

The Learnings Of The Glorious Quran

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The Necessity of Utilizing the Qur'an

As Amirul-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A.S.)^[1] said: "The outside of the Qur'an is elegant and its inside is deep."^[2] The Qur'an is a limitless ocean whose depths cannot be fathomed except by the Ma'sums (A.S.).^[3] Nevertheless, both the Qur'an and the Ma'sums advise the people to contemplate the ayahs [verses] of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an says: "A Book We have revealed to you, blessed, that they may ponder over its ayahs..."^[4] Not satisfied with that, it even rebukes those who do not ponder over it, saying: "Do they not, then, ponder over the Qur'an, or are there locks on the hearts?"^[5] Likewise, the Prophet (S.A.)^[6] and the (twelve) pure Imams (A.S.) had frequently advised that the Qur'an should be referred to and meditated upon, especially when the general ideological situation gets obscure and confused, and when there appear among the Muslims dubieties which may cause ideological and doctrinal deviations. It is advised that in such conditions the Muslims are to refer to the Qur'an: "When ordeals become ambiguous to you, like lumps of a black night, refer to the Qur'an."^[7]

How to Utilize the Qur'an

According to many narrations, the complete knowledge of the Qur'an was with the Prophet (S.A.) and with the pure Imams (A.S.), and it was they who were the real teachers and interpreters of the Qur'an. The Qur'an itself presents the noble Prophet as its teacher and explainer.^[8] At the same time we realize that the noble Prophet (S.A.) as well as the pure Imams (A.S.), stress that people should refer to the Qur'an, and that when the truthfulness of a narrative was doubted, it must be compared with the Qur'an.

There is a chapter in the narrative books called "Comparison with the Book", which also comes in the books of Usul under the title: "Equality and Preference." One of the preferences, or the conditions, for accepting a narrative as true, is whether it is in conformity with the Qur'an or not.

So, when we want to make sure whether a narrative is in conformity with the Qur'an or not, or whether it is, at least, preferable to other ones, we must first know the meaning of the relevant ayah in order to see if the narrative conforms to it or not. If it is such that the ayah has to be in conformity with the narrative, there we will have a cycle. Therefore, the dubious saying that, "No one has the right to deliberate the Qur'an and to utilize it, without referring first to the narratives", is but a groundless one. It is our duty, according to the very command of the Qur'an, the affirmations of the noble Prophet (S.A.), and the recommendations of the pure Imams (A.S.) to contemplate the ayahs of the Qur'an and understand them.

Unfortunately, there have been many shortcomings in this respect. Classes on explaining and interpreting the Qur'an among the religious students circles became so weak and negligent, until the late professor 'Allamah Tabataba'i succeeded in animating the classes on this subject. This was one of his great noble deeds, and we are all indebted to him. At present, one of the greatest authorized Islamic reference books is his honoured 'Al-Mizan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an [=The Balance in .Interpreting the Qur'an] as one of the best exegeses of the Qur'an, which had been written. May Allah

associate him with his pure ancestors, and help us to follow the path of our professor, and we offer our gratitude to him and his like.

However, we have to ponder and think about the Qur'an so as to be benefited by its precious gems and treasures.

Thank God, today our people have realized the importance of learning the Qur'an and its meaning. The people's reception of the interpretation is unprecedented. Although we are glad to know about it, yet we should be cautious lest some deviation might appear in the interpretation of the Qur'an which besides not bringing the facts of Islam any nearer, it also opens the roads to satanic goals. Unfortunately, we do know of such instances that had already happened. Today, there are groups of different identities who think that they are taking advantage of the Qur'an by way of conforming- their ill-thought ideas to the ayahs of the Qur'an. some of these groups are already known, while some others are not yet known well enough, though their activities in this respect are effective.

As we rejoice at the people's - especially the youths' - advance towards understanding the Qur'an, we must be on the alert lest the deviational methods find their way in the interpretation of the Qur'an, and change -God forbid- the course of the society.

Naturally, the burden of this responsibility lies on the shoulders of the men of religion who will have to fill up this gap, and guide those who want to learn the Qur'an to the right path, since not all of the deviators have intentionally and purposely adopted enmity to Islam and the Islamic State. It may be that the majority of them have been dragged on this road as a result of misunderstanding, and incorrect teachings and inspirations. Yet, regretfully, some of them have received the support of some men of religion.

Deviation in Interpreting the Qur'an

The impact of this topic may better be realized in seeing that the affliction of "the deviational conformity of the Qur'an to one's own ideas and purposes", not comparing them with it, had befallen the Islamic society just after the demise of the noble Prophet (S.A.), causing a person like 'Amirul-Mu'minin, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A.S.) to complain.

So, isn't there the danger that this deviation may expand, during our time of weak knowledge, to a more disastrous stage? That is why we must handle such matters with greater alertness than before, and follow the same path shown by the noble Prophet (S.A.) and the Imams (A.S.)

There is no doubt, then, that one of the most important tasks of our men of religion is to try hard to explain correctly and accurately all the concepts of the Qur'an to the different people of common, medium and high levels, and to put their knowledge within the easy reach of everybody. This task is a must, as otherwise, other deviations should be expected.

Today, most of the Muslim youths are deeply and eagerly interested in learning the concepts of the Qur'an. Some think that by referring to lexical and other similar books they can solve their problems. If we are to excuse them for this, how can we accept such an excuse from the elders who spent so many years in company with the scholars and studied hard the ayahs and the narratives together with the great researchers and versed men?

We have to utilize the criterion which we received from the scholars and the interpreters of the Qur'an, and to do our best to obtain explicit concepts of the Qur'an to offer them to the society, so as to pay up our debt to Islam and the Qur'an.

Yes, although it is not easy to understand the meanings and the interpretation of the Qur'an, yet, telling the one who desires to understand the Qur'an that one must keep studying for some thirty years before being able to comprehend the Qur'an, would mean disheartening one of being able to know the correct meaning of the Qur'an, or sending one into the arms of the perverted. It is true that understanding the Qur'an requires special efforts and certain faculties, but it is also true that a number of the talented should shoulder this burden and present its fruit to the others.

What we offer are such subjects whose dependence on the Qur'an is unquestionable, and, at the same time, they are not irrelevant nor orderless, since, on the one hand, disarrayed thoughts are difficult to learn, and, on the other, the incorrect ideological orders cannot be counteracted by another ideological order made of scattered and irrelevant notions.

The Necessity of Classifying the Islamic Learnings

At a time when all the deviated schools of thought try to connect and join a series of matters into an orderly and coordinated whole and to present their incorrect thoughts as a coherent unit, we must be even keener in offering the learnings of the Qur'an systematically and in good order so that a researcher may start from a particular point and advance to connect the rings of the Islamic learnings into a joint chain so as to finally attain to the aim of the Qur'an and Islam.

Therefore, we have but to sort out and classify the Qur'anic learnings and shape them in such forms that make it easy for the less attentive young people to learn them, and to be, at the same time, able to present them facing the other schools of thought.

To classify the learnings of the Qur'an in accordance with an objective exegesis sorting out the Qur'anic concepts according to their subject matters, while observing their correlations, would incur some difficulties, despite its being necessary.

The classification of the Qur'anic learnings requires a special systematic order. We are to pick out for each subject the relevant ayahs, arrange them together, then to think about them and coordinate our efforts to light up the possibly ambiguous points. That is, to explain the Qur'an by the Qur'an itself-the very method adopted by the great 'Allamah Tabatabai, in his Al-Mizan exegesis. Yet, it must be noted that when we take an ayah out of its context and consider it alone, disregarding the other ayahs before and after it, there can be the possibility of losing its real importance. In other words, the Qur'anic ayahs have contextual indications which are sometimes found in former or latter ayahs, or even in another surah. So, without taking these indications into our consideration, we may not get the real meaning of the ayahs.

In order not to face such difficulties, and not to mutilate or dissect the ayah, or get away from its original meaning - such as just reading: "There is no god," cutting off its second part: "but Allah" - we, must take care, when

intending to put an ayah under a certain subject, and take into consideration its connection with the ayahs before and after it, so as not to neglect mentioning any possible relevant indication.

Nothing can prevent us from stating the ayah under discussion together with its relevant ayahs that come before or after it, putting them between parentheses. This will help us not to overlook the contextual indications when referring to the discussed ayah.

Once again I repeat that we should always consider the indications before and after the ayah in question, as it had happened to the author of these lines. On occasion an ayah was considered and some remarks were written down, after some time, it was noted that in the former ayah there was an indication which escaped his attention, as otherwise he could have made more complete remarks, or even different ones.

Now as we have but to classify the learnings and the concepts of the Qur'an, and, consequently, to classify the ayahs as well, and present the relevant ones to each chapter, we must decide the basis according to which they should be classified.

We do know that the Qur'an is not classified like that which is used by the human beings. We seldom find a surah, even if it is of a single line, that deals with only a single subject. Actually, there are many ayahs each of which handles several subjects, and its content has many dimensions and features.

For example, a single ayah can include ideological, moral, historical and other dimensions - another fact which makes it difficult to segment the ayahs, though not impossible. Each ayah can be repeated on diverse topics.

A Plan for Grouping the Ayahs

Finding a general headline for the content of a single or several ayahs is not a difficult task-such as the ayahs on the salat, the jihad, bidding the right and forbidding the wrong. But coining the headlines and placing them within the frame of a system is not an easy job. Suppose we looked into the Qur'an and managed to group its concepts under, say, a hundred headlines, but how can these headlines be arranged in a harmonious order? Take, for example, the first ayah of the Qur'an. It praises Allah. So, the first title may be "Praising Allah". The first ayah of Suratul-Baqarah is about those who are guided by Allah. Similarly the other titles can follow this wake. Now, is that the best plan for titling, or can these same titles be systematized, too, so as to have a starting point, and a natural and logical advance?

The Plans

In this respect we suggest three plans as specimens of the best opinions offered for the grouping of the learnings of the Qur'an. From among them we have selected the best.

The First Plan

It maybe that this plan is the most familiar to one's mind. It divides the religious contents into three groups: beliefs, ethics and precepts. Al-Mizan exegesis frequently refers to this classification. so, one way for grouping all the learnings of the Qur'an is to divide them into three groups: one group to

cover the principal beliefs (monotheism, prophethood, resurrection, justice and Imamate), as well as their relevant details, such as the details of the Barzakh [the intermediate state of the souls after death up to the Resurrection Day]. The second group covers the ethics. The third group covers the precepts, whose division in fact, had been applied by our jurists in their books under a chapter titled: "The Ayahs of the Precepts", such as Kanzul-'Irfan" and Zubdatul-Bayan."

Criticizing the First Plan

Although a good plan, it is nevertheless criticizable. First, forcing all the contents of the Qur'an into these three categories is difficult. Take, for example, those ayahs which concern the histories and episodes of the prophets, though some of these episodes refer to monotheistic, ethical and legislative matters, yet the collection of the episodes belongs to none of these categories. It should, actually, come under a separate coherent chapter which, if segmented, it can no longer be episodic. So, if somebody wants to look up the episode about Ashabul Kahf [the people of the cave], he will not know under which group it can be found, as there would be no clear indication to guide him.

Another difficulty is that since these three categories have no obvious correlation among them, they may be regarded as forcibly imposed.

These precautions are, however, unimportant, and, should there be no better alternative, it may be adopted.

The Second Plan

The second plan is based on the saying that the Qur'an is for the guidance of mankind: "A guidance to men, and, as man has different dimensions, such as the material, the spiritual, the individual, the social, the secular and the heavenly dimensions, the learnings of the Qur'an are also to be classified accordingly, taking man as the axis of the classification.

Criticizing the Second Plan

This plan is actually workable, as it has no serious problem, but it seems that its technical difficulties are more than those of the first one. This is because when we come to look deeper into the details of the concepts of the Qur'an we find out that to take man as an axis is not so much recommended by the Qur'an itself. It would be a kind of prejudice which takes man to be the centre around which everything else revolves. The Qur'an does not accept such partiality.

We do realize that all the Qur'anic concepts, no matter what topic they deal with, whether ideological, moral, preachy, narrative, legislative, individual or social, they all revolve around a single axis - Allah the Exalted. When a law or a precept is enjoined, it is said that Allah had imposed it on you, and when a morality is explained it is said to be loved by Allah: Allah loves those who judge equitably",^[9] "Allah loves the patient"^[10] and Allah does not love the mischief-makers."^[11] So, the axis of morality is Allah, the Exalted, too. Thus, it can be said that the Qur'anic ayahs are based on Allah centralization.

The school of the Qur'an is Allah axial, not man-axial. So, taking man as an axis is almost a deviation. The axis of the learnings of the Qur'an must thus, be "Allah", and it should be preserved.

Another difficulty is that the dimensional entity of man is obscure and it cannot be decided how many dimensions man has, so that we can according to them group the ayahs . On the other hand, there can be seen no obvious connection among the dimensions of the human entity at first glance.^[12] The next problem is that grouping the learnings of the Qur'an according to man's dimensional entity is a futile attempt, because sometimes we see that Divine judgement or a characteristic praised in man does not belong to a particular dimension of human entity, as, actually, we realize that many of man's dimensions are connected to a precept, law or morality, such that one cannot positively say that his Qur'anic declaration undoubtedly belongs to a particular dimension of man's entity.

The Third Plan

Taking into consideration the problems of the former two plans concerning grouping the learnings of the Qur'an, this third suggestion is offered with "Allah" as the axis, and the grouping is done longitudinally, not crosswise. That is, we take the learnings of the Qur'an to be like a running stream, or a cataract, which flows down from the Divine source of abundance, saturating every region or stage it reaches: He sends down water from the sky, then the water flows in the valleys according to their capacities."^[13]

We must regard the learnings of the Qur'an as a flowing spring which advances from one region to another, representing the longitudinal groupings. It has a starting point from which it flows into a valley, then, having filled it to the brim, it runs to the second one, which is a branch of the first, not that it goes in parallel to it or as its partner. These longitudinal classifications gradually change into a delta with many tributaries. So, the basis of this plan is to longitudinally classify the Qur'anic learnings.

This plan, in our view, is more recommendable than the other two, for the following reasons:

First, its axis is "Allah", the Exalted, and besides Him nothing is introduced: He is the First and the Last and the Outward and the Inward", whereas in other classifications with some other axes, such as man, monotheism or beliefs, we shall have to share in ethics and precepts as well. In this plan we have but a single theme, with none to come along with it, as any other theme can be dealt with only after completely finishing our discussion about the first theme.

Therefore, the first merit of this plan is that it is based on "Allah" being the axis, and all the classifications go around it.

The second merit is that a logical arrangement among matters and groupings can be established. When these discussions are connected to one another chain-like, the previous topic will naturally have a kind of advancement over the later one- a clear and understandable advancement, unlike the classifications done diagonally, in which case the advancement of the one over another needs explanation, often constrained. For example, suppose that man's individual and social affairs are two dimensions of his

entity. Now should we begin with his individual affairs or social affairs: should we give priority to other classifications, or should we begin with the material and spiritual affairs? Had there been a natural arrangement among the titles and the groups according to which the classifications could be carried out, there would have been an explicit reason for advancing or delaying the groups - a fact which would have offered a better coordinated system, free from the problems of the former plans.

Consequently, it is better to take "Allah" as the axis for all the Qur'anic learnings, as it is completely compatible with the spirit of the teachings of the Qur'an. We are to begin with theology, then, through our study of the Divine Acts we are to study topics concerning ontology, anthropology and other dimensions of the human being by way of studying the Divine management and education. The result would be a harmonious system of the Qur'anic learnings whose axis is of real originality, and whose chain links are of obvious connection and arrangement.

The Order of the Learnings of the Qur'an

Therefore, the system of the Qur'anic learnings can be arranged as below:

1. Theology:

It covers knowing Allah and studying monotheism and Allah's Divine Attributes and Universal Acts.

2. Ontology:

It covers studying the universe: (The Earth, the heavens, and the stars), atmospheric phenomena: (thunder, lightening, wind, rain, etc.) and terrestrial phenomena: (mountains, seas, etc.), including, at the same time: Divine Throne, Divine Omniscience, angels, jinn and the Satan.

Obviously, after studying the Universal Acts of Allah, which will be dealt with in the first section, the turn will be for the study of the details of creation and management. Naturally, the study of the creation of the world comes before the study of the creation of man.

3. Anthropology:

It covers the creation of man, the specialities of the spirit, man's dignity and honour, bearing responsibility and its conditions: (awareness, ability to work, freewill, etc.), the different dimensions of man's entity, divine laws for the management of the individual and the society, resurrection and the final destiny of man.

It will be realized in this part that life in this world is a preliminary step to the Hereafter life, and is a stage in which man must himself choose, of his own free will, his way to happiness and make his own fate. The Divine management in this world revolves around securing the preliminary steps (affliction and trials) to be chosen.

4. Recognizing the way:

That is, one is to obtain ordinary knowledge (different common intuitive and acquired knowledge), and extraordinary knowledge (inspiration, revelation, etc.). Questions like prophethood, the necessity of sending prophets, their objectives and their positions (as prophets, messengers and Imams), questions dealing with miracles, infallibility, and, finally, the succession of the prophets (Imamate in its particular meaning) will be dealt with.

The connection between this section and the previous one is obvious, as, after knowing that man is a selective creature, and that he must freely choose his way, the topic of this section will be "the necessity of recognizing the way."

5. Recognizing the guide:

It covers the history of the prophets, the merits of every one of them, the Books that had been revealed to them and their contents, ending with the history of the noble Prophet of Islam and the events that happened during his lifetime. Meanwhile, the history of the nations and other episodes mentioned by the Qur'an will be discussed therein.

The depending of this section on the previous one is also obvious, as, having realized that there were revelation and prophethood, there would emerge the necessity of recognizing the persons who had been chosen to receive the revelation and convey it to the people.

6. Knowing the Qur'an:

It covers knowing general information about the Qur'an and its characteristics, such as: the objective of its revelation, how it was revealed, its miraculous nature, its universality, its everlastingness, its style of expression (logical inference, preaching, argument, exemplification, narration, etc.). It is obvious that this section also depends on the previous one, as, after having discussed the old heavenly Books, the turn would be for the last revealed Book which is to remain eternal.

7. Ethics or the making of man by the Qur'an:

This covers discussions about knowing oneself; the making of man, the good and bad in the freewill actions of man, and their relation to perfection and final happiness; the method of the Qur'anic education and purification (awakening of the motives for good deeds by warning and glad tidings); the role of faith and action and their connection to knowledge; and, at last, the details of virtues and evils. Consequently, this section comes after knowing the Qur'an, where we conclude that the objective of the Qur'an is purification [of the soul] and education. The purification requires discussing ethics and self-making.

8. The devotional programmes of the Qur'an:

This covers studies on salat [Islamic ritual prayer], sawm [fasting], hajj [Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca], sacrifice, invocation and praising Allah, i.e. acts whose basic pillar is the strengthening of man's connection with Allah, though including many social interests.

9. The Qur'anic precepts concerning the individual:

This covers discussing subjects such as: halal [the lawful] and haram [the forbidden] in respect of the eatables and the drinkables (food and drink), games, slaughtering, luxury and beautification.

10. The Qur'anic precepts concerning the society:

This section covers social, legal, political and economic arguments which are divided into the following divisions:

- a. Civil laws
- b. Economic laws
- c. Judicial laws
- d. Penal code

e. Political regulations

f. International laws

As an introduction to this section, the society will be dealt with from the Qur'anic point of view.

In the last three sections, the Qur'anic practical programme, concerning relations with Allah, with one-self and with the others, are discussed with reference to the teachings of this heavenly Book in respect of each of them.

Thus, the learnings of the Qur'an start from the very beginning of existence, then go forward to orderly deal with the stages of creation and Divine management, ending with explaining the merits of the ideal society. In all stages the connection with the original axis, Allah, is completely preserved.

Notes on Knowing Allah

Before discussing the original subject, it is necessary to be aware of a few points:

1. There are two ways for knowing a being: personal and general. The personal knowledge of the tangibles is acquired through senses and takes place in the form of a sensory understanding, while in respect of intangibles, it is acquired only through intuition and vision. But as regards a general knowledge about all beings, it is effected by means of intellectual concepts.

This knowledge, in fact, concerns the natures and titles of all beings, though the individuals and persons are occasionally labelled by it. For example, man's awareness of himself (the understanding "I"), and of his inner powers, actions and psychological emotions, such as his will and egoism, are of the personal and intuitive knowledge, whereas his awareness of the colours he sees and the sounds he hears, are of personal and sensory.

Knowing Hasan, Husayn and Taqi, as human beings (i.e. living beings of reasoning faculty and other human characteristics), is a general knowledge which principally concerns the nature of "man", but is incidentally ascribed to save Hasan, Husayn, etc. Similarly, knowing the electricity as an energy that changes into light and heat, and is the cause of many other material phenomena, is a general knowledge which, principally, belongs to a general title, but incidentally is ascribed to a particular electricity.

Two Types of Knowing Allah

Two types of knowing Allah can be imagined: The intuitive knowing which is fulfilled without the intermediation of mental concepts. The other is the general knowing which is fulfilled by means of the rational concepts, and does not directly belong to Allah.

The knowledge, which is achieved by way of rational proofs, is a general and acquired knowledge attained to through mental concepts. Yet, if a visionary and intuitive knowledge takes place, it will be known without the intermediation of mental concepts. Probably, the prevision mentioned in certain ayahs and narratives is this very visionary knowledge. It is also possible that Allah cannot be recognized except through His own self^[14] refers to the same knowledge.

The contexts of some other narratives can also be regarded likewise.^[15]

Admitting this point would protect our minds against a prejudgement on the ayahs concerning recognizing Allah, by taking them as general and as mental knowing of Him. They are to be better scrutinized lest some of them might refer to the presence of Allah through heart intuition, which may happen consciously or half-consciously. It is of the intuitive kind of knowledge.

Naturally, the intuitive knowledge can neither be learnt nor taught. Learning and teaching are practised by means of words and concepts which insert certain meanings into the minds of the listeners and thinkers. The intuitive knowledge is not an intellectual meaning and can neither be conveyed nor received. Even the Qur'anic declarations cannot, by themselves, grant us intuitive and visionary knowledge, but they can guide us along the road which helps us to get to intuitively know Allah, the

Exalted, or to bring our unconscious, or half-conscious, knowledge up to the level of conscious knowledge.

