

Alhassanain (p) Network for Islamic Heritage and Thought

The Holy Quran

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The Significance & the Status of the Glorious Quran

The Value of the Qur'an in the Eyes of the Muslims

The Qur'an Contains a Pattern of a Complete Way of Life for Man. The religion of Islam is superior to any other in that it guarantees happiness in man's life. For Muslims, Islam is a belief system with moral and practical laws that have their source in the Qur'an. God, may He be exalted, says: "Indeed this Qur'an guides to the path which is clearer and straighter than any other" (XVII:9).

He also says:

"We have revealed to you the book which clarifies every matter" (XVI:89).

These references exemplify the numerous Qur'anic verses (ayat) which mention the principles of religious belief, moral virtues and a general legal system governing all aspects of human behavior. A consideration of the following topics will enable one to understand that the Qur'an provides a comprehensive programme of activity for man's life.

Man has no other aim in life but the pursuit of happiness and pleasure, which manifests itself in much the same way as love of ease or wealth. Although some individuals seem to reject this happiness, for example, by ending their lives in suicide, or by turning away from a life of leisure, they too, in their own way, confirm this principle of happiness; for, in seeking an end to their life or of material pleasure, they are still asserting their own personal choice of what happiness means to them.

Human actions, therefore, are directed largely by the prospects of happiness and prosperity offered by a certain idea, whether that idea be true or false. Man's activity in life is guided by a specific plan or programme. This fact is self-evident, even though it is sometimes concealed by its very apparentness.

Man acts according to his will and desires; he also weighs the necessity of a task before undertaking it. In this he is promoted by an inherent scientific law, which is to say that he performs a task for "himself" in fulfilling needs which he perceives are necessary. There is, therefore, a direct link between the objective of a task and its execution.

Any action undertaken by man, whether it be eating, sleeping or walking, occupies its own specific place and demands its own particular efforts. Yet an action is implemented according to an inherent law, the general concept of which is stored in man's perception and is recalled by motions associated with that action.

This notion holds true whether or not one is obliged to undertake the action or whether or not the circumstances are favourable. Every man, in respect of his own actions, is as the state in relation to its individual citizens, whose activity is controlled by specific laws, customs and behavior. Just as the active forces in a state are obliged to adapt their actions according to certain laws, so is the social activity of a community composed of the actions of each individual.

If this were not the case, the different components of society would fall apart and be destroyed in anarchy in the shortest time imaginable. If a

society is religious, its government will reflect that religion; if it is secular, it will be regulated by a corresponding code of law. If a society is uncivilized and barbaric, a code of behavior imposed by a tyrant will appear; otherwise, the conflict of various belief-systems within such a society will produce lawlessness.

Thus man, as an individual element of society, has no option but to possess and pursue a goal. He is guided in the pursuit of his goal by the path which corresponds to it and by the rules which must necessarily accompany his programme of activity. The Qur'an affirms this idea when it says that: "every man has a goal to which he is turning, so compete with each other in good action" (II:148)

In the usage of the Qur'an, the word *din* (1) is basically applied to a way, a pattern of living, and neither the believer nor the non-believer is without a path, be it prophetic or man-made. God, may He be exalted, describes the enemies of the divine *din* (religion) as those:

"who prevent others from the path of God and would have it crooked" (VII:45)

This verse shows that the term *Sabil Allah* - the path of God - used in the verse refers to the *din* of *fitra* - the inherent pattern of life intended by God for man).

It also indicates that even those who do not believe in God implement His *din*, albeit in a deviated form; this deviation, which becomes their *din*, is also encompassed in God's programme. The best and firmest path in life for man is the one which is dictated by his innate being and not by the sentiments of any individual or society.

A close examination of any part of creation reveals that, from its very inception, it is guided by an innate purpose towards fulfilling its nature along the most appropriate and shortest path; every aspect of each part of creation is equipped to do so, acting as a blueprint for defining the nature of its existence.

Indeed all of creation, be it animate or inanimate, is made up in this manner. As an example, we may say that a green-tipped shoot, emerging from a single grain in the earth, is "aware" of its future existence as a plant which will yield an ear of wheat. By means of its inherent characteristics, the shoot acquires various mineral elements for its growth from the soil and changes, day by day, in form and strength until it becomes a fully-matured grain-bearing plant - and so comes to the end of its natural cycle.

Similarly, if we investigate the life-cycle of the walnut tree, we observe that it too is "aware", from the very beginning, of its own specific purpose in life, namely, to grow into a big walnut tree. It reaches this goal by developing according to its own distinct inherent characteristics; it does not, for example, follow the path of the wheat-plant in fulfilling its goal just as the wheat-plant does not follow the life pattern of the walnut tree.

Since every created object which makes up the visible world is subject to this same general law, there is no reason to doubt that man, as a species of creation, is not. Indeed his physical capabilities are the best proof of this rule; like the rest of creation, they allow him to realize his purpose, and ultimate happiness, in life. Thus, we observe that man, in fact, guides

himself to happiness and well-being merely by applying the fundamental laws inherent in his own nature. This law is confirmed by God in the Qur'an, through His Prophet Moses, when he says:

"Our Lord is He who gave everything its nature, then guided it" (XX:50)

It is further explained in LXXXVII:2-3 as:

"He who created and fashioned in balanced proportion and He who measures and guides"

As to the creation and the nature of man, the Qur'an says:

"By the soul and Him who fashioned it and then inspired it with wrong action and fear of God; he is truly successful who causes it to grow and purifies it and he is a failure who corrupts and destroys it" (XCI:7-10) God enjoins upon man the duty to "strive towards a sincere application of the din," (that is, the fitrah of God, or the natural code of behavior upon which He has created mankind), since "there is no changing (the laws of) the creation of God" (XXX 30)

He also says that:

"In truth, the only deen recognized by God is Islam" (III: 19) Here, Islam means submission, the method of submission to these very laws. The Qur'an further warns that: "the actions of the man who chooses a din other than Islam will not be accepted" (III:85)

The gist of the above verses, and other references on the same subject, is that God has guided every creature - be it man, beast or vegetable - to a state of well-being and self-fulfilment appropriate to its individual make-up.

Thus the appropriate path for man lies in the adoption of personal and social laws particular to his own fitrah (or innate nature), and in avoiding people who have become "denaturalized" by following their own notions or passions. It is clearly underlined that fitrah, far from denying man's feelings and passions, accords each its proper due and allows man's conflicting spiritual and material needs to be fulfilled in a harmonious fashion.

Thus, we may conclude that the intellect aql should rule man in matters pertaining to individual or personal decisions, rather than his feelings. Similarly, truth and justice should govern society and not the whim of a tyrant or even the will of a majority, if that be contrary to a society's true benefit.

From this we may conclude that only God is empowered to make laws, since the only laws useful to man are those which are made according to his inherent nature. It also follows that man's needs, arising from his outward circumstance and his inner reality, are fulfilled only by obeying God's instructions (or laws). These needs may arise through events beyond man's control or as a result of the natural demands of his body. Both are encompassed in the plan of life that God has designated for man. For, as the Qur'an says, the "decision rests with God only," (XII:40,67)

which is to say that there is no governance (of man or society, of the inner or the outer) except that of God. Without a specific creational plan, based on the innate disposition of man, life would be fruitless and without meaning. We may understand this only through belief in God and a knowledge of his Unity, as explained in the Qur'an.

From here we may proceed to an understanding of the Day of Judgment, when man is rewarded or punished according to his deeds. Thereafter, we may arrive at a knowledge of the prophets and of prophetic teachings, since man cannot be judged without being first instructed in the matter of obedience and disobedience.

These three fundamental teachings are considered to be the roots of the Islamic way of life. To these we may add the fundamentals of good character and morals which a true believer must possess, and which are a necessary extension of the three basic beliefs mentioned above. The laws governing daily activity not only guarantee man's happiness and moral character but, more importantly, increase his understanding of these beliefs and of the fundamentals of Islam.

It is clear that a thief, a traitor, a squanderer or a libertine do not possess the quality of innocence; nor can a miser, who hoards money, be called a generous person. Similarly, some- one who never prays or remembers God cannot be called a believer in God and the Last Day, nor be described as His servant.

From this we may conclude that good character flourishes when joined to a pattern of correct actions; morals are to be found in the man whose beliefs are in harmony with these fundamentals. A proud man cannot be expected to believe in God nor be humble in respect to the Divine; nor can the man, who has never understood the meaning of humanity, justice, mercy or compassion, believe in the Day of Rising and the Judgment. Chapter XXXV:10 speaks of the relationship between a sincere system of belief and a fitting character:

"Pure speech rises up to Him and He raises up good deeds still further" . In chapter XXX:10 we learn again of this relationship between belief and action:

"Then evil was the consequence of those who do wrong action because they denied the signs of Allah and they made a mock of them"

To summarize, the Qur'an is composed of the following Islamic fundamentals which together form an interlocking whole: a primary system of belief in the Unity of God, Prophethood and the Day of Reckoning, accompanied by a second group of beliefs, namely, belief in the Tablet, the Pen (which delineates the sequence of cosmic events), the rule of destiny and the decree (without implying pre-determination), the angels, the throne of the Creator, and, finally, in the creation of the sky, the earth and everything between them.

Thereafter, we observe that man's well-being lies in his character being in harmony with these principles. The shariah, namely the laws and code of behavior explained in the Qur'an and commented upon in every detail by the model of the Prophet's life, is the means whereby a man may practise these principles.

At this point we should add that the Prophet's family are his chosen heirs and are entrusted with the task of exemplifying and explaining further the prophetic message and the shariah after the Prophet's death. The Prophet himself has shown that the tradition, hadith, known as the hadith (2) al-

thaqalayn which all sects of Islam accept, refers specifically to this matter of succession.

The Qur'an as a Document of Prophethood

The Qur'an refers on several occasions to the fact that it is the word of God, that it issues from a divine source in the very words in which the Prophet received them and which he later transmitted. The divine nature of the Qur'an is affirmed in several verses. In LII:33-34 we read: "or they say that (the Prophet) is inventing it. Indeed they do not believe. If they are truthful then let them produce words like it" Likewise in XVII:88:

"Say (O Muhammad), if all the jinn and mankind were to join forces to produce something like this Qur'an they could not produce it even if they were to help one another"

Again, in XI:13:

"or they say he has invented it! Say: then produce ten verses like it which you have invented"

and again in X:38:

"or they say he has invented it. Say: produce a single chapter like it" we find further proof.

The following challenge is made in Chapter II:23:

"and if you are in doubt concerning that which we have revealed to Our slave then produce a chapter like it"

Here it should be noted that the Qur'an is addressing those who grew up with Muhammad, the man they knew to be unlettered and untutored in the matters spoken about in the Qur'an. Despite this knowledge, they still doubt. Another challenge is issued, (to those who would find contradictions in the Qur'an, but obviously cannot):

Will they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from other than God, they would have found in it much incongruity" (IV:82)

Since everything in the world is in a state of growth and self-perfection, then the Qur'an would of necessity lack harmony since it was revealed over a period of twenty-three years; it would lack harmony that is if we were to suppose that it was the work of a man rather than of a prophet. The Qur'an, whose messages announce and confirm that it is the work of God, also teaches us that Muhammad is a messenger, sent by God, thus confirming the authenticity of the Prophet. In chapter XIII:43 God speaks Himself, as on many occasions, confirming that He is witness and testimony to the prophecy of Muhammad:

"Say God is sufficient witness between you and me."

The verse refers to disbelievers and defies their disbelief. In another verse, the testimony of angels is added to that of God's: "But God testifies concerning that which he has revealed to you; He has revealed it in His knowledge; and the Angels also testify. And God is sufficient witness" (IV:166)

Notes:

1. Usually translated to mean religion, the word strongly implies transaction between the Debtor (God) and the indebted (man). Hence, living the din means repaying one's debt to the Creator.
2. A report of the words or deeds of the Prophet which has been transmitted to us intact by a chain, or numerous chains, of trustworthy

narrators. The tradition in question here possesses an unbroken chain of transmission back to the Prophet himself; these verses confirm the miraculous quality of the book and state that it is beyond the power of man to produce such a work.

The Prophet's miracle

Prophets and Miracles

Divine Prophets have always been sent with clear signs, so that men might be convinced that they had come from God. For this reason those who have souls like polished mirrors and like clear transparent springs, glistening and pure so that they can recognise these signs commit themselves and have faith; like the magicians of Pharaoh's time who, when they saw the amazing miracle of Musa (A.S.), how the staff became a poisonous serpent, and understood that this was beyond the power of a human being, believed in him and ignored Pharaoh's intimidation.

The disciples of 'Isa (A.S.) also saw with their own eyes the effects of his breath when he breathed into the bodies of the dead, and, by the will of God, raised the dead and gave them life. They were attracted to him, and the souls and spirits of the dead were given everlasting life through faith in 'Isa (A.S.).

The Prophet of Islam, who was the last prophet and the best and greatest of them, and who brought an everlasting religion, the perfection of all Divine religions, which will last till the Resurrection, came at the time of his mission with clear signs from God, so that he could be clearly a proof of the legitimacy of His true and perfect religion. * * *

The Qur'an, the everlasting miracle

Thus it was that the Qur'an, the everlasting document of Islam, appeared on the horizon of human thoughts and ideas. The torch which will always shine at the apex of the great religion of Muhammad (S.A.) at the highest peak of human intellects, as long as the sun rises in the East. It is a brilliant divine sign whose lights, like the rays of the sun, are essential in every era and century and for always, for the continuance of life and the safeguarding of the happiness of all races of humanity.

Within this framework and on this foundation, all that is necessary for man's guidance has come. It elucidates the foundations of belief and also the relation of man and God and the ways of strengthening that relation in words with the softness of the clear waters of murmuring brooks, and the firmness of the standing mountains, attractive, eloquent and strong.

It describes the social responsibilities of man; it teaches the ways and the rules of social behaviour. It puts an end to class differences and unequal divisions. It wishes the highest in man and his brotherhood and equality and his elevation.

Unequalled Eloquence

Being conversant with vocabulary and having a good knowledge of words at one's fingertips is not such a great difficulty, but their combination and arrangement and harmonisation in a style which has regard for eloquence and fluency, and the construction of phrases with a variety of

expression yet in the same way in which they arise in the mind, is the most important skill, and it is something which is not practicable without observing the narrow rules of literary exactness, and using craftsmanship and eloquence. In the art of eloquence, it is said that for eloquence in any speaking or writing it is necessary to observe three principles.

- 1) Proficiency in words and their meanings.
- 2) Power of thought and subtlety of eloquence.
- 3) Power of expression, or skill with the pen.

But it must always be kept in mind that although all the rules and requirements of eloquence may be heeded, no one can claim that his speech or writing is always the best, and that no one can parallel him. However, Allah the Exalted, Whose range of power and knowledge is without limit, has so variously decorated His words in the Qur'an with arrangements and harmonisations of words that no one, be he the most eloquent man on earth, can bring its like.

And this is the secret of the eternity of the Qur'an, the everlasting prophetic document of Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.). The Qur'an, according to the testament of history, shone at that time when the Arabs were at the zenith of their literary development.

The famous poets and great orators, Imra'ul-Qais, Labid, etc., who are still counted as outstanding geniuses in the field of literature, wrote poems and gave orisons which sometimes reached the limits of greatness and which were written on curtains and golden plaques and attached to the wall of the Ka'abah. But, with the rising of the brilliant sun of the Qur'an, all of these lost their light and were eclipsed like the stars.

The eloquent Arabs were left bewildered by the eloquence of the Qur'an, which was such that the enemies who were full of hate for Islam and Muhammad (S.A.), who even took to the sword to wipe him and his religion out, were unable, with all their efforts, to find even one short mistake in the language and expression of the Qur'an.

