

Guidance of the Holy Prophets

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Toward the Goal: General Guidance

A grain of wheat that is placed within the bosom of the earth under appropriate conditions begins to grow and enters upon a path of development in which at every moment it takes on a new form and state. Following a particular order and sequence it treads this path until it becomes a grown plant with spikes of wheat ; if once again one of the seeds were to fall upon

the ground it would begin the previous cycle all over again until it reached the final goal. Likewise if the seed is that of a fruit placed within the bosom of the soil it begins its transformation, breaking its shell, from which a green stem shoots out. It follows an orderly and distinct path of transformation until finally it becomes a fully grown tree, green and full of fruit. Or if it is the sperm of an animal it begins to develop within the egg or in the womb of the mother, following the line of development peculiar to that animal until it becomes a perfected individual of that animal species.

This distinct path and orderly development is to be observed in each species of creatures in this world and is determined by the inner nature of that species. The green wheat plant which has sprung up from the grain will never bear oats or become a sheep, a goat, or an elephant, and an animal that has become pregnant from its male will never bear spikes of wheat or a plane tree.

Even if an imperfection were to occur in the organs or the natural functions of the newly born, or if a lamp were to be born without an eye, or a wheat plant develop without spikes of wheat, we would have no doubt that such an occurrence was due to some pest or to unnatural causes. Continuous order and regularity in the development and generation of things, and the belonging of each species of creatures in its generation and development to a particular order and rule, is an undeniable fact.

From this evident thesis two conclusions can be drawn. (1) Between the various stages that each species of creatures traverses from the beginning to the end of its existence there is continuity and interconnection, as if that species in each stage of its development were pushed from behind and attracted by what is to come. (2) Due to the above-mentioned continuity and interconnection, the last stage in the development of each species is from the beginning of its generation the goal and point of "existential attention" of that species. For example, the "attention" of the walnut that sends out a green shoot from below the earth is centered from

that very moment on a fully grown walnut tree. And a sperm in the egg or the womb is from the moment of its generation moving toward the state of the perfected animal. The Holy Qur'an, which teaches that the creation and the preservation of things belong absolutely to God, considers this movement and attraction, which each species in creation possesses in tracing its path of development, to be derived from Divine guidance. As He says, "Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright" (Qur'an, XX, 50). And also, "Who createth, then disposeth ; who measureth then guideth" (Qur'an, LXXXVII, 2-3). And He refers to the result of these sayings in these words: "And each one hath a goal toward which he turneth" (Qur'an, II, 148). And also: "And We created not the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them in play. We created them not save with truth, but most of them .(know not" (Qur'an, XLIV, 38-39

Special Guidance

Obviously the human species is not an exception to this general rule. The same guidance which rules over all species of creature governs man as well. In the same way that each species through its particular nature follows its path of perfection and is guided to it, so must man with the help of this guidance be guided toward that which is his real perfection. Although man shares many elements with other species of animals and with plants, the one special characteristic which distinguishes him is intellect. It is with the help of his intellect and reason that man is able to think and to make use of every means possible for his own benefit, to fly into the endless spaces of the sky or swim in the depth of the sea, or to bring under his service and command all kinds of created things, whether they be minerals, plants or animals on the surface of the earth, and to benefit even from members of his own species to the greatest extent possible.

Owing to his primordial nature, man sees his happiness and perfection in gaining complete freedom. Yet, he must of necessity sacrifice some of his freedom because he is created as a social being and has endless demands which by himself he can never satisfy, and also because he is in cooperation and social intercourse with other members of his species who themselves have the same instinct of self-centeredness and love of freedom that he has. For the sake of the benefit he gains from others he must in turn be of benefit to them.

Equivalent to what he reaps from the toil of others he must give of his own work. Or, in summary, he must of necessity accept a society based upon mutual cooperation. This point is clear in the case of newborn babies and children. At the beginning, when desiring anything, they make use of no other means but force and crying and refuse to accept any

constraint or discipline. But gradually, as a result of mental development, they realize that one cannot succeed in the problems of life only through rebellion and force ; therefore, slowly they approach the condition of social beings. Finally they reach the age when they become social individuals with developed mental powers and are ready to obey the social regulations of their environment.