So, we have to answer this question: does the Qur'an aim at giving man a general idea about Allah, the Exalted, His Names and His Attributes, like that which is taught by the philosophers and theologians, or does it have another loftier aim - i.e., does it acquaint us with Allah and guide us to the intuitive and visionary knowledge?

2. The names and the words which refer to Allah in the diverse languages are of two kinds: some are "particular names", or "proper names", and some are used as names or general attributes". Sometimes a word is used in two forms: as a "proper name", or as a "general name", since there seems to be a kind of verbal communion between them, such as the word "GOD".^[15] In the Arabic language, the Glorified Name, "Allah", is used as a proper name or a personal pronoun, and "Ar-Rahman" [The Beneficent], is His Exclusive Attribute.

As to his other Names and Attributes they have no such exclusiveness, and, as such, they can be grouped and used for other than Allah, such as "rabb, pl. arbab" [master(s), owner(s)], ilah, pl. alihah" [god(s)], khaliq, pl. khaliqun" [creator(s)] and "rahim, pl. ruhama and rahimun" [merciful].

In the Qur'an we find such qualities as "ra'uf" [kind] and "rahim", attributed to the Prophet (S.A.): "(he is) kind and merciful to the believers".^[16]

3. The proper name might have been assigned to a particular being from the beginning, with no previous common name, though, before using it as a proper name, it might have been used as a general name or attribute, such as Muhammad and 'Ali, which had not formerly been used attributively. Such names, in their new position as proper names belong to the first group.

Consequently, the Glorious Word "Allah", whether aplastic or derived, when used as a proper name, it exclusively refers to the Divine Sacred Being. But, as His Sacred Being is not visible, He is introduced by way of an exclusive epithet that cannot be used to describe other than Allah, such as: "The Being All-Inclusive of all attributes of perfection", yet, it does not mean that the word "Allah" is intended to cover the total of these concepts. So, any research about the matter and form of this word would not help us to know any more of the meaning of the word as a personal knowledge.

4. Although the Persian word for Allah, "Khuda", is said to be the abbreviation of "Khud-aa", which is equivalent to "the One whose existence is necessary" or "the Necessary Being" there are some other similar ones, like "Khudawand" and "KadKhuda", one may declare that it means "The Owner" or "The Proprietor", while its common meaning is like "The Creator" or "The Originator".

The most common word used in the Qur'an to denote God is "Ilah" and "Rabb", the first of which is used even in the slogan of monotheism: "La ilaha illallah" (there is no god but Allah). It is, then, suitable to offer an explanation regarding these two words: "Ilah, though on the measure of "fi'al", has the meaning of "maf'ul", like "Kitab" which means "maktub". So, linguistically it means "ma'bud" [The Worshipped]. One can also add that "Ilah", like many other derivatives, denotes status and meritoriousness.

Thus, He can be said to be "worthy of worshipping". So, in the slogan "la ilaha illallah", there would be no need to think of a relevant attribute.

Here, another question may be asked: If "Ilah" means "the One worthy of worshipping", why then it is used in the Qur'an to denote the false deities such as "the Samiri's calf", which is referred to as "your Ilah", or Pharaoh's deities which are referred to as "your Ilahs"? The answer is that such uses are either according to the beliefs of the addressees, or uttered by the disbelievers - the case in which it means "the thing which, according to the listener's, or the speaker's, belief, is worthy of worshipping". Thus, even in such instances the Intended meaning of the word is also "worthiness", though from the point of view of the addressee or the addresser.

As to "rabb", which means "educator", "nourisher" or "breeder", originally meant "the owner", as is gathered from the Arabic phrase: "rabbul-ibil" [the owner of the camels], or "rabbud-dar" [the owner of the house] although it can be related, through "the grand derivation", to the root "to bring up", yet it does not exactly mean that. Therefore, translating it into "rearer" is not quite suitable, and using it for Allah, the Exalted is because He is "the Owner" of His creatures, and needs no genetic nor legal permission from anybody to deal with them and manage their affairs.

So, believing in one's "ownership" means believing in one's independent and needless of permission from anybody to do whatever one likes to what one owns. Believing in the oneness of the "owner" means believing that it is only Allah who can, independently and without any permission, dispose of all His creatures (the whole world) and manage their affairs.

Looking into the meanings of "ilah and "rabb, we realize that the former is a corollary to the latter, as worship and servitude are practised by the one who believes that the worshipped must have an independent mastery, domination and absolute ownership over the servant, inasmuch as to benefit or harm him.

The Rational Evidences in the Qur'an on Allah's Existence

The first question that is asked in respect of the Qur'anic knowledge of Allah is whether the Qur'an could prove the existence of Allah. A good number of the exegesists of the Qur'an, especially those versed in theology, could locate numerous ayahs in the Qur'an that prove the existence of Allah, regarding their import to be evidences that depend on the order of the universe.

On the other hand, another group of commentators believe that the glorious Qur'an made it needless to prove the existence of Allah, and, thus, it did not care to prove it.

This group believes that the evidences brought about by the first group are either to prove monotheism and deny polytheism, or they are not to be regarded as proofs in the Qur'an, and that it was the commentators who used parts of the Qur'an together with some other introductions to show them as evidences.

Indirect Proving of Allah's Existence

Correct and documented judgment concerning this subject naturally depends on strict and all-embracing study, which cannot be accommodated

in this concise discussion. What can be said to bring together these two opinions is that the Qur'an might not have directly tried to prove the existence of Allah, because it regarded the idea of His existence as to be so self-evident that it needed no argumentation, or because it encountered no serious dangers, and so it did not find it wise to discuss a topic which could arise some doubts and controversies.

Yet, it is possible to find out in the declarations of the Qur'an some evidences on the subject. It is even not impossible that the Qur'an itself indirectly takes care of them. For example, it is not contradictory that an ayah may directly aim at proving the oneness of Allah, and indirectly prove the very existence of Allah, too. Or an ayah, by way of defying those who did not believe in the prophethood of the Prophet (S.A.) and denied it, may refer to a subject which indirectly proves the existence of Allah, too. For instance, the Qur'an, arguing with the disbelievers who refrain from believing in the noble Prophet (S.A.), puts forth a number of ensuring questions: "Or were they created without there being any thing, or are they the creators?"^[17]

There is no doubt that the ayah is not openly intended to prove the existence of Allah, yet it can be a tacit proof on that. That is, a human being must have either been created by himself, without having a creator, he himself had created himself, or he must have a creator. The invalidity of the first and second suppositions is obvious and no sane person can accept them. So, the third supposition must inevitably be regarded as correct, i.e. man has a creator.

This inference is based on the fact that the meaning of "thing" in the noble ayah is "creator" , that is: were those disbelievers created without there being any creator, or were they the creators of themselves? Naturally, neither of these two notions is correct, and the answer to both questions is negative. So, they must believe that there was a creating god. But there are two other possibilities in respect of the sense of "thing". one is that it means a "previous matter", i.e. were they created without there being a previous matter? The other is that it means "a goal", i.e. were they created without any objective? It seems that neither of these two senses befits the next question: were they the creator of themselves? It is not that whether they had been created without a previous matter or with no goal.

Actually, it coincides with such a question as: were they created without a creator, or did they create themselves? It may be that the reason for not putting the question like this: "Do they have no creator or are they themselves creators?" is that a stress is wanted on "were created" so as to make more the invalidity of both suppositions more clear. Therefore, as we realize that the Qur'an did not present the question of the existence of Allah as a problem, and did not try to directly prove it, we also realize that it requires that it should not, even indirectly and tacitly, refer to its proof, too, inasmuch as we may not be able to obtain even preparatory inferential steps.

It is to be noted that the rational evidences, whether in the Qur'an or in the discourses of the philosophers, prove the existence of Allah by way of mental concepts, which result in a total and acquired knowledge. For example, the evidence showing the movement in the world proves the

existence of a mover for the world, and the evidence showing the order of the universe proves the existence of Allah as the organizer of that order, and then other evidences prove His existence as Creator, Maker, the Necessary Being, the Perfect, the Absolute, and afterwards, the evidences of monotheism prove that all these total titles prove but only a single thing - that Allah is One.

As to the evidences of Allah's Attributes, they also affirm His Attributes of perfection and negate all defects from Him, and final conclusion comes to:

"There exists the Being Who possesses Knowledge, Power, Life, and has, no limitations, such as time, place and the like, and it is He Who is the Creator of the universe and man." This is a knowledge that concerns a totality confined to a single One, and it is an in-absentia knowledge of "Being" and of "Him"^[18]

Here this question presents itself. Does the Qur'an say anything about knowing Allah, the Exalted visually and personally? We may get the positive answer to this question from "Ayatul-Fitrah and Ayatul-Mithaq.

Knowing Allah Through One's Fitrah (Nature)

Before entering the discussion about the two ayahs of al-Fitrah" and "al-Mithaq, it is worthy to give some explanations concerning the word fitrah (nature) ["disposition" or "invasiveness:"]: The word "fitrah" is an infinitive of kind, denoting the kind of creation, though commonly used in respect of human beings. Usually it refers to something which is an innate constitution of man. It is God-given, and not acquired, and more or less common to all human individuals. Consequently, it is inclusive of all man's God-given views and tendencies.

Fitrah has many idiomatic usages in logic and philosophy. But only three of these idiomatic meanings concern our purpose:

1. That which denotes that the quest for Allah is one of man's innate wants. The proof evidencing this allegation is that man, during the entire history, and disregarding his racial, geographical and educational differences, was in quest of Allah. A sort of religion and a belief in the existence of a creator-god have always prevailed among the people. 2. That which denotes that knowing Allah is a natural kind of knowledge, by which we mean the two kinds of knowledge: the acquired Knowledge of Allah, and the intuitive Knowledge of Allah.

a. By the innately acquired Knowledge of Allah we mean the fact that the human intellect needs not to exert itself in believing in the existence of Allah, as it very easily realizes that the existence of man and all other natural phenomena need Allah. Thus, there must be a needless Allah who can meet his own being needs.

b. By the innately intuitive Knowledge of Allah we mean the fact that the human heart has a deep connection with its Creator. When man looks deep into his heart he will discern that connection. But most of the people give little heed, if any, to that cordial connection, especially when they are too busy in their everyday engagements to do so. But when their hopes are taken away from everything and are cut off all means, they can recognize that connection.

3. That which denotes that worshipping Allah is an innate inclination, and that man is motivated by his nature to demand to worship Allah, to pay homage, and submit to Him.

It is clear that the Fitrah, in its first and third meanings, is a kind of inner inclination and tropism, and has no direct connection with knowledge. But, as to the second meaning, it is a kind of knowledge, either intellectually acquired or through a visual intuition. The first is, actually, obtained through reasoning and proofs. Now as its proofs are almost self-evident, it is called the innately acquired knowledge, while the innately intuitive knowledge is that which we intend to explain.

Ayatul-Fitrah

"Then set your face for religion as the one by nature upright-Allah's nature of which He had made man. There is no altering of Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most people do not know."^[19] In this ayah the full attention is first drawn to the religion, then there is an intimation to the fact that this is in complete accordance with the nature which Allah, the Exalted has put into man, and which is unalterable. Then, it is said that it was the upright religion. Finally, it is noted that the majority of the people are ignorant of that fact.

Now, the argument is about: what is this natural thing? Is it knowing Allah, worshipping Him, or is it something else? If the "natural thing" means the very cordial, intuitive knowledge, it will coincide with the matter we formerly referred to, and which is backed by the narratives^[19] which regard the context of this ayah to be identical to that of Ayatul-Mithaq, whose explanation will come later on. But , if it means the intellectual knowledge, it will have little connection with what is being discussed. This latter opinion, however, is rather weak. Another commentary on this ayah says that the general ideologic thoughts and laws, such as monotheism, worshipping Allah, caring for the deprived, establishing equity and justice in the society and other basic Islamic questions, coincide with man's innate nature, and are in harmony with his human wants, insight and tendencies.

According to this commentary, knowing Allah and worshipping Him are natural as mentioned in the said ayah. Another commentary, which is near to the above one, says that the actual meaning of religion is nothing but submission and obedience to Allah, the Exalted, shown in diverse forms of worship, and carrying out His instructions and laws. This is understood from the very word "Islam". "Surely the religion with Allah is Islam..."^[20] By saying that religion is natural we mean that having an inclination to worship Allah and to submit to the Lord is an inclination deeply-rooted in the constitutional nature of man. Everybody wants by nature to get nearer to the Absolute Perfect, while the diversive and polytheistic questions are the production of incorrect inspirations and education, or of ignorance and bad applications: "Every child is born up to nature..."

According to this commentary, the ayah does not directly refer to knowing Allah, but it can be said that the naturalness of God-worshipping necessitates the existence of some sort of natural knowledge of Allah, the Exalted, as man should know Allah in order to worship Him. Should the tendency to worship Allah be natural, knowing Him should also be natural.

In this respect there is in Al-Kafi a narrative quoted from the Imam al-Baqir (A.S.), commenting on the said ayah, which says: "He had made them to know Him."^[21]

Ayatul-Mithaq

"And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their offsprings, and made them bear witness against themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, we bear witness. Lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: We were heedless of this."^[22] This ayah is one of the most difficult ones to interpret and requires extensive discussions on diverse grounds. But to handle them all would take us away from our intended objective. What can be clearly obtained from this noble ayah is that everybody has a kind of knowledge of Allah, the Exalted, and which can be described to have occurred like this: Allah asked them: "Am I not your Lord? They replied: "Yes, we bear witness". This conversation is carried out in such a way that they are deprived of any excuse of committing mistakes in practice.

Consequently, on the Day of Resurrection, no one would have the excuse to say that he had no knowledge of His Divine Lordship, or that they had only followed their fathers and ancestors in worshipping other deities besides Allah, as a pretext for their deviation and polytheism.

It seems that such intuitive conversing and excuse-denying, which refute even mispractising, cannot take place except by way of intuitive knowledge and vision. This is supported by many narratives that refer to discerning and eying. A narrative of this kind, quoted from the Imam al-Baqir (A.S.), says: "...He made them to know Him and showed Himself to them, as otherwise one could not have known one's Lord."^[23] Also in the expression of 'Ali al-Qummi, quoting ibn Maskan, it is said that he had asked the Imam as-Sadiq (A.S.): "Was it real eying?" He said: "Yes."^[24]

In "Al-Mahasin by al-Barqi, quoting the Imam as-Sadiq (A.S.) as he has said: "...otherwise no one would have known who his creator and sustainer is."^[25] This gives one to understand that the noble ayah refers to a personal knowledge, not to a general one, which occurs through abstractive mental concepts. Personal knowledge of Allah cannot occur except through intuitive and visionary knowledge. Had it meant a general knowledge acquired by means of mental inference, it should have been expressed like this: "...otherwise no one could have known that he had a creator, not who his creator was.

In short, this ayah gives us to realize that knowing Allah by nature does not mean that intuitive and visionary knowledge of Allah, the Exalted is accessible to everybody. This knowledge of Allah, the Exalted is accessible to everybody. This knowledge, however, is a semiconscious one, which may become fully conscious on severing one's material relations and strengthening spiritual inclinations. With the holy people it reaches a stage when they say: "Can anyone else be more manifest than You are?" and "I do not worship a god whom I do not see."

Probably the objective of many Qur'anic ayahs is to draw attention to this natural knowledge and let hearts be more acquainted with Allah. For example, having drawn the attention to the phenomenon of life, it says:

"...such is Allah, how then are you perverted?"^[26] It seems that contemplating the living creatures prepares the heart to see the hand of Allah in the nature and feel His presence. Once again having mentioned many divine signs in the same surah, it says: "Such is Allah, your Lord. There is no god save Him..."^[27] The import of knowing Allah as an inward nature speaks, in fact, of the connection between man as a being with the Creator of existence. This kind of knowledge shown by a creature and his faculty of understanding it are inseparable. Thus, to describe it as to be "natural" is quite true. Such vision does not belong only to the principle of the existence of the Creator, but it also belongs to all affairs of the above-mentioned connection, including His State of Lordship, as indicated by us in g the word "rabb" [Lord] in Ayatul-Mithaq, i.e.

in this vision both the Existence of Allah and His State of Lordship are proved. Had there been a similar existential connection between man and another being, it would have been visible. So, this knowledge refers to "Allahs Oneness", too. That is why there can be no excuse for associating another deity with Him: Or lest you should say: our fathers did associate others (with Allah)...^[28] As Divinity and being worshipped are worthy only of the one who is the Creator and the Lord, it is evident that none other than "Allah", who is innately discerned, may be worthy of being worshipped. Consequently, it can be said that unification of creativity, Lordship and divinity is something natural. The Imam as. Sadiq (A.S.) had been quoted in many narratives in "Al-Kafi" to have said: "He created them [the creatures] on monotheism".^[29] Probably the following ayah refers to this, too: "Did I not charge you, O children of Adam, that you should not whorship the Satan? He is, indeed, your open enemy, and that you should worship Me. Here is the straight path,"^[30] taking into consideration that "the straight path" is that which is shown by the human nature - worshipping the Only One God, Allah. The worshipping of any one else is deviation and turning from the straight path of human nature.

Natural Monotheism

It had already been said that the intuitive knowledge of Allah could be understood from the ayahs of al-Fitrah and al-Mithaq. It had also been said that the content of Ayatul-Mithaq confirmed that Allah, the Exalted had made all the children of Adam witnesses against themselves, and they did so and confessed that their Lord is "Allah". This, as it were, face-to-face conversation between them and Allah, and Allah's asking them: "Am I not your Lord?" and their reply: "Yes", leaves no excuse for the children of Adam to take to polytheism, and to say that they knew nothing of such a truth, nor can they pretend to have followed the wake of their ancestors who had adopted idolatry, and they followed them unaware, and, therefore, they should not be punished for that. Such a pretext cannot be accepted after that Allah had such a face-to-face talk with the children of Adam.

It had also been said that this ayah was difficult to be interpreted, that is, the commentators had different ideas about its parts and their relation to each other, and they also differed in explaining the gist of its meaning. Some even said that they understood nothing from the ayah and that it was

one of the allegorical ayahs of the Qur'an that should be left to the versed authorities to explain.

Yet, it is fair to say that, although there is some ambiguity in this ayah, which is, in fact, of the allegorical ones, but this does not mean that nothing can be derived from the allegorical ayahs, and that their allegories can never be clarified. Actually, by thorough scrutinizing these two ayahs the above-mentioned subject can easily be understood. Should there be any difficulty, it would be due to our insufficient understanding of their truths. The ayah clearly says that Allah had a face-to-face meeting with individuals; asking everyone of them "Am I not your Lord?" to which they gave answer: "Yes, You are our Lord". This meeting with them individually deprived the idolaters from their excuse saying: "We were unmindful of At-tawhid [monotheism] and the worship of the One, as following our ancestors caused us to be idolaters.

So, the sin is our fathers' and we ourselves are not to be blamed." None of such excuses would be acceptable. They would be told: "you should have paid your attention to this fact. You cannot be excused for neglecting such a truth, nor can following your ancestors be an excuse, as you can very well realize it." Undoubtedly, the ayah wants to express these things. The ambiguity is in the fact that we ourselves have no idea about our face-to-face meeting with Allah, and that Allah had asked us: " Am I not your Lord?", and that we said: "Yes". We do not remember such an incident, and it is difficult for us to accept it. Otherwise, there is no doubt about what the ayah says. Many questions can be asked on this occasion: In which world and under what conditions did that questioning and answering happen? Did it happen collectively or individually? And so on.

The reason for referring to this ayah in this respect is that the mentioned conversation was not done in absentia and from behind a curtain. If a voice rises from somewhere asking: "Am I not so and so?" and you answer: "Yes, you are", it will be insignificant, as you may later say that you were wrong. It should be in such a way that allows no mistake, as otherwise you would have your excuse. Suppose it was Satan who called out: "Am I not your Lord?" and somebody thought him to be God, and replied: "Yes", it would be an error, i.e. a mere voice that enters our ears cannot definitely tell us who it was. The conversation which deprives you from an excuse and leaves no room for any misunderstanding is that in which you can see your addressee and definitely recognize him, as otherwise, just hearing a voice from behind a curtain cannot refute your excuse. So, the ayah alleges that such a conversation did take place between Allah and man, such that no excuse can be acceptable. Any excuse presented by man on the Resurrection Day to Allah that "I could not recognize You and did not worship You because of such and such reasons" would be refused. But this refusal cannot be acceptable without witnesses and actual comprehension.

Man must know Allah Himself and get a sort of knowledge of Him that causes. no mis-application. This is confirmed by many narratives which are received from the Pure Imams (A.S.) by the way of commenting on the said ayah. They are identical in their contents and trusted by authority. For instance, there are narratives in "Usulul-Kafi", the exegesis of 'Ali ibn

Ibrahim, "Al-Burhan" exegesis , "Nuruth-Thaqalayn" exegesis and in other books of narratives, to the effect that Imam as-Sadiq (A.S.) or, the Imam al-Baqir (A.S.) (most of the narratives are quoted from these two Imams) was asked whether this conversation had taken place "through eye-witnessing"? He said: "Yes, but the knowledge remained and the situation was forgotten." As to how the eye-witnessing took place, the world in which it took place, its time, etc., they are details that have nothing to do with our topic, although they are misty and ambiguous. But, as regards the original subject there is no ambiguity as the ayah presents it. We regard it to be applicable to the intuitive world.

It must be noted, however, that when we talk about seeing, witnessing and the like in respect of Allah, the Exalted, we positively do not mean seeing by the eyes and feeling by the senses. Actually we mean the heart-discerning and intuitive witnessing, which are expressed in different styles.

Commenting on the said ayah Imam 'Ali (A.S.) said: "Otherwise no one would have known who his Creator and Sustainer is".

If man could have visionary knowledge he would not be able to understand the fact that there is somebody who does a special work, suppose you did not observe the builders of a building which at work 'nor the workers making something with his hands yet on seeing the building on the thing you can immediately realize that there must have been somebody had done them. By studying the features of the construction you can gather some knowledge about the constructor. The degree of its beauty, precision and artistry denotes the degree of the cleverness and the knowledge of the maker. Up to this stage you will be able to recognise the effective through its effect. But you cannot find out who the maker was. Through your inferences you are unable Lo know the very person who made it.

