern the society.

Therefore the prophets have been concerned with justice, equality, and rejection of oppression and discrimination. Social values like justice, freedom, equality, democracy and also social morals such as generosity, forgiveness, kindness and charity do not have inherent values and are not considered to be perfection in themselves for man. All of these values are antecedent and instrumental [to perfection], their existence or non-existence is meaningless unless they are considered conditions by which to reach perfection, not perfection itself. They are antecedents to salvation and deliverance, not salvation and deliverance itself. They are the means to freedom, not freedom itself.

Fourth, it was mentioned in the third view, not only man's perfection and his ultimate purpose but every creature's perfection is summarized in moving towards God. To claim that the prophets have had dual purposes with their goals is an unforgivable heresy, just as to claim that their ultimate goal is secular salvation and that this salvation is nothing but enjoying the natural gift of life in a climate of justice, freedom, equality and fraternity is considered materialistic, but contrary to the third view, social and moral values are not without inherent values, even though they are also means to man's original value which is worshipping and believing in God.

Note: There are two kinds of relationships between what is antecedent and the thing itself. In the first kind, the only value of the antecedent is that it moves towards the thing itself and once reaching it, its existence and nonexistence are the same. For example, a person wants to cross a brook, so he places a large stone in the middle of the brook to jump over to the other side, It is obvious that after crossing the brook, the existence of the stone is immaterial to the individual, The same is true of a ladder that is used in reaching a roof for a transcript in registering for an upper division class. The other kind of relationship is that though the antecedent is the means of reaching some thing and while

it derives its real and unique value from the thing itself, after the goal is reached, the existence or non-existence are not the same: Its existence is as essential as before.

For example the knowledge obtained in the first and second grades is prerequisite for advanced classes. One should not suppose that there is no need for that kind of knowledge after getting to the advanced class, or no harm will be done if it is eradicated from his memory, and that the student could continue the advanced class without that kind of knowledge. Only with the help of that kind of knowledge can one continue in the advanced class.

The heart of the matter is that sometimes the prerequisite is a very weak form of the thing itself and sometimes it is not. A ladder is not a component of the roof just as the stone in the middle of the brook is not a component of being on the other side of the brook. But the knowledge of a lower and an upper grade can be the components of the same truth.

The relationship of moral and social values to the knowledge and worship of God is of the second type. If man reaches a perfect knowledge and worship of God, the existence and non-existence of truth, honesty, justice, kindness, charity, generosity and forgiveness are not the same. For man, the superior morality is to be divine-like, "Try to reach godly morals," and in fact it is a stage in the knowing and worshipping of God even though it is unconscious.

That is, man's search for these values derives from his inherent urge to be endowed with divine-like qualities, even though man himself is unaware of the inherent root and may even deny it in his conscious mind.

This is the reason that according to Islamic principles, the actions of those endowed with superior moral values such as justice, kindness, generosity and the like are not unrewarded in the other world, even though they themselves might be polytheists. These people, if their polytheism does not come from contumacy, will be rewarded somehow in the other world. In fact these people have unconsciously reached a kind of belief.¹

Notes :

1. Refer to the last part of the book *Divine Justice* by the author.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE RELIGION OF RELIGIONS

Theologians and religious historians usually talk about 'religions' in the sense of Abraham's religion, the Jewish religion, Christ's religion and the Islamic religion. They consider every prophet of the Divine Law as the bearer of one religion. The common term among the people is the same.

The Quran uses a special term which originates from special Quranic insight. According to the Quran, religion from Adam to the Seal of the Prophets is only one. All the prophets –those who brought a Divine Law and those who did not - have invited people one ideology. The principles of the prophet's ideology which is called 'religion' are the same. The difference in the Divine Laws is because of a series of secondary issues which differed according to the necessities of the particular time, circumstances and the special characteristic or the people who were being called to God. They are different forms and aspects of one fact and all going toward s one goal.

The second difference is at the level of their instructions so that each prophet, along with the progress of mankind, communicated his instructions on a higher level. For example, there is a great difference between the level of insructions of Islam and those which belong to the former prophets on questions concerning the beginning of the world, resurrection and the universe.

In other words, man, like a student, has been promoted from the first grade to the last by the prophets' instructions. This is called the perfection of religion, not the differences in religions. One of the distinctions between he prophets' and geniuses or great philosophers is that each philosopher has his own school of thought. As a result, there bas always been 'philosophies' and not 'the philosophy'. Divine prophets have always confirmed and supported each other, not denied each other. If anyone of these prophets bad been in the period and under the same circumstances of another prophet, he would

have taught the same rules and instructions.

The Quran specifies that the prophets form a single consistent chain. These prophets who were appointed before the others were forerunners of the immediate prophets and those who were sent on their mission later supported and confirmed the previous ones. The Quran also specifies that all of the prophets were asked to make a strong covenant to be supporters of each other.

The Quran says, "*when God made a covenant through the prophets and said, 'Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom - then a Prophet comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him and you must aid him.' He said, 'Do you affirm and accept my compact in this matter?' They said, 'We do affirm.' He said, Then bear witness and I (too) am one of the bearers of witness with you.'*" (3:80)

The Holy Quran presents religions from Adam to the Seal of the Prophets as a continuous process, and gives only one name to it and that is Islam [i.e. submission to the Will of God]. Of course, this does not mean that in every period, religion was called and was known among people with this name, but that the reality of religion has a nature which is best presented by the word Islam. So that in this verse, it says, "*Surely the (true) religion with God is Islam.*" (3: 18) Or it says, "*A brahman was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim.*" (3: 66)

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE SEAL OF PROPHETHOOD: The Reasons for the Renewal of Prophetic Missions

As was previously mentioned, even though their messages had minor differences, their prophets have been the bearers of one and the same message and belong to one school of thought. This school of thought was gradually presented according to the ability of human society, until humanity reached the point where the school of thought could be presented in its complete and perfect form, then prophethood ended.

The perfect version of the school of thought was presented through the person of Muhammad ibn Abdullah, the peace and mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, the last Holy book is the Quran. As the Holy Quran says, *'The true and harmonious message of God is perfected, nobody is able to change it.'* (6:116)

Now let us see why in the past, the prophetic missions were repeated and the prophets came one after the other, although most of them were not the prophets of the Divine Law but were usually appointed to carry on the existing religion. Why is it that after the last Prophet, prophethood ended? Not only have no prophets of the Divine Law come nor will they come, but not even a propagating prophet has come nor will one come. Why? Here we proceed with the reasons for the renewal of the prophetic missions.

Although prophethood is a continuous flow and God's message, in fact, religion is no more than one truth, there are several reasons for the renewal of prophethood, appointment of the prophets both those who bring a Divine Law and those who only propagate and the appearance of the Seal of the Prophets is this:

Firstly, ancient man was not able to preserve the Holy Book because of a lack of mental development and maturity of thought. The Holy Books were changed and distorted or were destroyed completely, so the renewal of the message was necessary. The time when the Quran was sent forth, that is fourteen centuries ago, coincides with the period when humanity had put behind its childhood and could preserve its scientific and religious heritages. Therefore, no distortion has occurred in the last sacred Holy Book which is the Quran. The Muslims generally, from the moment of the descent of each verse, recorded it by heart or in writing, in a manner so that the possibility of any kind of distortion, transformation, alteration, omission or addition was eliminated. Therefore, no alteration and destruction occurred in the Holy Book. This reason, which had been one of the reasons for the renewal of prophethood, eliminated any further need.

Secondly, in the previous eras, humanity, because of the lack of maturity and growth, was not able to receive a general program for its path and continue its path with the guidance of that program. It was necessary that it be directed step by step and that guides should always accompany it.

But simultaneous with the period of the Seal of the mission and from then afterwards as the ability was found in the human beings to receive the general program and, thus, the program of receiving guidance step by step ended, the reason for the renewal of religions, in addition, in the Holy Books, was that the human being was not able to comprehend the general and comprehensive program. But with the development of this ability and aptitude, the general and comprehensive program was placed at the disposal of humanity and in this way, the need for the renewal of prophethood and Divine Laws was negated.

The ulama of the ummah (scholars of the Muslim community) are experts who, by using the general guide which Islam gives, by writing and arranging laws and devising temporary tactics, show the way.

Thirdly, most of the prophets, rather, the majority of them, were prophets who only propagated and did not bring the Divine Law, The number of prophets who brought the Divine Law might not exceed the fingers of one hand. The job of the prophets who propagated was to promote, propagate and execute the exegesis of the Divine Law which were prevalent at their time.

The ulama of the ummah, during the Age of the Seal of Prophets, which is the age of knowledge, are able to adapt those generalities to the time and place and requirements and conditions. By knowing the general principles of Islam and by recognizing the circumstances of time and place, they are able to extract and deduce the Divine Laws. This is called *ijtihad* (to exert with a view to forming an independent religious judgment on a legal question).

The learned ulama of the ummah carry out many of the duties of the prophets who propagated and part of the duties of the prophets who brought the Divine Law, being ordained with the action of *ijtihad* and with the special duty of the leadership of the ummah in this respect. So whereas the need for religion will always remain, even increasing with man's progress towards civilization, yet the need to renew prophethood, the descent of a new Holy Book and the need- for new prophets has forever ceased to exist and prophethood has ended.¹

From what was said before, it is dear that the intellectual maturity and social growth of human beings plays a role in the cessation of prophethood. This role has different aspects:

*The human being has preserved the Holy Book from any distortion.

*The human being has reached a point where he can receive and use his evolutionary program as a whole and not step by step.

*The human being's intellectual maturity and social progress permit him, to undertake, to propagate and utilize religion to command people to good deeds and to prevent them from evil ones. The need of prophets who only propagate, who have been promoters and propagators of the religion of prophets of the Divine Law has been eliminated. The ulama and righteous ummah meet this need.

*The human being's intellectual maturity has reached a point where he can comment on and explain the generalities of revelation so that with the help of *ijtihad* in different circumstances and environments, he can refer any present case to the original principle. This, too, is done by the scholars of the Islamic nation.

It is clear that the cessation of prophethood does not mean that the need for divine instructions and propagation through revelation has been met, and that because of man's intellectual maturity and progress he does not need such instructions. The need for a new revelation and renewal of prophethood has been met, but nor the need for religious and divine instructions.

Iqbal Lahouri, the great Islamic thinker, with all his wisdom in Islamic matters which has been used frequently in this book and other books as well, has been greatly mistaken while commenting and describing the philosophy of the cessation of prophethood.

He has based his ideas on several principles: First, revelation which literally means 'talking quietly and whispering', has a vast meaning in the Quran which includes all the different kinds of mysterious guidance including the guidance of inanimate objects, plants, animals and even mankind. Iqbal says, "This contact with the root of his own being is by no means peculiar to man. Indeed, the way in which the word 'wahy' (inspiration) is used in the Quran shows that the Quran regards it as a universal property of life; though its nature and character are different at different stages of the evolution of life. The plant growing freely in space, the animal developing a new organ to suit a new environment and a human being receiving light from the inner depth of life are all cases of inspiration varying in character according to the needs of the recipient, or the needs of the species to which the recipient belongs."²

Second, revelation is a kind of instinct and the guidance of revelation is a kind of instinctive guidance.

Third, revelation is the guidance of man from the social point of view, that is, since human society is a unit and it has a path and certain progressive laws, it needs to be directed. A prophet is a receiver who instinctively gets whatever is needed by mankind.

Iqbal says, "The world-life intuitively sees its own and at critical moments defines its own direction. This is what, in the language of religion, we call prophetic revelation."³

Four, all the living creatures are guided by instinct in the early stages. The power of instinct decreases as evolution increases and as the powers of imagination, the senses, and thought in creatures grow. In fact, the senses and thought replace instinct so that insects have the most powerful instinct and human beings have the least powerful instinct.

Five, from the social point of view, human society, on its evolutionary path, gradually reached a point where the power of the intellect grew and made instinct (revelation) weak, just as in the early stages animals needed instinct; but this need was replaced by sensory and intellectual guidance as the powers of sense, imagination and sometimes the intellect developed.

Iqbal says, "Now during the minority of mankind, psychic energy developed what I call prophetic consciousness a mode of economizing individual thought and choice by providing ready-made judgements, choices, and ways of action, With the birth of reason and critical faculty, however, life, in its own interest, inhibits the formation and growth of non-rational modes of consciousness through which psychic energy flowed at an earlier stage of human evolution. Man is primarily governed by passion and instinct. Inductive reason, which alone makes man master of his environment, is an achievement; and when once born, it must be reinforced by inhibiting the growth of other modes of knowledge."⁴

Six, the world of mankind has two basic periods: The period of guidance through revelation and the period of guidance through thinking and reasoning about nature and history. Even though in the ancient world, some great systems of philosophy existed (such as those of Greeks and Romans) but they were not worth much and mankind was still in its early stages of evolution.

Iqbal says, "There is no doubt that the ancient world produced some great systems of philosophy at a time when man was comparatively primitive and governed more or less by suggestion. But we must not forget that this system building in the ancient world was the work of abstract thought which cannot go beyond the systematization of vague religious beliefs and traditions, and gives us no hold on the concrete situations of life."⁵

Seven, the Holy Prophet, of Islam with whom prophethood ended, belongs both to the ancient and modern world. He belongs to the ancient world because of the source of his inspiration which is revelation and not based on experimental, observation of nature

and history. He also belongs to the modern world, because of the spirit of his instructions which is an invitation to thinking, reasoning, and studying nature and history, at which point revelation ends.

Iqbal says, "Looking at the matter from this point of view, then, the Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world, In so far as the source of his revelation is concerned, he belongs to the ancient world; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned, he belongs to the modern world. In his life he discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction. The birth of Islam ... is the birth of inductive intellect. In Islam, prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot forever be kept in leading strings; that in order to achieve full self-consciousness, man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Quran and the emphasis that it lays on nature and history as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality ."⁶

According to Iqbal, these are the principles of "the philosophy of the cessation of prophethood, unfortunately, this philosophy is distorted and many of its principles are incorrect.

The first objection [to this view] is that if it was correct then there would be not only no need for the renewal of revelation, nor further prophethood, but also there would be absolutely no need for guidance through revelation because it would be replaced by the guidance through reasoning based on experiment. If this philosophy is correct, it is the Seal of Religion and not prophethood. In this case, the job of Islamic revelation would only be to announce the end of the religious era and the beginning of the era of reasoning and science.