When man comes to accept the necessity for mutual cooperation among members of society he also recognizes the necessity for laws which rule over society, clarifying the duty of each individual and specifying the punishment for each offender. He accepts laws through whose application each individual can realize real happiness and find felicity in proportion to the social value of his efforts.

These laws are the same universal and applicable laws which man, from the first day of his existence until today, has been continuously seeking and to which he has always been attracted as the foremost among all his desires. If the attainment of such a thing were not possible and were not written upon the tablet of human destiny, it would not have been the perennial yearning of man.

God, the Exalted, has referred to this reality of human society, saying, "We have apportioned among their livelihood in the life of the world, and raised some of them above others in rank that some of them may take labor from others" (Qur'an, LXIII, 32). Concerning man's selfishness and desire to monopolize things to himself He says, "Lo! man was created anxious, .(fretful when evil befalleth him, and, when good befalleth him, grudging" (Qur'an, LXX, 19-21

Reason and Law

If we delve into the matter carefully we will discover that man seeks continuously those laws which can bring happiness in the world ; that people as individuals and in groups recognize, in accordance with their God-given nature, the necessity for laws which provide felicity for them without discrimination or exception, laws which establish a general norm of perfection among mankind. Obviously, up to now, during the different periods of human history, there have not come into being any such laws which are devised by human reason.

If the laws of existence had placed the burden of creating such human laws upon the shoulders of human reason, then during the long period of history such laws would have been established. In that case, each individual who possesses the power of reasoning would comprehend this human law in detail in the same way that everyone realizes the necessity for such laws in society.

In other words, if it had been in the very nature of things that it be the duty of human reason to

create a perfect common law which must provide happiness for human society, and that man should be guided to that perfect law through the process of creation and the generation of the world itself, then such laws would have been apprehended by each human being through his reason in the same way that man knows what is of benefit or detriment to him throughout the determined course of daily life.

There is, however, as yet no sign of the presence of such laws. Laws which have come about by themselves, or have been devised by a single ruler, or individuals, or nations, and have become prevalent in different societies are considered by some as certain, and by others as doubtful. Some are aware of these laws and others are ignorant of them. Never has it come to pass that all people, who in their basic structure are the same in that they are endowed by God with reason, should have a common awareness of the details of the laws which can bring .about happiness in the world of man

That Mysterious Wisdom and Consciousness Called Revelation

Thus, in the light of the discussion above, it becomes clear that the laws which can guarantee the happiness of human society cannot be perceived by reason. Since according to the thesis of general guidance running throughout creation the existence of an awareness of these laws in the human species is necessary, there must be another power of apprehension within the human species which enables man to understand the real duties of life and which places this knowledge within the reach of everyone. This consciousness and power of perception, which is other than reason and sense, is called the prophetic consciousness, or the consciousness of revelation.

Of course the presence of such a power in mankind does not mean that it should necessarily appear in all individuals, in the same way that although the power of procreation has been placed in all human beings, the awareness of the enjoyment of marriage and being prepared for this enjoyment is possible only for those who have reached the age of puberty. In the same way that the consciousness of revelation is a mysterious and unknown form of consciousness for those who do not possess it, the apprehension of the joy of sexual union is a mysterious and unknown feeling for those who have not reached the age of puberty.