The Enemies' Judgment

It was the time of Hajj. People were coming to Mecca from everywhere, and the Quraysh were uncomfortable from fear that the news of Muhammad's prophethood might have an effect on the new arrivals. So a group of the Quraysh, with Walid at their head, gathered round them and related what unjust things they could say about the Prophet and thus dissuade the new arrivals from meeting him.

Then when they were gathered, one of them said, "Let us say this man is soothsayer." "They will not believe us," said Walid, "for his speech is not like the sayings of soothsayers." "Let us say he is mad," someone else volunteered. "No one will accept that," Walid replied, "because his speech and behaviour are not like a lunatic's." "We shall say he is a poet," they said.

"This also will not work, because Arabs know all kinds of poetry, and his words are not like a poem." "We shall say he is a sorcerer." "Sorcerers have special methods, like tying knots and blowing on them, and Muhammad does nothing like this." Then Walid himself declared, "I swear by God, the speech of that man has a special sweetness and pleasantness.

His speech is like a tree, luxuriant, with steady deep roots and branches which bend down laden with fruit. Thus we can say to people that his speech is bewitched, because it causes separation between father and child, wife and husband, sister and brother." To discover the Qur'an's eloquence, and also to find out that it is at the summit of eloquence, non-Arab speakers can turn back to the sayings of those Arabs who were experts in the language of those days and which are recorded in history, and also to present day authors who write on this subject, and to the acknowledgments of those specialists in this branch.

Fortunately, from the time of the Prophet (S.A.) till now, all specialists in the art of Arabic eloquence have confessed to the unparalleled eloquence of the Qur'an, and have been overwhelmed in the face of it.

For example, the famous contemporary Arab writer Abdulfatah Tabbarah writes: "Arab history tells us of many famous men, knowledgeable in the best poetry and prose, like Ibn al-Muqaffa', Jahiz, ibn al-'Amid, Farazdaq, Bashshar, Abu Nuwas, Abu Tammam and so forth, but all of them have shown humility when faced with the Qur'an, and have of necessity confessed that the great Qur'an is not of the words of man, but a Divine revelation."

Dr. Taha Husayn, the powerful contemporary Egyptian writer, said: The Qur'an transcends the limits of prose and poetry, because it has special qualities which cannot be found in any poem or prose. So the Qur'an cannot be called poetry or prose, rather it should be said: "It is the Qur'an, that is all."

Harmonisation of its Themes

The speech or writing of a person, however skillful or eloquent he may be, will not be uniform in all conditions and circumstances. In particular, the works which appear in the days of any author's first writings are very different from the works which come after many years and as the result of much experience and repeated practice; the later works are almost always better.

But the Qur'an, in that it was sent down in the course of 23 years, and in that it was revealed in various circumstances and like a long flowing river passed over various stony places, rapids, narrows, valleys and plains, and witnessed many amazing events, it remained forever, like a spring, clear and fresh.

The unity and harmony of the themes and the style and expression of the Qur'an are a source for wonder. We see this wonder reach its apex, and notice in the contents of the Qur'an that many different subjects are dealt with, but the style and unity of expression remain constant.

It is clear that if someone, when he reached a stage of mastery over a special subject, shows what he can do, he may display brilliance, but if he undertakes something in another branch of which he is not a master, he will not produce any distinctive work. But the Qur'an shines to an amazing degree in every area.

Scientific Wonders in the Qur'an Although the first and basic aim of the Qur'an, according to what it says itself, is only to guide man to the great road of contentment and prosperity in the life of this world, the world of man, but on the way, in pursuing this aim, it expresses many truths from human knowledge in the natural sciences, in physiology and astronomy. And this is itself another great sign of the wonder of the Qur'an.

For the Prophet, according to the definite testimony of history, had never studied, grew up in an environment completely devoid of human knowledge and science (except literature), and was far from the centers of science of those days - Greece, Rome and Iran. Now let us see some indications of this wonder.

1. Meteorology is a very new science. The knowledge of former people about the phenomena of clouds, wind, rain and snow did not go beyond conjecture and what they could see, and, generally speaking, it had an air of imaginativeness and chance and was never established on a scientific basis.

Captains and farmers both had their signs and indications for forecasting wind and rain, but they did not really understand these phenomena.

Thus things went on for thousands of years, till, in the 17th century A.D., the thermometer, and in the 19th century the telegraph, and, gradually, other things necessary for meteorology were invented and discovered. In their turn, scientists settled down to research, till, in the first half of the 20th century, the Norwegian scientist, Byerkness, succeeded in discovering the general laws of the formation and movements of clouds and the occurrence of storms and rains in all places.

After him, the extent of discoveries in this science, as in other areas, progressed: the rain-bearing properties of clouds, how rain is released from them, the formation and occurrence of hail, matters relating to thunderbolts

and thunder and lightening and storms in tropical areas, air currents near the surface of the earth, and other matters, till knowledge reached extensive limits.

But fifteen centuries ago, when the Qur'an told about the winds and the rain and other phenomena, it was right when it told us about the latest, newest discoveries of meteorology.

For example, it has now been proved that it is possible for a cloud to reach saturation point but to yield no rain, and for it to be just microscopic particles tiny enough to hang suspended in the air and not to fall and cause rain; however, by means of invisible particles of salt which are blown by the wind from the surface of the sea it will rain.

Or, something more important; the humidity in the air gathers round the crystallised snow flakes which lie at high altitudes and which are scattered by the wind. Eventually small drops and the first rain unite together, and, as a result of mixing and colliding together in the wind, they gradually become bigger and bigger, and because of their own relatively heavy weight fall from the massed clouds. This is what the Qur'an made clear 15 centuries ago:

"And We send winds for making fruitful, and then We send down water from the sky, thus We give it unto you to drink of it." (XV;22)

2. Until the invention of the aircraft and the possibility of high-altitude flying, man's knowledge and experience did not encompass needles of ice beyond the clouds. Till then no one knew that mountains of ice-needles existed in the sky above man's heads. But the Qur'an is very clear when it says:

"He sendeth down from the sky, from mountains therein, hail..." (XXIV;43)

3. Living things in other worlds. Man, with the help of his knowledge of space, has set foot on the moon, but the matter of the existence of living things on other worlds has not proceeded beyond theory, and we can say that, from many signs, only it is possible that there are living things such as animals or man on some other planets and stars. But the Qur'an declares unambiguously:

"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and of what He hath spread out in both of them of animate beings, and for their gathering together when He willeth, He is All-Powerful" (XLII;29)

4. In Surah 36, verse 36, we have:

"Glory be to He Who created all the pairs of what the earth produces, and of themselves, and of what they know not."

And in Surah 20, verse 53, we read:

"And He sent down water out of the sky, and therewith We have brought forth various pairs of plants."

In times when man's knowledge did not permit the respected interpreters of the Qur'an to know that plants and growing things came in pairs and couples, they interpreted and observed pairing in classes, species or by form and matter or other philosophical terms which do not exist in the pages of the Qur'an. But today, on the basis of new research, it has been discovered that not only are men and animals created in pairs, but other living things

also. One of the most amazing phenomena in the world is the pairing and fertilizations of plants, which is all explained in natural science books.

The Qur'an Makes a Challenge

Not only from the point of view of eloquence, but also, as we have seen, in the fields of human ideas and society, and for all levels of understanding, the Qur'an is a miracle. For rhetoricians it has its eloquence, for philosophers its wisdom, and for scientists its different kinds of knowledge. For all these reasons the Qur'an addresses all people and says: "If you say this book is the word of man, bring its like and its equal."

"Say: 'If man and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they would never produce its like, not though they back one another.'" (XVII;88)

"Or do they say: 'He has forged it.'? Say: 'Then bring you ten surahs the like of it, forged; and call upon whom you are able, apart from Allah, if you speak truly. ' Then if they do not answer you, know that it has been sent down with Allah's knowledge, and that there is no god but He.'" (XI;13-14)

"and if you are in doubt about what We have sent down on Our servant, then bring a Surah like it." (II;23)

But we see from the testimony of history from then till now no one has had the courage to do this and produce its like. Of course, during the time of Muhammad (S.A.) and after his death, some Arabs, like Musailamah, Sajah and Ibn Abi'l-'Awja', planned to challenge it but they were not able, and eventually confessed to their incapacity.

In the time of the Prophet (S.A.), the enemies of Islam, who used the most awful means in their work, torturing the Muslims, laying economic boycotts on them, plotting to kill Muhammad (S.A.), and so forth, had no one who could do a simple thing like bringing one surah like the Qur'an.

In the present day, too, those who spend millions of dollars trying to destroy Islam would certainly attack it in this inexpensive and easy way (bringing a surah like the Qur'an) if they could. If they had been able to do that up to now, it would have been a victory for them and the end of Islam and the news would have been blown on all the trumpets of the world's newsmen.

In the end it is necessary to remind ourselves that if we get to know the Qur'an, or get to know it better and put its great, magnificent and precise project into action, greatness will be ours, and more. The huge edifice of our, the Muslims, greatness collapsed when we stopped putting the commands of this heavenly book into practice.

So we fell down, we were satisfied only with the name of Islam. Our departed greatness will return when we leave this crooked way and, starting again, become new Muslims and put the Qur'an at the top of the sights of our hearts and our wisdom, and make it an example for life, as the Prophet said: "When calamities encompass you like the darkness of the night, reach for the Qur'an." (Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 599) (The Roots of Religion, p. 136-146).

Protection from any alteration

The transmission of the Qur'an, from the day of its revelation up to the present day, is flawless. The chapters and verses have been in constant use amongst Muslims and have been passed on perfectly intact from one generation to the other. The Qur'an we know today is the same Qur'an which was revealed to the Prophet some fourteen centuries ago.

The Qur'an does not stand in need of historical proof for its identity or authenticity, (although history too confirms its validity). Since a book which claims to be the actual unalterable word of God and attests to this in its own text, does not need to resort to others to prove its authenticity. The clearest proof that the Qur'an we have with us today is the same that was revealed to the Prophet and that no alteration has taken place in its text is that very superiority which the Qur'an claimed for itself at the time of its revelation and which still exists.

The Qur'an says that it is a book of light and guidance, a book which shows man the truth and reality of existence; it says that it explains all things, that is, everything necessary for man to live in accordance with his own natural character; it says that it is the word of God and challenges man and jinn to produce similar words;

-it invites them to find someone like the Prophet, who could neither read nor write and grew up in an age of ignorance as an orphan without instruction; the Qur'an challenges them to find any inconsistency in its method, Sciences, or laws, such as one might find in any ordinary book. They obviously cannot for the superiority of the Qur'an remains after its revelation.

Likewise, the guidance for man contained in the Qur'an is still valid; it still expounds a complete world view which is in accord with the purest of intellectual proofs and is the source of man's well being in this world and in the next. By the benevolence and care shown by the Creator for His creation in the Book, it still invites man to belief.

The Qur'an cares for the needs of man by giving him a vision of reality based on Divine Unity. All knowledge and belief spring from this view of reality. At no point does the Qur'an fail to explain in the most comprehensive fashion the reality of this oneness. It devotes much attention to explaining the behavior and transactions expected of the individual in society and shows how correct action is that which accords with the natural character and capability (fitrah) of man.

The Qur'an leaves the detailed description of man's behaviour to the Prophet whose daily life was an example of how man was to apply what was contained in the Qur'an. Together the Book of God and the example (or Sunnah) of the Prophet delineated an astoundingly comprehensive life-pattern for man, namely, the way of living in tune with the reality which is Islam.

The Qur'an deals precisely with all aspects of individual and social life and, despite having been revealed in another age, does not contain the slightest inconsistency or in-compatibility even today. It describes a din, a comprehensive way of life, whose programme of living is beyond the imagination of the world's most capable lawyers and sociologists.

The miracle of the Qur'an has in it clarity and eloquence, rooted, as it is, in the language of a nation famed for the purity and power of its language. The Qur'an is a miraculous sun whose light shines far brighter than the finest poetry of the time, indeed of any age. During the Islamic conquests of the first century after Hijra, the resulting admixing of non-Arabic words with the Arabic lessened the purity of Arabic language used in the Qur'an causing it to disappear from the every-day speech of the people.

The Qur'an does not merely challenge man by the use of its language but also by the depth of its meaning. Those familiar with the Arabic language (both prose and verse writings) are reduced to silence and astonishment when they attempt to describe it. The Qur'an is neither poetry nor prose but rather seems to draw qualities from both; it is more attractive and dazzling than poetry and clearer and more flowing than prose.

A single verse or phrase from the Qur'an is more illuminating, more penetrating, and more profound than the complete speech of most eloquent speakers. The profundity of meaning in the Qur'an remains as miraculous as ever; its complex structure of beliefs, morals and laws stands as proof that the Qur'an is the word of God.

Man, and in particular someone who was born and raised in circumstances similar to those of the Prophet, could never have created such a system; the Qur'an is a harmonious whole despite having been revealed during twenty-three years in greatly varying circumstances. God Himself confirms that the Qur'an has been preserved from change; in chapter XV:9 He says, "Indeed We, even We, reveal the Reminder and indeed We are truly its guardian," and in chapter (XLI:41-42)

*He says, 'for indeed it is an unassailable Book. Falsehood cannot come to it from before or behind it. (It is) a revelation from the Wise, the Praise one.'" Only a divine Book could remain preserved for fourteen centuries in a world where the enemies of truth and of Islam are numerous. * * * (Allamah Tabatabai, The Qur'an in Islam, p. 101-103)*

The Glorious Qur'an and exegesis (Tafsir)

The Science of Qur'anic Commentary and the Different Groups of Commentators After the death of the Prophet a group of his companions, including Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari, Abu Sa'ld al-Khudri, 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, Anas, Abu Hurayrah, Abu Musa, and, above all, the famous 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, were occupied with the Science of Commentary. Just as they had heard the Prophet explaining the meanings of the verses, they would transmit it orally to other trustworthy persons.

The traditions specifically concerned with the subject of Qur'anic verses number over two hundred and forty; many were transmitted through weak chains of transmission and the texts of some have been rejected as incorrect or forged. Sometimes the transmission would include commentaries based on personal judgments rather than on a narration of the actual sayings, hadiths, from the Prophet.

The later Sunni commentators considered this kind of commentary as part of the body of Sayings of The Prophet, since the companions were learned in the science of Qur'anic commentary. They argued that these

companions had acquired their knowledge of this science from the Prophet himself and that it was unlikely they would say anything which they themselves had invented.

There is, however, no absolute proof for their reasoning. A large proportion of these sayings, or traditions, about the reasons and historical circumstances of the revelation of verses do not possess an acceptable chain of narration. It should be noted that many of the narrators like Ka'b al-Akhbar, were learned companions who had belonged to the Jewish faith before accepting Islam. Moreover, it should not be overlooked that Ibn 'Abbas usually expressed the meanings of verses in poetry.

In one of his narrations over two hundred questions of Nafi' ibn al-Azraq are replied to in the form of poetry; al-Suyuti in his book, *al-Itqan*, related one hundred and ninety of these questions. It is evident, therefore, that many of the narrations made by the commentators amongst the companions cannot be counted as actual narrations from the Prophet himself; therefore, such additional material related by the companions must be rejected.

The second group of commentators were the companions of the followers (*tabi'un*), who were the students of the companions. Amongst them we find Mujahid, Sa'ld ibn Jubayr, 'Ikrimah and Dahhak. Also from this group were Hasan al-Basri, 'Ata' ibn Abi Rabah, 'Ata' ibn Abi Muslim, Abu al-'Aliyah, Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi, Qatadah, 'Atiyah, Zayd ibn Aslam, Ta'us al-Yamam." The third group were comprised of the students of the second group, namely, Rabi' ibn Anas, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam, Abu Salih al-Kalbi and others.