So, the inferences of the intellect can tell us that the world had been made by Wise Maker, Powerful Creator, Unbeatable Creator. Yet, these are concepts of general meanings: somebody is creator, powerful, knowing, wise, but who is it? The answer cannot be told by mental inference. Had it not been for our intuitive connection with Allah we could not have known Allah. We could only know that the world had a Creator. One can know the Creator in person only when one had, in some way recognised Him. Otherwise, it would be just a general knowledge of Him. We want to draw the attention to the strictness of the wording of the narrative. It is different to say: "Otherwise no one would know (or realize, or learn) that he has a Creator", or to say: "Otherwise no one would know who his Creator is".

It may sometimes be said that had it not been for that, no one would have known that the world had a Creator, or sometimes it is said that had it not been for that no one would have known who the Creator of the world was. None of the narratives said: "Had it not been for such a conversation and facing, no one would have known that the world had a Creator", because, even if it had not happened, the human intellect could have realized that the world had a Creator. It could even understand the Creator's Attributes, but it could not have known Him. So, the conversation created a connection between the heart and Allah such that when man looks deep into his heart finds his Lord, not that he knows that there is a Creator.

If man, by Allah's help, could fully concentrate his attention on contemplating and praying, becoming cut off everything save Allah, he would be able to discern Allah before himself, to hear His speech, and to be in a mood in which he sees Allah - not that he would say from behind a curtain: "O You who are high above the earth and the heavens, and manage the world," in fact, he would see Him in front of him and hear His words and hear His words Amirul-Mu'minin ['Ali] (A.S.), commenting on the ayah: Men whom neither trading nor commercing. distracts from remembering Allah",^[31] says: "There are some people who are devoted to the remembrance of Allah."^[32] Counting the attributes of "the people of remembrance" he also says: "...there have been persons with whom...Allah whispered through their wits..."^[33] that is, instead of the servant whispering to Allah, the Imam (A.S.) says that Allah Himself whispered to the. servant. There are persons who can hear the secret talk of Allah. Such things do happen. Man is so great that he can attain to such positions. Actually, they are not confined to the prophets and the impeccables (A.S.). The true followers of the prophets and the impeccables (A.S.) can also attain such positions. The prophets had come to extend a helping hand to the people to pull them towards themselves and to get them nearer to their own positions.

Conclusion

This ayah tells us that man has a kind of intuitive knowledge of Allah, which acquaints him with Him. This is exactly like a clever mason whose artistic work you witness with your eyes, i.e. this mason is the one who constructs such a building. Then, when you see somewhere else another building with similar features and artifice, you remember that mason whom you had seen at work, and tell yourself that it must be the same mason who built this one, too. You take the features to be your witness.

If a man is acquainted with Allah, knows Him and has seen the effects of His wisdom, his heart will be drawn to this one whom he saw and was acquainted with. Only then the heart will be attracted, and only then it will be able to perform real worshipping.

In other words, if somebody wants to know a being who is absent, he has first to know his attributes. This ayah says that everybody knows Allah in his heart, and when he sees His effects his knowledge of Him is animated. This knowledge is intuitive not acquired, and yet it does not attract our attention. Whenever it catches our attention the said knowledge occurs to us and is revived. The narrative says that had it not been for that scene no one could have known who his Creator was; that is, he could have known well that he had a Creator, but he could not have known who He was, as he had never seen Him.

Yet, as this knowledge is visionary, when the reason says that the world has a Creator, one remembers that the Creator is the one he had already known.

Therefore, depending on this point of view, which is backed by so many narratives and which is not a personal point of view, we may say that: The Qur'an confirms that man does know Allah intuitively and visionally.

Another point which is worth mentioning in this respect is that this vision, besides giving man to recognize the principle of the existence of

Allah, that is, besides man finding out that there is a God, it further helps him to know some other points as well, such as the Attributes of Allah. One of these Attributes is His Lordship.

The visionary knowledge takes place in such a way that man finds out not only who his Creator is, but he also finds out that it is He Who owns him, has his will and manages his life. The phrase expressing this scene in the Qur'an is His interrogation: "Am I not your Lord?" He does not ask: "Am I not your Creator?" It is more like asking: "Am I not your Lord in whose hands are your lives? Am I not the one Who owns your entire existence? By their saying: "Yes" not only His Attribute as Creator is proved, but His Lordship, too. In addition to that, His Oneness is also proved, i.e. that there is no other one who can be Creator and Lord except Him.

The conclusion of the discussion, then, is that the intuitive and visionary knowledge is a kind of knowledge existing between man and Allah (in the philosophic term: The Giver of Life) through which man discerns the cause of Divine profusion, the union of the existence. The meaning of the intuitive knowledge is that I see the genetic connection between my existence and Allah. Towards whom such an intuitive knowledge happens to me? Towards the one with whom I have this connection. It is a kind of coherence and attachment that is intuitively discerned. Whenever there is such an attachment, it can be seen, but if it is not there, no intuitive knowledge can take place at all. When the existent attachment is intuitively seen, it is so, disregarding the subject of the attachment. In this instant, one discerns only one's own attachment with "Allah". Had it been with something else, one should have discerned it, too.

For example, a lamp is attached by means of a wire to the ceiling and thus it is connected to the ceiling, and the connector is the wire. If somebody is not blind, and if the necessary conditions for seeing are there, and if he cares to look, he can see what is there, i.e. if the lamp is connected to the ceiling with a single wire, he will only see that single wire. If it is a twin wire, he will see them, and if they are three wires, he will see them three. So anybody who is capable of seeing can see whatever is there. The connection between us and Allah is a genetic and real one. i.e. our existence is connected to Him and belongs to Him, the same as our actions and psychological conditions are connected to us and belong to us.

You may visualize an image in your mind. It may be visualized by some other person, too, without his being aware of what is there in your mind. Now think of an apple-tree in your mind. Can there be such an image of an apple-tree without there being a mind? Of course not. In fact, it is connected to your mind and belongs to it. There is even a stronger connection between the whole world and Allah, the Exalted. This is said only to simplify the idea, as, in fact, we cannot understand the reality of the connecting attachment between man and Allah, or between the world and Him. Now, had there been such a connection between man and two Gods - God forbid! - that is if we had two creators, we should have seen our intuitive connection with two Gods, too. But, as in such an intuitive vision only single God is seen, it proves, that besides Him there is no Lord at all. So, this visionary

discerning proves both the existence of Allah and His Lordship. That is in this scene, one sees his relation to Allah like the relation of a mental vision to the mind which imagines it.

Actually, it depends on one's inclination. If your mind is inclined towards the apple-tree, then its image is there, but if you divert from it, there can be no such image. The very consistency of its existence depends on your own will and inclination. All the world, in connection with Allah, is explained in the same way. If He willed and cared for the world, it would be there, and if He lifted His care off the world, it is nothing, there would be no world.

"If she coquettishly turns away, all the moulds collapse."^[34] If one realizes that his existence is connected to Allah, that it is in His powerful hands, and that if He wishes him to be he will be, and if He does not, He will not be, one will be understanding the truth about Allah's Lordship and that our existence is at His disposal. He is our Lord, which means He owns us and our existence is from Him. If He wants we shall be, and if He does not, we shall not be:

His command, when He wills anything, is only to say to it: 'Be!' so it is."^[35] The connection of the world's existence to Allah, the Exalted, (is just like to say: "Be!" and it is, or: "Not to be!" or not to say: "Be!" and it is not. We had seen this situation in the world mentioned by the Qur'an, but we forgot it now. Maybe Allah assist us to bring it to perfection so that the intuitive knowledge becomes a conscious one, and then we shall find that our existence is connected to Allah in the same way. We have no independence of our own. We are bound to His will.

In other words, everything other than Allah is the crystallization of His Will. It is His Will that the world should exist. Had it not been for His Will there would have been nothing. Man can discern this through his intuition, and he had already seen it in some world - a world which is called by some scholars "Alamudh-Dhar", or "The world of the Covenant". In that world Allah asked: "Am I not your Lord?" that was a covenant with His servants.

As to how it happened, what kind of world it was, we know nothing, since we know only this natural world. We cannot comprehend what kind of a world it was, what kind of a conversation took place and how it happened. These are the features of the ambiguity of this ayah, according to some scholars. It is, however, caused by our insufficient understanding of the metaphysics. Yet, as a result of the said witnessing and conversation, knowing Allah, His Lordship and His Oneness had been established. That is why some narratives stress that this ayah is a proof of man's natural belief of monotheism: "He moulded them on monotheism" .

In the comments on Ayatul-Fitrah of Suratur-Rum and Ayatul Mithaq of Suratul-'A'raf, it is said: These two ayahs denote that Allah had moulded the people as worshippers of the One-a fact which necessitates that they should know Allah and His Lordship status, as well as His worshipability and Oneness. Thus, some narratives say: "He made them such as to know there is no Lord but He".

Therefore, it may be said that this ayah proves the natural intuitive knowledge of Allah. As we said, natural knowledge is of two concepts: knowing Allah by means of reasoning, which is obtained through general

concepts; and knowing Allah by means of intuitive vision, which is obtained through heart-witnessing.

Consequently, the ayah is an evidence confirming that such heart-witnessed and intuitive vision of Allah had happened to man sometime, and it still has its effects which refute our excuse. That is, when we want to know Allah, we are like the one who, on seeing the craftsmanship of an architect, remembers similar works by an architect whom one had known before.

In this case, one cannot allege that these works belong to some other architect. Similarly, our hearts, which had been acquainted with Allah, the One, have no excuse for associating any other deity with Him. It is true that attending to the world of matter and material means has extracted man's attention and weakened his intuitive knowledge of Allah, but, after the establishment of the intellectual proofs, and after the coming of the prophets with warnings and good tidings, there remains no excuse for man to say: "I thought that the creator of the heavens and the earth was an idol made of earned stone", nor has he the right to say: "...Our fathers associated others (with Allah) before and we were (their) offspring (who came) after them."^[36] They would be told: No, you had reason and you had been formerly acquainted with Allah and your hearts knew Him. So, you had no right to say that an idol made of dates or dried clay is worthy of worshipping.

This is the refutation of their excuse. Hence, this ayah says that Allah is known, through intuitive and visionary knowledge, to be the Creator of the world and the only worshipped deity.

At-Tawhid and its Limits

Some groups of patchy beliefs take at-Tawhid (monotheism) - which is an Islamic principle - to mean the unity of the society. They allege that the first principle is that the society must originally be classless, or all the classes should be a single one. They think that at-Tawhid is the unity of the society, i.e. it has nothing to do with Allah, it is a principle that demands the unification of the society.

Some others take at-Tawhid to be a principle of knowledge, and presented it into the Islamic philosophy, saying: from the Islamic point of view, things advance towards unification, and contradictions are to be united. This is what they thought at-Tawhid to be. Similarly, they gave to other principles such meanings which; "make the bereaved of her child laugh", as the proverb says: "Yes, if one does not base one's speech and writing on a definite criterion, and carelessly plays with everything for the sake of showing off one's ideas and fancies, one may say whatever one likes, "lies have no bones to stick in the throat", as the saying goes.

When one decides to write and say whatever one desires, to play with whatever one likes - with words, literature, science, philosophy, the Qur'an and everything, a question presents itself: What does at-Tawhid the first principle of Islam's viewpoint of the world - mean? Is it to unify the society and make a single community, to tend to unify everything, or is it to recognize Allah's Oneness?

In answering this question we say: Throughout the entire Qur'an, the word at-Tawhid and its derivatives, such as "to unify, unification and unified" had never been mentioned even once - one of the surprises of the Qur'an. But the original principle referred to by the Qur'an as the top fundamental one, is stated in such forms as: "Say: Me is Allah, the One!"^[37], "your God is one God"^[38], "... worship Allah, you have no god other than Him"^[39], "...there is no god but He"^[40], "...there is no god but Allah"^[41] and many others which announce the first principle in the Qur'an, i.e. we must realize that there is only One God, and that we must worship none but Him: "Your God is one God", "And We sent to every nation a messenger (saying): Worship Allah and shun the Taghut..."^[42] The top call of all prophets is: Worship Allah and shun the satan. Therefore, the principle of at-Tawhid, as an ideological principle, can have no meaning except the unification of Allah as the only diety. Wherever the word at-Tawhid occurs in Nahjul-Balaghah and in other Islamic traditions, it has the said meaning. Consequently, interpreting this Islamic principle, at-Tawhid, differently, would be nothing but deviation, ignorance, or prejudice.

Other matters, true or untrue, have nothing to do with this principle, that is, supposing that a classless society is supported by Islam, it has no connection with at-Tawhid as an ideological principle of Islam. Even if it could be proved that Islam's opinion was to have a society without classes, still it would be related to at-Tawhid.

Stages and Limits of at-Tawhid

Believing in Allah's Oneness has many stages:

1. At-Tawhid in the Necessary Being, i.e. no being has come to existence by itself except Allah. In the terms of philosophy, it is the belief in a being whose existence is necessary. It is only Allah, the Exalted, whose existence is untrinsically a must, and from Whom the other beings take their existence.

2. At-Tawhid in creation. That is, there is no creator except Allah.

This is a logical result of the previous point.

3. At-Tawhid in the genetic Lordship. The third stage of at-Tawhid is the genetic management and Lordship. That is, having admitted that Allah is the Creator of the world, we have to know who its manager and director is, and whether there is anyone, other than Allah, who manages the world without having to obtain His permission. Should there be an allegation that Allah had created the world, and then its management was handed over to some others, or Allah had nothing more to do with its management, or, if He had, He had it together with some partners, it would be multitheism in Lordship or in Management. In this stage, a monotheist is that who believes that, as the creation of the world needed none other than Allah, similarly, the genetic management, directing and Lordship are exclusively Allah's.

4. At-Tawhid in the genetic Legislative Lordship. Having known that our Creator is Allah, and that our existence and management are exclusively in His hands, we have to believe also that .none other than Him has the right to issue orders to us and to give law for us. Every law must be endorsed by the Divine order of permission before being regarded as authorized. Admitting that all existence is from Him, none shall have the right, without His permission, to command His creatures, to bid and forbid them, and to make laws for them. This is called "unity of Legislative Lordship."

5. At-Tawhid in worshipping. This is another stage of at-Tawhid. It is the unity of Divinity and worship. That is, none except Allah is worthy of being worshipped: "There is no god but Allah." This is also another outcome of that natural belief inherited in man. If our existence is from Allah, the management and directing our lives are up to Him. The independent effecter in the world is He, and the rights to legislate and issue orders are solely in His hands, there remains no room for anybody else to be worshipped. Him alone we must worship, which means we should place ourselves, unquestionably, at His service. This is what servitude to Him means. Only the one who owns everything deserves to be worshipped.

In other words, deity is a result of believing in His Lordship. Man worships the one whom he feels to have complete mastery and full command over him. So, the natural outcome of the genetic and Legislative Lordship of Allah is that no one else should be worshipped.

6. At-Tawhid in worshipping is another stage of at-Tawhid. It means that man should worship no one but Allah. The former stage was that there was no one deserving to be worshipped except Him. This stage requires that man should practically worship no one but Allah. This is called "unity of worshipping."

You might have realized that the Qur'an regards polytheism as a sin. When the grand sins are counted, "polytheism comes at the top of the list", as they say. This is worshipping, in practice, other than Allah, even if the

worshipper did not believe that his worshipped one deserved worshipping, but he did it for some interests of his.

7. At-Tawhid in asking help is another phase of at-Tawhid. It means that man should practically seek the help of none other than Allah. Regarding Allah to be the real effective in the world means that no gain or loss affects us unless Allah wills it. So, how can we ask help from other than Him? Should we ask it from the one in whose hands is everything, or from the one who himself is in need of help, like ourselves? So, one of the aspects of monotheism is the unity of asking help: You do we worship and You do we seek for help^[43] This is a kind of unification. In case this aspect reaches its perfection, it will change into a psychological attribute, which, in the terms of the Islamic ethics, is called "Dependence on Allah". Many ayahs, after commanding people to worship Allah, order them to depend on Him: "...and on Allah should you rely if you are believers."^[44]

8. At-Tawhid in fear. This is another aspect of monotheism. It means that man should fear none but Allah. Knowing that He is the real and only effective, why should we fear anyone else who can do nothing and is void of any power. All powers are originally from Him, while the others are no more than means of execution. The perfect monotheist is he who fears Allah alone, and no one else. Many ayahs enjoin: fear Allah, and fear none other than Him: "Those who convey the messages of Allah and fear Him, and do not fear any one but Allah..."^[45] and "...but do not fear them and fear Me if you are believers."^[46]

9. At-Tawhid in hoping is another aspect of monotheism. It means that we should place our hopes in none other than Allah. This is also a logical consequence of believing in the Genetic Lordship of Allah. If we really believe that the real effective one in the world is Allah, why, then, shall we expect any thing from anyone else? No one else can do anything, so, all hopes must be confined to Him.

10. At-Tawhid in love is another aspect. If one believes that all perfections and beauties originally are Allah's, one's love originally belongs to Him, while other loves are false. Our love to somebody or something is naturally caused by the perfection or the beauty which we see in the beloved. Realizing that perfection or beauty is false, and that the one who has the original perfection and beauty is Allah alone, we should not, intrinsically, love anyone else.

The perfect monotheist is the one whose heart is given up to Allah, and, should he happen to love anyone else, it would be a radiation of his love to Allah and for His sake, as it is natural that when one loves somebody, his love- covers his lover's belonging, too. If someone loves his friend he loves his clothes, his books and his house, too. Loving Allah, then, necessitates that whatever belongs to Allah is loved for that, too.

Finally, at-Tawhid reaches a stage where man becomes eyewitness of the fact that the entire existence and its affairs are in need of Allah, or, actually there is nothing but the need of Allah. In the terms of philosophy, this is expressed as: "The world of existence is the very connection, the very belonging itself, not something that belongs or has a connection." In an instance this subject appears in man in the form of a belief supported by

proofs; in another instance, when man's knowledge increases and his faith becomes more perfect, it reaches a stage in which he becomes an "eyewitness" of this fact and understands it. These were the stages of monotheism (at-Tawhid)

The Border Between Polytheism and Faith

If one wants from the Islamic point of view, to become a monotheist and embrace Islam so as to be counted in this world among the Muslims and the monotheists, and, in the other world be happy and enter Paradise, must he pass through all these stages, or is it enough to have only the first one, or is there any particular limit which must be attained to, and a lower stage will not be acceptable? Which one is it?

Should the limit, which man must comprehend, be the last stage, only few individuals along the history had actually reached it, could be eyewitnesses and understood it through intuitive knowledge. As a matter of fact there were such individuals in the history, but what about the others? Should they be rejected? Of course not. On the other hand, is the first stage sufficient? i.e. somebody believes that the Necessary Being is One, but admits for others to have the attributes of creation, lordship and being worshipped. He does believe that the only self-existent being is Allah, yet he also believes that there are other world-creators, too. Naturally, this belief is contradictory. Nevertheless, there are many such self-contradicting beliefs which are believed in by people who do not recognize the duality of their contradictory beliefs. This is because of their insufficient knowledge.

For example, there are some people who believe that the Creator of the world is none but Allah, who, after having created it left it to be managed by some of His creatures, or they did it automatically even without any permission from Him by taking the management out of Allah's hands! Incidentally, basic polytheist beliefs along the history stem from this very question. Even the Arab polytheists, about whom the Qur'an says: ...the idolaters are but unclean"^[47] and "...and kill them wherever you find them",^[48] and who were the same filthy idolaters who drove the Muslims out of their homes, did not believe that the world had many creators. They believed that the management of the world was done by many, such as the angels, whom they believed to be Allah's daughters. The idols were to represent those daughters, which they worshipped in order to draw nearer to the angels - the directors of the world. They even thought that those daughters were so dear to Allah that He rejected none of their demands. Thus, they wanted them to intercede for them with Allah: ...we do not worship them save that they may bring us nearer to Allah"^[49] and Should you ask them: 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' They would most certainly say: 'Allah'. "^[50] Their polytheism was in lordship and worship. Similarly were the idolaters of the time of the Prophet Joseph (Yusuf). He did not ask them: "Are sundry creators better or a single one?" He asked them: "Are sundry lords better or Allah the One, the Omnipotent?"^[51]

It is clear, then, that their polytheism was in lordship. If a person believes that the Creator is One, but the world has many lords who direct its parts - a lord for each part: for the earth, the animals, the lands, the waters, and so on, but that all of them had been created by Allah, will such a person be

regarded by Islam as a monotheist or a polytheist? Undoubtedly he is a polytheist. That is, only at-Tawhid in creation is not enough.

There are, however, others who believe that the genetic manager of the world is Allah, the one who created it, yet there, are besides Him, others who have the right to make laws for the people; and to obey them, like obeying Allah, is a duty. Allah sends a law and tells people to do so and so.

There are also others who make other laws, besides Allah's, which are to be obeyed, too, i.e. both the laws of Allah and the laws of those individuals are to be enacted, and it is incumbent upon them to obey both. This is polytheism in legislative lordship: They have taken their rabbis and their monks for lords besides Allah."

The Jews and the Christians believed that the big people in the synagogue and in the church had the right to legislate laws, or change the Divine law and dispose of it, just as it is currently done by the church - to make lawful what is unlawful and vice versa. For example in Catholicism divorce had been unlawful for many years. Marriage had been an everlasting bondage between man and woman once they were wed to one another. They had to live with one another. There was no way to divorce, but of late there appeared some particular exceptions in which the Ecclesiastical Council allowed divorce, i.e. making law is in their hands. What does the Christian religion say? It says whatever the said Council says.

This is the religion of Messiah. If they have to change their opinions tomorrow, the religion will change accordingly, and yet it will remain the same Christianity, only this time it appears in a different form. This type of belief is polytheism in the legislative lordship.

It seems that the Qur'an refers to this by the said ayah about the rabbis and monks whom the Jews and the Christians regarded as their lords. Did they really believe that, say, the Pope was the creator of the world? Apparently there was no such belief in the Church nor among the Christians. They only accepted their authority to originally legislate laws, taking it a duty upon them to obey their commands as they obey Allah's, though, as regards worshipping, they were of the opinion that no one deserved to be worshipped except Allah.