This is also against Iqbal's own view. Through all his efforts and endeavors, he wants to say that science and reasoning are necessary for human society but they are not enough. Man needs religion and religious faith as much as he needs science.

Iqbal himself specifies that life requires some basic and stable principles as well as complementary directions and the job of Islamic *ijtihad* is to accord the latter to the former.

He says, " The new culture ⁷ finds the foundation of world unity in the principle of tawhid, Islam as a policy is only a practical means of making this principle a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind. It demands loyalty to God, not to thrones. And since God is the ultimate spiritual basis of all life, loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his own ideal nature. The ultimate spiritual basis of all life, as conceived by Islam, is eternal and reveals itself in variety and change. A society based on such a conception of Reality must reconcile, in its life the categories of permanence and change, must possess eternal principles to regulate its collective life, for the eternal gives us a foothold in the world of perpetual change. But eternal principles when they are understood to exclude all possibilities of change which, according to the Quran, is one of the greatest 'signs' of God, tend to immobilize what is essentially mobile in its nature. The failure of Europe in political and social sciences illustrates the former principle. ⁸ The immobility of Islam during the last 500 years illustrates the latter. ⁹ What then is the principle of movement in the nature of Islam? This is known as *ijtihad* ." ¹⁰

According to this, the need of guidance through revelation will always remain and guidance through reasoning, based on experiment cannot be substituted for guidance through revelation. Iqbal himself certainly advocates the principle of the everlasting need of man for guidance, yet his explanation for the cessation of prophethood puts an end not only to the need for a new revelation and a new prophetic mission, but also to the need for guidance through revelation. In fact, religion would end and not prophethood.

Wrong conclusions have been drawn from Iqbal's erroneous explanation of the cessation of prophethood, resulting in the belief that the period of the cessation of prophethood means the era of man's independence from revelation. Man's need for the instruction and guidance of the prophets is the same as a child's need for a teacher.

Each year he child goes to a higher grade and his teachers change; man, too, has progressed step by step and his religious laws have also changed. The child reaches the final grade, obtains a certificate and afterwards will do research independently. Man, in the era of the cessation of prcphethood, too, has received his certificate. And does not need any more classical education; he can study nature and history independencly. This is called *ijtihad*, So the cessation of prophethood means reaching a period of 'self-sufficiency' .

Th etc is no doubt that these comments on the cessation of prophethood are wrong. The result of such comments is neither acceptable to Iqbal nor to others who have drawn such conclusions from Iqbal's word.

The second objection is that if Iqbal's view is correct, then with the birth of reasoning based on experiment, what Iqbal called ' the inner experience' will end too, because supposedly such matters are instinctive and with the appearanee of reasoning based on experiment, instinct, which is a guidance from within, will subside. But Iqbal himself specifics that ' mystic experience' will always remain and according to Islam, inner experience is one of the three sources of knowledge. ¹¹ Iqbal personally has strong mystic tendencies and believes strongly in spiritual inspirations.

Iqbal says, "The idea, however, does not mean tha mystic experience,which qualitatively does not differ from the experience of the prophet, has now ceased to exist as a vital fact. Indeed the Quran regards both *anfus* (self) and *aflak* (world) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience, and it is the duty of man to judge the knowledge - yielding capacity of all aspects of experience. The idea of finality, therefore, should not be taken to suggest that the ultimate fate of life is complete displacement of emotion by reason. Such a thing is neither possible nor desirable.

" The intellectual value of the idea is that it tends to create an independent critical attitude towards mystic experience by generating the belief that all personal authority, claiming a super natural origin, has come to an end in the history of man. This kind of belief is a psychological force which inhibits the growth of such authority. The function

of the idea is to open up fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of man's inner experience. Just as the first half of the formula of Islam has created and fostered the spirit of a critical observation of man's outer experience by divesting the forces of nature of that divine character with which earlier culture had clothed them. Mystic experience, then, however unusual and abnormal must now be regarded by a Muslim as a perfectly natural experience, open to critical scrutiny like other aspects of human experience."¹²

In the latter part, Iqbal means that with the cessation of prophethood, inspiration, revelations and inner experiences will not end, but their past worth and validity has ceased to exist. In the past, before the birth of experimental reasoning, miracles were like a truly natural, acceptable and unsuspecting document but now they do not have any validity for man who has progressed and reached intellectual perfection (man of the period of the cessation of prophethood).

Like any other phenomenon, miracles have to go through experimental reasoning, the period before the cessation of prophethood is the era of reason. Reason does not consider a miracle as the proof of something, unless by its own criteria reason can discover the validity of some discovered truth of inspiration.

This part of Iqbal's theory concerning the period before and after the cessation of prophethood is not correct either. It will be discussed later on under the title of 'the Miracle of the Seal of Prophethood',

Third, Iqbal's view that revelation is a kind of instinct is wrong, and this is the cause of his other mistakes. Instinct, as Iqbal himself has noted, is certainly a natural (inborn), unconscious quality. It is also on a lower level when compared to the senses and reason. According to the law of creation, instinct is given to animals in the lower stages of animal life (insects and sub-species). With the growth of the senses and reason, instinct will weaken and subside, so that man who has the most developed system of thought has the weakest instinct.

On the contrary, revelation is a kind of guidance above the senses and reason and is an acquired quality; more over, at the highest level, it is conscious. The conscious aspect of revelation is inexplicably above the senses and reason; the environment covered by

revelation is much vaster and deeper than what experimental reasoning can do.

In one of the previous chapters (Ideology, School of Thought) we proved that what the philosophers and the social thinkers have put together under the name of ideology causes aberration and bewilderment in regard to all the individual and social talents of man, the complexity of human relationships and the vagueness of the end of man's evolutionary path. There is only one ideology for man and that is the ideology which develops from revelation. If we do not accept the ideology through revelation we have to accept that man has no ideology.

Contemporary thinkers admit that an ideology depicting man's future route can only be given step by step, that is, only in each step one can define the next (as they claim), but it is not clear whether there are any more steps after the first one. The fare of such ideologies is obvious.

I wish Iqbal, who had if more or less studied the works of the mystics and was especially interested in the *Mathnawi* of *Mulawi* would have studied such works more deeply and would have found a better criterion for the cessation of prophethood. The mystics believe that prophethood ended because all the personal and social steps to be covered by man were discovered at one time, and after that man did not receive any further ones, as a result he has to be a follower. The last [Prophet] is one who has covered all the steps and has not left any untouched. This is the criterion for the cessation of prophethood and not the growth of experimental reasoning of society.

If Iqbal had paid more attention to the works of those in whom he was interested (like *Mulawi*), he would have known that revelation is not a kind of instinct, but it has a kind of spirit superior to the intellectual spirit of reason.

Mulawi says .

Besides the understanding and soul which in the ox and the ass, man has another intelligence and soul.

Again, in the owner of the Divine breath, there is a soul other than, the human soul.

The body is apparent, but the soul is hidden.

The body being like a sleeve, the soul like an arm.

Again, wisdom is deeper than the soul.

Understanding will go towards the soul sooner.

The spirit of revelation is hidden more than the wisdom, Since it comes from the invisible and is superior.

The wisdom of Ahmad was not hidden from anyone. It was the spirit of his revelation which did not become dear to everybody.

The spirit of revelation needs certain occasions, too, Wisdom will not understand when revelation exists, His leader is a preserved tablet.

What is it preserved from? From error.

It is not astronomy, not geomancy, nor dream Only God is aware of revelation .¹³

Fourth, it seems that Iqbal has made the same mistake that the scholars from the West have made, that is replacing faith by science. Of course, Iqbal is strongly against such a theory, but the course he has chosen for the theory of the cessation of prophethood reaches the same conclusion. Iqbal presents revelation as a kind of instinct and claims that as the system of thought and logic begins to work, the job of instinct is over and instinct itself will subside. This is correct as long as the system of thought continues to do what instinct used to do.

But if we suppose that instinct has a duty and the system of thought has another one, there is no reason for instinct to stop as the system of thought starts to operate. So even if we consider revelation as a kind of instinct and if we consider the job of such an instinct as 'the presentation of a kind of world view and an ideology which could not be accomplished by reason and thought, there is no reason why instinct should end because of the growth of inductive deductive reasoning (according to Iqbal himself).

The truth is that Iqbal, with all his genius and prominence and his attention to Islam, sometimes makes notorious mistakes. That is because his culture is a Western culture. Islamic culture is his secondary one. That is, his education is Western although he has studied Islamic culture especially *fiqh* [religious jurisprudence], mysticism and philosophy.

In the introduction to the fifth volume of *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, we have pointed out the vagueness of Iqbal's thought about profound philosophical matters.

Because of this, it is not right to compare him with Sayyid Jamal al-din Asadabadi, Not only Sayyid Jamal's personal genius cannot be compared to Iqbal's but also, contrary to Iqbal, his first and original culture is Islamic and Western culture is his secondary culture. Besides, the late Sayyid Jamal was more knowledgeable about Islamic countries because he travelled frequently to these countries and studied them closely so that he has not made any of Iqbal's notorious mistakes in understanding some of the movements happening in Islamic countries (like Turkey and Iran).

Notes:

1. In order to complete the discussion about the seal of prophets, refer to an article entitled "The Seal of Prophethood; by the author.
2. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious thought in Islam*.p.125.
3. ibid ., p.147
4. ibid., pp. 125.126
5. ibid., p.126
6. ibid., p.126
7. The Islamic culture
8. The rejection of any eternal principle and the denial of the basic principles of life.
9. The denial of transformation and belief in eternity.
10. pp. eit. , Iqbal, pp 147-148
11. The other sources are nature and history.
12. pp. eit. , Iqbal, pp 126-127
13. Jalal al-din Rumi, Poet , and Mystic , Selection of His Writings, translated by Reynold A. Nicholsons , (London : Allrh and Unwin , Ltd. 1956), p.51.

CHAPTER SIX :

THE FINAL MIRACLE

The Holy Quran is the immortal miracle of the last Prophet. Although the prophets like Abraham, Moses and Jesus had brought a Holy Book as well as miracles, yet the basis of their miracles was different from their Holy Books, like the transforming of fire to *bard* and *salam* (coolness and safety) ¹, or the changing of a staff into a snake or the resurrecting of the dead. It is obvious that each one of these miracles was a transient and temporary event.

The basis of the miracle of the last Prophet is his Book. His Book is both a Book and a demonstration for his mission and because of this, the final miracle unlike the other miracles, is permanent and immortal, not temporary and transient.

The miracle of the Seal of the Prophets being a book is what makes it appropriate to his time and period which is the age of the progress in science, civilization and culture. The progress in these fields gradually reveals some aspects of miracle in this Holy Book which had not been discovered before. Also its immortality is in harmony with the immortality of his message and mission which will last forever and can not be abolished.

The Holy Quran has explicitly stated its aspect of being a miracle and beyond man's power in some of its verses, just as it has specified the occurrence of other miracles. "*If you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, produce one surah like it.*" (2:23)

There are different matters set forth in the Quran about miracles, one of which is its necessity as a proof for every prophetic mission; a second one is its decisiveness as a proof; a third one is its performance in accordance with God's permission; a fourth one is that it is necessary as a proof to the truth of their claims, but they are not bound to yield to people's demand to produce any miracle they are asked for. In other words, they

have not opened a 'miracle's exhibition' and have not established a miracle making factory.

The Holy Quran explicitly describes and endorses the miracles of many of the prophets such as the miracles of Noah, Abraham, Lot, Saleh, Hud, Moses and Jesus, in a manner which is irreducible.

Some of the orientalis and Christian clergy, by the virtue of some verses in which the Quran has rejected the demands of the polytheists requesting a miracle, have claimed that the Prophet of Islam told people that he did not have any miracle other than the Quran; they would have to accept it as his miracle for he would not give any other.

Some of the recent intellectual Muslim writers have also accepted this idea and have explained that a miracle is a demonstration, but a demonstration that satisfies immature man and children who are after strange and unusual matters. The mature man is not concerned with such matters but deals with logic, and because the age of the Prophet of Islam is the age of logic and wisdom not the age of superstition and subjective hallucinations, the Prophet of Islam, by God's Command, rejected requests to perform miracles other than the miracle of the Quran.

They [intellectuals] say, "it was inevitable for former prophets to seek help from miracles and supernatural things, because guiding people with logical reasoning was difficult, almost impossible, at that time."

"At the time of the Prophet of Islam, human society had passed through its childhood and had reached the age of intellectual maturity. Yesterday's child who needed his mother to hold his hand and to teach him how to walk was able to stand on his own feet and use his brain... That is why the Prophet of Islam resisted the demands of enemies and doubters asking for miracles and supernatural things and would rely on reasoning based on logic and experiment and historical examples to prove the legitimacy of his calling... With all the insistence and pertinacity of the doubters, the Prophet of Islam, by God's order refused to work miracles such as the previous prophets

used to do. He would only depend upon the Quran as a miracle which would remain unique, The Quran, the miracle of the last Prophet, is another proof of the finality of prophethood. It is a Book which harmoniously contains all the facts of the universe, as well as, instructions and guidance for life. It is a miracle worthy of the mature and wise man, not a child bound by delusions on imaginary things.²

They [intellectuals] say, "Ancient man used to breathe in a world filled with superstitions, delusions and supernatural things and nothing except what was 'against logic and his senses' would affect his feelings. That is why man has always been looking for miracles and been fascinated by the invisible throughout history. This susceptibility to every impalpable and irrational thing is stronger among the people who are far from civilization. The nearer they are to nature, the more interested they are in what is supernatural; and superstition is the defective offspring of this fact. The man of the desert is always after a miracle, his world is full of spirits and surprising mysteries ... The spirit of an ancient man is only moved when his eyes marvel at something and see it as a secretive, ambiguous and magical thing. That is why not only the prophets but also kings, the mighty, and sages of every nation would resort to supernatural things to justify themselves. Among these, the prophets, whose missions were based on the invisible had to work more miracles because a miracle would be more effective than logic, science, perceptible facts and objective realities on the faith of the people at that time.

"But Muhammad's story is exceptional. He declares the Book as his miracle in a society in which everybody would think of nothing except pride, the sword, merchandise, camel and heir; in a society where in its biggest commercially advanced town, there existed only seven scribbles, thus this Book is a miracle in itself. A Book in a country in which history cannot find a book' God swears by ink, pen and script among; people who consider the pen as the tool of the despicable, weak and honorless men. It is in itself a miracle.