The *tabi'un* sometimes narrated the commentary on a verse as a tradition of the Prophet or of the companions and, sometimes, they explained its meaning without attributing a narrator to the source, this they did especially when there was any doubt as to the identity of the narrator. The later commentators treat these narrations as traditions of the Prophet, but count them as *mawquf* in their science of the levels of hadiths (that is as a tradition whose chain of narration does not reach back to the Prophet) .

The fourth group comprised the first compilers of commentaries, like Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, Wah' ibn al-Jarrah, Shuban al-Hajjaj and 'Abd ibn Humayd; others from this group include Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, the author of the famous Qur'anic Commentary. This group recorded the sayings of the companions and the followers of the companions with a chain of narrators in their works of commentary; they avoided expressing personal opinions except, perhaps, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari who sometimes expressed his views by indicating his preference when discussing two similar traditions.

The basis of the work of later groups may be traced to this group. The fifth group omitted the chain of narrators in their writings and contented themselves with a simple relation of the text of the traditions. Some scholars regard these commentators as the source of varying views in the commentaries by connecting many traditions to a companion or a follower without verifying their validity or mentioning their chain of narration.

Consequently, confusion has arisen allowing many false traditions to enter the body of traditions, thus undermining the reputation of this section of hadith literature. Careful examination of the chains of transmission of the

traditions leaves one in doubt as to the extent of the deceitful additions and false testimonies. Many conflicting traditions can be traced to one companion or follower and many traditions, which are complete fabrications, may be found amongst this body of narrations.

Thus reasons for the revelation of a particular verse, including the abrogating and abrogated verses, do not seem to accord with the actual order of the verses.

No more than one or two of the traditions are found to be acceptable when submitted to such an examination. It is for this reason that Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who himself was born before this generation of narrators, said, "Three things have no sound base: military virtues, bloody battles and the traditions pertaining to Qur'anic commentary."

Imam al-Shafi' relates that only about one hundred traditions from Ibn 'Abbas have been confirmed as valid. The sixth group consists of those commentators who appeared after the growth and development of the various Islamic Sciences and each undertook the study of Qur'anic commentary according to his specialization: al-Zajjaj studied the subject from the grammatical point of view; al-Wahidi and Abu Hayyan' investigated the verses by studying the inflection of the verbs, the vowels and the diacritical points.

There is also commentary on the rhetoric and eloquence of the verses by al-Zamakhsharii in his work entitled al-Kashshaf. There is a theological discussion in the "Grand Commentary" of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. The gnosis of Ibn al-'Arabi and 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani treated in their commentaries. Other narrators, like al-Tha'lab, record the history of transmission of the traditions. Some commentators, among them al-Qurtubi, concentrate on aspects of fiqh (jurisprudence).

There also exists a number of commentaries composed of many of these sciences, such as Ruh al-Bayan by Shaykh Isma'il Haqqi, Ruh al-ma'ani by Shihab al-Din Mahmud al-Alusi al-Baghdadi Chara'ib al-Qur'an by Nizam al-Din al-Nisaburi. This group rendered a great service to the Science of Qur'anic commentary in that it brought the Science out of a state of stagnation (characteristic of the fifth group before it), and developed it into a Science of precise investigation and theory.

However, if one were to examine closely the precision of this group's research, one would see that much of its Qur'anic commentary imposes its theories onto the Qur'an rather than allowing the content of the verses to speak for themselves. * * *

The Methods Used by the Shi'ite Commentators and their Different Groupings

All the groups mentioned above are Sunni commentators. Their method, used in the earliest commentaries of this period, was based on ijtihad, that is, the reports of the companions and the followers of the companions were examined according to certain rules in order to reach an acceptable understanding of the text.

This resulted in varying opinions amongst those making ijtihad and caused disorder, contradiction and, even, fabrication to enter into the body

of the traditions. The method employed by the Shi'ite commentators, however, was different, with the result that the patterning of the groups was also different.

The Shi'ite commentators in their study of a verse of the Qur'an, viewed the explanation given by the Prophet as proof of the meaning of the verse, they did not accept the saying of the companions, or the followers, as indisputable proof that the tradition was from the Prophet. The Shi'ite commentators only recognized as valid an unbroken chain of narration from the Prophet and through members of his family. Accordingly, in using and transmitting the verses concerning Qur'anic commentary, they restricted themselves to the use of traditions transmitted by the Prophet and by the Imams of the Prophet's family. This has given rise to the following groups:

The first group comprises those who have learned these traditions from the Prophet and from the Imams of the Prophet's family, studying and recording them according to their own method but not in any particular order. Among them we may mention such scholars as Zararah, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Ma'ruf and Jarir who were companions of the fifth and sixth Imams.

The second group comprises the first compilers of the commentaries, like Furat ibn Ibrahim al-Kufi, Abu Hamzah al-Thumali, Muhammad al-'Ayyashi, 'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi and al-Nu'mani who lived between the second and fourth centuries after HiUrah. The method of this group was similar to that of the fourth Sunni group of Commentators.

Thus, they avoided any kind of ijtihad or passing of judgment. We should remember that the Imams of the Prophet's family were living amongst Muslims and available for questioning (on matters of commentary, for example) for a period of almost three hundred years. Thus the first groups were not divided chronologically but rather according to their relationship with the Imams. There are very few who recorded the tradition without a chain of transmission.

As an example, we should mention one of the students of al-'Ayyashi who omitted to record the chains of transmission. It was his work, instead of the original of al-'Ayyashi which came into common use. The third group comprises masters of various sciences, like al-Sharif al-Radl who provided a commentary concerned with Qur'anic language and Shaykh al-Tusl who wrote a commentary and analysis on metaphysical matters.

Included, too, is Sadr al-DIn al-Shirazl's philosophic work, al-Maybudi al-Kunabadl's gnostic commentary and 'Abd 'Ah al-Huwayzl's commentary Nur al-thaqalayn.

Hashim al-Bahrani composed the commentary al-Burhan' and al-Fayd al-Kashani compiled the work known as al-Safi. There were others who brought together many different themes to their commentaries, like Shaykh al-Tabarsi who in his Majma' al-bayan researches different fields of language, grammar, Qur'an recitation, gnosis of death, after-life and paradise, and knowledge of the traditions.

(Allamah Tabatabai, The Qur'an in Islam, p. 47-51)

About the interpretation and commentators

The Qur'an Possesses Revelation and Exegesis

We shall discuss the word, exegesis, ta'wil, in relation to three Qur'anic verses. Firstly, in the verses concerning the implicit mutashabih and the explicit verses:

"But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, in truth, that which is allegorical talking dissension by seeking to explain it. None knows its explanation except God" (III:7) Secondly, the verses, In truth we have brought them a scripture which we expound with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. Do they await anything but the fulfillment of it.

(Here the word ta'wil is used connoting the appearance or clarification of meaning).

"On the day when the fulfillment of it comes, those who are forgetful of it will say: the messenger of our Lord brought the truth."(VII :52-53) Thirdly, the verse And this Qur'an is not such as could ever be invented . . . but they denied that, the knowledge of which they could not encompass and the interpretation (ta'wil of which had not yet come to them. Even so it was that those before them deny. Then [X:37-39].see what was the consequence in the wrongdoers.

In conclusion, we should note that the word exegesis ta'wil comes from the word awl, meaning a return. As such, ta'wil indicates that particular meaning towards which the verse is directed. The meaning of revelation tanzil, as opposed to ta'wil, is clear or according to the obvious meaning of the words as they were revealed.

The Meaning of Exegesis, According to the Commentators and Scholars

There is considerable disagreement as to the meaning of exegesis, ta'wil, and it is possible to count more than ten different views. There are, however, two views which have gained general acceptance. The first is that of the early generation of scholars who used the word exegesis, ta'wil, as a synonym for commentary, or tafstr.

According to this view, all Qur'anic verses are open to ta'wil although according to the verse, "nobody knows its interpretation (ta'wil) except God," it is the implicit verses whose interpretation (ta'wil) is known only to God. For this reason, a number of the early scholars said that the implicit verses are those with muqatt'ah-letters at the beginning of the chapter since they are the only verses in the Qur'an whose meaning is not known to everyone.

This interpretation has been demonstrated in the previous section as being incorrect, a view which is shared by certain of the late scholars. They argued that since there is a way of finding out the meaning of any verse, particularly since the muqattah-letters are obviously not in the same classification as the implicit verses then the distinction between the two (muqatta'ah and implicit, mutashabih) is clear.

Secondly, the view of the later scholars is that exegesis refers to the meaning of a verse beyond its literal meaning and that not all verses have exegesis; rather only the implicit, whose ultimate meaning is known only to God. The verses in question here are those which refer to the human qualities of coming, going, sitting, satisfaction, anger and sorrow apparently attributed to God and, also, those verses which apparently ascribe faults to the messengers and Prophets of God (when in reality they are infallible).

The view that the word exegesis refers to a meaning other than the apparent one has become quite accepted. Moreover, within the divergence of opinion amongst scholars, exegesis has come to mean "to transfer" the apparent meaning of a verse to a different meaning by means of a proof called ta'wil; this method is not without obvious inconsistencies. Although this view has gained considerable acceptance, it is incorrect and cannot be applied to the Qur'anic verses for the following reasons. Firstly, the verses:

Do they await anything but the fulfilment of it [VII:53]

and:

but they denied that, the knowledge of which they could not encompass and the interpretation of which had not yet come to them (X:39) indicate that the whole Qur'an has exegesis, not just the implicit verses as claimed by this group of scholars. Secondly, implied in this view is that there are Qur'anic verses whose real meaning is ambiguous and hidden from the people, only God knowing their real meaning.

However, a book which declares itself as challenging and excelling in its linguistic brilliance could hardly be described as eloquent if it failed to transmit the meaning of its own words. Thirdly, if we accept this view, then the validity of the Qur'an comes under question since, according to the verse, Why do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, if it were from other than God they would have found in it many inconsistencies.

One of the proofs that the Qur'an is not the speech of man is that, despite having been revealed in widely varying and difficult circumstances, there is no inconsistency in it, neither in its literal meaning nor in its inner meaning, and any initial inconsistency disappears upon reflection. If it is believed that a number of the implicit verses disagree with the sound, or muhkam, or explicit, verses this disagreement may be resolved by explaining that what is intended is not the literal meaning but rather another meaning known only to God.

However, this explanation will never prove that the Qur'an is "not the speech of man." If by exegesis we change any inconsistency in the explicit, or sound (muhkam), verses to another meaning beyond the literal, it is clear that we may also do this for the speech and writing of man. Fourthly, there is no proof that exegesis indicates a meaning other than the literal one and that, in the Qur'anic verses which mention the word exegesis, the literal meaning is not intended.

On three occasions in the story of Joseph, the interpretation of his dream⁹ is called ta'wil (exegesis). It is clear that the interpretation of a dream is not fundamentally different from the actual appearance of the dream; rather, it is the interpretation of what is portrayed in a particular form in the dream.

Thus Joseph saw his father, mother and brother falling to the ground in the form of the sun, the moon and the stars. Likewise, the king of Egypt saw the seven-year drought in the form of seven lean cows eating the seven fat cows and also, the seven green ears of corn and the seven dry ears.

Similarly, the dreams of Joseph's two fellow-inmates in the prison: one saw himself pouring wine for the king (in the form of the first pressing of wine), while the second saw himself crucified (in the form of birds eating from the bread basket on his head). The dream of the king of Egypt is related in the same chapter, verse 43 and its interpretation, from Joseph, in verses 47-49 when he says:

you will sow seven years as usual, but what ever you reap leave it in the ear, all except a little which you will eat. Then after that will come a year when people will have plenteous crops and then they will press (meaning wine and oil).

The dream of Joseph's fellow-inmates in the prison occurs in verse 36 of the same chapter. One of the two young men says to Joseph:

"I dreamt that I was carrying upon my head bread which the birds were eating. "

The interpretation of the dream is related by Joseph in verse 41:

"O my two fellow-prisoners! As for one of you he will pour out wine for his Lord to drink and as for the other, he will be crucified so that the birds will eat from his head. "

In a similar fashion, God relates the story of Moses and Khidr in the chapter "The Cave" [XVIII:71-82]. Khidr made a hole in the boats; thereafter, killed a boy and, finally, straightened a leaning wall. After each event, Moses protested and Khidr explained the meaning and reality of each action which he had carried out on the orders of God; this he referred to as ta'wil. Thus it is clear that the reality of the event and the dream-picture

which portrayed the event-to-be are basically the same: the ta'wil, or interpretation, does not have a meaning other than the apparent one. Likewise God says, talking about weights and measures:

Fill the measure when you measure and weigh with a right balance, that is proper and better in the end," (that is, more fitting in the final determination of the Day of Reckoning) [XVII:35].

It is clear that the word ta'wil used here in respect to the measuring and weighing refers to fair dealing in business practices. Thus the ta'wil used in this way is not different from the literal meaning of the words "measuring" and "weighing"; it merely deepens and extends the significance of the mundane to include a spiritual dimension. This spiritual dimension is of significance for the believer who has in mind the reckoning of the final day together with his own day-to-day reckoning in the affairs of trade. In another verse God again uses the word ta'wil:

and if you have any dispute concerning any matter, refer it to God and the messenger ...that is better and more fitting in the end (IV:59)

It is clear that the meaning of ta'wil and the referring of the dispute to God and His messenger is to establish the unity of Society and to show how each action or event in a community has a spiritual significance. Thus, the ta'wil refers to a tangible ordinary reality and is not in opposition to the actual text in the verses which refers to the dispute.

In all, there are sixteen occasions in the Qur'an in which the word ta'wil is used but on no occasion does it have a meaning other than the literal text. We may say, therefore, that the word ta'wil is used to extend the idea expressed to include a further meaning which, (as will be made clear in the next section), is still in accordance with the actual word ta'wil occurring in the verse.

Thus, in the light of these examples, there is no reason why we should take the word ta'wil in the verse about the explicit muhkam, and implicit, mutashaibih, meanings to indicate "a meaning basically other than the apparent meaning.

The Meaning of Exegesis in the Tradition of the Qur'anic Sciences

What is apparent from the verses in which the word ta'wil occurs is that ta'wil does not indicate a literal meaning. It is clear that the actual words of the dream described in chapter XII, "Joseph", do not in themselves contain the literal interpretation of the dream; the meaning of the dream becomes clear from the interpretation. And, likewise, in the story of Moses and Khidr, the actual words of the story are not the same as the interpretation which Khidr gave Moses.

Moreover, in the verse, fill the measure when you measure and weigh with a right balance the language does not in itself indicate the particular economic conditions which we are intended to understand. Again, in the verse And if you have a dispute concerning any matter then refer it to God and the messenger there is no immediate literal indication that what is meant is the Unity of Islam.

Thus, although the words indicate something not essentially different from their literal meaning, there is, nevertheless, in all the verses the same shifting of perspective, namely, from the actual words to the intended meaning. Moreover, all the meanings are based on a real situation, an actual physical event.

In the case of the dream, the interpretation has an external reality which appears before its actual occurrence in a special form to the dreamer. Likewise, in the story of Moses and Khidr, the interpretation that the latter gives is, in fact, a reality which is to take place as a result of his action. Therefore, the interpretation of the event is rooted in the event. In the verse which orders man to fair dealing and measuring, the aspect of the verse is a reality which appears as a social benefit.