Looking thoroughly into the Qur'an we realize that the said items are necessary for one to be a monotheist. That is, the monotheist, in the view of the Qur'an, is the one who sees that the attributes of being necessary and being a creator both are exclusively confined to Allah, as well as Genetic Lordship, Legislative Lordship and the only Ilah to be worshipped. And, since believing in Allah's divinity and Unity belonged to the last stage, Islam's slogan was "La Ilaha Illallah", "there is no god but Allah". It does not say: "There is no Necessary Being but Allah", "There is no Creator but Allah" or "There is no Lord but Allah" because these alone are not enough. They must include "There is no one to be worshipped but Allah." So, the limit, here, is at-Tawhid. Believing in this turns the individual into a monotheist, from the Islamic point of view, such that it is accepted and he is regarded as a Muslim, deserving to enter the House of Happiness. A stage below this is insufficient. But what about a higher stage? So much the better! man should try to attain it. The more he advances the more perfect he

becomes in his monotheism. As a matter of fact, man's procession of perfection advances towards at-Tawhid, and the evaluation of a man's merits in accordance with the Islamic criterions is measured in proportion to the degree of his monotheism.

Here someone may ask: Does each one of the said stages of at-Tawhid provide a part of our happiness and secure a stage of our perfection and piety, or are those monotheistic concepts like a mixture which if it contained all the ingredients it would be effective, and if not it would be as if it did not exist at all?

In more explicit terms: suppose a person accepts at-Tawhid in creation, but he does not accept at-Tawhid in Lordship. When this person is compared with another person who accepts none of these two concepts, can we say that these two are, as regards perfection and piety, in two different stages, such as to say this one gets 10 degrees and the other gets 20 degrees? Or by acquiring all the stages of at-Tawhid one has, actually, just started the process, and is it here that the effects appear, whereas before reaching this stage there would be no effect whatsoever? It occurs to one that these are almost a successive series of stages, each of which is relatively effective. That is, if somebody denies the existence of Allah, even as the Necessary Being, he will be extremely low. The one who admits that Allah is the Necessary Being has found a part of the truth and ascended a step towards perfection. He is better than the one who denies it; and so on until comes to accept at-Tawhid in Divinity. What is the answer to this question?

The Qur'an says that it is not true that the one who accepts some aspects of at-Tawhid is better than the one who accepts none of them, i.e. if one accepts only the first four stages of at-Tawhid will be regarded as if one accepts none of them - a fact which appears to us strange, at first glance. An explicit example of this in the Qur'an is the disbelief of Iblis (Satan). It is not our concern to discuss whether Iblis is a real creature or a legendary one, or whether he is separate from man or an inseparable dimension of him. We, however, believe that Iblis is a separate creature who has a real existence outside man, and who lives for a long period, all of which is not our concern now.

At any rate, the episode of Iblis, which is repeated in the Qur'an several times, is not a mere useless legend.

The Qur'an's repetition and insistence upon it is but for us to take a lesson from it. Did Iblis believe ill Allah's creation? The Qur'an says that when Allah asked Iblis why didn't he fall down in obeisance to Adam, he replied: "...You had created me of fire, while You created him of clay. I am better than him",^[52] why should he make obeisance to him? In this conversation there is no denial of Allah's creation, on the contrary, it declares that He is the Creator of both of them. Satan admits that Allah is the Creator of the world, including Satan and the human beings. So, he did believe in Allah's power of creation, but what about Allah's Lordship? He addressed Allah, saying: "My Lord! Because you have sent me astray, I shall entice them..."^[53] Allah is addressed as "Lord", which means that he believed in Allah's Lordship, too. He also believed in the Day of Resurrection, as he says: "...My Lord! Then respite me till the time when they are

resurrected."^[54] This he asked after that Allah had cursed him for his disobedience. He asked Allah to lengthen his life till the Day of Judgement so as to instigate them and deviate them from the right path.

Therefore, if each of these beliefs was individually sufficient to be regarded as a virtue and perfection, he should have had as many virtues and perfections, since he believed in Allah's Existence, Oneness, Creation, Lordship and in the Resurrection.

In "Nahjul-Balaghah", by Imam 'Ali (A.S.) we read about Iblis that: "He had worshipped Allah for six thousand years, whether counted by the years of this world or of the next world is unknown."^[55]

Now let us suppose that Iblis had worshipped Allah for six thousand years before the creation of Adam - and the worship of six thousand years is not a trivial thing - what shortcomings did Iblis have? He was short of obedience. He should have obeyed what Allah had ordered him to do. It is Allah's right to be obeyed without dispute. When He commands He must be obeyed. All existence is His; so, self-assertion before Him is pointless, since one has to accept Allah's legislative Lordship and to obey Him unquestionably. Nobody else is to be obeyed in this manner. But Satan disputes with Allah, meaning to say to Allah: "This order of Yours is irrelevant- [we seek Allah's refuge!] - if someone has to bow down before someone else, the former must be lower in position than the latter, whereas my position is higher than that of Adam. It is Adam who should make obeisance before me. So, You have issued a groundless order. You have no right to tell me to bow to Adam." Nowhere in the Qur'an, nor in any Divine Book and any traditional narrative, it was said that Iblis had committed any error except this one which is mentioned with its psychological preliminaries. This was the cause of Satan's downfall - he refused to obey Allah's order. The reason for his refusal is, of course, conceit and envy. He envied Adam. These are psychological causes. But what had practically caused Satan's downfall was Allah's verdict: "And My curse is on You to the Day of Judgement"^[56], and on that day it will be said: "That I will indeed fill Hell with you and with those who follow you, all.

"^[57] That is, the forerunner of the people of Hell is Iblis, while the others follow him. Allah had pledged that He would fill hell with Satan and his followers. If we suppose that whoever accepts a stage of at-Tawhid must be superior and more honoured than the one who does not accept it, then Iblis must be much superior to the one who denies even the existence of Allah, such as a person who does not believe in any deity lives a few years in this world .and perhaps no evil deed is committed by him, and yet, Iblis, who worshipped Allah for six thousand years and believed in several aspects of at-Tawhid, is placed at the head of the Hell-dwellers, that is, he is confined to the lowest stratum of Hell.

Maybe Iblis had partners. There may be human Satans even, and not better than him, but none of them may be benefitted by whatever worshipping he had done, since he did not reach the necessary limit of at-Tawhid, such as the mixture which lacks one of its essential ingredients. This mixture can benefit only when all its ingredients are added. A mixture lacking an essential part may even be harmful. In medicine, if a compound

lacked a particular material, it may not only be useless, but it may also be harmful. Similarly, the collection of the monotheistic beliefs is a mixture effective in bringing about man's happiness, and entering him in Allah's Mercy and His Paradise. If it lacks any of its elements it will be ineffective.

We know that if a Muslim denies a necessary Islamic precept mentioned in the Qur'an he is regarded as an apostate; that is, he has forsaken his religion. We remember that the Imam [late Ayatullah Ruhullah Al-Khumayni, the Founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran] some time ago said that, whoever regards the [Islamic] Penalty Bill as inhumane will be an apostate, his wife will be haram [illegal] to him, his penalty will be death, killing him will be lawful and his property will be distributed among his heirs. Why? Does he deny the existence of Allah, or the Prophet? Does he say that there will be no Judgement Day? No, he denies none of these. He even performs his salats and fasts. He only says that that "Bill, , is inhumane and unfair. Why should he be regarded as an apostate? He has so many [Islamic] beliefs. He serves so much. Why should he become lower even than the one who denies Allah? Is it because he does not attain to the accepted limit of at-Tawhid?

This shows as if some part of the mission of Muhammad (S.A.) were inadequate, or that Muhammad (S.A.) himself had - we seek Allah's refuge - badly conveyed Allah's message to the people, or Allah (W.S.A.R.) had badly expressed Himself, or badly legislated the laws. In any case, it is a denial of either the Message or the limit of at-Tawhid. The one who admits that the Prophet (S.A.) utters nothing out of himself and believes in the Message, by objecting to any of the Prophet's utterances, will actually be objecting to Allah i.e. he objects: why did Allah, for example, legislate the Penalty Code?

It is not without reason that the episode of Satan is so much stressed. We must understand it. We cannot be Muslims unless we submit to Allah's commands. If I say: "I accept this only when I understand its reasonable proof, but I'll leave it if I do not understand it", I will be following my reason. Of course, the Islamic precepts have their rational evidences and they are related to the good and the bad. But it is different to say: "I will not accept them unless I know what good there is in them", and to say: "There is no precept without an interest, though I do not know it."

Is there anything minus Allah? Whatever we have is from Him, so how can we say before Allah: "You are One and I am one, You will and I will." Who are we? What do we have from ourselves? When I say: "Allah said so in the Qur'an, but I think it would have been better if He had said so," is as if I say: "I have a sense which Allah does not have." Thus, in this sense you are a god, and the taste is not from Allah. If it is, then Allah is its originator. If you understand something which Allah does not, then you, in this understanding of yours, are the god of your understanding, since you did get it from Allah!

Islam means "submission", resignation to the will of Allah. So, how can it be possible for somebody to be a Muslim and nevertheless questions Allah about His commands, and shows off his own opinion, and says: "This precept is an insult to the women's dignity, that one is inhumane", and

things like that? This is why the Imam [Khumayni] said that the penalty for such a person is death, he must be killed, because he lacks the foundation of Islam in himself. This, however, is a religious decree and is backed by particular proofs. This precept is explained according to the Islamic point of view, as denying a necessary precept means denying the Divine Legislative Lordship. The parable of this person is like the parable of Iblis. If he worships for a thousand years and fights for Islam for a thousand years, but he denies a single necessary precept which is stated in the Qur'an, killing him will be lawful, his wife will be haram to him and his wealth will be distributed among his heirs, as it will no longer be his. Thus, there is a limit, a norm, before Allah. To dispute these norms is not accepted in Islam.

Islam is submission. If it is sometimes recommended that one should be tough and self-assertive, the opposite is required before Allah. One is to be humble, powerless, helpless, modest and submissive before one's Lord. Those who think that Islam does not want man to be humble even before Allah have understood nothing of Islam.

Man, before Allah, must be the most humiliated, and he must show his humiliation before Him.

Man's perfection is in his being humble before Allah. No one should be self-assertive before Him. This is actual worship. Islam without worshipping means nothing, and no worship is possible without showing humility to Allah. So, how can it be said that Islam does not want man to be humble even before Allah? What does it want, then? Islam is nothing but this. Islam is submission (to Allah).

"It is enough for me as a pride to be a slave of Yours and it is enough for me as an honour to have You for a Lord!"^[58] Islam says: "Put your forehead, before Allah, on the soil, and your face, too", "And they fall down on their faces weeping, and it adds to their humility."^[59] If not, why, then, 'Ali (A.S.) used to cry and to humiliate himself before Allah? How can they say that Islam does not want us to show humiliation before Allah?

At any rate, the Qur'anic ayahs tell us that the agreeable limit or norm of the human perfection, i.e. the least standard acceptable to Islam from a worthy godly person is his accepting these aspects and manifestations of at-Tawhid. To be careless or indifferent to any one of them leads to man's downfall from the lowest stage of Islam. The highest stage of man's perfection comes after this one, as without passing through these stages, there would be no advancement on the road of perfection and human virtue endorsed by Islam and acceptable to it. All those aspects can be helpful. Originality belongs to at-Tawhid, while other virtues help man to progress upwards. That which has the originality is the connection between the heart and Allah, which is manifested in those beliefs.

To conclude what has been mentioned above: at-Tawhid means considering Allah to be One, as an Islamic principle. His Oneness is admitted in the following subjects:

1. In the necessity of His existence, and this necessity is exclusively in respect of Allah alone.

2. In Creation

3. In Genetic Lordship, i.e. the management of the world.

4. In the Legislative Lordship, i.e. giving laws, biddings and forbiddings, which are to be carried out undisputedly.

5. In worshipping and deity, i.e. no creature deserves worshipping except Allah.

At this point one will be representing the concept of "La ilaha illallah", there is no god but Allah, which is the first stage of Islam, without which Islam cannot be fulfilled. Then, there are other stages of at-Tawhid, which can be attained to by way of knowledge and deeds on the road to perfection: at-Tawhid in seeking help and reliance, at-Tawhid in fear and hope, at-Tawhid in love, and so on until one reaches the highest stage of at-Tawhid, that is at-Tawhid in His "independent existence". The independent existence is exclusively His. All the affairs of existence are from Him - this must become a visualized fact, not just a mental concept attained to by mental and philosophical reasoning. Whoever reaches this stage will be a perfect monotheist. Such a person will have no independent relation except with Allah: "You are the One Who made the lights shine in the hearts of Your friends so that they could know You and admit your Oneness; and You are the One Who removed the others from the hearts of those who love You so that they could love no one save You."^[60]

The connection between at-Tawhid and the genetic guardianship raises a question: Having admitted that Allah is One as the Necessary Being, the Creator and Lord, should we, consequently, deprive all other creatures of any kind of effect in respect to creation and management, and if we attribute to them some effect would it be a sort of polytheism?

Or what is meant by at-Tawhid is not this, as others can also create, raise the dead and practise management, but only with permission of Allah. For example, there are some ayahs concerning Jesus (A.S.), in which certain things are mentioned. Allah, addressing Jesus (A.S.) says: "...and you create out of clay the shape of a bird by My permission, then you blow into it and it becomes a bird by My permission, and you heal the blind and the leprous by My permission, and you bring forth the dead by My permission..."^[61]

So, Jesus (A.S.), son of Mary did not only cure the sick, but raised the dead to life, and even more than that - he could turn a handful of clay into the shape of a bird, breathe into it, and it flew away a full real bird by Allah's permission. Those were the miracles which Jesus (A.S.) showed to the people to prove his prophethood.

In another ayah he himself says: "I bring the dead to life by Allah's permission."^[62] Some of the commentators who deny miracles and try to explain them according to the laws of nature, believe that Jesus's curing of the sick was a kind of genius in the science of medicine, alleging that Jesus (A.S.) was a very clever physician who could very easily cure the sick, which used to be regarded as a miracle. Otherwise there was nothing unnatural about it. Then, when they reached this part of the ayah "...and you bring forth the dead", they said that "to bring forth" referred to disinterment of the dead bodies, which Jesus (A.S.) did! This is, of course, a ridiculous thing that only an insane can utter. Why should Allah hold Jesus (A.S.) under obligation for telling him, he was the one who dug the dead bodies

out of their graves? Was it a pride for him to do so? Yet, Jesus (A.S.) himself said in another ayah: "I bring the dead to life".

At any case, these comments are symptoms of certain ailments which usually attack those who assume to be Muslims. They are motivated by their pro-Western tendencies and try to show off their fake scholarship, or whatever you may call it. It is their weak faith which causes them to think that all laws of the world are only the natural ones. They deny all metaphysical rules governing nature, and thus, whatever happens in the world must be in conformity with the natural laws. Consequently, to them, there can be no miracles and no extraordinary accomplishments. Therefore, in their efforts to combine their false beliefs with those ayahs which they pretend to accept and believe in, they fall into contradictory statements and find themselves in straits, and hence such absurd and childish talks.

The Qur'an definitely says that Jesus (A.S.) did bring to life dead people, create living creatures and cure acute diseases, and , yet he was one of Allah's servants. Actually, this was the very cause which made some of his apostles and followers exaggerate his position and say that he was the son of Allah, or even he was Allah Himself. Those beliefs are positively reputed by the Qur'an: "...and say not: Three. Desist, it is better for you. Allah is only One God..."^[63] At the same time it confirms that Jesus (A.S.) did practise those acts, by Allah's permission. Once again we repeat the said ayah for a more serious consideration: "... and you create out of clay the shape of a bird by My permission, then you blow into it and it becomes a bird by My permission, and heal the blind and the leprous by My permission, and you bring forth the dead by My permission..." It should have been enough to use "by My permission" only once for all those achievements of Jesus (A.S.). However, such achievements are regarded as polytheism only when one thinks that they had been achieved independently and without Allah's permission. But if one believes that Allah may grant somebody a power enabling him to affect the world of nature and bring about phenomena contrary to the accepted laws of nature, this belief, besides not being polytheism at all, it is, actually, the very monotheism itself, and to deny it is to deny the Qur'an, the message of the Prophet (S.A.) and at-Tawhid in its complete tenets.

We have, thus, to believe that such performances can possibly be achieved by other than Allah, but by Allah, s permission. Now, what is the nature of this permission? It is what is known in our culture as "the Genetic Guardianship", and whether the holy Prophet (A.S.) and the infallible Imams (A.S.) possess this "genetic guardianship" or not.

The Opinion Denying Genetic Guardianship

Some of the brethren of the Sunni sects think that such a belief is polytheistic, that is, if a person believes that the Prophet (S.A.) possessed "Genetic Guardianship", i.e. he could bring to life the dead or cure the sick, he is a polytheist, because such acts are only done by Allah. Consequently, they regard other Muslim sects, who make more than 95% of the Muslims, to be polytheists, including the Shi'ites who believe that the Prophet (S.A.) possessed "Genetic Guardianship".

Such accusations can be referred to as being ill-informed if partiality and political motives are excluded. The one who has read the Qur'an and those ayahs, too, how could one allow oneself to take such a belief as polytheism? The Qur'an itself says that Jesus (A.S.) did create, animate the dead and remedy the sick, so, how can these be regarded as polytheistic beliefs? Sometimes they add other unwise talk to that. They say that only the very instances stated in the Qur'an are not shirk (polytheism). But to ascribe them to persons not mentioned in the Qur'an, will be shirk. It is quite clear that this talk is groundless. If some act is shirk, then it is shirk even if the Qur'an does not mention it. Can the nature of monotheism be changed that which is shirk is shirk, disregarding what the others say. How is it possible that when the Qur'an says, addressing Jesus (A.S.): you created, you brought the dead to life, it is called Tawhid, but if it is not directly mentioned by the Qur'an, it is counted shirk?

This kind of immature viewpoint, which is spreading among many Muslims, is caused by economic and political factors. It is imposed by the force of money upon the poor people of the Islamic countries. It is now spreading throughout such countries as India, Pakistan and some Arab countries, whose majority of people are too poor to resist temptations of the Wahhabi money.

The connection between at-Tawhid and the "Legislative Guardianship" in this respect, is similar to that of the "Legislative Lordship". That is, by saying that no one but Allah has the right to legislate laws, to issue orders and to be unquestionably obeyed, we do not mean that no one else is to be obeyed in all cases, nor that no one has the right to issue orders in all cases. Actually, what is meant here is that no one has, independently, the right to issue orders on his own account, unless Allah Himself gives him the right to do so, in which case, to obey him would practically mean obeying Allah Himself.

The Qur'an confirms this by saying: "And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission..."^[64] So, to obey somebody by Allah's permission is, actually, to obey Allah. Such obedience not only does not contradict at-Tawhid, but is part and parcel of it. What contradicts Divine Legislative Lordship is to think that there are others, besides Allah, and diagonally, who have the right, like Him, to legislate laws, without depending upon Him, and regard obeying them is obligatory, like obeying Allah. This is real shirk. But to say that Allah had appointed some persons to see to people's affairs, to direct them and to bid them what to do and what not to do, and, at the same time, He ordered us to obey them - this is not shirk at all.

The said topics are referred to in the Qur'an: "Then those who manage the affair,"^[65] despite the fact that management is exclusively His, as: "Surely His is the creation and the command",^[66] and: "He manages the affair from the heaven to the earth..."^[67], yet, at the same time, He says: "Then those who manage the affair", no matter who they may be. (Most of the commentators believe that they are angels). At any case, there are others who, by the permission of Allah, practise some sort of managements, which are admitted by the Qur'an.

The Qur'an orders the people to obey the Prophet (S.A.): "...obey Allah and obey the Messenger and the authorized from among you... ." ^[68]

They are to obey not only the Prophet (S.A.), but also his infallible successors, as was told by the Messenger (S.A.) himself that "the authorized from among you" were the 12 infallible Imams (A.S.). It goes without saying, then, that obeying the Messenger and the authorized also covers those who had, in particular or in general, been appointed by the Prophet (S.A.) or the Imam (A.S.).

When the Prophet appoints a governor to a certain region, the people there must obey him, and their obedience to him is, in fact, obedience to the Messenger himself. Likewise, obeying the Supreme Islamic Guardian who had been appointed by the "Imam of the Time" [the 12th Imam] to take care of the people's affairs during his Occultation, is obeying the Imam, and obeying the Imam is obeying Allah: "They are my Proof before you and I am the Proof of Allah" So, believing in the legislative guardianship of the Prophet (S.A.), the Imam and the related, including the great jurists during the Occultation of the "Guardian of the Time" [the 12th Imam] not only does not contradict at-Tawhid, but it is one of at-Tawhid's affairs. That is, obeying Allah includes obeying Allah's Messenger, because He ordered us to obey him, and so on until we get to the jurists. This explanation was necessary to be annexed to the case of at-Tawhid so as to remove some of the doubts cast on this matter by the ignorant and the prejudiced.

This case of at-Tawhid is exactly the same as that of ash-shafa'ah [intercession]. In the previous lesson we said that the idolaters of Mecca believed that the angels were the daughters of Allah we seek Allah's refuge! - and that Allah obliged them by granting them whatever they demanded, even if it was contrary to His will.

They used to say: "We worship them, and although we do not see them, we carve their statues. So, they made the idols and worshipped them so that their souls - being Allah's daughters - may cast a kind glance at their worshippers and interceded for them with Allah. Asked: "Why do you worship these idols?" the idolaters would say: "We do not worship them save that they may bring us nearer to Allah," ^[69] or: "They are our intercessors with Allah." ^[70] This provoked the Wahhabis and others like them to consider the believers in intercession (ash-shafa'ah) to be, in some cases, polytheists.

As a matter of fact, the leader of the Wahhabis does believe that the Prophet (S.A.) will have the privilege of intercession on the Resurrection Day. But as to the others, including the Imams of the Shi'ah, and especially if such interceding expands to cover worldly materials, they regard it to be polytheism. There are people who are more Catholic than the Pope. They allege that the very idea of there being an intercession is a mere falsity, and that it actually means leadership, guidance and teaching, and nothing else. They even surpassed the Wahhabis. They say that "intercession" is shirk, and it is a belief like that of the idolaters in respect of the idols. But the Qur'an itself says that "intercession" is accepted from the angels, the prophets and the godly men, and it is with the permission of Allah, on the one hand, and is acceptable only from particular people in accordance with

their special merits and virtues, on the other. It is accepted under particular disciplines, and never on nepotism or arbitrarily. Actually, this in itself is one of the Divine laws. We hope to be able later on to expand on this subject a little more.

