

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO



الله
رسول
محمد

ISLAM

“Ta’rif-e-Aam bi-Din il-Islam

تعريف عام بدين اسلام

Originally written in Arabic
By: Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi

Peace Forum Network

gawmi

*In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful
There is no one worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is messenger of Allah*

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

“Ta’rif-e-Aam bi-Din il-Islam”

تعريف عام بدين اسلام

The most comprehensive & pragmatic Book on ISLAM, read and appreciated by millions of Muslims and non Muslims, the world over.

**Originally written in Arabic
By: Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi**

*Translated by Prof Raja F.M Majeed for ‘Quran Assan Tehreek’; 50 Lower Mall near MAO College Lahore.
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CAUTION!

This book is not meant for scholars and jurists; it is for those **Muslims** who want to properly understand their faith, or **non Muslims** who want to understand Islam as preached and practiced by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the light of Qur'an.

Islam has an argument, reason and proof for everything. A Muslim, therefore, is neither afraid of polemical dialogue nor avoids it. At the same level, Islam expects reason and proof from all those who claim to advance arguments against Islam: "Tell them; Bring forth your arguments (of what you state) if you are in the right"(Qur'an;2:111)

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

What is NOT demanded by Islam!

- Islam does not demand from a Muslim to give up the world altogether.
- Islam does not expect Muslims to be ignorant, lacking in knowledge of their faith and other branches of knowledge.
- Nor does it require one to make the mosque a permanent abode, never to leave it.
- Islam also does not insist that one should live in a cave and spend his whole life there ---- Not at all.

What Islam EXPECTS from the Muslims!

- To inhere in their best civilization and matchless culture in a manner that they surpass all the civilized nations of the world.

- They should be the most prosperous of all as far as the different branches of knowledge are concerned.
- Invite the humanity towards Islam, by conveying the message with wisdom, peacefully, in a logical and convincing way. They should argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.
- To use the right of retaliation to any injustice or oppression with equality, not exceeding the limits forgiveness and patience is however preferable.
- Not to kill the innocent people of any faith (including own self, through suicide) except by law, they don't have to create mischief on earth by creating anarchy or disturbing the peaceful coexistence.
- Warfare against injustice and oppression and self defence is permissible, to be declared by the

Islamic State but the rules lay down for its conduct by Shari'a (Islamic Law) be strictly adhered to. Those who surrender or do not fight or remain neutral are not to be disturbed. The prisoners are to be protected and provided peace and security.

- To fulfill all bilateral and international accords (like UN Charter) for peace and stability of humanity.
- To treat all members of society with equality, fairness and justice.
- Non Muslims in the Islamic society enjoy complete protections and freedom to practice their faith.
- The places of worship of other religions are to be protected.
- Do not abuse or degrade the god/ gods of non Muslims.

- Do not use coercion against non Muslims for conversion to Islam.
- Do not call other Muslims as apostate or unbelievers because, if a Muslim fails to perform some of his obligations and is negligent in practice or commits some such actions as are forbidden, yet he believes in the liability of all obligations and the impropriety of all unlawful deeds, he will continue to be a Muslim but a sinner. [*The concept of Takfeer i.e declaring a non-practicing Muslim, to be 'apostate', to justify murder; is rejected by majority scholars and is against Islamic Consensus*].

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INTRODUCTION

The Book & Author

The book “*Ta’rif-e-Aam bi-Din il-Islam*” was written in Arabic, by the renowned Syrian Scholar Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi, first published in the sixties, since then it has been translated to many languages and reprinted several times, the world over, also available on the internet. In Pakistan, Syed Shabbir Ahmad (late) not only himself translated it in to Urdu but also got it translated to English through Prof. Raja F.M. Majed (1924-2000), both Urdu and English translations have been published by Qur’an Asaan Tehrik, Lahore. [All these available sources have been consulted with gratitude for this reproduction.]

Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi grew up in Syria at the beginning of this century. He always expresses great admiration and gratitude to his father Shaikh Mustafa Tantawi, who was a leading *Faqih* (jurist) in his country.

According to Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi, people in those days were either Shaikhs (scholars of Islam) or Effendis (Arabs who had "received a secular education). The Shaikhs were uninformed about the modern sciences of the Effendis, whereas the Effendis were ignorant of religion. Fortunately Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi, was among the few to receive both types of education. Some years ago Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi wrote a book entitled: 'Religious Reform', wherein he discussed the need for religion and referred to the mooted question of whether man can live without religion. According to Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi, such questions can only be answered by counter-questions, such as whether it is possible for man to lead a material life, casting off all his inner emotions of love, and admiration of nature and her beauty. In this context the author also discussed the values of western philosophers and thinkers such as Kant,

Newton, Pascal and Goethe. To disprove the statement made by some of them that the universe was created by accident, the author gave the following example. If we were to place five balls, four white and one red in a bag, the probability of taking out the red ball the first time would be one in five. Similarly, if there were nine white balls, the ratio would be one in ten. But if one were to place an unlimited number of balls in the bag, the probability of picking out the red ball would be one to an unlimited number. Therefore we cannot say that the red ball could be picked at the first or even the hundredth attempt. So how could the planets that orbit on a set course without colliding with one another have come into existence by accident? Therefore, there must be a Divine Power behind them.

In 1936 Shaikh Tantawi went to work as a secondary school teacher in Iraq, and he was assigned to the teaching of Arabic

literature and religion. It was during this time that he felt the need for a simple and comprehensive book on Islam. He decided to campaign for this idea, and wrote many articles urging the Ulema to compile such a book. But no one responded. Many years passed. Meanwhile, other scholars who, like the Author, were also well read in religious and secular studies had decided to write books on Islam. While many of these were excellent, a simple and comprehensive book on Islam had still not been published. In 1966 the author wrote an article called "A General Introduction to Islam". It was published in the journal of the Muslim World League at Mecca, and caught the attention of a minister in the Saudi Arabian government, Mr. Muhammad Umar Tawfiq. He immediately advised the Muslim World League to commission the services of Shaikh Tantawi to write this book. So finally Shaikh Tantawi took up this long awaited task. He

worked on the book during one full summer vacation and an academic year. Having finished writing all the chapters of the book, complete with footnotes and quotations, it only needed to be given the final touches. The author placed the manuscript in three large envelopes and went off to Jordan to spend his summer vacation. He carried the envelopes around with him carefully until his arrival, but once he was there, and was busy meeting friends and relatives, he forgot all about it. Alas, during this time the manuscript was lost. He searched for it everywhere, and even asked all the taxi drivers in town if they had seen it, but in vain. Once he had got over the distress of losing the manuscript, Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi set to work afresh. By the grace of God he was able to produce this book within ten days and he wrote it with one source of reference the Holy Qur'an. The author gave this edition of the book the title

“Ta’rif Am bi-Din il-Islam” [A General Introduction to Islam]. He had intended to write two more parts in order to explain other aspects of Islam, but due to the pressures of a demanding schedule and illness, he was unable to do so. May God bless his soul at eternal peace, while his work continues to inspire all those interested in correct understanding of Islam.

CHAPTER – 1: CHOOSING A COURSE

An Allegory:

Imagine that you are traveling alone on a road which eventually divides into two: one track is bumpy and difficult, while the other is a smooth and comfortable path, sloping down to a plain. The first road is uneven, rocky and full of thorny bushes and hidden dangers. It is also steep and hard going. However, the authorities have put up a notice at the beginning of the track which reads: ***Even though this road may initially seem difficult, it will eventually lead you to your destination.*** As for the second road, it is well-paved and both sides are lined with fruit trees and flowers, and there are plenty of cafes and places of entertainment. The traveller on this road will find everything he needs to satisfy his senses. But the notice at the beginning of this road warns: ***This is a dangerous***

and destructive road. it leads to a chasm and certain death. Which of the two paths would you choose to take? More often than not, human nature opts for the easy way because it seems effortless, enjoyable and does not involve any suffering. It prefers *logo* its own way and to free itself of all commitments and responsibility. God has created this human instinct, and everyone, if left to himself, would follow the second path. However, the human mind intervenes at the junction of these two roads and applies the brakes. It urges Man to reflect and weigh up his options. Will he choose to enjoy short-lived pleasure followed by unremitting pain, or a brief and temporary period of pain, followed by eternal bliss and joy? Eventually he will choose to take the first road.

Illustration of Comparison of Heaven and Hell:

These examples illustrate the comparison between heaven and hell. The way to hell is full of pleasures enjoyed by the human heart: temptations such as seductive beauty, sensuous pleasure and wealth, derived no matter from what source, and the kind of material pleasure sought after by so many. Besides this, unlimited freedom of action and renouncement of all forms of control are also experienced on this path, as human beings tend to crave this kind of freedom from all forms of restraint. The path to paradise is certainly no bed of roses. One has to face untold hardships and suffering and to abide by many restrictions and the desire to resist the cravings of the heart. However, whereas the consequence of indulging in what are the temporary pleasures of life lead to constant suffering in hell, the reward for following the more difficult

path is eternal joy and pleasure in the life hereafter. It's rather like a student on the eve of his exams. He is reluctant to leave his family who are watching television, but he has to get on with his revision. However, after this temporary displeasure, he will enjoy the fruits of his success. 'Another example would be the case of a sick man who has to 'give up certain delicious foods. His reward is that he will regain his health. God has set the two paths before us and He has created the - faculty within us to enable us to distinguish between the two so 'that everyone, regardless of his or her educational background, has the ability to discriminate between good and evil. This means that in the same way as when we do something good we feel a sense of relief as we have a clear conscience, we equally feel upset when we do something wrong. This faculty is not restricted to human beings; animals have it too. For example, if you

throw a piece of meat to a cat he will eat it in front of you in a perfectly relaxed way. But if he snatches the meat from you he will run off to a corner and gobble it up on his own so that you won't see him and grab the meat back! So we can see from this example that in the first instance the cat's conscience is clear because he feels the meat has been given to him, whereas in the second example his reaction shows he knows instinctively that he has acted aggressively. In other words, he has distinguished between right and wrong, and what is 'lawful' and what is 'prohibited'. A dog too will come and lick his master when he has done something good as if he is asking him for a reward. But when he misbehaves the dog looks sheepish, as if he regrets what he has done or expects to be punished. This is the interpretation of the verse in the Holy Qur'an which says: Have We not shown

him the two paths (of good and evil)? (Qur'an;90:80).

Guidance of Humanity & Choice:

God has appointed certain men to preach to and guide mankind on the path of paradise. They are the prophets. The path to hell also has those who lure men to it. They are God's adversaries. The Ulema (scholars and religious leaders) follow in the prophets' footsteps. Fatima, daughter of our Prophet Muhammad, (peace be upon him), did not inherit property or wealth from him. The ulema inherited the da'wah (the task of spreading the message of his religion) from him. Whoever fulfills this task with absolute sincerity and to the best of his ability deserves the honour of this inheritance. Da'wah is difficult, given man's strong desire for freedom, which religion wants to restrain. Religion endeavours to curb human nature when it gets out of control and indulges in every

pleasure. Religion readily responds to any temptation to commit sins or behave immorally. Human nature is rather like a reservoir full of water, situated on top of a high hill. It's easy to destroy the reservoir: you merely pierce it with something sharp and the water will overflow in no time, flooding the valley below. But if you want to refill the reservoir, it's a different matter. You'll need to go to a great deal of trouble, install a pump and spend a vast amount of money. Here's another example to illustrate human weakness. If you want to bring a heavy boulder to the foot of a mountain, all you need do is to push it slightly and it will roll down, - but getting it back to the top is a tremendous task! And that is the way of human nature.

A friend who is not adhering to a religious path might tell you about a beautiful woman who performs dancing shows in the nude, and you might be tempted to go along and see her. If a religious person

were to come along at this point to advise you against seeing the woman, you might find it difficult to resist temptation and listen to his advice. Those who spread evil hardly have to exert themselves at all in order to spread their mischief, whereas those who uphold moral values and noble actions have to make a tremendous effort. The 'evil monger' has all the factors which play upon human weakness at his fingertips: feminine charms unashamedly exposed sexual arousal and easy access to whatever appeals to the senses. How can the preachers of Islam compete with all these attractions? What do they have to offer in their place? Simply restraint and moderation. You may find yourself looking at a girl who is not wearing the veil which Muslim women are required to wear, and you might fantasize about the shape of her body. At that point a preacher would ask you to lower your gawk and not to look at her. Another example is of a businessman

who finds the practice of lending money at a high rate of interest the best and quickest way of making money. But the preacher would advise him not to make money in this way. An employee might notice a colleague accepting a bribe equivalent to six months' salary and imagine how much he and his family would benefit if he did likewise. The preacher, however, would intervene at this point advising him to restrain himself from carrying out such an action. Spiritual teachers advise all such people, warning them to keep away from temporary pleasures that cross their path, - to give up temptations in the physical world for the sake of the unseen: that which they cannot perceive at that moment. They encourage them to control their weak wills and the desires of their hearts, even though this is a tremendous task and a heavy burden. It should not be a wonder that we describe religion as a heavy

burden. Indeed, Allah the Almighty has described it like this in the Holy Qur'an: "Behold, we shall bestow upon thee a weighty message" (Qur'an;73:5). Every noble act weighs down the human soul.

In the example we looked at, of the student leaving his family watching television in order to revise for his exams, he was no doubt fed up! It is also hard for someone who is a student of knowledge to detach himself from a social gathering when he is enjoying himself, for the sake of reading and teaching. The same goes for a person who is awakened at dawn to perform *fajr* (dawn prayer). Likewise, a man who sets out on the path of jihad (endeavour hard for the cause of God) also takes a great burden upon himself, when he says goodbye to his wife and family. We therefore find there are far more unrighteous and unworthy people around than the other way round. Those who remember God and let Him guide them are

far fewer than those who opt for the 'easy path'. And this is why it is harmful for us to fall blindly in line with the majority: Now if thou pay heed to the majority of those (who live) on earth, they will but lead thee astray from the path of God (Qur'an;6:116). However, if scarcity and rarity were not qualities of eminence and superiority, diamonds would not be hard to find and coal would not be in such abundance. Nor would great men of genius, brave heroes and men of distinction be so few and far between. For many generations, prophets and men of true knowledge have urged us to follow the right path, while the corrupt and virtueless have tried to mislead us. And in fact, we have the faculty within us to go either way. There is a part of our inner selves that accepts the teachings of the prophets, and another part that is influenced by those who have been misled. The human intellect is the side that understands truth

and the way of the prophets; and there is another side that provokes us into wrong doing. "What's the difference between the mind and the soul?" you may ask. I do not claim to provide here a clear definition to clarify and distinguish one from the other - and even science has failed to throw a light on them' However, I shall try to explain.

Body & Soul:

We all say. "I said to myself or "My mind told me" (or. my intellect). But what is 'you' and what is your 'self? And what is your mind? Even though these things are still not clear to us, and I am not going to discover something unknown, I shall attempt to give a tangible example, The human body is in constant change, and cells which lived in it years ago no longer exist (like the water flowing in the river at any point, changes every moment but river stays). The self is the same: its hopes,

aspirations, pains and sufferings are constantly changing. At this point you may well ask which part of the 'I' is unchanging? It is the 'soul' and your next question may be "What is the soul?" God has revealed knowledge to us about many mysteries of the human body: the functions of our limbs and cures for many diseases. He has also informed us about sicknesses of the human self (*nafas*). He has told us that some selves (*nafas*) are more prone to doing wrong (*nafas amara*), while others are self-critical (*nafase lawama*); in contrast, other selves are completely satisfied and peaceful (*nafase mutminah*). He has also told us that every human (self, *nafas*) tastes death. But the Almighty has not disclosed anything concerning the human soul, as this knowledge belongs only to God. The soul is not affected by limits of time and space. For example, a person in your presence may drop off to sleep for fifteen minutes.

And yet in that time may have 'traveled' to America or India, lived there for twenty or thirty years and experienced tremendous joys and sorrow. But how could a span of twenty years or more possibly be contained in fifteen minutes? This example shows how we can undergo great suffering or enjoy blessings beyond the grave. The soul itself is not affected by anything ~ not even disease or health. It was in existence before it was committed to this body and to this self and it will remain even after we depart from our bodies and after the self has vanished.

Conflict of the Mind and the Self:

Here is another example of the conflict between the mind and the self: You may be warm and cozy in bed, fast asleep on a cold night when the alarm goes to wake you up for dawn prayer. At that moment an inner voice in you tells you to get up and pray. Just as you're about to get up,

you hear another inner voice which says "Why don't you sleep for a bit longer?" "But prayer is better than sleeping," the first voice intervenes. "It would be lovely to go on sleeping," the second voice retorts, "and there's plenty of time. You can be a few minutes late." And so the battle between the two voices continues: "Sleep!" "Get up!" "Sleep!" "Get up!" The former is the mind and the latter is the self. This kind of situation shows up in many shapes and forms. It is the kind of hesitation that comes over a person who wants to jump across a wide ditch. He would like to get across, but is afraid of falling. He hears two different voices in his inner self: "Jump!" "Don't jump -turn back!" If he responds to the voice that tells him to jump, he will get to the other side. But if he hesitates and waits for the voice that tells him to turn back, and then decides to jump, he is bound to fall into the ditch. 'In every situation like the ones

above, we find ourselves having to make a choice. At times like this, good reason can only prevail if we have faith. It is only when we have Iman (faith) that we can achieve victory of the mind over the body. The force of Iman is proportional to the victory of the power of your mind. However, this does not mean that the mind can always conquer the desires of the body, and that a Muslim will never make mistakes.

The Realistic Faith:

Islam is a compassionate religion; it is a practical faith, based on the realities of life. God has not created human beings to be angels, devils, domestic animals or wild beasts. Angels have been created to obey and worship; devils, for disobedience and blasphemy, and domestic and wild beasts are not bestowed with the power of reasoning, but with instincts. This means they are not under obligation to obey the

divine commandments and will not be held responsible for their actions. We do not belong to any of these categories. So what are we? What exactly is a human being? Every human being is a unique creation containing some angelic, devilish and even animal-like characteristics. His angelic qualities are predominant when he sincerely worships God and establishes a close relationship with Him. Such a man is like the angels: "who do not disobey God in whatever He has commanded them, but (always) do what they are bidden to do "(Qur'an;66:6). But if a human being turns his back on or shows contempt for his Creator, or worships more than one God, he will fall victim to negative and harmful influences. When such a man gets angry he acts like a wild man, his sole aim being to beat his enemy at all costs, even if this means attacking him physically. On such occasions, a human being behaves like a wild beast. Likewise, if a man is unable to

control his sexual urges, the animal side of his nature takes him over completely.

These two tendencies form the basis of human nature, one inclining towards good and one towards evil.

God, however, has endowed man with the power of reasoning and the will to choose which way is best. If he is able to use his willpower and exercise good sense he will be amongst those who enjoy eternal happiness in the life hereafter. If not, he will bear the consequences and suffer. The self by its very nature is inclined towards freedom. However, religion restricts this 'freedom' in order to discipline the self. Without such restriction, we could lose all good values and the self might lose control and act in a completely irresponsible way. With such unrestrained freedom, human society could run amok, with human beings behaving like lunatics. For example, a mad man does whatever comes into his mind: he might strip off his

clothes and wander round the streets naked. He might even sit on the shoulders of a bus driver! Or he could take a fancy to your clothes and strip them off you. He may find your daughter attractive and want to have a sexual relationship with her based on passion, and not as ordained by Islam.

Total Freedom!

A lunatic is the only person who enjoys total freedom. A sane person is governed by his common sense which is rather like a 'tether or strap that binds him'. This is reflected in the Arabic word *aql* 'mind' which refers to the rope with which a camel is tied. The word *hikmah*, meaning wisdom, is similar, in that it is also derived from the meaning of a tether. The word 'civilization' also reflects the meaning of such a bond or tether, in that it places limits on your conduct in everyday life. It prescribes respect for the

rights of others and for the accepted conventions, traditions, etc., of a society. 'Justice' is another concept that has the same implication, because it fixes a limit on your freedom with regards to the freedom of your neighbour.

The self is constantly being tempted since what is alluring is always attractive. For example, you may enjoy listening to and taking part in gossip, hearing about what people have or haven't done, and you may derive a vicarious pleasure in it, because you feel that you are better than the person whose weaknesses are being exposed. In the same way, theft may be considered as fun, as it's an easy and effortless way of bringing in money. The self may find committing adultery an enjoyable way of satisfying its desires. Cheating in an examination helps the person to pass it, without having made an effort. The self may want to shirk its duties, thus becoming lazy and lethargic.

But if you really stop and think, you will find that this short-lived freedom is not worth the trouble, because in return you will have to bear the consequences of your misdeeds for a long time.

The Choice!

How would a person feel, if he was asked to sign a legal contract granting him whatever he wanted to satisfy his wildest dreams, for a year: he could live in whatever country he chose, and have as many love affairs as he wanted. Imagine that contract stated that nothing would be forbidden but it also stipulated that at the end of the year he would be hanged. Wouldn't he say "No pleasure lasting for a year is worth being hanged for!"? Wouldn't he realise that as soon as the noose was tightened round his neck he could not take any of these sources of pleasure with him? Wouldn't he understand that even though the pain of

being hanged may only last for a minute, the torture in the life hereafter would never come to an end? There can hardly be anyone in the world who has not sinned at some point in their life, and enjoyed committing that sin. The least of all sins might be the reluctance to get up and perform the dawn prayer.

If we stop and think about all the pleasures we might have enjoyed ten years ago and then ask whether we are left with any of those pleasures now, what's the answer?... Nothing! To perform any duty is always hard and causes some discomfort. For example, the duty of fasting during the month of Ramadan means we Muslims have to suffer feelings of hunger and thirst. But what effects are we feeling now from those sufferings? What is left of the hunger pangs we underwent during the month of Ramadan ten years ago? The pleasures of sin may have vanished, but the punishment remains. Whereas the

pains and sufferings undergone for the sake of performing duties have disappeared, but the reward stays with us.

Pleasures & Consequences:

What consequences await us at the hour of death from all the pleasures we enjoyed and the sufferings we underwent? Deep down in our hearts we always want to repent and return to the path of God, but we put it off and play a waiting game. For example I used to tell myself that I would repent and follow God's way after performing Hajj. I would perform Hajj regularly, but I still didn't repent! My fortieth year and my sixtieth years went by and I still hadn't repented. This does not mean that I have been leading a life full of sin all these years. Not at all, thank God. But that example just shows that man wants to lead a good life, but he keeps finding excuses to put it off. He thinks he has plenty of time ahead and can therefore

afford to vegetate - until, all of a sudden, he is struck by death. I myself have had two near death experiences, and this made me repent every moment I had wasted in acts of disobedience to God, and this feeling of repentance persisted for several months and during that time I became a good person. Later on though, I became involved yet again in the rough and tumble of life - and forgot about death.

Death- The Forgotten Reality:

We all forget death. Even seeing funerals go by isn't enough to remind us that we will die one day. Even during prayers at funerals our minds may wander onto worldly matters. We think that everyone else is going to die except us, and yet, deep down, we know we shall depart from this world one day. A man may live up to sixty, seventy or even a hundred, but he is bound to die one day. You must know people who lived on to a great age, but they

all died. Perhaps you know that Noah lived till he was 950, preaching to his people. Where is Noah now? Has he been living in the world all this time? Has he been excluded from death? Why is it then that we do not think about death and prepare for it, since it is inevitable?

A person who is going on a journey starts getting ready from the moment a date has been fixed until his departure. I was once in the company of some Jordanian teachers who had signed contracts for employment in Saudi Arabia informed that their flights were scheduled to take off one after the other. Those who had prepared themselves in time were able to leave as scheduled as soon as they had attended to passport formalities and said goodbye to their families. But those who needed more time to get ready for the journey were not given that time and were therefore unable to leave.

So what can we say about a call for departure announced by the Angel of Death! It is not a call that can be put off nor ignored. The Angel of Death will seize a person even if he is unwilling and will not allow him any respite. And who knows when the Angel of Death will arrive? What is death exactly? What is the truth about it? Human life is divided into stages: the first stage is the embryo in a mother's womb; then comes life in this world followed by the stage of *barzakh* (the interim period between death and resurrection). Finally, there is the eternal stage of the life hereafter. Each successive stage has the same degree of relativity to the one next to it.

The Perception of Vastness: A Relative Illusion:

The vastness of this world when compared to the narrow space in the mother's womb is like the vastness of the *barzakh* when

compared to life in the world; the same goes for the vastness of the life hereafter when compared to the barzakh. When a child is in the embryonic form he thinks his entire world is his mother's womb. If the embryo were to be asked about the meaning of his exit from the womb, he might say that it would mean death. If the embryo consisted of twins and one was born before the other, the one who was born late might say] that his twin brother had died and been buried in an unknown world. He would weep if he had seen his twin's placenta discarded and thrown away in just the same way a mother would grieve over her son's dead body. A mother who has to keep her child clean and sees him being buried in the earth of his grave breaks down. What she doesn't realize is that this is like the placenta: it is like a dirty shirt that needs to be "thrown away. It is a garment whose life is over and is no longer needed. This is what death is, in

fact it is a 'new birth'. It is an exit into another dimension which is longer and wider in terms of time and space.

The Transient World:

The world we live in is only a place of transit. Our life in it is similar to the life of a migrant going to the United States by ship. He pays for a pleasant cabin and makes provisions to ensure he has a comfortable trip. But do you think he would bother to spend all his money renovating the amenities in his cabin and arrive in the United States penniless as a consequence? Or would he say to himself: "I' will only be staying in this cabin for a week, so I might as well enjoy what's provided for and save my money for my home in the States as 'that is where I'll be taking up permanent residence." Here's another example to compare this world with the .world to come. Some years ago the United States announced that it was

going to carry out an atomic test on a small island in the Pacific Ocean. This island was inhabited by a few hundred fishermen who were asked to vacate the island and were offered residence in the country of their choice, with the same terms and conditions as those they had been used to. A final date was fixed, giving them time to submit their particulars and prepare for their departure. The inhabitants reacted in different ways. Some of them did as they were advised, some dilly-dallied and neglected the matter till the final date, whereas others said the whole issue was based on lies, that there was no such place as the United States and they were therefore not willing to leave the island. It did not occur to them that the whole island would be blow to pieces and left in ruins. This example illustrates the different attitudes that may have to life on earth.

The believer is aware of what is to come in the hereafter and therefore prepares for it by leading a life of repentance and obedience, and we can compare him to the first; group of fishermen who started to pack up and get ready to go and live in a different place. But the believer who does not obey God and ignores his obligations is like the second group of fishermen, who took no notice of the fact that danger was imminent. As for the non-believer, he is like the third group of fishermen: he rejects and doubts the truth of religion. He is convinced that there is no life after this worldly existence, and that death is a deep sleep, a permanent rest and that he will be extinct.

The Balanced Life:

This does not mean that Islam calls upon every Muslim to give up this world completely and free him self of all responsibilities. **Islam does not say that**

mosques provide the only place of interest for Muslims; nor does it say that they should live in caves and lead the life of hermits. On the contrary, Islam calls upon Muslims to set the best example of a civilized people and to strive to be among the richest in terms of material wealth as well as to take a lead among scientists. It urges every Muslim to lead a balanced and healthy life, taking care of his or her body by eating proper food and keeping fit. Islam advises Muslims not to overwork and to enjoy life and relax, so long as this recreation does not break the boundaries of Islam.

It urges a Muslim to take care of his family and carry out certain duties in the society in which he lives. He should be just as aware of these obligations as of the principles of faith in the Oneness of God and the need to obey Him. In other words, a Muslim may accumulate wealth, provided it is

accumulated lawfully. Equally, he may enjoy all the lawfully permitted good things in life and he should be very much of this world, provided that he remains true to his faith and does not let any form of polytheism, explicit or implicit, infiltrate into his faith. He must keep away from whatever is deemed to be unlawful and perform all his religious duties. **Wealth is something which should be carefully possessed** in a Muslim's hands and not in his heart, because his dependence should be on God and not on material possessions. And his one and only purpose in life should be constantly to seek to do what is acceptable to God.

CHAPTER-2: WHAT IS ISLAM?

Explaining Islam in Brief:

Once I asked my students the following question: "If a non Muslim asks you to explain all about Islam in an hour, what you would do?" This is how they responded: "That: would be impossible! He would have to study the principle of the Oneness of God, commentaries on the Holy Qur'an - and he'd have to learn how to recite from the Holy Qur'an, study the Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the system of Islamic law. He'd also need to delve into problems and issues which could take him fifty years' I retorted by saying, "Glory be to God! What about the simple and uneducated Bedouin who came to our Prophet and learned all about Islam Just by staying in his company for a day - or even less? And didn't those very same Bedouin then carry the message of Islam

to the desert folk, and in turn become their teachers and guides? Don't you remember how our Prophet explained our religion in three brief sentences? He spoke about Iman (faith) Islam (the religion) and *Ihsun* (Man's realization of his relation to God). So why is it, then, that we can't explain our religion in an hour in this day and' age?" So what is Islam - and how does one become a Muslim?

What is Islam? How to be a Muslim?

Pre-requisites of Joining a Group or Association: Every creed, whether its basic principles are based on truth or falsehood, every society, good or bad, and every political party, regardless of whether its intentions are noble or not, operate on certain basic principles and precepts that define its goal and outline its course of action. These principles and precepts are put together in the form of a constitution to guide its members and followers.

Anyone wishing to become a member of such an organisation would need to start off by studying these guidelines. If he finds that they satisfy both his conscious and subconscious mind, and believe without any doubt in their validity, he will decide to Join that organisation and become one of its members and supporters.

From then on he has to obey the laws laid down in the constitution and to pay the membership fee. He also has to prove, in due course, his genuine commitment to the principles and precepts of the organisation. This means he has to remind himself of them constantly and make sure he does nothing to contradict them. He has to set an example, through his character and behaviour, of one who ardently follows and supports those principles. So we can say that membership to a society means:

- Knowledge of its system.
- Belief in its principles.
- Adhering to its regulations.
- Conducting oneself in everyday life according to those principles and regulations.

These are accepted conventions which are all applicable to Islam.

Fundamental Principles to Embrace Islam:

Anyone wishing to embrace Islam has to accept its intellectual principles with total conviction right from the start. This means he will have developed the faith within himself. The principles he has to accept are outlined briefly as follows:

- This material world is not the ‘all’ and ‘end of all’ of existence and life in this world is only a part of the eternal life.

- Man existed even before he was born and will continue to exist after death; he did not create himself but had been created before he was conscious of his human existence.
- The inanimate objects around him couldn't have created him, as he is a rational being and they are not; * everything in this universe has been created from nothingness by the one God, God the Almighty.
- God is the only one who grants life and causes death. It is He who created everything, and if He wishes. He will destroy and obliterate it.
- Almighty God does not resemble His creation in any way. He existed before this creation and He is eternal and has unlimited knowledge.

- He is completely just in a way that cannot be assessed in human terms; it is He who has laid down what we call the laws of nature.
- He has created everything according to a well-defined measure before all creation, thus all the phenomena of activity, inactivity, consistency and inconsistency that we can observe in both animate and inanimate beings have been clearly defined and distinct boundaries have been set.
- Man has been bestowed with the power of intellect to deal with whatever matters he is presented with and he has been given the power of reasoning with which he can make his own choice and will power to enable him to achieve what he wants.
- God has created an eternal life beyond this temporary life, where

the doer of good will be rewarded with a life in paradise and the wrong doer will be punished and exist in hell. This God is One. No one else may be worshipped but Him; no one can take us nearer to Him to plead on our behalf without His permission. Thus we should worship God alone, in all sincerity and purity.

- All the material beings that we can see and feel which have been created by Him. He has also created unseen beings, some animate and others inanimate, which we cannot see. Among the unseen beings are the angels, who have been created for absolute good; and then there are the Satans, who have been created as dark and negative forces.
- Apart from these there is a third category of unseen beings, the jinn,

who are divided into Satans and 'good' or 'obedient' jinn and from amongst human beings.

- God selects certain people to whom the Shari'a (Divine Law) is revealed, so that they can guide humanity towards it, these people are the prophets.
- This divine law is contained in all the books revealed from the God. God takes us through progressive "steps" in each book until the final book, the Holy Qur'an. Books that preceded it were either distorted or got lost and forgotten. The Holy Qur'an, however, has remained intact. The last of these prophets is Muhammad bin Abdullah, an Arab of the Quraysh tribe. With him there was an end to all the previous divine messages and religions. There has been no other prophet since his

time. The Holy Qur'an is the constitution of Islam. Whoever endorses the fact that it has been revealed by God and believes in it completely, is a *Mu'min* (believer). *Iman* (faith) in this sense can only be seen by God because human beings cannot penetrate into human hearts and know what is in them. Therefore it is essential, in order to be accepted in the fold of Islam, that a man declare his faith.

Declaration of Faith:

An individual can pronounce his/her 'faith in Islam' by pronouncing: "*I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of God.*" The moment he pronounces this statement of faith he becomes a Muslim and is entitled to all the rights enjoyed by Muslims; he also agrees to perform all the duties (*ibadat*) enjoined upon him by Islam.

Duties (*ibada*) of A Muslim:

The *ibadat* (duties) of a Muslim, are the prescribed forms of worship. There are only a few and they are easy to perform and do not require much effort or exertion. There are four, as outlined below:

- I). **Salah (Prayer):** A Muslim has to pray two *rak'ats* (prostrations) at dawn, during which time he has communion with his Lord. He asks Him of His goodness and seeks refuge in Him from His punishment. Before making these prostrations, a Muslim has, to perform *wudu* (ablutions): he washes his face, hands and feet, or takes a bath if he is in a state of ritual impurity. Besides the dawn prayer, he has to pray at four other times four *rak'ats* at midday; four *rak'ats* in the afternoon; three *rak'ats* at sunset; four *rak'ats* at night: These are obligatory (*faradh*) prayers, the performing of which will not, on the

whole, take more than half an hour per day. There is no particular place or person required for the performance of these prayers, and it is not necessary for a Muslim to have an intermediary when he prays, as he prays directly to his Lord.

- II). **Fasting (Saum):** In a certain month during the year a Muslim has to fast. This is known as the period of Ramadan. Breakfast is consumed before dawn, lunch is taken after sunset, and during the day all Muslims abstain from food and water and must not have sexual intercourse. Ramadan is a month of self-purification for every Muslim when he purifies his body and soul. It is also a month to fulfill the desire to do good and be generous, and to reflect the brotherhood of man in the material life.
- II). **Zakah (alms):** A Muslim has to give 2.5 % of his wealth as alms to the poor and needy. He does this on an annual

basis, once his own needs and those of his family have been met. This financial support paid by every Muslim comes as a great source of comfort' and assistance to the poor, the sick and the needy. It thus helps to alleviate poverty and establishes a form of social security.

IV). **Congregations:** Islam has arranged certain periodical gatherings for Muslims. They congregate together five times a day to offer prayer. There need be no disruption of work for anyone whatever his trade or profession. Those who miss the congregation can pray at home, though they will, in fact deprive themselves of the joyful reward of praying together in a group. Then there is the weekly congregation on Fridays for *Jum'a* prayer. This lasts for less than an hour, and it is compulsory for all male Muslims to attend. Besides the above, there are mass congregations

held twice a year on the occasion of the two Eids (festivals). Attendance is not compulsory and they last less than an hour. Finally there is the annual world congregation known as the Hajj. It is a kind of mammoth public gathering, held once a year at Makkah. This congregation provides guidance in all aspects: spiritual, physical and intellectual. A Muslim is expected to attend once in his lifetime, but only if he is able to do so. These are the duties and acts of worship enjoined upon every Muslim.

Avoiding Evil Acts:

Apart from the above, abstention from certain modes of behaviour are also deemed as *ibadah* (worship). These are actions which any sensible person would deplore, such as killing without a valid reason, intruding on the rights of others, aggressive behaviour and all forms of

injustice, any kind of intoxication which would affect the brain, adultery, since it destroys honour and dignity and violates the sanctioned form of blood relationship. Other forms of forbidden behaviour include usury, lying, betrayal and deserting any form of military service which seeks to glorify the Divine Writ, making false oaths or producing false witnesses - and, above all, disobedience to one's parents or dismissing them and neglecting their needs. However, God forgives a Muslim who fails to carry out some of his duties and disobeys some of the Islamic laws but repents and asks for pardon. On the other hand, a Muslim who does not repent will be considered as a rebel, who will be punished in the next world. This punishment will, however, be only temporary and will not be equal to that of a non-believer. As for a Muslim who refuses to acknowledge any basic Islamic principle or belief, rejects his

duties and Islamic regulations or denies even the smallest detail outlined in the Holy Qur'an, he will be considered as an apostate deprived of his Islamic identity. Apostasy is similar to a crime of high treason, from the Islamic point of view. Unless a person gives up his un-Islamic beliefs and repents, he will be given a death sentence.

Total Acceptance of Faith-No Hypocrisy:

Faith has to be accepted in totality and, therefore, a denial of any aspect is deemed as a denial of the whole. Therefore, anyone who accepts 99% of the faith but denies 1% is considered an infidel. You may come across Muslims who are nonbelievers. They can be compared with someone who joins a political party or a society, attends all its meetings, pays his subscription - and does whatever is required of a member, but nonetheless refuses to accept its principles and remains unconvinced. It

may seem that such a person has joined the party or society simply to find out what's going on or to create trouble. Such a Muslim is a hypocrite - hypocrisy is defined as “outward profession of faith and concealment of disbelief”. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), used to say that a hypocrite can be recognised in three ways: failure to keep his promise, lying and betraying anyone's trust. A hypocrite pronounces statements of faith and performs his religious duties, yet deep and down he remains unconvinced. Such a person may be considered a Muslim by the outside world but not by God, Who knows what is hidden in our hearts and innermost beings.

The Believing Muslim:

One is a believing Muslims if he/she fully believes in the intellectual and theoretical bassets of Islam, which are:-

- a) Giving full testimony to the existence Allah (God) and declares He has neither associate nor intermediary.
- b) Belief in the angels, all Prophets and all revealed Holy Books, including Qur'an.
- c) Belief In the destiny.
- d) Expression of the statements of faith (*Shahada, kalimah*).
- e) Performance of the obligatory prayers.
- f) Fasting in the month of Ramadan;
- g) Payment of *zakat* (alms);
- h) Performance of Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca once in a lifetime, if this is possible.
- i) Abstention from everything that is forbidden by Muslim consensus.