Thus the order is connected to the effect it is supposed to have in the raising up of society and, in particular, of trade. In the verse concerning referral of the dispute to God and His messenger, the meaning is again fixed to reality, namely, the spiritualization of the life of the community. To conclude,

we may say that interpretation of each verse springs from a reality; the interpretation looks forward to or, in a subtle way, actually brings into being the reality it is talking about. Thus its meaning both contains and springs from a future or ulterior event. Just as the interpreter makes the interpretation meaningful, so the manifestation of the interpretation is already a reality for the interpreter.

The idea is also present in the form of the Qur'an since this sacred book has as its source realities and meanings other than the material and physical or, we may say, beyond the sensory level. Thus it expresses meanings which are more expansive than those contained in the words and phrases used by man in the material world.

Although these realities and meanings are not contained in the literal explanation of man, the Qur'an uses the same language to inform man of the unseen and to produce correct belief and good action. Thus, through belief in the unseen, in the last day and in the meeting with God, man adopts a

system of morals and a quality of character which allows him to achieve happiness and well-being.

In this way the Qur'an produces a spiritual effect which, in turn, produces a physical social change, the importance of which will become clear on the Day of Resurrection and the meeting with God. There is further reference to this same theme when God says in chapter XLIII:2-4:

By the Book which makes plain. Take heed, we have appointed it a lecture in Arabic that perhaps you will understand. And indeed the source of the Book which we possess, it is indeed sublime, decisive.

It is sublime, in that the ordinary understanding cannot fully comprehend it, and decisive in that it cannot be faulted. The relationship of the last part of the verse to the meaning of exegesis ta'wil, (as we have discussed above) is clear. It says, in particular, that "perhaps you will understand," implying that one may or may not understand it; it does not imply that one will understand the book fully, merely by studying it.

As we have seen in the verse concerning the explicit muhkam, and the implicit mutashabih, knowledge of exegesis ta'wil, is particular to God; moreover, when in this same verse corrupt men are blamed for following the implicit mutashabih, verses and for intending to sow dissension and conflict by searching for an exegesis, ta'wil, or special interpretation, it does not state that they necessarily find it.

The exegesis of the Qur'an is a reality, or several realities, which are to be found in the Source Book, the Book of Decrees with God; the Source Book is part of the unseen and far from the reach of corrupters. The same idea is treated again in chapter LVI:75- 80 when God says:

Indeed I swear by the places of the Stars - And truly that is surely a tremendous oath if you but knew - that this is indeed a noble Qur'an, in a book kept hidden, which none touch except the purified, a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.

It is clear that these verses establish for the Qur'an two aspects, namely the position of the hidden book protected from being touched and the aspect of revelation which is understandable by the people. What is of particular interest to us in this verse is the phrase of exception, "except the purified. " According to this phrase, we can arrive at an understanding of the reality of the exegesis of the Qur'an.

This positive view of man's capability to understand the Qur'an does not conflict with the negation of the verse, "And no one knows its ta'wil except God." Since the comparison of the two verses produces a whole which is independent and harmonious. Thus we understand that God is alone in understanding these realities, yet one may come to know these truths by His leave and teaching. Knowledge of the unseen is, according to many verses, the special domain of God but in chapter LXXII:26-27, those who are worthy are excepted from this:

"He is the knower of the unseen and He reveals to no one His secret, except to every messenger whom He has chosen. "

Again we conclude that knowledge of the unseen is particular to God and that it is fitting for no one except Him and for those he gives leave to. Thus the purified amongst men take the verse concerning the "purified ones" as

leave to enter into contact with the reality of the Qur'an. In a similar way we read in chapter XXXIII:33,

"God's wish is but to remove uncleanness from you, O people of the Household, and clean you with a thorough cleaning. " This verse was revealed, (according to a sound tradition with an unbroken chain of transmission), specifically with regard to the family of the Prophet. * * * (Allamah Tabatabai, The Qur'an in Islam, p. 37-45)

Types of interpretation

All praise is for Allah Who sent down the Qur'an to His servant so that he may be a warner to the worlds; and blessings be on him whom He sent as a witness, and a bearer of good news and a warner, and as one inviting to Allah by His permission, and as a light-giving torch; and on his progeny from whom Allah kept away the uncleanness and whom He purified a thorough purifying.

In this article we shall describe the method adopted in this book to find out the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an. at-Tafsir (exegesis), that is, explaining the meanings of the Qur'anic verse, clarifying its import and finding out its significance, is one of the earliest academic activities in Islam. The interpretation of the Qur'an began with its revelation, as is clear from the words of Allah:

Even as We have sent among you an Apostle from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know (2 :151).

The first exegetes were a few companions of the Prophet, like Ibn 'Abbas, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Ubayy (ibn Ka'b) and others. (We use the word, 'companion', for other than 'Ali(A.S.); because he and the Imams from his progeny have an unequalled distinction - an unparalleled status, which we shall explain somewhere else.

Exegesis in those days was confined to the explanation of literary aspects of the verse, the background of its revelation and, occasionally interpretation of one verse with the help of the other. If the verse was about a historical event or contained the realities of genesis or resurrection etc., then sometimes a few traditions of the Prophet were narrated to make its meaning clear. The same was the style of the disciples of the companions, like Mujahid, Qatadah, Ibn Abi Layla, ash-Sha'bi, as-Suddi and others, who lived in the first two centuries of hijrah.

They relied even more on traditions, including the ones forged and interpolated by the Jews and others. They quoted those traditions to explain the verses which contained the stories of the previous nations, or which described the realities of genesis, for example, creation of the heavens and the earth, beginning of the rivers and mountains, the "Iram" (the city of the tribe of 'Ad), of Shaddad the so-called "mistakes" of the prophets, the alterations of the books and things like that.

Some such matters could be found even in the exegesis ascribed to the companions. During the reign of the caliphs, when the neighboring countries were conquered, the Muslims came in contact with the vanquished

people and were involved in religious discussions with the scholars of various other religions and sects.

This gave rise to the theological discourses, known in Islam as Ilmu 'l-kalam. Also, the Greek philosophy was translated into Arabic. The process began towards the end of the first century of hijrah (Umayyad's period) and continued well into the third century ('Abbasid's reign). This created a taste for intellectual and philosophical arguments in the Muslim intelligentsia.

At the same time, at-tasawwuf (Sufism, mysticism) raised its head in the society; and people were attracted towards it as it held out a promise of revealing to them the realities of religion through severe self-discipline and ascetical rigour instead of entangling them into verbal polemics and intellectual arguments. And there emerged a group, who called themselves people of tradition, who thought that salvation depended on believing in the apparent meanings of the Qur'an and the tradition, without any academic research.

The utmost they allowed was looking into literary value of the words. Thus, before the second century had proceeded very far, the Muslim society had broadly split in four groups: The theologians, the philosophers, the Sufis and the people of tradition. There was an intellectual chaos in the ummah and the Muslims, generally speaking, had lost their bearing.

The only thing to which all were committed was the word, "There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) is the Messenger of Allah'. They differed with each other in everything else. There was dispute on the meanings of the names and attributes of Allah, as well as about His actions; there was conflict about the reality of the heavens and the earth and what is in and on them;

there were controversies about the decree of Allah and the divine measure; opinions differed whether man is a helpless tool in divine hands, or is a free agent; there were wranglings about various aspects of reward and punishment;

arguments were kicked like ball, from one side to the other concerning the realities of death, al-barzakh (intervening period between death and the Day of Resurrection); resurrection, paradise and hell. In short, not a single subject, having any relevance to religion, was left without a discord of one type or the other.

And this divergence, not unexpectedly, showed itself in exegesis of the Qur'an. Every group wanted to support his views and opinions from the Qur'an; and the exegesis had to serve this purpose. The people of tradition explained the Qur'an with the traditions ascribed to the companions and their disciples. They went ahead so long as there was a tradition to lead them on, and stopped when they could not find any such tradition (provided the meaning was not self-evident). They thought it to be the only safe method, as Allah says:

... and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord ...' (3:7). But they were mistaken. Allah has not said in His Book that rational proof had no validity. How could He say so when the authenticity of the Book itself depended on rational proof. On the other

hand, He has never said that the words of the companions or their disciples had any value as religious proof.

How could He say so when there were such glaring discrepancies in their opinions? In short, Allah has not called us to the sophistry which accepting and following contradictory opinions and views would entail. He has called us, instead, to meditate on the Qur'anic verses in order to remove any apparent discrepancy in them.

Allah has revealed the Qur'an as a guidance, and has made it a light and an explanation of everything. Why should a light seek brightness from others' light? Why should a guidance be led by others' guidance? Why should "an explanation of everything" be explained by others' words? The theologians' lot was worse all the more.

They were divided into myriads of sects; and each group clung to the verse that seemed to support its belief and tried to explain away what was apparently against it.

The seed of sectarian differences was sown in academic theories or, more often than not, in blind following and national or tribal prejudice; but it is not the place to describe it even briefly. However, such exegesis should be called adaptation, rather than explanation. There are two ways of explaining a verse-One may say: "What does the Qur'an say?" Or one may say: "How can this verse be explained, so as to fit on my belief? " The difference between the two approaches is quite clear. The former forgets every pre-conceived idea and goes where the Qur'an leads him to.

The latter has already decided what to believe and cuts the Qur'anic verses to fit on that body; such an exegesis is no exegesis at all. The philosophers too suffered from the same syndrome. They tried to fit the verses on the principles of Greek philosophy (that was divided into four branches: Mathematics, natural science, divinity and practical subjects including civics).

If a verse was clearly against those principles it was explained away. In this way the verses describing metaphysical subjects, those explaining the genesis and creation of the heavens and the earth, those concerned with life after death and those about resurrection, paradise and hell were distorted to conform with the said philosophy.

Supplement

That philosophy was admittedly only a set of conjectures - unencumbered with any test or proof; but the Muslim philosophers felt no remorse in treating its views on the system of skies, orbits, natural elements and other related subjects as the absolute truth with which the exegesis of the Qur'an had to conform.

The Sufis kept their eyes fixed on esoteric aspects of creation; they were too occupied with their inner world to look at the outer one. Their tunnel-like vision prevented them from looking at the things in their true perspective. Their love of esoteric made them look for inner interpretations of the verses; without any regard to their manifest and clear meanings. It encouraged the people to base their explanations on poetic expressions and to use anything to prove anything.

The condition became so bad that the verses were explained on the-basis of the numerical values of their words; letters were divided into bright and dark ones and the explanations were based on that division. Building castle in the air, wasn't it? Obviously, the Qur'an was not revealed to guide the Sufis only; nor had it addressed itself to only those who knew the numerical values of the letters (with all its ramifications); nor were its realities based on astrological calculations. Of course, there are traditions narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (A.S.) saying for example:

"Verily the Qur'an has an exterior and an interior, and its interior has an interior upto seven (or according to a version, seventy) interiors..". But the Prophet and the Imams gave importance to its exterior as much as to its interior; they were as much concerned with its revelation as they were with its interpretation.

We shall explain in the beginning of the third chapter, "The Family of 'Imran", that "interpretation" is not a meaning against the manifest meaning of the verse. Such an interpretation should more correctly be called "misinterpretation". This meaning of the word, "interpretation", came in vogue in the Muslim circles long after the revelation of the Qur'an and the spread of Islam. What the Qur'an means by the word, "interpretation", is something other than the meaning and the significance.

In recent times, a new method of exegesis has become fashionable. Some people, supposedly Muslims, who were deeply influenced by the natural sciences (which are based on observations and tests) and the social ones (that rely on induction), followed the materialists of Europe or the pragmatists.

Under the influence of those anti-Islamic theories, they declared that the religion's realities cannot go against scientific knowledge; one should not believe except that which is perceived by any one of the five senses; nothing exists except the matter and its properties.

What the religion claims to exist, but which the sciences reject-like The Throne, The Chair, The Tablet and The Pen-should be interpreted in a way that conforms with the science; as for those things which the science is silent about, like the resurrection etc., they should be brought within the purview of the laws of matter;

the pillars upon which the divine religious laws are based-like revelation, angel, Satan, prophet- hood, apostleship, imamah (Imamate) etc.-are spiritual things, and the spirit is a development of the matter, or let us say, a property of the matter; legislation of those laws is manifestation of a special social genius, who ordains them after healthy and fruitful contemplations, in order to establish a good and pro- gressive society.

They have further said: One cannot have confidence in the traditions, because many are spurious; only those traditions may be relied upon which are in conformity with the Book. As for the Book itself, one should not explain it in the light of the old philosophy and theories, because they were not based on observations and tests-they were just a sort of mental exercise which has been totally discredited now by the modern science.

The best, rather the only, way is to explain the Qur'an with the help of other Qur'anic verses-except where the science has asserted something which is relevant to it. This, in short, is what they have written, or what necessarily follows from their total reliance on tests and observations.

We are not concerned here with the question whether their scientific principles and philosophic dicta can be accepted as the foundation of the Qur'an's exegesis. But it should be pointed out here that the objection which they have leveled against the ancient exegetes -that theirs was only an adaptation and not the explanation- is equally true about their own method; they too say that the Qur'an and its realities must be made to conform with the scientific theories.

If not so, then why do they insist that the academic theories should be treated as true foundations of exegesis from which no deviation could be allowed? This method improves nothing on the discredited method of the ancients. If you look at all the above-mentioned ways of exegesis, you will find that all of them suffer from a most serious defect:

They impose the results of academic or philosophic arguments on the Qur'anic meanings; they make the Qur'an conform with an extraneous idea. In this way, explanation turns into adaptation, realities of the Qur'an are explained away as allegories and its manifest meanings are sacrificed for so-called "interpretations". As we mentioned in the beginning, the Qur'an introduces itself as the guidance for the worlds (3:96); the manifest light (4:174), and the explanation of every thing (16:89).

But these people, contrary to those Qur'anic declarations, make it to be guided by extraneous factors, to be illuminated by some outside theories, and to be explained by something other than itself! What is that "something else"? What authority has it got? And if there is any difference in various explanations of a verse and indeed there are most serious differences-which mediator should the Qur'an refer to?

What is the root-cause of the differences in the Qur'an's explanations? It could not happen because of any difference in the meaning of a word, phrase or sentence.

The Qur'an has been sent down in plain Arabic; and no Arab (or Arabic-knowing non-Arab) can experience any difficulty in understanding it. Also, there is not a single verse (out of more than six thousand) which is

enigmatic, obscure or abstruse in its import; nor is there a single sentence that keeps the mind wandering in search of its meaning.

After all, the Qur'an is admittedly the most eloquent speech, and it is one of the essential ingredients of eloquence that the talk should be free from obscurity and abstruseness. Even those verses that are counted among the "ambiguous" ones, have no ambiguity in their meanings; whatever the ambiguity, it is in identification of the particular thing or individual from among the group to which that meaning refers.

This statement needs some elaborations:- In this life we are surrounded by matter; even our senses and faculties are closely related to it. This familiarity with matter and material things has influenced our mode of thinking. When we hear a word or a sentence, our mind races to its material meaning.

When we hear, for example, the words, life, knowledge, power, hearing, sight, speech, will, pleasure, anger, creation and order, we at once think of the material manifestations of their meanings. Likewise, when we hear the words, heaven, earth, tablet, pen, throne, chair, angel and his wings, and Satan and his tribe and army, the first things that come into our minds are their material manifestations. Likewise, when we hear the sentences, "Allah created the universe", "Allah did this", "Allah knew it", "Allah intended it" or "intends it", we look at these actions in frame of "time", because we are used to connect every verb with a tense. In the same way, when we hear the verses:

and with Us is more yet (50:35), . . . We would have made it from before Ourselves (21:17), . . . and that which is with Allah is best. . . (62:11), . . . and to Him you shall be brought back (2:28, etc.).

we attach with the divine presence the concept of "place", because in our minds the two ideas are inseparable. Also, on reading the verses: And when We intend to destroy a town (17 :16), And We intend to bestow a favour . . . (28: 5), And Allah intends ease for you (2:185), we think that the "intention" has the same meaning in every sentence, as is the case with our own intention and will.