The Qur'an says: ..."Who is he who can intercede with Him except by His permission..."^[71] The ayah negates the "independent intercession" i.e. to impose one's own will on Allah's - as the idolaters used to say - and say to Him: Your will is to throw this person in Hell, but since we are bashful of one another, you must take him to paradise. And, on the basis of this reciprocal bashfulness, and as Allah attaches importance to such people, says: I shall not let you down, and will send him to paradise. This is shirk, because it is an independent intercession. But if Allah himself enjoins such a law and appoints certain persons allowed, in certain occasions, to intercede and invoke Allah's mercy for others, even before asking it for their own benefit according to their merits this is confirmed by the Qur'an. Allah's mercies are of His bounties. He can bestow His mercy upon some of His creatures, or upon all of them even more than they deserve. But for such grants He had assigned special channels and special regulations. Those who directly receive their rewards in proportion to their deeds only, are treated in a certain way.

But there are persons who, through certain deeds, deserve to receive indirect Divine favours, more than their due. For example, there are people who eat only their bread, and there are others who are worthy of being invited as guests, too. But they have to acquire the merit of deserving to be guests, as no one will be invited without a cause or a reason. The Prophet (S.A.), the infallible Imams (A.S.) and the godly people have the right to invite guests on the Day of Resurrection, but they do not invite everybody to be their guest. At any rate, the Qur'an says: "...and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves..."^[72] This means that there are certain conditions, approved by Allah, for one to get their intercession. Many ayahs in the Qur'an go this way, i.e. basing the intercession on Allah's permission, on the one hand, and limiting its effect to those who have won Allah's approval, on the other.

Thus, believing in intercession not only does not contradict at-Tawhid, but is, actually, a part of it.

The Qur'anic Proofs of at-Tawhid

The former discussion about at-Tawhid concerned its limits in Islam. In this respect we talked about management and legislation with' Allah's permission. The topic now is to find out whether at-Tawhid, whose limits had been discussed before, is proved in the Qur'an, or it only accepts it and leaves the task of proving it to the people. The answer is that the Qur'an has stated some proofs which are logically administrated and based on the criterion that should be used in such instances: "...Had there been in them any gods except Allah, they would both have certainly been in a state of disorder..."^[73]

It is quite clear that such an argumentation is a rational one, asking us to realize that since the heaven and the earth are in good order, then there can be no gods other than one God. This is called, in the terms of logic, "the exceptional syllogism". Those who know about logic, know that syllogism is of two kinds: the exceptional and the conjunctive. In the exceptional syllogism, there appears a correlation between two things, then one of them is proved. It has special forms, as explained in the books of logic. For example, they say: "If the sun has risen, then it is daytime". Then they say: "It is daytime", from which they deduce that "the sun has risen". Or they say: "It is not day time", from which they deduce " then the sun has not risen. This is a common example often used by the logicians. Here, too, is a correlation between polytheism and the corruption of the heaven and the earth. Had there been more than one god, the heaven and the earth would have been in chaos, like if there is sun there is daytime. However, no other matter is mentioned as to what happened to the heaven and earth, and whether there are many gods.

Once again the logicians say that there is a hidden part of a syllogism. Some times the deduction is made in such a way that when a premise is mentioned, the other premise (an induction usually consists of two premises) automatically occurs to the mind and it need not particularly stated, so, it is called the "hidden premise", although it does not exist. In this instance, the exception is not stated in the speech. It should have been said: "but they are not", to end the said ayah, then the deduction would be: "Therefore, there are no gods in them except Allah". But, as you see, the exception and its result are manifest, i.e. the heaven and the earth are there and in an orderly state, therefore, it goes without saying that they are not in disorder. This leads us to conclude that there is no god to rule them other than Allah.

Thus, this is perfect logical induction based on the logical method of syllogism. What is important here is bringing the correlation to light. What does it mean to say: "Had there been in them any gods except Allah, they would both have certainly been in a state of disorder"? What is the correlation here? What is meant by stating this correlation?

Commentators differ in explaining this correlation, which can be put on different statements. One is rather simple and naive. The other two are technical and strict. The first statement says that in order to direct and manage an establishment, a group or a society, it is necessary to have some sort of order which must be a single unified one, otherwise that

establishment will fall to pieces. Sometimes the example is offered that even within the limits of a family, if two of its members try to independently rule it, the family will be ruined. Or, if a township has two mayors its affairs will be in chaos. So, such being the case in these instances, how can a universe, so large and great as ours, be controlled and managed by more than one god.

This explanation is not logically satisfactory and can be disputed. But the other two explanations are technical and based on strict philosophical principles.

The Philosophical Induction of Antagonism

This antagonistic induction had been chosen by the scholars with philosophical inclinations, because there is in the philosophical writings a proof of at-Tawhid called: The Proof of Antagonism.

Those with philosophical taste had applied this proof to the said ayah, and, in order to shed light on its strict logical form, they offered premises, each of which is considered to be a philosophical principle.^[74] The conclusion obtained from the Antagonistic Proof is, briefly: Two causes cannot independently be effective in the creation of a single "caused". If two causes take part in that, each one can have created a part of the "caused". Thus, such a "caused" must be composed of two parts, one part created by one of the two causes, and the other part by the other.

Finally, on the basis of the said premises, it can be concluded that there cannot be two gods in the world, as it is impossible to run the world by two deities both of whom are "Necessary Beings". A Necessary Being must, from every respect, be a necessary being - a necessary being in essence and a necessary being in all aspects.

In a term, there is, according to this proof, a false consequence in the said argument about the well-known example: "If the sun has risen then it is daytime", or sometimes we say: "The sun has not risen, then it is not daytime", or "It is not daytime, then the sun has not risen". Concerning the second part, it is said that it is consequently false, i.e. the case is consisting of two parts, the first called the premise, and the second called the consequent. Thus: "If the sun has risen" is the promise, and "then it is daytime" is the consequent. If the consequent was false, the premise would be false, too, that is, if "it is not daytime", then it will be known that "the sun has not risen". In this argument the consequent - the disorder of the world - is false, it is a lie, since the world is not in disorder. The falsity of the consequent means the falsity of the premise, that is, the supposition of multiplicity of gods is false, too.

In the said noble ayah the false consequent is not the non-existence of the world, but the false consequent is the disorderliness of the world. It says: "Had there been in them any gods except Allah, they would both have been in a state of disorder", but you see that the world is not in a state of disorder.

It does not say: "Had there been many gods, the world could not have existed." The state of disorder befalls something existent. If it is said in respect of a non-existing thing, it will be a falsity. This is why the Qur'an says: "If the world had had many gods it would have been corrupt". It does not say: ...it would not come to existence, whereas the relevant induction of antagonism mentioned by the philosophers denotes the disorderliness of the

world. Using this proof of antagonism is criticized on the grounds that what is applicable to this ayah is other than this proof established by the philosophers. The critics assert that this proof does not well conform to the appearance of the ayah. The import of the proof is: "Had there been many gods, the world would not have been created," while the import of the ayah is: "Had there been many gods, the world would have been in a state of disorder." That is, the existing world would have been in disorder.

These two cases are not quite the same the conclusion of this statement, though a serene and in itself a philosophic proof, is not completely applicable to the ayah. I myself do not approve of it in respect of this ayah.

The third statement

The third statement which can be a proof of at-Tawhid in this ayah needs a preliminary explanation - an explanation on which we depend in this instance. This universe, including the heaven, the earth and all the phenomena therein, are run by means of a single order.^[75] In the antagonistic proof pain is taken to prove a unity throughout the whole universe, i.e. the universe itself is a single being. In this proof we support the opinion that the world has a single order. But a single order does not necessitate that the world should have a unity of existence, as there may be many existing beings, but ruled by a single order. This is quite enough for us to prove that the world is ruled by a single order, and we need not prove, in stating this, that the world is one, and even if it is not one, this proof will still be applicable. We just want to prove that the order of the world is one.

But what do we mean by one order? We mean that this world, whether we take it as one with many parts or a whole one, i.e. to take it consisting of many independent systems, each existing independently and without any organic connection among them. Even if it is so, we cannot deny the oneness of its order, because the world which we know had been constructed and created in such a way that its beings are not isolated or independent from each other. It is not that I should have in this world an existence which has no connection whatsoever with the phenomena of the past, nor that the coexisting beings have connection at all with the beings to come. We are not like the grains of rice in a bag they do exist next to one another, but none of them has any connection with its neighbour.

Try to study each part of this world individually. It does not even need a thorough scientific study. Simply looking into it would be sufficient. Take a flower in a vase, a green plant in the garden, a baby in his cradle, or anything within your reach. How does each come into existence? Can this shrub of roses grow without your watering it? Hence, its existence depends upon that water you give to it. It cannot live without water. Nor can it grow without first sowing its seed, or transplanting its seedling. Before becoming a rose-bush it was a seed. You have to sow it first in order to obtain a rose. Thus, it is connected with a former phenomenon, and is not isolated from it. It utilizes the oxygen or other gases of the air. If they had not been there, the rose could not have grown and continue its existence. Yet, at the same time, it has its effective role in changing the percentage of the gases in the air. By taking oxygen it decreases its percentage in the air, and by taking other

kinds of gases, it increases the percentage of the oxygen in the air. So, it has a close connection with its neighbouring atmosphere.

Consequently, neither the air is independent of the rose-shrub, nor the rose-shrub is independent of the air. Such is the case with the animals. That chicken which has just hatched out, under your observation, could not have come into existence without its mother and the egg. Now as it is alive and runs about in the yard, has its connection with its surroundings in the form of action and reaction. It breathes the air, eats, etc., and, in its turn, it has its effect on its environment, lays eggs and brings forth the chickens for the future.

So, it has reciprocal interactions with its contemporary, past and future creatures. Even if we turn to the inanimate world and study the physical and chemical reactions of its lifeless matters, we shall realize that each phenomenon has appeared as a result of the interactions of some former phenomena, and that it acts upon its contemporaries, and becomes the material for the appearance of coming ones. This is the system that governs this world - the system of correlation, action and reaction. As a matter of fact, this does not even need any philosophical proof. Everybody can, according to his knowledge, understand the existence of such correlation, connection and unified order. Of course, the more precise and expansive our knowledge is, the deeper our understanding of this correlation. Yet, even a passing glance is enough to make one get it to a great extent.

Now somebody may say: "There are different systems in the world, each of which has organic connection with the other from inside, but none of them has a connection like this with the other." This is one of the theories of systems, with which we shall not deal for the time being. Nevertheless, however independent these systems may be, we still notice such a connection among them, and recognize that they are contained in a single larger order. That is, supposed partial systems do not mean that they are not parts of a general one, which brings all the phenomena of the world under the control of the law of being effective or being affected. This is quite clear.

Supposing a Multisystem for the World

Now look into the following question: If we suppose that each one of these systems has a god, to whom belongs the existence of a creature, and all the needs of that creature are satisfied by that god; so do you think that such a world can continue? Please note what a god means. Especially according to the concept of the Islamic at-Tawhid mentioned before, as we have said that at-Tawhid in creation is not enough, unless it is accompanied by at-Tawhid in Lordship, too.

So, Allah to whom we refer, as Muslims, is that Who has created the creatures, Who controls their existence and Who meets all their needs. Had it been otherwise, one would have had to stretch one's hand to some other one to meet one's needs. If He is the God of this creature, He will have to satisfy all his needs, since the creature's existence is in His hands. So, it is meaningless to say that a god has created a creature, whose needs have not been satisfied by his own god, but by another god. This is an irrational supposition. There can be no such god. The God is the One Who has created

this creature, whose existence is in His hands. He manages his affairs, develops him and guides him towards his perfection. If each of these different systems in the world, had a god, this god must have himself created his own system, and it must be self-sufficient and in need of nothing from outside himself. The supposed god and creation must be like this. When Allah creates a creature, the complete existence of this creature will be in His hands, and all his needs will be provided for by Him or by other creatures whom He Himself has created. Now, if we suppose that the world had many gods, there must also be as many self-sufficient systems which must be in no need of any help from outside themselves.

If the human kingdom had a god, the animal kingdom, the plant kingdom, and the kingdom of inanimate matters each would have a god too. It would be necessary to suppose that the human kingdom is only in need of its own god and his creatures, and it has nothing to do with the creatures of other gods, since the other gods have different independent and separate systems. That is, it should not breathe the air which is created by another god and is at his disposal, because that air belongs to another god and is in his possession, and the creation of this god should be self-sufficient, needing nothing from other than its own god and his domain. This system must keep its existing connection with its own god.

If we suppose that the universe is composed of such isolated and separate systems, do you think that will last long?

Suppose that we had been created by a god who had nothing to do with the god of the earth, heaven, air, etc., could we, who had been created like that, live without air? Could we live without water? - the things supposed to belong to another god with another system, separated and isolated from us. We must live away from that system, without being in need of that god and his creations. But the universe is not like that.

We do not see any being or system which lives alone and with no connection whatsoever with other creations, or if it did live, it wouldn't be able to last long. Even if we suppose that Allah had created man out of no material, no clay, no sperm, yet, this man had to breathe, to eat, to drink, to make use of meat, vegetables, etc., or he would die.

The Almighty Allah says: "Had there been in them any gods except Allah, they would both have certainly been in a state of disorder..."^[76] If we suppose that this universe consisted of systems with a god for each to run it, its order would fall to pieces and perish, because we notice that the creatures need one another and without mutual efforts they cannot continue, they rot and perish away. So, this unity governing the order of the world can easily be recognized by everybody, though the degree of the recognition differs according to different individuals.

No one, however, fails to notice that the parts of this world are connected and coordinated, and they are not isolated from each other, and that a single order governs the whole world. This means that it is only one hand that runs and manages all things. Had there been many independent hands, each one of them wanting to "independently" run this world according to the requirement of its lordship, then the world would have been disintegrated. But, since we see this world sound and intact, running with a single order

and free from any corruption and disintegration, we, consequently, realize that the one who runs this world, directs its affairs, looks after its development and connects its parts, is a single One Who had brought up a single order.

Preference of the Rational Argument

Originally this rational argument belongs to the 'Allamah Tabataba'i (may Allah bless his soul), only its statement may be a little different. It seems that it is more appropriate to the meaning of the ayah, because the false consequent for the condition of multiplicity of gods is "..., they would both have certainly been in a state of disorder...", not "they would both have not existed." This statement has another merit.

The 'Proof of antagonism' established by the philosophers only proves, at the most, that there cannot be two or more Creators. That is it can prove the oneness of the Necessary Being, and, at the most, the creation. It says that if the world had two gods, or, in the philosophic terms: had there been two causes of existence, it would not have existed, because having two complete causes for a single caused is impossible, and it is impossible to have a single caused by two complete causes.

The result, thus, will be the Oneness of the Creator. This proof, besides proving the Oneness of the Creator, also proves the Oneness of Lordship, i.e. it proves that the original creation has not been done by two gods, and it proves that the management of the world is not carried out by two gods either.

According to this statement, which is based on the management and the order of the world, it becomes clear that the world has only one Manager and Lord. That is, besides proving at-Tawhid in the Necessary Being and Creation, it also proves at-Tawhid in Lordship and worship, i.e. there is no creator, no lord and no one deserving worship, but Allah. Islam confirms this by saying: "Had there been in them both any gods..." it does not say: "Had there been in them both any creator except Allah, or any lord except Allah."

So far it has been proved that none except Allah is the Lord of this world, nor is there any creator except Him. Now, in order to bring our belief in at-Tawhid to the agreeable level, we must also prove that none except Him deserves to be worshipped. So, how shall we start? We have already explained the connection between Allah's Lordship and Divinity, and it has been made clear that the one who deserves to be worshipped is the one who owns and controls the worshipper's affairs.

The one who wants to offer his worship and servitude must believe that the one whom he worships is his Lord and Owner, so that he can manifest to Him his practical servitude by showing submission, humbleness and inability before Him. So, He must be Mighty, Possessor and Master, in order that man may be a slave and show his servitude in the form of worshipping. So, believing in His Divinity includes believing in His Lordship. If we want to rightly worship we are to believe that the worshipped is our Lord, and that no one, except the Lord, deserves worshipping. When the Divinity of the Lord is proved, i.e. when it has become obvious that man and the world have no Lord except Allah, it

would consequently be proved that except him there is none to be worthy of worshipping, because if some other one is to be worshipped, he must have divine lordship, and, since none but Allah has it, it goes naturally that it is only Him Who is to be worshipped. Here the limit of the Islamic at-Tawhid: "La ilaha illallah (there is no god but Allah), is completely proved.

Another ayah Proving At-Tawhid

And your God is one God! There is no god but He, the Beneficent, the Merciful."^[77]

The claim is stated in this ayah. Some say that it even refers to a proof, but we shall not rely on this aspect. What is quite obvious in this ayah is that the claim of at-Tawhid is stated, i.e. the Qur'an says that its claim is that "Your God is one God." "La ilaha illallah" is a confirmation of it. When your worshipped one is He, then there will be no other worshipped except Him, "ar-Rahman", or "Rahim" (the Beneficent, the Merciful). Why should these two attributes be mentioned here? There are very delicate explanations in this respect, which we do not want to discuss. We may, however, say that the attribute "ar-Rahman" (the Beneficent) denotes creation and genetic Lordship. While "ar-Rahim" (the Merciful) concerns man's development and spiritual perfection, which is brought about under the shadow of the Legislative Lordship. The stated claim here is that the Ilah (Allah) and the worshipped are one, and that except Him there is no god, and it is He Who is the "Rahman", the Bestower of existence, and it is He Who is the "Rahim", the Merciful. He takes those who tread upon the road of servitude to Him, to a becoming perfection and a worthy happiness. In the next ayah we read:

"Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, the alternation of night and day, and the ships that sail on the sea for that which benefits mankind, and the water that Allah sends down from the sky to revive with it the earth after its death, and spread in it all (sorts of) animals; and the changing of the winds and the clouds made to serve between the sky and the earth; there are signs for a people who reason".^[78]

After making the claim, it says: if you think of those phenomena, you will recognize signs that prove the claim. By deeply contemplating on the ayah, it becomes more obvious when you discern the whole universe, its sky, its earth, its moon, its sun, and the revolving of the earth resulting in the appearance of the day and the night, which is related to the sun.

Let the earth revolve around itself a thousand million times, but there will be no day and night without there being a sun. These phenomena, whether celestial or terrestrial, are connected to each other.

These movements cause the sun to shine on the seas, where from the clouds ascend to the sky, then, under the effect of the conditions of the weather, they turn once again into rain drops pouring down on the earth, causing plants to grow out of it, and the animals to survive. All these phenomena are related to one another. Neither the sky is separate from the earth, nor the earth from the sky. Other terrestrial phenomena are also connected to each other. By studying these phenomena in general you will find that they are governed by a single, coordinated and harmonious order. They are joined together, and whatever you think of, you will see in it the

unity, harmony and order. Consequently, such a universe cannot have many gods, or many creators or many directors, because all its phenomena are connected to one another in creation. The Creator of man is the same One Who has created the earth, the parents and the sperm to create man.

It is not possible to say that man's earth is created by another god, and his parents by a second one and their new born baby by a third. Nor can it be said that the sun is created by someone, while the rain is sent down from the sky by another. What does sending down the water mean? Is it anything other than the sun's sending of its heat onto the oceans, turning their waters into vapour, which rises to the sky, and then, under low temperature and certain conditions, it turns once again into water?

Does rain mean anything other than this? Doesn't it happen by the effect of the sun and some other factors? So, the one who has created the sun and the said factors is the same who brings down the rain from the sky. It is a single order, and it cannot be said that the god of the sun is different from that of the rain. The one who moves the wind, also moves your ships on the sea.

Anyhow, it is the laws of nature that are being utilized to make all that man invents and fabricates. Allah has enjoined and regulated these things, and He is the One Who has created the matter, the human beings, and the metals of which ships and planes are made. He created the brain to enable man to turn the metals into those shapes. It is He Who created the plane as well as the whole world, directly or indirectly. One cannot say that the creator of the ship and the plane is someone other than the One Who created man and the elements of nature, as without the human brain and the elements of nature the plane and the ship cannot be created.

As a result, a deep contemplation on the world's phenomena will guide you to realize that the universe has a single God, Allah.

At-Tawhid in Essence, Attributes and Acts

Unity of Essence, Unity of Attributes and Unity of Acts are three terms used in special meanings by two groups of people: the philosophers and the theologians on the one hand, and the gnostics on the other. The meanings intended by these two groups are different. We begin first with these terms as used by the philosophers and the theologians, and later on we shall deal with the terms as used by the second group.

Unity of Essence in the View of the Theologians and the Philosophers

In the view of theologians and philosophers, the Unity of Essence means that the Essence of Allah is one and has no partner in His Being and there is no compound inside Him and no other god outside Him. He is simple in Essence, composed of no parts or organs. He is One and has no partner.

Unity of Attributes in the View of the Theologians and Philosophers

At-Tawhid in attributes means that the attributes which we ascribe to Allah are nothing but His very Essence they are not things other than Himself added to Him, such as the case with us, the human beings and our attributes. If a black object wanted to be white, a colour is to be added to it to make it white. Similar are the moral characteristics. A sad person may become happy by adding to him a mood of happiness. To the one who dislikes work we may add the required attribute to make one like it and want it.

So, there is a being who lacks the will, then the will can be added to him - an addition which suits the soul and abstract things, then it finds what it has not had before. Thus, it becomes clear that the soul itself is something and the will is something else. The soul was there, but the will was not there, then later there was the will added to the soul and the soul has acquired the will. So, the wanted attribute can be ascribed to the soul only when something other than the soul is added to it. All the attributes which we recognize in the substances and non-substances, such as the psychological attributes, are all of this type, that is, the attribute is something other than the essence. Is it the same with Allah, the Most High, too? Is this Essence something other than His knowledge? If so, does it mean that, if we disregard His knowledge, the Essence itself will lack knowledge? Is Allah's power something other than His Essence? Does it mean that His Essence, in itself, is lacking power which is added to it afterwards, and only then we say: Allah is powerful? Is it so? It is said that the Ash'aris (a Sunni sect) say that Allah's Attributes are other than His Essence, as Allah Himself is a truth that has eight Attributes, each one of them is self-existent, but they are not His very Essence, though they are old. That is why the Ash'aris were called "The Old Eights", one is Allah's Essence, and the others are the Attributes of His Essence.

On the opposite side of this opinion (which is untrue) stands the belief of the other intellectual Muslims, both the philosophers and the theologians, who say that Allah's Attributes are His very Essence, which is simple. Our

minds derive different concepts from this Essence. The origin of all these concepts is the Essence itself, and it is the mind that derives these concepts through diverse view points concerning Allah, the Exalted. Such concepts have been formerly derived from another source, but they are concepts that speak of perfection.