"...A Book is the only miracle that can be seen permanently, every day it is more miraculous and it is the only miracle that unlike other miracles will be better understood and appreciated by the wise and the learned and by a society which is more developed and civilized. It is the only miracle to believe in which is not limited to the believers of invisible issues but every sage acknowledges it as a miracle. It is the only miracle that is not for the common people but for the intellectuals ... Unlike other miracles, it is not just for stimulating its audience's sense of wonder; it is not an introduction and an instrument to accept a prophetic mission, but to educate the converts; it is the aim of acceptance; it is the prophetic mission itself.

"Finally, Muhammad's miracle is not a nonhuman entity, although it is a nonhuman action. So contrary to the previous miracles which were brought to make people believe (and only for a few who would see them) and which did not have any other benefit, Muhammad's miracle is like the apogee of human aptitude and can be considered as man's best guide, a permanently accessible guide ... Muhammad tries to turn people's curiosity from the supernatural and strange issues to logical, scientific, natural, social and moral issues; he tries to change the direction of their susceptibility to strange and extraordinary issues towards 'realities and facts'. To do so is not simple, especially with people who do not yield to anything except to unnatural things, the people among whom he calls himself a prophet.

"It is an amazing task to call oneself a prophet, to call people to a godly mission and at the same time to formally confess, 'I am not aware of the invisible world'; and putting aside its human value, his unusual truthfulness is very exciting, making every heart sanctify and every mind wonder at him.

"People would ask him to tell them the price of goods beforehand if he was a Prophet so that they could make a profit. The Quran ordered him to say, 'I have no power to benefit myself or to avert harm from myself except by what God Wills. If I had a knowledge of the invisible, I would have increased my own benefit and no harm would be done to me.' *I am no more than an admonisher and one who brings good news to*

believers, (7: 188). But a prophet who does not tell of the invisible, does not speak with ghosts, fairies, and the jinn and does not work a miracle every day, cannot make an impression on the people of the desert. Muhammad invited them to think about the universe, purity, friendship, science, faith, understanding the meaning of life and man's fate, and they repeatedly required miracles and predictions from him, In a voice as though he would never be expected to do such things, God, through him says. 'Glory to my God. O I am nothing more than a mortal messenger.' " (17:93)³

Verses 90-93 of surah 17 have mainly been relied upon by this group (intellectuals) Which says, *"They say. 'We will not believe you until you make a spring gush from the earth; or you make rivers to flow in your garden of palms and grapes; or you cause heaven to fall on us in pieces as you think you can; or bring God and the angels in front of us ; or you build a house of gold; or you ascend to heaven and we will not believe in your ascension unless you bring down a letter for us.' Say, 'Glory to my God, I am nothing more than a mortal messenger,' " (17: 90-93)*

They say these verses indicate that the polytheists wanted a miracle (other than the Quran) and the Prophet refused.

Although we confirm some of the above mentioned opinions, especially about the superiority of the Book being a miracle compared to other miracles, yet unfortunately we cannot agree with all of them. From our point of view, several of the e opinions are questionable:

First, the Prophet of Islam did not have any miracle other than the Quran and refused to work any miracle other than presenting the Quran and the verses of surah 17 prove this.

Second, what is the value and the use of a miracle? Were miracles and supernatural issues suitable to the age of man's childhood when wisdom and logic were not effective so that everybody, even sages and kings, justified themselves with these issues and convince people with them, but the Prophet of Islam, whose miracle is a Book, is an exception. He justifies himself with a Book or in fact with wisdom and logic.

Third, the Prophet of Islam tries to turn people's attention from unusual and supernatural things towards logical and rational issues and he tries to change their susceptibility from strong and extraordinary issues to facts and reality. These points will be discussed below:

A Miracle Other than the Quran

Did the Prophet of Islam have no miracle other than the presenting of the Quran? Putting aside the fact that this idea is not acceptable from the viewpoint of history, the customs of the Prophet, of Islam and the Traditions, it is also contrary to the text of the Holy Quran. The 'splitting of the moon' is mentioned in the Quran (54:1). Assuming that one could find a different interpretation for 'splitting of the moon' (which, of course, cannot be done), what could his interpretation of the 'ascension to heaven' and 17: 3 be? The Quran explicitly says, "*Glory be to Him who carried His servant by night from in sacred place of worship⁴ to the farther place of worship⁵ so that We may show him some of Our signs.*" (17:1) is this not a supernatural occurrence? Is this not a miracle?

The story about the Prophet confiding a secret to one of his wives, and that woman revealing it to another wife, is brought in the Surah 66: ⁶ The Prophet asked that wife why she had told the secret to the other and he repeated part of what had passed between the two wives. She asked (with surprise) how had he heard about it. The Prophet answered that God had informed him. Is this not knowledge from the invisible? Is this not a miracle?

Verses 90- 93 of surah 17 and some similar verses that have been referred to belong to another category. The case of requesting a miracle as the sign and the evidence in these verses is not the case of a group of people who are really in doubt and are looking for signs and proofs. These verses, and verse 50 of surah 29 clarify the special logic of the polytheists requesting miracles and the special logic of the Quran about the philosophy of the prophets' miracles .

In verses 90-93 of surah 17, the polytheists begin with these words, " We will not convert and enter your group for your benefit unless you, for our own benefit, cause a spring to gush forth from the dry land of Mecca - that is

the bargain - or you make rivers flow in a garden full of trees, or build a house full of gold (so that we, too, can use them) - that is another part of the bargain - or you throw a part of the sky (as you think it will happen on the judgement day) on us - that is torture, death and the end but not a miracle: Or you summon God and the angels or ascend to heaven and bring a special letter in our name to honor us - again another bargain (this time it is not about money but for self-glorification, without recognizing the impossibility of such a thing)."

The polytheists did not say, "We will not believe you unless you work a special miracle, They said, "We will not join your group for your benefit," that is an obvious confirmation for buying and selling of opinions. There is a difference between 'to believe sincerely' and 'to yield'. The scholars of principles of *fiqh* have elicited the same delicate point about the Holy Prophet in verse 61 of surah 9 which says, "*who believes in God and is true to the believers*". Furthermore, what the polytheists required for this convenient confirmation begins with '*cause a spring to flow for our benefit*,' which is obviously a request for a reward but not requiring proof and miracles, The Prophet is there to convert real believers nor to buy their votes and opinions at the price of a miracle.

The respected writer (Ali Shariati) himself writes that the Prophet was asked, "If you are a Prophet, tell us the price of goods beforehand so that we can make profits in our business." it is obvious that this kind of miracle or evidence requesting is not for discovering a fact but using the Prophet in order to make a business.

Obviously the Prophet's answer was, "Had God informed me of the invisible (for such purposes), I would have used it for my worldly affairs, but miracles and the invisible are not for such purposes. I am a Prophet, an admonisher, and a bearer of good tidings."

The polytheists thought that performing a miracle was in the hands of the Prophet so that he could work a miracle at any time, in any way and for any purpose. That was why they asked for flowing springs, golden houses, and a knowledge of the price of goods beforehand. However, a miracle is like revelation itself which depends upon the other party (on God) not on the Prophet's desire. It is a process for the other party that affects the Prophet's will and is worked out by him. It means that revelation occurs with God's permission, just as a miracle occurs with God's permission and it is the meaning of verse 50 of surah 29 which has been misused by the priests, *'signs and miracles are in the hands of God, I am only a plain admonisher'*.

The same is true about a knowledge of the invisible as a miracle. As far as the Prophet's character is concerned, he is unaware of the invisible, *"I will not tell you that I am an angel and I am not aware of the invisible."* (6: 50) But when he is under the influence of the invisible, he speaks of the hidden secret and when asked how he knew, he would answer. *"the omniscient God informed me"*.

When the Prophet says, *"I do not know the invisible and had I known it I would have earned a lot of money"* (7:138) it is because he wants to defeat the logic of the polytheists saying that his knowledge of the invisible is within the limits of a miracle and for a special purpose through God's revelation.

If knowledge of the invisible was a personal matter which could be used for any purpose and if it was an instrument to fill one's pocket instead of giving the prices to them to fill their pockets, he would have filled his own pocket.

The Quran in another verse says, *"God is aware of the hidden. He will not inform anybody of His secrets except an approved apostle."* (72:26) Certainly the Holy Prophet is one of the approved apostles.

Besides, the Quran has cited the miracles of many of the prophets in several verses like the miracles of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, then how can it be possible that when the Holy Prophet is asked for a miracle - just as previous prophets were asked and they accepted - he answers, "*Glory be to God. I am nothing more than a mortal messenger.*" Did not the polytheists have the right in asking whether the previous prophets whom Muhammad himself had described their miracles in detail were not mortals or were not messengers? Can there be such an explicit paradox in the Quran? It is possible that the polytheists had not understood this paradox?

If this kind of intellectual reasoning is correct, the Prophet should have said, "Glory be to God, I am the last Prophet and I am an exception, Do not ask me what people wanted from other prophets", instead of saying "*I am just a mortal messenger like other prophets,*"

So it is clear that what the polytheists requested from the Prophet was not a miracle, that is signs and proof to discover the truth which truth-seekers have the right to ask from one claiming to be a Prophet. It was below the dignity of the prophets to comply with such requests; that is why the Prophet said, '*Glory be to God. I am nothing more than a mortal messenger.*' That is, he was saying, "What you are asking of me is not what a truth-seeker would ask the prophets and messengers and what the messengers would be obliged to answer positively. It is something else; it is a bargain; it is seeing me not seeking God, it is asking something of me independently: it is showing pride, selfishness and proving superiority to others; it is requesting a series of impossible things ..."

Confess that people's desire is always towards inventing miracles not only for prophets and Imams but also for any grave, stone and tree; but should this make us deny any miracle and miraculous act from the Prophet (except the Quran)?

Also, there is a difference between a miracle and a miraculous act, Miracles are divine proof and signs to verify a Divine mission and they are limited. There is a heavenly intention behind them, that is why they are limited to special situations. But a miraculous act is an extraordinary affair as a result of spiritual strength and holiness of a perfect or semi-perfect man; it is not for a special Divine purpose. Such a thing happens frequently and even one can say that it is an ordinary act not bound by any stipulation. A miracle is God's Words in verifying a person but a miraculous act is not.

The Value and the Use of a Miracle

What is the value and the use of a miracle? Logicians and philosophers have classified the materials used in reasoning from the viewpoint of their value and usages. Some of them which have logical values do not present any scientific or logical doubt such as the materials used by a mathematician in his reasoning, Some others have convincing values such as the materials used by the preachers in their speeches which if scrutinized carefully may arouse doubt, but as long as they are not analyzed, they produce a kind of reaction. Some others have only exciting and sentimental value.

What is the use and value of a miracle from the Quran's point of view? Just as the Quran declares that the manifestation of creation are 'God's Signs' and the unquestionable proof of His Existence, it mentions miracles of the prophets as signs and evidence and considers them as decisive, indisputable and logical proof of the truth of those claiming their performance.

The Quran has discussed the miracles in detail and has considered the request of those who would not yield to the prophet's claims without signs and proof as rational and logical. It has described the positive and practical answer of the prophets to these request within the limits of reason and logic as evidence for the truth of their claim, not within the limits of people's demands and desires in order to make profits or fun of the prophets and their miracles. The Quran allocated many verses to miracles, Also the Quran does not at all State that a miracle is a convincing evidence for the common and simple minded man and that it belongs to the period of man's childhood, but it has called it [the miracle] a demonstration.⁷

The Direction of the Prophet's Guidance

The final miracle is an immortal miracle since it is a Book and belongs to the category of speech, wisdom and cultural matters. The miraculous aspect of the Book is gradually clarified. Today some of the wonders of the Quran which were not clear before and were not possible to be known have been brought to light. The sages understand the miraculous aspect of the Book better than the common people. The final miracle was sent as a Book in order to have the suitable quality of the Seal of Prophethood. But was this miracle sent as a Book to turn people's attention from the invisible to the visible from the irrational to logic and reason and from metaphysics to nature? Did the Prophet of Islam try to turn people's curiosity from unusual occurrences and extraordinary issues to logical, rational, scientific, natural, social and moral matters and to turn their susceptibility from the extraordinary and strange issues to realities and facts?

This view does not seem to be correct, because if it is so, we have to say that all the prophets have invited people to the invisible, but Muhammad, the peace and mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, has invited them to the visible evidence. Then, why are hundreds of the verses of the Quran allocated to extraordinary and strange things?

Undoubtedly one of the basic advantages of the Quran is the invitation to study nature as proof and Divine Signs, but an invitation to study nature does not mean dissuading minds from paying attention to every unnatural issue. On the contrary, an invitation to study nature as signs and proof means passing from nature to metaphysics. From the Quran's point of view, the path to the invisible, the supernatural and the intelligible is through the visible, nature and the senses:

The importance of The Prophet of Islam's task is that just as he invites people to study nature, history and society and just as he makes people who do not give in to anything which is unnatural, to yield to wisdom, logic and knowledge, he tries as well to make those whose minds are occupied with wisdom and logic and do not yield to anything but to what is natural and perceptible, familiar with a higher and superior logic.

The basic universal advantage of the world presented by religion in general, and Islam in particular, over the world presented by the science and the absolute human philosophies present is that according to William James, in the world of religion, there are elements, principles and rules other than those known in ordinary human knowledge.

The Quran does not want to turn one's attention away from what is supernatural and intelligible to what is natural and perceptible. The importance of the Quran is that while it pays attention to nature - or the observable, to use the Quranic term - it also puts the belief in the 'invisible' as the epigraph or its invitation. *"This is the Book where of there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil), Who believe in the unseen..."* (2: 2-3)

How can the Quran try to dissuade people from paying attention to such issues while it belongs to the same category of extraordinary and strange things itself, namely, that miracles. Besides, there are over a hundred verses about a person to believe and disbelieve in the invisible at the same time?

It was said, "Muhammad's miracle is not a nonhuman affair although it is a nonhuman action."⁹ The meaning of this sentence is also ambiguous to me and it can be explained in two ways: One that the miracle of Muhammad (the Quran) is not done by man because it is a revelation and since it is not his words, it is a nonhuman action. At the same time, although it is the Word of God, not the words of man yet it is a kind of human act, it is something common in the range of human acts.

