

[Belief in the Unseen [World

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Those who believe in the unseen and perform the prayer, and expend of that we have provided them ... (2:3)

It is customary for us to call an individual believer a mumin by which is meant that he is a devout person who has faith in that he performs all the obligatory acts of devotion as well as recommended acts. In the same way, another person is said to be without faith. There is no harm in using those words like this but the Quran, too, uses the same words meaning: Having belief in religion or lack of belief in religion. So we must begin our discussion by considering beliefs as a matter of heart.

The Quran, speaking of a group of nomadic Arabs who came to the Prophet to say, "We believe," says "You believe not, rather say, 'We surrender,' for belief has not yet entered your hearts. " (49:14)

Is this a belief in God or His Attributes or in His Prophet and revelation or resurrection? All these are parts of belief but the Quran sums all these up in the first verse of Sura two: "That is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a guidance for the God-fearing who believe in the unseen.." (2:1) Unseen means hidden. Hidden from what? In this enclosed area what is behind these walls is hidden from us but if we feel sure of what is happening behind them, it is faith in the unseen? No, tomorrow it is hidden from us but if we can predict what is going to happen tomorrow, is this a faith in the unseen? Again, no. What is the unseen then?

In this world, there are things which could be understood through the senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. We call things perceptible if our senses enable us to know them. Animals, too, possess these senses which are sometimes stronger than man's . Some animals possess a sharper sight than man. A dog has a very sensitive ear and power of smell. The tiny ant can easily find its way to a piece of meat by its strong power of smell.

But these powers are not related to the unseen. Belief in the unseen means admitting that in the world of existence there are certain facts which we cannot distinguish by our senses, even if they are present before us. The senses given to living creatures are only limited means of contact with the world outside each being. The eyes are given to distinguish form, color and direction. The ears are meant to distinguish waves of sound. The other senses, too, are bestowed for various purposes. But if we cannot distinguish other facts beyond the senses, can we say that they do not exist?

No. This is wrong. The greatest mistake made by the human being is to suppose that all the senses that one has are adequate for understanding whatever exists and to negate what is not distinguishable for one. All the things which a human being should believe in are expressed by the Quran under the heading of the unseen.

If we cannot distinguish them through the senses, how should we accept them? Other ways and means are placed at our disposal to believe in the unseen. The verse of the Quran concerning faith in the unseen does not mean that we should accept every hidden matter simply because we have faith. If an exorcist claimed that he had an army of jinn, we should not believe him simply because he speaks of the unseen. But we must not deny the unseen altogether.

If we were asked what are the ways of believing in the unseen, we would say that there are stages. The first stage is to distinguish the various signs which make it impossible to deny it. It means entering from the stage of denial into the stage of doubt.

Let me give you an example. In the past, the only wave which was recognized in the space was the sound wave, which was compared to the waves created by throwing a stone into a pool. But today, science has discovered other waves which are not distinguishable by our ears or any of our other senses such as electric waves or radio waves which are not sound waves. For if they were sound waves it would take a space of time similar to sound waves in order to be heard. It is sometimes said that the sound of Big Ben in London is heard all over the world before it is heard by the people in the area near it.

How can one distinguish various waves in the space which are not sound waves? Only by scientific conjecture, not by the senses. Thus the denial of the existence of such waves shows only ignorance.

Is faith in the unseen a belief in God, in the angels, in the Book and revelation, in the Resurrection? No. It is higher than that. It means belief in a relationship between oneself and the unseen and not thinking of the two as totally separate. When in our prayer we say, "You only do we serve; to You alone do we pray for succour." (1:5) we show that we worship hidden God and beg His assistance since we believe that all powers are in His hand. In a supplication you ask His aid to give strength to your body, your resolution and your thought. But what is that for?