In this way, we jump to the familiar (which most often is material) meaning of every word. And it is but natural. Man has made words to fulfill his social need of mutual intercourse; and society in its turn was established to fulfil the man's material needs. Not unexpectedly, the words became symbols of the things which men were connected with and which helped them in their material progress.

But we should not forget that the material things are constantly changing and developing with the development of expertise. Man gave the name, lamp, to a certain receptacle in which he put a wick and a little fat that fed the lighted wick which illuminated the place in darkness.

That apparatus kept changing until now it has become the electric bulb of various types; and except the name "lamp" not a single component of the original lamp can be found in it. Likewise, there is no resemblance in the balance of old times and the modern scales -especially if we compare the old apparatus with the modern equipment for weighing and measuring heat, electric-current's flow and blood-pressure.

And the armaments of old days and the ones invented within our own times have nothing in common, except the name. The named things have changed so much that not a single component of the original can be found in them; yet the name has not changed. It shows that the basic element that allows the use of a name for a thing is not the shape of that thing, but its purpose and benefit. Man, imprisoned as he is within his habitat and habit, often fails to see this reality.

That is why al-Hashawiyah and those who believe that God has a body interpret the Qur'anic verses and phrases within the frame-work of the matter and the nature. But in fact they are stuck with their habit and usage, and not to the exterior of the Qur'an and the traditions. Even in the literal meanings of the Qur'an we find ample evidence that relying on the habit and usage in explanation of the divine speech would cause confusion and anomaly. For example, Allah says:

Nothing is like a likeness of Him (42:11); Visions comprehended Him not, and He comprehends (all) visions; and He is the Knower of subtilities, the Aware (6:73); glory be to Him above what they ascribe (to Him) (23:91; 37:159).

These verses manifestly show that what we are accustomed to cannot be ascribed to Allah. It was this reality that convinced many people that they should not explain the Qur'anic words by identifying them with their usual and common meanings. Going a step further, they sought the help of logical and philosophical arguments to avoid wrong deductions. This gave a foothold to academic reasoning in explaining the Qur'an and identifying the individual person or thing meant by a word. Such discussions can be of two kinds:

i) The exegete takes a problem emanating from a Qur'anic statement, looks at it from academic and philosophical point of view, weighs the pros and cons and with the help of the philosophy, science and logic decides what the true answer should be. Thereafter, he takes the verse and fits it anyhow on that answer which, he thinks, is right. The Muslim philosophers and theologians usually followed this method; but, as mentioned earlier, the Qur'an does not approve of it.

ii) The exegete explains the verse with the help of other relevant verses, meditating on them together-and meditation has been forcefully urged upon by the Qur'an itself-and identifies the individual person or thing by its particulars and attributes mentioned in the verse. No doubt this is the only correct method of exegesis. Allah has said:

and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything (16:89).

Is it possible for such a book not to explain its own self? Also He has described the Qur'an in these words:

a guidance for mankind and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between wrong) (2:185);

and He has also said:

and We have sent down to you a manifest light (4:174).

The Qur'an is, accordingly, a guidance, an evidence, a discrimination between right and wrong and a manifest light for the people to guide them

aright and help them in all their needs. Is it imaginable that it would not guide them aright in its own matter, while it is their most important need? Again Allah says:

And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them onto Our ways (29:69).

Which striving is greater than the endeavour to understand His Book? And which way is more straight than the Qur'an? Verses of this meaning are very numerous, and we shall discuss them in detail in the beginning of the third chapter, The Family of 'Imran. Allah taught the Qur'an to His Prophet and appointed him as the teacher of the Book:

The Faithful Spirit has descended with it upon your heart that you may be of the warners, in plain Arabic language (26 :193-4);

and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect (16: 44);... an Apostle ... who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom (62:2).

And the Prophet appointed his progeny to carry on this work after him. It is clear from his unanimously accepted tradition:

I am leaving behind among you two precious things; as long as you hold fast to them you will never go astray after me: The Book of Allah and my progeny, my family members; and these two shall never separate from each other until they reach me (on) the reservoir.

And Allah has confirmed, in the following two verses, this declaration of the Prophet that his progeny had the real know- ledge of the Book:

Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying(33:33);

Most surely it is an honoured Qur'an, in a Book that is hidden; None do touch it save the purified ones (56 :77-79).

And the Prophet and the Imams from his progeny always used this second method for explaining the Qur'an, as may be seen in the traditions that have been narrated from them on exegesis, some of which will be quoted in this book in appropriate places. One cannot find a single instance in their traditions where they might have taken help of an academic theory or philosophical postulate for explaining a verse.

The Prophet has said in a sermon: "Therefore, when mischiefs come to confuse you like the segments of darkened night, then hold fast to the Qur'an; as it is the intercessor whose intercession shall be granted; and a credible advocate; and whoever keeps it before him, it will lead him to the Garden; and whoever keeps it behind, it will drive him to the Fire; and it is the guide that guides to the best path; and it is a book in which there is explanation,

particularization and recapitulation; and it is a decisive (world), and not a joke; and there is for it a manifest (meaning) and an esoteric (one); thus its apparent (meaning) is firm, and its esoteric (one) is knowledge; its exterior is elegant and its interior deep; it has (many) boundaries, and its boundaries have (many) boundaries; its wonders shall not cease, and its (unexpected) marvels shall not be old. There are in it the lamps of guidance and the

beacon of wisdom, and guide to knowledge for him who knows the attributes.

Therefore, one should extend his sight; and should let his eyes reach the attribute; so that one who is in perdition may get deliverance, and one who is entangled may get free; because meditation is the life of the heart of the one who sees, as the one having a light (easily) walks in darkness; therefore, you must seek good deliverance and (that) with little waiting .

'Ali (a.s.) said, inter alia, speaking about the Qur'an in a sermon: "Its one part speaks with the other, and one portion testifies about the other."

This is the straight path and the right way which was used by the true teachers of the-Qur'an and its guides, may Allah's blessings be on them all! We shall write, under various headings, what Allah has helped us to understand from the honoured verses, by the above- mentioned method. We have not based the explanations on any philosophical theory, academic idea or mystical revelation.

We have not put into it any outside matter except a fine literary point on which depends the understanding of Arabic eloquence, or a self-evident or practical premises which can be understood by one and all.

Supplement 2

From the discussions, written according to the above- mentioned method, the following subjects have become crystal-clear:

1. The matters concerning the names of Allah, and His attributes, like His Life, Knowledge, Power, Hearing, Sight and Oneness etc. As for the Person of Allah, you will find that the Qur'an believes that He needs no description.

2. The matters concerning the divine actions, like creation, order, will, wish, guidance, leading astray, decree, measure, compulsion, delegation (of Power), pleasure, displeasure and other similar actions.

3. The matters concerned with the intermediary links between Allah and man, like the Curtain, the Tablet, the Pen, the Throne, the Chair, the Inhabited House, the Heavens, the Earth, the Angels, the Satans, and the Jinns etc.

4. The details about man before he came to this world.

5. The matters related to man in this life, like the history of mankind, knowledge of his self, the foundation of society, the prophethood and the apostleship, the revelation, the inspiration, the book and the religion and law. The high status of the prophets, shining through their stories, come under this heading .

6. The knowledge about man after he departs from this world, that is, al-Barzakh.

7. The matters about human character. Under this heading come the various stages through which the friends of Allah pass in their spiritual journey, like submission, faith, benevolence, humility, purity of intention and other virtues. (We have not gone into details of the verses of the law, as more appropriately it is a subject for the books of jurisprudence.) As a direct result of this method, we have never felt any need to interpret a verse against its apparent meaning. As we have said earlier, this type of interpretation is in fact misinterpretation.

As for that "interpretation" which the Qur'an has mentioned in various verses, it is not a type of "meaning"; it is something else. At the end of the commentaries, we have written some traditions of the Prophet and the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.), narrated by the Sunni and Shiah narrators. But we have not included the opinions of the companions and their disciples, because, first, there is too much confusion and contradiction in them; and second, they are not vested with any authority in Islam.

On going through those traditions of the Prophet and the Imams (peace be on them all!), you will notice that this "new" method of exegesis (adopted in this book) is in reality the oldest and the original method which was used by the Teachers of the Qur'an (peace of Allah be on them all!).

Also, we have written separately various topics - philosophical, academic, historical, social and ethical- when there was a need for it. In all such discussions, we have confined our talk to the basic premises, without going in too much detail. We pray to Allah, High is He, to guide us and keep our talk to the point; He is the Best Helper and the Best Guide.

(Allamah Tabataba'i, Al-Mizan, p. 3-16).

Reading through The Glorious Quran Noor al-Qur'an

Sura Al-Fatihah

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful Contents of the Sura The Holy phrase In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful / bism-il-lah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim / is, in fact, mentioned both at the onset of the Qur'an and at the beginning of every Sura, except Sura 9, (Sura Taubah - Repentance).

And, since the purpose of Allah's Word, i.e. the whole Qur'an, is to guide people; as Sura Al-Ma'idah, No. 5, verses 15-16 say : "...Indeed, there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah ", " With it Allah guideth him who follows His pleasure to the ways of peace and safety ..."; therefore, this guidance, being a grant and a fundamental principle, begins with Allah's Holy Name.

This Sura, among all Suras of the Qur'an, has an extraordinary radiance which originates from the following merits : 1. The Tone of the Sura : This Sura, The Opening, in comparison with other Suras of the Qur'an regarding its tone and melody, has a particular style which is clearly different and extraordinary.

The other Suras contain instructions from Allah, Who gives commands and admonishments to His servants, but, in this Sura, His words are uttered on behalf of the servants. In other words, in this Sura, Allah has taught His servants how to supplicate and speak to Him, simply and without a mediator.

2. Al-Fatihah, the Basis of the Qur'an :

It is narrated that the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) has said : " By the One, in Whose hand is my soul, Allah has not sent down a similar Sura to this Sura (Al-Fatihah), neither in the Torah, nor in the Gospel, nor in the Psalms, nor even in the Qur'an, and it is Umm-ul-Kitab "; ⁽¹⁾ which means that it is the basis and origin of all excellence.

In fact, besides referring to the Resurrection, this Sura presents facts concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence, Unity of Attributes, Unity of Divine Acts, and Unity of Worship. It is the essence of the whole meaning of the Qur'an.

It is narrated from Hadrat Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) that :

" All secrets of Allah are in Divine Books; and the contents of all those Divine Books are comprised in the Qur'an; and what is found in the Qur'an is condensed in Sura Al-Fatihah, and what is in Al-Fatihah is gathered in /bismillah /, and what is in / bismillah / is concentrated in /b/, (the first letter of Bism-il-lah ')..."⁽²⁾ Based on the entirety of great commentators' statements, it is understood that this tradition indicates clearly the importance of both the Holy Qur'an and /bismillah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim/ in which science and knowledge, from the beginning to the end, is comprised. The interpreter and elucidator of these sciences is the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), and after him there are his true vicegerents including Amir-ul-

Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.).⁽³⁾ Al-Fatihah, Magnificent Honour of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) :

Sura Al-Fatihah, more so than the other Suras in the Holy Qur'an, was revealed to the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) as a great bounty. It stands on a par with the whole Qur'an. The seven verses in the Sura sum up the whole Qur'an : " And We have bestowed upon thee the Seven Oft-repeated (verses) and the Grand Qur'an ", (Sura Al-Hijr, No. 15, verse 87).

This meaning is also referred to in a narration from Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) quoting the Prophet's (p.b.u.h.) tradition who said : " Verily, Allah, the Exalted, has bestowed (His) favours on me particularly for The Opening ' (Al-Fatihah) and has positioned it on a par with the whole Grand Qur'an, and surely Fatihat-ul-Kitab (the Opening of the Qur'an) is the dearest (item) in the treasures of the Arsh, (Throne of Heaven) ".⁽⁴⁾ The Importance of its Recitation :

The recitation of this Sura, because of its extreme importance, is frequently emphasized in Islamic traditions and narrations.

As for its virtue, it is narrated from the holy Prophet(p.b.u.h.) that: " The reward of any Muslim who recites the Sura Opening ', is like that of a person who has recited two thirds of the Qur'an, and so much reward would he receive as if he has given every believing Muslim, man or woman, a free will offering ".⁽⁵⁾ The Titles of the Sura :

There are ten titles given to this Sura, as taken from Islamic narrations and commentary books, thus: Fatihat-ul-Kitab, Umm-ul-Kitab, Umm-ul-Qur'an, Sab-ul-Mathani, Al-Wafiyah, Al-Kafiyah, Ash-Shafiyah, Al-Asas, As-Salat, and Al-Hamd. (6)

**** * * Sura Al-Fatihah (The Opening) No. 1 (Verses 1-7)***

1. " In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful."
2. " (All) praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds."
3. " The Beneficent, The Merciful."
4. " Master of the Day of Judgement."
5. " Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) do we seek help."
6. " Guide us (O' Lord) on the Straight Path."
7. " The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties, not (the path) of those inflicted with Thy wrath, nor (of those) gone astray."

1. " In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful." Commentary :

It is a custom among most people of the world to recite the name of one of their great and very beloved personalities that the worthiness of their work might be elevated. That is, they relate that work to that personality from the very beginning of their endeavour.

Among all beings, the One Who is eternal is only Allah, and, therefore, everything and every activity should begin with His Holy Name. It should be enveloped in His Light, and help should be always asked only from Him. So, in the first verse of the Qur'an, we recite Bism-illah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim', (In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful).

This action should not be done only with the tongue, but it should be done truly and meaningfully, because this kind of connection with Him sets

work in the right direction and keeps it far from any deviation. For this very reason, such a work will certainly be successful and blessed.

The holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), in a tradition, has said : " Any important work that begins without mentioning / bismillah /, will remain invalid. " ⁽⁷⁾ After narrating this tradition, Hadrat Aeir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) added: " For every action that a person wants to do, he/she should recite / bismillah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim /, which means that he/she begins the action with the Name of Allah, and every action that begins with the Name of Allah is blessed. " ⁽⁸⁾ On the excellence and importance of / bism-il-lah /, it is narrated from Ali-ibn-Musa-r-Rida (a.s.), who has said thus: "

(The holy phrase) Bism-il-lah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim' is closer to the Exalted Name of Allah' than the pupil is to the white of the eye ". ⁽⁹⁾ Again, Ibn-Abbas narrates from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) thus:

"As soon as a teacher tells a child to say Bism-il-lah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim' and the child says it, Allah records immunity (from fire) for the child,his or her parents and the teacher". ⁽¹⁰⁾ Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has said: " No Holy Book ever came down from heaven but that it began with Bism-il-lah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim' ". ⁽¹¹⁾ In Khisal' by Shaykh Saduq it is cited that Imam Baqir (a.s.) has said: "... When we begin an action, great or small, it is appropriate to recite /bism-il-lah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim/ and that action may be blessed ". ⁽¹²⁾ In short, the stability and permanence of an action is due to this very relation to Allah.

The phrase / bism-il-lah / at the start of the Sura, teaches us to seek the help of Allah from His pure perfect Essence when we begin any action. That is why Allah, the Exalted, in the first verses revealed to the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) instructed him to initiate the proclamation of Islam perform this great task with the Name of Allah: " Proclaim in the Name of your Lord...",(Sura Al-Alaq, No.96, verse 1); and the words of Noah (a.s.) to his followers, at the time of the Flood are: " So he said: Embark ye on the Ark, in the Name of Allah, whether it moves or be at rest! ... " (Sura Hud, No. 11, verse 41).