Realizing that Allah is devoid of imperfection, the intellect says that He also has that perfection. But that perfection is nothing but His Essence. We first recognize the meaning of knowledge in ourselves. Is it possible that the one who has created this world is devoid of knowledge? It is impossible for the one who has no knowledge to create such a world so wisely. So, we say: "Allah is Knowing", or "Wise". These concepts are recognized first in ourselves, but we ascribe them to Allah, as we know that Allah possesses all perfections. So, the source from which these concepts are derived is the Sacred Divine Essence.

Knowledge is not a separate thing annexed, or added, to Allah, or united with Him. It is the Simple Divine Essence that causes the mind to ascribe these concepts to it. The expression that the Divine Attributes are nothing but the very Essence of Allah is called, in the terms of the philosophers and theologians, "at-Tawhid in Attributes" or the unity of Attributes. Maybe what has Imam 'Ali (A.S.) said in "Nahjul-Balaghah" was a reference to this. He said: "The perfect admission of His Oneness is to deny Him attribute." Oneness can be perfect only when we deny Him the attributes which are not His very Essence; not to ascribe to Him the knowledge which is outside Him or is contrary to His Essence, otherwise at-Tawhid will be imperfect, and we will be accepting a kind of multiplicity: there is Allah, and there is His Knowledge, His Power, His Existence or else. Therefore, Unity of Attributes, as believed in by the philosophers and the theologians, means that Allah has no separate Attributes added to His Essence.

The Unity of Acts in the View of the Philosophers and Theologians

At-Tawhid in acts means to them that in performing His acts, Allah does not need any help or helper. He is independent and alone in doing. Some of the polytheists and deviators used to say that without there being other things or other persons, Allah is unable to carry out an act, and that when He wants to do anything He needs the help of others.

Here is, of course, a delicate point which must be mentioned. To say that Allah carries out an act by some means which He Himself has created is different from saying that He cannot do without the help of some means. These two expressions differ from each other. By Allah's Will, we shall expand on them in the coming pages, to explain the difference between saying Allah acts through means, and that He cannot act without means.

Thus, the meaning of Unity of Acts, in the terms of rationality and theology, is that Allah, in carrying out His acts, does not need any help and helper from outside Himself. Should he use any means for that purpose, the means itself is created by Him and used by Him. It is not that He needs some help from outside Himself and not connected to Him, and to be brought from somewhere else, or else Allah would not be able to do

whatever He wants to. No, it is not like that, Allah's Acts need none but Himself. If the Act needs a means, He creates it and uses it.

Another Version of the Unity of Acts

Some Islamic philosophers use the term "Unity of Act" instead of "Unity of Acts". By this term they intend to say that all Allah's created beings are connected to one another with an existential tie which collects them in a single oneness, i.e. there is a sort of unity throughout the stages of existence.

Taking into consideration that the entire universe, from this point of view, is a single unit, the act which Allah achieves is the creation of this one universe, and thus, Allah has only one thing to do - the creation of this world with all its details and diverse dimensions, extended over the vast expanse of time. This, however, does not mean that Allah has created the world in a single moment, and then it goes on automatically for ever.

Actually, they mean that this world, besides having its dimensions of length, width and thickness, which are collected together, it also has its dimension of time, too. The world, with this dimension, which spreads in the expanse of time, is a single unit. Producing such a thing does not happen in the time, since time contains the world, not Allah. This world had been created with its time, but in what time is Allah? He has no time. The relation of the world, with all its phenomena along the time with Allah, is an existential one, yet it is not one of time nor of place. Can anybody tell where Allah had created the world? Such a place is a part of the world itself. The "where" appears with the world when it is created. So, it is impossible to tell where Allah had created the world.

The "place" is something which Allah had created first and then He created the world in it. One may ask: "Where did Allah created the 'where'?" If we suppose that a vacancy in the space had been created first by Allah, then the world was created in that vacancy, the same question rises again: "Where did He create that vacancy?" It goes on until it comes to where one can no more ask: "Where was that creation created?" "Where" belongs to the creation, and there was no "where" before creation. This is like length, width and thickness, which belong to the world. It is not that Allah had first created the world and then gave it its length.

Actually the world of matter means something which has length. We cannot say that Allah created the world, then gave it width or thickness. The world of matter cannot be without length, width and depth. Similarly, it cannot be without time.

Therefore, time and place, like volume and other dimensions, are characteristics of the world itself, not added from outside. The entire world, with its time and place dimensions are a single unit, which Allah had created. This they derived from the ayah: "And Our command is but one..."^[79]

and this one command is: "Be!" and it is there. This is regarded by some Islamic philosophers as a proof of the Unity of Acts, which can be regarded as Unity of Act, too. That is, there is only one act, no more, as, in fact, all of the Acts stem from a single one.

The real nature of these Acts is one, though they appear in different complexion and at different places and times. So, the different Acts are the manifestations and appearances of a single one.

At-Tawhid as Seen by the Gnostics

The gnostics are those who try, through training the soul, purifying the inside and polishing the spirit, to prepare themselves to receive the truths through their visions and tasting, not through studying and arguing. They are those who, through sufferings and laborious mortifications, can acquire visionary knowledge and see, not understand the facts. As to who the real gnostics are, is another topic- As a matter of course, many people allege to be of true gnosticism. The false ones are most probably, much more than the real ones.

At any rate, when some people, because of their pure hearts, are capable of discerning the facts, their such a faculty is called. gnosticism, visionary or intuitive knowledge. Those people have a lot to say concerning what they find. The nature of gnosticism is what the heart finds and recognizes. As to what is being said, their words are merely moulds for what they find, or signs of what they taste, but these words can never convey what the gnostics receive into their hearts, since what they receive is from beyond this limited, small and emulative world. So, when they want to pour their findings into the mould of words, they use certain terms.

We must remember that the discussion is not about who the true gnostic is, and whether every body who uses gnostical terms is a real or a false gnostic, i.e. whether he has picked up some gnostical terms and ascribed them to himself, as is the habit of most of those who claim gnosticism. They themselves actually found nothing, but have heard some information from others, they liked and adopted it, using the relevant gnostical terms. It is even vague whether they understood and tasted them, or they were mere words they picked up from here and there. To us, the real gnostics are the prophets, the pure Imams (may Allah bless them all) and those whom they personally educated. Whether there are others who have attained real gnosticism is not easy for us to know, unless those who have some degrees of gnosticism show certain signs, or can be known through spiritual intuition.

Ordinary people cannot recognize whether those who speak like the gnostics have really found something, or theirs is just a borrowed language. The real gnostics use, like the theologians and the philosophers, the three special terms: at-Tawhid in Acts, at-Tawhid in Attributes and at-Tawhid in Essence, to demonstrate their findings.

At-Tawhid in Acts as Seen by the Gnostics

In manifesting these terms, the philosophers begin with the Unity of Essence. They say that we must first believe in the fact that there are no attributes added to the Essence, then we may realize that in His Acts Allah is in no need of help and helper. But the gnostic, explaining these subjects on the basis of the human procession, starts with the Unity of Acts, i.e. 'man's procession and advance towards Allah.' The first thing uncovered to him is the Unity of Acts, then, when he reaches a more perfect stage, he

deserves to understand the Unity of Attributes. The last stage to which a gnostic arrives is the Unity of Essence, though not as the philosopher explains it.

At-Tawhid in Acts means, to them, that when a person gets his soul purified, he will see every act to be Allah's, and the others are merely means and instruments. The hand which, from behind the curtain of causes, directs the world, creates everything in time and puts everything in place, is the powerful hand of Allah - a hand which is present everywhere and in all times. The tiniest phenomenon that happens in the world is created by Allah. So, what is the role of the material causes? They are no more than instruments, such as the incomplete simile of a pen in the hand of a writer.

The writer writes with the pen, but the basic role is played by the writer himself. The gnostic believes that, having believed in Allah and made it his profession to obey and worship Him, man would receive such a light from Allah that, he would be able to see and find the world's phenomena as they are, not just to understand them. But the Unity of Acts is one of at-Tawhid's degrees which man can attain first. We can also, more or less, attain them, through the philosophical studies, and by means of knowledge. But they (gnostics) see (witness) and find the facts without need of learning them. There is a famous story which clearly shows this fact but, we don't know to what extent it is right.

It is related that there was a meeting between Avicenna, (Ibn Sina), a philosopher, and Abu Sa'id Abul-Khayr, a gnostic. "How did you find Abu Sa'id Abul-Khayr?" the students of Avicenna asked him. "He sees whatever I know", was his reply. Asked by his students about Avicenna, Abu Sa'id Abul-Khayr said: "He knows whatever I see". Now, suppose that this story is untrue, but it quite clearly shows the basic difference between philosophy and gnosticism as an important one. The object of philosophy is to know, and the result of gnosticism is seeing and finding - that is, the real perfect gnosticism. So, this is the first stage which man reaches on his procession towards the stages of at-Tawhid. Having passed the stage of knowing himself, and stepped onto the valley of at-Tawhid, the first stage of at-Tawhid which man attains to and sees, is at-Tawhid in Acts (Unity of Acts).

Unity of Attributes, the Gnostic's Second Stage

The gnostic says: Having passed through the first stage, become firm in it and continued his advance, man will reach the stage of the Unity of Attributes. This Unity of Attributes is different from the philosophic version. It means that man in this stage regards every attribute of perfection as to originally belong to Allah. That is, he sees that, except Allah, no one really has knowledge, and that the knowledge of the others is a manifestation and shadow of the Divine Knowledge, since the real knowledge is Allah's. Similarly, the other powers of the world are originally Allah's, but we fictitiously ascribe them to things or people. In reality they are manifestation of Allah's power which appears in His creatures, otherwise, they are originally His.

Thus, at-Tawhid in the Attributes means that the gnostic sees that all the attributes of perfection originally belong to Allah, while what is seen of them in man is but a shadow, a reflection, or a manifestation of the Divine

Attributes. We cannot, however, have an agreeable and delightful impression of understanding and comprehending what they claim. Much as we press our minds to get the belief that our knowledge is that of Allah, we fail in getting it in. They themselves admit that such things cannot be understood by reasoning. One must have a pure soul to do so.

They say: It is to be tasted, not heard of. Of course, those who are endowed with sufficient mental powers, philosophic brilliant intellects and gnostical tastes can present those gnostical topics in delicate philosophic terms. Such people are not many. In the philosophical terms, the Unity of Attributes means that the Divine Attributes are not additions to His Essence. But they do not say that every attribute of perfection, wherever it is, is an attribute of Allah.

The gnostic sees that Allah's Attributes are not additions to His Essence, and that every attribute, wherever it is, originally belongs to Allah. It is a ghost of Him ascribed to others. An Arabic poem which refers to this gnostical concept, reads:

The glass is so sheer, and the wine is sheer, too As though there is wine but no glass, Or as though there is a glass but no wine.^[80]

The gnostic claims that such vocabularies are symbolic, according to the terms of the gnostical poets, with special meaning for every word. The poem says that the glass, full of wine, was so transparent and so clear and it added nothing of itself to the wine, that one could only see the wine, not the glass. But the wine was also so clear and transparent that one would think it to be just a red glass with no wine, as if there was a glass with no wine, or wine with no glass. By this they mean to say that when the Attributes of Allah are manifested in His creation they appear as if they were the Attributes of the creation and not of Allah.

Here we think that there is a glass with no wine. But if somebody's attention is drawn to the fact that the colour belongs to the wine, it appears as if he sees only the wine with no glass. The gnostic reaches a stage when he sees the attributes of perfection in the world like this. Wherever he sees knowledge, it is the knowledge of Allah poured into a certain container, manifested in this way. Its original reality is Allah. Wherever he sees a power, he believes it to be Allah's. Likewise the other attributes of perfection. He claims that finding these facts is so much pleasing that one is thrown into ecstasy and rapture.

Naturally we accept whatever had reached us through the prophets and the infallible Imams (A.S.) as to be true. But as to others, we can neither take whatever they claim to be right, nor deny them, since we know nothing of what is there in their minds. It may be possible to guess their credibility by their acts and conduct.

For example, if the one who claims to have such intuitive visions, is seen in his daily life resorting to flattery even for trivial gains, or extending his hand begging, can we believe in his unity of acts and that he knows some divine secrets? The one who, for his daily bread, extends his hand to the courts of the sultans, praises them and flatters this and that, can we believe him that he takes Allah as the manager of the world? We do accept such claims from somebody who says (like late Imam Khumayni): "By Allah, I

feared no one in my whole life except Allah". In his practical life he proves that he fears no one except Allah. On mentioning Allah's Name his eyes are filled with tears, but before the greatest world powers he seems as if talking with a child. "For so-and-so President is to go!" thus he fears nobody. When he stands for worshipping Allah he trembles, but in facing grave dangers that threaten his life, wealth and existence, he does not turn a hair, and so steadfast he is that he astonishes the entire world. If such a person claims that he has realized that all powers are Allah's, and that the others are no more than means, we are apt to believe him.

The Gnostic and the Last Stage of At-Tawhid

To the gnostic, the last stage of at-Tawhid is the Unity of Essence. He says that man, in his march to perfection, reaches a stage in which he believes that the real existence is confined to Allah. There, in the world of existence, he sees that the whole world is the manifestations and the reflexions of His Existence. In fact, "reflexion" is an inapt expression, yet it is used for a better approach to the subject. The gnostic believes that when man reaches the highest degree of at-Tawhid, he sees everything as a reflexion in a mirror showing the existence of Allah, the Exalted. The multiplicities which he witnesses in the world are but multiplicity of mirrors. The light which illuminates these mirrors is one and same, and it does not belong to them, it is only reflected in them:

"Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth, the likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp..."^[81] So, he regards the world to be a mirror, in which he sees that what is manifested is the Divine Essence of Allah. This is the same subject referred to by the Persian poet, Sa'di:

Man reaches where he sees nothing but Allah Look! To what extent man's position can rise

This is the highest position in at-Tawhid to which man can ascend. As it has been said, comprehending what those notables had said, cast into the moulds of common vocabulary, is no easy task. Yet, those who have explained their beliefs, their behaviour, and morals and showed conformity with the religious regulations, can have our good opinion of them that they would not claim groundless achievements. They must have found something which they tried to contain into their utterances, though somewhat vague. Those who have written in their books that Allah is immaterial; Allah does not transmigrate; Allah is not the very creation; and when they have said they see nothing but Allah, they do not mean that whatever they have seen is Allah. They actually mean that in these mirrors they discern the beauty of their own beloved. If those who have spent their whole lives obeying Allah and worshipping Him claim such allegations we shall have the right to have a good opinion of them and say that their utterances bear high meanings which we cannot understand well. But if a careless, wine drinker and unrestrained person alleges gnosticism, we cannot have a good opinion of him. Gnostical intuition is not such a gem to be offered to every rascal.

Acquiring such a knowledge requires decades of toil, or, as that great man said: "It needs digging the mountain with one's eyelashes." Treading the road of gnosticism is not an easy job, it is like rubbing off a mountain with one's eyelashes. Those who had endeavoured so hard for the sake of

knowledge and servitude to Allah, might have been blessed by Him and they must have been guided to uncover certain realities that our minds are incapable of understanding.

This is quite possible, as it had been referred to in some narratives, which assure that among the companions of the Prophet (S.A.) and the pure Imams (A.S.) there were some who could not tell their closest friends about the things they could understand. Such traditional narratives are seen in Usulul-Kafi, as: "Had Abudharr known what was there in Salman's heart, he would have accused him of infidelity (or: he would have killed him), whereas the Prophet (S.A.) proclaimed them as brothers." We do know that Abudharr and Salman were the Prophet's most favoured companions. Their faith made them so close to one another that the Prophet (S.A.), on the day of announcing brotherhood among the believers, proclaimed them to be brothers.

Yet, Salman had attained such a knowledge that could not be understood by Abudharr, and thus, on hearing it, he would either accuse Salman of infidelity or kill him. Salman's knowledge, apparently, was so deep and profound that if he had tried to tell Abudharr about it, the latter could not have understood it correctly, and would have thought him to have turned back to infidelity. Amirul-Mu'minin, 'Ali (A.S.) could understand facts which he could not disclose to Salman either. They could not be explained. Poured into the moulds of words, would have caused them to be wrongly understood and get incorrect meanings. As a matter of fact, some great personalities were actually misunderstood and badly accused of groundless accusations, whereas they were quite innocent.

The Divine Acts

In the former discussions we got to the conclusion that the limit of at-Tawhid in the Necessary Being and in Creation - covers also at-Tawhid in Genetic Lordship and Legislation, as well as in Divinity.

From the Qur'anic standpoint, a monotheist is the one who believes in these five stages of at-Tawhid, all of which are summarized in the good slogan of La ilaha illallah, [there is no god but Allah]. Every monotheist must generally have this belief. Yet, when it comes to analyzing and applying it in particular instances there appear some ambiguities in certain questions, not only for the laymen, but also for the scholars versed in theological and philosophical matters, who find them rather difficult to solve.

For example, when we say Allah has created everything, it is undoubted that every monotheist believes in it. But when we want to apply the idea to see: Whom did Allah create? What did He create? What is He going to create? Does He directly create everything by Himself, or does He create only the raw materials of the world and then these materials, through their own dynamism, bring about all the other phenomena, and, according to the law governing matter, everything comes to existence gradually, needing no help from Allah?

Creation and Management in the Islamic Tawhid

The scholars of the monotheist religions bear different opinions in this respect. We have to see what the opinion of the Qur'an about this subject is. We have formerly referred to an example about the management of the world, with the conclusion that the total Divine Acts can be summarized under the title of Creation and Management, since the latter is inseparable from the former.

Concerning the management a question is put forth: after the creation of this world, did Allah create together with it a particular order and a sort of management such that afterwards it continued functioning automatically in perfect order till the end? Is it like the watchmaker who arranges the parts of a watch in such a way that when it is filled up it goes on working without any further interference on the part of the watchmaker, all its wheels and springs work in a good order, needing no more help from the watchmaker? Is the world like this? Is it that Allah had put its parts in such a strict order that there will be no need for any readjustment and interference? Is Allah now sitting idly aside, while the world is running itself alone, or, on the contrary, the world is in needs, in every moment, of Allah's management, and Allah is present in every event that happens in the world as a manager, His Lordship covering all the phenomena along time and place?

Perhaps you have heard of the two European scholars, Rene' Descartes and Blaise Pascal, both monotheists, who had different opinions about Allah's Lordship over the world. Descartes used to minutely describe the mechanism of the universe in such a way that one would think that there was no need for Allah's influence.

Somewhere he wrote that the world just needed a sign from Allah to get a moving power to run its wheels forever. Allah was the original mover,

which meant that the first power which caused the appearance of movement in the world was created by Him. This power remains forever and is enough to run all the phenomena of the world.

Pascal, who had a stronger intuitive and moral spirit, accused Descartes that he, according to his above theory, said that we would no longer need Allah, as His job was just to make a sign, and nothing more. Now, it is none of our business to discuss their arguments. We just wanted to point out that even the philosophers and those versed in intellectual and theological matters, such as these issues, used to discuss them. What every monotheist must believe in is a general belief that Allah is the Creator and the Lord of the world.

But regarding the details, even the great scholars cannot comprehend them, let alone the ordinary people. Naturally, the more one's knowledge (whether rational through the intellect, or through the heart by means of divine inspiration) the better one's understanding of at-Tawhid and more clear the details of monotheism to one's mind. We pray to Allah, the Exalted to make our intellect more perfect, and our knowledge of the Book and the Tradition (Sunnah) more explicit, as well as to give our hearts the luminosity of a better knowledge.