God, the Exalted, makes reference in His Word to the revelation of His Divine Law (Shari'ah) and the inability of human reason to comprehend this matter in the verses: "Lo! We inspire thee as We inspired Noah and the prophets after him, as We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We imparted unto David the Psalms; and messengers We have mentioned unto thee before

and messengers We have not mentioned unto thee ; and Allah spoke directly unto Moses ; Messengers of good cheer and of warning, in order that mankind might have no argument .(against Allah after the messengers" (Qur'an, IV, 163-165

The Prophets - Inerrancy of Prophecy

The appearance of prophets affirms that conception of revelation outlined above. The prophets of God were men who propagated the call of revelation and prophecy and brought definitive proofs for their call. They propagated among people the elements of the religion of God (which is the same divine law that guarantees happiness) and made it available to all men. Since in all periods of history the number of people endowed with the power of prophecy and revelation has been limited to a few individuals, God - the Most Exalted - has completed and perfected the guidance of the rest of mankind by placing the mission of the propagation of religion upon the shoulders of His prophets. That is why a prophet of God must possess the quality of inerrancy ('ismah). In receiving the revelation from God, in guarding it and in making possible its reaching the people, he must be free from error. He must not commit sin (ma'siyah).

The reception of revelation, its preservation and its propagation are three principles of ontological guidance ; and error in existence itself is meaningless. Furthermore, sin and opposition to the claims of the religious call and its propagation are impossible in a prophet for they would be a call against the original religious mission ; they would destroy the confidence of the people, their reliance upon the truth and the validity of the call. As a result they would destroy the purpose of the religious call itself.

God, the Exalted, refers in His word to the inerrancy of the prophets, saying, "And We chose them and guided them unto a straight path" (Qur'an, VI, 88). And also, "(He is) the Knower of the Unseen, and He revealeth unto none His secret, save unto every messenger whom He hath chosen, and then He maketh a guard to go before him and a guard behind him, that He may .(know that they have indeed conveyed the messages of their Lord" (Qur'an, LXXII, 26-28

The Prophets and Revealed Religion

What the prophets of God receive through revelation and as a message from God and conveyed to mankind was religion (din), that is, a way of life and human duties which guarantee the real happiness of man.

Revealed religion in general consists of two parts : doctrine and practice or method. The

doctrinal part of revealed religion consists of a series of fundamental principles and views concerning the real nature of things upon which man must establish the foundations of his life. It is comprised of the three universal principles of unity (tawhid), prophecy (nubuwwat), and eschatology (ma'ad). If there is any confusion or disorder in one of these principles the religion will not be able to gain any following.

The practical part of revealed religion consists of a series of moral and practical injunctions covering the duties man has before God and human society. That is why the secondary duties which have been ordered for man in different Divine laws are of two kinds : morals (akhlaq), and actions (a'mal). The morals and actions related to the Divine are of two kinds, such as: first, the quality of faith, sincerity, surrender to God, contentment and humility ; and second, the daily prayers, fasting, and sacrifice (called acts of worship and symbolizing the humility and servitude of man before the Divine Throne). The morals and actions related to human society are also of two kinds, such as: first, the quality of love for other men, wishing well for others, justice and generosity ; and second, the duty to carry out social intercourse, trade and exchange, etc. (called transactions).

Another point that must be considered is that since the human species is directed toward the gradual attainment of perfection, and human society through the passage of time becomes more complete, the appearance of a parallel development must also be seen in revealed laws. The Holy Qur'an affirms this gradual development, which reason has also discovered. It can be concluded from its verses that each Divine Law (Shari'ah) is in reality more complete than the Shari'ah before ; for instance, in this verse where He says, "And unto thee have We revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and a watcher over it." (Qur'an, V, 48)

Of course, as scientific knowledge also confirms and the Qur'an states, the life of human society in this world is not eternal and the development of man is not endless. As a result, the general principles governing the duties of man from the point of view of doctrine and practice must of necessity stop at a particular stage.

Therefore, prophecy and the Shari'ah will also one day come to an end when in the perfection of doctrine and expansion of practical regulations they have reached the final stage of their development. That is why the Holy Qur'an, in order to make clear that Islam (the religion of Muhammad) is the last and most complete of the revealed religions, introduces itself as a sacred book that cannot be abrogated (naskh), calls the Prophet the "Seal of the Prophets" (khatam al-anbiya'), and sees the Islamic religion as embracing all religious duties. As He says, "And lo! it is an unassailable Scripture.

Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or behind it" (Qur'an, XLI, 41-42). And also, "Muhammad is not the father of any man among you but he is the messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets" (Qur'an, XXXIII, 40). And, "We reveal the scripture unto thee as an .(exposition of all things" (Qur'an, XVI, 89

The Prophets and Proof of Revelation and Prophecy

Many modern scholars who have investigated the problem of revelation and prophecy have tried to explain revelation, prophecy and questions connected with them by using the principles of social psychology. They say that the prophets of God were men of a pure nature and strong will who had great love for humanity.

In order to enable mankind to advance spiritually and materially and in order to reform decadent societies, they devised laws and regulations and invited mankind to accept them. Since people in those days would not accept the logic of human reason, in order to make them obey their teachings the prophets, according to such modern scholars, claimed that they and their thoughts came from the transcendent world. Each prophet called his own pure soul the Holy Spirit ; the teachings which he claimed came from the transcendent world were called "revelation and prophecy" ; the duties which resulted from the teachings were called "revealed Shari'ah" ; and the written record of these teachings and duties were called a "revealed book."

Anyone who views with depth and impartiality the revealed books and especially the Holy Qur'an, and also the lives of the prophets, will have no doubt that this view is not correct. The prophets of God were not political men. Rather they were "men of God," full of truthfulness and purity. What they perceived they proclaimed without addition or diminution. And what they uttered they acted upon. What they claimed to possess was a mysterious consciousness which the invisible world had bestowed upon them. In this way they came to know from God Himself what welfare of men was in this world and the next, and propagated this knowledge among mankind.

It is quite clear that in order to confirm and ascertain the call of prophecy there is need of proof and demonstration. The sole fact that the Shari'ah brought by a prophet conforms to reason is not sufficient in determining the truthfulness of the prophetic call. A man who claims to be a prophet, in addition to the claim of the truth of his Shari'ah, claims a connection through revelation and prophecy with the transcendent world, and therefore claims he has been given by God the mission to propagate the faith. This claim in itself is in need of proof. That is why (as the Holy Qur'an informs us) the common people with their simple mentality always sought miracles from the prophets of God in order that the truthfulness of their call might be

confirmed.

The meaning of this simple and correct logic is that the revelation which the prophet claims is his cannot be found among others who are human beings like him. It is of necessity an invisible power which God miraculously bestows upon His prophets, through which they hear His word and are given the mission to convey this word to mankind. If this be true, then the prophet should ask God for another miracle so that people would believe the truth of his prophetic call.

It is thus clear that the request for miracles from prophets is according to correct logic and it is incumbent upon the prophet of God to provide miracle at the beginning of his call, or according to the demand of the people, in order to prove his prophecy. The Holy Qur'an has affirmed this logic, relating miracles about many prophets at the beginning of their mission or after their followers requested them.

Of course many modern investigators and scientists have denied miracles, but their opinions are not based upon any satisfactory reasons. There is no reason to believe that the causes which until now have been discovered for events through investigation and experiment are permanent and unchanging, or that no event ever occurs for reasons other than those which usually bring it about. The miracles related about the prophets of God are not impossible or against reason (as is, for example, the claim that the number three is even). Rather they are a "break in what is habitual" (kharq-i 'adat), an occurrence which, incidentally, has often been observed in a lower degree among people following ascetic practices

The Number of the Prophets of God

It is known through tradition that in the past many prophets appeared, and the Holy Qur'an affirms their multitude. It has mentioned some of them by name or by their characteristics, but has not given their exact number. Through definitive traditions also it has not been possible to determine their number except in the well known saying which Abu Dharr Ghifari has recited from the Holy Prophet, according to which their number has been set at 124,000