Again, Soloman's letter to the Queen of Sheba begins, thus: " It is from Soloman, and is (as follows):In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful' ", (Sura An-Naml, No. 27, verse 30).

Based on the same principle, all of the Suras of the Holy Qur'an, (except Sura At-Taubah, No. 9) begin with /bism-il-lah/ ⁽¹³⁾ in order to pursue the essential aim of guiding man and leading him to prosperity with success, far from getting a taste of defeat.

In any event, when we begin our work with reliance upon the Supreme Power of Allah, Whose Power is above all power, we feel, psychologically speaking, far more powerful; therefore, we may be more confident. We may try more, be more persevering, and more courageous in challenging with difficulties, more hopeful, and, similarly, our intentions and the essence of our actions may be more purified. At the time of beginning any affair, reciting the Name of Allah is the secret to its success.

To whatever extent we further explain this verse, it will still be seen insufficient, because, according to a narration, Hadrat Ali (a.s.), regarding

the commentary of the verse, talked to Ibn-Abbas from the beginning of a night until the next morning, but it was only for the commentary of /b/, the first letter of /bism-il-lah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim/.

⁽¹⁴⁾ * * * Explanation : Is the Phrase Bism-il-lah' a Part of Each Sura ? Almost all Islamic scholars unanimously hold the opinion that / bism-il-lah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim/ is, as was stated before, a part of Sura Al-Fatihah and, also, of the other Suras of the Qur'an (except Sura At-Taubah, No. 9). In essence, the inclusion of /bism-il-lah/ at the beginning of all Suras of the Holy Qur'an, except the above mentioned one, is a vital piece of evidence bearing witness to this very fact, and the belief is so firm that no change has been made in the Qur'an and nothing has been added to it since it was revealed to the Prophet of Islam (p.b.u.h.).

Muawiyat-ibn-Ammar, one of the companions of Imam Sadiq (a.s.), said that he had asked the Imam whether he should say /bism-il-lah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim / at the beginning of Sura Al-Fatihah when he stood for prayer, and he (a.s.) replied: " Yes ". He had questioned him (a.s.), again, as to if he should recite /bism-il-lah/ when Sura Al-Fatihah ended and before reciting the next Sura.

Then, Imam Sadiq (a.s.), again, answered: " Yes ". ⁽¹⁵⁾ Dar Qutni, a Muslim learned researcher, according to a sound document, narrates from Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) that someone asked him (a.s.):" What is As-Sab-al-Mathani (Seven Verses)?" " It is Sura Al-Hamd ",he (a.s.) answered. The man said: " Sura Al-Hamd consists of six verses ". He (a.s.) replied: " Bism-illah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim ' is also one verse. "

⁽¹⁶⁾ Moreover, Muslims have always preserved the practice of reciting / bism-il-lah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim / at the beginning of every Sura (except Sura 9) when reciting the Holy Qur'an, and it has been proven, on numerous accounts, that the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) used to recite it, too.

It has been said that Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) was asked to say whether / bism-il-lah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim / was a part of Sura Al-Fatihah. He (a.s.) answered: " Yes, the Messenger of Allah used to recite it and considered it one verse (of the verses) of the Sura, and he said that Fatihat-ul-Kitab (The Opening) is the same as Sab-al-Mathani ' (seven verses) "

⁽¹⁷⁾ Allah, the Most Inclusive Name of God The term / ism / in the phrase / bism-il-lah /, as men of letters in Arabic literature say, is originally derived from / sumuww / with the meaning of height, elevation'. The reason why any noun' is called by an appellation ' is that after choosing to call a noun' by the particular given name' (ism), the hidden meaning of the expression appears, and the sense of the name' is elevated, therefore forsaking meaninglessness.

In the phrase / bism-il-lah /, the word Allah is the most complete and comprehensive name among the Lord's many names. This is because each of Allah's names, which are found in the Holy Qur'an, as well as in other Islamic sources, truly reflects one particular aspect of Allah's Attributes. In other words, the only name that refers to all of His Attributes of Glory and Beauty, is Allah. That is why other names are often used as modifiers for the word Allah'.

For example, " Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful", (Sura Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 226), refers to Allah's forgiveness; " ...Allah heareth and knoweth all things ", (No. 2, verse 227) shows His being well-acquainted with what is audible and what comes to pass, respectively; " And Allah sees well all that you do", (Sura Al-Hujurat, No. 49, verse 18) states that He has information on every thing that is done by anyone; " Surely Allah is He Who gives (all) sustenance, the Lord of Power, steadfast (for ever) ", (Sura Ath-Thariyat, No. 51, verse 58) points to His giving sustenance to all creatures and, at the same time, discloses that He is powerful and firm in His actions.

And, finally, Sura Al-Hashr, No. 59, verses 23,24 reveals some other Attributes of Allah. The terms Creator ' and Evolver ' are suggestive of His creativeness and inventiveness, and Bestower of Forms ' indicates His giving shapes: " Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god; the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme (in creating all creatures)...."

He is Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names... ." Another piece of evidence which is a clear indication that this Name, Allah, is all-inclusive is that the acceptance of Faith, in Islam, is possible only by reciting the sentence: / la ilaha illallah / " There is no god, but Allah "; and each of the other phrases such as: All-Knowing ' or Creator ', or Bestower of Sustenance ', and the like, alone, is not sufficient enough to proclaim as evidence of Monotheism in Islam.

And, that is why in religions other than Islam, the God of Muslims is referred to as Allah ', because it is only Muslims who use Allah ' to refer to what they do worship. * * * Allah's General and Specific Mercy:

The words ar-Rahman' (The Beneficent) and ar-Rahim' (The Merciful) are adjectives, both derived from ar-Rahmah' (Mercy).

The former word, the Beneficent, as it is popularly recognized among some commentators, refers to the General Mercy of Allah which is bestowed upon all creatures, among them are the believers and the disbelievers, good-doers and evildoers. And, as we can see, the Divine bounties of life are distributed everywhere and all human beings enjoy the endless merits therein. This is their sustenance. They draw it out of the abundant blessings encompassing the whole world of existence.

The word ar-Rahim' (The Merciful) refers to that Specific Mercy that is endowed upon the believing, obedient servants alone. The believers, because of their true belief, good actions, and faithful active obedience, deserve this special, exclusive mercy, of which the disbelievers are deprived.

The particular fact ratifying this topic is that the word Rahman is always used in the Qur'an with the meaning of an infinite form of mercy, which is a sign of its generality, while the word Rahim is sometimes used with the meaning of a finite form, which is a sign of its specificity such as: "... And He is full of Mercy to the Believers ", (Sura Al-Ahzab, No. 33, verse 43). And it is sometimes used in an infinite form such as in Sura Al-Fatihah.

A narration from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says: " Allah is the God of all things and is Beneficent to all His creatures, and He is Merciful, especially to the believers." ⁽¹⁸⁾ Therefore, at the moment that we initiate any action, when we begin with the Name of Allah, we must seek His Mercy, General and Specific Mercy, both.

It is interesting to note that this power, which has a broad concept much the same as gravitational pull, and has the ability to draw hearts closer together, is the very Attribute of Mercy. This Attribute of Mercy is the very means by which men can attain a close relationship with the Creator, also.

Supplement

That is why true believers, when reciting the holy verse /bism-il-lah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim/, at the beginning of their affairs, detach their hearts from everything else and rely only upon Allah, and seek help only from Him, because He is the only One Whose Mercy is All-Encompassing' and no creature is deprived of it.

Another fact that can also be understood from / bism-il-lah / is that Allah's acts are based on Mercy, and, punishment has an exceptional aspect which will not be fulfilled unless there are some exact, clear reasons for it.

When we recite the supplication entitled, Jaushan Kabir ', Section 20 thus : " O'Lord, Whose Mercy surpasses His Wrath... " the above point becomes clear.

Human beings should attach importance to mercy and affection and behave accordingly in their daily lives and use violence and harshness only for those times when it is clearly warranted.

We conclude this discussion with a tradition, rich in meaning, from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), who, when commenting on the many different kinds of His All-Encompassing Mercy, said : " Verily, there are one hundred mercies belonging to Allah, from which, He has sent down to the Earth only one and distributed that one among His creatures. All the mercy and affection they have, issue from it. He, the Merciful, withheld the other 99 for Himself to show mercy upon His servants on the Day of Resurrection ".
(19)

" (All) praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds " Commentary : The World is Full of His Mercy After reciting the phrase / bism-il-lah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim /, to begin the Sura, our first duty is to bring to mind the Great Creator and Cherisher of the world of being, and His endless bounties which have surrounded us thoroughly. In doing so, it is both a guide ' for us to observe the existence of Providence and a motive ' for showing our servitude and worship to Him.

It is a motive' because any man, after receiving a gift, wishes to know its giver at once, in order to show his gratitude and thankfulness to him. This quality is in man's innate disposition prompting him to manifest his acknowledgment of Him.

This same quality in man, in discussing the theological motives of the necessity of expressing thankfulness to the Bestower ', according to what man's nature and rationale leads him to, is considered one of those motives.

And it is a guide' to knowing the Lord and His bounties, because the best and the most direct way towards the acknowledgment of the Origin is the study of the secrets of creation, especially, the existence of the bounties of life as related to human beings.

Therefore, perhaps, it is for these two reasons that Sura Al-Fatihah, alongside /bism-il-lah/, begins thus: " (All) praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds ".

Or, in other words, the verse " (All) praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds " points to both the Unity of Divine Essence, and the Unity of Divine Attributes and Acts.

Originally, qualifying Allah (s.w.t.), here, with the phrase /rabb-il-alamin/ (the Lord of the Worlds) is, in fact, mentioning the reason after stating the claim. It seems that someone has asked why all praise is (only) Allah's, and the response is that it is for the reason that He is the Lord of the Worlds'.

This is one of the characteristics of Allah. In another occurrence, the Holy Qur'an says: " He Who has made every thing which He has created most good ...," (Sura As-Sajdah, No. 32, verse 7).

And again, in Sura Hud, No. 11, verse 6, it says: " There is no moving creature on the earth but its sustenance depends on Allah... ". It is, also, clearly understood from the word /al-hamd/, praise ', used in this verse, that Allah has created all these bounties and benefits, basically, by His Choice and His Will.

It is interesting to note that by stating the phrase, (All) praise is (only) Allah's ', it is not only helpful to use it for the commencement of affairs, but, as the Qur'an teaches us, it is also used as a conclusion, like in Sura Yunus, No. 10, verse 10, about the good-doers in Heaven, it says: "(This will be) their cry therein: Glory to Thee, O God! ' And peace' will be their greeting therein! And the close of their cry will be:

Surely, the Praise is Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds! ' ". Virtue of the Verse Concerning the virtue of this Holy verse, there is a narration from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) which says that in a tradition from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), he has said: " When a believing servant says The Praise is (only) Allah's, the Lord of the Worlds ', such a praise that befits Him and His Rank, the angels are unable to record it.

They will be asked by Allah why they did not record the reward of the phrase which the believing servant stated. Then, in response to their not recording the reward, they will ask how it is that they could even understand and estimate the high standard of saying such a phrase which contains the praise befitting and deserving only to Him. Allah, the Exalted, will tell them that they should record the phrase and it would be for Him to endow the servant with the reward of the praise as befitting Him ".⁽²⁰⁾ The word /rabb/ originally means the owner of something who proceeds to train and improve it '.

This word is absolutely applied to Allah, alone, and if it is applied, in Arabic, for other than Him, it is certainly used in a possessive form, as /rabb-ud-dar / the owner of the house ', or /rabb-us-safinah / the owner of the ship '. In any case, the word, itself, conveys the meaning of training '.

There is another idea mentioned in Majma-ul-Bayan that says:

" /rabb/ means: an important person whose orders are obeyed '." However, it is probable that both meanings refer to the same origin. The term /alamin/ is the plural form of /alam/ the world' and we cite it, here, with the meaning of a collection of different creatures with common characteristics or a common time and place'. For example, we say: the world of Man, the world of animals, and the world of plants, or, we say: the world of the East and the world of the West, or: the world of today and the world of yesterday. Therefore, when /alam/, which has a plural sense by itself, is used in a plural form, it refers to the universe'.

The writer of the Al-Manar Commentary says that it is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that he has said /alamin/ means peoples', only. Then, the writer adds that the term is used in the Qur'an with the same meaning; for example: "...That it may be an admonition to all peoples ", (Sura Al-Furqan, No. 25, verse 1).⁽²¹⁾

It is true that the term /alamin/ in many occurrences, in the Qur'an, is used with the meaning of peoples', but, sometimes, it is also used with a broader scope of meaning which envelops other creatures; for instance:

" Then Praise be to Allah, Lord of the heavens and Lord of the earth, Lord and Cherisher of all the worlds! ", (Sura Al-Jathiyah, No. 45, verse 36). And, also, like: " Pharaoh said: And what is the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds ? ' (Moses) said: The Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth, and all between them ...", (Sura Ash-Shuara, No. 26, verses 23,24).

It is interesting that in a narration from Hadrat Ali (a.s.), Saduq has cited in the book Uyun-ul-Akhbar', that he (a.s.), commenting on the verse, has said: " (The phrase) /rabb-il-alamin/ refers to all creatures whether they are inanimate or living ".⁽²²⁾ There is, of course, no contradiction between these traditions, because, although the meaning of the term /alamin/ is very vast, Man is the most significant being among all creatures of the world, so, he is sometimes especially considered the central point of them, and other creatures are dependent upon him and in his shadow.

Therefore, when, in the tradition of the Imam (a.s.), the term is rendered into peoples ', the reason is that the main purpose of creation, in this great gathering of beings, is Man.

This point is, also, interesting that some have introduced two forms of /alam/ the world': the great world' (macrocosm) and the lesser world' (microcosm) by which they refer to Man as the lesser world', because the entity of a person alone, is a collection of different powers which govern the great world'.

In fact, man' is a sample of the whole world. So Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) in one of his poems, addressing Man, says: " You think that you are a small body, while (you should know that) you contain the great world' (macrocosm) inside you."⁽²³⁾ One of the factors that causes us to emphasize the vast meaning of /alam / the world', is that the term has occurred after the phrase /al-hamd-u-lil-lah/, in which we devote all the praise to Allah, only, and, then, we reason our statement with /rabb-il-alamin/ The Lord of the Worlds '. We say the praise is only Allah's, because all perfections, all bounties and all blessings, in this world, belong to Him, the Lord, the Cherisher.

" The Beneficent, The Merciful " Commentary : The meaning of /ar-rahman/ the Beneficent ' and /ar-rahim/ the Merciful ', together with their broad sense of meaning and the difference between them, was explained at length while commenting on /bism-il-lah/, the repetition of which is not required.

A point that should be added to the commentary, here, regarding ar-Rahman' and ar-Rahim', is that these two attributes, which are the most significant attributes of Allah, are repeated at least 30 times, every day, in

our (5) daily prayers; (twice in Sura Al-Fatihah, and once in the Sura we recite after it). In this way, we praise Allah sixty times as being Merciful ' each day.

This, indeed, is a lesson taught to all human beings more than anything else that they should try to acquire this attribute, and practice it in their daily lives and activities. Moreover, it points to the fact that if we count ourselves among the true, obedient servants of Allah, we should not follow or imitate the manner in which tyrant slave owners use against their servants when dealing with our servants.