It is unlikely that this is the intention, because in this case the Quran does not have any advantage over other heavenly books. All these books are nonhuman actions because they have come through a revelation but because they do not have an extraordinary aspect, they are no like nonhuman matters; just as we have some words in the name of 'sacred traditions' which are exactly God's Word sent through revelation but they are not miracles or nonhuman issues.

The advantage of the Quran over other holy books and sacred traditions is that it is both a nonhuman action - that is, revelation - and a nonhuman issue – that is, a miracle and beyond man's capacity. Herefore, the Quran says, "*Say if jinn and man gather to bring a book like the Quran, they will fail even if they help each other.*" (17: 88)

The second explanation of this sentence [quoted above] is that Muhammad's miracle contrary to the miracles of other prophets like changing a stick into a snake and the resurrection of the dead which are nonhuman actions, is a human affair because it relates to speech, wisdom, and cultural matters: but it is a nonhuman action because it is beyond man's capacity and originates from an invisible and supernatural power. If this is the intention - which it should be - it is an admission of the invisible, supernatural, the same matter in the Quran.

I do not understand the meaning of this sentence. "It is the only miracle to believe in which is not limited to the believers of invisible issues." ⁸ What sort of belief? Is it to believe that it is a book and has excellent materials? Or is it to believe that it is a miracle? To believe in something as a miracle in the sense of being a Divine Sign and proof is equal to believing in the invisible, so how is it possible for the unnatural and whatever is called the extraordinary and strange things so why should our approach to miracles and unusual things be like the approach towards superstitions and irrational matters. Should we not, from the beginning, separate miracles and extraordinary issues from superstitions and delusions so that those who do not have enough information about these issues will not get the impressions we do not want them to? Basically why should one change the famous expression, 'the Book of the Prophet is a miracle' to 'the miracle of the Prophet is the Book' which can be misunderstood?

An article entitled 'The Quran and the Computer' by the respected writer, Shariati, was published in the *Falaq* publication of the students of the Faculty of Letters at Tehran University, that can be considered as a correction of his own viewpoint on miracles and as a sign of gradual development of his thought.

In this article, it is suggested to turn the words of the Quran to computer signs and to use this great manifestation of man's civilization in order to discover the facts of the Quran which of course is a very suitable suggestion. Then it points to what some Egyptia Muslim engineers are beginning to do or have already done about it. Then he presents an interesting discussion entitled 'How the Miracle of the Quran Can Be Proved', He has also referred to a very valueble book, *The Process of Transition of the Quran* recently published and he praises its writer's valuable dis-coveies proving that the length of the verses and the increase in the number of words revealed to the Holy Prophet over twenty-three years make an exact, regular and extraordinary curve. He adds, "Where can one find an orator in the world that by the length of a phrase one can determine the year of its utterance? Especially when the text is not like a literary or scientific book which its writer could have sat down and written it over a certain period. But these art the words that have been uttered during twenty-three years of a turbulent life. Especially if it is a book whose author has not written anything on a single subject or a special field. These arc different issues that gradually, according to the needs of society and as answers to questions or events and problems that have arisen during a long crusade, have been uttered by the leader and then been gathered and put together "10

Notes:

1. Refer to the Holy Quran, 21:69.
2. Habibullah Paidar , The philosophy of History from the Quran's Point of View, pp. 15-16
3. Ali Shariati, The study of Islam, pp. 502-506.
4. Of Mecca
5. Of Jerusalem.
6. When the Prophet confided a secret to one of his wives and when she revealed it to another wife, and God informed him of the revelation of the secret, the Prophet retold some parts to her and parts to her and restrained from saying the other part. The wife asked who had told him .The Prophet said that God had told him. (66:33)
7. Refer to Tafsir al-Mizan , such 2:23 and Revelation and prphethood by Muhammad Taqi Shariati , p.214,
8. Jbid
9. Jbid
10. Falaq publication, book 1, p .25.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE HOLY QURAN

The Quran is our Holy Book and the everlasting miracle of our Prophet. This Book gradually descended to the messenger of God over twenty-three years. The Holy Quran, which is both the book of the Holy Prophet and the manifestation of his miracle, has played a far greater role than that of the staff of Moses or the breath of Jesus. The Holy Prophet would read the verses of the Quran and their allure would pull people towards Islam. The accounts related on this subject in the history of Islam are innumerable.

The Quran is the collection of 114 chapters (surah) and these chapters consist of about 6205 verses and all these verses have about 78,000 words. From the early years of Islam to the present time, Muslims have done in comparable acts in connection with the Quran which presents their strong attraction towards it. The Quran was written by a group of people selected by the Prophet himself who are known as the 'Scribes of Revelation'. Besides, most Muslims; male or female, young or old, had a wonderful desire to memorize all or most of its verses. They would read it in the prayers and would consider it spiritually rewarding to chant it. They also enjoyed reading it because it had a soothing effect on their souls.

The Marvelous Actions of Muslims in Connection with the Quran.

In every period, Muslims, under the influence of their enthusiasm and passion for their Holy Book have worked on the Quran in accordance with their intellectual and practical capabilities, such as : Learning and memorizing the Quran, chanting it with the experts of the art of recitation, commenting on its semantics, describing and explaining its words in special dictionaries, counting the verses, words and even letters used in the Quran, scrutinizing its meaning and using it in legal, moral, social, philosophical, mystical and scientific matters, ornamenting their speeches and written works with Quranic verses, using it in worthy inscriptions or tile and plaster work, writing it in calligraphy, gilding its verses, teaching it to their children before teaching

them anything else, compiling the grammar and syntax of the Arabic language for the sake of the Quran, inventing the art of rhetorics, collecting Arabic words, etc.

The desire and interest of Muslims in the Quran were the sources of a series of literary and logical sciences which if there was no Quran, these would not have appeared.

The Miracle of the Quran

The Quran is the immortal miracle of the last Prophet. From the beginning of the descension of the Quran in Mecca, which started with the small surahs, the Holy Prophet formally challenged [his opponents], That is, he claimed that the Quran was not his words but God's and not only could he not, but no other human being could create one like it. If they did not believe him, they could try and they might even get help from others, but they ought to understand that even if a jinn and a man help each other to create something like it, they would not be able to.

The opponents of the Holy Prophet at that time and even now that fourteen centuries have passed have not been able to answer this challenge. The last word of the opponents at [that period was that it was 'magic'. This accusation is by itself an implied confession to the Quran being extraordinary while seemingly it is a declaration of helplessness before the Quran,

The stubborn opponents, of the Prophet did not spare him any kind of opposition to weaken and to defeat him. The only thing they did not do - since they were incapable of doing so - was what the Prophet repeatedly suggested and the Quran itself emphasized, that is, to create at least one surah (even if it be a one line surah like the Unity or Abundance surahs) of the Quran.

The Aspects of the Miracle of the Quran

The Quran is a miracle from different aspects - that is, it is beyond human capability. A summary of these aspects will be brought here. Generally the miracle of the Quran has two aspects: Literal and spiritual.

The literal aspect of the miracle of the Quran relates to aesthetics and the spiritual aspect relates to science. So the miracle of the Quran has an aesthetic and artistic aspect as well as a scientific and intellectual one. Each one of these aspects - especially the scientific one - has several directions.'

The Words of the Quran

The style of the Quran is neither poetry nor prose. It is not poetry because it does not have rhythm and rhyme, besides, poetry is usually accompanied with a kind of imagination which is called poetic imagination. The consistency of a poem is because of exaggeration and hyperbole which are a kind of fabrication. There is neither poetic imagination nor visionary simile in the Quran. At the same time, it is not ordinary prose since it has a kind of versatility, tune and music not seen in any kind of prose up to now, The Muslims always chant the Quran with special intonation which belong only to the Quran.

It is said in the religious instructions to read the Quran with beautiful intonations. The pure Imams would sometimes read the Quran with such charming intonation in their houses that it would stop the passers-by. No prose has harmony like the Quran, especially intonation that is suitable for religious gatherings, not tunes good for pleasure parties. Even after the invention of the radio, no religious speech could compete with the Quran from the viewpoint of beauty and acceptance of spiritual intonation.

Beside the Islamic countries, other countries included the Quran in their programs because of its beauty and intonation. It is strange that the beauty of the Quran has surpassed time and place. Most beautiful pieces of prose or poetry belong to one period and so do not fit the taste of another age; or at least they are suitable for the tastes and talents of a certain nation with a particular culture, but the beauty of the Quran does not

belong to any certain period, race or culture.

All the people who became familiar with the language of the Quran found it suitable to their taste, As time passes and as different nations become familiar with the Quran, they are more than ever attracted to the beauty of the Quran.

The fanatical Jews and Christians and the followers of some other religions have created every kind of opposition over fourteen centuries to weaken the status of the Quran; sometimes they have attributed distortions to it; sometimes they have doubted some of its stories and sometimes they have opposed it in other forms, but they have never asked their experts to answer the Quran's challenge to create one small surah which is comparable to the Quran and present it to the people.

In the history of Islam, many people have appeared who are called dualists or atheists, some of whom were very distinguished people. This group said things against religion in general and the Quran in particular in different forms. Some of them were considered masters of rhetoric in the Arabic language. They occasionally challenged the Quran, but only to humiliate themselves and to show the greatness of the Quran. There are stories in history about Ibn Rawandi, Abul I-Mu'ari and the famous Arab poet Abul Tayib Mutannabi. They wanted to present the Quran as a human work.

A lot of people claimed to be prophets and presented works like the Quran. Believing in their own imagination, they claimed that their works, too, like the Quran were the words of God. Talaha² MusHmih³ and Sajah⁴ belong to this group. This group, too, made evident their own inferiority and the grandeur of the Quran.

It is amazing that the words of the Prophet himself - by whose tongue the Quran was uttered - are different from the Quran. There are a lot of words in the form of sermons, prayers, aphorisms and Traditions from the Holy Prophet which are eloquent, but they do not have the attraction of the Quran at all. This shows that the Quran and the words of the Prophet came from two different sources.

Ali, peace be upon him, became familiar with the Quran at the age of ten, that is; he was about this age when the first Quranic verses descended to the Holy Prophet and Ali, like a thirsty person who reaches clear water, learned them, and was the head of the Scribes of Revels down to the end of the Prophet's life. Ali knew the Quran by heart and would always recite it. At night when he was saying his prayers, he savored the Quranic verses. So if the style of the Quran could be imitated, Ali, with his unique talent in oratory and his eloquence, which, putting aside the Quran, is incomparable, should have been able to follow the style of the Quran because of its influence on him. His sermons should have been like the verses of the Quran, but we see that the style of the Quran is totally different from Ali's style. When Ali includes a verse from the Quran in his eloquent and fluent sermons, it is totally distinct and looks like a star shining brilliantly among other stars.

The Quran has never presented subjects such as self-praise, eulogy, satire, elegy, lyrics, and pastoralism which are the subject matter of people in discourse and are used by individuals if they want to display their ability in oratory. The subjects presented by the Quran are all spiritual, and deal with unity, the resurrection day, prophecy, morality, commandments, sermons and stories which are all aesthetically beautiful.

The geometry of the words of the Quran is unmatched.

No one has ever been able to change the place of a word of the Quran without damaging its beauty, nor has anyone been able to produce something like it. In this respect, the Quran is like a beautiful building which no one can make more beautiful by changing it, nor is anyone able to make something like it or better than it. The style of the Quran is unprecedented and will never be surpassed; that is, no one has ever spoken in that style and no one - with all of the invitations and challenges of the Quran - will all of the able to compete with it or imitate it.

The miracle of the Quran, still exists like a mountain and will remain so forever. Even today all the faithful Muslims invite people to take part in this competition and if a likeness is found for the Quran, they will abandon their claim and faith since they are certain that it will never be.

The Meanings of the Quran

The miracle of the Quran needs to be discussed in detail from the viewpoint of its meaning. While this would entail a separate book, we will present here an overview of the facts. First, we must ask what kind of a book the Quran is. Is it a philosophical book? Is it a scientific book? Is it a literary book? Is it a historical book? Or is it merely an aesthetic work?

The answer is that the Quran is not anyone of these, just as the Holy Prophet, as well as all other prophets, are different from ordinary men. They are neither philosophers nor literary men, nor historians, nor artists nor artisans but at the same time they have all of their qualities as well as others.

The Quran, too, which is a Holy Book is neither philosophy nor science nor history nor literature nor an aesthetic work but it has the qualities of all these as well as having a series of other qualities.

The Quran is the human guide book; it is in fact the book of humanity but the human being as created by God for whom prophets were sent to help a person to come to know the self and to show the path towards well-being. Since it is the book of humanity, it is the Book of God as well because the human being is the creature whose creation began before this world and will end in a world beyond this one, that is, man from the Quran's point of view is created from the breath of the Divine Spirit and will of necessity return to God. That is why recognition of God and recognition of man are not unrelated. The human being cannot know God truly unless he knows himself; on the other hand, it is only through knowing God that one will find the true reality of the self.

The human being in the school of thought of the prophets - for which the Quran is the most perfect expression - is very different from the human being known through science; that is, he is more developed. The human being known through science exists, as if, in parentheses (birth/death) with darkness preceding and following these parentheses, which are unknown according to human sciences. But the human being of the Quran does not have these parentheses. He has come from another world and must make himself perfect in the school of the universe. His future in the other world depends upon

the kind of efforts he makes or the indolence and weakness, he shows in this world. Besides, man between birth and death as known by human beings is very shallow compared to the prophets' conception.

The human being of the Quran should know:

Where he has come from?

Where he is going?

Where he is?

How he ought to be?

What he ought to do?

Once when the human being of the Quran practically answered these questions correctly, his real happiness in this world and the other world will be assured.

The human being has to know his God in order to know where he has come from and the source from which he has originated and in order to know God, he has to study the universe and man as physical and spiritual signs-Also he has to contemplate the depths of existence and life.

In order to know where he goes, he must think about what the Quran calls returning to God, that is, the Day of Resurrection and the assembling of the dead, the fears of the Day of Resurrection, the immortal graces severe and sometimes everlasting tortures and finally the paths and the steps that he has in front of him. He has to gain awareness about them, to believe in them and to acknowledge God as the beginning and starting point as well as the end and the returning point of every creature.

In order to know where he is, he has to know the systems and traditions of the world; he has to understand the position of man among other creatures and to readjust himself among them.