The Prophets Who are Bringers of Divine Law

From what can be deduced from the Qur'an, it can be concluded that all the prophets of God did not bring a Shari'ah. Rather, five of them - Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and the Prophet Muhammad - are "possessors of determination" (ulu'l-'azim), those who have brought a Shari'ah. Other prophets follow the Shari'ah of those who "possess determination." God has

said in the Qur'an, "He hath ordained for you that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which We inspire in thee (Muhammad), and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus" (Qur'an, XLII, 13). He has also said, "And when We exacted a covenant from the Prophets, and from thee (O Muhammad) and from Noah and Abraham and Moses .(and Jesus son of Mary, We took from them a solemn covenant" (Qur'an, XXXIII,7

The Prophecy of Muhammad

The last prophet of God is Hadrat-i Muhammad - upon whom be blessings and peace - who possesses a book and a Shari'ah and in whom Muslims have placed their faith. The Prophet was born fifty three years before the beginning of the hegira calendar in Mecca in the Hijaz amidst the family of Bany Hashim of the Tribe of Quraysh, who were considered the most honored of the Arab families.

His father was called 'Abdallah and his mother, Aminah. He lost both parents at the beginning of childhood and was placed under the care of his paternal grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib, who also soon passed away. At this time the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, took charge of him and became his guardian, taking him into his own house. The Prophet grew up in his uncle's house and even before reaching the age of adolescence used to accompany his uncle on journeys by caravan.

The Prophet had not received any schooling and therefore did not know how to read and write. Yet, after reaching the age of maturity he became famous for his wisdom, courtesy, and trustworthiness. As a result of his sagacity and trustworthiness, one of the women of the tribe of Quraysh, well-known for her wealth, appointed him as the custodian of her possessions and left in his hands the task of conducting her commercial affairs. The Prophet once journeyed to Damascus with her merchandise and as a result of the ability he displayed was able to make an outstanding profit. Before long she asked to become his wife and the Prophet accepted her proposal.

After the marriage, which occurred when he was twenty-five years old, the Prophet began the life of a manager of his wife's fortunes, until the age of forty, gaining meanwhile a widespread reputation for wisdom and trustworthiness. He refused, however, to worship idols, as was the common religious practice of the Arabs of the Hijaz. And occasionally he would make spiritual retreats (khalwah) in which he prayed and discoursed secretly with God.

At the age of forty, in the cave of Hira', in the mountains of the Tihamah region near Mecca, when he was in spiritual retreat, he was chosen by God to become a prophet and was given the mission of propagating the new religion. At that moment the first chapter of the Qur'an ("The

Blood-Clot" [Surah-i 'alaq]) was revealed to him. That very day he returned to his house and on the way met his cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who after hearing the account of what had occurred declared his acceptance of the faith. After the Prophet entered the house and told his wife of the revelation, she likewise accepted Islam.

The first time the Prophet invited people to accept his message he was faced with a distressing and painful reaction. Of necessity he was forced henceforth to propagate his message in secret for some time until he was ordered again by God to invite his very close relatives to accept his message. But this call was also fruitless and no one heeded it except Ali ibn Abi Talib, who in any case had already accepted the faith.

(But in accordance with documents transmitted from the Household of the Prophet and extant poems composed by Abu Talib, Shi'ites believe that Abu Talib had also embraced Islam ; however, because he was the sole protector of the Prophet, he hid his faith from the people in order to preserve the outward power he had with the Quraysh.)

After this period, according to Divine instruction, the Prophet began to propagate his mission openly. With the beginning of open propagation the people of Mecca reacted most severely and inflicted the most painful afflictions and tortures upon the Prophet and the people who had become newly converted to Islam. The severe treatment dealt out by the Quraysh reached such a degree that a group of Muslims left their homes and belongings and migrated to Abyssinia. The Prophet and his uncle, Abu Talib, along with their relatives from the Banu Hashim, took refuge for three years in the "mountain pass of Abu Talib," a fort in one of the valleys of Mecca. No one had any dealings or transactions with them and they did not dare to leave their place of refuge.