The history of slavery indicates that the tyrant owners used to treat their slaves in horrifyingly cruel ways. For example, if a slave moved a little slow in performing services, he would receive harsh punishments: i.e. be whipped, put in chains or fetters, fastened to a mill-stone and forced to turn it, instructed to work in mines, imprisoned in deep, dark, wet holes and, if his faults were greater, he would be hanged. Another reference in the history of slavery also shows that condemned slaves were put in wild animal cages. If the slave succeeded in staying alive, another animal would be let in on him.

These are some examples of the conduct of some owners with their slaves. But, Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, has mentioned repeatedly, in the Holy Qur'an, that Allah is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful to the servants who are repentant of their disobedience to Him. For example: Sura Az-Zumar, No. 39, verse 53 says: " Say: O' My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins, for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful' ".

Therefore, the terms ar-Rahman' (the Beneficent) and ar-Rahim' (the Merciful) used after the phrase /rabb-il-alamin/ the Lord of the Worlds' refer to the idea that, He, with the absolute Power He has, is yet Merciful to all His creatures. This quality, which Allah possesses, attracts His servants to Him and they eagerly say:

ar-Rahman-ir-Rahim', (the Beneficent, the Merciful).

It is here that one's attention is drawn to the fact that the behaviour of Allah, the Exalted, toward His creatures is, by far, different from that of masters toward their servants, in particular, during the horrible period of slavery. Therefore, belief in Allah ' is the first of the five principles of Islam.

" Master of the Day of Judgement." Commentary : Faith in the Resurrection ', the Second Principle In this verse, attention is paid to the second important principle in Islam, i.e. Resurrection and the Hereafter when it says:

" Master of the Day of Judgement " .

Thus, the focus of the idea of the Origin and End, which is the main foundation of all ethical and social improvements in Man, reaches the peak of perfection.

It is noteworthy, here, that the mastership of Allah, or His Ownership, is pointed out, which illustrates His Sovereignty and Domination over everything and everyone on that Day, when all human beings will attend that Great Court for reckoning, before their real and genuine Master. They

will see all their deeds and even their thoughts present without there being aught less than the original or anything forgotten.

They will even have to accept their share of responsibility for any customs for which they have merely been the founders of, not necessarily the doers of them.

Allah's Ownership, on that Day, is not similar to our imaginary ownership of that which belongs to us from the things of this world. His Ownership, regarding the world of existence, is the real ownership. It is the special dependence of creatures on the Lord and their being in need of Him. If the flow of His blessings ceased even for a single moment, it would cause them to perish altogether.

In other words, this ownership is the consequence of His Creatorship and Divinity. He, Who creates beings, gives them life every moment and cherishes them, protects them and guides them, is the real master of all creatures. As a matter of fact, He is the only Ruler of all powers in the world of existence. There is no doubt that Allah is The Lord of the Worlds '.

The question to be raised here is this : Is not Allah the Absolute Owner of this world ? ' versus our statement to this effect that He is the Master of the Day of Judgement '. The answer to this question lies in the fact that the Ownership of Allah ', though it comprises both worlds, enjoys further manifestation in the Hereafter.

This is because all material ties and imaginary ownerships are cut off (in the Hereafter), and no one has anything of his or her own on That Day. Even intercession, if ever achieved, is by Allah's command, as the Qur'an says about the Reckoning Day: " The Day on which no soul shall have aught for (another) soul, and the command That Day shall be (wholly) Allah's ", (Sura Al-Infitar, No. 82, verse 19).

In other words, occasions arise, in this world, when one helps another through his or her speech, money, power, advocates, plans, designs, and so on. On That Day (the Hereafter), however, certainly not a single trace of such affairs will exist. Therefore, when people are asked: " Whose will be the Domination This Day ?...", they answer: "... that of Allah, the One, the Almighty! ", (Sura Al-Mu'min, No. 40, verse 16). This is also an answer to those who reject the idea that when Allah is the Owner of everything why, then, He is called the Master of the Day of Judgement '.

Man, with no belief in the Hereafter and the Day of Reckoning, would have the potential to be the most immoral of beings, the biggest tyrant committing the worst and the most hideous crimes, for, in his view, there is not any one to question or punish him if he is clever enough not to get caught and, with such characteristics, sometimes, it would be so terrible or impossible for other fellow-creatures to continue their lives in this world. Therefore, faith in life after death and the Day of Judgement, which is an essential part of Islam, like prayer, is very helpful in controlling men against committing sins.

Supplement 2

Emphasizing the Ownership of Allah on the Day of Judgement has this effect, too, that it stands against the disbelief of disbelievers in the Hereafter. It is understood from the verses of the Holy Qur'an that Faith in Allah has been a common belief even among disbelievers in the Age of Ignorance.

Sura Luqman, No. 31, verse 25 says about them: " If thou ask them, who it is that created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say: Allah '..." , while they did not accept the speech of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) about the Resurrection: " The Unbelievers say (in ridicule): Shall we point to you a man that will tell you, when ye are all scattered to pieces in disintegration, that ye shall (then be raised) in a New creation ? " " Has he invented a falsehood against Allah, or has a spirit (seized) him ?..." , (Sura Saba, No. 34, verses 7,8).

A tradition about Imam Sajjad (a.s.) says: " When Ali-ibn-il-Husayn (a.s.) began reciting Master of the Day of Judgement', he repeated it so many times that he was at the point of losing his life ".⁽²⁴⁾ The phrase / yaum-id-din /, is repeated more than ten times in the Qur'an, exclusively with the meaning of the Hereafter': " And what makes you know what the Day of Reckoning is ? " " Again, what makes you know what the Day of Reckoning is ? " " The Day on which no soul shall have aught for (another) soul, and the command that Day shall be (wholly) Allah's ", (Sura Al-Infitar, No. 82, verses 17-19).

The phrase /yaum-id-din/ is used in the sense of the Day of Judgement', for That Day' is the day of rewards; and /din/ in Arabic philology means: reward, recompense'. The most evident procedure fulfilled in the Hereafter is the procedure of paying rewards or inflicting punishments. On That Day, the curtains will be removed and the deeds of all will be reckoned, precisely, and everyone shall reap the fruit of his own actions, be they good or evil.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said in a tradition that the Day of Judgement is The Reckoning Day'.⁽²⁵⁾ It is also noteworthy to mention that some commentators believe that Resurrection' is called /yaum-ud-din/ because on That Day, everyone is recompensed for his own religion, if he has followed it accordingly.

" Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) do we seek help." Commentary : Man in the Presence of Allah Here, this verse is a start for a servant to plea and ask his needs from Allah. In fact, from here on, the tone of the statements changes.

The former verses were the praise and attributes of Allah, and the statement of Faith in His Pure Unity, consisting of a confession to the belief in the Day of Resurrection. But, from this verse on, it seems that the servant, with that firm foundation of Belief in the knowledge of Allah, sees himself in front of Him, the Pure Essence. He addresses Him and speaks, firstly, about his own worship for Him and, then, about His help which he seeks from Him. Thus he says:

" Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) do we seek help." In other words, when the concepts of the former verses settle in one's soul, and his entire entity is enlightened with the Light of Allah, the Cherisher of the

Worlds, and when he recognizes His General Mercy ' and Specific Mercy ', the individual transforms into a complete person from the point of belief ' and Faith '.

The prime fruit of this deep belief in monotheism, for a person, in one respect, is to be a pure true servant of Allah, free from any idol and idolatry, far from tyrants and lusts; and, on the other hand, to seek help only from His Pure Essence.

In fact, the former verses state the Unity of Essence and Attributes, while, here, the statement is regarding the Unity of Worship and Unity of Acts.

Unity of Worship ' means that we acknowledge no person or thing worthy of worship other than Allah, Whose commands alone do we obey and Whose laws only do we follow, avoiding any kind of servitude and submission to other than Him, the Pure Essence.

Unity of Acts ' means that we clearly recognize Him as the only real Author of Causes ' in the world. It does not mean that we would refuse the world of cause ' and be neglectful of searching for the causes of things, but it means that we would believe that any effect from any cause is under His command. It is He Who has given heat to fire, light to the sun, and vivacity to water.

The outcome of this belief is that one relies on Allah alone, and knows that all authority and power are His only. In his view, other than Him is powerless, mortal and perishable.

Allah is the only Essence to be relied on and worshipped. It is only He Who is deserving of man's reliance for everything.

This kind of thought and belief sets man apart from any one or any thing else and joins him only to Allah. He obeys Allah even when he pursues after the world of ways and means ', i.e. he sees the Power of Allah, the Cause of causes, in control of the means.

This belief elevates the soul of man so high and the scope of his thought so broad that it reaches eternity and becomes free from any limited circumstances, in so far as, Hadrat Amir-ul-Mu'mineen, the Master of the Virtuous, Ali (a.s.), regarding Allah, says: " I worship you neither for the fear of the Fire (of Your Hell) nor for the desire of Your Paradise, but I found You fit for worshipping and I worshipped You."

⁽²⁶⁾ Explanation : Allah : the Only Site of Reliance According to the Arabic literature, when the object of the verb precedes its subject, in that language, the meaning of exclusiveness is understood, and, here, the word / iyyaka / Thou ' has preceded the words / nabud / we worship' and / nastain / we seek help ' which indicates exclusiveness in which its result is the very Unity of Worship and Unity of Acts that were explained before. Even in our own worship, we need His help for which we must ask Him. We may be involved in self-conceit, deviation, hypocrisy and similar things, which destroy our worshipping and servitude totally. Then, in all affairs and activities, our full attention should be exclusively on Allah, the Exalted.

In other words, this, in itself, is one of the stages of monotheism, a high stage of it, which is rendered into monotheism in speculation'. That is, one should always and in all circumstances, think of Allah only. He should

rely exclusively on Allah. He should fear nothing but Allah; and he should trust Allah only. He should see nothing save Allah; he should want nothing save Allah; and he should love none save Allah. As the Qur'an says: " Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body... ", (Sura Al-Ahzab, No. 33, verse 4).

The Social Aspect of Worship The pronoun 'we', which is in the plural form, used in terms / nabud / we worship ' and / nastain / we seek help ', and in the next verses, shows that worship, especially prayer, is based on plural' and community.

The servant must consider himself among the community even when he is standing in front of Allah for invocation, much less during his other daily activities.

Thus, from the point of view of the Qur'an, any individualism, solitariness, and the like are not accepted in Islam. Particularly, the ritual prayer, from the prayer call: /hayya alas-salat/ hasten to the prayer', which is an invitation to initiate prayer, to Sura Al-Hamd at the beginning of the prayer, and the term /assalamu alaykum.../ 'peace be on you all...' at the end of the prayer, all are statements of verification to the concept that this worship basically has a social aspect; viz, it ought to be performed as a congregational prayer.

It is true that the prayer performed individually is also accepted in Islam, but personal worship is considered as the secondary degree. We Ask Allah for Help in Confronting Forces We have to confront different forces in this world, both the forces in nature and our innate, or inborn natural forces. To be able to challenge with these destructive, misleading factors, we need to be helped. Hence, we shelter under the protective umbrella of Allah.

We get up every morning and repeat the verse / ' iyyaka nabudu wa ' iyyaka nastain / (Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) we seek help) to confess our servitude to Allah and to ask His Pure Essence help to make us successful in this great challenge. We do the same in the evening before we go to bed. We get up in the morning with His remembrance, and we go to bed in the evening with His remembrance, and each time we ask help from His Pure Essence. What an excellent state this is for the person who is in this stage of Faith! He never bows to any tyrant. He never loses himself for the attraction of material gain, and as the Qur'an reveals about the Prophet of Islam (p.b.u.h.), saying:

"... Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for the Cherisher of the Worlds ", (Sura Al-Anam No. 6, verse 162).

Therefore, the recitation of this Holy Sura may provide the solution to all problems in our lives. It has plenty of properties which can bring us to safety. An example is from a narration cited by one of the companions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). He said that in one of the battles, he was with the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.).

When the fight became difficult, he (p.b.u.h.) lifted his head and said: " O' Master of the Day of Judgement! Thee (alone) do we worship and of Thee (only) we seek help ". At that moment the army of enemies was defeated and (many of them) were killed while the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and

Muslims won.⁽²⁷⁾ It is stated in another narration: " When a difficulty arises for a believing servant, and he recites this Holy verse, it will become easy for him".⁽²⁸⁾

" Guide us (O' Lord) on the Straight Path." Commentary : After confessing his obedience and servitude to Allah, reaching the state of worship, and asking for help from Him, the first thing that the servant seeks is His guidance to the Straight Path ', the path of the righteous, the path of Justice, and the path of Faith and good deeds.

So, he asks the Lord, Who has bestowed on him all of these bounties, to give him the bounty of guidance', too.

Such a man, in the above stated condition, is a believing one who is acquainted with the Lordship of his Lord, but it is possible, too, that suddenly he would cease to receive this bounty because of some component of wickedness, and, consequently, he would stray from the Right Path. Therefore, he must ask his Lord, at least ten times a day, to protect him from any kind of aberration.

Moreover, this Straight Path ', which is the very Divine creed, has some stages. All people are not on the same level of spiritual preparedness necessary for attaining these stages. Whatever stages a person attains, there are still some higher stages above them that a believing servant might ask Allah to guide him to reach.

Here, a question arises: " Why must we always ask Allah for guidance to the Straight Path', as if we are being misguided ? "

Besides, supposing the statement is true about us, the ordinary believers, but what about the holy Prophet and sinless Imams (p.b.u.th.) who were the examples of complete human beings ? In answer to this question, we may say :

Firstly, the fact is that Man is liable to deviate from the Right Path with each step that he takes as he is walking along the path of guidance. So, he should rely on Allah and ask Him to keep him firm on the Straight Path'.

We must not forget that our existence, our being, and all the bounties which always come to us, are from His Origin. To clarify the matter, we cite a simple example :

All creatures, including human beings, (from one point of view) resemble an electric lamp. We see that the light of a lamp, when it is on, appears to be constant and monotonous. The reason is that the electrical current flows constantly from a generator to the lamp. The generator continuously produces some new electrical power, a part of which reaches the lamp by some connective wires. Our being is similar to the lamp.

Although it appears as a sustained being, it is, in fact, a continually renewed being that flows ceaselessly to us from the Original Being, the Bountiful Creator.

Therefore, as the continually new being reaches us, we need constant new guidance, too. It is natural that if something wrong or some barriers manifest themselves in our spiritual connective wires with Allah; the vices, injustice, wrong doings, etc., will disrupt our connection with the Origin of guidance. At that moment, we may deviate from the Straight Path '.

We ask Allah that these barriers be removed and not obstruct our way that we may remain steadfast along the Straight Path '. Secondly, receiving guidance' is the same as travelling the path of development' along which man can gradually promote from lower degrees to higher and higher ones.

We also know that the path of development is endless and continues towards infinity'.

So, it is no wonder that even the prophets and sinless Imams (p.b.u.th.) ask Allah to guide them to the Straight Path ', because the Absolute Perfection is Allah and all of us, without any exception, are on the path of perfection, then it is acceptable that they, too, ask Him for higher promotions.

Supplement 3

Do we not often send greetings to the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) by the special formula of Salawat ' ? Does Salawat ' not have the meaning of requesting new blessings from Allah for Prophet Mohammad and his descendants (p.b.u.th.) ? Is it not expressed in the Qur'an regarding the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) who used to say: "... O' my Lord ! advance me in knowledge ", (Sura Taha, No. 20, verse 114) ? Does the Holy Qur'an not say: " And Allah doth advance in guidance those who seek guidance..."(Sura Maryam, No. 19,verse 19) ?

And, again, does it not say : " But to those who receive guidance, He increases the (light of) Guidance, and bestows on them their piety and restraint (from evil) ", (Sura Muhammad, No. 47, verse 17) ? This explanation makes clear the answer to the question regarding the benediction which we recite for the Prophet and the sinless Imams (p.b.u.th.) by which we beseech Allah, in fact, for a higher and better position for them all (p.b.u.th.).