Allah's Connection with the World And Mankind

The Glorious Qur'an follows a special method in presenting Allah's connection to the world and mankind - a method which is, in itself, an example of the Divine Wisdom and His Genetic Lordship and Legislation in respect of the human beings. It informs us, at the same time, that as we cannot know well the Divine Essence, we also can neither know the truths of the Divine Attributes as they should be, nor the truths of the Divine Acts. Nevertheless, we shall try, through a special method, to explain man's knowledge of the Divine Acts and Allah's connection to man and the world. Perhaps our expression that we cannot even comprehend the truths of the Divine Acts appears to some a bit heavy. A brief explanation is necessary here, in order to throw light on the fact that we actually cannot very well understand the connection between Allah as Creator and the Divine activity and creativity. The concepts which we use in this instance, such as the concepts of creativity, causity, activity and the like, are concepts extracted from possible evidences. That is, we first found something in ourselves, or we knew the connection between two material things. We then derived from that which we found, or that connection which we knew, a concept, then we generalized that concept in order to cover Allah, too. When I say I did a certain task, I use the concept of "task" and doing it, and ascribe the same concept to Allah and say that Allah, too, did it. Or when they say that somebody managed to rule a given community, or directed a group, or looked after a machine - these are concepts which are obtained from special connections between man and nature, or between a person and other persons. Making, finishing, directing, managing and the like are concepts which result from man's connection with nature. For example, take the making of a machine, or the talking about man's connection with other men, or when reference is made to managing a society, we usually expand the concepts of these experiences, which we ourselves see or know, and omit

from them certain limitations, so that we can say: Allah, too, made the world, meaning the same "making" which we use when talking about what a worker, a constructor or an architecture makes. We use the same word "management", which we use in respect of the manager of a community, to say that Allah is likewise managing or directing the world. But what we find in ourselves are certain connections which are characterised by deficiencies and limitations. So, when we want to ascribe them to Allah, those deficiencies and limitations, which do not befit Allah, the Glorified, are to be left out. When we want to do something, how do we do it? We do it by using our hands, body and with the help of our eyes, ears and other senses. But when we say that Allah does something, do we mean that Allah, like ourselves, - we seek Allah's refuge - has hands which he moves? Or, as we put a mechanical energy in a body to move it, does He, too, press His hands against the world to move it? Or as we kick a ball, does He also kick the earth with His foot - glorified He! - in order to give it its revolving movement? Of course, the case is not like this, as we do know that Allah has no physical body and no corporeal limbs to use for moving the sun and the other planets. Allah's Acts are not done by means of physical and corporeal limbs. Yet, there is a kind of connection here. If we do not kick the ball it will not move. Likewise, if Allah did not do something with the world it would not move, though we do not know how it was. This is also true of Allah's Attributes. When we say that Allah is Knowing, we have incomplete and limited evidences of His "knowledge". Yet, we say that "Knowledge" can have other than these limited evidences, such as what? We do not know. It can be "knowledge", but not that kind which is acquired by hearing or reading. Lacking this kind of knowledge does not give us the right to regard it impossible. When the rational proof tells us that Allah's is not an acquired knowledge we accept the concept of there being a non-acquired knowledge, but how? We do not know, and therefore we are used to describe His knowledge to be a "knowing, but not like ours". This is true of His Acts, too. Allah, the Cause of the Causes When we say Allah is the director and the manager of the world, we must add: but not like our managing and directing. When, in the terms of the rationalists, the philosophers and mutakallimun, we say: Allah is the cause of the world, or the cause of the causes, we must define it by adding: but not like when we ourselves are the cause. The characteristics seen in the connection between the natural cause and the effect of the world's phenomena are never seen between Allah and the world. It is a different kind of causation. How? We do not know. That is, our reason cannot understand it. It can only understand that Allah is the Cause of the Causes, i.e. had there been no Allah there would have been no world. This is what a cause means. It means the cause upon which everything depends, or that which causes existence to a thing, such that if the first had not been existent, the other would not have been existent, too. So, the first is the cause of the second. Likewise, when we say that Allah is the Cause we mean that if He had not existed, the world would not have existed, too. But we cannot know or understand how Allah's connection with the world is, since we cannot realize the truth of Divinity and Divine Act. We cannot understand how it is, except through visionary knowledge,

as we had already said. Allah bestows on some of His worthy slaves the favour of having a visionary knowledge so that they can understand, according to their individual capacities, the truth of the Divine Acts, as we said in respect of the Essence and the Attributes. It may be that the ayah concerning the Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) refers to this subject: It is in the Qur'an that Ibrahim (A.S.) asked Allah: "O Lord! Show me how do you give life to the dead?"^[90] A superficial impression of this episode is that Ibrahim (A.S.) wanted to know how a dead can return to life, because witnessing a demonstration of bringing a dead to life can be more effective. The late 'Allamah Tabataba'i has a very delicate comment on this ayah. He says: "Ibrahim (A.S.) did not ask Allah to show him how a dead is brought to life. He asked Him to show him how He brings the dead to life. That is, he wanted to see Allah's way of bringing the dead to life." He wanted to see the connection between Allah and His creatures which brings the dead to life, i.e. what does Allah do that brings the dead to life? He wanted to see the Divine manner of bringing the dead to life, not the manner of coming to life. In other words, he wanted to see the evidence of Allah's Act - an Act which all of us wish to see - what does Allah do to give existence to a world? How is it directed? What connection is there between Allah and His creation? Allah ordered Ibrahim (A.S.) to take four birds, kill them, mix the parts of their bodies, divide them into four parts, put each part on top of a mountain, then call them to him. At that moment they came to life moving towards him. 'Allamah Tabataba'i says: "Actually Ibrahim (A.S.) was involved in Allah's Act of giving life, i.e. Allah gave life to the birds through Ibrahim (A.S.). It was Allah's Will that it should be achieved by him. It was a visionary knowledge. Should anybody get a similar chance he would find, according to his capacity, the truth of Allah's Act. We should not expect to know the truth of Allah's connection with His creatures, except to the limit which the intellect can explain. As to these inviolabilities: He acts, but not like our act; He creates, but not like our creation; He makes, but not like our making; He arranges, but not like our arrangement - we must keep all Divine Acts inviolate from all human defects shortcomings and insufficiencies which are present in our own acts. Now, as we have mentioned that we are unable to find out the true nature of the Divine Act as it is in actuality, we do not mean that we should keep our intellect and reasoning faculty inactive and idle, and go on saying: we do not know. This "we do not know", which is said by scientific researchers, is different from that which is said by an ignorant at the beginning of the work. Much as we may try we would not be able to understand the truth about the Divine Act by means of our reason. Nevertheless, we have to use our thinking faculties. We can proceed a great deal, though not to the extent of finding its very nature. We must, however, go ahead and increase our knowledge. Allah's Connection with the World in the Qur'an The Qur'an guides us on this road. On different occasions it explains Allah's connection with His creatures and points out to it in such a way that if we care to find out how it was stated at the first instane, then at the second, we will gradually increase our knowledge. Answering the question: "Is Allah the Creator of the origin of the world only, or is He also the Creator of all its phenomena?" The Qur'an

says that He not only created the first matter of the world, but He also created every thing in the world. So, Allah's creation covers every existing thing in the world. The Qur'an, for example, says: "...And He created everything..."^[91] "...(He), the Creator of all things..."^[92] and: "And Allah created you and what you make."^[93] He created even what you make or what you do; for man's acts are things, too, since they exist, and they are also created by Allah. Thus, from the Qur'anic viewpoint, there is no doubt that whatever can be said to be "a thing" is a creation of Allah, and that His creation is not confined only to the first matter. As regards "management", other ayahs speak of the fact that wherever there appears the question of directing and willing something, Allah's Lordship and His management are present. This is generally referred to in ayahs such as: "...(He) regulates (all) the affairs"^[94] So, managing and regulating the affairs of the world are absolutely of Allah's concern. Another ayah says: "..., but Allah's is the commandment entirely."^[95] Starting a name with the Arabic preposition lam, in the Arabic syntax, gives exclusiveness to it. That is, the commandment belongs to no one but Allah. In another ayah it is said: "...His is the creation and the commandment; blessed is Allah, the Lord of the worlds."^[96] Therefore, since He is the Lord of the worlds, everything is covered by His Lordship: Creation is done by Him, and the management is commanded by Him. Many other ayahs exclusively confine creation, management and lordship, in general, to Allah alone. By way of detailing, the Qur'an, in several instances mentions natural phenomena and then says that it is Allah who does all these things. Generally, when the Qur'an mentions the natural phenomena and contemplating them, it connects them solely with Allah. The Qur'an is not interested in directly enhancing such a contemplation merely to understand nature, because man will do that willy-nilly for his own interests. But the Qur'an's stress is on encouraging man to try to understand the connection between Allah and nature, and then to get a better knowledge of Allah. There are many ayahs which refer to different natural phenomena and remind us that they are Allah's Act and creation. An ayah says: "..., and the water that Allah sends down from the sky, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spread in it all (kinds of) animals..."^[97] The Qur'an frequently repeats: "The water which Allah sends down, the plants which He grows out of the earth for you and your cattle. This is stressed everywhere. Everybody knows that water comes down from the sky, but the Qur'an stresses the event of sending it down and the Sender. Everybody knows that plants grow out of the earth, and that the earth comes to life in spring, but the Qur'an stresses the fact that it is Allah Who does all these things. What does this mean? We shall come to this later on, by Allah's Will. For the time being we want to make it clear that the Qur'an's claim is that all this is Allah's Act. This is the tone of the Qur'an in mentioning the natural phenomena that even the smallest movement or change in the world of existence is done by Allah. What is simpler than the falling of a seed on a damp place, where it absorbs the moisture, gets a little fat, then peels off? It is a phenomenon of nature. The Qur'an says: "Surely Allah is the splitter of the seed and the date-stone..."^[98] What does this mean? It is Allah's presence in every phenomenon, even in man's voluntary

and compulsory acts. Allah says: "You (believers) did not slay them (unbelievers), but it was Allah Who slew them, and you did not throw when you threw, but Allah threw..."^[99] In Badr Battle the Prophet (S.A.) threw a handful of sand at the enemy, and the Muslims were victorious, despite their being few in number. Likewise, in other battles Allah refers to the fact that the Muslims, though fewer in number, were victorious, and tells them that it was Allah Who killed them (the unbelievers) not they (the Muslims). Similarly, in respect of man's subsistence, man knows how he is provided for, how his income increases or decreases. How it is that one is more comfortable or less comfortable. Such notions deserve consideration. There must be some factors. But Allah repeats that it is He Who increases or decreases providence: "Allah amplifies and straitens the means of subsistence for whom He pleases."^[100] As regards being guided or going astray, and how it is that somebody is guided to find the right path, or to go astray, there are certain factors which are worthy of consideration. Allah says: "Allah guides whom He pleases to the right path."^[101] As to those who go astray, it is because of their evil deeds that He guides them astray. These are of the Qur'anic expressions. The Connection Between Man's Free Will and Allah's Creation Many questions can be asked on this subject. If it is Allah Who does everything, what is our role then? Is it not fatalism? If Allah had created the world and all its phenomena, does it not mean that we must disregard the natural causes and factors? It is He Who does every thing, whether there are laws in nature or not. Does this not mean a denial of world's mechanism and dynamism? Concerning man's actions, does it not mean that he is compelled and has no free will? Such questions are put forth and to answer them is not an easy task. It is our intention to try, with Allah's help and backed by the Qur'anic declarations, to solve the problems occurring in the analyzation of the unity of Creation and that of Lordship, as well as its application in different instances. We hope to be able, with the blessing of the Qur'anic light, to illuminate such questions as: What does Allah's creation mean? Does it contradict the existence of natural and supernatural factors? What is meant by saying that Allah is the only regulator of the world? Does it mean that there is no other management at all? Concerning Allah's Acts and man's management, which are stressed by the Qur'an, both the material such as giving subsistence, or spiritual such as giving guidance, all of which are ascribed to Allah, do these not lead to an idealistic knowledge and to the denial of the existing realities and the rules of this world, or do they mean something else? In our coming discussions these questions will, by Allah's Will, be explained. The Qur'an never tried to deny the natural factors and their effects altogether. As an actual matter, the Qur'an's arguments are based on man's free will within the circle of his own activities. If there had been no free will, what then the prophets had been sent for? If a human being is like a straw on the surface of a stormy sea, surrounded by compulsory factors, how can he be advised to do this and not to do that? If it is the determined factors that direct man, there can be no room for guidance, management, preaching, advice, education and purification, since it is the inevitable which will happen. In principle, the objective of the prophets and the philosophy of their coming with the Divine

Books can be justified only when man has his free will and may be ordered to do this and not to do that, and man is free to accept or to refuse. But if man is under compulsion, this talk will be useless. If man is not free to do what he pleases, there will be no meaning in keeping on telling him: do this, don't do that. You are responsible! What responsibility? If man's subjection to the compulsion of nature, society, and history gives him certain characteristics, then what responsibility can he undertake after being told to do or not to do? Such being the case, there can be no use of sending prophets, divine Books and giving laws and regulations. So, the Qur'an does not deny man's free will. If man's free will is denied, the philosophy and wisdom of sending down the Qur'an will, practically be destroyed. It is not like this. As a matter of fact, the Qur'an tries to gradually make man understand Allah's connection with him, and thus, increase man's knowledge of Him. How, we will, God willing, give details about that later on.

The Generalities of Allah's Acts

The topic is the generalities of Allah's Acts. The Qur'an talks about all aspects of creation, regulation and different acts ascribed to Allah, the Exalted such that it would not be possible to handle them separately. Similarly it cannot be said that the only factor in growing the flower plant is the soil, the rain, the sun, the air or the nourishing elements. All of these are to be present. If any one lacking the process would be incomplete. Under such conditions we usually do not count the element which is always there or within easy reach and do not depend on it. Normally we count the factor which is to be sometimes there to complete the conditions. For example, the soil is always there, the sun is always there, the air is always surrounding the earth, so we usually do not count them, and say that the gardener grows flowers, although this factor may not always be present. If we want to be precise and exact we will have to count the gardener, the soil, the sun, the water and hundreds of other factors effective in growing that flower. In this way we regard a collection of factors as the complete cause to be completely present for bringing the flower into existence. Therefore, if it is said that a number of factors or causes had helped in the appearance of a phenomenon, it is not only correct, but actually it is hundred per cent true and realistic. Sometimes a phenomenon depends on two factors to substituting one another, if one works the other does not work and vice versa, like a master key. This phenomenon is in need of either this factor or that, if the one is present the other is not needed. But it is possible that we may ascribe the appearance of a phenomenon to two factors and say that it is done by both of them , whereas actually only one of them did it, and the other was a substitute. Suppose there are two gardeners who successively take care of a garden. One of them, either this or that, is to plant the flower. so , here we have two factors, but the one substitutes the other. They do not work together. They are not to meet together, as "an impossible exclusion", to use the term of the logicians, i.e. it is impossible that neither of them be present. Sometimes two factors are regarded working longitudinally, i.e. it is ascribed to both of them, but not together and side by side, each working at one of the dimensions. Two factors, along each other, effect in each other, the one conveying the effect of the other to the caused in a particular form.

Examples of this can be seen in nature, in ordinary affairs as well as in the supernatural realm. In common matters, too, you may ascribe an act to two persons, such and in details. So, we have but to look at them from a general point of view, in order to see how He ascribes to Himself the collection of these acts in their diverse shapes and features. what secrets there are in this connection and whether it severs them from their natural and normal direct causes. In this respect we mention a general principle which is, in fact, the key that solves a lot of problems. It concerns the connection between things and Allah. By carefully studying this principle and fully understanding its impact and digesting it, we are apt to overcome many problems which accompany this subject. The principle is this: the connection of a phenomenon to two factors or agents is effected in many ways. Sometimes, to come into existence, a phenomenon needs many things, each of which has a special role in its appearance or shaping of it. All of these are known as the complete cause of that phenomenon, such that if it lacked any one of them the phenomenon would not appear, though this does not mean that they all participate in the making of the phenomenon. Each one has its special part to play in the process of bringing it into existence. For example, these flowers which you see in the garden, in order to become what they are they need a number of factors which simultaneously work together to make a pleasing and fragrant flower growing out of the earth. It needs a seed or a seedling. How the seed or the seedling come into existence? It requires a number of preparatory stages which also need hundreds of factors and conditions. However, this flower seed is to be sown into the soil, or the seedling is to be planted in the earth. Sometimes the wind may insert a seed into the soil, which may grow by itself, such as the wild flowers in the desert. So, for that wild tulip to grow the wind is one of its factors, placing the seed into the earth. But this is not enough. Water must come down from the sky to give moisture to the soil, as the seed cannot grow in a dry land. In the garden, there must be a gardener to sow the seed, or to plant a seedling. He is to insert the seedling into the soil, then to water it, and to take care of it now and then, as it is necessary for the plant to grow out and develop. Consequently, the appearance of this flower bush cannot be ascribed to a single special factor, nor even to the gardener who takes care of it, as the crime which is committed by a secret police who is ordered by his superior to commit it, like the SAVAC of the tyrannical regime [in Iran]. To whom should we ascribe this crime? To the one who personally committed it, to the prosecutor, to the regional head of the SAVAC, to the Director General of the SAVAC, to the big tyrant or to the masters of the tyrant? You are right if you ascribe it to all of them, because the persecutor killed the victim at the order of the local SAVAC head, who issued the order according to that of the higher superiors. The same is true in respect of good deeds. The charity which somebody gives at the order of somebody else, is regarded to have been given by the direct giver as well as by the one who ordered it. So, it is possible, then, to ascribe one act to two doers, but neither crosswise nor substitutionally. The Longitudinal Connection Among the Causes The longitudinal connections are not such that they also form diagonal connections, since they do not work on the same level. The work of the

direct doer is on a level, and the work of the commander and causer is on a higher level. The former does not act side by side with the latter. So, sometimes an act is ascribed to two doers on two levels, longitudinally positioned in respect of each other, not diagonally. In a certain aspect it is ascribed to the one doer, and in another aspect it is ascribed to the other on a higher level, and none of them substitutes the other. Neither the former does the work of the latter, nor the latter does the work of the former. On a given level the work is done by the one and on the other level the work is done by the other. This is so in respect of common and accidental affairs. Sometimes it is said that the cause is stronger than the direct doer, i.e. the crime is better ascribed to the commander than to the one who was commanded to commit it. This arrangement is also common in supernatural matters, i.e. the effect of the supernatural doer does not cross the effect of the natural doer, but it goes along with the natural doer, that does not work in place of the supernatural doer, nor the supernatural doer works in place of the natural one, but it is the supernatural that brings the natural doer into existence and puts it into work. How does it put it into work? Whether it does need this putting into work or not is a different question, which will be dealt with later on, by Allah's will. For the time being our concern is to stress that the dependence of the phenomena of the world on Allah and on natural factors is not on the same level. This, however, does not mean that Allah and nature bring about an act together. Such a god is not a god. The god who has to work with the help of nature is a very needy god. The god who needs no help acts differently. Furthermore, it is polytheism to believe that, besides Allah, there is another one with any effect. When we say that Allah grows the plants, brings the animals to life, moves the wind, causes the night and day to appear in succession, we do not mean that Allah must sit beside the sun and the earth so that the three of them start working to make the day and night appear, that is they do not diagonally do a team-work. This is incorrect. This is not Qur'anic thinking. How does Allah bring about the day and night? If there were no moon, no sun, no earth, no sky and no movement of the earth how could there be day and night? That is why we say that it is Allah Who does it: "That is because Allah causes the night to enter into the day and causes the day to enter into the night!"^[103] Without the earth there would be no meaning of day and night. There they are because of the movement of the earth. Similarly if there was no sun there would be no meaning of day and night. Without the shining of the light of the sun on the earth there can be no meaning of the day. So, what is Allah's role in this respect? On this level and beside them, there is no role; the effect is of the earth and the sun. Allah's role goes with them longitudinally, neither diagonally nor substitutionally. Where there is the earth and its role of bringing about the day and night there it is not the place of Allah. Allah's place is above that. It is He Who brings to existence all the universe by His will. It is by His will that the moon, the sun, the stars and the sky move. The effect of His will in the appearance of the day is the same as in the appearance of the sun and the earth. The entire world as a whole exists and continues to exist by His will. But it is not that Allah comes to replace the gardener in growing flowers. The gardener, the power of his hands, the

flowers and all other factors are created by Him and their existence is in consistent need of His aid. If He stops His aid even for a single moment there will be no existence. Allah's Connection to the Causes Thus, Allah's effect in the appearance of the phenomenon does not cross the material factors, nor does it come beside them nor act in their place. Saying that Allah cured a patient does not mean that no other material factor had any effect in that case. By saying that Allah provides for man we do not mean that there were no natural factors effective, and that the provision descended upon man from some unknown world, or it came, as some say, from the nonexistence. Allah's provision is the very bread whose wheat is grown by the farmer, whose water descends from the sky, whose warmth comes from the sun, the millers ground it and a bread is baked so that we may eat it. Without His Will there will be no plant, no gardener, no sun, no oceans, no earth, no moon, no clouds, no rain and no wind. So, who is it who provides the living? Is providing livelihood anything other than managing these world phenomena in a way that the result would be satisfying my need of food? Such an organized and harmonious order that gives such results, who other than Allah can direct it? Therefore, He is the Provider and He is the One Who brings death. Here also the talk can be lengthy. We just wanted to offer a general criterion for solving such problems as how a phenomenon can be ascribed to nature, to man and to Allah. Do such ascriptions mean contradiction? Do they mean that all are at work? Do they replace one another? or else? If it is something else, then what is it? It is now clear that there is no contradiction, no collective work and no replacement. It is something else. Each factor of any sort of effect on anything in the world has been brought into existence by Allah, its power is from Allah and its life from Him. Therefore, for all connection among the creatures there is a higher connection to Him. Sometimes it happens that a supernatural cause replaces a natural one, other than Allah, the Exalted, as we said in respect of the miracles, such as curing diseases, or the Jesus (A.S.) saying to a dead body in its grave: "Rise up, by Allah's permission!" In that instance there was no natural factor for the dead to come to life, except if we consider it to be the connection of Jesus (A.S.), who had a physical body, to the dead man. Otherwise, there were no natural laws for the dead to come to life. Had there been such laws, it would have no longer been a miracle. On occasions it happens that natural factors and some supernatural ones replace each other in some way. But what is intended is the connection that exists between Allah and the phenomenon, which is not a kind of replacement. Nothing can replace Allah, who has the effect of His divine Lordship upon every natural and supernatural factor, and no factor can take His place. But this does not mean that the factors have no effect alongside Allah's. Allah Himself assigns other things as means, as causes, by means of which certain effects can be obtained and they are true effects. So much for that general rule. Let us now talk a little about its details - leaving the rest of it for the coming discussions, by Allah's Will - how we get these subjects from the Qur'an, and how the Qur'an tries to acquaint our minds with these facts in order to gradually prepare us to understand and accept the concepts which we could not understand at the beginning. Allah, Man and Nature The Qur'an

sometimes ascribes a phenomenon to a natural factor. It says, for example, that the soil grows the plants, sometimes it ascribes it to rain, and sometimes to Allah: "...and you see the earth barren, but when We send down water thereon it thrills and swells and sprouts. forth every pleasing pair."^[104] "And Allah sent down water from the sky and therewith gave life to the earth after its death."^[105] "Know that Allah gives life to the earth."^[106] In these three ayahs, the coming of the earth to life is ascribed to the earth itself in the first, to the water in the second and to Allah in the third. Similar ayahs come frequently in the Qur'an. Some people (those overwhelmed by materialistic thoughts, who formulated the ideologies of some groups) thought, therefore, that nature is Allah, since we sometimes say that the plant is grown by Allah, sometimes by the rain and sometimes by the earth. So; Allah is the very rain and earth. In other words, the Qur'an contradicts itself by ascribing it once to Allah, and once to nature, or we must say that Allah is nature itself. In order not to say that the Qur'an is contradictory, we say that Allah is the very nature. Or, once it says that Allah caused you to be victorious, and once it says that the believers had won the victory, so this means that Allah is the believers. In an instance it says that "you" had killed the disbelievers, and in another instance it says that it was Allah who killed them. So, Allah must be "you". What kind of a god is this who sometimes is nature, sometimes "them" and sometimes "you"? They say that by "Allah" it is the general order of the world that is meant. Or they say that by Allah it is the dynamism of nature, or the general laws of nature that is meant, and the like. Those are all deviations from knowing Allah. He is neither nature, the spirit of nature, the very man, nor the "people" themselves. He is none of these. Allah is Allah, nature is nature and people are people. Nor is He the laws of nature, because these laws are general forms that exist in man's mind, whereas Allah is neither a mental being nor an abstract concept. Allah is an identical and real Being. No being can be described as really existing in comparison with His existence. Allah is the one and according to His Will the whole universe was created. So, how can He be the "people" or nature? How can Allah mean the creatures, and be equal with "people", and other similar talks? The whole world, along its limited and unlimited time, in its proportion to the existence of Allah, the Exalted is much less than the proportion of a drop of water to a fathomless great ocean. Why? Because when you pour a drop of water into the ocean, its volume increases by the volume of that drop, whereas the whole universe added to the existence of Allah cannot increase it: "And they did not measure (the power of) Allah its true measure,"^[107] as otherwise they would not have uttered such nonsense. Allah created the whole world with a single command and if He withdraws His will everything will vanish. How such a Being can be called "people", "society", "creation", or "nature", of compare Him with the spirit to the body of a living creature? If the spirit leaves the body, the body will not immediately perish, but if there were no Allah - God forbid! - what nature could be there? No connection of any kind which we realize between two beings can be compared to that between the world and Allah. We are unable to understand the nature of that connection, but we do understand that if there were no Allah, if. it were not for His Will, nothing could exist even for