The idol-worshippers of Mecca, although at the beginning they considered inflicting all kinds of pressures and tortures such as striking and beating, insult, ridicule and defamation on the Prophet, occasionally would also show kindness and courtesy toward him in order to have him turn away from his mission. They would promise him great sums of money or leadership and the rule of the tribe. But for the Prophet their promises and their threats only resulted in the intensification of his will and determination to carry out his mission.

Once, when they came to the Prophet promising him wealth and power, the Prophet told them, using metaphorical language, that if they were to put the sun in the palm of his right hand and the moon in the palm of his left hand he would not turn away from obeying the unique God or refrain from performing his mission.

About the tenth year of his prophecy, when the Prophet left the "mountain pass of Abu Talib," his uncle Abu Talib, who was also his sole protector, died as did also his devoted wife.

Henceforth there was no protection for his life nor any place of refuge. Finally the idol-worshippers of Mecca devised a secret plan to kill him. At night they surrounded his house from all sides with the aim of forcing themselves in at the end of the night and cutting him to pieces while he was in bed.

But God, the Exalted, informed him of the plan and commanded him to leave for Yathrib. The Prophet placed Ali in place of himself in his bed and at night left the house under the Divine protection, passing amidst his enemies, and taking refuge in a cave near Mecca. After three days when his enemies, having looked everywhere, gave up hope of capturing him and returned to Mecca, he left the cave and set out for Yathrib.

The people of Yathrib, whose leaders had already accepted the message of the Prophet and sworn allegiance to him, accepted him with open arms and placed their lives and property at his disposal. In Yathrib for the first time the Prophet formed a small Islamic community and signed treaties with the Jewish tribes in and around the city as well as with the powerful Arab tribes of the region. He undertook the task of propagating the Islamic message and Yathrib became famous as "Madinat al-rasul" (the city of the Prophet).

Islam began to grow and expand from day to day. The Muslims, who in Mecca were caught in the mesh of the injustice and inequity of the Quraysh, gradually left their homes and property and migrated to Medina, revolving around the Prophet like moths around a candle. This group became known as the "immigrants" (muhajirun) in the same way that those who aided the Prophet in Yathrib gained the name of "helpers" (ansar).

Islam was advancing rapidly but at the same time the idol-worshippers of Quraysh, as well as the Jewish tribes of the Hejaz, were unrestrained in their harassment of the Muslims. With the help of the "hypocrites" (munafiqun) of Medina who were amidst the community of Muslims and who were not known for their holding any particular positions, they created new misfortunes for the Muslims every day until finally the matter led to war. Many battles took place between the Muslims and the Arab polytheists and Jews, in most of which the Muslims were victorious. There were altogether over eighty major and minor battles. In all the major conflicts such as the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq, Khaybar, Hunayn, etc., the Prophet was personally present on the battle scene. Also in all the major battles and many minor ones, victory was gained especially through the efforts of Ali.

He was the only person who never turned away from any of these battles. In all the wars that occurred during the ten years after the migration from Mecca to Medina less than two hundred Muslims and less than a thousand infidels were killed.

As a result of the activity of the Prophet and the selfless effort of the muhajirun and ansar

during this ten-year period, Islam spread through the Arabian peninsula. There were also letters written to kings of other countries such as Persia, Byzantium and Abyssinia inviting them to accept Islam. During this time the Prophet lived in poverty and was proud of it. He never spent a moment of his time in vain. Rather, his time was divided into three parts: one spent for God, in worshipping and remembering Him ; a part of himself and his household and domestic needs ; and a part for the people. During this part of his time he was engaged in spreading and teaching Islam and its sciences, administering to the needs of Islamic society and removing whatever evils existed, providing for the needs of the Muslims, strengthening domestic and foreign bonds, and similar matters. After ten years of stay in Medina the Prophet fell ill and died after a few days of illness. According to existing traditions the last words on his lips were advice concerning slaves and women

The Prophet and the Qur'an

It was demanded of the Prophet, as it had been of other prophets, that he produce a miracle. The Prophet himself also confirmed the power of prophets to produce miracles as has been asserted clearly by the Qur'an. Many miracles by the Prophet have been recounted, the transmission of some of which is certain and can be accepted with confidence. But the enduring miracle of the Prophet, which is still alive, is the sacred book of Islam, the Holy Qur'an.