Here are two traditions which make the above idea clearer :

Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) commenting on the verse Guide us (O' Lord) on the Straight Path ', says: " It means: (O' Lord) continue bestowing Your blessings on us as You did during the days passed by which we succeeded to obey You, so that we can obey You in the future of our lives, too ' ".⁽²⁹⁾ Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has said about the verse: " It means: (O' Lord) show us the way which ends in Your love, leads us to Your Paradise, and prevents us from following our destructive desires or our own wrong and destroying decisions ' ".

⁽³⁰⁾ What is the Straight Path ' ? According to what is understood from the verses of the Holy Qur'an, the Straight Path' is the same as the Monotheistic Creed'; the religion of Truth and the belief in the instructions of Allah, as Sura Al-'Anam, No. 6, verse 161 says: " Say: Verily, my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight, a religion of right,

the path (trod) by Abraham the true in faith, and he (certainly) joined not gods with Allah '." Here, a religion of right' and the theistic path of Abraham (a.s.) as the true faith', in which he called on no god but Allah, are introduced as the Straight Path '. This shows the belief' aspect.

But, Sura Yasin, No. 36, verses 60 and 61 say: " Did I not enjoin on you, O' ye children of Adam, that ye should not worship Satan; for that he is to you an enemy avowed ? " " And that ye should worship Me, (for that) this is the Straight Way ? " These verses, here, point to the practical' aspects of the religion of truth'. They urge us not to commit any Satanic deed or any wrong action.

Clinging to Allah, the Qur'an says, is the key to reaching the Straight Path': "... Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a Way that is straight ", (Sura 'Al-i-Imran, No. 3, verse 101).

It is necessary to mention this point, that the Straight Path ' is always only one way, not more than that, because the shortest distance between two points is always only one straight line.

Therefore, when the Qur'an says that the Straight Path ' is the very true belief in the Divine religion with its moral and practical aspects, it is because it is the shortest route to a spiritual connection with Allah.

And it is also for this same reason that the religion of truth' is not more than one: " The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will)...", (Sura 'Al-i-Imran, No. 6, verse 153).

Later it will be made evident that Islam' has a vast meaning which envelops all the monotheistic religions that were lawful at their own times but were nullified by the new one. Thus, it clarifies that all different commentaries that commentators have cited on the matter, i.e. the Straight Path ', refer, indeed, to the same thing.

Islam, the Pure Unity, Qur'an, the Prophet, and his vicegerents (p.b.u.th.), are some explications that commentators have offered for the meaning of the Straight Path '. All of the stated explications refer to the Divine religion in the aspects of Faith ' and practice'.

Also all of the various narrations and traditions cited on the subject in the Islamic sources, each of which points to a separate dimension of the question, in substance, refer to one essence. Some examples are as follows :

It is narrated from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) who has said: " The Straight Path' is the path of prophets and they are those on whom Allah hath bestowed His Grace ".⁽³¹⁾ Here are three traditions from Imam Sadiq (a.s.), who, when commenting on this verse, said: " It is the way' and the cognizance' of Imamate ".⁽³²⁾ Again, in another tradition, he (a.s.) says : " By Allah, we (Ahlul-Bait) are the Straight Path ' ".⁽³³⁾ Another tradition from the same Imam (a.s.) says: " The Straight Path ' is Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.) ".⁽³⁴⁾ Ahmad-ibn-Mohammad-ibn-Ibrahim Al-Thalabi, a Sunni scholar, has narrated from Abu-Buraydah Al-Aslami, who was one of the companions of the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), that he said: " The Straight Path ' is the path of Mohammad and his descendants ".⁽³⁵⁾ This means that their path is based on the doctrine of Islam which consists of the belief in: Oneness of Allah', Justice', Prophethood', Imamate', and the Hereafter'. There is no doubt that the path of Ahlul-Bait (p.b.u.th.) is the Straight Path', and that adhering to it causes prosperity and salvation, while pursuing other than that leads to loss and injury.

Ibn-il-Maqazili has narrated from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) who has said: " The example of my household (Ahlul-Bait) is similar to the Ark of Noah. He who embarked it was rescued (from drowning and destruction), but, he who refused it drowned (and perished) ".⁽³⁶⁾ Other traditions narrated from Ahlul-Bait (p.b.u.th.) also confirm the concept.

In addition, the well-known tradition Thaqalayn ' from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), is another good clear witness to the matter, too. It says: " I leave behind me amidst you two Great things; should you be attached to these two, never, never shall you become astray: the Book' of Allah (the Holy Qur'an) and my progeny, my Ahlul-Bait ' ".⁽³⁷⁾ As was previously stated, it is certain that the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), Hadrat Ali-ibn-Abitalib (a.s.) and all of the other infallible Imams (a.s.) invited people to the theistic religion of Allah, an invitation to Faith and practice in truth, which elevates Man to the climax of ability, guidance, dignity, and human excellences.

By the way, it should not be neglected that there are two kinds of guidance: Divine Guidance ' and Religious Guidance '. Divine Guidance ' is the human intelligence bestowed on a person by Allah, which recognizes the difference between: good and bad, right and wrong, gain and loss, felicity and wretchedness, virtue and vice, and so on. It is, in fact, the inner messenger of a person.

Religious Guidance ' means that Allah sends prophets, Divine Books and legislation to guide Man to all merits of this world and the next, as well as making him aware of the injuries and damages of the two worlds. Of course, when Man is guided by the above guidance and acts accordingly, he will be worthy of receiving the blessings of the next world; this is made possible through the development of the soul by acquiring knowledge, good habits, and commendable moral qualities in which state he will certainly attain the happiness of this world and that of the next, together with the infinite grace of Allah.

Intellect ' is called a guide' in that it enlightens man as to what is right and what is wrong. The Prophets (p.b.u.th.), Imams (a.s.), and scholars are called Guides ', too, because they guide the human race to the salvation and felicity in both worlds. But, really, Allah is the main Supreme Guide, and these are the means appointed for the guidance of Man.

" The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties, not (the path) of those inflicted with Thy wrath, nor (of those) gone astray." Commentary : Two Paths of Deviation This verse is, indeed, a clear illustration of the Straight Path ' which was dealt with in the previous verse. It says that the person asks Allah to guide him onto the path of those on whom He has blessed with many kinds of bounties;

(such as the blessings of guidance, success, the leadership of people of truth, knowledge, good actions, holy wars and martyrdom);not those who deserved His wrath because of their wrong doings, nor those who neglected the right path and went astray.

" The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties, not (the path) of those inflicted with Thy wrath, nor (of those) gone astray." In fact, we are not familiar with the method of guidance, so the Lord's command, in this verse, is that we ask for the path of the prophets, good doers and all of those to whom Allah has extended His bounties, blessings and favours.

It also warns us that there are two deviated paths in front of us:

the path of those inflicted with His wrath, and the path of those gone astray.

* * * Explanation : 1- Who are Those upon whom Allah has bestowed His bounties ' ? Sura An-Nisa, No. 4, verse 69 has introduced these people, thus: " All who obey Allah and the Apostle are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah, of the prophets (who teach), the Sincere (lovers of Truth), the Witnesses (who testify), and the Righteous (who do good): Ah ! What a beautiful Fellowship ! ".

As it demonstrates, this verse introduces the people on whom the bounties and Mercy of Allah are bestowed. They are four groups: the Prophets, the Sincere, the Witnesses, and the Righteous.

These four states may refer to an idea that: for the attainment of a sound, progressive and faithful society, prophets and Divine leaders should form the foundation.

After the prophets are the sincere truthful missionaries and preachers whose words attest to their actions by which they are able to extend the prophets' missions throughout their societies.

Following this period of the formation of these structural states, naturally, some evil-minded individuals, who serve as barriers on the path of truth, may appear in the way. There should be some others to stand against them. In this struggle a few of these defenders of truth may be gifted with martyrdom, whose blood would then water the tree of Theism '.

The fruit of these struggles and devotions is yielded as the Righteous' with whom the society can be pure, efficient, and abounding with spirituality.

Therefore, in the Holy Sura Al-Fatihah (The Opening), we are encouraged to repeatedly ask Allah, during the day and night, that we be led on the path of these previously mentioned four groups, and, obviously at each time, we must emphasize with sincere effort and endeavour, on one of these four states more than the others in order to perform our duty and mission well. 2- Who are the Last Two Groups in this Verse ? The separation of these two groups from each other indicates that each group has some defining characteristics.

To make distinction between these two groups, there are three commentaries:

A) From the application of these two words in the Qur'an, it is so understood that /maqubi alayhim/ those inflicted with His Wrath' are in a worse condition than /dallin/ those gone astray'. In other words, those gone astray' are the ordinary misguided and /maqubi alayhim/ those inflicted with His Wrath' are the misguided who are obstinate or hypocritical. And, for these two very reasons, the Curse and Wrath of Allah have been cited towards them in frequent occurrences in the Qur'an. The followings are some instances :

"... But such as open their breast to Unbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah, ...", (Sura An-Nahl, No. 16, verse 106).

" And that He may punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and Polytheists, men and women, who imagine an evil opinion of Allah. On them is a round of Evil; the Wrath of Allah is on them. He has cursed them and got Hell ready for them: and evil is it for a destination ", (Sura Al-Fath, No. 48, verse 6).

However, this group, ie. those inflicted with His Wrath ' were those who, besides their unbelief, pursued the path of obstinacy and enmity against Allah, and whenever they could, they even injured the Divine leaders and prophets (p.b.u.th.). As Sura 'Al-i-Imran, No.

3, verse 112 says: "...They draw on themselves Wrath from Allah, and pitched over them is (the tent of) destitution. This because they rejected the Signs of Allah, and slew the Prophets in defiance of right; this because they rebelled and transgressed beyond bounds ".

B) Some of the commentators believe that /dallin/ those gone astray' refers to the misguided of the Christians; and /maqđubi alayhim/ those inflicted with His Wrath' refers to the misguided of the Jews.

This idea was formed because of the particular responses that these two groups showed in reply to the invitation to Islam. For, as the Qur'an has clearly pointed out in different verses, the misguided Jews used to show a special grudge and enmity against the invitation of Islam, though, at the beginning, their scholars and learned men were the bearers of the glad tidings of Islam.

Very soon, though, under the effect of deviation of thought, belief and notion, and, also, because their financial gains were being endangered, they became the most obstinate enemies of Islam and they did whatever evil they could against the progression of Islam and Muslims. (Even today, Zionism and Zionists hold the same position regarding the manner in which they treat Islam and Muslims.) Therefore, to render these people as those inflicted with His Wrath ' seems very correct.

But, the misguided of the Christians, who upon encountering with Islam were not so grudging, but were misled because of their misperception of the Divine religion and therefore refusing the Truth, were rendered into / dallin / those gone astray '.

They believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost instead of clinging to true Monotheism, the worship of Allah. This is, in itself, one of the greatest examples of astray' and aberration'.

In the Islamic traditions, too, / maqđubi alayhim / those inflicted with His Wrath ' are interpreted as the Jews, and / dallin / those gone astray ' as the misguided of the Christians. The foundation of this interpretation is the same as was mentioned in the above.

C) It is also probable that /dallin/ those gone astray' refers to those who are misguided but do not insist on making others go astray, while / maqđubi alayhim / those inflicted with His Wrath ' refer to those who both go astray' and lead others astray '. They try vigorously to change others to become like themselves.

The references to this meaning are the verses that introduce the persons who obstruct the way of guidance of others and are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as those who would hinder (men) from the Path of Allah'. Sura Ash-Shura, No. 42, verse 16 says: " But those who dispute concerning Allah after He has been accepted, futile is their dispute in the sight of their Lord: on them is Wrath,and for them will be Penalty terrible".

Other traditions have also been cited concerning the matter, including a narration from Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (a.s.). It says:

"Everyone who has disbelieved in Allah, on him is Wrath, and he is astray from His Path". ⁽³⁸⁾ In Maani ', a book of traditions, it is narrated from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) who said: " Shiah (the followers) of Ali (a.s.) are those on whom Allah has bestowed the bounty of Wilayat ', love of Ali-ibn-Abitalib (a.s.); His Wrath is not on them, and they are not on the wrong path". ⁽³⁹⁾

Supplication

O' Lord! Count us not among those inflicted with Your Wrath' and those gone astray', but consider us among true believers, the followers of the school of Ahlul-Bait (a.s). O' Lord! Guide us on the Straight Path in our every circumstance and in all our affairs! O' Lord! We thank you for this Divine blessing and say : "Praise belongs to Allah (alone) Who set us among those holding steadfast to the love of Ali-ibn-Abitalib and the other immaculate Imams (a.s)."

The End Sura Al-Fatihah (The Opening)

Notes

- 1 Majm-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 17
- 2 Makhzan-ul-Irfan, Commentary, vol. 1, p. 28 & Masabih-ul-Anwar vol. 1, p. 435
- 3 Manhajus-Sadiqin, vol. 1, p. 90
- 4 Al-Burhan Fi Tafsir-il-Qur'an, vol. one, p. 21; & Atyab-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 83
- 5 Majma-ul-Bayan, vol. one, p. 17 .
- 6 Rauh-ul-Janan, Abul-Futuh Razi, Commentary, vol. one, p. 16
- 7 Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 76, chapter 58, p. 305 (according to Tafsir Al-Bayan ', vol. one, p. 461)
- 8 Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 76, chapter 58
- 9 Majma-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 18
- 10 Ibid
- 11 Al-Mahasin by Barghi p. 40 & Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 92, p. 234
- 12 Tafsir-us-Safi, vol. 1, p. 70 & Al-Mizan, vol. 1, p. 26 (Persian version)
- 13 The phrase /bism-il-lah/ is used as a contraction of /bism-il-lah-ir-rahman-ir-rahim/.
- 14 Makhzan-ul-Irfan, vol. 1, p. 28
- 15 Al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 312
- 16 Al-Itqan, vol. 1, p. 136
- 17 Atyab-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 92
- 18 Kafi, Tauhid by Saduq, and Maani-yul-Akhbar, (according to Al Mizan Commentary).
- 19 Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 21
- 20 Maani-ul-Akhbar, p. 32, tradition 8; and, Tafsir Furat-ul-Kufi, vol. 1, p. 52
- 21 Al-Manar Commentary, vol. 1, p. 51
- 22 Nur-uth-Thaqalayn Commentary, vol. 1, p. 17
- 23 From the collection of Poems of Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali-ibn Abitalib (a.s.), p. 175
- 24 Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, Commentary, vol. 1, p. 19
- 25 Majma-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 24 ; & Manhaj-us-Sadiqin, vol. 1, p. 24
- 26 Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 186
- 27 Kanz-ul'Ummal, vol. 4, p. 36(taken from Tafsir-i-Baqawi, Amal-ul-Youm wal-Laylah) 28 Manhaj-us-Sadiqin, Comentary, vol. 1, p. 114
- 29 Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 92, p. 254;and, Tafsir us-Safi, vol.1, p.72
- 30 Ma'ani-ul-Akhbar, p. 484
- 31 Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 1, p. 20, tradition 86
- 32 ibid, p. 21, tradition 88
- 33 Ibid, tradition 89
- 34 Ibid, tradition 94
- 35 Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 24, p. 16 & Manhaj-us-Sadiqin, vol. 1, p. 116
- 36 Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 23, p. 124, tradition 50
- 37 Ihqaq-ul-Haqq, vol. 9, pp. 309- 375
- 38 Tafsir-us-Safi, vol. 1, p. 74
- 39 Maani-ul-Akhbar, p. 32, tradition 8; and, Tafsir Furat-ul-Kufi, vol. 1, p. 52

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