Generally speaking, adhering to the Iman (Faith) is more beneficial to us - we feel

better and enjoy tremendous rewards. This is why, even though it may be hard to stick to these laws 100%, we feel better in ourselves if we follow them. Our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) summed up the characteristics of a true Muslim in an eloquent sentence which states the essence of faith and action in a nutshell: "You should worship God as if you can see him." This means we must strive to be in total awareness of God's presence all the time. This is the very essence of Islam - to be God conscious in all our actions, whether or not they are serious. God is watching us constantly and is aware of our every move. This is why anyone who is truly God-conscious will obey His laws, and he will not despair either, knowing that God is with him all the time. A person who is strengthened in this way will not need to ask for help from anyone because he can always ask God to fulfill his needs. And, if anyone disobeys God's laws, as it is

in his nature to sin, provided he asks for forgiveness, God will forgive him. This is just a brief introduction to Islam and in the following chapters we shall be looking into all aspects of faith in detail.

A Sinner Muslim:

If a Muslim fails to perform some of his obligations and is remiss in practice or commits some such actions as are forbidden, yet he believes in the liability of all obligations and the impropriety of all unlawful deeds, he will continue to be a Muslim though he will be a sinner. [The concept of *Takfeer* i.e declaring a non-practicing Muslim, to be ‘apostate’ and liable to be killed; by some extremist groups, calling themselves as ‘True Muslims only’, is rejected.]

CHAPTER:3: DOUBT, PRESUMPTION & KNOWLEDGE

Before going into the subject of doctrine in detail we should define certain terms which frequently appear in books on this subject and which are often used by scholars of Islam. These terms are ‘**Doubt**’, ‘**Presumption**’ and ‘**Knowledge**’. After we have examined them we shall begin to look into the meaning of faith.

Doubt:

Descartes; the renowned French philosopher and mathematician, and, before him. Imam Ghazali in his book "Savior from Misguidance" both chose ‘**DOUBT**’ as a point of departure for their enquiry into certainty. In fact, Descartes: used ‘Doubt’ as a means to reach certainty. So what do we mean by ‘Doubt’? If

someone were to ask you while you were staying in the centre of a city, that whether it was raining in the suburbs? You would be unable to reply, even though the suburbs are only about twenty miles away. You would have no definite evidence one way or the other. And this is the case with the 'concept of doubt'. You can make a guess, but you cannot be 100% sure.

Presumption:

However, if you were to look into the distance and see some rain clouds you might be inclined to say: "It looks as if it is raining in the suburbs." This means that it's very likely that it is raining, and this possibility regarding the existence of something, is known as 'Presumption'. Should you take a further look and notice that the rain clouds are quite thick and heavy, and also see a flash of lightning, your presumption regarding the possibility of rain increases and your response to the

original question will be more positive. At this point you might well reply: "I'm inclined to think it's raining in the suburbs now."

Knowledge:

But if you were to go into the suburbs and actually see the rain falling, your presumption would become a certainty. And this is what scholars term as "**KNOWLEDGE**". If we examine the various meanings of the word 'knowledge' we see that firstly we have 'absolute knowledge' as opposed to ignorance. Knowledge also embraces science in contrast to the arts and philosophy. For example, physics and chemistry are both sciences whereas art and poetry belong to the domain of the arts. In the context of science where the ultimate goal of knowledge is to seek the truth, the intellect is used as a tool to achieve this aim. The methods adopted are 'enquiry',

'experiment' and "deduction'. In the case of the arts, it is concerned with the appreciation of beauty. Its means are perception and consciousness while a good taste is instrumental to success in it. Definition of Faith needs no proof. We intend to discuss that knowledge which in contrast to doubt and presumption stands for certainty and positiveness. This knowledge is of two kinds:

Obvious Knowledge:

It is the Knowledge gained through the senses and observations need no proof. For example there is a mountain before you which does not need any proof. You see it there and it exists. Every sane person who sees it will admit of its existence. Its presence is the proof of its existence. This knowledge is called essential or axiomatic knowledge.

Theoretical Knowledge:

It is that knowledge which requires proof. For example the formula that the sum of squares of base and height of a right angled triangle is equal to the square of its hypotenuse; is something which requires proof. Any scholar or a student who finds the proof of that will know the fact and will admit it. But an ignorant unlettered person will not know it and will not accept it until he is given vivid proof of that even though the triangle along with squares on its sides are placed before his eyes. This knowledge is known as Theoretical Knowledge that is the knowledge which cannot be acquired without proof.

Self Evident Truth and Creed:

Some theoretical knowledge needs proof because it cannot be perceived merely by logic and observation. Nevertheless, it is common and popular knowledge of which everyone, regardless of age or education,

is aware. Such knowledge almost falls into the category of essential knowledge. For example: "A part is smaller than the whole" is a theoretical statement, but, although the category of theoretical knowledge basically needs to be proved, you will hardly find anyone who doubts this statement or needs evidence of it. Even a child will accept it. If you were, for example, to take a bar of chocolate from a child and give him back just a small piece, telling him that the piece you have returned is bigger than the bar of chocolate, he would not be convinced and would not accept it. This is because it is self-evident that any part of any thing is smaller than its whole.

The statement regarding identity—that is, that everything has an identity of its own, is also a self-evident truth. If someone were to ask you to prove that the pen you were holding was not a teaspoon, you would respond by saying: "That's quite

obvious and doesn't need any proof!" So these self evident truths are obvious facts which everyone acknowledges - facts that do not need proof. And when a self evident truth enters the inner consciousness and establishes itself there, it creates an impact on intuition and all aspects of behaviour - and is known as faith. Belief in it is known as *Iman*. However, we all know that although people often believe in truth, more often than not they believe in 'untrue' ideologies. Nowadays there are many breakaway groups with misleading principles not based on truth, and these groups have attracted a lot of ardent followers who sacrifice all they have for the sake; of these groups. Such people cannot be regarded as believers; in the absolute meaning of the word. God says in the Holy Qur'an: Art thou not aware of those who, having been granted their share of the Divine Writ, (now) believe in unfounded mysteries and in the powers of

evil.(Qur'an;4:51); “And most of them do not even believe in God without (also) ascribing divine powers to other beings beside Him (Qur'an;12:106).

As for Iman, and all the derivatives of this word, they are used exclusively to denote belief in all that pertains to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah (tradition).

The Belief (Iman):

This belief can be summed up as follows:

To believe that:-

- 1) The God (Allah) as the One and Only God, unique and peerless.
- 2) He alone is the Master, All-powerful and Almighty, the One Who has supreme ownership of all things.
- 3) He alone is to be worshipped, and no one else is to be associated with Him in worship.

- 4) All that has been revealed to His prophet (Holy Scriptures), the angels, the prophets and the Day of Judgment and destiny, regardless of whether this destiny is in our favour or full of hardship.

The Believer (Mu'min):

A person who holds the above belief is a *Mu'min* (believer). But if he makes any compromise regarding them, withdraws from them or hesitates to endorse his beliefs or expresses doubts, he will be lacking in the quality of *Iman* and will not be deemed a Mu'min (true believer).

- 1) Just as one obtains conviction (*Yaqin*) through one's observation and senses, so is true news the source of conviction.

- 2) We have no right to deny the existence of those truths which we cannot perceive through our senses.
- 3) A firm faith in the existence of God is the natural nucleus of and is concentrated in the human nature.
- 4) There is a spiritual world at the back of this material world, which we cannot perceive.

The belief in life after death tantamount to belief in the existence of Allah.

[Conviction *Yaquin*--- is the fruit of faith
-Iman]

CHAPTER-4: THE PRINCIPLES OF CONCEPTUALIZATION OF FAITH

Before explaining the fundamentals of faith, which are the subject matter of this book, I would like to deviate a little and say a few things in connection these fundamentals which are, though not related to this topic, yet will through light on the circumstances which influenced the genesis of these fundamentals and were responsible for their arrangement and compilation. Just before the Second World War when I was teaching Arabic literature in Baghdad, I was asked to teach religious Studies. The syllabus consisted of certain *Surah* (chapters) of the Holy Qur'an which had to be explained and interpreted. I arrived at my class to find a completely undisciplined group of students who had turned the period designated to religious studies into a time for recreation and idle chat. But when I was teaching "the very

same class literature, you could hear a pin drop. I realized that their poor attention in the religious studies class was due to their **wavering faith**. So I told them to put away their copies of the Holy Qur'an and listen. As soon as I started reciting from the Holy Qur'an, I felt inspired by God. This led to my producing a new work on the subject of **Iman**, in which I incorporated the **Principles of Belief**. These Principles (of conceptualization of faith) are as follows:-

The First Principle:

We have no doubts about anything that we can perceive through our senses we all accept this fundamental truth. However, if I walk through the desert at noon and see a lake in the distance, but only find sand when I reach that spot, what appeared to be a lake turned out to be mirage. Likewise if I put a pencil in a glass of water it will look as if it is broken, though

in actual fact it is not, You might go to a party where, as it gets late, you start talking about the supernatural - ghosts, etc., and get so carried away that you feel as if a ghost or demon is following you, whereas in reality there is nothing there. It's rather like a conjuring trick. A magician will produce strange objects which seem to be real, even though they are not. So our senses can delude and deceive us. But does this mean that I should doubt the existence of something I can feel? Quite the reverse because if I doubt what I see, hear and feel, there will be a conflict between fact and fantasy that will eventually drive me crazy. But I would like to add another condition here about obtaining knowledge - meaning 'certainty regarding the existence of what I sense'. The mind may misjudge something the first time it perceives it. For example, it may think a mirage is a lake, but the second time it sees it will not make the

mistake. Similarly it will soon realize that even though the pencil on the glass of water looks as if it is broken, in fact it is not. The various ways in which the senses delude us are limited and easy to recognize. This includes the tricks that Pharaoh's magicians used to perform in the past, and the circus tricks we enjoy in this day and age.

The Second Principle:

Certainty about past and present events received through a reliable source is as reliable as the certainty we would have had if we had been present. There are certain facts about which we are sure, even though we may not have direct experience of them. For example, we all know that India and Brazil are countries that exist though we may not have visited them. We also know for a fact that Alexander the Great conquered Persia, even though we did not witness the battles in which he

fought. In fact, if we all looked inward, we would soon realize that the number of facts about which we are sure even though we cannot perceive or experience them directly, far surpass those we have actually experienced, such as countries we have not visited and events, both past and present, that we have not witnessed directly. What evidence, then, do we have of their existence? Of course we draw certain conclusions from what we have always been told throughout history and our own lives. It would be absurd to think that each generation has fabricated events and ideas to pass on to the next.

The Second Principle therefore is that; just as we get conviction and belief through perception and observation, so do we get it through the report of a person whom we believe to honest and truthful.

The Third Principle:

How much knowledge can we perceive through our senses? Can our senses comprehend everything that exists? We can compare the human mind in relation to the senses as follows. Imagine that orders have been given to shut us up in a tower. All the windows and doors are shut, so that all we can see of the outside world is through cracks in the wall. If we peep through one crack facing east, we can see a river, looking west through another crevice, we can see a mountain. In a northerly direction we can see a large mansion, and south a playground. The human mind is the prisoner and the body the tower, with the cracks representing the senses. The sense of sight sees colors, the sense of hearing picks up sounds, the sense of taste awakens our appetite for food, the sense of smell introduces us to the world of fragrances, and the sense of touch makes us aware of physical bodies

and objects. At this point we can ask certain questions:

- 1) **Can each sense perceive everything that exists in this universe?** Does the river a prisoner sees through a crack in the tower wall represent the entire river? Of course not He only sees a part of it. Similarly the sense of sight cannot perceive the whole spectrum of colours. The fact that I cannot see an ant crawling three miles away from where I am does not rule out its existence. In the same way we are unable to see all the tiny bacteria in a glass of water. Neither are we able to observe the electrons revolving in an atom, or the planets in their orbits, with the naked eye. The vibrations of an ant's voice are outside the range of our auditory sense, which is from five to twenty thousand whatever, is less than five

vibrations or beyond twenty thousand is outside our hearing range. Nor can we pick up the scent of sugar that attracts ants and flies. All this proves that **we are only able to perceive a part of what is around us.**

- 2) Is it not possible that another world exists between the world of colour and sound, which we are unable to observe because we are not equipped with the particular sense of Perception? The prisoner in the tower may not have actually been able to see a beautiful garden between the river and the mountain, but this does not rule out its existence. Again we have the example of someone who is born blind and is only able to learn by what he is told that the sea is blue and the grass is green. Yet physically he is unable to see the

Manifestation of these colours. In the same way, someone who is deaf, though he may learn about musical notes, he cannot actually hear them. But this does not mean that a blind or deaf person denies the existence of colour or sound. The room where you are sitting may seem to be free of all sound though, in actual fact, it contains all the sounds that are being broadcast in the air from various radio stations. You are only unable to hear them because they are outside the range of your sense of hearing. They are vibrations which can only be picked up by a radio. And there are other things going on in the atmosphere that humans are unable to perceive. For example, we cannot pick up the slight variations in atmospheric pressure though a barometer can do this. Likewise, a radar picks up mild

tremors we cannot feel. So, there are many things which exist outside the range of our senses, but not perceiving them does not mean denying their presence.

- 3) The next question we need to look at is **whether our senses are all pervading and complete?** Until recently it was thought that we only had five senses. Now a few more have been discovered, and it seems there can be more. Therefore, anything that can be increased can be described as being incomplete. I may do things which I do not perceive, but am aware of For example, if I shut my eyes and open or close my hand I am aware that it is open or closed without actually seeing it. And do we perceive our moods of happiness or unhappiness, weakness or sickness through our five senses? Of course not. We

perceive them with an **inner sense**. Similarly, I do not sway from left to right when I am walking because an inner sense infuses me with a sense of balance. The same goes for a cyclist or a trapeze artist who performs amazing balancing acts. This means that there must be an eighth sense - the sense of balance. And it has been discovered that God created this sense in the form of liquid matter in the inner ear. Experiments carried out on rabbits show they lose their balance if this liquid is removed, and totter around as if they were drunk.

This Third Principle is that we have no right to refuse the existence of certain things which are not perceptible thorough senses.

The Fourth Principle:

The human imagination can only perceive that which the senses are able to perceive. We have already discussed the limitations of our senses: we cannot see every visible object with our eyes, etc. But God has granted us with the power of imagination to serve as a supplementary tool. For example, I cannot actually see my home in London if I am in New York - though I can picture it in my mind's eye. The power of imagination therefore complements our sense of perception. But is this power limited - or is it fathomless? Can I imagine something I haven't actually seen?

Psychologists classify imagination in two categories:-

- 1) Imagination based on reality and creative imagination. The example of imagining my house in London when I am in New York illustrates the former.

- 2) The latter is the fertile ground poets, writers, painters and other artists use to create from. Look at what they have achieved. Have they produced anything not based on reality? For example, did the sculptor who sculpted the statue of Venus depict someone in real life? No-he did not. However; it is not a totally new image but a synthesis of several images. We can trace the end result back to various sources and say that that the sculptor used the best physical features from different women to produce his art form; the nose and mouth represent the perfect female form in real life and so on. As a result the end product though 'new' represents different parts already in existence.

In the case of the Winged Assyrian Bull, found in a museum in Paris, the sculptor created a patchwork of a human face and

the body of a bull to which he attached the wings of a bird. Again, the result is a new kind of image compiled of existing forms. Poets illustrate their mental images through the use of metaphors, similes, metonyms and, sometimes, deliberate exaggeration. Various strands of their imagination come together to form the poetry they produce. If we were to delve more deeply into such fantasies; however, we would find they have their limitations and that it is not possible to piece together components which are mutually incompatible. For example, we cannot say that a song smells like a rose or that the fragrance of a perfume is red. If you visualize such illustrations you will not be able to relate the image to anything concrete which is already in existence.

We are only able to see three dimensions with our eyes namely, length, breadth and height. We cannot imagine circle

without a circumference any more than we can imagine triangle without angles. So how can we possibly imagine the 'other world' and everything that is to be found in it?

It is different from ours, and comparing it with this world is like comparing this world to a mother's womb. If we were able to make contact with a fetus and ask it about its idea of what our world is like, he or she would reply "The universe is the membrane and darkness which surround me." Even if the fetus were able to understand our description of the sun and the moon, day and night, land and sea, beautiful gardens and fields, etc., he or she would not be able to imagine them. This is why Ibn Abbas, one of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, said "Things of this world have no similarity to those in the next - except in name". This means that the wine and women in the next world

will be different from the wine and women in this world. Likewise, the fire of hell will not be like the fire we know, and the 'straight path will not resemble the bridges that span across rivers and valley in this world.

The fourth Principle, therefore, is that the human imagination is unable to encompass things which are beyond the reach of human senses.

The Fifth Principle:

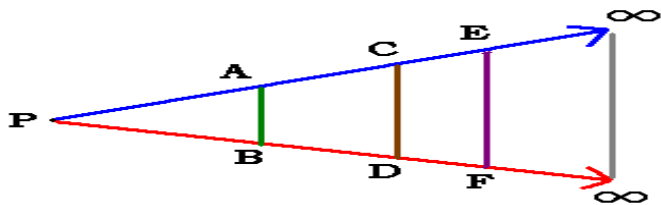
Even though the eye observes that a pencil in a glass of water looks as if it is broken, the mind is not deluded; in the same way that it realizes the mirage in the desert is nothing but sand. When we see a magician take handkerchief out of his mouth and twenty rabbits from his sleeve, our mind being more accurate than our sight, alerts us to the fact that it is a trick. Does this mean that the mind can rule over matters that fall beyond its scope?

The mind rejects anything that does not fall within the framework of time and space. If a history teacher were to tell you 'that a war between the Arabs and the Persians took place neither before nor after the advent of Islam-yet it still took place, your mind would reject this statement as being completely contradictory. Or if a geography teacher told you that a country existed but was not situated on land or sea, or in the earth or the sky, your mind would take this as a contradiction in terms. So we can see that the faculties of the human mind are finite and refuse to accept anything infinite, which is outside the scope of time and space. Therefore issues concerning the problems of the soul, destiny, (metaphysical) signs of God and His attributes are all beyond the scope of the mind. If we look at the concept of immortality for example, a believer is sure in his mind that immortality is an

unshakable truth which has been conveyed to mankind through the divine message. But it is not possible to fit that concept into a framework of time and if we try to do that, we will fail and give up. In fact we may visualise a millennium of centuries, millions, trillions -- but then what? Our minds get tired because they fail to reach a final point. And if they claim to have reached such a point it will contradict the very meaning of immortality. The famous German philosopher Kant published a well-known work "Contradictions", in which he said that the, human mind can only judge the physical world. But Muslim scholars had proved that before Kant's time and had, on the basis of mathematical theories, proved the falsity of circuits vitiosus (vicious circle). Their simple evidence is evident form this example.

If you draw two straight (not parallel) lines from point "P" (as shown in the

diagram) as two rays coming from point “P”, in such a way that the distance between these two lines increases gradually stretched to infinity.



Then you connect these two lines at equal distances: AB, CD, EF ... and so on till infinity. Will the last line (shown as ‘grey’ colored) connecting the two infinite ends be considered to be the finite or infinite? If you say it is finite, it will be argued that it not correct as it is between two unending (infinite) points. If you say that it is infinite, people will reply that this cannot be so, as it is between two finite points. Therefore, it is a contradiction in terms. It is clear that the human mind goes off balance when it tries to dominate

the unlimited or infinite; it becomes the victim of impossible contradictions when it delves deeply into anything which is unlimited. The human mind, therefore, cannot go deeply into the realm of metaphysics, as proved by Kant and stated by Muslim scholars earlier. And we can refer to this theme in the works of Islamic scholars, such as al-Ghazali in his books on scholastic theology.

The Sixth Principle:

All human beings, believers and non-believers alike feel worried and anxious in the face of a serious crisis in their life. At such times they find no consolation in their material surroundings and seek solace and comfort in a power beyond the material world, a power that filters through every aspect of our existence, bodies and souls. Examples of such crises are illness, the stress of taking important examinations and so on. Why then do

people turn to God at such times? From my own observation of two world wars, I noticed how people cling to religion: everyone, from heads of governments to military generals, it seemed, became devout worshippers of God and impressed their subordinates to do the same. I remember reading a story in a magazine during the war, a story related by a young paratrooper (parachutes were something new in those days). The young man had been born and brought up in a household where there was no mention of God and his family did not pray. He was educated in secular schools where religion was not included in the syllabus and so he grew up rather like a 'human animal', eating, sleeping and enjoying himself. But when he found himself descending from a great height and having almost landed before his parachute started to open, he found himself praying involuntarily, and from the bottom of his heart. The words "Oh

Lord -Oh creator!" came to his lips instinctively. He was completely overwhelmed and could not explain how he had suddenly acquired this faith.

Stalin's daughter describes in her memoirs as to how she fumed to religion after many years of living forgetful of God. She marvels at this - but there is no reason to be in wonder, because faith in the existence of God is something which is inborn in every individual. It is a natural instinct and an urge-rather like the sexual drive. So we can say that man is an animal with a religion. This instinct may be overrun by physical desires, passion, ambition and craving for material comfort. However, when overcome by fear, danger or other crises, it rejects these desires and appears in its true and natural form. This is why we describe a non-believer as a *kafir*, which literally means 'one who hides'. I was surprised to find the same concept by two eminent figures from

backgrounds which were entirely different in very way, including the time and place they lived, their circumstances and the purpose for which they expressed this idea, One of them was the Muslim, Rabia al Adawiya, known for her piety, and the other was the famous French writer, Anatole France. While discussing his disbelief an abandonment of faith, Anatole France declared "A person becomes a believer when he learns, as a result of a urine test that he has diabetes". (He made this statement before insulin was discovered). On the other hand, Rabia al Adawiya replied in answer to a statement made by someone who claimed he had found a thousand proofs of God's existence, "One proof is enough". When asked what that proof was, she responded "If you were walking alone in the desert and happened to fall in to a well from which you were unable to get out - what would you do?" The answer was "I'd call

out - Oh God!". "Then that's your proof!" she declared. Faith in God exists in the core of every human being. We Muslims know this fact, because God has informed us that Iman is a natural characteristic that He has created in each of us.

In Europe recently many people have seriously address the question of faith and have recognised its value. Professor Durkheim (1852-1917), the famous Jewish French sociologist who had, like Freud, a negative influence on some minds for some time, has written a book to his credit, where he states that faith in the existence of God is a self-evident truth. No one can go through life without at some time reflecting on the existence of a Lord of this universe. But man, due to his short sightedness, may not find his way to God. He therefore worships certain objects which he imagines to be God, or that he thinks will help take him near to Him. And yet when faced with a major crisis man

returns to God and gives up all objects of worship. The polytheists of the Quraysh tribe worshipped various idols, known as Hubal, Lat and Uzza. They were simple stones or statues. Hubal was made of cornelian, a semi-precious red stone transported from the Syrian spa of Himmah. They described the statue as a great almighty god. It was transported on the back of a camel and en route fell off and its hand was smashed. This hand was replaced by a gold hand. But how the hand of God get broken! However, even after that incident, they continued to worship the statue. But even enough they worshipped it in times of peace, this was not the "case when they were at sea, and the sea became rough and danger was imminent. At times like this, they did not call out "Hubal!" but they called out to Allah. Even today during times of disaster and accidents you will notice that proud adversaries of God return to the fold of

religion. Why is this? Simply because Iman is a natural instinct, and that, as we have already seen, leaves us with the most precise definition of man: "an animal with a religion".

Do you imagine that materialists, such as Karl Marx and Lenin, called out to production and manufacturing industries - those ideologies they had worshipped as God, when they were on their death beds? Or did they call out to God? You can be sure they prayed to God when drawing their last breath. Pharaoh, who posed as being high and mighty, used to Declare "I am your supreme lord" But when he was about to be drowned he said "I have believed in what the children of Israel have believed". The sentiment of love expressed by lovers is yet further evidence of Iman being an inborn characteristic of man. Love is a micro-projection of Iman; it is a kind of worship, In fact, when so many of the French turned away from religion they

used the word 'worship' to mean 'love'. Arabs influenced by European ideas started to imitate them using phrases such as "He loved and worshipped her" and "He loved her so much that he began worshipping her". You will find such expressions in Arabic short stories and novels. But this was only because worship is the natural manifestation of belief in God, and because there is a degree of similarity between love and faith. A lover obeys his beloved's wishes and desires. And this is exactly the same relationship as the one a believer has with God. A lover is never bothered if everyone around him is angry, as long as he is able to please the one he or she loves. That too is the case between a believer and God. What's more a lover fears the loved one to the extent of not wishing to make him or her angry, and has nothing but praise for whatever the beloved says or does. This is just the same way that a believer accepts what God has

ordained. So we can see that love passionate love, is a testimony to the fact that faith is inborn.

The Inadequacy of Language:

The above statement does not purport to equate the love of God with the sentiments of passionate love between human beings. We simply need to take into account that a person in a passionate relationship obeys the beloved and is afraid of him or her, and admires and praises whatever the loved one does being able to endure other people's anger in order to please the loved one. But he does this because it fulfills a desire. In fact, we express our love for our own self through the love we have for our lover. We can look at the example of one of the most famous lovers in Arabic history, Laila. Let us imagine that she was afflicted with leprosy and that the disease had disfigured her face. Would her lover Quais have approached and made advances

to seeing her in this state? He wouldn't even have given her a second glance - and would have abandoned her. This is the difference between love of mortals and love of God.

Although the two forms are entirely different from each other, the same word is used to denote both because the human language lacks a better expression, with a wider scope and range -of meaning, which would include the spiritual aspects of love. We use the same word 'love' to denote a variety of meanings from love of the countryside and history to love of rice and curry! A father loves his son. Prince Charming loves Cinderella and the believer loves God. Each one of these loves differs from the other. With regard to this concept of 'inadequacy of language (words)' we should also include the word 'beauty', which is used to denote so many meanings. The same applies to the words 'hearer' and 'seer' with reference to God

being the Hearer and Seer and a human being a hearer and seer. Referring to a human being, we mean that that person is neither deaf nor blind. But Divine Seeing and Hearing is not like that of mortals, because God is unlike anything in creation. Likewise, nothing in creation is similar to Him. All the Divine attributes given in Qur'an come under this heading. Allah says: "This is nothing whatever like unto Him" (Qur'an;42:11). They are not to be compared with the faculties of mortals.

The Seventh Principle:

Man recognizes intuitively that the material world is not every thing. There is a spiritual world beyond that, the nature of which we do not know. Man is only able to catch glimpses of the unseen world when he realises that material pleasures are limited and, after a certain point, they lose their attraction and become a source of boredom and monotony. When a poor

man sees the material possessions of a rich man, he feels that the wealthy man has achieved the ultimate in life. However, when the poor man succeeds in acquiring such possessions he loses interest in them. Likewise, a lover who longs to meet his girlfriend, and spends sleepless nights dreaming about being with her believing that all the pleasures of life will be encompassed by his love, is disappointed when he finally marries the girl. The feeling of ecstasy disappears, and within two years the whole affair may be a thing of the past. Another example is of a man who falls ill and gets very depressed, imagining that all the pleasures of life depend on his recovery to health. But once he is well he not only forgets those unhappy days, but he takes his health for granted too. And how about the young artist who seeks fame and popularity, and is overwhelmed with joy when he hears his name being broadcast, or sees his picture

in a paper. Yet once he is recognised and established, the attraction for fame loses its charm and becomes part of his everyday life. By the same token we may be moved by a romantic song, which brings up intense feelings of love, stirring our hearts and kindling the fire of our imagination, sending us into raptures. A well written story can have the same effect, carrying us away from reality into a world of fantasy, full of poetry and romance; But at the end of the story we are jolted back to reality, with a sense of longing. We yearn to return to that fantasy world in vain.

During moments of contemplation our souls may rise to sublime heights, where this material world appears trivial and unworthy. The joy of this experience will far surpass the Joy of a starving person finding food, the lover meeting his loved one or the pleasure and satisfaction a poor man when he finally acquires wealth and

influence. This self is always eager to rise to sublime heights, to an unknown world, the identity of which can only be acquired. Through the few glimpses we catch of it, as mentioned previously. But it is through such experiences that man realises how trivial and limited material pleasures are, compared with spiritual pleasures. As a consequence, he becomes convinced, intuitively rather than intellectually, that this material life is not the ultimate goal and that there is beyond doubt another world beyond this. This is the world which our souls yearn for and try to reach, but the human body becomes an obstacle and hampers its efforts. This subjective and psychological perception and intellect are the proofs of the existence of another world called Hereafter.

The Eighth Principle:

Faith (Belief) in another world (Hereafter) is a natural consequence to the, belief in

the existence of God. The above statement can be further explained by stating that the Lord of this universe is fair, and that anyone who is just will not allow for injustice. He will not let the oppressive person go unpunished, nor will he deny justice to anyone who has suffered unfairly. We find many people in this world who live and die as oppressors without ever being punished (people like Hitler, who killed millions). We can also see people who are victim of unfair treatment throughout their lives. But how can this happen if God exists and is just? It only proves that there is a life after this worldly life where the doer of evil will be punished and the doer of good rewarded. The story does not finish with the end of this world. If a feature film were to be shown on television and were to be stopped abruptly, with the viewers being told that the film ended at that point, they would most certainly complain and want

to know what was going on. "What happened to the hero?" "What happened to the rest of the film?" would be some of the questions they would ask. These questions would crop up because they would expect the script writer to give a full account of the story. But if this is how people would react to a story on life in this world, can any intelligent person accept the statement that life ends with death? How could it be possible? It therefore becomes clear to the human mind that there must be a Lord of this universe and a life hereafter. That unknown world that we catch glimpses of when we hear romantic music or read a moving story, or experience in moments of intuition, is not 'the world of ideas' as depicted by Plato. It is a world created by the Lord of all creation; a world offering everlasting pleasures and not the ephemeral pleasure of this world which are but a mere flavor of what is to come. And what's more, we

will never get used to these eternal pleasures. They will never lose their beauty and become ordinary - as is the case with the pleasure of this world.

Summary of Principles:

These principles of conceptualization of faith can be summarized as follows:-

1. We have no doubts about anything that we can perceive through our senses we all accept this fundamental truth.
2. Certainty about past and present events received through a reliable source is as reliable as the certainty we would have had if we had been present.
3. We have no right to refuse the existence of certain things which are not perceptible through senses.
4. The human imagination is unable to encompass things which are beyond the reach of human senses.

5. The human mind, therefore, cannot go deeply into the realm of metaphysics. The human mind goes off balance when it tries to dominate the unlimited or infinite; it becomes the victim of impossible contradictions when it delves deeply into anything which is unlimited.
6. Faith in the existence of God is something which is inborn in every individual. It is a natural instinct and an urge-rather like the sexual drive. So we can say that man is an animal with a religion. This instinct may be overrun by physical desires, passion, ambition and craving for material comfort. However, when overcome by fear, danger or other crises, it rejects these desires and appears in its true and natural form.
7. The human language lacks a better expression, with a wider scope and range of meaning, which would

include the spiritual aspects of love of God and His attributes, for which normal words do not express the actual meanings.

8. The human self is always eager to rise to sublime heights, to an unknown world, the identity of which can only be acquired. Man becomes convinced, intuitively rather than intellectually, that this material life is not the ultimate goal and that there is beyond doubt another world beyond this. This subjective and psychological perception and intellect are the proofs of the existence of another world called Hereafter.
9. The Lord of this universe is fair, and that anyone who is just will not allow for injustice. He will not let the oppressive person go unpunished, nor will he deny justice

to anyone who has suffered unfairly in this world.

10. Faith (Belief) in another world (Hereafter) is a natural consequence to the, belief in the existence of God.

CHAPTER– 5: FAITH IN ALLAH (IMAN)

There are three main aspects of faith in God (Allah):

1. Allah is the Cherisher and the creator of the Universe and all that it holds.
2. God (Allah) alone is the Master of this world and He alone can make modifications in it as He wishes.
3. Allah alone is worthy of worship. He has no associates and there is no none besides him to be worshipped.

Four Founding Blocks:

The faith (Iman) in Allah (God) is based on four foundations:

1. The Existence of God (Allah) and nobody created Him.
2. Allah (God) is the Lord of the worlds.
3. He is the Owner of the worlds;

4. He is the Only Lord and He alone is to be exclusively worshipped and He has no associates, which could be ascribed to Him.

The Existence of God:

The faith in God is axiomatic which man accepts with the help of his intuition without the need of a rational proof. (6th principle in earlier Chapter No.4). It is an axiom, the proofs of which subsist in every thing in this world, yet it needs no proof. Although the proofs are so numerous that they can not be enumerated in this short space. Fifty years ago a Syrian scholar, Sahaikh Jamaluddin al Qasimi, published a book on this subject, entitled "Proofs of the Oneness of God". I would also like to mention another book, "God Manifest in the Age of Science", written by thirty different and well established scientists. Another relevant book is "Man Does not Stand Alone". These books will convince

the reader that a true scientist, just as much as a layman, has to be a believer.

The tendency for atheism, a lack of respect and contempt for God is prevalent among ill-informed scientists, who have deprived themselves of the characteristics of inborn faith and have consequently fallen into the abyss of disbelief, The books referred to contain many valuable discourses by reputable scholars, such as Frank Alien, world famous biologist, Robert Morris Budge, inventor of radar, John Cleveland Kawthron, professor of Chemistry and John Herbert Blonde, Professor of physics, to name but a few.

It is worth mentioning here that Professor Frank Alien disproved the theory of the pre-existence or timelessness of the universe, as was propagated by the Greek philosophers. Science has now established that everything has a time limit, Without elaborating on the evidence of the existence of God which has been

expounded by scholars throughout the ages, I would like to quote just one verse from the many verses in the Holy Qur'an, which are clear and irrefutable proofs. This verse sums up this question briefly and concisely: "And on earth there are signs (of God's existence) visible to those who are endowed with inner certainty, just as (there are signs thereof) within your own selves. Can you not, then see?" (Qur'an;51:20-21). This must be sufficient proof for both scholars and laymen alike. Deep in our hearts we are all convinced of the existence of God. As we saw in the previous chapter, we call on Him in times of crisis or great difficulty; our inborn faith urges us to seek His help at such times. What's more, if we look around we can see ample proof of His existence. The inner self is convinced by intuition and the intellect by logical proof.

So why would anyone deny God's existence? Isn't that rather like a person

who, even though his clothes are soaking wet, denies having been anywhere near water? Anyone denying His existence does so because: “They have forgotten God and so God made them forget themselves”.(Qur’an;9:67). People are so absorbed with their own lives that they do not want to spend any time whatsoever in reflection and meditation. They keep themselves busy doing any job that comes their way, or in idle chat - or reading rubbish. The self becomes their biggest enemy and they live as if life is a burden they want to unload. Most people, as you have probably noticed, are engrossed by the pleasures of life. They eat, drink, sleep and go about their daily work through which they earn material benefits for themselves and their families. It is as if they were stuck in a rut. There is hardly any difference between their past and present, and they have hardly anything to look forward to in the future which might

be different from their present way of life. But that is not the case with a believer who puts his faith into practice.

No practicing Muslim, for example, can resign himself to a monotonous routine life. On the contrary, such a person has to think and reflect and wonder "Where did I come from? Where will I go from here? Where does my life begin and end?" He realises that life is not a span of time between the two points of birth and death. He knows that he existed before birth, in his mother's womb, and prior to that he was just a drop of sperm which was created from the blood that ran through his father's body. His father's blood was formed from the food he ate, and this food was prepared from the fruits of the earth. So a long chain of unknown factors led to his birth. How then could he create himself through his intellect and will power when, at a certain time, he existed without either? A child is unaware of

himself until the age of four. We are unable to remember our birth or the days we spent in our mother's womb.

It is clear that man existed even before he was aware of himself, and it is absurd to say that man is his own creator. The questions we put to atheists and heretics should therefore be "Did you create yourself through your own will and intellect? Did you force yourself into your mother's womb? Did you choose your own mother? Was it you who fetched the midwife to attend to your delivery? Were you then created from nothingness and without a creator?" Of course this is impossible. Was man created by those things which were in existence before him, such as the mountains, the sun and the stars? The French philosopher Descartes evolved the 'Theory of Doubt'. He doubted everything, even his own self, yet when he thought of it he could have no doubt of its existence. And since there is no doubt

without a doubter he made the famous statement "I think, therefore I exist". Of course he existed, but who brought him into that existence? It goes without saying that material objects are inanimate and devoid of the power of reasoning. But can an irrational being create a rational being? How could a person who does not possess something give it to others? This was the stand taken by the eminent Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) against his father. His father was a sculptor who used to carve idols of gods out of stone. These idols, made by human hands, were worshipped by his people.

Abraham (peace be upon him) was puzzled and began to question himself asking; "How could I make a god and then pray to him and ask him to grant me what I want? My reasoning can't accept that!" Then he began to think and to enquire. When he saw stars he mistook them for gods because they were not formed from the

earth, like the stone from which the idols had been carved. But then when he saw the moon rising in the sky and giving more light than the stars, he considered the moon to be his god. But when the moon disappeared and the sun rose and shone in full blaze, he couldn't help but consider the sun as his god. Alas, the existence of this god was also short-lived. How could a god abandon his kingdom and vanish out of sight? So there must be a supreme God beyond all these inanimate beings. It is He Who has created me and all these beings. The above argument is dealt with very clearly in the Holy Qur'an: "Or were they created out of naught? Or are they creators?"(Qur'an;52:36). This verse, a proof of Divine eloquence must come as a great blow to the rationalist who denies the existence of God by clinging on to the power of intellect as the source of all action.

When we grew up and became mature we asked "What is nature?" In Arabic, etymologically, the word means 'something which is made natural.' Who then, made it natural? Many unbelievers hold that "nature is coincidence - the law of possibilities". We say that this description of nature can be compared to the story of two men who lost their way in the desert and came across a palace. It was an excellent example of architecture, furnished with exotic carpets, clocks, chandeliers and so on. The two men, spellbound by the sight of it, had the following conversation:

First Man: Somebody must have built this palace and famished it.

Second Man: What conservative and old fashioned comment! This whole place is the work of nature

First Man: How could nature have built such a palace?

Second Man: Well, the stones and rubbish that were originally here were formed into walls and partitions as a result of floods, winds and climatic change.

First Man: But what about the carpets?

Second Man: Oh - They were made from the wool that fell off sheep and dyed by mixtures of colored metals. Then the wool was interwoven and the end product is these carpets.

First Man: How about the clocks?

Second Man: Due to certain climatic conditions, iron corroded and formed small round and flat pieces which became clocks.