In order to know how he should be, he must recognize humanistic tendencies and habits and develop himself in accordance with them.

In order to know what he should do, he must accept a series of individual and social laws and commandments. Moreover, the man of the Quran should believe in a series of non-perceptible and unseen beings or, by the Quran's definition, *ghaib* as the

manifestations of the Divine Will in the system of existence. He also has to know that the exalted God has never abandoned man when he was in need of some Divine Guidance, but that a series of chosen people who are the prophets of God and the guides of mankind have been appointed by Him who have brought the Divine Message.

The man of the Quran looks at nature as evidence and at history as a real 'Laboratory' which prove the truth of the instructions of the Prophet.

Yes, such is the human being of the Quran and, as well as other subjects.

The Subjects of the Quran

The subjects set forth in the Quran are many and cannot be counted summarily, but with a single glance one can at least see these:

* God, His Essence, His Attributes and His Unity, what we would consider Him to be free from and what He is endowed with:

* Resurrection and the Day of Judgement, the assembling of the dead, the stages between death and resurrection (purgatory).

* Angels, the mediators of grace the powers who are aware of themselves and their Creator and carry out Divine orders.

* The prophets or those whose minds have received Divine revelation and transferred it to others.

* Persuasion and provocation to believe in God, in the Day of Judgement, in angels, in the prophets and in the heavenly books.

* Creator of the skies, the earth, mountains, oceans, plants, animals, clouds, wind, rain, hail, meteors, etc.

* Invitation to worship the unique God and being sincere in this worship, inclusion of no one and nothing else in this worship, severe prohibition from worshipping others such as man, angels, the sun, stars, or idols instead of God.

* Recollection of God's grace in the world.

* The immortal grace of the other world for the beneficent and the pious; severe - and perhaps everlasting - tortures in the other world for the evil doers.

* Arguments and reasonings concerning God, the Day of Resurrection, the

prophets, etc. and some other unknown news among these thoughts.

* Histories and stories as a human laboratory which clarify the truth of the prophets' invitation, the favorable fate of those who have followed the prophets' traditions and the terrible fate of doubters.

* Virtue, piety and purification of the soul.

* Warnings against the lustful self, the danger of evil and carnal temptations.

* Good individual morals such as bravery, perseverance, patience, justice, kindness, love, praise of God, love of God, thanking God, fear of God, trust in God, acceptance of God's Will, submission to God's Orders, thinking and reasoning, knowledge and awareness, enlightenment of heart by means of virtue, truthfulness and trustworthiness.

* Social morals such as alliance, mutual agreement on what is right, mutual agreement on patience, cooperation for virtue and piety, the renunciation of hatred, enjoining to good and forbidding evil, fighting in the jihad, offering one's own life and property.

* Religious decrees such as: Prayers, fasting, religious taxes, pilgrimage, jihad, vows to God, promises, sales, mortgages, rents, donations, marriage, the rights of a couple, the rights of parents and children, divorce, an oath of condemnation, pre-Islamic form of divorce, wills, inheritance, retaliation, punishment for certain acts, debt, judgement, testimony, covenant, wealth, ownership of government, counselling, the rights of the poor, the rights of society, etc.

* The events and incidents of twenty-three years of prophetic mission of the Holy Prophet.

* The characteristics of the Holy Prophet, his praiseworthy qualities.

* General descriptions of three basic groups found in every period: Believers, polytheists and hypocrites.

* The characteristics of believers, polytheists and hypocrites at the time of Muhammad's prophetic mission.

* Unseen creatures other than angels, jinn and Satan.

* Praise and glorification of all creatures of the universe and the existence of a kind of awareness within all creatures of their Creator.

* Description of the Quran itself.

* The universe and its traditions, the transience of life in this world and its inadequacy to be an ideal of mankind, God and the afterlife, and the immortal world being worthy of becoming the ideals of man.

* Miracles and extraordinary acts of the prophets.

* Confirmation of the previous Holy Books especially the Torah and Bible and the correction of mistakes and alterations of these two books.

The Expansive Meanings

What was said above is a summary of what there is in the Quran but even as a summary it is incomplete.

If we only consider these different subjects about man.

God, the universe, and man's duty and compare them with any human book on the same subjects we find that no book is comparable to it, especially considering the fact that the Quran was revealed through a person who was illiterate and not familiar with the ideas of any learned man; particularly if we consider that the environment of such a person was one of the most primitive and ignorant of human societies and its people were generally unfamiliar with civilization and culture.

The Quran brought a vast amount of materials and meanings which were set forth in such a way that later on they became the origin of inspiration for philosophers, scholars of law, jurisprudence and morals, as well as historians, etc.

It is impossible for an individual - no matter how brilliant he is - to bring so many ideas by himself that attract the thoughts of great scholars of the world. This would be the case if what is there in the Quran we assume on a par with what is provided by human scholars but the point is that the Quran has opened new horizons on these subjects.

God in the Quran

Now we will talk about one of the above mentioned subjects and that is God and His relations with the universe and man. If we consider the manner of setting forth this subject and of comparing it with human ideas, the Quran's extraordinary and miraculous quality will be clarified.

The Quran has described God and in that description He is shown, on the one hand, to be infallible, that is, it has taken away qualities that do not fit Him, and on the other hand, it has proven His sublime qualities and attributes. There are about fifteen verses about the infallibility of God and more than fifty verses describing God's sublime Qualities and Attributes. The Quran is so perspicacious in these descriptions that it has amazed even the most profound theologians .

This perspicacity is the dearest miracle of an illiterate person. The Quran has taken advantage of all the available methods in presenting the path to the belief in God: The method of studying spiritual and physical evidence, the method of purification of self, the method of thinking and contemplating about life and existence in general. The best Islamic philosophers have taken their most solid arguments from the Holy Quran by their own confessions.

The Quran has based the relation between God, the universe, and creatures on absolute monotheism That is, God does not have any competitor or opponent: in His Divine Will and all wills and powers are under His control and by His command.

The Human Being's Relationship with God

The Quran has presented the most beautiful expressions about the human being's relationship with God. The God of the Quran, unlike the God of philosophers, is not a dry, spiritless and strange being to man, The God of the Quran is closer to man than his jugular vein. He deals with man and there is a mutual happiness between them, He attracts man to Himself and soothes his soul, "*Verily in the remembrance of God do hearts find rest.*" (13:28) Not only is man familiar and acquainted with Him, but so is

everything else. All things want Him and call Him. All creatures have a connection with Him from the depth of their being and praise Him. *"And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification."* (17:44)

The God of philosophers whom they know merely as the first cause or the Necessary Being is a stranger to man; He has only created and brought man to this world. But the God of the Quran is an ideal for man and He is the source of man's affection; He makes man aglow and ready to sacrifice, He may even take away his night's sleep and day's peace because. He becomes an extremely sacred idea.

The Islamic philosophers brought theology to the highest peak because of their familiarity with the Quran and by using Quranic expressions.

Is it possible for an illiterate person who did not go to school and did not have a teacher to be so knowledgeable in theology, so much so that he is thousands of years ahead of the ideas of philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle?

The Quran, the Torah and the Bible

The Quran confirmed the Torah and the Bible but said that these books have been tampered with and man's treacherous hand had made alterations in them. The Quran corrected the mistakes of these two books about theology, stories of the prophets and some laws. One example was what we mention about the forbidden tree and the fall of Adam.

The Quran purified God from false accusations and the prophets from incorrect attributes brought in previous books and these are other reasons for the legitimacy of the Quran.

Histories and Stories

The Quran presented histories and stories that the people at that time were unfamiliar with and the Prophet himself was unaware of, *"It was unknown to you and to your people."* (11:49) Among all the Arabs not even one person claimed that he knew these stories. The Quran did not follow the Torah and the Bible in these stories but corrected them. The investigations of historians in recent times about the nations of Sheba and Thamud confirmed the Quran's view.

The Quran and Predictions

When Iran defeated Rome in 615 AD and made the Quraish tribe happy, the Quran said decisively that in less than ten years, Rome would defeat Iran. Some Muslims and pagans bet on this and later on it happened as the Quran had foretold. The Quran had also decisively said that the person who had called the Prophet 'barren' was himself barren; that man had several children at that time but the succeeding generations of this family were finally made extinct.

All this shows the miracle of the Book. The Quran has other scientific and spiritual miracles which relate to philosophical, natural and historical sciences.

Notes:

1 .Recently some Egyptian and Iranian scientists have claimed that there is a special kind of miracle in the Quran from a "technical" point of view. That is, there is a special order in the geometry of its words and letters and there is a special curve going gradually upward based on the descended verses. Refer to *the Proces of the Transition of the Quran* and the article, "The Quran and the Computer" published in *falaq* publication, no.1.The publication of the students of the Faculty of Letters, Tehran University.

2. Talaha b. Khuwalid claimed to be a prophet and died in 641 AD.[trans]

3. Muslimih was a contemporary of the Holy Prophet and suggested to him to take part in his prophethood. He was the prophet of the Bani Hanifa in Ya mama and was kiiled in the battle of Agraba.[trans]

4. Sijah (Urn Sadir) was a woman from Bani Tamim who after the death of the Holy Prophet claimed to be a prophet. She married Muslimih and after his death, converted to Islam. [trans]

CHAPTER EIGHT:

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAM

Islam [submission to God] is the name of God's religion which is unique; all prophets were appointed to it and they in turn called people to join it. Religion was conveyed to people in its comprehensive and complete form by Muhammad ibn Abdullah, the last Prophet (peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants). Prophethood ended and today it is known by that very name throughout the world.

Since the Islamic instructions which were conveyed by the last Prophet have special characteristics appropriate to the period of final prophethood, they were the comprehensive and complete version of religion and were brought in order to be the guide of humanity forever. These characteristics could not be presented in previous times because they were the ages of humanity's childhood.

Each of these characteristics is a criterion to know Islam. With these criteria, everyone of which being one of the principles of Islam, one can have an outline - through schematic - of Islam. Also, with the help of these criteria, one can recognize whether a certain instruction belongs to Islam or not.

We do not claim that we can gather all these criteria here, but we will try at least to give a comprehensive list of them.

We know that every school of thought and ideology and every system of thought which presents a pattern for human salvation, emancipation, perfection and happiness offers a series of values and brings a series of individual and social 'musts' and 'musts' and 'mays' and 'may not's'. For example, one must be like this, one must become like that, one must make this or that, one must choose a certain direction, one has to go a certain way and follow a certain goal, One must live free and independently, one must be brave and courageous, one has to be constant, one must strive for perfection, society should be built upon justice and equality, and one has to move to grow nearer to God.

However, these musts and nots are based on a certain philosophy which justifies them. That is, if an ideology presents a series of orders and commands, there is always a kind of philosophy and world view about existence, the universe, society and man which implies that since existence is like this and society or man is like that, then one has to be so and so.

The world view is a collection of insights, commentaries and analyses about the universe, society, and man, It describes the world in a certain way says that it has certain laws and states the way it develops and whether or not it has a certain beginning and a certain ultimate goal and whether man has a certain predetermined nature, his being a chosen reality, as well as problems concerning the existence of sociological laws and the laws governing history, etc.

Ideology is based on a world view, When one decides how to live and behave or what to try, this would be based upon his view of the nature of man and society. The 'why' of each ideology lies in the world view upon which that ideology is based and, in a manner of speaking, ideology is a sort of 'philosophy of action' and the world view is a kind of 'speculative philosophy'. Every special kind of philosophy of action is based on a special kind of speculative philosophy. For example, Socrates's philosophy of action is based on his special insight into the world which is the same as speculative philosophy. The same is true about the relationship between Epicurus's philosophy of action and his speculative philosophy, etc.

Why are there different sorts of ideologies? This is so because there are different sorts of world views. An ideology is a fraction of a world view.

On the other hand, why are there different sorts of world views or cosmologies, as they are sometimes called? Why does one school of thought see the world in a certain way and the other in a different way? Why does one conceive it this way and the other that way?

These questions cannot be easily answered. Confronted with this issue, some will invoke the social status and class position immediately. They claim that class position and class status provide one with a certain insight and make him see the world with a particular perspective. The relationship between man and his society, the relationship between man and that which is produced and distributed in the society and the systems' governing them as well as the degree of their success or failure will cause certain reactions in his soul and nervous system and will give special shape to his mental attitude. His special mental and inner attitude will affect his mind, evaluation and his judgments.

As Mulawi says,

When you turn round and round and your head turns as well.

It looks as if the house is turning around.

If you are on a ship on a river,

You'll see the banks of the river moving like yourself

If you are unhappy,

You'll see all the world unhappy.
If you are happy with your friends,
This world looks like a garden to you.
Since you are part of the world.
You believe that as a whole it is true.
Anyone who acts like animals,
Is suspicious of generous people.

According to this point of view, one cannot reject someone else's judgement since it is a relative issue and a product of a special relationship of every individual with his own natural and social environment, so what one sees is correct only for oneself.

The problem is not so simple, There is no question that man's mind is under the influence of his environment to a great degree, but it cannot be denied that man has a free basis for his thoughts which can make him independent from any influence. This is called primordial nature in Islam and I must talk about it in detail at another time.

Even if we could deny man's unique nature and his ability to impartially see facts, it is still seen to condemn man at this stage (the stage of world view and cosmology).

The philosophers and scientists who have closely studied these matters believe that the origin of different world views and cosmologies lies within what is called nowadays, 'the theory of knowledge', or 'epistemology'. 1

Philosophical efforts have been focused upon epistemology to such an extent that some claimed philosophy is, to be regarded as epistemology rather than ontology. The reason why cosmologies are different is that theories about knowledge are different. One says the world can be known through reason, another says it can be known through the senses, and a third says it can be known through purification of the soul, intuition and inspiration. From one point of view, the stages of recognition are like this and another

says they are like that. The power of reason is limited according to some and it is unlimited according to others. There are also some questions about the sources of knowledge and its criterion, etc.

So the ideology of each school of thought is based upon its world view and its world view is based upon its views about knowledge and cognition. The progressiveness of each ideology depends upon the progressiveness of its world view which itself is dependent upon the progressiveness of its epistemology. In fact, the philosophy of action in each school of thought is dependent upon its philosophy of thought which itself is dependent upon the logic of that school so each school of ideology must first determine its logic.