The Holy Qur'an is a sacred text consisting of six thousand and several hundred verses (ayah) divided into one hundred and fourteen large and small chapters (surah). The verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed gradually during the twenty-three year period of prophecy and mission of the Prophet. From less than one verse to a whole and complete chapter were revealed under different circumstances, both at day and night, on journeys or at home, in war or peace, during days of hardship or moments of rest.

The Holy Qur'an in many of its verses introduces itself in unambiguous language as a miracle. It invited the Arabs of that day to rivalry and competition in composing writings of comparable truth and beauty. The Arabs, according to the testimony of history, had reached the highest stages of eloquence and elegance of language, and in the sweetness of language and flow of speech they ranked foremost among all people.

The Holy Qur'an claims that if it be thought of as human speech, created by the Prophet himself or learned through instruction from someone else, then the Arabs should be able to produce its like or ten chapters like it, or a single one of its verses, making use of whatever means were at their disposal to achieve this end. The celebrated Arab men of eloquence

claimed that in answer to this request that the Qur'an was magic and it was thus impossible for them to produce its like.

Not only does the Qur'an challenge and invite people to compete with its eloquence and elegant language, but also it occasionally invites rivalry from the point of view of its meaning and thus challenges all the mental powers of men and jinn, for the Qur'an is a book containing the total program for human life.

If we investigate the matter carefully we will discover that God has made this vast and extensive program which embraces every aspect of the countless beliefs, ethical forms and actions of mankind and takes into account all of their details and particularities to by the "Truth" (haqq) and to be called the religion of the truth (din-i haqq). Islam is a religion whose injunctions are based on the truth and the real welfare of mankind, not the desires and inclinations of the majority of men or the whims of a single, powerful ruler.

At the foundation of this vast program is placed the most cherished word of God which is belief in His Unity. All the principles of the sciences are deduced from the principle of Unity (tawhid). After that, the most praiseworthy human ethical and moral virtues are deduced from the principles of the religious sciences and included in the program.

Then, the countless principles and details of human action and individual and social conditions of man are investigated, and the duties pertaining to them which originate from the worship of the One are elaborated and organized. In Islam the relation and continuity between the principles (usul) and their applications (furu') are such that each particular application in whatever subject it may be, if it is brought back to its source, returns to the principle of Unity or tawhid, and Unity if applied and analyzed becomes the basis for the particular injunction and rule in question.

Of course, the final elaboration of such an extensive religion with such unity and interconnection, or even the preparation of an elementary index for it, is beyond the normal powers of the best authorities on law in the world. But here we speak of a man who in a short span of time was placed amidst a thousand difficulties concerning life and property, caught in bloody battles and faced with internal and external obstacles and furthermore placed alone before the whole world. Moreover, the Prophet had never received instruction nor learned how to read and write. He had spent two-thirds of his life before becoming a prophet among a people who possessed no learning and had had no taste of civilization. He passed his life in a land without water or vegetation and with burning air, among a people who lived in the lowest social conditions and were dominated by neighboring political powers.

Besides the above, the Holy Qur'an challenges men in another way. This book was revealed

gradually, during a period of twenty-three years, under totally different conditions in periods of difficulty or comfort, war or peace, power or weakness, and the like. If it had not come from God but had been composed and expounded by man, many contradictions and contrasts would be observed in it.

Its ending would of necessity be more perfect than its beginning, as is necessary in the gradual perfection of the human individual. Instead, the first Meccan verses are of the same quality as the Medinan verses and there is no difference between the beginning and the end of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is a book whose parts resemble each other and whose awe-inspiring power .of expression is of the same style and quality throughout