Wouldn't you think someone giving such answers was crazy? : Is it a matter of sheer coincidence that the invisible cells in human liver carry out extremely difficult functions? They convert excess sugar in the blood into glycogen, which is later

turned into glucose as and when required. These cells also produce bile, and maintain the cholesterol level in the blood, as well as producing red corpuscles and performing several other functions. Is it also just coincidence that the human tongue has nine thousand small buds on it which enable us to enjoy the sense of taste? The human ear has one hundred thousand cells that carry out the function of hearing, and the human eye has one hundred and thirty million cells which pick up rays of light.

Furthermore, consider the wonders and mysteries of the earth itself. The air that blows round it, the creatures living on it and the wonderful shapes of snowflakes. What beauty and precision! And many of the discoveries have only recently come to our knowledge. Look at the minerals found on earth and the flora and fauna; the vast deserts, oceans, high mountains and deep valleys. Compared with the sun, you will

find the earth is a very small and negligible entity. As for the sun, it too is like a particle of sand when compared with other stars, even though it is one million times bigger than the earth. In terms of speed of light, the sun is only eight minutes away from the earth, the speed of light being three hundred thousand kilometers per second. So, in eight minutes light travels more than the two million kilometers that separate the sun from the earth.

And what about the stars whose light reaches us in a duration of a million light years, very light year being equal to ten thousand billion kilometers! Astronomers have little information about these stars, including the galaxy, apart from the fact that it is a spot of illumination containing many stars which we human beings know nothing about. Only God knows. These stars whose size is beyond the scope of our imagination move at great speed and never

bump into each other. How can that be explained? I once read an article by an astronomer who stated that the possibility of stars colliding is as slight as that of six bees colliding if they were flying in the earth's atmosphere. The vastness of this atmosphere is for the bees similar to the space for the stars. The tremendous space in its entirety exists in the midst of a huge globe - the sky. This globe has a definite body. It is neither air nor atmosphere, nor the imaginary line that some scholars and commentators of the Holy Qur'an claim exists between the stars as a line of orbit. This globe surrounds the space containing all the stars, great and small. And, as God Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: "We have set up the sky, a roof well guarded".(Qur'an;21: 32). Beyond this space is yet another space, the vastness of which is known only to God. It may be like the space in this globe, or even bigger. It is surrounded by another globe, still

larger, beyond which may be a third space and a third globe, larger in size, then a fourth space with a fourth globe and a fifth, sixth and seventh space, each surrounded by a globe Then there are huge and magnificent celestial bodies: The Throne, the Seat of Power and all the creation that God has informed us about.

Atom: The Most Extraordinary Wonder:

It represents in minuscule form, all that exists in the space. And the human mind is unable to perceive its intricacies in just the same way as it cannot imagine the vastness and enormity of the space. All this is indomitable proof, therefore, of the fact that God exists. In the past, scientists and philosophers described the atom as “the unique particle that cannot be split”. It cannot be seen except through an electronic microscope. According to scientists, the atom is so small that if you were to arrange forty million atoms side

by side, their total length would be no more than one centimeter. In the middle of every atom is a space containing the Nucleus around which small bodies known as electrons are in orbit, just like planets in space. This nucleus, when compared to the atom, is like a grain of wheat compared to a huge palace. And a nucleus by itself weighs more than one thousand eight hundred electrons. Is all that an act of sheer coincidence? All the writings based on high-flown theories regarding 'Nature', "Laws of Coincidence', etc. are, to say the least, illusive and illogical. But to the pleasure of sincere believers such words are no longer valid in scientific circles and are usually only used by pseudo scientists.

God, Sustainer of the Whole Universe:

The second dogma of faith is that in God alone created everything - plants, animals, planets and all that we can see as well as

all that exists in the unseen. He has created all this from nothingness, and what's more, has laid down marvelous rules and regulation for everything. Very few of them have been discovered in the realms of physics, chemistry, medicine and astronomy. Only God possesses knowledge of all the major and minor aspects of everything in existence. It is He who knows the number of leaves on every tree and the shape of each leaf and its position. He knows how many insects exist in this world, their length, breadth and each part of their anatomy. He alone knows how many electrons, mobile and immobile, there are in an atom, and the mutations and permutations, progress and change which take place in them. All this knowledge is recorded in a book in His custody.

God is the Lord of all the worlds. It is He Who has brought them into existence, and it is He Who protects them changing them

from one condition to another. And it is He Who has placed the guidance for wise and intelligent people in every particle. This second issue regarding faith in God is essential and inevitable. But is it enough for someone to simply profess faith in this concept in order to become a believer? If someone tells you that God is the Creator and the Lord, does this mean he is a believer? Of course not. It is not enough to declare faith, as most nations in the past have done. Even the unbelievers of the Quraysh tribe professed faith. This was the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), he exposed the falsehood of their belief in polytheism and tried to make them believe that the creed they believed in was inferior and unacceptable. The Prophet (peace be upon him) even had to wage wars against them for this cause. Even Satan (Iblis), the vilest of all creatures, did not deny the fact that God was his Lord: (Iblis) said "Oh my Lord!

Because thou hast send me astray" (Qur'an;15:39) and Iblis said "Oh my Lord! Reprieve me (Qur'an;15:36).

God is the Lord of the Universe:

The third issue concerns God being the Lord of the universe. He has the absolute right of disposal in it, just like the rights of a property owner. He bestows life and deals death. Can you protect yourself from death? And can you grant yourself immortality in this world? It is He Who causes illness and gives health. Is it possible, therefore, for you to heal a person whom God has deemed incurable? God alone bestows wealth and causes poverty. It is He who brings about floods and droughts. There, were once terrible floods n Italy that devastated cities. During the same period we heard about frightening droughts in parts of India; crops dried out, cattle died, and water was so scarce it had to be rationed. So who

causes water to overflow in one area and to dry out totally in another? Who bestows daughters on some couples and sons on others? and can anyone who has been bestowed with a girl turn her into a boy? Can a sterile woman conceive a child? It is He Who causes people to die when they are infants and grants longevity to others who live to a ripe old age. He causes cold spells and snowfalls on some countries, and heat waves and earthquakes in others. And man remains helpless amidst all these phenomena.

The Lord to Be Worshipped:

As we said before, most people agree that God is the Lord of the universe and the Absolute Power. But does this suffice for a person to be a believer? Of course not. There is yet another issue, the fourth, which concerns this question of faith: that only God is to be worshipped. If you really believe that God exists and that He is the

Lord of all the Worlds and the Lord of Sovereignty, you should not worship anyone except Him. This means that you should not associate anyone else with Him in any form of worship. The chapter in the Holy Qur'an entitled *Annaas* (Mankind) is a clear refutation to those who do not accept the Oneness of God, even though they believe in His existence, and that He is Lord of all Dominions. I have arrived at a conclusion regarding this chapter, which, as far as I know, no other commentator has reached. I hope my opinion is correct. God almighty says: "Say, I seek refuge with the Lord and Cherisher of Mankind, the God (or Judge) of mankind" (Qur'an;114:1-2). Why has the word 'mankind' been repeated in these verses when the possessive pronoun 'their' could easily have been substituted? I believe - though God knows best - that there are three separate but interconnected issues here. Namely, Our

Lord is the Lord of mankind; He is their Creator; and He is their Protector: Our Lord is the Ruler of mankind. In other words, He is Absolute Disposer of their affairs. And our Lord is The God of mankind, which means that He alone is to be worshipped. No partner should be set up to be worshipped as an equal to Him. One has to either totally accept or totally reject these three issues. How could you differentiate between three identical issues accepting some while rejecting the others? All three are essential and inseparable.

CHAPTER-6: THE ONENESS OF GOD

[THE UNITY OF GODHEAD]

To believe that Allah is the Sustainer of the worlds and the Lord of the universe, emanates from the heart and permeates our whole being. But Faith in God as the one and only Lord is not confined to the act of faith alone. It influences all our behaviour and conduct and demands acts of worship to God and God alone. Anyone refraining from such worship or worshipping anything else as a 'partner to God is not considered to be a believer, even though he may profess true belief in God as the Lord of all Creations and Dominions. So how can we define the concept of worship of God? Normally we understand worship as remembrance of God, performance of prayers, fasting and recitation of the Holy Qur'an, plus any other actions which take us nearer to Him. While this definition is no doubt correct,

worship is not limited to these actions alone. Any useful action which is not prohibited by the Divine Law and is performed by a believer with the intention of seeking God's pleasure, is worship. We eat so that we can keep ourselves fit in order to serve Him, therefore eating is a form of worship. A man gets married to ensure an honourable life for himself and his wife; therefore his marriage is an act of worship - as is the earning of money to spend on his family. Gaining knowledge and good qualifications are also forms of worship. The same goes for the household chores a housewife does and the love and care she gives her husband. Every action, provided it is within the Divine Law and is performed with the intention of seeking God's pleasure, is worship. Perhaps it is to convey this meaning that He says in the Holy Qur'an: "I have not created jinns and men to any end other than they may worship me".(Qur'an;51:56).

The Spirit of Worship:

Worship has two aspects, spiritual and physical. The spiritual aspect concerns our faith, which serves as both a motive and a guide. The physical aspect applies to the movement of our bodies. Prayer, for example, involves speech and movement, reciting and reading, as well as standing, sitting and kneeling. But all these actions are empty of meaning and spirit, unless they are motivated by the force of true faith in the oneness of God.

Basis for the Oneness of Divinity:

The belief that God alone is the source of all good and evil is the basis for the oneness of Divinity. It may be explained further by stating that God is the Creator of everything. As we said previously, he has created these worlds causing all kinds of creatures and things to flourish in them. He has endowed us with the power of intellect, so that we may think and

contemplate about His entire creation. But when we look at the sky, the earth and the various elements of nature, we may find that some of these forces are at odds with each other. For example, fire can burn a dry tree and water can extinguish the fire. If a mosquito stings someone, that person may contract malaria, and the bark of the cinchona tree can cure his fever. We also find that God has combined harmful substances in order to make useful products. Table salt, for example, is made up of two harmful substances, chlorine and sodium. By mixing them together in certain quantities, table salt, which we require for our food, is produced. We can also observe the following points.

- 1) Certain sets of rules and methods govern the interaction, fusion and merging of various substances. These principles and precepts laid down by God are constant and do

not change. We tend to describe them as laws of nature.

- 2) These laws of nature and relationships between material things are not always visible to us, as is the reaction between fire and wood and fire and water. Indeed, many of these interactions are minute - deep, and hidden from our sight. God has created a cure for every illness in this world, but those cures are not visible or intelligible and have not been handed to us as 'ready-made' products. On the contrary, in His supreme Wisdom, God has hidden these cures in places and situations where we can hardly imagine them to be. For example penicillin is found in putrid mould which has the appearance of deadly poison. The most fragrant perfumes and paints of dazzling

colours are to be found in tar, which is the most foul smelling and ugly looking material. 'These sources are not within easy reach. Our Lord has mixed them, which means that the most effective and sought after material may exist in a very complicated form, mixed up with many other substances, making it a mammoth task to extract it. When we read about Madame Curie we learn about tremendous patience. She had to carry out a long series of tests and experiments over several years in order to extract a gram of radium from a huge mass of materials! Every student should read the book about Madame Curie and her husband entitled "The Immortal Student" in order to understand the amount of patience and perseverance needed to obtain

knowledge. The biographies written by Islamic scholars in the early ages also describe extensively the patience, perseverance and sincerity required to seek knowledge.

- 3) So far we know very little about the laws and regulations God laid down. What we have discovered so far is only a drop in the ocean. We have categorized this limited knowledge into what we call science - including biology, chemistry, physics, physiology, medical sciences, etc. Each of these branches of science has specialists who delve into the depths of their particular area in order to gain more knowledge about the laws set down by our Lord.
- 4) Some things in our universe serve us while others are harmful and

these, we find, can be divided into two categories. Some events can be attributed to an obvious reason. For example, we know that we will die if we take poison. We have gained that knowledge through the application of the laws of nature, which have been incorporated in our sciences. But the second type of useful or harmful occurrence or substance may not seem apparent and may not be based on any known law of nature. An example of this would be of a physically fit person, who enjoys good health, suddenly dying of a heart attack for no obvious reason. Both these phenomena are caused by God.

- 5) God has created in us intrinsic qualities of love for what is good and dislike for what is bad. This is why man does all he can in order to achieve what is good and

beneficial to him and tries his best to avoid what is harmful and evil. In this context, he seeks help from every possible source of power and strength. Some of these sources are permitted by religion, however, while others are not. So, which means are permitted by religion and which are not? Imagine that your child is unwell. In this situation you normally send for a doctor and ask him to treat your child. He may do so and write out a prescription. This is a lawful means you have made use of, in order to cure your child and it is permitted by God. You sought the help of a 'scientist' who has, learnt the laws of nature laid down by God in the area of medicine. But if you had sent for a 'witch doctor' to treat your child you would have been seeking help

through means which are outside the Divine Law. In other words, the treatment your child would be given would not be based on knowledge of the laws of nature. On the contrary, they would employ certain unseen forces with which they claim to have contact, but the existence of which has not been proved either by physical or traditional evidence, such as evidence given in the Holy Qur'an or in the Traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). If your doctor died, and you were to visit his grave requesting him to treat your child, although in this position he is neither able to write a prescription nor is it possible for him to diagnose the disease, this too will be an illegitimate effort. But if all practical efforts and the known scientific methods fail and

you resort to prayer or charity to seek the Divine assistance through a pious and saintly person, this too will be permissible. However, if you visit the grave of a saintly person and entreat him, whereas he is in apposition that he can neither move his tongue to pray for you nor is it possible for him to cure anybody without the divine sanction, this method of seeking help will also be illegitimate.

It will be perfectly legitimate effort to administer to a patient the medicine prescribed by a doctor but if you hang the prescription round the neck of a patient or, if you dilute it with water and make the patient swallow it, and you believe that it will cure him, it will be foolish action. It is illegitimate to seek benefit out of things which Allah

ahs not clearly ordained to be cause of benefits. It is perfectly permissible for a sterile woman, desiring to be the mother of a child, to seek the help of qualified doctor or use such medicines as Allah has created and which have been discovered and prepared by the scientific means. In seeking his help, she will not be doing any illegitimate thing nor will it be contrary to religion. But if she believes, like the old ladies of Syria that she will get conceived if she visited the Hanball Great Mosque on the mount Qayunon the first Friday of the month of Rajab and pulled at the chain on its door, or she may achieve her object by tying a ribbon to the lattices of a grave, then she will be doing an illegitimate thing (similar practices are common in

different parts of world) which will negate her faith in the unity of Godhead (Tawhid).

It is thus clear from the above that to seek help of the natural laws, or to find out an expert advice from one who is a specialist in his job, or use such methods are generally employed, is quite legitimate, but we must always remember that none but Allah is the real benefactor. It is absolutely illegitimate and against the Qur'an and the Hadith, as well as contrary to the dogma of Unity of Godhead (Tawhid), to seek the help of such nonsense as is supported neither by science nor by experimentation and observation.

God- The Arbiter of Lawful and Forbidden:

All the benefit which we gain by acting on natural and physical laws are only worldly

gains because God has given us the power of intellect to discover them. However, He has not granted us the power to discover what is beyond these laws, nor has he given us the power to bring into this world the benefits of the next world. So we function within the material confines given to us, trying to work for what is good and reject what is bad, as much as possible. We do not claim good or bad for ourselves in the other world. God has ordained that if we do our duty in this world, we shall be amply rewarded with all that is good in the life to come. And if we choose to indulge in what is outside the confines of Divine law, then we will suffer and be in anguish in the next world. This principle forms the basis for the concept of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and for reward and punishment. No one else can tell us what is lawful and what is forbidden, nor can anyone make what is forbidden lawful, or,

by the same token, forbid anything which has not been forbidden by God. Whoever gives anyone but Him the right to decide what is within or outside the confines of Divine law will either be worshipping someone other than God, or setting up partners in worship with Him. This is described as *shirk*, (polytheism) in the Holy Qur'an: The worshippers of false gods say "If God has so willed we should not have worshipped aught but Him neither we nor our fathers - nor should we have prescribed prohibitions other than His"(Qur'an;16:36).

Love and Fear of God:

We all have feelings of love, hatred, likes and dislikes. Perhaps we love anything that is good. We may love beautiful scenery, or many may love a woman to the extent of worshipping her. But all these aspects of love are bound by limits and constraints, like any other forms of human

love. We become attached to the good feeling we derive from anything we love, or from the pleasure and joy we feel by being close to the person we love. But this love may not continue in the same degree of intensity; in fact it may even turn to dislike if some misfortune happens to the person or object of love, or if the person we love becomes disfigured in an accident, or the food we love goes bad, or if climatic conditions change the beauty of natural scenery. But the love, a believer has for God is absolute. It is not subjected to any constraints or limitations. In fact, the love we have for the people and objects in this world is, in reality, our love for God through his creations, since it is He who has created and placed at our disposal all that we can make use of, or enjoy the sense of seeing or touching.

At the same time, many things in creation are a source of fear for us. A wild beast, deadly poison or a ruthless tyrant may

frighten us out of our wits. But such fear is bound by the extent of danger we visualise, or that may result from the source of our fear. When the danger has passed, our fear vanishes. But we do not check or restrain our fear of God. That fear is unlimited. The way of realizing the Oneness of God is based on both the love and fear of Him. And it is love and fear that form the essence of worship.

However, it must be pointed out that love of God does not mean you write poetry to Him or express physical love for him. And fear of God should not cause a sense of panic or anxieties, making us lose our sense of mental balance. We should, instead, induce the love of God through obedience to him within us. We therefore resist the craving of the heart, and keep away from the temptations of the devil. It should make us lead a life of purity in both conduct and character, in a way that is acceptable to God. It must, above all,

encourage us to proceed on the path shown by our Prophet (peace be upon him). The Holy Qur'an states: "Say (Oh Prophet), if you love God, follow me! God will love you and forgive your sins"(Qur'an;3:31).

Thus the true measures of love and fear, as the example set by the Prophet (peace be upon him), are: 1) Adherence to the path of guidance and abstinence from all that has been forbidden; 2) Preference for the reward in the next world over the pleasures of sin in this world. However, submission to God should not be thought of as being similar to the way we obey some human beings, for the following reasons. We obey our Prophet (peace be upon him) because God ordained us to do so, while we obey other people for reasons of instinct or fear of what the consequences will be if we disobey. For example a nation obeys its ruler, children comply with their parents' wishes, a wife

submits to her husband's wishes, and, provided that what he is ordered to do, does not hurt him, an person may obey someone who has been good to him, or we may suddenly feel compelled to obey someone to protect ourselves from harm or injury.

All such acts of obedience, except obedience to the Prophet (peace be upon him), which is in fact compliance to God's will, are conditional. In other words, they are not like the complete and unlimited obedience we show to God. For instance, we may have to carry out duties and activities in our everyday lives which we do not enjoy. In fact, even though we may or may not comprehend His supreme wisdom in all that he wills us to do; our obedience of Him is the fruit and proof of our sincere love for Him.

The Attributes of God:

The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and was first addressed to the Arabs. Therefore, the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an will be authentic only as understood by an Arab, provided he follows the grammar and the usage of the language and interprets precise in its concert meaning a and a figure of speech as a metaphor. But, since the vocabulary of all languages was coined to convey the things in 'this material world' and their meanings, the words do not have the competence to cover human sentiments and feelings, not to speak of the Attributes of Allah.

I have, so far, avoided the discussion of problems concerning differences in scholastic theology or among theologians on this subject. But there is one issue - namely, the verses of the Holy Qur'an referring to the attributes of God, which have been subject to many debates and wide difference of opinion. It is a subject

deserving attention, and I would therefore like to inform readers of the issues involved. Our Almighty Lord has, in the Holy Qur'an, described Himself with words which are normally used in everyday language to express human feelings and activities. Needless to say, there is nothing equal to God, Who, as the Creator and Sustainer, is above all comparison with any of the creations. These words, therefore, when they occur in the context of Divine attributes, cannot be interpreted to mean the same as when used in the context of human beings. We may, for instance, say that such and such a person is well-informed and that another person is knowledgeable. We may also say of God that He is well-informed and knowledgeable, but the processes by which a human being learns and perceives are not the same as those pertaining to God. We say, for example "The teacher seated himself at his Desk". The verb 'to seat'

also occurs in the Holy Qur'an: "Verily, your Sustainer is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and is seated on the throne of his Almightyness."(Qur'an;7:54) In this verse the verb 'to seat' has been used to convey the meaning of 'establish'. We know the lexical meaning of 'establish' (in Arabic the verb *istava* is used in both instances), nevertheless, we apply it to a teacher with a completely different meaning from that in the quoted verse. Theologians are unanimous in their agreement with regard to the denotation of the verses dealing with the attributes of God, and that these are His words. If He had said "... and is established ...", no one could ask "What could 'is established' be?" But opinions vary greatly with regard to the purpose and Intention of these attributes and as to whether they are real or metaphorical. The question is whether they can be subjected to interpretation and clarification or not.

One school of thought took the stand that these verses can be interpreted and clarified, and agreed with the scholars of the science of rhetoric, who, by and large, hold the view that words are essentially to be used in the meanings they signify. There is no doubt that the Arabic language contained the language of the Holy Qur'an before it was revealed. These words were used to denote ordinary and everyday meanings. But as they are not adequate enough even to express human emotions and feelings, what can we possibly say about their inadequacy to express Divine attributes? Let us consider, for example, the words at our disposal to express beauty. We know that beauty has several forms and entities, such as the beauty of nature, a poem, a building or the dazzling beauty of a young girl. When we want to express anything regarding beauty, we are forced to bring in the words 'beauty' or 'beautiful', as our linguistic repertoire is

rather limited. Thus human language falls short of expressions to convey the concept of beauty - and the same applies to the concept of love. Think of all the different manifestations of love - and the words at our disposal to describe or discuss them.

The vocabulary of any language is considered to be a vehicle to convey the thoughts, feelings, actions, emotions, etc. which pertain to life in this world. The vocabulary in the Holy Qur'an also draws from this repertoire of mundane meanings, meanings concerning our material existence in this world, or (example, the words referring to God concerning some of His actions like: 'He sat, He came, He deceived, He was cunning, He forgot.' etc. It would be a contradiction in terms to say that these words in the Holy Qur'an are not to be understood in their ordinary, everyday meaning and that they have occurred as metaphorical expressions. Among those

who reject the theory of metaphorical usage of such words in the Holy Qur'an is the famous scholar, Ibn Taymiyya. He is of the opinion that metaphorical interpretation The Oneness of God is also man-made and will therefore also reflect mundane.

Three Categories of Verses about Attributes of God:

I find, after studying these verses (about God); that they fall into three categories:

- 1) Verses which are in the nature of a statement of fact by God, as in: The Most Gracious established on the throne of His almightiness. (Qur'an;20:5) We do not interpret this verse either by denying the act of being 'established' or by saying that the Almighty' established or seated' Himself on the throne, in the same way as a person would sit on a chair. Such a statement would amount to a

comparison between the Lord and His creation. But we believe that it is the Word of God and that the human intellect cannot grasp the inner meaning of such a statement. We quoted other situations earlier, in which the human intellect remains helpless.

- 2) Verses containing 'extended metaphors' - a suggestion of likeness or analogy which is a recognised form of stylistic expression. For example, Abu Tammam, the famous Arab poet says: Ninety thousand lions of the forest have become ripened... (i.e., they are all set to fight) This is like the ripening of figs and grapes. This mode of expression can be noticed in several verses of the Holy Qur'an: "They have forgotten God, and so He is oblivious of them"(Qur'an;9:67). The words 'to be oblivious' in this verse are not to be taken in their lexical meaning

regarding us human beings, but as an extended metaphor, with reference to the Almighty, Who is never oblivious of anything, which is clearly stated in the following verse: “And thy Lord was never forgetful”(Qur’an;19:64). As to the following verse: “And He is with you wherever you may be. And God is Seer of whatsoever ye do”(Qur’an;57:4). Commentators all agree that it is to be understood in the sense of the Omniscience of God. He is aware of your existence without being physically with you. And: “We shall dispose of you, Oh you two dependents (man and jinn)”(Qur’an;55:31); “And they (the disbelievers) schemed, and God schemed (against them): and God is the best of Schemers”(Qur’an;3:54); “Lo! The hypocrites seek to beguile God, but it is He Who beguiles them. When They stand up to worship, they perform it languidly and to be seen of men, and

are mindful of God but little” (Qur’an;4:142). All such verses have Divine connotations, and therefore should not be understood in their literal and ordinary meanings.

- 3) Verses, the meanings of which are made clear by other verses: And the Jews say "God's hand is shackled!" It is their own hands that are shackled and rejected (by God) because of this their assertion. Nay, but wide are His hands stretched out. He dispenses (bounty) as He wills. (Qur’an;5:64) The above verse can be understood by perusing another verse from a different chapter. Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach. (Qur’an;17:20)

It is evident that the expression regarding the stretching of hands has been used here metaphorically, in order to indicate generosity and bounty, and we should therefore not assume that God has two

hands, as we do. In fact the words 'two hands' which come up in the Holy Qur'an in verses referring to the hand of mercy of God, or His punishment, are not to be taken in their literal sense.

Qur'an: Explanatory & Allegorical Verses:

It is mentioned in Qur'an that: "He it is who has bestowed upon thee from on high this divine writ, containing messages that are clear in and by themselves - and these are the essence of the divine writ - as well as others that are allegorical. Now those whose hearts are given to swerving from the truth go after that part of the divine writ which has been expressed in allegory, seeking out [what is bound to create] confusion, and seeking [to arrive at] its final meaning [in an arbitrary manner]; but none save God knows its final meaning. Hence, those who are deeply rooted in knowledge say: "We believe in it; the whole [of the divine writ] is from our

Sustainer - albeit none takes this to heart save those who are endowed with insight.”(Qur’an;3:7). God the Almighty has revealed verses in the Holy Qur’an that are self-explanatory - messages that are clear in themselves, and they are the essence of the Divine Writ. There are also verses that are expressed figuratively, where the meaning is implied metaphorically and not directly. The verses referring to the Divine Attributes occur in this latter category, namely, allegorically.

Attributes of God-Majority’s View on Verses:

The Muslims of the best of the eras who were the finest, the most virtuous and the most excellent members of the Muslim community, did not debate or argue about the obscure verses of the Qur’an no did they conjecture any interpretations of them; they accepted them and believed in

them as revealed by Allah and had faith in them consummate with the purport of Allah. However when the scholastic theology/dialectics raised its head and Islamic doctrines began to be criticized, a new section of the Ulema came in to existence who, piled argument on argument in order to refute these objections. They gave different explanations of the verses relating to the Attributes of Allah, and in conformity with the traditions of the Arabs, applied metaphorical meanings to those expressions which could not bear plain explanation.

The course Adopted by the Elders and the Ancient is reported to be safe and the standpoint of their followers is considered more judicious. However both of them agree that all these verses are revealed by Allah and any one, who renders them ineffective saying that these words are meaningless, is also an infidel. And, one

who tries to interpret them in their literal meanings and attribute, and equates the Creator with His creatures is also an infidel. It is a very hazardous path and it may fatal to march on it. The best and the safest course to follow is the path of the Elders and the early Muslims because that alone ensures security and stability.

The Modes of Worship:

When a person believes that all good and all harm comes from Allah and that He alone has the exclusive authority to declare anything permissible or unpermissible, that absolute and infinite obedience and love is for Allah alone and that He alone is to be feared. The greatness and magnificence of Allah permeates that person and he fully understands the meaning of “Allah-O-Akbar” (God is Great); every thing besides Allah becomes naught in his eyes.

Since some of the human actions testify to the absolute reverence (to Allah), e.g. invocation, prayer, bowing, prostrating, offering sacrifice, circum-ambulation of Kabah, glorification of Allah and declaring His Unity etc, a believer performs these actions only for Allah. A believer **does not pray before another person** nor does he **bow or prostrate before anyone else**. He **does not glorify anyone except Allah, nor does he beseech anyone else to forgive his sins**, because all these are modes of absolute reverence which are the soul of worship.

Invocation (Du'a):

Invocation is the greatest manifestation of reverence and worship. 'Du'a' (invocation) is the most remarkable form of exaltation, and in Arabic it means 'to call'. The Shari'a (religious law) allows you to call out to someone nearby if you need his help

concerning knowledge, or his physical strength in order to achieve some good for yourself. But this calling help is not the same as the Du'a we are discussing now. Indeed Du'a is the essence of worship. It is the call to God to bestow what is good for us and turn us away from what is harmful. And we address this call (Du'a) to the Almighty directly, without any mediator or material means. When we go to the doctor he can only prescribe the medicine; it is God alone who, eventually, cures us, and He alone who grants, through tangible means, what is good for us. A believer, therefore, equips himself with the necessary means, and then seeks the help of the Almighty to make them come into effect. If the believer cannot find such means, he simply invokes the Almighty in the firm hope that the Diving door is ever open to him and that his invocation will be answered. Therefore, he does not invoke anyone other than God; neither does he

associate anyone else other than Him in his invocation. This is the essence of worship. The best course is to avoid such a ambiguous zone, which is why a believer should not analyze them deeply, or list them separately to provoke discussion. As mentioned before, we should abide by the path shown by our Muslim forefathers, and remember that our true faith rests in our firm belief in the word of God.

The Ultimate Purpose of Worship:

As stated earlier, worship assumes a physical form through words pronounced by the tongue, and movements carried out by the body, and that faith is the 'soul' of worship. I would like to mention the following, from among the several aims of worship. The main objective is to try to achieve what pleases God. We should therefore not use worship as a means of acquiring wealth, position or fame, nor should we make it a stepping stone to

worldly achievements nor a means of making a name for ourselves as being devout. In other words, we should try to be absolutely sincere in our worship. Anything affecting or impeding this sincerity is known as hypocrisy. Sincerity is always linked with intention, as intention is the driving force behind every action. God Almighty will question us on the Day of Judgment not only about our actions, but also for the reasons behind them. An action may be good in itself, but if the intention and purpose for which it is performed is not genuine and dedicated to God, it loses its worth. Prayer for example is a noble act, but if it is offered with the intention of attracting attention or creating an impression of piety and devotion to God the action becomes empty. This is why the historical event of migration from Mecca to Medina differed according to the intentions of the migrants, outwardly everyone performed

the act of migrating in a uniform manner, but inwardly there were those who migrated for different reasons. Those who went to Medina to protect their religion and please God migrated for the right reasons and in all sincerity, whereas those who went in the hope of getting married or striking a business deal migrated for a worldly purpose.

Awareness of our actions therefore is the dividing line between actions performed as worship and those performed automatically, as a matter of habit. A person may oversleep and then rush off to work without having had breakfast, and may not eat or drink before sunset. In one way he will have observed a day of fast, but he will not have the reward for fasting as someone observing fast with the intention of fasting. Anything we do that is lawful and permissible, if it is done with the intention of pleasing God, is considered to be an act of worship. This

means that our daily routine of eating, drinking, sleeping, sitting, standing, working, our married life and so on, are all forms of worship as long as they are performed consciously. And this is what God means in the verse of the Holy Qur'an where He says: "I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me"(Qur'an;5:56). The broad scope of the meaning of religion therefore needs to be understood as explained above - and worship is the ultimate goal of all human beings.

Unity of Divinity- Summary:

The Unity of Divinity, the fourth and most important of all issues concerned with the subject of faith can be summarized as:

1. All good and evil comes from God alone, and that we should not seek to gain benefit from anyone other than Him.

2. We seek such benefit either through the 'rules', 'the laws of Nature' that He laid down for this universe, or directly from Him, through prayer and invocation.
3. We plead to Him alone and set up no other partners or mediators with Him.
4. We seek His help alone directly from Him, or through the means He has put at our disposal. We do all this in the full knowledge that it is He, the Almighty, Who grants all benefits.
5. Our absolute love is for Him only and it is this love which motivates us to be completely obedient to Him, and our fear of Him that stops us from committing acts which would cause His displeasure.
6. We glorify Him from the bottom of our hearts and reflect our devotion to Him in our speech and actions, because satisfying Him is our most cherished desire.

7. Hence our prayers and worship are not directed to anything whatsoever that belongs to this world.

Scientific Enquiry:

God has given us the power of intellect and has ordered us to think and reflect on the secrets of the universe, with its unique laws and traditions. These have been laid down by Him so that we may behave in accordance with His wishes. Therefore the study of the natural sciences and the discovery of the secrets of the universe are acts of worship, provided such knowledge serves to strengthen our faith and should, in fact, make us more devout. We should use this knowledge for causes that are both beneficial to mankind and acceptable to our Lord, and not exploit it in order to cause disaster and destruction in the world.

Reward of Good Works Done by Non Believers:

Many people ask, "Why is it that someone who doesn't believe in God, but performs acts which help mankind, such as charity, building homes for the poor, establishing medical and educational institutions, etc, will not, according to what you believe, receive any reward in the next world?". The answer is that God will certainly not disregard the labour of any human being, and He will not deny the reward due to a doer of good deeds. Indeed, He will respond to his requests. Is there a better way of expressing one's gratitude to a person who has done something good for him? If the doer of a good deed believes in God and the life hereafter, and seeks the reward of the next world. God will grant him his reward. However, if the person is only interested in worldly achievements, he will be rewarded accordingly. Why should you concern yourself about his

reward if he himself does not seek the reward in the next life?

Avoiding Useless Debates:

Some issues concerning the Divine Attributes and the existence of God have led to too many long-winded debates and discussions, filling volumes of theological works. Questions such as whether God's knowledge belongs to Him, or whether He acquired it, whether characteristics such as knowledge, ability, power, etc., are inborn in Him, and whether these characteristics differ from His other characteristics, such as the power to create, grant, employ and so on, lead to unnecessary tension, like the question regarding the Holy Qur'an and whether it was eternal or created. Likewise issues regarding the difference between 'good' and 'the best', fate, destiny, man's willpower, etc are equally absurd and fruitless. The right approach to all these

issues is to refuse to delve into them and discuss them. Such issues are, to use a legal term, 'Rejected Cases', for the following reasons:

- 1) Our predecessors, who were the best of Muslims and among whom were the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the companions of the companions, did not analyze these points, as their faith was sounder and purer than ours, and, as stated before, they set models for us to follow.
- 2) Anyone making a careful study of the views of the various factions will find there is a unified undercurrent based on the parity between God the Almighty and mankind. All these factions seek to apply human logic and psychology to the Almighty. But this is wrong as there is no comparison between God and a

human being. In fact, nothing can be compared to God the Almighty.

- 3) All the aforementioned issues and questions belong to the realm of metaphysics, in other words, the world of the unseen. As we mentioned earlier that, our power of intellect is limited to the material world and cannot therefore consider issues which are beyond it. Approaching these issues, I would like to put forward a new approach, which is nearer the truth and more beneficial to us. We should give up arguing about the attributes of God and turn our attention to actions which will please Him and He will consequently reward us. So instead of indulging in futile discussions such as those previously mentioned, let us attend to our duty to keep to the path He ordained so that He may

learn about us in a way which is acceptable to Him.

Conclusion:

The truth about God has been explained above; anyone who still argues about God's attributes is like a class of students who are told that the ministry of education has committed a high level committee to conduct their examinations. The sensible students will make sure they prepare themselves thoroughly and do not miss out any of the syllabus. The foolish students, on the other hand, will start asking questions about whether the committee will approach the examinations collectively or on an individual basis, whether the committee consists of an odd or even number of members, whether they will come by air or by road, etc. They will continue to argue in this way so that on the day of the examinations they will be completely unprepared. Indeed God will

not ask us on the Day of Judgement about what viewpoints scholars put forward, or about those arguments that filled so many volumes. If such matters were important, the Prophet of God (peace be upon him), would have discussed them himself. So why not turn our attention away from such issues which are the result of ancient Greek philosophy, about which most formulations have been proved false, and arguments in their favour have not stood the test of time. Creating a new philosophy just as misleading as the earlier philosophy of metaphysical thought has caused yet more chaos and confusion. Why not keep the Book of God before us, using it as our guiding force and accepting what it says regarding the Unseen, and leave the rest to Him.

CHAPTER-7: MANIFESTATION OF FAITH

A student, who knows that his examinations are only a week away, but spends his time having fun instead of studying, does not realize that his exams are just getting closer. Similarly, someone may ask you the way to some place. He listen carefully to your detailed instructions and set out in the opposite direction' With regards to the last example, the person's reaction shows that his does not trust you completely. In the same way, we can say that faith is reflected in the actions and behaviour of a believer:-

1. The marks of perfect faith are displayed clearly in the actions and behavior of the believer.
2. The Islamic law (Shari'a) has ordained that man should first adopt all possible

means and methods and should, then pray to Allah for positive results of his efforts.

3. Reliance (*Tawakkul*) does not consist in sitting idle and setting aside the use of all methods and the laws of nature fashioned by Allah.
4. The believer's point of view is that religious ties are stronger than the blood ties and the bond of creed is more vital than the bond of lineage.

Faith and Actions:

Faith and action are inseparable. Action is a consequence of faith, a cherished fruit, and an outward expression of inner conviction. This is why God has, in the Holy Qur'an, associated faith with good action: "They only are the (true) believers whose hearts feel fear when God is mentioned, and when His revelations are recited unto them they increase their

faith, and who trust in their Lord”(Qur’an;8:2); “They only are the (true) believers who believe in God and his messenger and, when they are with him on some common errand, go not away until they have asked leave of him. Lo! Those who ask leave of thee, those are they who believe in God and His messenger. So, if they ask thy leave for some affair of theirs, give leave to whom thou wilt of them and ask for them forgiveness of God. Lo! God is forgiving, merciful” (Qur’an;24:62); “Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers and who shun vain conversation, and who are payers of poor due, and who guard their modesty—save from their wives or the (slaves) that their right hands possess, for then they are not blameworthy, but whosoever! craveth beyond that, such are transgressors, and honour their commitments and their covenants, and who pay heed to their

prayers”(Qur’an;23:1-9); “It is not righteousness that you turn your face to the east and the west, but righteous is he who believeth God and the Last Day the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets; and gives wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observes proper worship and pay the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing”(Qur’an;2:177).

Increase in Faith:

Some scholars consider faith to be a total and indivisible concept, so they hold that a person has to be either a believer or an unbeliever: there can be no intermediate stage, and faith is therefore constant and neither increases nor decreases. But the

majority of scholars link faith with good actions and consider it as varying in degrees, in proportion to these 'actions. In fact, this is the view expressly stated in the Holy Qur'an: "... and when the revelations of God are recited unto them they increase their faith"(Qur'an;8:2); "As for those who believe, it has increased them in faith"(Qur'an;9:124); "... and all this but increased their faith and their readiness to surrender (themselves unto God)"(Qur'an;33:22).