Although Islam is not a school of philosophy and has not spoken to people in the language of philosophy and philosophers, yet it has its own special language from which all classes of people can profit according to their understanding and talent. In between the lines, however, one can see that it has discussed all these matters - which is indeed most marvelous - so much that its ideology can be presented as a system of practical thoughts, and its universal insights can be set forth as a philosophy of thought and its views about knowledge can be presented as the principles of a system of logic.

It is obvious that here we have only to take a glance and pass on. Bringing together the principles of Islamic ideology, world view and epistemology in regard to the valuable views of Islamic scholars whether jurists, philosophers, gnostics or other authorities would end up in several thick volumes. Here- we will give only a list - however incomplete - with the hope that in the future it will be completed,

Now that we want to draw the essential guidelines of Islamic views under the title of characteristics of Islam, we will list them under three sections: The characteristics of epistemology, the characteristics of the world view or cosmology and the characteristics of ideology.

The Epistemological Point of View

1 Is knowledge possible? This is the first question which has always been asked on this subject. Most thinkers believe that real knowledge is impossible and consider that

man is condemned to non-understanding of the reality of what goes on in the world. They consider absolute knowledge (on unquestionable definite knowledge which represents things as they are) impossible.

But the Quran believes knowledge possible. It has called [people] to know God, the universe, man and history. In the story of Adam, which is the story of mankind, it has considered him worthy of learning about all the Names of God (facts of the universe). Sometimes it has considered man's knowledge (which is the very truth) as the Quran says, " ... *while they encompass nothing of His knowledge Save what He Will.*" (2:255)

2. What are the sources of knowledge? From Islam's point of view, the sources of knowledge are natural or physical phenomena, man or mental or spiritual phenomena, history or the folk tales of tribes and nations, intellect or the innate first principles, the heart, if it has been purified and finally the scientific and written works by others.

In many verses, the Quran has called [the people] to study the nature of the earth and the sky, " *Say, behold and be attentive to what there is in the heaven and the earth*" (10: 101) It has also called man to study and reflect upon the histories of ancient nations, "*Do they not travel on the earth (do they not study the works of the ancients on the earth) so that they find hearts to reason with and ears to hear with.*" (22:46) It also considers reason and innate logical principles authentic and invokes them while reasoning, '*Say, had there been gods other than God in these two (heaven and earth - all existence), this system would not have existed and would have been ruined.*" (21: 22) Or again, "*God has not begot a son and there has never been other gods with Him. If it was so, each god would take his own creatures to his own direction and some would have preference others. Exalted be God above what they describe ..*" (23: 91)

The Quran also considers the heart as the focal point of a series of inspirations and Divine implications. The more man will profit from a series of inspirations and implications, the more he has tried to keep this focal point pure, to move towards it, and to feed it spiritually by being attentive to sincerity and devotion. The revelation of the Prophet is the most powerful example of this kind of knowledge. The Quran has frequently pointed out the value of the pen, the book and the script and on some occasions, it has sworn by them, *Nun.. By the pen and that which they write.*" (68:1)

3. What are the sources or knowledge? They consist of the senses, the power of thinking and reasoning, purification of the self and studying the works of others. The Quran in surah 16:78 says, "*God brought you out of your mother's wombs while you did not know anything and gave you ears, eyes, and hearts so that you may give your thanks and benefit from them correctly.*"

In this verse, it is specified that man - contrary to plato's theory 2 - has no knowledge at birth at all, God has granted him the sense by which he would be able to study the universe. He has given him a conscience and the faculty to analyze, so that he could reflect upon what is given to him through his senses and could penetrate inside the objects and the laws governing them.

In this verse, the senses (the most important ones, i.e.

hearing and seeing are given as examples) are introduced specifically as the tools of knowledge (that is, superficial knowledge and the first stage of knowledge); also mind (heart) is presented as the tool of knowledge and science (that is, the stage of profound and logical knowledge). In this verse, another question relating to knowledge has also been pointed out and that is the question of the stages of knowledge.

Just as the Quran considers the senses and the power of thinking as the tools of knowledge, it also considers the purification of the soul, virtue and purity as the tools for knowledge. This matter is pointed out and specified in many verses , "*If you keep yourself away from what God does not want and if you keep your heart pure and uncontaminated, God will give you the potential to distinguish right from wrong.*" (8:29) It also says, "*By the soul of man and Him who moulded its merits and inspired it with the knowledge of purity and impurity, he who purified his soul is blessed and he who contaminated and added impurity to it is ruined.*" (91:7-10)

Learning and reading the Book are the other instruments that Islamic instructions have paid attention to and have recognized. It is enough to know that the revelation to the Holy Prophet Starts with the sentence, *iqra*, "*Recite.*" , "*Recite in the Name of your Lord who created; created man from a clot of blood (a leech-like creature) . Recite and your Lord who is the most generous taught man how to use the pen, and he did not know.*" (96:1-5)

4. The objects of knowledge. What we could or should know. What we are to know about are God, the universe, man, society and time. All of these could be known and should be known.

The Islamic World View

The present book which is an introduction to the Islamic world view deals with this very subject matter and the material can be drawn from it. But here in order not to lose the track of materials, we will discuss these characteristics briefly.

1. The universe has a Divine Nature. That is, the reality of the universe depends upon a Divine Reality. There is a difference between something which comes from something else without its reality being dependent upon it - an example of this is the relationship of a child to his parents where the terms of this relation have their own

existence and reality through the parents have begot the child – and a case where something comes from something else and depends up on it in such a way that if you take away the relation, the thing will collapse and cease to exist completely.

This is how the world is related to God. If it were other than this, it would be production, not creation. As the Quran says, "*He begets not nor was He begotten.*" (112: 3)

In this case it does not make any difference whether the universe has a temporal beginning or not. If the universe has a temporal beginning then it is a finite dependent reality and if it does not, then it is a dependent reality infinitely extended backward in time. Being temporally finite or an infinite dependent reality does not have an effect on the creational and dependent reality of the universe.

2. The universe, whose reality is dependent upon Him, and which is, as it were, created in His Essence, is also created in a temporal sense, That is to say, it changes constantly and in fact its nature is constituted by change. The universe being so constituted, it is in a state of constant becoming and repeatedly being created. There is not one single moment in which the universe is not in the state of creation and destruction.
3. What ever is real in this world is a baser and lesser rank of a reality which belongs to another world called 'the unseen? The limited and predestined matters in this world exist as unlimited and unpredestined matters of a world prior to this world prior according to the Quran, the treasures of that world.³ "*There is nothing that we do not have stores and mines and we send them down in appropriate measure.*" (15:21)

4. The universe has a 'retuning-to-Him' nature. That is, as it belongs to Him, it moves towards Him too. So the universe as a whole has passed through a downward movement and is now passing through an upward phase towards Him. "*Everyone belongs to God and will return to Him.*" (2:156) "*Everything shall return to God.*" (42:53) "*That their end is towards God.*" (79:44)

5. The universe is a firm causal system. Divine grace, decree and predestination for any creature take place only through special channels of causes and effects.⁴

6. The system of cause and effect is not limited to material and physical causes and effects. The universe has a materialistic system of cause and effect in its material

dimension. But in its spiritual and heavenly dimension, its causal system is of a non-materialistic kind. There is no contradiction between these two systems and each of them has its own place. The angels, the spirit, the slate, the pen, and Holy Books are the lays and means through which heavenly gract flows with God's permission.

7. There is a series of unbreakable traditions and laws which govern the world and which are essential to the system of cause and effect in the universe.

8. The universe is a guided reality and the evolution of the universe is a guided one. All the particles in the universe benefit from guidance no matter what their position is. The instinct, the senses, reason, inspiration and rcvelation are the hierarchy of universal guidance. Moses and Aaron told the Pharoah, *"Our Lord is the one who gave every creature the nature it was worthy of, and guided it towards the right path "* (20:50)

9.The world contains both good and evil, compatibility and incompatibility, generosity and parsimony, light and darkness, motion and tranquility; but goodness, compatibility generosity, light, land, motion have genuine existence,while evil, contradiction, parsimony, darkness and tranquility have parasitic and subordinate existence.Yet the parasitic and subordinate existence plays an essential role in creating goodness, campa tibility , generosity, light, motion and evolution.

10.Sinec the universe is a living unit, that is, since the universe is governed by intelligent powers [as supported by the Quran,*"Those who govern the events,"*(79:5)] It is a universe of action and reaction, that the universe is not indifferent to man being good or evil. There are rewards and punishments, help and retaliation in this worJd besides what will come in the other world. Thankfulness and blasphemy are not equal.

"If you give thanks and are grateful for divine blessings and if you use them properly, we will give you more and if you are ungrateful and use the blessings vainly and in an unlawful way. My punishment will be terrible indeed." (14:7)

Ali, peace be upon him, says, "If you do good to somebody and he does not appreciate it, let it not make you unwilling to do good because someone else will appreciate you to whom you have not been helpful and you will benefit from that stranger more than that ingratc person God likes the beneficent."⁵

That is, the universe as a whole is a relevant system and a living organism. Do not expect to receive a reward for the kindness you have done from the recipient of the kindness, Sometimes you do something somewhere, but you will get the reward somewhere else unexpectedly. Why? Because God is the governor of the universe and loves the beneficent. Sa'di, the Iranian poet, says,

Do good and throw it in the Tigris.

And God will reward you in the desert.

11. After his present life, the human being will live an eternal life in which one will be rewarded or punished as a result of one's deeds in one's present life.

12. The human spirit is an eternal fact. Not only will the human being be brought back to life on the Day of Resurrection but also between this world and that Day, one win enjoy a kind of life called pmgawry which is stronger and more complete than worldly life. About twenty verses of the Quran indicate that there is a life between death and resurrection while the body is decomposing.

13. The primary principles and bases of life,i.e, the principles of a moral and a humanistic life are eternal and constant. These principles would not vary according to the time in which one lives. They do not prescribe a life like that of Abu Dharr⁶ at one time and then a life like that of Mu 'awiyah⁷ at another. The principles according to which people's life, like those of Abu Dharr, Mu'awiyah,Moses and Pharaoh are evaluated, are identical and eternal.

14. Truth is eternal too. A scientific truth will remain a truth forever if it is a truth at all and if it is a falsehood, it will be a falsehood forever. If it is partly true and partly false, the part which is true remains true and the pan which is false always remains false. Only fact, namely physical facts are changeable. But the truth, namely, the correspondence of a thought or a belief in reality or its noncorrespondeice, namely, falsity, has an identical and constant status.

15. The universe, the earth and the sky are established justly. "*We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them save with truth,*" (46: 3)

16. The Divine Will in this world rules for the final victory of right over wrong .

Right and righteous people, are victorious, "*We promised that Our pronhets would be helped and Our armies (the righreous armv) would be victorious.*" (37:173)

17. People are created equal and no one has any privilege over others according to his creation. People are differenriared only according to their: (1) knowledge, "*Are those who know equal with those who know not? But only men of understanding will pay heed*" (39:9), (2) their religious and spiritual struggle upon God's Way (*jihad*)

"... *He has bestowed on those who strive a great reward above the sedentary,*" (4:95), (3) piety and purity, '*the noblest of you is the best in conduct.*'(49:13)

18. According to his nature, the humoan being has a series of dispositions and inner capacities, including moral and religious dispositions. The main source of one's conscience is one's, given nature but not one's class status, nor one's social life nor one's work and fight with nature, though all of these are important to one's acquired conscience, Due to one's human nature, the human being can have a unique culture and a unique ideology. One can rise against one's natural and social environment, as well as against historical and heredirory factors and make one's self free from all their bonds.

19. Since everyone is born human by nature, there is a capacity even among the most evil men to accept advice and to repent. The prophets in the first ptace, were appointed to advise even their enemies and the most evil men and to arouse their human nature, If this approach did nor work, then they would fight with them. Moses, son of Imran, is advised on his first encounter with the Pharaoh to say, "*Will you purify yourself in grace! I will guide you to your God so that you may have fear of him.*" (79:18-19)

20. While the human being enjoys a real unity, one is a resl compound. Unlike inanimate bodies and plants in which the constituents lose their indepenfence completely

which the constituents lose their independence completely and turn into a unified whole, the contradictory elements, out of which the human being is made, do not resolve into a unity completely. There is a constant struggle going on within one's self and the contradictory forces within drive a person into opposite directions. These inner conflicts are expressed in religious terms as the opposition of reason and ignorance or the opposition of reason and soul or the opposition of mind and body.

21. Since the human being has an independent spiritual essence and one's will originates from the reality of one's spiritual nature, one is free and independent. No force or necessity can take one's freedom away. Thus, one is responsible for one's self and one's society.

22. Human society, too, like the individual, is a real compound and has laws, traditions and institutions and as a whole throughout history has not been dependent upon the will of any particular human being, yet, the contradictory elements that make up its structure, that is, intellectual, trade, political and economic groups do not lose their identity completely. Conflicts and fights have continued in the form of political, economic, intellectual and doctrinal wars and finally the fight between the superior tendencies of civilized and perfected man and the low tendencies of animal-like human beings - continue as long as the society has not reached the height of humanity.

23. God does not change the destiny of a nation or tribe unless the people change themselves. *"God changes not the condition of a people until they (first) change that which is in their hearts..." (13:19)*

24. The Omnipotent God Who is the Creator of the universe and the human being is affluent by nature, complete in every aspect and absolutely perfect. He is Omniscient, Immovable and beyond further progress. His attributes are the same as His Nature. The universe is all His Creation; all the universe is a manifestation of His Will and His Will does not have a rival. Any cause and any will comes after His Decree and not before it.

25 .The universe has a special unity like organic unity of a living creature because it originates from one Source [God] and goes back to Him in a harmonious path. It continues to move under the influence of efficient and intelligent powers.

From the Point of View of Ideology

Owing to the wide range of issues involved, it is extremely difficult to offer a thorough account of the main characteristics of Islamic ideology as a whole or even of some branch of it. Yet we will try to note whatever is possible.

1. One of the advantages of Islam over other religions or rather, one of the advantages of God's religion in its all-encompassing form over previous ones is its completeness. Confronted with any particular issue, there are four principles on the basis of which a scholar can decide what the decree of Islam would be in that particular case. There is no problem which is left undecided.
2. Applicability of the method of *ijtihad*⁸ The principles of Islam are arranged and organized in such a way that they can be used in *ijtihad*. This is the discovery and the application of general and unchanging principles which gives them this particular quality. The inclusion of reason as one of the Islamic sources has made true *ijtihad* easy.
3. **Convenience and leniency.** Islam, as described by the interpretation of the Holy Prophet is a lenient and forgiving religion. (22:78) Because it is lenient, it does not demand binding and hard obligations. "*God has not put any restriction in religion.*" (22:78)

Since Islam is forgiving, whenever a duty may turn out to be restricting or causing trouble, one is required not to do it.