It is said that the difference between divine philosophy and religion is that the former may at most believe that there is God apart from the universe, while the main thing in religion is the relationship between a creature and its Creator, between us and the unseen that it establishes and which inclines us to action and effort to serve and, at the same time, tells us that because

of our relationship with the unseen we are somehow helped through our supplications to attain our goal. It tells us to be charitable, for it removes calamity . It tells us to supplicate. Of course, the prayer requires certain conditions in order to be fulfilled. We cannot sit down and beg for assistance from the unseen.

The Quran speaking of the Prophet says, "Remember God's blessing upon you when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together so that by His blessing you became brothers.

You were upon the brink of a pit of fire and He delivered you from it ... " (3:98-99)

This is assistance from the unseen. Sometimes you feel that if you follow a certain goal appointed by God, you receive some hidden aid and support beyond what you think or understand, and such a belief gives one a footing which is most necessary in life.

I remember something about Ayatullah Burrujerdi, a truly virtuous and fine authority to be imitated in religious matters. He was a monotheist of the highest rank and had a deep conviction and trust in God's aid to man. He had vowed that if he was cured after a surgical operation, he would make a pilgrimage to Mashhad. He announced his intention to his companions one day and asked who would accompany him.

We discussed it among ourselves and did not think it advisable for him to make this visit since at that time he was not so well-known and we did not think he would receive the welcome he deserved there. We thought this vow could be fulfilled one or two years later when conditions were more favorable.

Another day when he repeated his invitation, one of us told him that as he was recovering from his illness, it was too soon to go on a long journey by car. He understood the real reason why his friends did not advise the journey. He was aroused enough to say that for seventy years

God had favored him, not because of his own deliberations but because it was his lot. He said, "I have always thought what my duty is in the way of God. I have never considered whether it is above or below my dignity to act in a certain way. Whatever happens is my destiny. It is unbecoming to plan my steps at the age of seventy when I have God and His Favor. When I look upon myself as His servant, He will not forget me. Yes. I will depart." And

we knew that he arose to the highest point of respect and appreciation by all Muslims. God has never left the world without a master. Whenever mankind is in real danger, He saves them through a human being. You know how pessimistic the enlightened people of the world have become concerning the future of mankind. Do you know that this pessimism is fitting by the standard of apparent causes and factors?

We Muslims do not appreciate this blessing so that, like our ancestors of a hundred years ago, we say the world will last another thousand or a hundred thousand years more. Some

enlightened people claim that the downfall of humanity is near and Einstein is one who believes in this. He says that man will in all probability destroy himself with all the skill at his command for western scientific progress has given the power to destroy mankind.

In the past, this power of destruction was very limited. Hajjaj ibn Yusuf managed to kill 30,000 people. Nero burned Rome but could he burn the whole world? Today, however, a mad dictator could annihilate the whole of humanity. Hitherto in a war, one side has been victorious and the other side, defeated. But in the next world war, there will be no victory and defeat for both sides will be destroyed. These apparent reasons make us agree with the pessimist .

There is, however, an inspiration that we receive from religion. We see that in the past great dangers have occurred on smaller scales proportionate to the size of tribes, countries or regions. But God has always protected mankind and even when a danger appears on a world wide scale, again God is there to save it. Gandhi says that Europe is full of both madness and genius at the same time. Their madmen are geniuses and their geniuses are madmen.

The logic of religion tells us that we should not worry about the future of mankind. God has given us the promise of a time when wisdom will rule and life will be longer and health and security more complete. The earth is so full of hidden resources that it can provide for many times more than four or five billion people.

The world that is promised to us is a wide and clear space beyond the dark tunnel which is our present world. There is no probability of corruption and vice ruling the whole world. The aid of the unseen for a person is on a personal scale; for communities on a social scale and, the world, on a universal scale. A single world government will establish wholesale justice, security, welfare, progress and goodness.

I pray to God to grant us faith to wait for the Iman who is our savior, and faith in the rightfulness of the Prophet's household and make us familiar with the truths of the holy religion .of Islam