Negligence and Belief:

Scholars of the traditional school of thought all agree that someone who commits a forbidden act but accepts it as forbidden, or he neglects some thing obligatory , but accepts it as obligatory, he is entitled for punishment in the Hereafter but he will not be deemed an infidel nor he be committed to hell for ever. It is with this significance and meaning that the

Prophet (peace be upon him) said that an adulterer is not a believer at the time he commits adultery. In other words, he fails to realize that God is watching him, for if he were aware of this he would refrain from such an act out of fear and modesty. Someone planning an adulterous affair may be caught by his father in the nick of time. In this case, will his sense of modesty stop him from fulfilling his plan? If his sense of modesty and respect for his father can prevent him from carrying out such an affair, it will become all the more imperative when he thinks of God.

Fruits of Faith:

Actions performed with sincerity are the fruits of faith. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) summed up this point eloquently and precisely in the following Hadith: "Worship God as though you see Him. If you do not see Him, He verily sees you."

Dhikr (Remembrance of God):

One of the fruits of faith is to remember Allah (Dhikr) at all times. To recollect, having read about a very pious man who asked his uncle, also a pious and God-fearing individual with whom he had spent his early years: "Uncle, what should I do in order to become like you?" "Say the following phrase three times a day: Verily God is looking at me; verily God is observing me!" his uncle told him. He did so for a week, and then his uncle asked him to repeat it three times after each prayer for another week, and finally he taught him to repeat it straight from his heart without physically pronouncing the words. Dhikr is the subject to which the Holy Qur'an most draws our attention, and no other subject has been emphasized so much, and no other person has been commended and praised by God in the Holy Book as the one who abides by Dhikr. Linguistically the word *Dhikr* has two

meanings: Dhikr from the heart and Dhikr through speech, both of which have; been used in the Holy Qur'an. Therefore if you wish to be included among those who are constantly God-conscious, you should remember Him from the bottom of you heart and with the power of your intellect. Your efforts with regard to this should be reflected in your conduct and behaviour wherever you are: on your own, in the company of friends, in the street - and whatever mood you are in. You should only do what is acceptable to God.

Intention of Obedience:

Whatever you do should be done with the intention of obedience to Him, and this includes abstention from what is forbidden. Your indulgence in what is allowed should be with the intention of seeking His reward. -And if you have two different choices always go for the one which is nearer to God and farther from

the temptation to being misled. If you are caught off guard and are drawn away from the path of God, but realize what you have done later, you always have the chance to repent and ask for forgiveness. “Verily, they who are conscious of God bethink themselves (of Him) whenever any dark suggestion from Satan touches them - whereupon, lo! they begin to see things clearly”(Qur’an;7:201). The best way of remembering God is coordinating and integrating the way you speak with the way you feel. Anything you say coming from a mind preoccupied with something else unrelated to the matter at hand, holds no real meaning. For example, a street vendor wanting to sell his wares may repeat, "God is generous" to attract people's attention to what he is selling, rather than because he is really remembering God. Similarly we cannot take someone seriously who is drinking alcohol, or singing crude songs while talking about God. The best forms of

Dhikr are those words uttered when we recite the Holy Qur'an, while kneeling and prostrating in prayer or as suggested by our Prophet (peace be upon him). These days, congregations of *Dhikr* are performed in a way that is regarded unfavorably in Islam. Dhikr performed through dance or other movements and making rather strange sounds are also not allowed, unless such dancing is performed by someone in a state of divine ecstasy.

The Condition of Fear and Hope:

One form of remembering God is to 'fear' Him - to be in awe of Him - and to be aware of how we can suffer if we forget Him, and to hope for His pardon. Let us examine those two concepts in detail. We must always bear in mind that God settles an account quickly and we soon feel great discomfort when we lose our way and forget Him. A real awareness of this 'punishment' makes us eager to please

Him, as we realise that this makes us feel much more comfortable and at ease. While this realization induces fear in us, recognition of His readiness to forgive reminds us of His great compassion and generosity and consequently inspires us with hope. A God-fearing heart will always receive His mercy: “Verily, none but people who deny the truth can ever lose hope of God's life-giving mercy”(Qur'an;12:87). A person who lives in an illusion of hopes without being aware of God's power may feel that he is protected from what is in store for him. God says about such people: “But none feels secure from God's deep devising save people who are already lost”(Qur'an;7:99). As mentioned earlier there is no similarity between the Creator and the created. This means that the fear you have for the Creator is not the same as the fear you have for His Creatures. For example you would be terrified if a lion confronted you,

showing its teeth, and you were unarmed and unable to protect yourself. But fear of God is completely different. You might be able to ward off the lion's attack but you cannot ward off what is willed by God. Here is another example. You may be caught in a violent flood and panic that it will sweep you away. But that fear is not like the fear of God Who has caused the flood and Who, if He so desires, has the power to stop it or cause it to flow again. It may be possible to escape from the flood, whereas there is no escape from the suffering of God's punishment when it occurs. Fear of illness, hardships, loss of your near and dear ones, 'financial loss, etc., cannot equal the fear of God the Omnipotent and Omniscient. If He wills He may cause you great hardship. And if He wills He may spare you. But no creature can cure you of any illness which your Creator has inflicted on you. A Muslim must therefore be aware of the

importance of both 'hope' and 'fear'. This can be demonstrated very simply in our prayer, when we utter the phrase, "God the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful", followed by "Lord of the Day, of Judgement". Unfortunately most Muslims these days put more importance on hope and pardon, than on fear and punishment. However, this does not mean that a devout Muslim should grow complacent simply because he performs all the duties God has ordained and abstains from what is forbidden. He should continue exerting himself and aspire for a privileged position in the next life, and not be like the student who just manages to scrape through his exams without getting a high grade.

Reliance on God (*Tawakkul*):

God the Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: "...if you do (really) believe in Allah then in Him put your trust if you submit (your

will to His)”(Qur’an;10:84): “God loves those who place their trust in Him”(Qur’an;3:159). What is the meaning and significance of *tawakkul*? We stated earlier that God has created both good and bad, and that the laws He has laid down for the universe contain the means for achieving both. Does *tawakkul* mean therefore that we can abdicate responsibility for what happens, saying that everything is God's responsibility? There were among the Sufis those who interpreted *tawakkul* as meaning they could abandon their responsibilities and instead of earning their living, they waited for work to find them without taking action to look for it. If one of them fell sick they left him without medical care, hoping he would be cured without medicine or treatment. They would also travel across the desert without food or water, expecting to be bestowed with whatever they required without making,

any effort. They had the same attitude towards seeking knowledge. To prove their point they would misquote the verse from the Holy Qur'an which reads: "And remain conscious of God, since it is God Who teaches you"(Qur'an;2:282) But this is only a portion of a verse, and anyone reading the whole of it would realise that the meaning they claimed is not the true interpretation. Allah says: "O believers! When you deal with each other in lending for a fixed period of time, put it in writing. Let a scribe write it down with justice between the parties. The scribe, who is given the gift of literacy by Allah, should not refuse to write; he is under obligation to write. Let him who incurs the liability (debtor) dictate, fearing Allah his Lord and not diminishing anything from the settlement. If the borrower is mentally unsound or weak or is unable to dictate himself, let the guardian of his interests dictate for him with justice. Let two witnesses from among you bear witness to all such documents, if two men cannot be found, then one man and two women of your choice

should bear witness, so that if one of the women forgets anything the other may remind her. The witnesses must not refuse when they are called upon to do so. You must not be averse to writing (your contract) for a future period, whether it is a small matter or big. This action is more just for you in the sight of Allah, because it facilitates the establishment of evidence and is the best way to remove all doubts; but if it is a common commercial transaction concluded on the spot among yourselves, there is no blame on you if you do not put it in writing. You should have witnesses when you make commercial transactions. Let no harm be done to the scribe or witnesses; and if you do so, you shall be guilty of transgression. Fear Allah; it is Allah that teaches you and Allah has knowledge of everything” Qur’an;2:282).

Even if we were to accept their statement for the sake of argument and presume that we can attain knowledge simply by being conscious of God, we could still reason by saying that God-consciousness is attained

by abiding by what is ordained by God. As He ordains the seeking of knowledge, anyone failing to abide by that is not a truly God-conscious person, and therefore his attitude is contrary to Divine guidance. There are people, who live only to make money, and their whole lives are orientated towards that goal, and there are people who believe that the means justify the end, and that it is by means alone that logical results are achieved. In fact such an assumption is contrary to reality because the desired result is often not achieved, in spite of the availability of the means. For example, two patients in hospital may receive identical treatment from the same doctor and one may recover while the 'other may die. Similarly, a farmer could use the latest methods and machinery, sow the best quality seeds and fertilize his land with the best fertilizer available, yet a cold spell or some other drastic weather conditions could lay waste

to all his efforts. Therefore the means alone cannot produce the end result. However, it is not sensible to ignore them altogether.

The right course is to be led by Divine guidance. We can employ all the means at our disposal and pray to God to grant us the result rather like; tying a camel and entrusting its safety to God, or preparing yourself as well as you can for an exam, and trusting God and praying to Him for your success. This is the true meaning of *Tawakkul* (trust in God). It does not mean ignoring whatever is at our disposal to get a job done, nor should we disregard the universal laws He has laid down: at the same time, however, we must be aware of the fact that God alone bestows what is good or bad. We need the means to achieving what we wish, and employing the means available to us is away of obeying God. However, we cannot resort to the means alone as the results are in God's

hands. Therefore, anyone genuinely trusting God will use every lawful means at his disposal to achieve his goal and will firmly believe that it is God Who grants success.

Gratitude:

Gratitude represents the sense of contentment we feel with whatever comes our way, good or bad. God says in the Holy Qur'an: "He who is grateful (unto God) is but grateful for the good of his own self"(Qur'an;31:12); "God will requite all who are grateful (to Him)"(Qur'an;3:144). Being grateful for whatever befalls us, believing that it comes from God, is a fruit of faith. Normally we express gratitude to someone who has been good to us, but that person is only a channel through which God has granted us that good, By the same token we also feel guilty if we do not express our thanks to that person. So what can be said about our immense gratitude

to God, Who has granted us the power of our senses of perception, the functions of all our organs, besides granting us health and safety, the earth from which we can survive, and countless other blessings, so many that we could never make a statistical record of them!

Man does not always realise the value of God's blessings on him until he is deprived of them. Someone with bad toothache would realise what a blessing it would be not to have any more pain, but once the pain has gone he may forget the blessing. We realise the blessings of having money when we have financial difficulties. And look how restless we become when there is a power cut and our home is plunged into darkness. Once the power comes back though, we forget to appreciate it. So is it not necessary to thank God for His countless blessings on you? This can be done through words and actions. The words of gratitude we can often repeat are,

"Praise be to God. Oh my Lord unto You be all praise!". Showing gratitude through action is sharing what you enjoy with others. A rich man would show his gratitude by helping the poor, a strong person would help the weak, a person in authority can always stand by truth and justice; if, for instance, you are enjoying a five course meal while your neighbour is starving, it would be an act of ingratitude to God on your part if you do not give a share of your food to your neighbor. Actions speak louder than words, and it isn't enough just to repeat the words. "Praise be to God!" a thousand times. You can express your gratitude to God by truly appreciating whatever you have been given, without being discontented or greedy or envying others who have more than you do. So a truly grateful person is grateful at heart, and contented with what God has given him. He will help the poor

and the needy and continuously express his gratitude to God.

Patience:

A Muslim enjoys two different kinds of blessings, good fortune, for which he gives thanks, recognizing it as a reward from God, and patience: if misfortune comes his way he is patient and realizes that in the long run he will receive a reward from God. The reward God grants a poor man who puts up with his poverty with fortitude will be equal to, if not more than, the reward to a rich man who is grateful to God. “.. And most certainly shall We grant unto those who are patient in adversity their reward, in accordance with the best that they ever did”(Qur’an;16:96). Life in this world is not an eternal bed of roses, and there are bound to be prickly patches, like illness, financial loss or betrayal by a friend. Such crises are all part of life. An Arab poet

said: Life has confronted you with many unsavory things. Whereas you wished it to be pure of all dirt and anything unsavory. He who yearns ever for the cool shades of time. Is like one who craves for the warmth of fire in the midst of winter. God says in the Holy Qur'an: "We shall surely test your steadfastness with fear and famine, with loss of property, life and produce. Give good news to those who endure with patience; who, when afflicted with calamity, say: "We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return." (Qur'an;2:155- 156).

You cannot escape from problems and crises, but you have a choice either to bear them with patience or to rebel against them. The latter reaction solves nothing and only makes you more miserable. Dealing with problems with perseverance is the first category of patience. The second category is self-control. A young man may be surrounded by beautiful girls

flaunting themselves at him, and he may feel sexually aroused, but his fear of God will make him lower his gaze, refusing to cross the threshold of the door to forbidden pleasure, even though it is wide open. An employee may be offered a bribe equal to six months' salary, but refuses to accept it even though he may need it desperately; or a student may have the opportunity to look up the answers in his book while he is taking an exam, but refrains, in spite of the fact that he would be sure to pass if he cheated. All these are acts of restraint representing patience. We are always tempted to follow our desires, even though we know that giving in to them is bad for us. But the person who, even though he is surrounded by temptations, manages to steer clear of them is truly patient.

The third category of patience is adhering to God's will. Like the performance of prayers, especially *fajr*, (early morning

before sun rise) when we have to get out of our warm beds to pray (*Salah*), the observance of *Ramadan*, particularly during the summer months when we cannot drink, and the payment of *Zakat* and giving of alms, even though we may be reluctant to part with our money. However, all these acts represent our obedience to God's commands. Leading a spiritual life in this day and age when we see so much evil acts being happening all around, can be rather like a man holding a hot poker in his hand! A religious person may be laughed at and humiliated by the public, or even persecuted by those in power. Some people may have a cut in their salaries or be banished from their countries because of their religious beliefs. But anyone who firmly sticks to his beliefs, despite such trials and tribulation, is like those whom God has described in the following verses: "... those who, having attained to patience in

adversity, in their Sustainer place their trust”(Qur’an;16:42); “Those who will be given their reward twice over because they are patient and repel evil with good and spend of that We have provided them”(Qur’an;28:54); “But none is granted it, save those who are steadfast, and none is granted it save the owner of great happiness”(Qur’an;41:35).

Submission to God's Will:

Compliance of Shari’a (Islamic Law) is reflective of submission to God's Will. It has already been mentioned that faith is an aspect of the heart and a territory known only to God. However, outward appearances can be observed by everyone, and we therefore differentiate a believer from a nonbeliever through his actions and words. Thus Islam is the manifestation of inner faith. The meaning of the word 'Islam' is to submit. A child submits to his parents because he trusts them, and we submit to our partners out

of love and desire, and a person who has been defeated submits or surrenders to his conquerors. This last example is based on fear of the victor. But a believer submits to God's will totally and unconditionally. He obeys every command, even though he may not know the reason behind it or the benefit to be derived from it, and he stays away from whatever God has forbidden, without necessarily understanding the reason behind the prohibition. This submission has two aspects. The first is practical and can be observed in the form of obedience in actions and speech, points which we shall be discussing later when discussing Islam as a practical faith. The other aspect concerns our mental attitude, which is what we shall be discussing now while we are talking about faith.

This second aspect refers to our inner acceptance of God's will. It is a contentment which brings peace of mind and therefore gives us the courage of our

conviction. As a result of such contentment, we have no difficulty in carrying out our duties and keeping away from what is forbidden, without hesitation or complaint. God the Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an; "But nay, by thy Lord, they will not believe (in truth) until they make thee judge of what is in dispute between them"(Qur'an;4:65) (which is the practical aspect): "... and find within themselves no dislike of that which thou decidest, and submit with full submission"(Qur'an;4:65) (which is the inner, mental aspect). This represents our mental attitude. It is clear from these verses that faith in God depends basically on our being convinced in our hearts about the rightness of the Divine Command, and therefore we can accept it with full satisfaction. The only response of believers whenever they face the judgement of God and His Apostle can therefore be no other than: "We have heard and we pay heed! - and it is they,

they who shall attain to a happy state”(Qur’an;24:51).

Some people always want to know the wisdom behind what is required of them.

It is as if they would like to withhold their compliance until they know about it. But this wisdom can be perceived either through the actual text, or by inference - or it may not be perceived at all. In the case that it cannot be perceived, does this

mean we disobey our Lord? How would you feel if you had a child who refused to obey you without first knowing the wisdom and reasons behind, whatever it is you want him to do? You would probably think he was rather strange. Perhaps you want to satisfy his curiosity, but because the matter is urgent, you have no time to explain. On the other hand it may be something which needs to be kept secret.

But if your son still fails to understand the situation and insists on knowing the reason, you would find his: behaviour

defiant, and expect him to obey you because he is your son and you are his parent- Similarly, a military officer refusing to carry out the commander's orders without first knowing the reasons and purpose behind them, would probably end up being court martialled. Yet God's precedence over his worshippers is far beyond that of parents over their children or army officers over-soldiers.

It is His precedence that we obey Him in all respects, regardless of whether they are in harmony with our own desires; or not. It is not for us to look for proof and to strain our minds to' find a viewpoint from the books of jurisprudence to support; our inclinations. And we should not take the foreign vacillations and traditions which we have imbibed into our; culture in form and content as authoritative evidence against the Divine Writ, 'tailor-making' the text to suit our own interpretation. We have done this even at the risk of going

outside the principles of Islamic teaching in case our religion contradicts the values and traditions of foreign civilizations. But if in the future the values of society change, and we shift from Western ideals to those of the East, will we have to look for yet more interpretations? We should mention our position regarding concepts such as democracy, capitalism or socialism in this context. Sometimes, we praise democracy and say it is in harmony with Islam, and when it suits our interest we may take the opposing view and say that socialism is in tune with Islam, thus wavering between paradoxical views merely to please the powers that be. But these are not the right sources of guidance. We should refer for this guidance and redress our problems only through the Divine Writ (Qur'an), and be satisfied with it. This would be the position of believers who genuinely believe in the truth of Islam.

Concord and Discord:

Rigidity and flexibility to love and hate for God's sake are also proofs of faith, For example, we may love someone who is religious and God-fearing even though we do not gain any material benefit from him. And we may dislike an arrogant unbeliever, even though he has not done us any harm. We may have very close links with him, but we still dislike him and keep away from him because the bond of brotherhood in religion is stronger than the brotherhood based on kinship or affinity, or the fraternity of lineage and nobility by birth. Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) son was, by Divine Writ, excluded from his family because of his blasphemy- God Almighty has ordained that there should be no friendship and peaceful coexistence between believers and adamant transgressors against religion. There is no Divine sanction for "peaceful coexistence" however strong the

relations may be between the two parties. The Holy Qur'an states: "You will never find any people who believe in Allah and the last Day on friendly terms with those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even though they be their fathers, their sons, their brothers or their relatives..."Qur'an;58:22).

This does not mean that they are compelled to accept Islam. However, it does mean that they should be prevented from creating obstacles in the path of Islam and from opposing its message. They are most welcome to accept our religion if they are convinced about it and become one of us, enjoying the rights and privileges we enjoy and taking on the same responsibilities. Or, if they wish, they may keep to their own religion, in which case we shall reciprocate and maintain peace with them, as long as they do not oppose our faith: "Allah does not forbid you to be kind and equitable to those who had

neither fought against your faith nor driven you out of your homes. In fact Allah loves the equitable”(Qur’an;60:8). This means that a believer's feelings of love and dislike are purely for the sake of his religion. His love is expressed through his generosity, courtesy, patience and sacrifice. He may humiliate himself for his brother's sake and take this in his stride, or sacrifice something which he really needs for his brother's sake. His feelings of hatred for God's sake become manifest through his anger and resentment. He fights with the enemies of Islam, in the defense of Islam with extreme courage and fortitude. He is therefore at the same time flexible and rigid, hard and kind. He reserves his tolerance and kindness for his brothers in Faith, and his harshness and vehemence are directed towards the enemies of his faith and evil forces. The Holy Qur’an states; Muhammad is God’s Apostle, and those who are with him are

firm and unyielding towards the disbelievers. (Qur'an;48:29): "... humble towards the believers, proud toward all who deny the truth: (people) who strive hard in God's cause, and do not fear to be censured by anyone who might censure; them"(Qur'an;5:54). These verses describe the attitude of believers when they spared no effort for the sake of striving hard in God's cause (*jihad*). But when we gave up *jihad* and did not abide by God's Will, and started fighting among ourselves and were submissive in the face of our enemies, God caused us to suffer greatly by allowing us to be dominated by those who do not fear Him or have any mercy for us. Such people have ruled our lands and become masters.

Repentance and Atonement:

The love for this life and this world is instinctive; it has been so ordained by Allah. That is why man is always busy in weaving he warp and woof of desires. He

loves to amass wealth, has great passion for women; and violence and the desire to avenge him are inborn and is ever tempted to be misguided by negative forces within. So how can he save himself from such temptations? In fact God, out of His mercy, has given man the [opportunity for repentance. Through repentance and atonement man can transform this record of wrong actions into one of good actions and still be rewarded in the life hereafter. God the Almighty is indeed ever-forgiving: “except the one who repents, becomes a true believer, and starts doing good deeds, for then Allah will change his evil deeds into good, and Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Qur’an;25:70). Provided we are genuinely repentant, the door of repentance is open for us as long as we live, and stays open till we draw our last breath-until that hour when the dying man's soul reaches his throat. It is the

hour when we face the truth as conveyed by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

The sum and substance of a person's repentance will be manifest at that what he labors, as repentance is an expression of voluntary surrender to God, it will be of no avail when a man draws his last breath if he did not opt to repent consciously when he had the chance. This type of last-minute repentance is more an action performed under duress than one done voluntarily. God the Almighty says: "Verily, God's acceptance of repentance relates only to those who do evil out of ignorance and then repent before their time runs out; and it is they unto whom God will turn again in His mercy - for God is all knowing, wise; whereas repentance shall not be accepted from those who do evil deeds until their dying hour and then say, "Behold, I now repent!" nor from those who die as deniers of truth ..."(Qur'an;4:16 -18). Resisting temptation

and being determined not to behave sinfully again are among the basic conditions for genuine repentance. For example, you could not accept an apology from someone who throws dirty water at you, apologizes when you complain, but threatens to do the same thing the next day.

Two Aspects of Repentance:

Repentance has two aspects, spiritual and physical. The spiritual aspect is reflected in curability to realize how much damage sinful actions can cause, and the physical aspect represents itself in how you restrain yourself from doing them in the first place by applying the brakes at the right moment 'the self carries the blame', however, if it fails to do so. In other words, a crime committed by someone who is not aware of its seriousness is much less when compared to someone who is fully aware of its consequences. The second

point regarding repentance is that good actions should predominate - the urge to abide by noble values rather than upholding values which are destructive and corrupt. In other words, repentance should reflect itself in a change of behaviour. The Holy Qur'an states: "When those who believe in Our revelations come to you, say: "Peace be upon you. Your Lord has decreed mercy upon Himself. If anyone among you commits evil because of ignorance and thereafter repents and mends his ways; you will find Allah Forgiving, Merciful."(Qur'an;6:54): "However, those who repent after this and mend their ways, then verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful"(Qur'an;3:89); "except those who repent, reform and let the truth be known; I'll accept their repentance, for I am the Receiver of Repentance, the Merciful"(Qur'an;2:160).

One has to turn over a new leaf by genuinely trying not to transgress against

Divine Law and being determined not to repeat one's mistakes. But if, despite your resolve, your willpower fails you, or circumstances force you to do wrong, then you repent again, you will be forgiven even if the same situation recurs. However, if your determination weakens and you say to yourself, "Never mind I will fulfill my desire to do such and such a wrongful act this time, and then ask for forgiveness" your repentance is not genuine and will therefore not be accepted. It is sufficient to repent by abstaining from wrongful acts while being fully aware of what you are doing. God in His greatness will forgive you. But say you hurt another human being by stealing his money or hurting him physically, giving false witness, gossiping or blackmailing, etc. In all such instances you need to put things right with the person concerned or receive his forgiveness. In turn God may show you mercy. Otherwise, on the Day of

Judgement that person may get credit for all your good actions, while you will have to bear the brunt of his misdeeds. But however many sins are committed, the door of repentance is ever open, and we should never think God will not forgive us. In fact, despairing of his forgiveness is the gravest sin of all: “Oh you servants of Mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of God's mercy. Behold, God forgives all sins”(Qur'an;39:53). Thus true repentance is to give up doing what we know is wrong and consciously to do what we know to be right. One should ask for forgiveness from God alone as ordained in the Holy Qur'an: “He brought you into being out of the earth and made you thrive thereon. Ask him, therefore, to forgive you your sins, and then turn towards Him with repentance”(Qur'an;11:61); “Hence ask your Sustainer to forgive you your sins, and then turn towards Him in repentance.

For verily my Sustainer is a dispenser of grace, a fount of love” (Qur’an;11:90); “Hence O my people, ask your Sustainer to forgive you your sins, and then turn towards Him in repentance”(Qur’an;11:52).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also addressed the subject of repentance in the same way, urging us to ask for God's forgiveness and save ourselves from punishment in the life hereafter. Sinful people can be put into various categories, one being those who live and die as infidel, for whom there is no hope of forgiveness: “Verily, God does not forgive the ascribing of Divinity to aught beside Him”(Qur’an;4:48). The fate of believers who do not spend their lives in accordance with the Divine Will, and do not ask for God's forgiveness, is in the hands of God, who may pardon them if He wishes; And He may punish them in the fire of hell though they may not stay there forever.

Other than associating partners with Him, He forgives any lesser sin unto whomever He wills: “Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with him; but He forgives anything else to whom He pleases; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed”(Qur’an;4:48).

No one should underestimate this. As mortals, we are unable to withstand a blaze even for a very short time, so why risk putting ourselves in a position where we might suffer the fire of hell for a long time? Even though God, in His mercy and generosity, forgives those who ask for repentance after they have transgressed, the greatest reward of all is for those who deliberately stay away from temptation, even when it is very strong, because of the deep respect they have in their hearts for the power of God. For example, a man may be Just about to be unfaithful to his wife when he remembers God's wishes and is tempted no further, even though he is

extremely aroused. Only a man who, has been divinely bestowed with a strong will-power is able to restrain himself from getting involved in the first place. Getting embroiled in situations like this is rather like conducting an experiment on a dangerous contagious disease and making sure you inhale the germs at the time. Anyone who survives must have built up a strong immunity, but the chances against him catching the disease would be about one per cent. That example is set in the context of a physical illness. So what about our own transgressions? Indulgence in them does not help us build up our immune systems, so if we want to make sure we keep ourselves centered on 'God's Will' we should avoid mixing with people whose ways could lead us astray. You can judge a man by the company he keeps. In fact there is a popular saying that goes, "Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are." Let's hope that the

younger generation realizes the potential danger of these temptations, and pray for their guidance.

CHAPTER-8: FAITH IN THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

‘O our Lord! Open our eyes so that we may see the realities scattered all around us which are a proof of your existence; and bestow on us the wisdom to discern the path that leads to you, and protect us from all perceptible and imperceptible evils’.

Man and the Death:

There are four types of people in regards to their attitude towards death.

- 1) The people who support the foolhardy view of, say, a poet, who claims that, "Whatever has happened in the Past is over, and as you don't know what's going to happen in the future you might as well live for the present!". People who have adopted this philosophy on life consider the day that has passed as something which is over and done with

and they do not think about the future. They reckon that there is no point in thinking about what has happened. But, for goodness sake, it is not over! Our deeds are accounted for in the record of our actions, good and bad, and none of them, great or small, will be left out of that record. We may hope our actions are unseen, but (it is only to our consciousness that they are unseen). Otherwise, whatever we have done is Present in our soul, and God is aware of our deeds even though we may forget about them. In fact, people who never think about death are the most misled, compared to the other three categories.

- 2) The attitude of the second category of people can be compared with the Persian poet, Umar Khayyam. Many people were attracted to his unconventional views as far as morals were concerned. He says, "since death is an undeniable truth and life is short

and ephemeral, let's fill it with love and passion. And when we are struck with misfortune and despair, let us seek refuge in wine and poetry, and revel in forbidden pleasures!"

- 3) Then there are people who think of death as a phenomenon and an event without any consequences. These people belong to the third category. The Arab poet Abul Atahiya is well-known for his verses on the phenomenon of death, but he has not spoken of what happens after death, as if he agrees with people who claim, "Death is nothing but a deep sleep in the grave."
- 4) Finally, the fourth category of people are those who follow the way of truth because they realise that life is eternal, and that death is the beginning of new life and not a deep sleep but awakening from hypnotic slumber. Indeed there is another, much longer life which is infinite. It may be a life of eternal bliss

and joy, or one of never-ending suffering. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said; “People are asleep; they will wake up when they die”. It refers to the same truth. They will thus, come to realize that a long interminable life is awaiting them after death. It will bring either be eternal bliss or painful retribution according to one’s deeds. This and the fourth group, consists of those who are the right-guided believers.

Life after Death:

The life hereafter is the true life. It is not visible to anyone who is short-sighted and cannot be understood by anyone who is dull-witted or does not wish to hear about such things. But anyone who really uses his eyes and mind to see and understand truth will realise that life consists of several stages. A man begins his life as an insignificant mass, shrunk within himself

in his mother's womb. At that stage, if he were given the power of reasoning, he would take the womb as his ultimate abode, and one which he would only leave under duress. If he were able to speak at that stage he would declare that leaving his mother's womb would mean being dead and buried, in just the same way as we consider death and departure from this world. But it is also a process of birth, a shift from this world to another, which is more expansive and far removed from our mortal, material life. It is the world of eternal life.

Preparations for the Death:

Our zest for life is an inborn human instinct. The ambitions we nurse and the hopes we aspire to are never ending. In fact it is for this reason that death, in spite of being closely connected to our sense perceptions, is far removed from our thoughts. Even the sight of a funeral may

not remind us of our own death. On the contrary, many of us live in the illusion that death is something that will never happen to us. Even when we attend a funeral service, our minds may wander. There are graveyards around us, but do they make us think about the fact that one day we too shall be laid to rest? Fortunately, however, the graveyard is not our ultimate abode! It is our physical bodies which will be laid to rest. The body is like a garment that we take off when it gets dirty. And the soul disentangles itself from the body in just the same way as the child disentangles itself from the placenta when it is born.

Anyone who is not following the path of God may forget about death. But a believer is always ready to meet his end and prepares for it by repenting to God and asking for His forgiveness. Such a person clears all his debts, in terms of money and obligations. He is continuously taking

stock of his actions, thanking God for his successes and seeking forgiveness for his failures and shortcomings. He contemplates life after death by thinking of the day when all eyes will be forced to turn toward God, and by being aware of punishment after death. Such a person is constantly seeking God's pleasure through his noble deeds, and through prayer and patience.

Dying Consciously:

Here are some verses from the Holy Qur'an regarding the subject of death: “Why is it not then that when you see a dying person's soul come up to his throat while you are helplessly watching - and at that time We are nearer to him than you, although you cannot see Us. Then why do you not - if you claim you are not subject to reckoning - restore to the dying person his soul? Answer this, if what you say be true!(Qur'an;56:83-87). In other words,

when death approaches we tend to panic and feel helpless; we bring medical help to the dying person and comfort him as much as we can. But at this point can anyone who claims not to be dependent on God, do anything to restore health and give him a new lease of life? This is a g divine challenge to those who deny the existence of God. It is a question which they cannot answer.

A Senseless Doubt:

Some people who have abandoned religion may cynically ask, "How can the Angel of Death possibly be with two people who are dying at the same time in say, America and China?" The answer to that statement is: 1) From the angel's perspective, planet earth seems like a minute particle one who leans over the colony of ants where millions of them swarm, or peers in to glass of water which has numerous microbes. For the angel this orb of the

earth is like a grain of wheat in our palm. 2) Also the angel of death has many associates to seize the souls. Allah says: “when death approaches anyone of you, Our angels take his soul and they are not negligent in performing their duty”(Qur’an;6:61).

Trial of the Grave:

[Trial of the Grave has not been mentioned in the original book, it has been added here for the benefit of readers.]

The grave is the place of burial, it also symbolize death or extinction of physical body with fire or any other means. The questioning or the trial of grave will take place. The details of this life in grave and how it is conducted are not well known [most likely spiritual in nature, because resurrection will take place on the Day of Judgement (Allah knows the best)]. It is only known that the faithfuls who have done well in this life, being devout and doing what God requires them to do will be in a happy state, while determined sinners will

suffer what is termed as the “torment in the grave”. This is intermediate stage; final trial will take place on the Day of Judgment.

In biblical accounts (New Testament), the spirits of the dead, are placed in a state or abode called ‘Hades’, the place of waiting before judgment. It is mentioned as ‘Sheol’ in the Old Testament. The righteous and the wicked are separated, the blessed dead are in that part of ‘Hades’ called paradise (Luke;23:43). They are also said to be in Abraham's bosom (Luke;16:22). The wicked are in state of torments in hell (Luke;16:23).

According to the Islamic traditions, there will be a trial after death called ‘The Trial of the Grave’, which involves questioning the deceased person by two angels; *Munkir* and *Nakir*, about his/her Lord, his/her religion, and his/her Prophet. There "Allah confirms those who believe with a firm saying, in the present life and

the hereafter" (Qur'an;14:27). The believer will say: "Allah is my Lord, Islam is my religion, and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is my prophet." The unbeliever or the hypocrite will say: "I do not know. I heard the people saying something and I said it." The believers will be in a happy state in the grave; "Those whose lives the angels take in state of purity, saying 'peace be on you; enter paradise for what you were doing' (Qur'an;6:32).

The transgressing unbelievers will get the "torment in the grave.": "If you could only see when the evildoers are in the agonies of death and the angels are stretching out their hands, saying, 'Give up your souls! Today you shall be rewarded with the punishment of humiliation for what you used to say untrue about Allah, and for scornfully rejecting His signs"(Qur'an; 6:93). The dead will rise as in a trance, and they will be confused in the new conditions! They will gradually regain

their memory and their personality. They will be reminded that Allah in His grace and mercy had already announced the Hereafter in their probationary lives, and the word of Allah's messengers, which then seemed so strange and remote, was true and was now being fulfilled! The new dreadful, frightening and terrifying environments will have such adverse affect that the period they had spent in the grave and the “torment in the grave” will appear to them as nothing, very short as if they were asleep :“And the trumpet is blown and lo! From the graves they will rush forth to their Lord! Crying: Woe upon us! Who hath raised us from our place of sleep? This is that which the Beneficent did promise, and the messengers spoke truth(Qur'an;36:51-52). The sayings of the Prophet are numerous and well-known in this subject.

A Muslim must believe in all that is reported in the Qur'an and the Prophetic

Traditions concerning the (metaphysical) unseen matters (*ghyeb*). He should not contradict it by his worldly experience, because the affairs of the hereafter cannot be perceived by the affairs of this life. The difference between them is very great. Allah is the source of help.

The Day of Resurrection:

The second basic tenet of faith is belief in the Day of Resurrection and Judgement. The Holy Qur'an places so much importance on this principle as on belief in God: the two tenets are invariably mentioned together. A believer is constantly aware of the Day of Judgement and this knowledge determines his actions: he does as much good as he can to reap the rewards on that Day and avoids letting himself involved in actions which will harm him spiritually. He will resist even the most enjoyable and desirable temptations, realizing he will have to take

full responsibility for his actions on that Day. Similarly, if he is asked to undertake a difficult task, he will carry it out, being aware of the positive sequences. Such people are described in the Holy Qur'an as those; "... who are impelled to rise from their beds (at night) to call out to their Sustainer in fear and Hope, and who spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance..."(Qur'an;32:16). It is people like this, who are happy to serve God regardless of whether times are good or bad: They are willing to let go of whatever they own for the sake of others. They are in awe of God and respect His power and at the same time, they are comforted by His mercy.

The Last Hour:

The Holy Qur'an states that the time fixed for the Day of Resurrection is known to none but Allah: "They ask you about the Last Hour and when will it take place. Say:

"Knowledge about it rests only with my Lord: He Himself will disclose it at the proper time..."(Qur'an;7:187); "Allah Alone has knowledge of the unseen things of the Heavens and the Earth. As for the taking place of the Hour of Judgment, it will be like a twinkling of an eye or even quicker: surely Allah has power over everything"(Qur'an;16:77). However the Holy Qur'an states that certain strange happenings will take place in this universe prior to the Last Hour: a creature will be brought forth to speak to mankind - the human mind cannot picture how, or what kind of beast this will be? Our knowledge is limited to the fact that God has revealed this information. Among the other peculiar occurrences that will come about is the letting loose from a rampart of the savage tribes: "It is not possible that a nation which We have destroyed may rise again. Until, when Gog and Magog will be let loose and they will swiftly swarm from

every height, and the time of fulfillment for the True Promise will draw near, then behold! The eyes of the unbelievers will fixedly stare in horror: "O woe to us! We were indeed heedless of this warning; nay we were wrongdoers." (Qur'an; 21:95-97). There are references to the Last Hour in other Traditions (Sayings of the Prophet). Among them are the extinction of truth and the prevalence of ignorance, alcoholism, adultery, an increase in the number of women and a decrease in the number of men, the disappearance of honesty and trustworthiness, social imbalances, the appearance of an impostor until appearance of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) as the Proclaimer of the Divine Path, as revealed to the Last of All Messengers, Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Commencement of the Last Hour:

The Holy Qur'an states that the Last Hour will be preceded by certain signs. There will be a massive earthquake, unlike any other that mankind has witnessed, and it will come about when human life is still flourishing. "When the earth will be shaken to her utmost convulsion, and the earth shall bring out all her inner burdens"(Qur'an;99:1-2).The consequence will be that human society will be thrown into a state of panic and terror and plunged into gloom. This panic will be severe, Allah says: "On that Day you shall see that every nursing mother will forget her nursing-babe and every pregnant female will miscarry, and you will see people as if they are intoxicated, though they will not be drunk: such will be the horror of Allah's chastisement"(Qur'an;22:2). Thus man will live on earth to witness the

earthquake, enquire about it and trace the reasons for its occurrence.

Celestial Events:

As we mentioned earlier, about the knowledge regarding the Day of Judgement and what will happen on that Day, belongs to the unseen realm. With our limited perception we cannot inform ourselves about it in the same way as we can find out about the material world we live in. The human mind will not be able to control it in the same way as it controls worldly affairs: our knowledge regarding That Day is based solely on our understanding of the meaning and significance of the verses concerning the subject. We find in the Holy Qur'an many clearly worded verses (*ayah*) describing the changes and alterations that may occur in what we call the laws of nature. It is understood, for example, that the continuity of these laws is dependent on

the continuity of life on earth. In other words, they will cease to be valid when this life ceases to exist. This means that we can deduce that the world we know, with its earth, stars and the marvelous system that holds it together, is but a temporary abode set up for a specific time and purpose.