4. **Life orientedness.** Islam is a life-oriented religion, not a monastic-minded one, There is no monastic life in Islam. The ancient societies were either an unworldly life or a hedonistic one. Islam has combined the physical and worldly aspect of life with spiritual and Divine Values. From Islam's point of view, the path to the afterlife passes through life and worldly responsibilities.

5. **The social character.** Islamic laws have a social nature. Even in one's most private duties such as ritual prayers and fasting there is a social flavor. The many social, political, economic, civil and penal laws of Islam originate from these characteristics, just as rules such as holy war and enjoining the good and preventing evil originate from social Islamic responsibilities.

6. **The right and the freedom of individuals.** Even though Islam is a social religion which takes in to consideration society and considers the individual responsible for society, yet it does not ignore the rights and freedom of individuals. It does not consider the individual an abstract entity.

An individual has certain political, economic, legal and social rights from the Islamic point of view. From a political point of view, one has the right to consult and elect. From the economic point of view, one has the right of ownership of the product of his work, the right to exchange, to give alms, to endow, to rent, to form a cooperative with one's lawful property. From the legal point of view, one has the right to file a suit [against someone], demand the administration of justice and to testify in its court of law. From the social point of view, one has the right to choose a vocation, a house, a field of study, etc., and from the point of view of family, one can choose a spouse.

7. The priority of the right of society over the right of individual. where there is a contradiction between the rights of society and those of an individual, the right of

society takes priority over the right of the individual. An authorized judge will decide in such cases .

8. **The principle of counseling.** This principle in social matters is an authentic principle in Islam. In cases where there is no explicit word of Islam, Muslims should choose a practical system through counsel and group thinking.

9. **The negation of loss.** Islamic orders, which are absolute for everyone, are enforceable up to the point where they do not bring about loss. In Islam, the law of no losses is a general statute which can 'veto' any law ending in loss.

10. **Utilitarianism.** From the Islamic point of view, one should consider the usefulness and benefits of any job, whether social or individual, Any job which does not result in some benefit is considered null and is prohibited. "*Successful indeed are the believers ..] and who shun vain convention.*" (23: 3)

11. **The proviso that business transactions should be useful.** Transaction of wealth and money and its exchange should be free from any wastefulness. Any transaction and transfer of money should result in a material as well as spiritual benefit or else the transfer of the money is futile and prohibited. "*And eat not up your property among yourselves in vanity.*" (2: 188) The transfer of wealth through gambling is to spend money wastefully and is thus prohibited.

12. If capital is taken out of ' practical usage' and therefore not exposed to the danger of loss or destruction, i.e., when it takes the form of loans to others, it becomes sterile and unproductive and whatever it makes through interest is usury and strictly forbidden.

13. Any transfer of wealth should be done with the total awareness of both parties and necessary information should be gained beforehand because business transactions done through risk and ignorance are null. The Holy Prophet prohibited transactions through risk and ignorance.

14. **Opposition to irrationality.** Islam respects reason and considers it as the internal voice of God. The principles of faith cannot be accepted unless by reasoning.

Reason is also one of the sources of *ijtihad* in respect to minor issues. Islam considers reason and a kind of purity and its decline as becoming defiled; so insanity or drunkenness, too, like urinating or sleeping nullifies *wuzu'* [ritual ablution]. Islam fights with any kind of drunkenness and the prohibition of using any intoxicating element is based on the opposition to irrationality which is part of the religion.

15. **Opposition to anti-will.** Just as reason is respected and some of the Islamic instructions protect reason, will, too, being the executive power of reason, is respected. As a result 'prohibitors' of will called debauchery (*lahw*) are forbidden.

16. **Working.** Islam is the enemy of idleness. Since the human being gains profit from society and since working is the best constructive factor for individuals and the society and since idleness is the biggest factor of corruption, the human being should have a useful occupation. Islam has damned a parasitic life in any form in society. "One who imposes his life and himself on people is damned."⁹

17. **Sanctity or vocation and profession.** Vocations and professions, besides being duties, are sacred and desirable to God. They are like *jihad*. "God likes the believer who has a vocation."¹⁰ "One who labors for the sake of his family is like one who fights in the way of God,"¹¹

18. **Prohibition of exploitation .** Islam considers exploitation-that is, making profit from other people's labor for free - in any form, as unjust and unacceptable. It is enough to prove that a job has an exploiting nature to make it unlawful,

19. **Waste and dissipation.** People have control over their Own property, yet this control is effective within a frame allowed by Islam and not beyond it. Wasting property in any manner and in any form such as throwing it away , using more of it that is necessary using it for extravagance and corrupt luxuries; are unlawful and prohibited.

20. **Improvement in life.** Improving life for the welfare of one's own family, as long as it does not result in depriving someone of his rights or in waste and dissipation of in forgetting one's duty and responsibility, is allowed, even encouraged.

21. **Bribery.** In Islam One who gives bribes and one who takes bribes are strongly condemned and they deserve [hell] fire. The money gained in this way is unlawful and prohibited.

22. **Hoarding.** Storing and collecting public provisions and keeping them in order to bring the prices up and in order to sell them at a higher price is unlawful and prohibited. An authorized judge will present the goods to the market and will sell them at a just price inspite of the unwillingness of the owner.

23. **Having an income is justified only if it contributes to the welfare of the society.** It is usually thought that if there is a market or demand for certain services, that would be enough to justify the legality of (providing) these services or any income thus gained. However, in Islam, a mere demand or desirability of the service does not suffice. The welfare of the society should be taken into account as a necessary condition for the legality of the profession as well as its income. In other words, Islam does not consider the existence of demand enough to make supply religiously lawful. That is why some vocations in Islam are called 'forbidden vocations'. There are several types:

A . Any transaction which may confuse people or bring about ignorance. Anything that may mislead people in their thoughts and beliefs is forbidden even though enough demand exists. As a result, selling idols and crosses, making up women to deceive suitor", praising one who is not worthy of, and divination are forbidden and earning money through these ways is prohibited.

B. Any transaction which may convey wrong information and harmful instructions. Buying and selling books, films or anything which somehow misleads and deceives society are unlawful and forbidden.

C. A vocation which aids and strengthens the enemy. Earning money by any means which strengthens the enemy from the point of view of military , economy, culture or intelligence and weakening the Islamic party by either selling arms or anything which practically has the same effects, are forbidden and the unlawful selling of rare manuscripts belongs to this category.

D. Earning money through means which are harmful to individuals or the society. Earnings through selling alcoholic beverages, gambling equipment, impurities, and counterfeit goods belong to this category. Also gambling, slandering, satirizing the true believer, supporting tyrants, accepting a position from an oppressor, etc. are forbidden.

Of course there are others kinds of vocations which earning income from is not permissible. This is not due to the un-expediency of the job, but because they are above the level of being transactable. Some of these services are so sanctified that it is forbidden to receive any money for providing them such as pronouncing a decree of religion, jurisdiction, reading the principles of faith, preaching and probably medical services.

It is because of their nobility and special Status that they enjoy the people who can offer these services cannot ask for any money in return and people are obliged to provide them free if they are able to do so. The government should support those people financially.

24. It is necessary to defend people's rights whether individual or social and to fight against the aggressor. *'God Does not love slandering (disgracing) unless from somebody who has been wronged.'* (4:148) The Holy Prophet said, "The best *jihad* is to talk of Justice in the presence of an oppressor.' The Holy Prophet used to say and Imam Ali has quoted it from him, "No tribe and nation can be ranked sanctified (being worthy of praise) unless they reach the point where the weak ask for their rights from the strong without fear and dread."

25. Seeking reform and constant fighting with corruption. The principle of enjoining good and forbidding evil is a principle which according to the interpretation of Imam Baqir, peace be upon him, is the basis of other Islamic religious duties. This principle keeps a Muslim in a state of permanent mental revolution and reform and in a Constant fight with corruption. *"You are the noblest nation because you enjoin the good and forbid evil,"* (3: 110) The Holy Prophet says, "You should enjoin good and forbid evil else God will set them over you, then good people will pray for you but it will not be responded to. "¹²

26. Monotheism. More than anything else, Islam is the religion of monotheism and does not allow for any deviation either in theory or in practice. Islamic thoughts, behavior and deeds begin from God and end in God. That is why any duality or trinity or or anything else that alters this principle is strongly opposed, whether a duality in the form of the duality of God and the devil or God and people. Any action should only begin and be accomplished in the Name of God, with the thought of God, towards God in order to get closer to Him. Anything which is other than this does not belong to Islam. In Islam all the paths lead to monotheism. Islamic morals originate from monotheism and end in monotheism. The same is true of Islamic education, politics, economics and society.

In Islam, every action begins in the Name of God and by asking Him for help. *"In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate."* and ends in the Name of God and giving thanks to Him, *"Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds."* (1: 2) Every action takes place in the Name of God and continues by relying on Him, *"I have put my trust in God."* (11:56) *"In God let believers put their trust."* (14: 11)

Monotheism of a true Muslim is not a mere belief just as the Essence of God is not separate from His creatures. He is with everyone and knows everyone and just as everything begins with Him and returns to Him, the idea of monotheism, too, takes over the whole existence of a true believer in His Unity and rules over his thoughts, actions and habits and directs them. That is why a true Muslim all through his life thinks of God and nothing else.

27. **Elimination of intermediaries.** Although Islam accepts intermediaries for the dispensation of grace and recognizes the system of causes and effects in both materialistic matters as well as spiritual matters, yet it eliminates any intermediaries in worshipping and praying. As we know, in religions which have been distorted the individual has lost direct contact with God because of an assumed separation between God and man.

Only the priest and the clergy can directly pray and they are the ones who must communicate the people's messages to God. In Islam, on the contrary, this is regarded as a kind of polytheism. The Holy Quran says frankly, *"If My servants ask you about Me,*

*say I am near them and I accept their prayers ..."*¹³

28. Co-existence is possible with other monotheists. From Islam's point of view, Muslims under certain conditions can live with the followers of other religions which have monotheistic origin (like the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians) although they have actually deviated from monotheism. But they cannot co-exist with the polytheists in an Islamic country. Muslims can sign peace agreements based on Islamic welfare with polytheistic countries or sign contracts on special matters.

29. Equality. One of the principles of Islamic ideology is equality and rejection of discrimination. According to Islam, people are created equally, this is because they all enjoy the same human nature. Color, blood, race or nationality does not bring about superiority. A noble man of the Quraish and a black from Ethiopia are equal. In Islam, freedom, democracy and justice are based upon the equality of human beings.

From Islam's point of view, only under certain limited conditions can the rights of people temporarily be restricted. This has nothing to do with the color, race or nature of people. The temporary period of slavery, according to Islam, should have cultural and educational aspects and not economic and exploiting ones.

30. In Islam, rights, duties and punishment are differentiated according to the sex. Both sexes, that is, men and women are equal in humanity and possess unique typical human characteristics, but they have differences according to their sex. As far as their common nature and characteristics are concerned, they have identical rights and duties, such as the right to an education, the right to pray, the right to choose a spouse, the right of ownership and the right of bringing about changes in one's own property. But as far as their sex characteristics are concerned, they are not regarded as similar.¹⁴

Notes:

1. These matters are discussed in detail in *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, vo.1, especially article 4 (Value of Knowledge). They will be discussed elaborately in another article called "Recognition", which will be published soon.

2. Plato's famous view is that man's spirit has existed before, in the world of 'ideas', and when he comes to this world, he knows everything but has forgotten them; when he becomes familiar again with the realities in this world, they are not a new knowledge for him but a 'reminder'. The content of this verse is not inconsistent with the theory of substance in the Quran because innate matters in the Quran's terms do not mean that man knows a series of matters actually at birth, but it means that the substance of man is always growing and progressing. On the path of life, besides what man discovers through his senses, he finds a series of basic principles for which imagining them is enough for their exact and necessary acknowledgement. When the Quran points out 'reminding' as well as education, it is reminding one of nature as was mentioned before. So there is no discrepancy and contradiction between remembrance and verses of nature, on the one hand, and the verse of surah 16 and other verses, on the other.

3. Refer to *Tafsir al-Mizan* under 6:59.

4. Refer to *Divine Justice and man and Destiny* by the author.

5. *Nahjal-Balaghah*, Sermon 204.

6. Abu Dharr was one of the Prophet's Companions who was very pious and faithful; He was tortured for propagating Islam. He was exiled by the third Caliph to a desert and died there. [trans.]

7. Mu'awiyah was the son of Abu Sufyan and was the governor of Syria for 23 years; He was a very corrupt and vicious person. [trans.]

8. " I was appointed a Prophet for a religion which is forgiving and lenient ."

This Tradition with such commentary is famous but I do not remember to have seen the exact commentary. In *Kafi* , volume 5, page 494, it is said, " God did not appoint me for monasticism but for a pure , lenient and forgiving religion." In *Ja'maia al-Saghir* (a book of the Sunnis) quoting from *Tarikh Khatib* and in *kunuz al Haqaig* (a book of the Sunnis) quoting Tarmidhi, it has been quoted as such, "I was appointed for a pure , forgiving religion."

9. Wasa'il, tradition.

10. Tradition.

11. Tradition

12. Nahjal – Balaghah, recomrucntations to Malik Ashtar.

13 .No reference is given by the author.

14. Refer to The system of Women's Rights in Islam by the author.

CHAPTER NINE:
THE HOLY PROPHET

The Holy Prophet, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, with whom prophethood ended was born in the year 570 AD. At forty, his prophethood was actualized. For thirteen years in Mecca he called people to Islam and endured many difficulties and troubles. During that time he trained a group and then migrated to Medina and made it the center of his activities. For ten years in Medina, he openly invited people to join him, fought with obstinate Arabs and defeated them all. After ten years, all the people on the Arabian Peninsula had converted to Islam.