Other events happening on that Day are that the mountains will be rocked so violently that they will become like cotton wool. Huge mountains will be reduced to hillocks of quicksand and the whole earth will become completely flat and bare with no rough surfaces whatsoever. The Holy Qur'an has informed us about all these events. It says that the waters of the seas will explode and evaporate into steam, the stars will fall out of their galaxies, the moon and the sun will merge, and the skies will be torn away and folded, like sheets, in a large size register. And the

earth will be changed into another earth.
Heaven too will be changed.

Blowing of the Trumpet (*Nafkh-i-Sur*):

We do not have any detailed description of the trumpet referred to in the Holy Qur'an, nor how it will be blown. Whatever is said about it without the support of Qur'anic verses or authentic Traditions (Sayings of the Prophet, peace be upon him) should not be relied upon. However, in the light of what is said in the Holy Qur'an, we understand that the trumpet may be blown on two occasions: 1) : "On the Day, when the trumpet shall be blown and all who dwell in the heavens and the earth shall be terrified except those whom Allah will choose to spare, and all shall come to Him in utter humiliation"; (Qur'an;27:87); 2): "The Trumpet shall be blown, and all that is in the heavens and the earth shall swoon except those whom Allah will please to

exempt. Then the Trumpet will be blown for the second time and behold! They shall all stand up, looking around”(Qur’an;39:68). The above verses indicate that the first blowing of the trumpet will render mankind into a state of panic and senselessness, while the second blowing of the trumpet will be for resurrection. This is the occasion on which judgement will take place, as stated in the Holy Qur’an: “Then a trumpet shall be blown and, behold, they will rise up from their graves and hasten to their Lord.”(Qur’an;36:51).

Resurrection and Congregation:

Everyone who has died will be resurrected on the Day of Judgement, with each person being in the same mental state as on the day he died. This means he will hardly feel the time lag. He may even be under the impression that only an hour or so has passed since his death. His mental

state after resurrection is rather like that of a person who goes into a coma for three days as a result of a car accident. When he comes round he continues his normal routine as if nothing had happened. For example, he may set out to do whatever he was doing before he was struck down by the car - talking to someone, crossing the road, etc. He continues that activity without realizing he has been unconscious for three days. Mankind will be in such a state on the Day of Resurrection.

Among the several real-life situations similar to those that will occur on the Day of Resurrection is the following parable, which appears in the Holy Qur'an: "Or take another example of the one who passed by a town which has fallen down upon its roofs. He exclaimed: "How can Allah bring this dead township back to life?" Thereupon Allah caused him to die, and after one hundred years brought him back to life. Allah asked: "How long did

you remain here?" he replied: "Perhaps a day or part of a day." Allah said: "Nay! You have remained here for one hundred years: now just have a look at your food and drink; they have not rotten; and then look at your donkey and see that his very bones have decayed. We have done this to make you a Sign for mankind. Look at the bones of your donkey how We bring them together then clothe them with flesh and bring him back to life! When this all was shown clearly to him he said: "Now I know that Allah has power over everything."(Qur'an;2:259).[also refer to Ezekiel's vision of dry bones (Ezekiel, 37:1-10, Nehemiah's visit to Jerusalem in ruins after the Captivity, and to its re-building (Nehemiah;2:2-20): and also referred to Uzair, or Ezra].

We can compare these verses with the other Qur'anic parable of the people in the cave (narrated at Qur'an:18:9-26) who slept for three hundred years and woke up under the impression that they had only been asleep for a few hours. They sent

someone with the money they had on them to buy things to eat. But of course, the money they were using was outdated! And they were totally unaware of this.

These stories illustrate the condition of human beings on the Day of Resurrection. We too shall all be contradicting each other, thinking that we have slept for only a short while: "On the Day when the Hour of Judgement will be established, the criminals will swear that they did not stay in this world more than an hour; thus are they ever deluded. But those who are given knowledge and faith will say: "In fact you have stayed, according to the Book of Allah, till the Day of Resurrection and this is the Day of Resurrection: but you were not aware."(Qur'an;30:55-56). Thus people will be under the illusion that they are still living in this world.

The shock and horror of that Day will cut adrift all relationships and affinity among human beings: "Then those whose scales

are heavy, they are the successful” (Qur’an;23:102). We will ignore even our closest friends, as we shall all be so involved dealing with our own 'business'. We will even flee from our families, offering them as ransom if need be! All human beings will be left in such a state until they will all be taken to the congregation. God will gather every being for the congregation, from Adam until the last of his descendants: Those who died in their sleep were drowned, devoured by wild beasts, killed in air crashes were cremated - everyone will be resurrected by God, who created them form nothingness. Among those gathered for the congregation too, will be the jinns and the Satans. Hastening toward the Summoner the disbelievers say: "This is a hard day"(Qur’an;54:8). Then our Lord shall command hell to appear from a distance for everyone to see. And He will say: “Did I not enjoin you, O children of Adam, not

to worship Satan, who is your open enemy, and that you should worship Me which is the Right Way? Yet, inspite of this, he (Satan) has led a great number of you astray. Had you no common sense? This is the hell, of which you were repeatedly warned (if ye followed him)"(Qur'an;36:60-63); "Indeed We have forewarned you of an imminent punishment which lies close-at-hand, on the Day when man shall see what his hands have sent forth and the unbeliever will cry: "I wish! I could remain merely dust."(Qur'an;78:40).

Then God will send all the unbelievers, along with the jinns and satans whom they worshipped as gods, to hell. These gods include: Zeus and Aphrodite of the Greeks, Jupiter and Venus of the Romans, Hurmuz and Eherman of the Persians, Habi of the Egyptians, Bal of the Phoenicians and Lat and Uzza of the Arabs. Men set these gods up as partners to God. The Greeks and

Romans set up different gods for different things: Apollo the God of sun and the arts, Bacchus the God of wine, Diana and Artemis, goddesses of wisdom, Neptune the God of the seas, and so on. "On the Day of Judgement Allah will say to them: "Call on those whom you thought to be My partners." They will call them but will receive no answer; and We shall cause animosity between them."(Qur'an;18:52). And God will say, "What is the matter with you today that you do not help each other?" "(Qur'an;37:25); "When all people appear before Allah, those who were weak in the world will say to those who thought themselves mighty: "We were your followers. Now! Can you do anything to relieve us from the punishment of Allah?" They will reply: "Had Allah given us guidance, we would have guided you. Now it makes no difference whether we panic or bear it with patience, for there is no escape for us."(Qur'an;14:21). But those

leaders have no answer. They can only evade the questions put to them and exonerate themselves by confessing their inability either to save themselves or those whom they misled. They all stand in total submission after being humiliated before the Lord of all creations: the pantheon with all the deities will have gone, likewise false leadership will have been obliterated, the bonds between unbelievers and their objects of worship will have been broken. In fact, the very objects of worship will absolve themselves of the guilt of falsehood built around them by those who worshipped them.

“Once the matter has been decided, Satan will say: "In fact, the promises which Allah made to you were all true; I too made some promises to you but failed to keep any of them. However, I had no power over you. I just invited you, and you accepted my invitation. Now! Do not blame me, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor

you can help me. I reject what you did before; that you associated me with Allah. Certainly such wrongdoers will have painful punishment.”(Qur’an;14:22); “Those who are believers fight in the cause of Allah and those who are unbelievers fight in the cause of forces of evil: so fight against the helpers of Satan; surely, Satan’s crafty schemes are very weak”(Qur’an;4:76). This verse also clarifies that the spurious spiritual guides (*pir*) and spiritists (*A’mil*), who claim that they have a ‘hold’ on devils and jinns and, through them, can harm or do good to any one they wish, are all liars. They also claim that they can cure those with epileptic fits by exorcizing the jinns. All this is sham and humbug. The Satan has no control over anything.

Reckoning and Accounting:

Every human being will present him or herself for the reckoning. A balance of

absolute justice will be set up, which will not ignore even the most trifling matter. Everything will be taken into account - all that is on earth or in the skies, even including the electrons in an atom. Man will be reckoned for all his actions and any hypocrisy; double-dealing or deception, to which he indulged during his lifetime will weigh against him. It will be an absolutely fair reckoning; only our good actions, prayers and supplications to God for pardon and mercy will stand in our favour. Any worldly aspect we may have enjoyed on earth, such as wealth, influence and power will be of no help to us on the Day of Reckoning, except for the extent to which we used these attributes for the sake of God, in His path and in obedience to Him.

Intercession:

On that Day, no one will be able to help anyone else, nor can anyone intercede

with God unless He grants His permission. Intercession in the other world will be different from this one. In this world we may be able to mediate with someone in a position of authority on the strength of the goodwill or influence we enjoy with that person. This sort of intercession may not be sincere. It may be done with the intention of obliging an employee or having acquitted someone who was accused of doing wrong. However, intercession in the other world can only take place when God, out of His mercy, wishes to pardon someone and to honour a person out of His generosity to him or her. In this case, He grants permission to someone to intercede, and, accordingly, the person to whom Divine permission is granted intervenes.

Witness and Proof:

Law courts in this world are presided over by human beings who have been trained to

be judges. The justice dispensed by such courts is limited and by no means flawless. Facts of every litigation are judged on the basis of material evidence. However, court in the other world will be presided over by God; justice will be absolute and unrestricted. The prophets will bear witness, likewise the angels, who recorded good and bad actions of every human being; their register will contain statistical information on the confessions of sinners, and even the limbs of the human body will give witness regarding actions committed.

Witness by the Messengers:

On the Day of Reckoning, the prophets will be brought forward: The record (or Deeds) will be placed open; the prophets and the witnesses will be brought forward. (Qur'an;39:69) Every community will be judged in the presence of its Prophet, according to the Shari'a (religious law), which it abided by in this world: "And

thou will see all people kneeling down: all people will be called to the record”(Qur’an;45:28); “How then if We brought from each people a witness, and We brought thee as a witness against these people”(Qur’an;4:41).

The Books and the Scrolls of Deeds:

The scrolls on which deeds we have carried out in this world will be recorded and kept folded; these scrolls remain unrevealed and a secret. The human beings will know nothing about. If we repent in all sincerity for the sins we committed, those sins will be erased from the scrolls. If we do not repent those deeds will remain recorded, and on the Day of Reckoning, will be brought forward and made known to everyone - like examination results. And like examination results, they will remain in the custody of the examiners as guarded secrets: no one will know who has failed until the date and

time are fixed for the announcement of the results. Then those results will become known to all who are concerned about them, and news regarding those who have failed, will spread among family and friends. But on the Day of Reckoning, the record of wrong deeds and failure to obey Divine Law will be made known to the entire congregation of humanity.

If you fail an examination you may lose a year of your career - but failing the divine test, ordained by God - the test of faith in God and belief and practice of what He ordains, will lead one to hell and if he is an unbeliever, deprive him of eternal happiness. On that Day the Scrolls will be unfolded and every man will receive his record of deeds and be told: "Here is your book of deeds: read it. Today you yourself are sufficient to take your own account"(Qur'an;17:14).

Anyone who has more good deeds recorded to his credit by the Angel of the Right will

receive his record of deeds on his right hand, as a glad tiding to him that his reckoning will be smooth and easy. When he reads his record, he experiences the same kind of happiness as a student who finds out he has passed his examinations when he reads his results. He wants to tell those close to him about his success: Now as for him whose record shall be placed in his right hand, he will exclaim, "Come you all! Read this my record! Behold, I did know that (one day) I would have to face my account"(Qur'an;69:19-29). And whoever has more bad deeds on his records, as noted 'by the Angel of the Left, will receive his record of deeds in his left hand. He will weep in self-pity and it will dawn on him that he will have to face eternal despair. He will then say: "Oh would that I had never been shown this my record, and neither known this my account! Oh! would that this (death of mine) had been the end of me! Of no avail

to me is all that I have (ever) possessed (and) any power of argument had died away from me!" (Qur'an;69:25-29); "But as for him whose record shall be given to him behind his back, he will in time pray for utter destruction, he will enter the blazing flame. (Qur'an;84:10-12). "On the Day of Judgement Allah will raise them all back to life, then inform them about what they have done. Allah has kept full record of their deeds even though they may have forgotten, for Allah is a witness over all things"(Qur'an;58:6). "And they will say in wonder, "Oh, woe unto us! What a record is this! It leaves out nothing, be it small or great, but takes everything into account!" For they will find all that they ever wrought (now) facing them"(Qur'an;18:49); "They will then realise that they had done wrong unto themselves and that "thy Sustainer does not wrong anyone"(Qur'an;18:49). They regret the excesses they committed and on

paying heed to the temptations of the devil and their own evil selves a voice will call out unto them "...Allah's hatred towards you was far greater - during your worldly life when you were called to the Faith and you used to refuse - than your hatred of yourselves"(Qur'an;40:10).

Defense followed by Confession:

On the Day of Reckoning, the unbelievers will try to defend themselves and make false oaths to prove their innocence. They will behave as if they are in the presence of a person of authority in human form, without realizing that they are in the presence of God, Lord of all creations, who is aware of what is going on in everyone's conscience and the musings of every soul. On the day God will raise them all together, then will they swear unto Him as they (now) swear unto you, and they will fancy that they have some standing. (Qur'an;58:18). ... and in their utter

confusion they will only be able to say, "By God, our Lord, we never were idolaters"(Qur'an;6:23). At that moment. God will render them speechless and will order their limbs and internal organs to confess of the wrong they have done: the hand will admit to its mistakes and the legs will confess about the wrong places they went to: "This day We seal up their mouths, and their hands speak out to Us and their feet bear witness as to what they used to earn"(Qur'an;36:65).

When their confessions are taken note of and proven to be true, these people will reproach their organs and limbs: And they say unto their skins, "Why testify you against us?" They say, "God has given us speech Who gives speech to all things, and Who created you in the beginning, and unto Whom ye are returned."(Qur'an;42:21). These human beings used to hide themselves away from the world in order to indulge in sexual

pleasure, and imagined that God would not notice them! How could this be possible, even when measured by human standards of intelligence and capabilities? Television is a good example to illustrate this idea. The announcer sits in an enclosed area and presents a program - but does this mean he is hidden from anyone's sight? Millions of people both watch and listen to him. If on a human scale we can make information known in this way, it is even simpler for God to observe all the actions of us mortals. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'an says: "And they say unto their skins, "Why testify ye against us?" They say, "God hath given us speech Who gives speech to all things, and Who created you at first, and unto Whom ye are returned. You did not hide yourselves lest your ears and your eyes and your skins should testify against you, but ye deemed that God knew not much of what ye did. That, your thought

which ye did think about your Lord, hath ruined you - and ye find yourselves (this day) among the lost”(Qur’an;41:21- 23).

This is what will happen to those who do not believe in God and who deny the Day of Reckoning. These people are unable to see beyond this world and refuse to see that life is eternal. Such people do not realise that they cannot hide anything from God, Who is aware of everything and how can they, in this case, possibly hide anything from their physical bodies, which are part and parcel of their own beings? It is important, therefore, to ask God to forgive and protect us on the Day of Judgement in the same way as He forgave us in this world, for He is the only One Who can do so.

An Absurd Argument- Expression by Body Parts:

Some people will reason by asking how our hands and feet can possibly 'speak' when

they do not have the faculty of speech. But, if you think about it, there are inventions that 'speak': tape-recorders, films, cameras, including those which are hidden in banks and such places, and are able to take pictures of anyone who visits the bank. And if a man who robs a bank denies any accusation made against him, a film can be shown to him, exposing his crime, showing him in the very act of stealing, maybe talking to himself or any others who were around, as proof of what he did. If man, through his ingenuity can make such marvelous; inventions, is it not possible for God to invent something beyond the ingenuity of man? However this could also be taken metaphorically to reveal or express.

The Reckoning and its Result:

There are various categories of reckoning. The easy reckoning is for those who receive the record of their deeds in their

right hands, and the severe reckoning for those who disobey God. After the reckoning, people will be placed in various categories: those who are drawn close to God in the front, followed by those who have done what is right in their life, and finally those who lost their way.

Now if one happens to be of those who are drawn close unto God, happiness (awaits him or her in the life to come) and inner fulfillment and a garden of bliss. And if one happens to be among those who have attained to righteousness (he or she too will be welcomed into paradise with the words), "Peace be unto thee (that art) of those who have attained to righteousness". But if one happens to be one of those who are wont to call the truth a lie, and (thus) go astray, a welcome of burning despair (awaits him in the life to come) and the heat of blazing fire! Verily, this is the truth. Extol then the limitless glory of thy

Sustainer's mighty name (Qur'an;56:88-96).

The Approach to Hell:

Everybody will walk along a path overlooking hell. The speed at which they move along this path will depend how close they are to God and on the abundance of their good deeds. This means, therefore, that those who are in awe of God, and are God-conscious, will have a 'safe exit'. God the Almighty says: "There is not one of you but shall approach it. That is a, fixed ordinance of the Lord. Then We shall rescue those who kept from evil, and leave the evil-doers crouching; there"(Qur'an;19:71-72); "Nay! Would that you knew through the real knowledge provided to you in this Qur'an and care about your life in the Hereafter. Because on the Day of Judgement when you shall see the hell,"(Qur'an;102:5-6). The above verses refer to two different

'viewings' of hell. Those who are God-conscious will have the first viewing, and they will have a safe passage and attain salvation. Those in the second viewing will include people who have followed evil ways and have been unjust; they will fall into the abyss of hell. The first viewing may perhaps be before the reckoning takes place, when everybody will witness the sight of hell.

Paradise and Hell:

The Holy Qur'an presents descriptions of heaven in a style that the human intellect can easily understand. References are made such as: Rivers will run beneath it... Those who reside in it will wear bracelets of gold and pearls, their garments will be of silk... Rivers of wine and rivers of honey will flow in it, and in it will be girls most beautiful of eye like unto pearls hidden in their shells, and immortal youth.

The blissful delights of heaven belong to the realm of the unseen, and God has described them in allegorical language in the Holy Qur'an in a manner easily understood by the human mind. It should therefore be clear to us all that everything in paradise which is referred to is unlike anything in this world That includes the rivers, milk, honey and 'the girls most beautiful of eye, etc. In this context we can consider the quote from the Holy Qur'an and a saying by our Prophet, peace be upon him. The Holy Qur'an says: "And no human being can imagine what blissful delights as yet hidden, await (in the life to come) as a reward for all that they did"(Qur'an;32:17). And our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "God says, I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has ever seen and no ear has ever heard and no heart of man has ever conceived'. This is further proof of the point we made earlier, that the human

being is incapable of imagining or comprehending the unseen.

Some commentators on the Holy Qur'an who have expounded on this subject have done so without providing proof for their theories. They tried hard to present a visual image of the life hereafter and compare it to life in this world. But their efforts were similar to those of scholastic theologians who tried to gauge and conceptualize Divine Justice and Divine Attributes on the basis of human justice and attributes: they got tangled in a web of theories and arguments. It would have been wiser for them to take the same stand as that taken by the scholars of early Islam who adhered strictly to the text regarding relevant issues, admitting the incapacity of the human mind to go beyond its limits. One of the empty and fruitless arguments put forward by these scholars pertains to the beautiful girls of paradise. Would cohabitation -with them be similar to the

way we live with women in this world? They forgot that part of the role of marriage in this world is to have children and preserve our species. But as there is no such purpose in the life hereafter, those sorts of questions have no meaning. It is far more reasonable to believe everything that has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an instead of going into details and interpreting what has been said in a way which is incompatible with the text.

Admission to Paradise:

Admission to Paradise cannot be achieved merely by a sense of yearning or wishful thinking. It can only be achieved by faith and obedience. The Holy Qur'an says :“The final result will neither be in accordance with your desires nor in accordance with the desires of the People of the Book. He who does evil will be requited with evil; he will find no protector or helper besides Allah”(Qur'an;4:123); “Do you think that

you will enter paradise without going through the trial? Allah has not yet tested you to see who among you strive hard for His cause and who show patience for His sake”(Qur’an;3:142). Therefore, a believer who is accepted in the realm of paradise is one who promotes good, who has worked for God's sake and has sacrificed time, money and power on earth in order to work towards truth. Failing this, he should have avoided getting involved in actions that in the end are harmful to his spiritual development, and have learnt to be patient.

Salvation is finally achieved after the reckoning is over and the believer crosses the bridge of *Sirat*: “Those who were conscious of the Sustainer will be urged on towards Paradise, till when they reach it, they shall find its gates wide-open, and its keeper will say unto them, "Peace be upon you! Well have you done: enter then this (Paradise), herein to abide." And they will exclaim "All praise is due to God, who has

made His promise to us come true, and has bestowed upon us this expanse (of bliss) as our portions so that we may dwell in paradise as we please! And how excellent a reward will it be for those who labored (in God's way)!" (Qur'an;39:73-74).

Description of Paradise:

In terms of space, paradise is as vast and spacious as the heavens and earth put together. If this is hard to imagine, we must remember that the other world in relation to this is like this world compared to the mother's womb. As we mentioned earlier, the fetus thinks of the womb as being its own finite world. And, if you think about it, any house on earth is a million times larger than the world of the fetus. Paradise has been prepared for the righteous and God conscious. So who are these people and what do they do? We may perhaps wish to follow in their footsteps

and be blessed by their company. God has described the righteous and God conscious in the following way: “Who spend (in His way) in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check in their anger, and pardon their fellow men because God loves the doers of good; and who when they have committed a shameful deed or have (otherwise) sinned against themselves, remember God and pray that their sins be forgiven...”(Qur’an;3:134-35) These are some of the qualities of the God fearing and God conscious people. And God will, out of His generosity and benevolence, admit to heaven those who acquire those qualities after practicing the right kind of faith and having sincere belief in the principle of the Oneness of God. Paradise will be divided into different categories, first and foremost is the Garden of Bliss which may not be attained by everyone: “Does every one of them hope to enter a Garden of

Bliss?”(Qur’an;70:38). The Garden of Bliss is for those who are: foremost in faith and good works(Qur’an;56:10), They who were (always) drawn close unto God (Qur’an;56:12).

Then there is a part of heaven known as the 'highest place in heaven'. It is granted to those servants of God referred to the Holy Qur’an in the chapter entitled Al-Furqan (The Criterion). They are the people who possess the following virtues:

- 1) Humility and patience towards those who are not as spiritually developed as they are.
- 2) Devotion to God, which keeps them in constant touch with Him.
- 3) Awareness of the judgement they will receive in the life hereafter.
- 4) Moderation in spending.
- 5) Avoidance of treason to God, their fellow creatures and to themselves.

- 6) Avoidance of falsehood and futility.
- 7) Paying attention, both in mind and manner, to God's signs.
- 8) The desire to bring up their families in righteousness and making them aware of Truth.

The above virtues represent, in a nutshell, a complete code of individual and social ethics, and a ladder of spiritual development, available to everyone.

Among other divisions of heaven are: Gardens with trellises and without.(Qur'an;6:141). That is to say, there are both cultivated and uncultivated gardens; Gardens of Abode, Gardens of Eden and the 'two Gardens', for those who are God fearing. In these gardens will be set down the record of the truly virtuous in a most lofty model.

Life in Paradise:

The Holy Qur'an states that those who are in paradise will meet their brethren and their kith and kin: "Enter Paradise, you and your spouses, with happiness know therein neither (burning) sun nor cold severe, since its (blissful) shades will come down low over them and low will hang down its clusters of fruit, most easy to reach"(Qur'an;76:12-13). In happiness will they and their spouses on couches recline (Qur'an;36:56). And as for those who have attained to faith and whose offspring will have followed them in faith, we shall unite them with their offspring.(Qur'an;52:21). They will meet in an atmosphere of warmth and purity of heart: We shall have removed whatever unworthy thoughts or feelings may have been (lingering) in their bosoms.(Qur'an;7:42); ". ...And (by then) We shall have removed whatever unworthy thoughts or feelings may have been

(lingering) in their breasts, (and they shall rest) as brethren, facing one another (in love) upon thrones of happiness. (Qur'an;15:47). (In such a paradise the blest will dwell) reclining upon carpets lined with rich brocade; and the fruit of both these gardens will be within easy reach(Qur'an;55:55). And they will be waited upon by (immortal) youths, (as if they were children) of their own, (as pure) as if they were pearls hidden in their shells(Qur'an;52:24). In that (paradise) they shall (right fully) claim all the fruits (of their past deeds), resting in security(Qur'an;44:55). A cup will be passed round among them (with a drink) from unsullied springs, clear, delightful to those who drink it: no heartiness will be in it, and they will not get drunk thereon. (Qur'an;37:45-47).

And as for their food and drink, it will be waited upon with trays and goblets of gold(Qur'an;43:71). Immortal youths will

wait upon them with goblets, and ewers, and cups filled with water from unsullied springs(Qur'an;56:17). ...And with fruit of any kind that they may choose and with the flesh of any fowl that they may desire... amidst fruit-laden lote trees, and acacias flower-clad, and shade extended, and waters gushing and fruit abounding, never-failing and never out of reach, and (they will rest on) couches raised high. (Qur'an;56:19-20; 28-34). Upon their faces thou wilt see the brightness of bliss. (Qur'an;83:24), Some faces will on that Day shine with bliss, well pleased with (the fruit) of their striving (Qur'an;88:8-9). They will be at liberty to go wherever they wish, to meet and talk to whomever they wish: ... and they will be welcomed with the greeting? "Peace!" (Qur'an;14:23). They speak nothing but good ... for they were (willing to be) guided towards the best of all tenets, and so they were guided onto the way that

leads to the One unto whom all praise is due (Qur'an;22:24). And they (who are thus blest) will turn to one another asking each other (about their past lives). They will say, "Behold, aforetime, - when we were (still living) in the midst of kith and kin - we were full of fear (at the thought of God's displeasure): and so God has graced us with his favour and has warded off from us all suffering through the scorching winds (of frustration)"(Qur'an;52:25-26).

And in gratitude to their Lord they say, "Verily, we did invoke Him (alone) ere this; (and now He has shown us) that He alone is truly benign, a true dispenser of grace."(Qur'an;52:28). When they talk among themselves, they remember how they spent their time during their life in this world. They also remember matters concerning other people and what became of them: One of them speaks thus, "Behold, I had (on earth) a close companion who was wont to ask (me)

"Why, art thou really one of those who believe it to be true (that) after we have died and become mere dust and bones we shall, forsooth, be brought to judgement?" (And) he adds, "Would you like to look (and see him)?" And then he looks and sees that (companion of his) in the midst of the blazing fire and says, "By God! Verily, thou hast almost destroyed me (too, o my erstwhile companion) - for bad it not been for my Sustainer's favour, I would surely be (now) among those who are given over (to suffering)"(Qur'an;37:51-57). Then God will bless them with the company of most beautiful girls: And (in that Paradise) We shall mate them with companions pure, most beautiful of eye(Qur'an;52:20). And (with them will be their) spouses, raised high: for behold, we shall have brought them into being, in a life renewed, having resurrected them as virgins, full of love, well-matched with those who have

attained to righteousness(Qur'an;56:34 - 39). In these gardens will be mated of modest gaze, whom neither man nor invisible being will have touched ere them(Qur'an;55:56).

In that state of happiness they will call out, "Limitless art Thou in Thy glory, o God!" and will be answered with the greeting, "Peace!" And their call will close with (the words), "All praise is due to God, the Sustainer of all the worlds"(Qur'an;10:10). And they will say, "All praise is due to God, Who has guided us unto this. For we would certainly not have found the right path unless God had guided us! Indeed, our Sustainer's Apostle has told us the truth!" and (a voice) will call out unto them, "This is the paradise which you have inherited by virtue of your past deeds."(Qur'an;7:42). No weariness shall ever touch them in this (state of bliss) and never shall they have to forego it (Qur'an;15:48). And neither shall they

taste death thereafter having passed through their erstwhile death.(Qur'an;44:56), ... and the angels will come unto them from every gate (and will say), "Peace be upon you, because you have persevered!" How excellent then, this fulfillment in the hereafter(Qur'an;13: 23-24). ... and there will be found all that the souls might desire, and (all that) the eyes might delight in. (Qur'an;43:71). Verily, this-this indeed-is the triumph supreme. For the like of this, then let them labour, those who labour (in God's way)(Qur'an;37:61-62).

To that then, let all such aspire as (are willing to) aspire to things of high account. (Qur'an;83:26). Oh Lord, Thy mercy we seek in everything, and thy pardon and forgiveness Verily, You are the One who pardons and forgives. Grant us refuge Oh Lord, from the torture of hell and grant us too a safe entrance into Paradise.

The Hell:

Generally when we think of Hell, the first notion that comes to our mind is that it, too maybe a fire like that of the worldly fire. But although they both belong to the species of fire, there is no comparison between the two. We can notice the vast difference between these two fires when we study carefully the description of it in the Holy Qur'an. If the fire of hell were the same as the fire we know, of this world, it would burn everything and reduce it to coal. In hell, however, there are trees, water and shade, but they are for the purpose of torture and suffering and not for comfort and luxury. If a person falls into a fire in this world, he meets instant death and is thus saved from the resultant pain and suffering. But a person who is condemned to the fire of hell will undergo eternal suffering: No end shall be put to their lives, so that they could die, nor shall aught of the suffering

caused by that (fire) be lightened for them.(Qur'an;35 - 36). ... and every time their skins are burnt off. We shall replace them with new skins, so that they may taste suffering (in full). (Qur'an;4:56). As for the trees in hell, they are the trees of Zaqqum: the tree of deadly fruit... the (hellish) tree of deadly fruit. Verily, We have caused it to be a trial for evil doers: for behold, it is a tree that grows in the very heart of the blazing fire (of hell), its fruit (as repulsive) as Satan's heads. (Qur'an;37: 62-64). And the food in hell will be the food of the sinful: like molten lead will it boil in the belly, like the boiling of burning despair. (Qur'an;44:43). And stinking water will be given to those who arrogantly deny the way of truth:... he shall be made to drink the water of most bitter distress, gulping it (unceasingly), little by little, and yet hardly able to swallow it. (Qur'an;14:17). So people in hell will be made to eat

deadly fruit and drink stinking water, which they will, due to an insatiable thirst, drink again and again, rather like a camel. That water will boil in their stomachs like molten lead, causing all that is within their bodies, as well as their skins, to melt away. (Qur'an;22:20). And the garments which they will wear in hell will be garments of fire. (Qur'an;22:19). The shade in hell will be clouds of fire will they have above them and (similar) clouds beneath them. (Qur'an;39:16) shadows neither cooling nor soothing. (Qur'an;56:44). 158 Belief in the Day of Judgement This will be the fate of those who place more importance on material values and the pleasures they bring, and the fate of unbelievers who deny that there is an afterlife, For behold, in times gone by they were wont to abandon themselves wholly to the pursuit of pleasures, and would persist in heinous sinning and would say, "What' After we have died and

become mere dust and bones, shall we, forsooth, be raised from the dead?". (Qur'an;56: 45 - 46); "Now as for those who (by their deeds) will have brought wretchedness upon themselves, (they shall live) in the fire, where they will have (nothing but) moans and sobs (to relieve their pain) therein to abide as long as the heavens and the earth endure unless thy Sustainer wills it otherwise: for verily, thy Sustainer is a sovereign doer of whatever He wills. (Qur'an;11:106-107).

Entry into Hell:

When the reckoning is over and judgement has been pronounced on unbelievers regarding their punishment in hell, groups of them will be led there. Hell itself will be 'furious' with them for persistent disbelief in God and the messages of the prophets. The keepers of hell will be baffled by the foolishness and arrogance of such people. In this context, the Qur'an states: When

they are cast into that (hell), they hear its breath 'n drawing as it boils up, well-nigh bursting with fury; (and) every time a host (of such sinners) is flung into it, its Lepers will ask them, "Has no warner ever come to you?" that juncture they will confess, "Yes, a warner did indeed come to us, but we gave him the lie and Said 'Never has God sent down anything (by way of revelation!)' "Thus the angels will tell them, "You (self-styled warners) are but lost in a great delusion". So they admit that they turned a deaf ear and refused to exercise their minds and that, had they taken heed of the preachings and contemplated both within themselves and the world around them, they would have found proof of God's existence and believed in Him, and would have followed the path shown by the prophets, and, as a consequence, would not have been condemned to hell. And they will add, "Had we but listened (to those warnings),

or (at least) used our own reason, we would not (now) be among those who are destined for the blazing fire." (Qur'an;67: 7-10).

Hell as a Prison:

God the Almighty has described hell as abode: with seven gates leading into it, each gate receiving its allotted share of sinners (Qur'an;15:44), and that it will be: a fire kindled by God, which will rise over the (guilty) hearts; verily it will close in upon them in endless columns(Qur'an;104:6-9). Those who have been assigned to hell will be tied together and flung into a tight space, and when they are flung, linked (all) together, into a tight space within, they will pray for extinction there and then! (Qur'an;25: 12 - 14). Behold, for those who deny the truth we have readied chains and shackles, a blazing flame(Qur'an;76:4).

Attempts to Escape from Hell:

God gave man the respite of life to spend in this world. He endowed him, at the same time, with reason to choose whichever path he liked. He gave man the volition to select the goal for himself. Some chose the path to Hell and performed deeds which may take them there, but when they reach there they will try to escape from it. Such people may swear that they will live a Godly life, as long as they are given a second chance like a student who has taken an exam, failed it and is sitting for it for a second time. But it may not be such a simple matter. As God the Almighty states in the Qur'an: Verily We have brought them a scripture which we expound with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. Await they aught save the fulfillment thereof? On the day when the fulfillment thereof cometh, those were before forgetful thereof will say, "The messengers

of our Lord did bring the truth! Have we any intercessors that they may intercede for us? Or can we be returned (to life on earth) that we may act otherwise than we used to act?" They have lost their souls, and that which they devised hath failed them(Qur'an;7: 52-53). "He whom Allah let go astray (that wills to go astray) has no protector after Him. When they will face the punishment, you will see the wrongdoers exclaim: "Is there any way back to the world?"(Qur'an;42:44). "Therein they shall cry for help: "Our Lord! Get us out, from now on we shall do good deeds and shall not repeat the ones we used to do". The response will be: "Did we not give you lives long enough so that he who would, could take a warning? Besides, someone did come to warn you. Now taste the fruit of your deeds, here there is no helper for the wrongdoers."(Qur'an;35:37).

In desperation, these men seek the help of the keepers of in the hope that they may rescue them: "Also imagine when the dwellers of fire will ask the Keepers of hell: "Pray to your Lord for relieving our punishment at least for one day!" The Keepers of hell will ask: "Did there not come to you Messenger with clear revelations?" "Yes," they will answer. The Keepers of hell will say: "Then pray yourselves." But vain shall be the prayer of the disbelievers.(Qur'an;40:49-50). Still in despair they turn again to another source: the angel who rules over hell: "They will cry: "O the keeper of hell! Let your Lord put and end to us." But he will answer: "Nay! You are going to live forever."(Qur'an;43:77). Then they consider offering a ransom. And though those who do wrong possess all that is in the earth, and therewith as much again, they verily will seek to ransom themselves therewith on the Day of Resurrection from

the awful doom. And there will appear unto them, from their Lord, that wherewith they be never reckoned. And the evils that they earned will appear unto them and that whereat they used to scoff will surround them.(Qur'an;39:47-48). And for them are hooked rods of iron. Whenever, in their anguish, they would go forth from thence they are driven back therein and (it is said unto them), "Taste the doom of burning. Lo! God will cause those who believe and do good works to enter gardens underneath which rivers; flow, wherein they will be allowed armlets of gold, and pearls, and their raiment therein will be silk." (Qur'an;22:21-23).

Harmony and Disharmony:

Those who dwell in heaven will be recognised by their harmonious state of being. They shall be free of unworthy thoughts or lurking sense of injury and they shall rest as brethren, facing one

another (in love) upon thrones of happiness(Qur'an;15:47). As for those in hell, they will be forever arguing and quarrelling.

“Allah will say: "Enter the fire and join the nations of Jinns and men who have gone before you." As each nation will enter hell, it will curse its preceding sister till all are gathered there, the last of them will say about the first one: "Our Lord! These have led us astray; therefore, give them double punishment of the fire." He will answer: "There will be double for all, although you may not know because of being predecessor or successor in sin and aggression." Then the first will say to the last: "If we were to blame, you too, were no better than us; now taste the punishment of your misdeeds."(Qur'an;7:38-39). “Such will it be the reward for the righteous. But for the rebellious there will be an evil resort - hell, that is! In which they will burn - the

worst abode. Such will it be the reward for the wrongdoers. So they will taste scalding water, festering blood (pus) and other things of the same sort. It will be said to the ringleaders; "Here are your troops being thrown headlong with you. They are not welcomed here; for they are going to burn in the hellfire. The followers shall say to their miss guided leaders: "But you! There is no welcome for you either! It was you who have brought us to this end. Such an evil abode." Then they will pray: "Our Lord, inflict on those who brought this fate upon us double punishment in the fire." Then they will say to one another: "But why do we not see those whom we deemed wicked and whom we use to ridicule? Or have our eyesight failed to notice them?" Surely, this is the very truth: the people in the hellfire will argue just like that"(Qur'an;38:55-64).

The Dialogues-Inmates of Paradise and Hell:

The Holy Qur'an states that the inmates of paradise will be able to see the inmates of hell, and communicate with them. And the dwellers of the Garden cry unto the dwellers of the fire, "We have found that which our Lord promised us (to be) the truth. Have ye (too) found that which your Lord promised the truth?" They say, "Yea, verily". And a crier in between them cries, "The curse of God is on evil-doers. Who (debar) men from the path of God and would have it crooked, and who are disbelievers in the Last Day." (Qur'an;7:44-45). "And the dwellers of the fire cry out unto the dwellers of the garden, "Pour on us some water or some of that wherewith God hath provided you." They say, "Lo! God hath forbidden both to disbelievers (in His guidance). Who took their religion for a sport and pastime, and whom the life of the world beguiled. So this day We have

forgotten them even as they forgot the meeting of this their Day and as they used to deny Our tokens" (Qur'an;7:50-51).

Al-A'raf (Limbo):

The verses coming in the chapter entitled Al-A'raf, indicate that this title denotes a place - a point of transit between heaven and hell, known as the Heights (Limbo). It is said that it will be a halting place for those who do not fit into the category of either heaven or hell. In other words, their good actions do not merit their entry into heaven, yet their bad actions were judged not to be sufficiently bad for them to be condemned to hell. People in Al-A'raf will witness the beauty of paradise and talk with those dwelling there, yearning to enter themselves? They will also witness hell and converse with its inmates. There will be a veil between the inmates of paradise and the inmates of hell. And on the Heights will be men who would know

everyone by his marks. They will call out to the companions of the Garden, "Peace on you". They will not have entered, but they will have an assurance (thereof). When their eyes shall be turned towards the companions of the fire, they will say, "Our Lord! Send us not to the company of the wrong-doers."(Qur'an;7:46-47). They will see people in hell whom they knew in this world; people who in this world were very mighty and proud of their wealth. The popularity and support they enjoyed through all this made them behave in a proud manner and commit unjust acts. To them the people of Al-A'raf will say, "What has your amassing (of wealth) availed you, and all the false pride of your past?"(Qur'an;7:48). They will realise that their riches are of no avail and will have no influence whatsoever over their agony, and what's more that they cannot take those riches with them.

Conclusion:

When we die, we enter the grave alone, without anyone at all by our side, leaving everyone we knew on earth behind us. We are alone during our resurrection, and we will be alone for the reckoning. But even though we all have to face death, we tend not to think about it. We are unable to envision it physically, through our senses, nor can picture it in our imagination. We should therefore ask God to open our eyes, so that we can see His Divine Truth and be enlightened in our vision, so that we may proceed on the path towards Him. We should pray to be protected from temptations, both seen and hidden, that might harm us. And we must remember to ask for His acceptance, and to be protected from His anger. For in the end, only God can forgive us and save us from our agony.

CHAPTER-9: FAITH IN PREDESTINATION (TAQDIR)

Destiny, Predestination and Divine Will

The most secure and the best way to establish the authenticity of any Islamic doctrine, is to consult the true source, the Qur'an, the pious elders, that is the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and their followers. Same course is adopted with regards to the doctrine of Predestination and Destiny. The Holy Qur'an refers to destiny and divine will in several verses in different chapters, some of which are quoted below:

- a) "For, no single thing exists that does not have its source with Us; and naught do We bestow from on high unless it be in accordance with a measure well-defined."(Qur'an;15:21).

- b) “Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measures. (Qur’an;54:49)
- c) “...and bestowed blessings on the earth, and measured therein all things to give them nourishment in due proportion. (Qur’an;41:10).
- d) “ And the moon We have measured for her mansions to traverse...”(Qur’an;36:39)
- e) “It is He who created all things, and ordered them in due proportions”(Qur’an;25:2).
- f) “Every single thing is before His sight, in (due) proportions”(Qur’an;13:8).

It is clear from the meanings of verses that **‘Predestination’** means those decrees and rules which Allah determined for this universe and it is that discipline under which the whole system runs. It is those natural and physical laws which govern

everything. In other words, whatever has been created has some definite and specific magnitude and in well defined proportions. For this reason everything that is found here was pre-determined before its existence. The number of atoms in them and the quantity and nature of elements that compose it was determined beforehand. It was also “decided” what new thing will be created if one element combines with the other, and what will happen if they separate or disintegrate. The statics and dynamics of all things were also determined before their creation.

Difference between Destiny & Predestination:

I shall try to explain the difference between ‘Destiny’ and ‘Predestination’ by an example though only ‘Allah can give the best example’ (Qur’an;16:60). In this age, when a building is constructed, a sign post

is put up indicating the names of the engineers and contractors who designed and undertook the construction. The engineer is in charge of the design (like destiny of all in the universe) of the building: his role is to decide on the details of the building, such as the quality and quantity of materials, the thickness of the walls and the numbers of doors and windows it should have. The contractor, however, is responsible for the construction i.e. execution of this design, in that he executes the work as required (like 'Divine Will' for all in Universe). 'Destiny' and 'Divine Will' in actual fact, belong to God alone. He may alter our destiny, in response to our prayers and charitable acts, in the same way as the engineer may make minor alterations in the design of the building, in response to various needs. God alone determines our 'destiny', and 'only He' can alter it in response to our prayers. If all human

actions had been destined since eternity-with no scope for change, alteration or option, there would have been no need to send prophets to this world, nor to strive against unbelievers, and to invoke the Almighty. The Prophets, the righteous Caliphs and the reformers of the Ummah in every period, have always sought to banish evil and achieve what is good for mankind.

Reward and Punishment:

The analogy we have just considered, explains the concept of destiny and applies to the whole of creation, including human beings. But there is another issue with regard to human beings, which is much debated and argued about, and that is '**Reward and Punishment**'. And the question brought up time and again is: How could there be such a thing as reward and punishment, if our lives are predestined anyway? Especially if the

Divine will is absolute and unchanging, it doesn't make sense! Before we begin to look at this question in detail, it is important to differentiate from the start between man's physical existence and the attributes of God and divine action. The human mind is unable to grasp this concept; except through what has been made known to us through revelations.

Freedom of Will:

First I would like to discuss this subject with regard to the realities of existence, as we see and feel it, and then I shall refer to relevant texts. In reality, man has freedom. He is able to assess material matters, and differentiate between good and bad through the power of his intellect. Through his will power, man is able to either do good, or make mistakes. Every thinking person knows that prayer is good and drinking alcohol is bad; when someone sets out from home he can either

go to a Mosque and pray, or go to a pub and get drunk. By the same token, nobody can dispute the fact that I am able to lift my arm unless I have badly injured it or unless it is paralyzed. I may raise it either to give money to a poor man, or to hit an innocent person. But are these two actions one and the same? Surely the action of giving money to a poor man, deserves a reward, whereas the assault on an innocent person merits punishment. A student can choose whether to go out of the town the evening before his examination, or to spend the evening quietly at home, revising. In a case like this, we cannot sympathize with the student who wasted his time if he fails in his exam and says his failure is unfair. And if the other student passes his exam, we cannot regard this fact as a mere fluke.

Predestination of Human Will- Constraints:

I am able to move my arm, because God has given me the power to do so. However, I cannot control the muscles of my heart and stomach. One student may be very intelligent and able to grasp what he learns, just by reading his books through once - and then afterwards he may get pleasure from a hobby. Another student, however, may be a bit of a 'plodder', needing all day to understand and memorize his lessons. In the same way, one student may come from a family background where learning is encouraged and an appropriate environment is provided, whereas another student may not be given the same kind of support. His family may not be interested in intellectual pursuits-and the environment might be, noisy, making it hard for him to study. **The choice of his circumstances is beyond him.** As far as he knows, he

has not been able to choose his parents, the ideal time for his lifespan or the ideal family background. All these matters are beyond our reach: We cannot make major changes in our structure for example alter our finger prints or change height in order to improve our appearance. All such aspects of our lives are predestined.

Free Will within Human Limitations:

Man, however, is free within his limitations. His 'free will' itself is not affected by the fact that certain aspects of his life have been pre-ordained. Human beings are rather like vehicles: the capacity of the engine determines the speed of the vehicle. A lorry cannot go as fast as a racing car. A saloon car is supposed to be used on smooth roads, and not to be driven up steps or through walls. A vehicle is not classified as something else just because something goes wrong with it. It can never, for example, be

classified as a mass of rock. Similarly, man is not deprived of his free will, just because he faces certain difficulties which, within his limitations as a human being, are difficult to overcome. He still has choice, and can pursue his path as best he can. Man, unlike God, does not have the power to do as he wants, beyond a certain point.

Reward & Punishment-Corollary to Free Will:

Punishment is a result of the course of action we have chosen to follow using our own free will, which means that we are not punished for doing wrong if that choice was made under duress. We are only taken to task regarding what we have delightfully chosen to do. Whatever good a man has done will stand in his favour and whatever mistakes he has made will stand against him. God will not burden a human being with more than he is able to bear

and He does not ignore even the tiniest good action. If 'man-made' courts of law with their relative sense of justice can assess and judge a man by taking his background and circumstances into consideration, how can the same factors be ignored in the Divine Court, a place of absolute justice? Will the same judgement be made in, say, a juvenile court, on a child who comes from a broken home and a poor background as a child from good parents, brought up in a secure home in ideal surroundings? Will both offenders be judged in the same way?

Parameters of Justice:

Applying the parameters of man-made justice to God is an error made by most theologians. I personally became aware of this after a certain incident. I think it has a moral behind it, even though it may seem out of context here. In 1931, I was working as a teacher at a primary school

in Syria. At that time I was young and enthusiastic, but I was also very assertive, full of my own importance and I held dogmatic views. At that time I started to question the idea of fate and destiny, a matter which I discussed with various educated men, but could not get a satisfactory answer. My arrogance drove me into having violent arguments with them, which must have disturbed their peace of mind. I continued to hold these views, until one day I had to cane a student for bad conduct at school, (in those days caning of students was permitted). The student reacted rudely and insolently, shouting, "This is unjust! You are an oppressor!" When I heard his words, the cane fell from my hands. Momentarily I was mentally away from the school, and surrounded by complete darkness. And then it seemed as if a lamp had been lit for me. "That boy accused me of behaving unjustly because I caned him -

whereas I consider it perfectly fair," I thought to myself. "The action itself is same, though the points of view held about it are different. And if this student were to complain to his parents about what had happened, they might tell him that I had acted justly, and that the caning had been for his own good! So, if a student cannot apply his immature viewpoint to that of his teacher's concept of justice, how on earth can I apply my man-made parameters of justice to those of Almighty God?"

Could it not be that an action which I consider unfair is in fact the very essence of justice? It would be like a sick boy complaining that it is rude of the doctor to give him an injection, whereas the boy's father feels the doctor is performing a worthy act. The difference in viewpoint is that the boy is looking at it from the angle of his pain and suffering, while the father sees it as a way of restoring his son's

health. A judge cannot give a verdict regarding a case, unless he studies it from all aspects. We tend to judge matters from one particular viewpoint and often arrive at the wrong conclusions. Imagine that you and a friend go for a walk in the country and, as you lose your way, you accept a lift you are offered from someone driving a smart car. But when you're in the car your friend takes out a knife, and starts to slash the car seat. How could he justify this? Isn't this kind of behaviour rude and uncalled for? Of course it is! But if, later, someone tells you that a street gang have been stealing every smart car on the road and only sparing those with torn seats, then your friend's behaviour would be justified. In fact the owner of the car might well have done the same thing in order to protect his vehicle! That is exactly what happens in a parable narrated in the Holy Qur'an, about Moses (peace be upon him) and a gentleman

(Qur'an;18:60-82), when the gentleman (*Khidar*) deliberately made a hole in the boat in which they crossed from one side of river to the other. He also did many other strange things which puzzled Moses (peace be upon him) and consequently made him break his vow to *Khidar* not to ask questions. The moral of this story is that one should not judge matter without first looking at it from all angles.

Confirmation from The Qur'an & The Traditions:

Before going on to discuss the question of destiny and Divine will in the light of the Holy Qur'an and the Traditions, I would like to remind readers about the following basic principles:

- 1).The human mind can only function using these texts as a basis. It cannot grasp the reality of destiny in detail on its own, because, as stated earlier, the mind is unable to delve into

metaphysical aspects. Therefore, any discussion that is not supported by the texts should be avoided.

- 2). We should always be aware that the Holy Qur'an is the basis, the terra firma-of all our beliefs. So, if there is any contradiction between a Qur'anic verse and a Tradition based on the authority of a single source and there is no way of reconciling the two in a satisfactory way, we should opt for the Qur'anic verse.
- 3). There can be no clear text, either in the Holy Qur'an or in the Traditions, which denies any physical reality because Our Lord Who revealed the Holy Qur'an is the Creator of every reality and Our Lord does not contradict his own creation.
- 4). The verses in the Holy Qur'an which carry the meaning of 'Predestination' and therefore denial of man's free will

are, in my opinion, verses which have a bearing on both the nobility and the corruptibility of man. Here are some verses we can consider, regarding that theme:

- a) “He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases. There is no god but He the Exalted in Might the Wise”(Qur’an;3:6). For example, a newly born baby girl cannot be changed into baby boy, and we cannot change the colour of our skin.
- b) “Thy Lord does create and choose as He pleases: no choice have they (in the matter): Glory to Allah! and far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!”(Qur’an;28:68).
- c) And there are verses which refer to global events beyond human control: “Have you seen that which you cultivate? Is it you who foster it, or are we the fosterer? If we willed, we

verily could make it chaff, then wouldst you cease not exclaim. (Qur'an;56:63-65).

- d) "If God touch thee with affliction, there is none that can relieve thee there from, save Him, and if He touch thee with good fortune (there is none that can impair it), for He is able to do all things" (Qur'an;6:17).
- e) There are verses which refer to circumstances which are not of man's making and which may lead to develop either noble or corruptible aspects of his character: "By the Soul and the proportion and order Given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; Truly he succeeds that purifies it And he fails that corrupts it!" Qur'an;91:7-10).
- f) In the verses dealing with guidance, we find the word 'guidance' used to mean 'direction of the Almighty':

“Did we not assign unto him two eyes and a tongue and lips, and guide him to the parting of mountain ways?”(Qur’an;90:8-0); “Lo! We have shown him the way whether he be grateful or disbelieving”(Qur’an;76:3).

We notice in the above verses that there are factors which are not created by man, but may have an influence in shaping him either into a noble or corrupt person. As stated earlier, God does not take his worshippers to task on such issues. It is impossible to plan something inevitable, and then blame the person who, as a consequence, behaves in a certain way. These texts have formed a battleground for various 'breakaway' sects, who misunderstood their meaning and therefore misapplied them. These groups should, on the contrary, have done as follows:

- I). They should have made a distinction between the verses dealing with Divine Will, Divine Power and God's disposal of the affairs of His kingdom, and the verses dealing with reward and punishment.
- II). The texts should have been considered as a whole, and not broken down into parts. Anyone who studies the texts in their totality will realise that the Holy Qur'an grants man Freedom and free will which may result in either reward or punishment: "Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things lowest as well as highest. Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord; but those who reject Faith say: "What means Allah by this similitude?" By it He causes many to stray and many He leads into the right path but He causes not to stray except those who forsake (the path)"(Qur'an;2:26).

A superficial look at these verses may well give the impression that, like everything else, guidance and misguidance are divinely ordained: some are destined to be misguided while others are to be blessed with guidance. But this impression will soon change after studying the following verses: "This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil)"(Qur'an;2:2). It is clear that God does not take it upon Himself to actually grant guidance or misguidance. This is a matter on which every individual takes his own decision. If a person lives in awe of God and in God consciousness, the Holy Qur'an will be his source of guidance. However, anyone who gets involved in matters which are harmful to him will not be guided. Anyone still having any lingering doubts, asking, "How do I know whether God has placed me among the guided or the misguided?" can find the answer in the following verses:

“This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil), who believe in the unseen and establish worship, and spend of that we have bestowed upon them. And who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee, and are certain of the hereafter”(Qur’an;2:2-4); “those who break Allah's Covenant after accepting it, and who cut aside what Allah has ordered to be united and cause mischief on earth. It is they who are the losers.”(Qur’an;2:27).

It is clear therefore that there is no predestination of man's free will, and that free will is corrected with certain attributes and actions falling within the scope of human volition. For example, you may believe in a world beyond the reach of human perception, pray regularly and spend your time and money in the path of God; on the other hand, you may separate

yourself from God, saw disruption and spread corruption on earth. Any of these actions are within your capacity. However, if you carry out the first three, you will be among those who are God-fearing and therefore you will be guided. But if you are guilty of the latter three, you will be considered as one who lost his way and whose lot is misguidance.

A Meaningless Debate:

At this point many people ask: "Did I go wrong because it was God's will, or could I have done things differently - in His way?" or, "Was I responsible for my own action?" and so on. Such arguments have filled countless volumes of books written by theologians. But such books are meaningless, because we cannot compare God with human beings, neither can the human mind make assessments of God and His attributes. The Almighty is not questioned regarding His actions; it is we who are questioned by him for our actions.

And there is no doubt about God's justice. We must be responsible for ourselves and look within regarding our behaviour and seek to direct our will power to do good works. We should refrain from discussions regarding God, in the same way as they were avoided by our much respected forefathers.

Argument of Destiny as an Excuse for Evils:

Many people who make mistakes in their lives blame their destiny. In such a case if you were to ask a murderer, "Why did you kill that man?" He would reply, "Because it was ordained that I should do so." Such an argument holds no water for two reasons:-

- I). Reward and punishment are connected to our actions, the motives behind them and our desires. No murderer can justify his crime by claiming that murdering people was ordained for him - as though he knew

what was inscribed for him in the 'imperishable tablet', and took that as a basis for committing his crime, in other words, he cannot claim that he carried out orders, according to what was 'written' as his destiny. In fact what happened was that he fell prey to negative influences; in other words, he fell for the temptation of the devil. Polytheists also sought to justify their beliefs by making use of such an excuse: "Had God so willed, we would not have ascribed divinity to aught but Him"(Qur'an;6:148). The Divine answer to this was: "Have you any (certain) knowledge which you could proffer to us? - - - - Ye follow nothing but conjecture: Ye do nothing but lie."(Qur'an;6:148). In other words, "How did you know before you became polytheists that polytheism was ordained for you? And did you opt for

the belief in the Oneness of God and realise that it was forbidden for you."

- II). If those taking refuge in destiny were being true to themselves, they would gladly accept whatever God ordains for them-poverty, sickness, starvation, financial and material loss, etc. but this is not the case! Such people do not resign themselves to their fate. On the contrary, they often do all they can to accumulate wealth, fight sickness and keep away from starving. They cannot endure any loss, such as loss of someone close to them, loss of wealth, etc. They use every means possible to enjoy worldly pleasures and protect themselves from pain and suffering. Why then do such people not make use of the power of their intellect to counteract their carnal desires and restrain from what is forbidden because they are aware of the resulting punishment?

Our Belief in Destiny vs Our Forefather's:

Many opponents of Islam accuse Muslims of being lethargic and lacking enthusiasm for their cause, and relate this attitude to their belief in destiny. To some extent, they are right, but this is due to the wrong notion of this concept, and one which was formed by latter day Muslims. A great number of Muslims used this misconceived idea of destiny to cover up a multitude of sins, and as an excuse for laziness and inactivity. But our revered forefathers had, on the contrary, made destiny a springboard for work, effort and struggle. We read of the principle which states that a certain livelihood has been allotted to each one of us: “What is ordained for you as your share will come to you even if you are weak and powerless. You cannot, even with all your power and might, take what has been given to another as your share.” This was interpreted by some Muslims to mean that as we have no choice in what we

do, we may as well give up working for a livelihood and be idle. People like this expect the heavens to open one day and shower them with riches. They are the kind of people who embark on a journey without money, or provisions.

However, our forefathers read and interpreted this maxim quite differently. They took it as a springboard for work and action, and therefore made a great effort to find a useful means of employing themselves and acquire wealth in a lawful manner. They strived their utmost in all they did, and with that knowledge were content to accept their lot. They never felt resentful, nor did they complain to the Almighty, and they did not envy those who had achieved more. Wealth did not make them arrogant and poverty did not drive them to despair. As we know death is inevitable, we do not always exercise prudence and discretion.

We may not commit crimes, but often, nonetheless, we avoid certain responsibilities and blame the result on 'our destiny.' An example to illustrate that kind of behaviour would be of someone who drives his car too fast, knocks someone down - and then describes it as "an act of destiny." Our forefathers were also aware of the inevitability of death. But they believed that as no one dies before his appointed hour there is no point in; say jumping into a blazing fire or stabbing oneself to death! So they got on with their lives, saying, "We should work and achieve what is acceptable to God. Let's strive in His path, and not fear death, just because it is inevitable. It has an appointed hour which cannot be put back or forward. So let us give up what deters us from following in God's way and convey the message of truth to all." Consequently, our forefathers fought valiantly for the sake of truth and obeyed

no one but God. So, while we understand the fact that everything is destined, we do not always pay attention to the norms that God has laid down for this universe and the laws of nature, all of which He has made as a source of good and evil.

Our forefathers, however, studied these laws seriously and established themselves as pioneers in the sciences. They grasped the meaning of those sciences, and evolved ways of using them for the good of mankind. But our negligence has caused us Muslims to fall from the heights of glory to the depths of oblivion. Our forefathers were, supported by their faith, masters in every field in this world. But we have let others be masters over us. Our forefathers ruled a third of the civilized world, with the strength of the word of truth. But, alas, we have allowed our enemy to conquer our homeland - not with the weapon of Truth, but with the weapon of falsehood.

Glorifying the Dead Forefathers:

Some of us, when we find that every aspect of our life seems to be going wrong, or that we have been humiliated in some way, let our minds wander back to the power and prestige enjoyed by our forefathers. The thought of that glory turns our present despair into hope - hope with which we build bridges between the past and the present. In this frame of mind we tend to despise our contemporaries and glorify the dead and departed, and that reaction forms the basis for the practice of praising the dead and departed, pinning all our hopes on them. We expect help and assistance with our difficulties and build grand mausoleums in their honour. Our veneration for the dead, however, is growing similar to the beliefs and practices of pagan days. Even though our religion forbids it, we have even begun giving offerings and making vows to those tombs, in order to seek intercession from

our forefathers, Even though we know that those who are dead and buried have no material or tangible means to fulfill our requests, we beg them to intercede on our behalf, both for good and bad purposes. We continue to uphold such wrong beliefs because of the decadence of our present compared to the glory of our past.

Conclusion:

Our misunderstanding of the question of destiny led to the wrong conclusion regarding what is within the scope of man's free will and what is beyond it. This confusion first appeared in the various schools of thought among theologians. Some claimed that man has no free will because he has no jurisdiction on several matters, including control of the muscles of his heart, the choice of his parents and having an environment to his liking. But they forgot that God has granted man control over several of his muscles, and

that God has given him the power of intellect which he can use, to a certain extent, to rectify what he finds wrong with his upbringing and his surroundings. However, the opposite and rather exaggerated point of view was expressed by other theologians. They placed far more importance on man's free will than is to be found in reality, and consequently confusion arose between the issues of reward and punishment. They forgot that God does not make us answerable for our actions, except within the limits of our freedom and free will. And, as stated earlier, we are not taken to task for actions committed under great duress. Besides this, these theologians, as we also saw earlier, confused certain issues with regard to Divine justice, forgetting that it cannot be compared to human justice. The safest course to follow regarding the question of belief in destiny and on all other connected issues is to follow the

basic source namely, the Holy Qur'an, and to proceed on the path shown by our revered forefathers, who were among the companions of the Prophet, (peace be upon him), and the companions of the companions. We should avoid futile discussions, such as those based on superficial and rather primitive Greek philosophy.

CHAPTER-10: FAITH IN THE UNSEEN (METAPHYSICS)

It is an open reality that, in this material world of observation, if man was left to rely totally on his senses and his intellect, that is, he was allowed to opt according to his intellect whatever was commanded by his senses, we would have remained in the dark about the transcendental matters; It was, therefore, His Profound Justice and his Mercy on us that he did not let the hidden matters out of the comprehension of our intellect: rather, He endowed it, from Himself, with the knowledge of the invisible according to its requirements.

It is well established that we are unable to perceive everything that exists in this world with our senses. What's more, there are many other worlds in existence which we are not aware of, the closest example being 'spirit'. How can we deny the

existence of spirit, when it keeps everyone alive? But has anyone ever known the true essence of spirit? Of course not. In other words, the world that we can see and perceive is described by the Holy Qur'an as the 'seen world', and the world that is beyond our sense of perception is the 'unseen metaphysical world'. Every human being, without exception, endorses and expresses belief in the seen world. Even animals perceive this world with their senses. Therefore, no one can claim superiority or precedence over anyone else in this matter, because this belief forms part of what we called 'essential knowledge.' However, 'superiority' is granted to those who, on the basis of trust in the truth of the Message conveyed to them, believe in and claim that the unseen world exists. It is this quality which gives superiority to the God fearing over others. And it is the very first quality emphasized

in the Holy Qur'an: "Who believe in the Unseen..."(Qur'an;2:3).

How Can We Believe in the Unseen?

How can we believe in the unseen when God has not given us the sense perception to perceive it? If we were left to depend only on our senses and power of intellect in order to draw our conclusions, we would still be groping in the dark, and remain ignorant about the metaphysical world. But God, in His wisdom and mercy, has not left the human intellect in its state of helplessness. On the contrary He has provided it with the necessary guidance and information. But this information cannot be obtained from within the self. It can be found in external sources - sources which are not connected with intuition, spiritual inspiration, intellectual enlightenment or powers of reasoning. And neither can it be evolved from human ability alone. It can only be obtained

through one of the following three methods:

- 1). God might communicate it to man either through an inspiration, or a dream or through any other method of transmission which does not involve any effort on our part. It is something that cannot be intellectualized in such a way that we can feel and express it.
- 2). A prophet, to whom revelation is sent, may hear it without being able to know or locate the original source of the sound.
- 3). God may choose a human being to receive His Message through one of his angels, with the command that this Message be conveyed to mankind, In this context the Holy Qur'an says: "And it is not given to mortal man that God should speak unto him otherwise than through sudden inspiration, or (by a voice, as it were), from behind a veil, or

by sending an apostle to reveal, by His leave, whatever He will (to reveal)”(Qur’an;42:51).

Matters in which Faith in the Unseen is Essential:

Faith in the Unseen is an element of Faith, which has been described in detail through the Divine Revelations a part of our faith to trust this knowledge. The unseen includes the Angels, the Jinn, the Revealed Books, the Prophets, the Day of Judgement, and the Day of Reckoning, when we shall receive reward or punishment and belief in destiny. We are also asked to believe everything that is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an like; the creation of heaven and earth, the creation of man, and all the other information like historic narratives, future and scientific or any other information which it contains.

Rationale to Believe in Something Not Perceived by Senses:

Materialists will refuse to believe in anything which they do not perceive with their senses. Our response to this is already mentioned in the 'The Principles of Conceptualization of Faith', which states, "We are not in a position to deny the existence of whatever is beyond our senses." In other words, just because we cannot sense certain things, this does not mean we can deny their existence. And also, the 3rd principle of conceptualization of faith' states that, "Certitude transmitted by an authentic person gives us a good enough proof as through that which we can see or feel." Since the honesty of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in conveying the Divine Message revealed to him has been established for us, we Muslims firmly believe in the unseen.

Classification of the Unseen:

We can classify the unseen into several categories:

- 1 **Historic Events:** The first category of the unseen includes all the events which occurred in the lifetime of past generations. It is for this reason that the story of Joseph is referred to in the Holy Qur'an as: an account of something that was beyond the reach of thy perceptions: "We now reveal unto thee". Our Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) had not witnessed the events of this story. It was only witnessed by the sons of Israel, i.e., the sons of Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him). Such information has therefore been classified by the Almighty as something "beyond the reach of perception", or as "stories of what happened unseen".

2 **Events Before Existence of Humanity:**

The second category involves events which mankind would have observed, had the human race been in existence at their time of occurrence. For example, all the events that took place on earth before the birth of the human race, information regarding all the creatures that existed on earth, and the story regarding the creation of Adam, the "father of mankind. The only means that human beings have had to learn about these events has been through revelation.

3 **Matters Imperceptible through Senses & Intellect:**

In the third category of the Unseen, we can group all those matters which cannot be perceived by the senses - issues which cannot be reasoned through the intellect, nor belief in the unseen comprehended by using the power of imagination. The Attributes of God, Creations, He has

hidden from our sight, the angels, judgement and how it will take place, and the consequent reward and punishment.

Knowledge about Child in the Womb and Weather:

Some people might say regarding the realm of the unseen, that God has reserved certain pieces of knowledge for Himself. For example, the causing of rains to occur or the knowledge of the sex of a child in the womb. But how does the weather forecaster predict the weather every day whether the skies will be clear, or whether it will rain? And how does science discover the sex of a child in the mother's womb? The answers to all this are as follows:

- 1). God revealed the Holy Qur'an, and He created this universe and everything that has ever happened in it. It is therefore impossible to find a text in the Holy Qur'an which contradicts any

physical reality. Whenever we think we have come across such a text, we will find after further scrutiny that the real meaning is something other than what we understood.

- 2).As for the weather forecast, it informs us about weather conditions after the causes have been examined. For example we may be told there will be rain in the south west. If we study the laws of this universe, which have been laid down by God, we understand that this rain is caused by a breeze which comes from the side of the Atlantic Ocean, passes through the Straits of Gibraltar and collides with a block of still air, resulting in the ' formations of clouds, which cause the rain. We can compare this kind of prediction with the example of someone who sees the postman approaching his house, and tries to predict how long it will take him to reach the door. He may predict

that it will take him three minutes. Or we can take the example of someone looking through binoculars and observing vehicles approaching, and then telling others about them, in advance. Such knowledge is not knowledge of the unseen. It is merely information gained in advance of other people. It can be compared to the prediction of the sex of a baby after it takes shape as a fetus. But the knowledge about rain clouds, the falling of rain on land which God has deemed to be dry, the prevention of rain on land which He deemed to be blessed with rain and the knowledge of the sex of an embryo when it is still a sperm are all matters which belong to the realm of the unseen.

[Explanation by Dr.Zakir Naik: Allah is Omnipotent and Omniscient He has granted knowledge of certain things to humankind. But Allah has knowledge of the seen as well as the unseen. Many people believe that the

Qur'an claims that Allah alone knows the sex of the child in the mother's womb. The Glorious Qur'an says: "Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah (alone). It is He who sends down Rain, and He who knows what is in the wombs...." (Qur'an;31:34). A similar message is given in the following verse: "Allah doth know what every female (womb) doth bear, By how much the wombs fall short (of their time or number) or do exceed. Every single thing is before His sight, in (due) proportion."(Qur'an;13:8). Today science has advanced and we can easily determine the sex of the child in the womb of a pregnant mother, using ultrasonography. It is true that many translations and commentaries of this verse of the Glorious Qur'an say that only Allah knows the sex of the child in the mother's womb. If you read the Arabic text of this verse, there is no Arabic word corresponding to the English word 'sex'. In fact the Qur'an says the knowledge of what is in the womb is with Allah alone. Many commentators have misunderstood it to mean only Allah knows the sex of the child in the womb, which is a mistake. This verse does not refer to the sex of the child in the womb but it

refers to, how the child in the mother's womb will be. How will his nature be? Will he be a blessing or a curse to his parents? Will he be a boon or a bane to the society? Will he be good or evil? Will he go to heaven or hell? The complete knowledge of all things is with Allah alone. No scientist in the world, no matter how advanced his equipment, will ever be able to accurately determine the knowledge of these things about the child in the mother's womb. As far as rain is concerned He says: "It is He who sends down Rain".]

The Angels, the Scriptures and the Messengers:

Belief in the angels, the Books and the prophets is one of the pre-requisites of faith, without which no one will be considered to be a believer. Angels are God's messengers to the prophets and the prophets are messengers of God to mankind. The Holy Scriptures (Books) are the messages conveyed by the angels to the prophets and by the prophets to mankind.

Divine Revelation:

The necessity of Divine revelation is a rational possibility. This is because God is capable of creating the angels, nominating the prophets and laying down laws. Once the human intellect believes in the existence of God, His ability and power, it cannot deny this possibility. Revelation has occurred because the news of its occurrence has been conveyed to us with certitude. We stated earlier that "Certitude through news conveyed from an authentic person is as good as certitude by seeing and feeling." This is why we believe in what is communicated to us with authenticity, in the same way-as we believe in what we see and hear.

Divine revelation is necessary because, without it, mankind would be engrossed in a material life, oblivious of the fact that there is an Afterlife. Without such revelation, human beings would behave like animals - eating, drinking and

indulging in carnal pleasures. They would have no contact with their Lord nor would they seek to work for the life Hereafter. If it were not for Divine revelation, man would be deprived of moral values and nobility of character. He might live in a world of illusion, drawing inspiration from various theories on social ethics. But any system based on social ethics alone, is like a palace built on quicksand. Man is by nature self-centered and seeks to satisfy his own needs and protect himself from harm and does not do anything which does not give him pleasure or some sort of gain. Say someone who only has fifty pence with which to buy himself dinner notices a charity box in aid of orphans. Would he be willing to donate his fifty pence towards that cause in a discreet manner, not telling anyone what he has done - and forgoing his dinner, unless he were a believer in God and the Day of Judgement? A believer would certainly give money in such a case,

and would be aware that God is watching him, and that if he donates his fifty pence he will be rewarded with the equivalent of, say, fifty thousand pounds on the Day of Judgement. Only a believer carries out charitable actions, without caring whether people notice what he has done or not, or whether they express gratitude, or reward him or not. And only a believer restrains himself from doing what he knows is wrong, regardless of whether he is alone or in the company of others.

However the person who does good in order to gain recognition will not do so unless he is sure of obtaining a good name and fame. Likewise, the person who will not commit a crime for fear of being caught by the police or shown up in the public eye will nonetheless act without regret if he knows he is alone. If God were to take people to task on the Day of Judgement, for the mistakes they have made in their lives and had not sent

prophets to teach mankind the Divine laws, they would certainly protest, saying, "Oh Lord- if only Thou had sent us an apostle, we should certainly have followed Thy signs before we were humbled and put to shame." (Qur'an;20:134). And they might also claim that had the Message been sent to them sooner they would have abided by it, and had they known the Divine law they would have adhered to it. The Holy Qur'an states that the apostles gave good news as well as a warning so that... mankind after (the coming) of the apostles should have no plea against God. (Qur'an;4:165).

Humanity Could Have been Created Sinless:

Some people ask questions such as:

- 1). "Why hasn't God guided everyone to the path of paradise? And why does he give us sexual desires, and then punish us for committing adultery?"

2).Why does He infuse in us the desire for money, and then takes us to task for holding on to it?"

We can take the sort of questions asked by school children as an analogy to the above. For example they might ask,

- 1).Why don't teachers give us answers to our exam questions at the beginning of the year?
- 2).Why are exam questions kept secret?
- 3).Why are we asked to prepare for exams? and so on.

Needless to say the purpose of keeping the questions secret is to ensure that students study the whole syllabus, as prescribed. If the exam questions were made known to the students beforehand, the examinations themselves would become a pointless exercise.

This world is a testing ground in the same way. We are given certain tests and given

different problems, where the faithful and the God-fearing stand apart from the unfaithful and the unbelievers, and the righteous stand apart from the corrupt. In other words, were it not for the hurdles in a race, you would not be able to distinguish a horse who runs fast from the one who is lazy.

If God had so willed He could have created the whole of mankind as one nation. He could also, if He had wished, have "made all mankind show absolute obedience to Him, like the angels. But, He willed differently, and nothing can change what He wills, and it is not for us to question what He does. God has absolute control over us: unto Him we belong and unto Him we shall return. There is no other God but Him. , He can, if He wills, cause us great hardship and unhappiness, and if He wishes He may pardon us. So we pray to Him to I grant us pardon and mercy, and we seek refuge in Him from His

punishment. The truth is that we cannot save ourselves from this punishment unless He pardons us; and He alone grants that pardon.

The Angels:

True followers of Islam believe in the existence of angels, as affirmed in the Holy Qur'an. The information we are given about them is as follows:

- 1). Angels were created before the creation of mankind: "And when thy Lord said unto the angels, "Lo! I am about to place a viceroy on earth. They said, "Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we hymn thy praise and sanctify thee?" He said, "Surely I know that which ye know not."(Qur'an;20:30).
- 2). Angels were created in order to obey God totally: "O ye who believe! ward off from yourselves and your families a

fire whereof the fuel is men and stones, over - which are set angels strong, severe, who resist not God in that which He commands them, but do that which they are commanded”(Qur’an;66:6) They celebrate His praises and bow down before Him”(Qur’an;7:206). “Those who bear the throne, and all who are round it, hymn the praises of their Lord and believe in Him”(Qur’an;40:7)

- 3).When God has created Adam, He taught him the nature of all things and made him teach the angels about these facts since they expressed ignorance about them. Then when Adam's superiority over the angels was established. God ordered them to bow to Adam. They did this not in worship, but in reverence.
- 4).Angels sometimes take the physical form of human beings. The Holy Qur’an states in the chapter concerning the story of Mary: “... Then we sent unto

her Our spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man”(Qur’an;19; 17). “And Abraham’s guests were angels in the form of human’ beings, to whom a sumptuous dinner of fatted calf was laid out:’ And when he saw their hands reached not to it he mistrusted them and conceived a fear of them. They said, “Fear not. Lo! We are sent unto the folk of Lot”(Qur’an;11:70).

5).The angles' abode is in heaven, and they come down to earth according to God's orders: “We (angels) come not down save by commandment of the Lord. Unto Him belongs all that is before us and all that is behind us and all that is between those two, and thy Lord was never forgetful”(Qur’an;19:64).

6).And the angels are grouped in various categories and denominations, according to their characteristics and

degree of servitude to God. God describes them as follows: "Praise be to God, The Creator of the heavens and the earth. Who appoints the angels messengers having wings-two, three and four. He multiplies in creation what He will"(Qur'an;35:1). "There is not one of us (angels) but hath his known position"(Qur'an;37:164').

- 7).Among the angels is Gabriel, who conveys the revelation: "Say (O Mohammed, to mankind): Who is an enemy to Gabriel '. For he it is who hath revealed (this Scripture) to thy heart by God's leave, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, and a guidance and glad tidings to believers. (Qur'an;2:9).And among the angels are those responsible for death: "Say (one day), the angel of death who has been given charge of you will gather you, and then unto your Sustainer you will be brought back"(Qur'an;32:1 1).

- 8).Among the angels are also those who blow the trumpet and the Angel Michael and the bearers of the throne: “Those who bear the Throne, and all who are round about it, hymn the praises of their Lord”(Qur’an;40:7). “And the angels will be on the sides thereof, and eight will uphold the throne of thy Lord that day, above them”(Qur’an;69:17).
- 9).There are angels who are responsible for the comfort of those in paradise: “Gardens of Eden which they enter, along with all who do right of their fathers and their helpmates and their seed. The angels enter unto them from every gate”(Qur’an;13:23). And there are still more angels who are charged with the task of inflicting punishment on those who are in hell: “o’ ye who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a fire whereof the fuel is men and stones, over which are set angels strong, severe, who resist not

God in that which He commands them, but do that which they are commanded”(Qur’an;66:6). Some angels are assigned the work of recording mankind's deeds: “He utters no word but there is with him an observer ready”(Qur’an;50:18), “Generous and recording” (Qur’an;82:11).

10). And there are angels who usher men into the Divine presence on the Day of Judgement, and bear witness against them: “And every soul cometh, along with it a driver and a witness” (Qur’an;50:21).