The verses of the Holy Quran gradually descended upon him, over a period of twenty-three years. Muslims showed a unique infatuation towards the Quran and the character of the Holy Prophet. After twenty-three years of prophethood, at the age of sixty-three, the Holy Prophet died in the eleventh year of the hijira, that is, eleven years after his migration from Mecca to Medina, having established and left behind a new society filled with spiritual happiness and faithful to a constructive ideology which had a universal sense of responsibility:

Two things had given life, unity and happiness to this newly-established society: First, the Holy Quran which was always recited and would inspire, and second, the great and penetrating character of the Holy Prophet which was charismatic. Now we will discuss the character of the Holy Prophet.

Childhood

He was still in his mother's womb when his father died in Medina. His grandfather, Abdul Mutallib became his guardian. From childhood, signs of greatness and superiority were obvious in his features, his behavior and his speech. Abdul Mutallib was intuitively aware that his grandchild had a bright future.

When he was eight years old, his grandfather died and according to this will, Muhammad's uncle, Abu Talib became his guardian. Abu Talib was also amazed by the strange behavior of the child. He was quite distinguished among his fellow mates.

He was never seen to show interest or greed in food like children at his age. He would content himself with a little food and would abstain from over-indulgence.¹ Unlike children at his age and unlike the habits of training of that period, he would keep his hair and face well-groomed.

One day Abu Talib asked him to take off his clothes in his presence and go to bed. He reacted reluctantly. As he was unwilling to disobey his uncle, he asked him to turn his face so that he could take off his clothes. This was amazing to Abu Talib, since among Arabs at that time, even adult men did not avoid uncovering all parts of their bodies. Abu Talib said, "I never heard him telling lies, never saw him doing anything inappropriate or laughing without reason. He was not interested in children's games. He liked solitude and was always humble."

Abhorrence Towards Vanity and Idleness

He abhorred vanity and idleness. He would say; "O

God, I resort to you from boredom and unhappiness, from slackness and idleness and from weakness and wretchedness" He used to say. "Worshipping has seventy parts and the best part is a lawful vocation."

Trustworthiness

Before his prophetic mission, he went on a trip to Damascus for Khadijah, a lady who later became his wife. On this trip, his competence, talent, honesty, and integrity became apparent even more than before. He was famous for being honest among the people that he was given the title ' Muhammad, the trustworthy'. People used to entrust him with their valuable goods. After being appointed as a Prophet , the Quraish tribe, with all their hostility, still used to entrust him with their valuables. That was why after his migration to Medina, he left Ali, peace be upon him, behind for several days so that he could return the goods to the owners.

Fighting against Cruelty

At the time of the pagan state of the Arabs before Islam, he signed a treaty with a group who were also upset to see oppression and cruelty in order to defend the oppressed and to resist against the oppressors. This treaty was made at the house of Abdullah bin Jad'an, important personality in Mecca and was called *hilf al-fudhul* . Later on, during the prophetic mission, he would recall that treaty and would say, "I do not want that treaty to be violated and I am still ready to take part in one."

The Way He Created his Family

He was kind to his family. He would not speak harshly to his wives which was unlike the habits and customs of the people of Mecca. He would tolerate the abusive tongue of some of his wives so much that others suffered from his tolerance .

He would emphasize and recommend to the people to behave politely with women and he would say, "Everybody has good characteristics as well as bad ones . A man should not consider only the bad characteristics of his wife and leave her because if he is unhappy about one of her characteristics, there will be another one to make him happy

and these should he counted together."

He was very kind and affectionate with his children and his grandchildren. He would treat them with love, put them on his lap and over his shoulder, and kiss them, all of which were contrary to the habits and customs of the time. one day, he was kissing one of his grandchildren (Imam Mujtaba peace be upon him), in front of one of the aristocrats. The man said that he had two boys and had not kissed either of them yet. The Prophet said, "God's mercy will not include he who is not kind."

He was also kind to the children of Muslims and would put them on his lap and pat them affectionately. Sometimes when women gave their young children to him so that he would pray for them, one of the children would urinate on his garment and the mother would become embarrassed and try to stop the child. But he would firmly prevent her, saying, "*Do* not stop the child from urinating; it is not important if my clothes have been defiled. I will clean them."

The Way He Treated Slaves

He was extremely kind to the slaves and would tell people, "They are your brothers, give them from the food you eat and clothe them with whatever you wear. Do not force them to do intolerable jobs; help them yourselves with the job." He used to say, "Do not call them by the name of *bandah* [male slave] or *kaniz* [female slave], (which shows ownership) because all of us are slaves of God and God is the true owner. Call them young man and young woman."

In Islam all possible facilities were provided to free slaves which would result in their complete freedom, He considered dealing in slavery as the worst of jobs and used to say, "To God the worst of the people are slave dealers."

Cleanliness and Sweet Fragrance

He was very interested in cleanliness and sweet fragrance. He would keep himself clean and sweet smelling and would order others to do so as well. He would recommend his friends and his followers to keep themselves and their homes clean and sweet smelling. He urged them, especially on Fridays, to wash themselves ceremoniously and prayers .

Contacts and Social Relations

He was kind and warm in company. He would greet everybody even children and slaves. In sitting he would never stretch his legs out in front of other people and would never recline when somebody was present, but would sit with his legs bent under him. In meetings, he would make people sit in a circle so that there would not be a lower or an upper place and everybody would have an equal position. He showed affection to his companions and if he would not see one of them for three days, he would inquire after him as to whether that person was sick. If so, he would visit him and if he had some problem, he would help that Companion. In their meetings, he would not look at one person only but would look around.

He hated to sit and let others do things, he would get up and take part in the work. He used to say, "God is reluctant to see one who considers himself above others."

Tenderness as well as Firmness

He was tender and forgiving in personal matters. His great historical generosity was one of the reasons for his progress. But in essential and public matters - where law was concerned - he was firm and hard and did not concede to any indulgence. After conquering Mecca and his victory over the Quraish, he forgave all the evil that the Quraish had done to him over twenty years. He accepted the repentance of the murderer of his uncle, Hamza. But at the time of conquering Mecca, a woman from the Makhzum tribe had stolen something and her crime was confirmed. The family of that woman who were from the Quraish aristocrats and considered carrying out the religious decree for stealing an insult to themselves, tried hard to make the Prophet forego the punishment. They made some of the respected Companions of the Prophet intercede for them, but the Prophet was inflamed with anger and said, "How can you intercede? Is it possible to abandon God's Law?" On the evening of the same day, he made a speech at a meeting and said, "The ancient nations and tribes declined and were exterminated because they were biased towards the Law of God. When one of the mighty and the powerful committed a sin, he would be sentenced. I swear to God in whose hands my life lies, I will not be lax in carrying out justice even if he is my closest relative."

Worshipping

He would spend part of the night of half of it , sometimes a third or two-thirds of the night, in prayer.. Although he was working all day long, especially when he was in Medina, yet he would not decrease the time of his prayers. He would find complete peace in worship and praying to God. His worship was not because of his desire for heaven or a fear of hell, but because of love and gratitude. One day, one of his wives asked why he prayed so much since he was certainly absolved. He answered, "Should I not be a grateful servant?"

He used to fast often. Besides the whole month of

Rarnadhan and part of the month of Shaban, he would fast every other day of the year. During the last ten days of Rarnadhan, his bed was not spread at all. He would retire for the prayers in the mosque and would worship all the time. Yet, he would tell others that it was enough to fast three days each month. He used to say, "Do not impose on yourselves more than you can bear, because it has a counter effect." He was opposed to a monastic life, seclusion, isolation and desertion of the family. Some of his companions who had decided so were rebuked. He used to say, "You have obligations towards your body, your wife, your children and friends and you should fulfill them."

When he was alone, he would lengthen his prayers. Sometimes he was praying for hours at night, but with people, he would try to shorten the prayers considering the condition of the weak and he would recommend others to do so.

Abstemiousness and Simple Living

Abstemiousness and simple living were two of the principles of his life. He used to eat simple food, dress simply and live simply. His mattress was usually made of mat. He would sit on the floor. He used to milk his goat himself and would ride unsaddled animals. He would not allow people to walk while he was riding. His main food consisted of barley bread and dates, He would repair his own shoes and clothes with his own hands. Although he was living simply, he did not like the idea of poverty. He considered it necessary to have money and wealth for the benefit of the society and for spending lawfully. He used to say, "How good is the wealth earned lawfully by someone who is worthy of owning it and who knows how to spend it." He also used to say, "Money and wealth help virtue."

Determination and Perseverance

His determination and perseverance were unique and had affected his companions as well. The twenty-three years of his prophetic mission are all lessons of determination and perseverance. During his lifetime, he frequently confronted situations where there was nothing left to hope for but he never thought of defeat and his strong faith in Success never weakened.

Leadership, Management and Consultation

The Prophet never behaved like a dictator even though his orders were carried out immediately by his Companions and although they repeatedly said that if he ordered them to drown themselves in a sea or to throw themselves into a fire, they would do so because they had strong faith in him. While doing things for which no order from God had been sent, he would consult his Companions and applaud their ideas and give importance to them. In Badr, he consulted his Companions about going to war, determining the place of the camp and how to deal with the prisoners of war. In Uhud, too, he consulted them about whether to make Medina the camp or whether to move the camp outside the city. In Ahzab and Tabuk, too, he consulted his Companions.

The Prophet's tenderness and kindness, his forgiveness and amnesty and asking God forgiveness for his Companions, his restlessness for asking God to forgive the sins of the Muslim community, his being considerate to his Companions and friends, and consulting them and giving them importance were the main reasons for his unique and great influence over his Companions. The Holy Quran points out this matter. *"Because of the Mercy that God has put in your heart, you are kind to your Companions, If you were harsh and hard-hearted, they would desert you. Therefore show them forgiveness and kindness, consult with them and ask God to forgive them. When you are determined, put your trust in God and do not doubt"* (3: 159)

Discipline and Order

Discipline and order governed his work. He used to divide his time and recommend people to do so. Under his influence, his Companions disciplined themselves strictly. Sometimes he considered it necessary not to reveal some of his decisions in case the enemy might be informed. His Companions would accept his orders without any question. For example, if he ordered them to be ready to go tomorrow, they would accompany him in the direction he had ordered without knowing the final destination until the end. Sometimes he would order a group to move in a certain direction and would give their leader a letter. He would tell him to open the letter several days later after reaching a certain point to carry out the order. They would follow his commands even though they did not know the final destination or the kind of mission before reaching a certain place. Thus the enemies and the spies were not informed and sometimes were attacked unaware.

Capacity of Hearing Criticism and Abhorring Flattery

Sometimes he was confronted by the objection of his Companions, but without being harsh, he would gain their approval for what he had decided. He abhorred hearing flattery or praise and said, "Throw dirt in the face of flatterers."

He liked to make sure that everything was done properly. He wanted to do everything firmly and perfectly so much so that when his friend Sa'dibn Ma'dh died and was put in the grave, he himself arranged and put the stones and mud-bricks of his grave, saying, "I know that these will be ruined in a short time, but God likes a man to do his job firmly and solidly."

Fighting with the Weak Points of the People

He would not use the weak points and the ignorance of the people, On the contrary, he fought with them and made people aware of their ignorance. When Ibrahim, his eighteen month old son died by chance, there was also an eclipse of the sun that day. The people said that the eclipse of the sun took place because of the disaster which had happened to the Prophet. He did not remain silent with their ignorance. He went to the pulpit and said, "People, sun and moon are two signs of God and they do not eclipse for someone's death."

Possessing the Necessary Qualifications of Leadership

He possessed all the qualities of being a leader including a sense of recognition, decisiveness, lack of doubt and irresolution, bravery, acting without fear of the results, foresight and providence, capacity to endure criticism, understanding people and their capabilities and entrusting them with authority as much as they were able to, tenderness in personal matters, firmness in basic affairs giving importance to his followers and training their intellectual, emotional and practical talents, not being a dictator and expecting others to obey blindly, humbleness and modesty, simplicity and frugality, dignity and self-possession, strong interest in organizing and putting into order the human being's powers. He used to say, "If three of you travel together, choose one as the leader and the chief."

In his organization in Medina, he arranged a special system. He gathered a group of writers and divided them into subgroups, each doing a certain job. Some were the Scribes of Revelation and would write down the Quran, some were responsible for personal letters, some registered contracts and deals of the people; some wrote down donations and taxes; some were responsible for agreements and treaties, off of these group are recorded in history books such as *Tarikh-i-Yaqubt*, *al-Tanbih wa 'I-Ashrad* by Masudi, *Mujam al-Buldan* by Bilazari and *Tabaqat* by ibn Sa'd.

The Method of Propagation

He was easy and not severe in propagating Islam. He mostly depended on hope and good tidings rather than fear and threats. He ordered one of his Companions who was sent to convert the people of Yemen, "Go slowly and do not be harsh. Give them hope. Stimulate their desires. Do not make people hate." He was active in propagating Islam. He traveled to Ta'if, During the hajj, he would move among the tribes and would propagate Islam. Once he sent Imam Ali, peace be upon him, and another time, Ma'dh ibn Jabal to Yemen to propagate the cause. He sent Mas'ab ibn Umair to Medina to convert the people before going himself. He also sent a lot of his Companions to Ethiopia, while they were free from the persecution of the Meccans, they propagated Islam and prepared for the conversion of Najashi, the king of Ethiopia and half the people in that country. In the sixth year of his migration, he wrote letters to the leaders of the countries in the world and declared his mission and prophethood to them. About a hundred of his letters written to different personalities have remained.

Encouragement to Study the Sciences

He encouraged people to study science and be literate. He made the children of his Companions learn the Syriac language. He used to say, "It is every Muslim's duty and obligation to learn." He also said, "Acquire wisdom everywhere and from anyone even if he is a polytheist or a hypocrite." He said, "Search for science even if it necessitates travelling to China."

Such encouragement and emphasis resulted in Muslims pursuing different sciences all over the world. They translated scientific books wherever they found them and they themselves began to research. By this, they became a link between ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome, Iran, Egypt, India and the new civilizations of Europe. Moreover, they themselves created one of the most magnificent civilizations and cultures in the history of mankind, known as the Islamic civilization and culture.

His habits and behavior, like his speech and religion, were all-encompassing. History cannot recall a personality like him, being so perfect in every human dimension. He really was the universal man.

Notes:

1. The following is a summary of the character and personal behavior of the Holy Prophet. The material used here is mainly taken from an article from the first volume of the book *Muhammad, the Last Prophet* written by the great contemporary scholar, Mr. Haj Sayyid Abul Fadl Mujtahid Zanjani.