11). The Holy Qur’an also states that angels infuse believers with courage and fortitude at times of war: “When thy Lord inspired the angels, (saying) “I am with you. So make those who believe stand firm.”(Qur’an;8:12). The angels pray for soldiers and seek God's forgiveness for them: “He it is Who

bless you, and His angels (bless you) that He may bring you forth from darkness into light”(Qur’an;33:43). “Our Lord! Thou comprehends all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore forgive those who repent and follow Thy way. Ward off from them ill-deeds; and he from whom Thou ward off ill-deeds that day, him verily hast Thou taken into mercy. That is the supreme triumph”(Qur’an;40:79). And the angels witness the dawn prayers with the believers: “And (the recital of) Qur’an at dawn. Lo! (the recital of) the Qur’an at dawn is ever witnessed”(Qur’an;17:78). When we pass on from this worldly life, the angels bring tidings to believers and reproach to unbelievers: “But behold as for those who say, "Our Sustainer is God", and then steadfastly pursue the right way-upon them do angels often descend, (saying), "Fear not and grieve

not, but receive the glad tidings of that paradise which has been promised to you!"(Qur'an;41:30). "Behold, those whom the angels gather in death while they are still sinning against themselves, (the angels) will ask, "What was wrong with you?". They will answer, "We were too weak on earth". (The angels) will say, "Was then God's earth not wide enough for you to forsake the domain of evil?". For such then, the goal is hell - and how evil a journey's end!"(Qur'an;4: 97). "And if thou couldst but see (how it will be) when He causes those who are bent on denying the truth to die: the angels will strike their faces and their backs, and (will say), "Taste suffering through fire in return for what your own hands have wrought, for never does God do the least wrong to His creatures (Qur'an;8: 50-51).

12). The angels lead sinners to the fire and rebuke them: "And those who were bent on denying the truth will be urged on in throngs towards hell till, when they reach it, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will ask them, "Have there not come to you apostles from among yourselves, who conveyed to you your Sustainer's messages and warned you of the coming of this your Day of Judgement?" They will answer, "Yea - indeed". But the sentence of suffering will (already) have fallen upon the deniers of the truth. (And) they will be told, "Enter the gates of hell, therein to abide!"(Qur'an;39:71-72) And angels also greet and welcome those who enter paradise: "And those who keep their duty to their Lord are drives unto the garden in troops till, when they reach it and the gates thereof are opened, and the warders thereof say unto them, "Peace be unto you! Ye are good, so

enter ye (the garden of delight), to dwell therein.”(Qur’an;39:73).Angels do not marry or have children, and they are not described as being sexual beings, males or females.

- 13). The above gives a general picture of what is mentioned about angels in the Holy Qur’an. And, as stated before, because they are mentioned in the Holy Qur’an, believers are expected to believe in them. To believe in Angels is among one of the basic tenets of faith. “The messenger believed in that which had been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in God and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers - we make no distinction between any of His messengers.” (Qur’an;2:285).

Benefits, Gained by Belief in Angels:

Belief in angels increases our awareness of God's glory and makes us more conscious

of His mercy, as angels pray for believers and seek forgiveness on their behalf. By knowing that angels keep a record of all our deeds, we are able to steer clear of what would be harmful to us, as believers. What's more, we feel encouraged to embark upon noble deeds, such as Striving for the cause of God, knowing that God has ordered the angels to support us. We therefore seek to behave in such a way that will lead us to paradise, where we shall be greeted by them. Likewise, we will abstain from actions which will lead us to hell, where angels will rebuke us. In other words, the overall benefit from having a belief in angels is that it will make us more committed in our obedience to God, and more conscious of abstaining from doing what is against His will. And in so doing, we strengthen angelic qualities within ourselves.

The Jinn:

God Almighty has also informed us of other beings who cannot be perceived by us and who dwell in the unseen. Our inability to perceive them is similar to our not being able to see ultraviolet or infrared rays, or hear sound waves or perceive flow of electricity. This special species, mentioned in earlier chapters, are known as Jinn. While, unlike belief in angels, belief in Jinn is not a basic tenet of faith, but since Jinn are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an they must therefore be taken note of.

The Qur'anic Views Regarding Jinn:

- 1). The Holy Qur'an informs us that jinn were created from fire. However, this does not mean that they are fiery bodies burning anything that comes into contact with them. It is quite possible that God may have changed them into a different form, as He did

in the case of human beings. Man was created from clay, but transformed into a different entity -a structure consisting of bones, muscles, blood and a nervous system. This means, therefore, that all creations may change from one state of being to another, in accordance with God's laws for this universe. In the same way, a single cell may be transformed into different living organs of varying qualities, shapes and sizes. Similarly, if God wills. He may create different kinds of metals from a single atom, and a lush green tree from a seed.

[A scientific speculation, not by the author but added here for general information: The renowned scientist Albert Einstein, through his famous 'Special Theory of Relativity' established the equitation of Mass and Energy, according to which the Energy (E) of a quantity of Matter, with Mass (m) , is equal to the product of the Mass and the

square of the velocity of Light (c). This relationship is commonly expressed in the mathematical formula: $E = mc^2$. It can be deduced that the matter, light and energy are interchangeable or different forms of same thing. The crude example of three different forms of water, solid (ice), liquid (water) and gas (steam or vapors) may be considered for understanding. Thus it may be reasonable presumption that the human are made of dust or 'matter' (m = a solid & liquid forms of material), then other creatures can also be made from other forms i.e. Angels from 'light' (c) and jinns from 'energy' (E) the parable of heat energy produced from the flame of fire!]

- 2). Jinn were created before man: "Whereas the jinn we had created, (long) before that, out of the fire of scorching winds"(Qur'an;15:27).
- 3). Even though jinn can see us, we cannot see them. But there is nothing

strange about this. For example, someone looking through binoculars can see someone far from where he is standing, but that person, the object of his view, cannot see who is looking at him. Scientists have also invented equipment such as television which reflects the image of the speaker in TV studio to us, hence we can see the people in studio but they can't see us. So it is therefore not beyond Divine power to create beings that can see us without us seeing them.

- 4). Jinn will also be judged on their actions, in the same way as humans, and will also be subject to reward and punishment. This means that hell will consist of both Jinn and human beings. And (tell them that) I have not created the Jinn and men to any end other than that they may (know and) worship Me”(Qur'an;51:56); “But (as for those who refuse to avail

themselves to Divine guidance), that word of thy Sustainer shall be fulfilled: "Most certainly will I fill hell with jinns (invisible beings) as well as with humans, all together." (Qur'an;11:119)

5). The Divine Message was also conveyed to jinn as revealed to both our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Prophet Moses (peace be upon him): "They said, "O our people! Behold, we have been listening to a revelation bestowed from on high after (that of) Moses, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains (of the Torah): it guides towards the truth, and onto a straight way." (Qur'an;46:30).

6). Like human beings, jinn have different characteristics; good, obedient as well as evil and sinful beings dwell among them. Just as (we do not know how it happens) that:

“some from among us are righteous, while some of us are (far) below that: we have always followed widely divergent paths”(Qur’an;72:11); “ Yet (it is true) that among us are such as have surrendered themselves to God-just as there are among us such as have abandoned themselves to wrong doing. Now as for those who surrender themselves to Him - it is they that have attained to consciousness of what is right”(Qur’an;72:14).

- 7). God made them (jinn) submissive to the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him): “They worked for him as he desired: making arches, images (**tamathil*), basins as large as reservoirs and built-in cooking cauldrons. We said: "O Family of David! Work gratefully." Only a few of My devotees are truly grateful”(Qur’an;34:13).[*Many interpreters of the Qur’an have inferred

form *tamathil*, the picture of inanimate objects and the natural scenery, and this is preferable because making of statues of living beings is forbidden even the Shari'a followed by Solomon but also in present Islamic Shari'a.]

8). Jinn do not have knowledge of the unseen. Therefore they continued to work for Solomon (Suleiman) even after his death: "When We decreed Solomon's death he was leaning on his staff. The jinns did not know that he was dead until the termite ate away his staff and fell down. Thus it became clear to the jinns that if they had known the unseen, they would not have continued in the humiliating punishment of their task"(Qur'an;34:14).

9). God also challenged the jinn, in just the same way as He challenged human beings, to produce a work similar to the Holy Qur'an: "Say:

Verily though mankind and the jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another”(Qur'an;17:88).

- 10). Jinn were curious to find out more about the nature of the heavens and tried to pick up information from Angels; However, after the advent of Islam, they were prevented from doing so and whenever they tried to find out more, they were confronted with a blazing fire: “And we used to sit on places (high) therein to listen. But he who listens now finds a flame in wait for him”(Qur'an;79:9).

The Devils:

Unbelievers among jinn are known as devils, and their Chief is Iblis (Lucifer). Some people believe that Iblis (Lucifer)

is an angel, but in fact he is a Jinn. The reasons to support that are:

- 1). God has said so in the Holy Qur'an: "Behold! We said to the angels, bow down to Adam. They bowed down, except Iblis. He was one of the Jinn and he broke the command of his Lord."(Qur'an;18:50).
- 2). "Iblis disobeyed his Lord Whereas angels flinch not from the commands they receive from God".(Qur'an;66:6).
- 3).The Holy Qur'an states that Iblis (Lucifer) was created from fire: God said, "What prevented thee from bowing down when I commanded thee?" He said, "I am better than he: Thou didst create me from fire and him from clay"(Qur'an;7:12).

Qur'an on Devil:

The Holy Qur'an mentions many things about Devil, some are mentioned below:

1).The devil is enemy number one to mankind: “Surely Satan is your enemy: so take him as an enemy. He is inviting his adherents towards his way so that they may become companions of the blazing fire”.(Qur’an;35:6). It is he who caused the banishment of the Adam (the father of all mankind) from paradise. His main aim is to prevent people from entering paradise, so he tries to lead us into temptation and the path of hell. Unfortunately, many of us succumb to his temptation and are led away from the path of God, therefore disregarding the guidance shown by the prophets. God has reprimanded man for his foolishness in giving in to temptation in such a way, instead of following His path, which ensures mercy and forgiveness: “Will ye then take him and his progeny as protectors rather than Me? And they are enemies to you! Evil

would he the exchange for the wrong doers!”(Qur’an;18:50).

- 2). The above verse indicates that the devil has offspring, and these offspring are from Iblis.
- 3). While God has made the devil a predominant source of evil influence on mankind. He has not granted him the power, has granted him is cunning: “... feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan”.(Qur’an;4:76); “... but he (the devil) cannot harm them in the least, except as God permits”.(Qur’an;58:10); “even though he (devil) had no authority over them. It all happened because We wanted to see who among them believed in the hereafter and who is in doubt concerning it. Your Lord is watching over all things”.(Qur’an;34:21). “Surely he has no authority over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord. His authority is over those

only who take him as patron and who join partners with Allah.”(Qur’an;16:99-100).

- 4). The devil's sole occupation is to cast doubt on man's mind that the path of God is the right one to follow, and therefore the devil will try to mislead him and ultimately cause him the greatest harm. “The evil one threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly (acts)”(Qur’an;2:268). “Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desire. But Satan's promises are nothing but deception.”(Qur’an;4:120); “O believers! Intoxicants and gambling (games of chance), dedication to stones (paying tribute to idols) and division by arrows (lottery) are the filthy works of Satan. Get away from them, so that you may prosper...”(Qur’an;5:93). The devil's

main task is to spread evil, immorality and dissent among all human beings. The basic rule he has laid down is to tempt man towards exhibitionism - to give up modesty and resort to crude behaviour: “O children of Adam! Let not Satan seduce you as he caused your (first) parents to go forth from the garden and tore off from them their robe (of innocence) that he might manifest their shame to them. Lo! He sees you, he and his tribe, from whence you see them not. Lo! we have made the devils protecting friends for those who believe not.” (Qur’an;7:27). The devil also strives to make what is bad appear good in the eyes of his followers: “... and the devil made all that they used to do seem fair unto them”(Qur’an;6:43). He also instigates his followers to spread doubts among believers and to turn

their attention away from following the way of truth by provoking arguments and disputes. God has warned us against this: "... and eat not of that where on God's name hath not been mentioned, for lo! it is abomination. Lo! the devils do inspire their minions to dispute with you. But if you obey them, ye will be in truth idolaters."(Qur'an;6:121) The devil also persistently tries to persuade the believer to forget God and to embark on acts which lead him away from truth: "The devil hath engrossed them and so hath caused them to forget remembrance of God. They are the devil's party. Lo! is it not devils party who will be the losers."(Qur'an;58:19). Lo! Those who ward off (evil), when glamour from the devil troubles them, they do but remember (God's guidance) and behold them seers!"(Qur'an;7:201).

5). Even though the devil, with his persistent tricks and intrigues is our greatest enemy, ultimately, he can neither help nor harm us. He may try his best to influence us regarding everything we do, but in fact this influence is only temptation. In the end, the choice is ours: we either give in to his temptations or disregard them and rise to sublime heights, which in turn, affect the way we conduct ourselves in our lives. This is what is meant: "Once the matter has been decided, Satan will say: "In fact, the promises which Allah made to you were all true; I too made some promises to you but failed to keep any of them. However, I had no power over you. I just invited you, and you accepted my invitation. Now! Do not blame me, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor you can help me. I reject what you did before; that you

associated me with Allah. Certainly such wrongdoers will have painful punishment.”(Qur’an;14:22). When Iblis begged God to grant him respite until the Day of Resurrection and God agreed. “Iblis said: ... "My Lord! Because Thou has sent me astray, I verily shall adorn the path of error for them on earth, and shall mislead them every one." (Qur’an;15:39) And God the Almighty said: ... This is a right course incumbent upon Me. Lo! as for My servants, thou hast no power over any of them save such of the forward as follow thee." (Qur’an;15:41-42). “And when thou recite the Qur’an, seek refuge in God from Satan the outcast. Lo! he hath no power over those who believe and put trust in their Lord. His power is only over those who make a friend of him, and those who ascribe partners unto him”(Qur’an;16:98-100).

6). The devil abandons his followers in their hours of need and betrays them: "Remember Satan made their (sinful) acts seem alluring to them and said (to the polytheists of Mecca on the day of the battle of Badr), "No one among men can overcome you this day, while I am near to you." But when the two forces came in sight of each other, he turned on his heels and said, "Lo! I am clear of you. I see what ye see not. I fear God!"(Qur'an;8:48). "Their parable is like the Satan who says to man disbelieve, but when man becomes a disbeliever, he says: "I have nothing to do with you; I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds."(Qur'an;59:16).

The Human Devils:

Human beings can acquire devilish characteristics when they spend their time talking against God, behaving

immorally and inducing others to wear indecent clothing. Such people provoke arguments which are not founded on truth and create disharmony within the Muslim community and we should be wary of them. They Holy Qur'an says: *"Say: I seek refuge with the Lord and Cherisher of mankind, the King (or Ruler) of mankind, the God (or Judge) of mankind, from the mischief of the whisperer (of evil) who withdraws (after his whisper the same) who whispers into the hearts of the people whether he be from among the jinn or from the mankind."*(Qur'an;114:1-6). Therefore anyone who places importance on the spread of immorality in any form whatsoever is a 'Human Devil'; that also includes anyone who supports racialism or diverts people from their religious path: *"O my Lord! I seek refuge in You from the prompting of the Satans, and O Lord! I seek refuge in You even from their coming near me."*(Qur'an;23:97-98).

CHAPTER-11: FAITH IN THE PROPHETS

The angels, jinn and prophets are all created by God and act as His servants; this is a basic tenet laid down by the Holy Qur'an, It is God who created them - and it is He Who regulates their course in life on earth. Like everyone else, they do not have the ability to cause either good or harm, unless God so wishes. All prophets are human beings, and therefore, like human beings, they are born, die, fall ill and enjoy good health; eat and drink and do not differ from them in their material way of being.

Prophets are void of divinity, as divinity is exclusive to God, but they do receive revelations, a fact which caused wonder and astonishment among earlier generations. Regarding this attitude. God says in the Holy Qur'an: Is it a matter of

wonderment to me that we have sent our inspiration to a man from among themselves that he should warn mankind (of their danger) and give the good news to the believers. (Qur'an;10:2). And naught prevented mankind from believing when the guidance came unto them save that they said, "Hath God sent a mortal as (His) messenger?" (Qur'an;17:94). God the Almighty replied by saying that a prophet is one among the community to which he is sent: Say: If there were upon the earth angels walking secure. We would have sent down for them from heaven an angel as messenger. (Qur'an;17:95). Those who were astonished argued saying, "Ye are but mortals like us, who would fain turn us away from what our fathers used to worship. Then bring some clear warrant." (Qur'an;14:10). The prophets answered: "We are but mortals like you, but God giveth grace unto whom He will of His slaves. It is not ours to bring you a

warrant unless by the permission of God.” (Qur’an;14:11). And they argued saying, “What aileth this messenger (of God) that he eateth food and walketh in the markets?” (Qur’an;25:7). And the Divine answer to those who argued was: They say, “Why is not an angel sent down to him?” If we did send down an angel, the matter would be settled at once, and no respite would be granted them. If we had made it an angel, we should have sent him as a man, and we should certainly have caused them confusion in a matter which they have already covered with confusion. (Qur’an;6:8-9).

The Prophet - a True Profile:

The Prophet is only superior to other human beings, inasmuch as he has been bestowed with divine revelation. God says to Muhammad: Say thou, “I am but a man like you; it is revealed to me.”(Qur’an;41:6). The word 'but' occurs

in this verse for the purpose of restriction and qualification, and it also excludes any possibility of the Prophet having any qualities which are incompatible with human beings. This is further emphasized in this verse, by the words 'like you'. As we said before, physically a prophet is just like us. But he differs from us in the way he behaves, his outstanding qualities and his greatness. Even if Muhammad had not been the last of the Prophets, he would have certainly been the greatest of the great and a hero of heroes. But if a prophet is like us, can he make the same mistakes? The answer to that question is as follows:

- 1). No prophet will miscommunicate the Divine message and teaching the path of God. A prophet cannot go wrong on such occasions, as when he gives such teaching he is acting as a 'channel' for the Divine Source, and therefore does not "say of his own desire."

(Qur'an;53:3). O mankind! The Apostle hath come to you in truth from God. (Qur'an;4:170). After receiving prophethood, it is impossible for a prophet to be anything but completely just and fair in his behaviour or to conduct himself in any way that contradicts his image as a perfect human being. This is because God has made him a shining example for us to use as a model for our own behaviour. Ye have indeed in the apostle of God a beautiful pattern (of conduct). (Qur'an;33:21). All prophets are deemed to be like this. There was indeed in them an excellent example for you to follow. (Qur'an;60:6). Such a quality requires a prophet to be above any vices and shortcomings.

- 2).The prophet may sometimes make a mistake with regards to religious teaching, but this is only when he exercises his own independent thinking

concerning a matter about which he has not received Divine guidance. Any prophet may commit such an error. However, God does not endorse such mistakes, in fact. He corrects them and shows them the right path, as happened in the incident with the blind person, as narrated in the Holy Qur'an in Surah 80, entitled 'He frowned', and also the incident involving the captives, after the battle of Badr. On both these occasions the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), acted on his own opinion, which was later disapproved of through revelation. I pondered over his attitude towards the blind man, and said to myself, "If God had not revealed this Surah, He frowned', and had the Prophet explained the reasons for his attitude to the politicians and wise and learned men of that time, would anyone of them have found fault with him or would they have unanimously approved

of his action?" During this incident the Prophet, (peace be upon him), was engrossed in a discussion with a group of eminent men whom he was eager to win over to his side. At that time, one of his followers came up to him wanting clarification on a matter which was in no way urgent and could have waited until the Prophet had finished the task at hand. Would anyone have behaved differently in such a case? And could anyone deny that his action was correct? While he acted correctly according to human reasoning, this was overruled by Divine revelation for factors beyond the scope of the human minds. And of course. Divine reasoning is beyond any shortcoming whereas human thinking can be partial and misconstrued. The same may be said regarding the stand taken by the Prophet about the captives of the battle of Badr: according to Divine revelation

it was an incorrect stand, even though it would have been Judged correct by the most serious-minded and wise men. However, it is important not to criticize these incidents as being mistakes made by a great man. What we can learn from them is that divine revelation is above the wisdom of every mortal.

- 3). A prophet may make mistakes regarding administrative or military matters, because a prophet is a human being, and he thinks and acts like one. When he was deliberating on such matters, the Prophet Muhammad's companions would ask him whether his decision was based on Divine revelation or his own thinking. If he said that it was not a Divine directive but rather his own opinion, they would also express their personal views, which he would either accept or reject. To illustrate this, we can look at the incident of the battle of Badr. The companions asked, "O

Prophet of God, is this a location assigned to you by the Almighty, which means we can neither advance nor retreat from it, or did you decide to come 215 General introduction to Islam here of your own will and discretion, thinking it was a tactical move?" When he answered that he had acted upon his own decision, they suggested a different move which he accepted and acted upon. Similar changes in his decision occurred during the digging of the trench and the truce with the tribe of Ghatafan, during that battle.

- 4). The Prophet expressed his own views, with regard to everyday matters, such as industry, agriculture and medicine. Of course, he may have been wrong, as such knowledge belongs to specialists in those areas. For example, he was wrong in his opinion of how to pollinate date palms. But this was not a shortcoming, as no one however great

in his knowledge and learning, can be expected to know about everything. In this case the pollinating of date palms is a purely agricultural matter and the Prophet's opinion was off the cuff. He neither pushed them to accept his view, nor did he accredit it to Divine revelation. When he realized his mistake he told them, "You know better regarding your worldly affairs." The Prophet Has No Knowledge of the Unseen The Holy Qur'an states that the Prophet has no knowledge of the metaphysical world, and that God has commanded him to inform mankind of that fact: Say: I tell you not that with me are the treasures of God nor do I know what is hidden, nor do I tell you I am an angel. I but follow what is revealed to me. (Qur'an;6:50). Say: I have no power over any good or harm to myself, except as God willeth. If I had knowledge of the unseen,! should have

multiplied all goods, and no evil should have touched me: I am but a warner and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith. (Qur'an;7: 188). The Prophet (peace be upon him), conveyed to mankind the above Divine Message; the same Message is contained in the Holy Qur'an and recited by all Muslims. Many Prophets, One Message God Almighty states in the Holy Qur'an that a prophet was sent to every nation: ... there never was a people without a warner having lived among them (in the past) (Qur'an;35:24). However, the Holy Qur'an does not mention all the prophets: Of some apostles we have already told thee the story; of others we have not. (Qur'an;4:164). All the prophets were sent to convey faith in the oneness of God and the importance of following His path. The main principles of Islam are, therefore, the same as those of earlier religions,

taught by earlier prophets. The same religion has He established for you as that which he enjoined on Noah- that which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus: namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion and make no division therein. (Qur'an;42:13).

Each prophet was sent to his people to teach and explain the Divine Message in their language. And never have we sent forth any apostle otherwise than (with a message) in his own people's tongue, so that he might make (the truth) clear unto them. (Qur'an;14:4). The Divine Message revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the last message and it is addressed to all mankind, and he was the last prophet. All Divine Revelations ceased with his departure from this world and thus religion was complete. Today have

I perfected your religious law for you and have bestowed upon you the full measure of My blessing, and willed that self surrender unto Me shall! be your religion. (Qur'an;5:3).

The Answer to an Important Question
Many people may wonder why the message brought by the Prophet Muhammad was addressed to all mankind whereas other messages had been given only to their respective peoples. How can this message remain unchanged and un-amended whilst other messages have been changed? The answer to this question is, though God Almighty knows better, that the message of Islam is viable and suitable for every age and place. Islamic tenets of faith and principles of worship have been given in explicit and detailed texts. It admits no change or amendment because these tenets and principles do not need to be changed

with the times, and they do not vary according to different traditions or conventions.

It is important to note that concerning constitutional issues, financial matters and administrative dealings which are affected by changing times and tradition. The Divine directives were conveyed in the form of broad principles. Like the foundations of a building, the structure built upon it is left to the discretion of every age and every society, and provided they are adhered to, are perfectly viable. Here are some brief examples. Islam teaches that a ruler should be selected by consensus of his nation, and that he should have the necessary qualities for performing the duties of the state. He should abide by the Islamic Constitution, which is the Holy Qur'an, and seek the opinion of those in power. In fact, every society throughout the

ages has been given the freedom to decide how they will select their leader, the procedure they will use to appoint positions of authority, etc. In Islam, rule by justice is compulsory. But we are given freedom to determine the course of justice, ways of appointing judges and legal procedures. With regards to legal contracts, we have been given general rules that ensure the rights and privileges of the two parties involved. Rules concerning accurate wording and the expression of intent of the two sides have also been laid down. Any type of contract which will harm the good of the public or put one of the parties down, is banned. We are free to work out the details of the clauses of a contract- As regards individual enterprises and financial transactions, these are sanctioned by Islam, and only in instances where there are particular

directives of something originally forbidden, are these banned.

Islam has opened the doors of reform for us. Any matter which is in the public interest of a Muslim society, and which is neither obligatory nor forbidden, as per the Shari'a, may be created as a religious duty by the order of a Muslim ruler. Financial laws, the penal code, administrative regulations (traffic rules, municipal laws, etc.,) all fall under this category. So Islam is applicable to the needs of every age and society. However, some latter jurists have, due to narrow attitudes, forbidden to the public what is permitted by the Shari'a, or, conversely, forced them to adopt liberal attitudes which are not allowed in Islam. In the olden days, especially during the time of the earlier prophets, the world was a vast expanse and nations were far apart with few means

for contact and interaction with each other. Their only means of transport were camels and other animals. However, with the advent of Islam, contact and interaction grew rapidly. Nowadays a speech delivered in New York can be heard simultaneously in Tokyo. The world is growing smaller, and is becoming more like one nation. Therefore the Message of Islam could be spread to all comers of the world, if only Muslims were to take seriously their responsibility regarding what their religion enjoins upon them.

Islam Does not Differentiate Between the Prophets:

Some people may criticize prophets belonging to religions other than their own. But Islam enjoins upon every Muslim to respect other prophets, and therefore any criticism or disrespect against other prophets goes against Islamic principles.

The Apostle and the believers with him, believe in what has been bestowed upon him from on high by his Sustainer. They all believe in God and His angels, and His revelations and His apostles, making no distinction between any of his apostles and they say, "We have heard and we pay heed. Grant us thy forgiveness. O our Sustainer, for to Thee is the return (of all)" (Qur'an;2:285).

So a Muslim loves Moses and Jesus in the same way as he loves Muhammad (PBUH), and has the same degree of regard and respect for them. A Jew who embraces Christianity does not lose his affinity for Moses; he merely develops love for one more prophet, 220 Faith in the Prophets namely Jesus. Likewise, a Christian embracing Islam draws near to another prophet, the Prophet Muhammad, in addition to Prophets Jesus and Moses. May peace be upon Muhammad and all the other prophets and messengers!

Messengers of God Mentioned in the Holy Qur'an Muslims believe that the Holy Qur'an is the Word of God; it was revealed to Muhammad through the Angel Jibril (Gabriel), and Muhammad conveyed this Message to mankind in the same way as he received it.

Muslims also believe that the words of the Holy Qur'an that he recites are the same words in the text that was transmitted by Gabriel. Only the unbeliever denies or doubts any part of it. The Holy Qur'an mentions twenty-five prophets and their names occur in five verses: And this was Our argument which We vouchsafed unto Abraham against his people: (for) We do raise by degrees whom We will. Verily thy Sustainer is Wise, All-knowing. And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob, and We guided each of them as We had guided Noah aforetime. And out of his offspring (We bestowed prophethood upon) David, and Solomon, and Job, and Joseph, and

Moses, and Aaron: for thus We reward the doers of good; and upon Zachariah, and John, and Jesus, and Elijah: every one of them was of the righteous; and (upon) Ishmael, and Eisha, and Jonah, and Lot. And every one of them did We favour above the other people. (Qur'an;6: 83 " 86). And call to mind through this Divine writ, Idris. Behold, he was a man of truth, a prophet, whom We exalted onto a lofty station. (Qur'an;19:56). And unto (the tribe of) 'Ad (We sent) their brother Hud. (Qur'an;7:65). And unto (the tribe of) Thamud (Qur'an;We sent) their brother Salih. (Qur'an;7:73). And unto (the people of) Madyan (We sent) their brother Shu'ayb. (Qur'an;7:85). And (remember) Ismail and Idris and Dhul-kifl, all-(men) of constancy and patience. (Qur'an;21:85).

Although the Holy Qur'an does not refer to Adam specifically as a prophet, we can deduce from the verses where he is mentioned that he was one. Among the

twenty five prophets mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, some, such as Idris and DhulKhifl, have only been referred to very briefly by name. Others are mentioned with a short account of their life histories, such as Ismael, Isaac and Yunus, while great detail has been given about other Prophets such as Abraham, Moses, Joseph and Jesus. All stories in the Holy Qur'an about the prophets are true and authentic, and one of the principles of faith for Muslims is to believe in them. Some of these apostles have we endowed more highly than others: among them were such as were spoken to by God (Himself) and some He has raised yet higher. (Qur'an;2:253).

Miracles

The Quraysh tribe was unable to believe that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been able travel from Mecca to Jerusalem in one night. Of course, these days such a

journey 222 Faith in the Prophets would not strike anyone as being an impossible feat. But in the days of our Prophet it was considered impossible, as the only means of transport available were animals, such as camels and donkeys. Even the most eminent of physicists living a hundred years ago would never have believed anyone who told him that a time would come when people would be able to fly through the air in vehicles made of iron and steel, or more over go up into space! He would have found it difficult to believe that voices could be recorded and broadcast everywhere and anywhere and that we would therefore be able to listen to people's voices after they had passed away. Achieving the Impossible.

The concept of 'impossibility' is founded on two beliefs. Firstly, impossibility based on something being unfeasible, which is beyond our capabilities, such as the examples given above. The second concept

of the term refers to what our minds are unable to take in. For example, we cannot conceive that any two opposites can meet. Let us take the example of existence and nonexistence: a man cannot be present and absent in a place at the same time. In the same way, no object can take on two entities at the same time, so that a book cannot become a spoon while it is still a book. That which is impossible in the sense of something being mentally inconceivable remains impossible. However, what is considered to be impossible because it is not feasible, may become possible if man studies the laws of nature God has laid down for the universe and, as a result, succeeds in making it feasible. In fact as God laid down these laws of nature He can make possible anything which seems impossible. So we should, after ascertaining the facts, accept the fact that this type of impossibility can become a possibility.

Supernatural Occurrences:

The Holy Qur'an mentions three types of supernatural occurrences. The first type concerns miracles performed by the prophets when they were challenged to prove their prophethood. Thus, when Prophet Abraham was thrown into the fire, God made the heat become a peaceful haven. When Prophet Moses threw down his staff, it turned into a snake, and when he struck the sea with his staff, the sea parted and each division looked like a vast mountain. And, with God's permission, Jesus brought the dead back to life. These are all examples of miracles.

The second type of supernatural occurrences happened to saintly people. Food was made available to Mary in her room and the Queen of Sheba's throne was transported from Yemen to Palestine in a split second. Another example of supernatural occurrences can be described as Divine temptation which tests one's

faith. The Holy Qur'an talks of how the apostate Samaritan produced a calf making a lowing sound, from molten gold. We should believe in all three types of supernatural happenings and all details regarding them, as they are described in the Holy Qur'an. We can, however, keep the supernatural events happening to saintly people, but not recounted in the Qur'an, open for questioning. They may or may not be true. If they were experienced by truly saintly people, we can believe that these things really happened. A truly saintly person is free of all sin. The Holy Qur'an says: Oh verily, they who are close to God - no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve: they who have attained to faith and have always been conscious of Him. (Qur'an;10:62-63). You are under no obligation to believe in these occurrences if you are not convinced about the authenticity of the people connected with them. There are some alleged forms

of the supernatural involving sinful acts and strange events which cannot be explained also happen to non-believers. But none of these should be considered supernatural.

Miracles and Magic:

When the challenge took place between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians; the latter threw their ropes and sticks and turned them into snakes. But, in fact, these snakes were soon swallowed up by the snake Moses produced! So, was the snake he produced identical to theirs? Did he, like them, perform a conjuring trick? Not at all. The snakes they produced were illusory, and took the spectators in, whereas the one Moses brought about was alive and real. The magicians were so much in awe of this fact that they made a spontaneous declaration of their faith in God. The reason for this spontaneous reaction was because the magicians

realized that Moses' act was not an illusion or any form of conjuring trick, and were stunned and shaken to the very depth of their hearts. The outcome of this was their total conversion and belief in God. They declared their faith in a way which was most defiant and humiliating to Pharaoh. As they admitted their faith, the falsehood of Pharaoh's greatness and the fact that his form of godliness was untrue, became apparent to them. They changed their outlook immediately because this world suddenly seemed trivial to them; so they did not feel threatened by Pharaoh's threat to punish them by crucifixion and mutilation. They developed an inner calm which shielded them from fear and panic. Even though Pharaoh had the power to punish them in this world, how could that compare with the joy and comfort of the world hereafter? Therefore they snubbed Pharaoh, saying: "Decree, then, whatever thou art going to decree: thou canst decree

only (something that pertains to) this worldly life!" (Qur'an;20:72).

How much I, who was born a Muslim, and whose forefathers have been Muslims, wish I had been bestowed with this kind of spontaneous faith, as were Pharaoh's magicians, a faith that was born as a result of their accepting Islam.

THE MIRACLES OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH):

The two miracles granted to Prophet (peace be upon him), are, firstly, the Holy Qur'an and, secondly, the unique qualities which made him pre-eminently deserving of prophethood. His life history was a miracle in itself! He was a human being, like all other human beings and God commanded him to declare this fact and make it clear to everyone, in case people made a god of, or ascribed Divine attributes to him: Say (O Prophet): "I am but a mortal man like all of you. It has

been revealed unto me that our God is the One and Only God"(Qur'an;18:110). However, it has been proved that no other human being is similar to him in his greatness, even though he had all the physical and mental characteristics of a human being. God Almighty has not created any unique human being from among the children of Adam, save Muhammad (peace be upon him), his father Abraham, Moses, Jesus - and on all the other prophets.

Not Comparable to Great Men in History:

It would be both untrue and grossly unfair to Muhammad (peace be upon him) if we were to compare him with all the thousands of great men throughout history. Every great man has been known only for a certain aspect of greatness: some have been known for their wisdom, but notorious for their lack of sensitivity and difficulty in expressing themselves;

others were noted for their eloquence of speech and their power of imagination, but the ideas they expressed were banal. Still others were most able administrators and distinguished leaders, but corrupt in their personal lives.

Epitome of Greatness Among Human:

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the only great man who can be described as the epitome of greatness. All the others had a blind spot, maybe a guarded secret regarding their moral behaviour - some sort of perversity or weakness. Only Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), has a life history which is an open book, for everyone to read and scrutinize.

His Life Recorded as an Open Book of History:

He is the only one who permitted his companions to tell the public everything about him. They therefore described every

detail of his behaviour both during his hours of tranquility, as well as times when he was open to human weakness; when he showed signs of anger, desire or was prey to emotional reactions. We can also read all about his private and domestic life, as told by his wives. With his permission, Aysha narrated every detail regarding his family life. Nothing has been left out as all his actions were carried out according to the Divine path and guidance. I would have quoted details about his personal life, were it not for the fact that it might be embarrassing for some readers. Nonetheless, all such aspects can be read about both in the books about his life and in those on Islamic jurisprudence. You can read about strictly personal aspects of his life: his habits with regard to personal hygiene, the way he ate, dressed, slept, etc.

Is there any other great man who has dared to say to the public, "Look - here is

my life history, -everything I have done. You can read it and tell others about it - friends and enemies! “And I am open to criticism from anyone!”. Has anyone else's life history been recorded and kept intact for so many centuries? A man may be great for his intrinsic qualities, noble disposition and personal charm, and he can also be revered for his intellectual brilliance, which he leaves behind as a heritage for his own country and the world.

Comprehensive Greatness in All Aspects:

Every great man has only one such dimension of greatness in him. But Muhammad's greatness represents every aspect. We should also consider the fact that most great men are great only among their own people. They may do good for them, while harming others who do not belong to this category. The life histories of statesmen, warriors and conquerors all

show this. Or a man may be well known and respected all over the world, but his fame may be due to a limited area: discovery of one of the many laws of nature which God laid down for our universe, or a certain medicine for a particular disease. He may have come up with a new theory of philosophy, or written a masterpiece or the life story of a literary genius.

However Muhammad's (peace be upon him), greatness was comprehensive in both range and scope, and he practiced what he preached. He was unlike the many missionary zealots of the past and the present, who fail to practice what they preach at the top of their voices! Those whose true colours were exposed during moments of weakness: desire, fear, anger, need and hunger. At moments like this they might completely forget what they teach. Maybe I can hold myself up as an example. Sometimes I rise to sublime

heights when I am writing an article, or delivering a lecture encouraging people to abide by truth, goodness, and righteousness. But as soon as I reach these heights, my ego interferes! I start to long for some sort of glory. In fact, man's inner self does try to lead him away from God. So, within a few minutes I come down to earth again, to an ordinary existence. Because people notice this very same attitude among preachers and religious men, they do not take much notice of what they say.

Practiced Whatever He Preached:

As for our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), he practiced whatever he taught. He exhorted people to do good, and shun temptation; what's more, he translated his words into actions, using the Holy Qur'an as his guiding force. He was tireless in his effort to reform people by his words and deeds. He was not

invited to give lectures and seminars at universities and such places. He carried out his mission wherever he was: at home, in the mosque or in a public place. He really demonstrated everything that the Holy Qur'an pleads for and exhorts people to do, in his everyday life. He used to offer night prayers for such a long time that his feet became swollen. He always sought God's forgiveness. Someone once asked him "Hasn't God forgiven you for all your sins (then why do pray such long hours)?" to which he replied, "Shouldn't I be a thankful servant of God?" Every single action was like a prayer, because he always sought to do good and banish evil, and he unceasingly sought to serve the common good.

I would like to quote just one incident to show how he practiced what he believed and adhered strongly to the principles he held high, and kept above all other considerations. But before I relate the

incident, let me preset the following prelude. If a girl from a distinguished family was caught stealing, would she get the same sort of punishment as a girl from a working class background, accused of a similar crime? Probably not! In most cases, many secret efforts would be made to see that the whole matter was hushed up, or the legal punishment was not severe. A similar incident happened during the Prophet's lifetime. A young woman coming from one of the most distinguished and noblest Muslim families committed a theft. She was found to be guilty and this verdict was announced. Immediately some people tried to intervene, hoping that the Prophet, well-known for his magnanimity and love of forgiveness, would grant pardon in this case. Not at all! In fact he was angry that he had been approached in this way, and reminded people of how earlier generations had been ruined because

crimes committed by people of influence and position went unpunished, while the weak and humble were punished. He then made a remarkable statement which came to be accepted as a firm principle of Islam. "Indeed - by God, if Fatima, daughter of Muhammad, were to steal, her hand would be amputated." This statement put an end to interference in legal verdicts. The above attitude was natural for the Prophet, because his whole life was a life of *dawah* (spreading the message of Islam).

Lived Simple Life but not as a Hermit:

His personal likes and dislikes, and his friendships with people were governed by the Divine Message. And he did not hesitate to break any bonds which conflicted with his mission. The Prophet (peace be upon him) had elevated himself above all desire for the good things of life which human beings usually crave for. However, he did not live like a hermit and

deprive himself of food or become mystic wearing strange clothes.

Food: He ate whatever good food was served to him, provided it came within the confines of Divine Law. He was never seen to look down on any kind of food. He had tremendous willpower which enabled him to be patient at all times, and stay without food for days on end. If hunger pangs overwhelmed him, he would tie a stone over his stomach to suppress his hunger.

Clothing: As regards his clothes, he did not stick to one particular way of dressing himself. He sometimes wore both a cap and a turban at the same time, or at times one or the other. He usually wore an under-garment, with a robe and an outer garment over it. The *jubba* (long outer garment) he sometimes wore sometimes had narrow sleeves, not the wide sleeves we see today. His turban consisted of a length of cloth tied round his head, which he would drape over his shoulder when it

was not being worn. This type of turban can be used for other purposes during times of peace, or for tying up prisoners in times of war. At times he made a tuft for it. It is necessary to wear turbans in the Arabic peninsula due to climatic reasons and to protect oneself from the intense heat. This has given rise to the saying, "Turbans are the Arabs' crowns."

Regarding colour, the Prophet did not stick to any particular one, but wore a black turban on the day of his victorious re-entry into Mecca. Only clothes which show parts of the body which should be covered are forbidden in Islam, or styles which are not in harmony with decency and modesty. Muslim women should only expose their faces and the palms of their hands, and Muslim men should not wear anything made of silk. No Muslim - male or female - should wear any type of clothing associated with other religions, such as a monk's robe or the clothing of a

priest. Clothes should not reflect extravagance or be ostentatious. Apart from these rulings, Islam permits any type of clothing.

Adornments not Forbidden but Himself Avoided:

While the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not forbid people to enjoy the beautiful and good things of life that God has bestowed on mankind, he did not indulge in them himself. He had risen above the desire to have lust or wealth. It is a well-known fact that the tribe of Quraysh offered him wealth, power and the position of leader, and tried to tempt him with many other offers in order to persuade him to give up his mission. But he firmly refused all these offers, and felt pity and concern for the people who had made them.

Above Temptations of Sexual Desires:

The Prophet was also above the temptations of sexual desire. However, the, subject of women is one which is exaggerated by orientalists who have researched his life and sought to tarnish his image and mislead the public. They use the fact that he married nine wives as a case for him being "a man of lust". But they have judged him in the same way as they judge other great men eminent writers or brave warriors. For example: Napoleon was a notorious womanizer and made the whole nation of Poland act as pimps in order for him to gain the hand of Mary Valvdka, with whom he was madly in love. He forced her father to offer her to him as a price to be paid for the independence of Poland. The life histories of many great men, such as Alexander Dumas, Byron, Goethe and Bodlieare - and many others, abound with scandals of sexual pursuit. And these orientalists have

judged our Prophet by the same standards, drawing the conclusion that he, like the others, was sensuous and a man of lust.

These people (orientalists) did not study Muhammad's (peace be upon him) life in great depth, nor did they take certain psychological factors into consideration. Furthermore, their judgments were partial and showed no respect for moral behaviour. The sexual urge manifests itself in people from the age of puberty until the age of twenty five. A person is considered to be most vulnerable at this age, and sex can become an obsession which leads to all sorts of pitfalls and deviation. This is why free mixing of girls and boys at this age, even for academic purposes, is discouraged.

Non-Indulgence in Immorality Even in Early Life:

Now let us consider the Prophet's life at this stage of his life. Did he get misled and

enjoy the pleasures his contemporaries indulged in? After all, he was a free man living in a free country and in a society which, at that time, was not governed by any religion or law. He was therefore absolutely free to do as he wished. As we said before, our Prophet's life history is an open book, which anyone can read. Can anyone prove, therefore, that he was, in the full flush of youth, a man who indulged in sensual and immoral pleasures? It is narrated that he was almost led into temptation by his contemporaries, but luckily God saved him. He made him fall asleep, and when he woke up he had forgotten what he had wanted to do. Had he indulged in any such acts of pleasure, his enemies, the polytheists, would not have hesitated to publicise the fact and blackmail him.

Marriages:

When our Prophet (peace be upon him) got married at the age of twenty-five, did he marry a beautiful virgin? Not at all. He married a widow who was his mother's age. Most of his other wives were also widows, and he only married them for tactical reasons. God had granted him permission to marry more than four wives - and this right was not granted to other Muslims. However, God did not give him the right to divorce them, a right which is given to Muslims. Of course, the sexual drive is not a human flaw. How could a characteristic of man become a fault of mankind? But it can be harmful when a man becomes sexually obsessive, making it his sole occupation, and seeking to satisfy himself in ways which are not permitted.

Marriage with Zaynab:

The story of Zaynab is a favorite among the critics of Islam. They try to find fault

with it, through distortion and misinterpretation, and their views do not, therefore, deserve any attention. Zaynab was a good-looking girl and closely related to the Prophet (peace be upon him). If he had so wished, he could have married her - an act which would have been the greatest honour her family could have wished for. But the Divine Will had ordained that her marriage would be the cause of two important social reforms which were to come about in Islam. Firstly, she was the subject of a test case, and secondly the Prophet was made to set an example to others. In the first instance God Almighty sought to put an end to aristocratic pride and class consciousness. So Zaynab, a girl belonging to the noblest Arab stock, was married to Zayd, a man from a humble background, a fugitive and an adopted son of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Society at that time considered him totally unworthy of her. But she married him all

the same, against the wish of her family. Subsequently it was difficult for her to adjust to her new life, and she and her husband were constantly bickering. Both partners were ill at ease with each other and wanted to separate. But our Prophet (peace be upon him) continued to advise Zayd: "Retain your wife and fear God." But the couple had reached the end of their tether and divorce became inevitable.

What happened next involved the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was put to the most difficult test. He had to marry Zaynab in order to put an end to the practice of adoption and show the world that it is lawful for a person to marry the wife of his adopted son. This was extremely hard for the Prophet (peace be upon him) who did not want to bear the stigma of society as one who had married his son's wife. However, he carried out this duty with patience and in obedience to the Divine Will. However, the above

incident should be seen in perspective, and not in the way in which it is presented by critics of Islam. The conclusions they draw are nonsense and do not deserve any attention.

Moral Strength, Patience & Forgiveness:

Physical strength builds up our physical resistance, whereas moral strength - the courage of conviction of the heart - brings us victory over our enemies. Yet the most powerful strength of all, more powerful than the might of our enemies or of any material force, is the strength of the willpower to overcome the self and its cravings impulses, desires and inclinations. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) has, on different occasions, exhorted us to cultivate such strength: "Strong is not the one who is good at wrestling. Indeed strong is the one who controls himself at the time of anger." And we all

know that controlling our anger is the most difficult of all tasks!

The amount of energy needed to keep our temper is far greater than that required to knock down our opponent in the boxing ring. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the ratio is 1:100. You can try this theory out in everyday life by asking someone who is at the peak of his fury to abide by the principles of good behaviour. You may not even find one in a thousand men who would respond to your suggestion. Say you are a religious person engaged in the task of spreading our religion and someone murders a very dear relative of yours and then comes to you to confess his crime and respond to your call to religion. How would you react? Our Prophet (peace be upon him) pardoned the man who had brutally murdered his uncle when that man accepted Islam. But even then our Prophet found it hard to suppress his human instinct in such a way so as not

to violate the principles of Islam. He therefore said to the man, "Don't let me see you!" So this person never appeared before the Prophet.

The story of Hind is also worth mentioning in this context. Hind was the wife of Abu Sufyan, the arch enemy of the Prophet and his mission. She committed a horrible crime which no human being or wild beast would commit. She cut open the Prophet's uncle's chest, took out his liver and chewed it. But the Prophet forgave her, in spite of all her sinful acts, and accepted her into the fold of Islam. The inhabitants of the city of Taif carried out many wicked deeds against the Prophet, yet when they embraced Islam he pardoned them.

Then we have the most magnanimous act of all—and a most important event in the history of Islam. That was the general pardon the Prophet (peace be upon him) granted the people of Mecca, they who had caused him the greatest possible distress

and suffering, both personally and to his mission in general. They spared no effort whatsoever in their attempts to pull him down. They boycotted him, abused him, imprisoned him, threw camel's filth at him while he was praying and placed thorns on the streets through which he passed. And all these events did not take place over a few days - but over a period of thirteen years. They also fought pitched battles against him and massacred his relatives and companions.

Then came the hour of retaliation - although this word does not truly reflect this situation. It was time to impose lawful punishment in answer to that long chain of aggressive and humiliating actions. It was at this point that the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked the people of Mecca, "What do you think I'm going to do with you all?" The record of what they had done was always at the back of their minds which meant they were aware of the

punishment they deserved, but they did not forget what a noble character Muhammad was. So they answered, "You are a noble brother and the son of a noble brother." Then they stood in silence, waiting for his verdict. If it had been a death sentence to them all, no one would have objected in the least - and no historian in later years, whether a friend or a critic of Islam, would have been able to find fault with his decision. But Muhammad gave a different verdict; it was one that took them by surprise, and continues to surprise every generation. "Freedom is granted to you all!" he declared.

Every Aspect of His Personality & Life, Miraculous:

It is a pity that I have only been able to give such a brief account of this incident. I would have preferred to devote a whole chapter to it in order to present the facts

and the Prophet's magnanimity in its true perspective. Indeed his attitude would have needed the energy of ten thousand wrestlers! I wonder why the later day biographers of our Prophet (peace be upon him) were so concerned with the miracles he performed. In fact, they sometimes gave exaggerated versions and filled in details on their own. This was sheer fabrication - why did they need to do this? Wasn't every stand our Prophet (peace be upon him) took and every aspect of his personality a miracle in itself? Which brings us to the definition of the word miracle. Does it mean achieving something that others have been unable to achieve? The Prophet's honesty and trustworthiness were miracles in themselves.

One Example out of many Miraculous Aspects:

Alas, it is impossible to give many examples because of the limitations of

space, but I would like to mention just one incident from his life. I have read about it hundreds of times and have always regarded it as rather an ordinary story, until suddenly one day, I realized it was a miracle. When the Prophet migrated to Medina he left one of his companions, Ali, behind to take care of the money which the Quraysh tribe had entrusted him with. These were the cash assets of the tribe, and Muhammad was the only person they trusted enough to leave them with, even though he and they were not on good terms. He returned them to the Quraysh tribe and not to the Muslims, because all Muslims had migrated, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) was the last to leave Mecca. He stayed there till the last moment, like the captain of an abandoned ship; he did not leave until all the passengers had disembarked and got into life boats. This is another great quality of

our Prophet (peace be upon him) which I have only mentioned briefly.

Can you imagine two different parties, who have -been engaged in fierce battles, both verbal and on the battlefield for the sake of faith and the Divine Message, entrusting the opposing party with their assets and valuables? Have you ever heard such a story? How could they trust their opponent unless his personal character, integrity and honesty were, beyond any doubt, a miracle? To doubt him in any way was impossible. This was what the personality of Muhammad was like.

Strength of Character & Fairness:

Another incidence which shows yet one more aspect of his character. On the day of the battle of Badr, our Prophet was inspecting the infantry. He was carrying a shaft of wood in his hand, and thrust it gently into the abdomen of a soldier named Sawad ibn Ghizya, who was

standing apart from the troop formation. The Prophet (peace be upon him), wanted to alert him and make him take his place, but as the prod of the shaft of wood had hurt him, he said to the Prophet, "Oh Prophet of God, you have hurt me. Indeed, God has sent you in order to spread the message of truth and justice!" How do you think the Prophet (peace be upon him) reacted to such an affront from an ordinary soldier? Did he take any disciplinary action; - did he ignore him or forgive him? Or did he apologize to the soldier in the usual way by saying, "I'm sorry." He did none of these things. The Prophet did what no one else would do, and something that may not even occur to anyone to do. He uncovered his own abdomen and said, "Thrust the shaft and inflict pain on me as I inflicted it on you!" This was what he was like. He caused retaliation to himself, in spite of his exalted position among all mankind.

Achievements Unparalleled in the History:

Muhammad's (peace be upon him) life history consists of a series of actions and achievements unparalleled in the history of mankind. No other eminent person has left such a record of greatness and glory in every aspect of his life, behind him. This greatness included personal courage and valour, magnanimity, patience at times of defeat and self restraint at times of anger.

Fearless Warrior: He was a firm and fearless warrior in the battlefield, to such an extent that his companions always rushed to him at critical moments to seek comfort and solace. Even the bravest of men were no challenge for him.

Man of Extreme Compassion: He was also a man of extreme compassion. He gave a helping hand to the poor and the needy, and stood by the widows and the aged. The Prophet (peace be upon him) always upheld truth, faithfully conveying

every verse of the Divine Revelation, including the verses that mentioned his mistakes and reprimanded him.

Honourable and Trustworthy: He honoured the treaties he made and kept his word, despite the difficulties and hardships he had to face on that count. He honoured his commitments, whether they concerned personal dealings or matters of the state.

Exemplary Personal Conduct and Behaviour:

Our Prophet (peace be upon him) was meticulous in his personal conduct and behaviour. It was he who laid down rules for table manners and personal hygiene. He educated his companions with regard to these matters, setting himself up as an example for them to follow. His standard of living was in no way different from theirs. He was never aloof from them, always consulting them and listening 10

their views. He was self effacing and whenever he met his companions he took his seat wherever there was an empty place, even if it meant sitting in a comer, away from everyone else. In fact, visitors had sometimes to strain their eyes in order to spot him. It is said that at one such gathering, a visitor found that everyone who was seated looked identical, and therefore asked, "Who among you is Muhammad?" Our Prophet never distinguished himself from others. He was one of them: he dressed like them and resembled them in every way.

Courteous Behavior and Love:

His attitude to women was very courteous, and his conduct with the members of his family and at home was remarkable for the unrestrained love and affection he showed. He was close to everyone, because he never let people feel that he was superior to them, like a king. He never allowed his

companions to stand up in reverence to him when he called on them. He used to attend personally to the requirements of his household and even mended his shoes himself. Our Prophet preferred to lead a frugal life, though he could, if he had wanted, have lived in grand style in a fabulous palace with all the ensuing display of ostentatious living. But he shunned all forms of show because his thoughts were always engaged in the afterlife.

The house where he lived with his wives was only twenty five meters long. Aisha's house consisted of one room made of clay and mud, and it was so narrow that there was not enough room for her to stretch out while the Prophet prayed, so that whenever he prostrated he had to push her feet to one side. As for his eating habits, Aysha tells us that he had a very light appetite and that, "a month or two may pass without a fire being lit in the kitchen

in order to make bread." When she was asked, "Then what did you all eat?" she replied, "Dates and water." This was the staple diet of the Prophet and his family.

Eloquence and Clarity of Speech:

Regarding his eloquence and clarity of speech, he was always known for expressing himself clearly and simply. All the qualities we have discussed prove that our Prophet (peace be upon him) was an extraordinary man and that God Almighty chose him for the tremendous task, only after preparing him fully for that responsibility.

Conclusion:

Prophet (peace be upon him) was one of many human beings, but no one had his qualities. Indeed God knows best upon whom to bestow His Message.

CHAPTER-12: FAITH IN THE SCRIPTURES

Faith in the Holy Scriptures:

Muslims believe in the Holy Qur'an and in all the other revealed books mentioned in it. These are. The Book (Scrolls) of Abraham, The Book of Moses, (Torah - Old Testament), the Psalms of David and the Gospel (*Injeel*) of Jesus (The New Testament contains four Gospels, according to Mark, Mathew, Luke and John but none according to Jesus Christ). The Holy Qur'an was revealed to confirm the true and original message and to expose the distortions made in earlier messages: "And unto thee (o Prophet) have we revealed this Divine Writ setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein"(Qur'an;5:48). Muslims therefore believe in the other revealed books in the light of Qur'an, where ever they differ with

what is said in the Holy Qur'an, those contradictions are rejected.

The Scrolls of Abraham:

God has informed us about what is mentioned in the Scrolls of Abraham and is repeated in the Scrolls of Moses: "That no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden..." (Qur'an;53:38). "To happiness (in the life to come) will indeed attain he who attains to purity (in this world), and remembers his Sustainer's name and prays (unto Him). But nay, (O men), you prefer the life of this world, although the life to come is better and more enduring. Verily (all) this has indeed been (said) in the earlier revelations - the revelations of Abraham and Moses. (Qur'an;87:14-18).

The Torah:

The Torah is also a book revealed by God. It contains guidance for people as well as

the Divine Commandments: “But how is it that they ask thee for judgement seeing that they have the Torah, containing God's injunctions”(Qur'an;5:43); “Verily it is we who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light”(Qur'an;5:44). “And among the Divine commandments it contains are: And We ordained for them in that (Torah): a life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth, and a (similar) retribution for wounds”(Qur'an;5:45).

The Torah also contains the glad tidings about the coming of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): “Those who shall follow the (last) Apostle, the unlettered Prophet whom they shall find described in the Torah that is with them”(Qur'an;7:151). “And the Torah describes the believers as follows: Muhammad is God's Apostle; and those who are (truly) with him are Firm and

unyielding towards all deniers of the Truth, (yet) full of mercy towards one another. Thou canst see them bowing down, prostrating themselves in prayer, seeking favour with God and (His) goodly acceptance: their marks are on their faces, traced by prostration. This is their parable in the Torah”(Qur’an;48:29).

The Psalms:

Allah says: “And so to David We gave the Psalms” (Qur’an;4:163). It is mentioned in the Psalms that the righteous will inherit the earth. God Almighty says in the Holy Qur’an: “Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): "My servants the righteous shall inherit the earth.”(Qur’an;21:105). The earth in this verse may perhaps mean paradise, as is understood in another verse: And they will exclaim: "All praise is due to God, who has made His promise to us come true, and has bestowed upon us in

this land (of bliss) as our portion, so that we may dwell in paradise as we please.” (Qur’an;39:74).

The Gospel (*Injeel*):

The Gospel (*Injeel*) referred in Qur’an, comprises of the revelations to Prophet Jesus Christ, the son of Mary (peace be upon him). Allah says: “ ... and We vouchsafed unto him the Gospel, wherein there was guidance and light, confirming the truth of whatever there still remained of the Torah...”(Qur’an;5:46). And that the Gospel contains the Divine Laws: “Let then, the followers of the Gospel judge in accordance with what God has revealed therein”(Qur’an;5:47). We are also informed that the Gospel comprises the amended laws of the Torah: “And (I have come) to confirm the truth of whatever there still remains of the Torah and to make lawful unto you some of the things which (aforetime) were forbidden to

you...” (Qur’an;3:50). The Gospel (*Injeel*), like the Torah, conveys the glad tidings of the advent of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and a description of the believers. Thus we believe in the books that the Almighty has revealed, and we respect the prophets. May God bless them all.

THE HOLY QUR’AN

The Holy Qur’an is the Last Divine Book - the miracle revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Anyone who alleges that the Holy Qur’an was compiled by Muhammad, refuses to acknowledge him as a prophet, but is virtually describing him as a 'God'. We Muslims say, "*There is no God except God and Muhammad is His Servant and His Messenger.*" The Holy Qur’an is a book which cannot be compiled by any human being, nor can it be revealed by anyone but God. Therefore, anyone who says that

Muhammad produced the Holy Qur'an is attributing Divinity to him.

The Unlettered Prophet, born in Backward Area:

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was illiterate. He never knew how to read or write and never went to school - in fact there was no school in his town at that time. The country he was born in had not known much of civilization or progress. How, then, could such a person produce a work like the Holy Qur'an? He came to Islam from a village surrounded by dark mountains and the wilderness of the desert - a remote place, unheard of at that time. No one in that village had any knowledge of the philosophy of Greece and Rome, nor of the literature of India and Iran. It was a village, devoid of any academic tradition and activity. There was no one even with a minimum level of education and knowledge. And our

Prophet did not travel from his village, except to go to Busra in Syria, another village, slightly bigger than his own, where he only stayed for a few days. So, how could someone, with such a background produce a work like the Holy Qur'an?

Remarkable Background:

Biographies have been written about men of genius, and the history of nations in different periods has also been written. But no other book has the same remarkable background as the Holy Qur'an. Mozart composed a piece of music when he was less than ten years old, and the well-known Arab poet, Bashsharibn Burd wrote a poem at a very early age. Likewise, Shakespeare has left us a rich collection of masterpieces. In fact he was not counted as an eminent literary figure during his lifetime.

Unusual Book, Unusual Person & Circumstances:

Great achievements have been produced; an unknown youth may write an excellent story or evolve a scientific theory because he is a genius. But ingenuity is not something only possessed by educated people or university graduates. It may appear in the most unexpected quarters. Those who become well-known in the scientific field or in literature or the arts may have been a century ahead of their times, excelling their contemporaries by fifty or even one hundred per cent. However, their excellence will be bound by certain limits and constraints. But no one, in the entire history of mankind, has lived in circumstances similar to those in which Muhammad (peace be upon him) lived, and at the same time has managed to convey a masterpiece to the world similar to the Holy Qur'an.

Excellent Literary Values, Law, Knowledge of Nature, Science & Metaphysics:

The Holy Qur'an excels in both its literary values and its unique treatment of law. It contains an entire legal system which is perfect in every detail. As for the theology therein, and the knowledge of the unseen, it gives information which is not known to anyone - information which the human intellect is unable to perceive. It reveals laws and phenomena pertaining to nature which were unknown to anyone, not only during the time of the Prophet" some of these laws were discovered only 1300 years later, while others still remain undiscovered.

Unbeatable Challenge:

The Holy Qur'an challenges all mankind. Men and the jinn were asked to produce ten chapters or at least one, like the chapters of the Holy Qur'an, but they failed to produce even one chapter. This

challenge is still open, and the inability still continues. The illimitability of the book is now established beyond doubt. Its excellence is noticeable in every chapter. It would be incorrect to say it can be observed in some and not in others.

Unique Captivating Aspects for Each Reader:

We may liken it to a beautiful woman whose beauty is not attributed to or dependent on any single aspect of her appearance - neither her eyes, nor her limbs or specific dimension of her body. It is the composite whole which makes her beautiful. However, it is possible that a person reading the Holy Qur'an may be enamored by the particular part he is concerned with.

One well-known government official declared his faith in Islam when he heard the verse: Does man think that We cannot (resurrect him and) bring his bones

together again? Yes indeed. We are able to make whole his very fingertips! (Qur'an;75:3-4). This verse made the official think about the reason why the Almighty referred to the fingertips in particular. What is their significance? Indeed, the fingertips consist of the various patterns of fingerprints. There are no two people whose fingerprints are identical. No doubt it is a Divine act of creation that remained unknown until its discovery in recent times. This is further proof that the Holy Qur'an is a Divine book, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Source of Everlasting Knowledge for All Times:

There are more facts and information that still remain undiscovered yet are written about in the Holy Qur'an. Every now and then scholars find some new information in it which contributes to human

knowledge in general and to the better understanding of Islam by all. It is therefore essential that the Holy Qur'an should be reinterpreted. The man of literature should interpret it according to his field of study, likewise the legal specialist, the astronomer, the psychiatrist, the social scientist and the historian. Each may interpret it in the light of his particular area of study and prove that it is the word of God.

The Living Miracle:

Once the miracles of earlier prophets had happened, they were over. But the miracle of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is ever present and it is renewed every day. The miracles of the earlier prophets served as proof of the message, while in the case of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his message itself was a miracle. May peace be upon him and all the Prophets and Messengers.

Conclusion:

Qur'an is the criteria (*Furqan*) to judge the right from falsehood. Muslims therefore believe in the other revealed books in the light of Qur'an, where ever the old scriptures differ with what is narrated in the Holy Qur'an, those contradictions are not accepted being a human fabrication or error. Moreover they were for specific people, for specific period, but Qur'an is the last scripture for the humanity till eternity, so now humanity has to believe in Qur'an as a source of divine guidance.

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## THE EPILOGUE

We have presented in the preceding pages the basic; principles of the Islamic faith. The perfect Muslim believes in them and in what is stated in the Holy Qur'an regarding the creation of the heavens, earth and man. His behaviour and conduct in everyday life should reflect such a belief. He will therefore accept and abide by the Holy Qur'an, the authenticity of which he has no doubt. He will not be satisfied with reading it unless he can understand it, nor by reciting it melodiously without grasping its meaning. In fact he adopts it as a book of codes with which he can govern his daily life. He accepts what is declared to be lawful and refrains from what is forbidden. He acts on what it instructs, and abstains from what is not permitted.

Other religions may be confined to their respective places of worship. Islam

however, is not confined to the mosque. In fact its impact and influence pervades all places— the mosque, the home, the streets and government offices: It is a religion to be observed at times of war as well as peace. Islam is an unalienable factor in the life of every Muslim. He is guided by its teachings on every aspect of life. It informs him of what is lawful and what is forbidden. All actions of a Muslim can be classified under one of the following five categories: Lawful, Recommended, Obligatory, Forbidden and Reprehensible. Whereas other religions may only include forms of worship and may not include politics and acquisition of knowledge that is not the case with Islam.

Besides being a religion of worship, Islam also contains a set of civil and criminal codes of law; it includes international law, rules and regulations of administration, principles of ethics and the science of politics. You can open any book on Islamic

Jurisprudence and you will find these topics discussed, Worship in some religions may only take the form of prayer. But Islam includes every action done for the good of the people, with the intention of dedication to God besides prayer and fasting.

If religion is thought to be separate from the realm of knowledge, then Islam can be described as a religion of learning - because the very first word of Divine Revelation was "*Iqr'a*" "Recite" or "Read". It did not say, "Fight" nor did it say, "Accumulate money and possessions" or, "Renounce the world". "Read" was the first word revealed in the Holy Qur'an, followed by a discourse on knowledge. The biggest gift God has granted to mankind is the gift of knowledge, knowledge of what man did not know. No other blessing can match it - be it in the form of wealth, physical strength or fame and glory.

It is necessary for every member of an Islamic society, if he can, to acquire every area of knowledge needed. No other religion on earth except Islam considers the acquisition of knowledge as a religious duty. It therefore exhorts its followers to learn the sciences of chemistry, medicine, aviation, etc. Islam is also the religion of 'riches'. God has described wealth as *khair* (good). But man's attachment to wealth is described as follows: "And violent is he in his love of wealth"(Qur'an;100:7). Muslims should therefore seek to be rich, but they should acquire their wealth lawfully, and this wealth should not become an obsession.

Every Muslim should understand that wealth and everything else in this universe are at his disposal. He may seek to derive good from everything he finds around him. However, he should not become attached to what he finds and seek to glorify him through it. If he does so, he will become a

slave of wealth and consequently he will worship it besides God. God has made wealth as a means of benefit. But if you hoard your wealth, you become a slave and a captive of it, Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "miserable is the slave of money."

As for clothes, Islam considers all garments as a means of covering the body to protect it from different weather conditions. But, as with wealth, if you glorify your clothes and hoard them without wearing them, you become their slave. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "Miserable is the person who is obsessed with his clothing."

Islam is also a religion of might and power, but not based on injustice. It is also a religion of this world and the life hereafter. "Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the hereafter." (Qur'an;2:201). Islam enjoins on its followers to be true to their faith and



follow Divine guidance, while, at the same time, being the most advanced, sophisticated, strong, rich and well informed people in the world.

Besides all this, every Muslim should be aware of another duty he should perform: to convey the Message of Islam to others, and to call others to the path of God with wisdom and beautiful preaching. He should not compel or force anyone to accept Islam. "Let there be no compulsion in religion." (Qur'an;2:256) He should present the salient features of Islam in a way that appeals to both the head and the heart.

Muslims should be living examples of the glorious principles of Islam. They should not present a perverted and distorted picture of it. The Muslim missionary should be a man or woman of intellectual qualities and one who understands the needs and response, mood and wavelength of those to whom he is talking. He should

also understand that Islam does not shun dialogue or debate. Everything is argued out on the basis of proof, thus anyone who speaks against Islam should be asked to give evidence. Say, "Bring forth your argument if ye are telling the truth." (Qur'an;2:111). If anyone invokes, besides God, any other god, he has no authority therefore. (Qur'an;23: 117) It is impossible to give proof against the Oneness of God.

If such Muslim missionaries take up the task, the whole world will accept the religion of God. For God has revealed this religion and He will preserve it: "We have without doubt, sent down the message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)"(Qur'an;15:9).

The future is for Islam. However, it is now up to us Muslims to seek the privilege of spreading the Message of Islam and thus attain reward in this world and in the life hereafter. If we fail to do so, God may

assign this task to others who will come into the fold of Islam and take up the WORK of *dawah*. May God the Almighty make us worthy of our religion and grant us success in our task. And may He pardon us and grant mercy to us. In conclusion our prayer is - all praise be to God, Lord of all the Worlds!

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## **RELIGION AND SCIENTIFIC REASONING**

Many people are under the impression that religious truths cannot be proved scientifically. But inferring truths from things, as religion does, is the very reasoning which scientists employ in their everyday deductions.

In ancient times water was just water. Then, in the 19th century, the microscope was invented. When water was looked at under a microscope, it was discovered that water was not just water; it also contained countless live bacteria. In the same way man used to think that there were no more stars in the sky than those which can be seen with the naked eye. But in modern times the sky has been examined with telescopes and many more stars than can be seen with the naked eye have been discovered.

These two examples show the difference between ancient and modern times. Modern research has shown with certainty that there are many more realities than man had previously thought when he was limited to the sphere of simple observation. But these new discoveries so excited those who were making them that they made another claim: that reality is that which can be directly observed; that which we can not experience or observe is mere hypothesis, and does not exist.

In the nineteenth century this claim was made with great enthusiasm. It was most damaging to religion. Religious creeds are based on belief in the unseen; they cannot be directly observed or experienced. For this reason many people came to think of religion as hypothetical and unreal.

Twentieth century research has completely changed this state of affairs. Advanced study has shown that there is more to life

than meets the eye: all the great realities of life lie beyond our comprehension.

According to Bertrand Russell there are two forms of knowledge: "Knowledge of Things" and "Knowledge of Truths". Only "Things" can be directly observed: "Truths" can only be understood by indirect observation, or, in other words, inference. The existence of light, gravity, magnetism and nuclear energy in the universe is an undisputed fact, but man cannot directly observe these things. He knows them only by their effects. Man discovers certain "Things" from which he infers the existence of "Truths".

This change in the concept of knowledge which occurred in the twentieth century changed the whole situation radically. Man was forced to accept the existence of things which he could not directly see, but only indirectly experience. With this intellectual revolution the difference between seen and unseen - reality

disappeared. Invisible objects became as important as visible objects. Man was compelled to accept that the indirect, or inferential argument, was academically as sound as direct argument.

This change in the concept of knowledge has, in the present age, made divine reasoning truly scientific. For instance, the greatest argument for religion is what philosophers call the argument from design. Nineteenth century scholars, in their zeal, did not accept this reasoning. To them it was an inferential argument which could not be accepted academically. But in the present age this objection has been invalidated. Nowadays man is compelled to infer the existence of a designer of the universe from the existence of a design in the universe, just as he accepts the theory of the flow of electrons from the movement of a wheel.

A statement of Bertrand Russell throws some light on this matter. In the preface

to his book; "Why I Am Not a Christian" he writes: "I think all the great religions of the world-Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Communism both untrue and harmful. It is evident as a matter of logic that, since they disagree, not more than one of them can be true. With very few exceptions, the religion which a man accepts is that of the community in which he lives, which makes it obvious that the influence of environment is what has led him to accept the religion in question. It is true that Scholastics [*Adhering rigidly to scholarly methods; pedantic, Characterized by a narrow, often ostentatious concern for book learning and formal rules*] invented what professed to be logical arguments proving the existence of God, and that these arguments, or others of a similar tenor, have been accepted by many eminent philosophers, but the logic to which these traditional arguments



appealed is of an antiquated Aristotelian sort which is now rejected by practically all logicians except such as are Catholics. There is one argument that is purely logical. I mean the argument from 'Design'. This argument, however, was destroyed by Darwin; and in any case, could only be made logically acceptable at the cost of abandoning God's omnipotence [*Having unlimited or universal power, authority, or force; all-powerful.*]."

Arguing the existence of a Designer from Design is, as Russell admits, a scientific argument in itself. It is the very argument which science uses to prove anything. Russell then rejects this argument by citing Darwin's theory of evolution. This rejection would only be (considered) acceptable if Darwin's theory was itself scientifically established. But scientific research has proved Darwinism to be mere hypothesis, rather than established scientific fact. [*Even if hypothetically*

*Darwin's theory of evolution is accepted, the argument of Design is not negated, because the Evolution could be part of His Design of Creation]. Thus it is Russell's first statement, therefore, concerning the validity of the argument from Design that must prevail. His rejection of that argument on the basis of Darwinism is groundless.*

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*[By Maulana Waheed uddin Khan, courtesy Monthly Tazkeer, January 2009, Lahore Pakistan]*

## **eBooks recommended for further reading**

### **The Creator:**

The idea of a Supreme Power who is the First Cause of all things, the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth has always been part of human nature from the beginning. The belief on God was followed by His worship in different cultures. The relation of a group of human beings to God or the gods or to whatever they consider sacred or, in some cases, merely supernatural is known as religion. The beliefs supporting the existence of God or against it, including the middle positions have resulted in an array of doctrines, the most prominent among them are; Theism, Monotheism, Theodicy, Deism, Agnosticism and Atheism. The main issue which have remained the center of attention of believers of the God has been; How to prove the existence of God rationally? This has been dilated upon in this book. The Abrahamic religions e.g., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam attempt to satisfy human quest through the Revealed knowledge received by the prophets and messengers of God. While exploring the historic development in theosophical and scientific aspects about 'The God' and 'The Creation' specifically in the three religions linked to Abraham. Islam emerges as true legacy of Abraham contrary to the common perception that it was a new religion founded by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This

book is first of four in the series, the other being; The Creation, The Guidance and Islam: The Legacy of Abraham.

### **The Creation:**

Man has always been inquisitive about the origin and creation of universe to which earth is just a small part. The whole cosmic system of matter and energy is called universe. Its main constituents are the galaxies, within which are stars and stellar groupings and nebulae. Earth's Sun is one star among the billions of stars in the Milky Way Galaxy. In this book the traditional narratives and myths of Creation, Scientific & theosophical theories have been explained, The Grand Design of creation include, Qur'anic and Biblical narrative of creation and their comparative analysis. Synthesis of Islamic & scientific narrative of creation is revealing. Other subjects include human creation; Origin of life, Theory of Evolution and Refutation by Christians; the Islamic perspective include in favor and opposing views, which may appear to be new to some readers. Further corollary is my latest work "Universe, Science & God".

**The Guidance:** Does human need to be guided? If so, how? It is said that human is a thinking, rational animal. He knows what is right and what is wrong, so does he/she need some additional source of Guidance? Some say 'No', while others say 'Yes' and still there are who say 'I Don't know'. The Book "Guidance" includes, natural guidance, miracles &

signs; The brief on the messengers of God; from Adam – Noah – Abraham – Ishmael – Isaac – Jacob -Moses – David, Solomon - John The Baptist (peace be upon them all), Prophet Jesus Christ, The Son of Mary (peace be upon him) and The Last Messenger; Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Sacred Scriptures. i.e. The Bible and Qur'an have been briefly introduced.

### **Islam: The Legacy of Abraham:**

Humanity has been blessed with the instincts and intellect to rationally identify and believe in the existence of a Supreme Creator and Sustainer through the signs within and all around. The man endeavors to live the life within the desired parameters to achieve His pleasure, the objective of his creation. This original religion was revived: Islam, in its unique spirit of monotheism, fourteen hundred years ago in concordance with the light of reason; exclusive of mysterious doctrines to cast a shade of sentimental ignorance round the original truths rooted in the human intellect, representing the latest development of the religious faculties. The Book "Islam: The Broader Perspective"; includes the Islam of Prophet Abraham, refutation of Prophet Jesus Christ by Jews, evolution of Christianity, revival of Legacy of Abraham (pbuh) by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Its doctrines, practices and the concept of Predestination has been debated. The other subjects include; Jihad, Shari'a , Priesthood, Human Rights and role of Islamic civilization in the development of humanity and the modern challenges.

## **Universe Science & God:**

“Soon shall We show them OUR SIGNS in the UNIVERSE and in their OWN SELVES, until it becomes clear to them that this QUR'AN IS INDEED THE TRUTH. Is it not enough that your Lord is a witness over everything?”(Qur'an;41:53); “We did not create heaven and earth and everything between them to no purpose. That is the opinion of those who disbelieve...” (Qur'an; 38: 27), “Verily in the heavens and the earth are Signs for those who believe. (Qur'an; 45:3). “To God belongs the Mystery of the heavens and the earth. And the Decision of the Hour (of Judgment) is as the twinkling of an eye, or even quicker: for God hath power over all things.” (Qur'an; 16:77). “Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in God hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And God hears and knows all things.” (Qur'an; 2:255).

Science is beginning to see the entire universe as an interlinked network of energy and information. Our capacity for fulfillment can come only through faith and feelings. But our capacity for survival must come from reason and knowledge.” The follower of 3 great monotheistic faiths believe that God created the universe and governs it as per His laid down rules. The atheists reject such a set of beliefs.

In philosophy there are many rational, metaphysical, logical, empirical, or subjective arguments for the existence of God. Interestingly the conclusions reached by science recently were mentioned 1400 years ago in the last Testament; The Quran which provides theological, philosophical and scientific evidence of existence of God. To derive maximum benefit it is suggested that the book may be read with an open mind keeping aside the existing ideas.



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**Islam:**

1. Islam: A General Introduction: By Sheikh Ali Tantawi
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