a single moment. This is a recognition of the effectiveness of Allah at the highest level, and the effectiveness of the means at lower levels. It is not a denial of the effectiveness at lower levels. It is fire that burns, it is water that quenches man's thirst. But this burning happens when there is fire and something to burn. It is only in that case that the process of effecting and being effected takes place. There must be fire, cotton and air contiguously, each depending on the Divine Essence of Allah, the Exalted. This is unlike the connection between fire and burning, it is a loftier and deeper one that cannot be compared with any other kind of connection between two beings. This must very well be accepted and digested, that Allah, in His effectiveness and causation, should not be compared with those of any other beings, even when a prophet or an Imam performs a miracle with Allah's permission, like Jesus (A.S.) who brought the dead into life. Even this bringing to life by the prophets and Imams is quite different from that of Allah's, i.e. these bringings to life and creations depend on the means which have nothing of their own, while ascribing them to Allah is to ascribe them to a doer who is the creator of every existing, and does not come diagonally with them. It is the same in spiritual matters. What were the prophets sent for? They were sent to guide the people, yet Allah tells His Prophet: "Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He wills."^[108] He tells him: It is not in your capacity to guide whomever you like. It is not up to you. Allah has bestowed upon you a limited favour under certain conditions. It is Allah's Power that is temporarily put in your hands, or in the hands of all other creatures. Every thing is from Him, and it is He Who controls every thing. So, it is not that if you liked to guide somebody you could do it as you liked. No, it is only Allah's Will which, if He decided something, there can be no delaying. If your will was within His and was a beam of His Will, it would be Allah's Will brought about and implemented. But if your will was not within the frame of Allah's, it would have no effect at all. This is a rule that bears no exception. In short, the connections among things, such as we know, can be imagined in several forms: The Connection Among Things 1. The connection of an effect with the complete parts of its cause. If the parts of a complete cause are gathered in a single collection, the phenomenon will be implemented. 2. The connections between things and the replacing factors, as each one of them can be effective in the appearance of the phenomenon, which cannot appear without the existence of anyone of them. 3. Sometimes the effect of two things in the appearance of a phenomenon or the implementation of an affair, is not like either of the above two forms, but they work longitudinally, that is, the effect of the one factor on a level is real, and the effect of the other factor on another higher level is also real. By using the expressions: higher, lower, superficial or deeper we refer to a fact whose nature is not quite clear to us, i.e. we do not mean the factual high or low positions. We actually mean that Allah's real and independent effect is of such originality that nothing else can have any effect on the same level. It is under His radius that the effective factors appear. These are the results of that independent effect of Allah, the Exalted. The real independent effective is Allah. Other things demonstrate their effects according to their capacities to receive Allah's radius, according to

the extent of His Will, and according to the flow of blessing bestowed upon them. Otherwise, the others have nothing of their own, and should Allah remove His Will, it would become clear that all other factors would be nothing. Therefore, the key to the solution of the problems is to think of the connection between Allah and the factors and the natural phenomena to be longitudinal, and to accept it as such. Allah, in an ayah says: "Allah takes the souls at the time of their death"^[109] Here, the taking of the souls is ascribed to Allah. In another ayah He says: "Say: the angel of death who was put in charge of you will take you."^[110] Somewhere else He says: "...when death comes to anyone of you, Our messengers take him."^[111] At first sight one may think that these ayahs are contradictory. It says: "Allah takes the souls", and it says: "The angel of death... will take you", and it says: "...Our messengers take him". But the fact is that these connections are longitudinal, i.e. the real effective is Allah's Will, which is at the top and along everything. He is the originator of all powers and activities, while the others are mere channels or passages. It is His Will that flows through the angel of death, who, in his turn, is effective through His assistants, the angels under His command. Allah's Will shows in the Angel of Death, who issues his orders to his subordinates to take peoples' souls at the prescribed time. Therefore, those ascriptions are correct. Both the "messengers" and "the Angel of Death", take the souls, in obedience of Allah's Will. They cannot do anything independently and directly. All these effects are along the natural effects. This, however, does not mean that one would die without having a heart attack, a stomach disease or hepatalgia, or, for example, without receiving a strike on the head or having an accident, one would be killed. All these factors are possible in nature, nevertheless they are under the managing control of a single upper power. When you peel an apple, is it the knife which peels it or you? If you say: "I peeled the apple", you are right, and if it is said that it is the knife which peels, it is also right. But the knife is under your control, and it is you who use it to peel the apple. Take another example. The driver who drives a car, is it the steering wheel which guides the car, or the driver, or both? Without the steering wheel the car cannot be directed to left or right, similarly without the hands of the driver the wheel would not turn. Eventhough, without the driver's brain and will, his hand would not move. Admitting that whether the mechanical or the physical laws cause the car to move, whether the cause is the turning of matter into energy, or the appearance of mechanical energy, or else, does not mean that there is no driver. A corporeal natural person exclusively fixes his eyes on natural factors, taking no care of the supernatural factor which governs and controls them. The prophets were keen on making you open your eyes a little to see what is behind the curtain, behind the wall, so that you may not think that this is everything and it is confined only to this natural level. Above are factors and worlds, as well as powers of which the natural forces are manifestations. Those are means in the hands of some of those powers, because they cannot be independently effective. Stressing the fact that all actions are done by Allah, the Qur'an wants to remind us of Allah whom we had forgotten. It wants to make us remember Him, not that what we see is incorrect, or non-existent. It tells us to open our eyes and not

to say that it is the pen that writes, to look at the hand which moves the pen, and think of the brain which orders the hand to move the pen, and then you are to decide whether the writer is the man, the muscles of the hand, the nerves or the pen. It is the man who writes, and the others are mere means and tools. The real effect is from him. Yet, Allah's connection with the natural factors is even higher, because the existence of the pen, in that case, would not be in need of man. Even if man did not exist, the pen did exist, since the existence of material means is connected to Allah's Will. The sun does have its effect, but its very existence is by Allah's Will. So, again "...and Allah's is the loftiest similitude". Yet, those similies are unable to explain the truth of the matter concerning Allah. In that case their would be no need of measuring. Here another question may arise: If we take the word elah, god, to mean "worthy of worshipping", how can we explain using it by the Qur'an to also denote the false dieties, such as concerning As-Samiri's calf which is referred to as "your elah, and concerning Pharaoh's gods as "your elahs? The answer is that such utterances are either taken to represent the beliefs of the addressees, or to repeat what the disbelievers used to say.

8. Unity of fear. This is also one of the aspects of at-Tawhid, and means that one should fear nobody except Allah. Since we know that the real effective is Allah, why should we fear others? No one else has any effect, and nobody has any power at all, except as an instrument. The one who truly believes in at-Tawhid is the one who fears Allah alone.

The Principle of Causation in the Qur'an

We had said that all the phenomena of the existence are related to Allah, and that no being in any time, place and dimension can do without Allah. A question may arise here: If the Unity of Acts is so vastly extensive as to encompass every phenomenon with its dimensions and details, it must mean that no other factor or cause can have any effect in the appearance of any thing, since the Unity of Acts means that all acts are done by Allah, and since He is the real effective, and that we must deny everything else any kind of effect and causation. Therefore, this can be a question for discussion.

The Connection of the Principle of Causation to the Unity of Acts

To get a clear expression of this connection, we may explain first the concept of "cause" and the principle of "causation". "Cause" is usually used to denote the aim of the doer, and it is commonly called "causa finalis" or "the final cause", when you ask: "What was your final cause for doing that?", i.e. your motive and aim. In the terms of philosophy it has a much wider meaning, besides being divided into the general and the particular. A general cause is that on which another thing depends, disregarding the thing itself nor the kind of its dependance. Writing a letter depends on the writer. Without a writer no letter can be written. So, the writer is a cause.

The writer must normally have a hand. So, the hand of the writer is a cause, too. Besides, the writer, regarded as a thinker, as a spiritual personality, must have physical tools, his hand is to be sound, its nerves and muscles are to be sound, as these are also needed for writing. So, these are causes, too.

Furthermore, a writer needs paper, ink and pen, each of which is a cause, since without a pen, ink and paper the letter cannot be written. So, writing a letter depends on all these items.

Consequently, each of these is a cause according to its general meaning. The particular meaning denotes the doer, i.e. the being that brings another being into existence, even if it depended on other things in the bringing one of these things into existence, such as the example of the writer, who is a being, though he would need pen, ink and paper, but these are not causes under this particular meaning, because they do not write. In this instance the cause equals the doer, as in the former term, the cause included the doer, though not exclusively. But here the term "exclusively" means the doer.

Causation is the affected source of the cause, i.e. to be a cause is the origin of causation, the origin of the effectiveness of something in the appearance of something else, according to the general term, or the doer of a phenomenon, according to the particular term. Now, one may ask whether the Qur'an accepts the principle of causation, and, if it does, how can the connection of this principle with the Unity of Acts be? Is it possible to accept both the Unity of Acts and the principle of causation? Or if the one is accepted, is the other to be rejected? If we consider the principle of causation in its general meaning, i.e. something that depends on something

else, we will have to study the different causes in the world of existence, so as to see whether the Qur'an accepts them all or not.

Causation in the Qur'an

We confirm here that causation, meaning that the phenomena have doers, is not only acceptable to the Qur'an, but the very principle of the Unity of Acts is based on the principle of causation. The well-known proof of the existence of Allah is also called the proof of the cause of causes. Thus, this proof is based on accepting the principle of causation. By saying that Allah is the real doer of all acts and the Creator of all phenomena we actually present Him as the doer, i.e. the One Who is known in the philosophic term as the cause. So, Allah is the cause of all phenomena, that is, all phenomena are in need of Him.

In this view it is the very Unity of Acts, and does not contradict at-Tawhid. But in its general meaning, as to be the different doers and causes, it is not exclusively confined to be the cause of doing, such as the constructor being the cause of construction, the writer being the cause of the writings, the natural causes, of the natural phenomena, or water and air, of the appearance of the plants. The Qur'an not only accepts the different causes which we know, but it also mentions other kinds of causes which we do not know. As a matter of fact, it accepts the widest concept of the principle of causation, even to a further extent than what we accept of the connection among the phenomena of the world. Allah had stated other kinds of effects and causes in the Qur'an that otherwise we could not have known and understand them. To prove this we shall have to bring examples of the Qur'anic ayahs.

The Materialistic Causation

Among the many causes mentioned in the Qur'an is that which is known in the philosophic terms as the materialistic causation, which, in this term, means that each of this world's phenomena usually appears from the changing of another phenomenon. i.e. every being in this world which may occur to your mind was formerly something else, which had undergone certain changes and transformed into a new thing. For example, the soil was before a mountain, but because of erosion, rain and sun, the mountain erodes and gradually turns into dust, the soil turns into plant, which transforms into animal, which is eaten by man and turns into human beings. This body of ours was formerly other beings, some of it was the flesh of former animals, some of it was of eatable plants, some was of mineral materials.

Whatever phenomenon of the nature you lay your hand on was formerly something else. This "something else" is called "the materialistic cause" in the philosophic term, and this is because there is a kind of union between the former thing and the latter one, to which we say: this is what was formerly a plant. There is a sort of sameness and unity between the present phenomena and the former one. So, the former phenomena, on which the latter ones depend, are, thus, causes.

The Qur'an and the Materialistic Causation

Is this causation acceptable to the Qur'an? Yes, it frequently says that Allah has changed these phenomena into other ones, or He created a given thing from a certain thing, which means that the first was the cause of the appearance of the second. Many examples can be cited. This sky which we see nowadays in different shapes, from the Qur'anic standpoint, formerly was a phenomenon called "smoke, which we today scientifically know as gases. That is, this world was one day in the form of a gas. The noble ayah in this respect says: Then He turned to the heaven when it was smoke.^[112] Regarding the living beings the Qur'an says: "...We made every living thing of water".^[113] So water is a materialistic cause of living things, i.e. water is a necessary part of every living being. This is a proof of the accepted principle of materialistic causation in our world.

As for men, the Qur'an repeatedly says that Allah had created him of clay. Many ayahs in the Qur'an refer to the creation of man: "Surely We created them of firm and sticky clay."^[114] The Qur'an expands the circle of causation to cover things which we do not see, and had it not been mentioned by it we would have known nothing about them.

The creation of the jinn is also an example of causation. The Qur'an talks of the jinn as real beings who, like man, had been created of a material already existed - a subject which we do not intend to discuss for the time being. The Qur'an in this respect says: "And the jinn We created before of intensely hot fire".^[115] So far we talked about the materialistic causation which is acceptable, and of which examples were presented.

Further to these there are the active causes of different features, some of which are unknown to us, such as the activities of the angels. Had the Qur'an not talked about them we would not have known their existence, let alone understanding how their actions and reactions happen. Their activeness is confirmed by Allah, and a lot of tasks had been ascribed to them.

We can say, in brief, that, according to the Qur'an their mission or intermediation is of two types: One is their mission in genetic matters, and the other is in legislative matters. That is, some of them perform genetic affairs as helpers in bringing them about, and some others deliver Allah's instructions to the prophets. The first is called the genetic mission and the other the legislative mission or intermediation. Here is an example of each. Generally, the question of having a message is ascribed to both groups of angels. The Qur'an says: "...Who appoints the angels messengers".^[116] This Surah is also called Suratul Mala'ikah or the angels. Allah had appointed the angels as His messengers and envoys delivering His messages, that is, they are intermediates. A specimen of the messages that are being conveyed by the angels, or beings like angels, in the genetic affairs was that related to the episode of Mary (A.S.). The Qur'an relates this episode many times, explaining how Jesus (A.S.) was born without having a father. What concerns our topic is this: "...then We sent to her Our spirit."^[117] That is: We sent the spirit, who is a great angel, or, according to some narratives, a creature greater than the angels, to her, "Who appeared to her like a perfect man."^[118] This spirit may be Gabriel, another angel or some other creature (no indication in the Qur'an specifying it). It has been sent to Mary, and it

showed itself in the shape of a man. So, one of the characteristics of the angels is that they can turn into a man.

Mary was busy worshipping in a room. (It was the custom in those days to build rooms near Jerusalem for people to worship in seclusion). She was frightened at seeing a stranger who might hide an evil intention: "She said: I take refuge in the Beneficent from you, if you are God-fearing."^[119] In reply "He said: I am only a messenger of your Lord, that I may give you a pure boy."^[120] So, the angels can give offsprings, "...that I may give you a pure boy." This is an act performed by the angels - Jesus (A.S.) was given to Mary (A.S.). She felt the boy in her womb. Gabriel did not bring a legislative message to Mary (A.S.), it was a genetic one. It is the how, the effectiveness and activity that create the spirit, or the angel, in the human world, by the permission of Allah, of course, and through the message sent by Allah. Had it not been stated by the Qur'an, we could not have proved the existence of a being called "the spirit" capable of having such an effect on the world.

On the other hand, the Qur'an admits some effectiveness for the satans, in the form of whispering into the souls of the people: "Say. I take refuge in the Lord of the people...from the evil of the shinking whisperer who whispers into the hearts of the people."^[121] This is a kind of effectiveness of the satans against the people, by way of whispering into their hearts to seduce them to go astray.

Concerning Satan, his nature and acts we shall, by Allah's Will, have a thorough discussion. For the time being we only mentioned this Satan's particular characteristic of his whispering evil in people's heart. Had it not been stated by the Qur'an we could not have known it.

Man's Effectiveness

Man also has many kinds of effects on the world, all of which are not intended to be discussed here. One of the ayahs referring to this question is that in which Allah says: Fight them, Allah will torture them by your hands and bring disgrace on them."^[122] In this short sentence Allah discloses the effectiveness of man in the slaughtering, defeating and destroying the idolators. He tells man to fight and defeat them. So, man is effective, and the shedding of their blood is a punishment inflicted by Allah upon them through man. Man is the doer of the act of killing, but it is Allah Who kills them by man's hand. It is the longitudinal effectiveness explained previously. It is both your doing and Allah's doing, the latter on a higher level, and the former on a lower level. Or we may say: the direct and close doer, man, and the remote doer, Allah, though it seems that this is not quite expressive.

At any rate, man's being a fighter is taken for granted, i.e. it is man who fights and combats, and, at the same time, Allah's act goes along man's action. So it is possible to say that Allah tortured the disbelievers and the idolators by the hands of the believers, and it can be said that the believers attacked the disbelievers and destroyed them, though in two stages.

Another example: Allah says that the Qur'an has a guiding effect on man's heart. Here also two kinds of parallel effects are at work: "There has come to you a light and a clear Book. With it Allah guides the one who

follows His pleasure into the ways of safety."^[123] Here also many concepts can be inferred, the discussion of which we postpone for the time being. Whom does the Qur'an guide? What should their merits be in order to receive divine guidance? The first condition is that their hearts must seek Allah's pleasure and try to obtain it. This is the first condition for availing oneself of the Qur'an's light. Thus, the Qur'an is a means of guidance. It can be said that the Qur'an guides, and it can be said that Allah guides by means of the Qur'an. These are two parallel actions: It is one of the examples of causations which are stated in the Qur'an, as otherwise we could not have quite understood these facts.

There is a connection between human acts and the appearance of evils and misfortunes on the earth. We do, however, understand, to some extent, that some bad deeds, some crimes, have corruptive results, and that the crimes of despotic regimes cause social corruption. These are known and understood. But as a general law, every bad deed done by man causes an evil effect in this world, and there will be a corruption.

The misfortunes that happen in the land and at sea are caused by the evil deeds of people. We could not know this, but the Qur'an says: "Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea because of what the bands of men have wrought."^[124]

Moreover, it is surprising that the acts of some people sometimes caused particular regulations to be issued by Allah. Some punishments-and severe ones-were imposed upon ancient people because of their evil deeds. Allah prohibited certain food for Bani Israel, as punishment, because of their evil conduct. From such ayahs many things can be understood. An ayah says: "Because of the injustice of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful for them."^[125] From this we realize that man can have his effect even on the divine laws. This is another different kind of effectiveness. There are other kinds of causations on the part of man which are also unknown to us, such as the effects of the good deed of men in the blessings of the earth and the heaven.

These are confirmed by the Qur'an, as otherwise we could never have known them. The Qur'an says: "And if the people of the towns had believed and feared Allah, We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth,"^[126] though presently it adds: "but they disbelieved, so We convicted them according to what they earned." Accordingly, the bad deeds of man cause corruption in the earth, and his good deeds bring blessing from the earth and the heaven. This is also another kind of causation between man's acts and spiritual matters which benefit man himself. The previous ayah showed us the effect of good deeds in causing material blessings. Here the connection is between man's good deeds and their spiritual effects which are to man's interest: "Those who believe and do good, their Lord will guide them for their faith"^[127] This is a divine guidance conditioned by man's faith and good deed.

If a man has faith and does good deeds Allah will guide him and grant him a light which the others cannot understand. So, it is his faith and good deed that become the cause for Allah to bestow upon him guidance and light to his benefit. This is a kind of effectiveness in respect to a moral, a spiritual

matter. It is a different effect of the connection between man's acts and the phenomena of the other world that which has never been known to us, nor do we have now a correct knowledge of its truth. The Qur'an says that the smallest of your acts in this world will have its effect in the other world. None of your acts can .have no effect on your life in the other world, and what a great and eternal effect resulting from a worldly and transitory act! This kind of causation is quite unknown to us, but the Qur'an confirms it. Many ayahs refer to this, such as: "I have rewarded them this day, because they were tolerant, that they are the winners (of happiness)."^[128]

So far, we noted examples of causations, among natural, living and supernatural phenomena from the Qur'anic standpoint.

By the above-mentioned examples our claim has been proved, that is, the Qur'an confirms the principle of causation at a wider level than that which occurs to human mind. It establishes a causal connection even between our smallest act done in this world and the eternal rewards and results. So, the causation doctrine has never been denied by the Qur'an.

Such being the case, how can the Unity of Acts and the causation doctrine be accepted at the same time. The answer is the same as had been mentioned, i.e. in the longitudinal connection, the two acts go in parallel to each other, not a crosswise act consisting of several doers making a single group, nor a substitutional act that takes the place of another act. Actually, the doer is both, though each acting on his particular and different level and degree. We already said that the Qur'an extends the causation doctrine to its widest limit and accepts it. As a matter of fact, it does not present the scientific and philosophic topics in their technical terms, since it is not a book of science nor of philosophy, but it includes subjects which are related to them.

We may say that a certain ayah, or ayahs, coincide with so-and-so scientific or philosophic matter. We do not say that it handles a certain philosophic problem, solves it and proves it, The Qur'an does not present the causation doctrine by way of questioning whether there is a cause in the world or not. Yet, its statements cannot be interpreted except on the basis of the causation doctrine, i.e. accepting this doctrine is inevitable for those statements. There is no doubt that the Unity of Acts presents the divine effect on a higher level, not on the level of natural and ordinary causes, and without there being any contradiction. In other words, the effect of Allah and of the other causes go parallel to one another, not crosswise.

Here appears another question related to the causation doctrine. All that had been gathered from the Qur'anic ayahs prove the fact that this doctrine had been confirmed on diverse occasions, but does Qur'an's acceptance of the causation doctrine, as understood from the said occasions, mean that this doctrine is like a necessary and indispensable law such that nothing is out of its limits, or do the ayahs say that generally the world is governed by this doctrine, but there can also be occasions on which it does not work?

In the new philosophy there is a term called "determinism". Is it necessary and inevitable that each effect is brought about by means of a certain cause, or is it that some phenomena cannot be proved to have certain causes? In this respect there are several theses which can be squeezed into

three ones: some people believe that every phenomenon is subject to the principle of "determinism, , and necessity. Some others believe that this principle can never be proved in any instance. Some go into details and say that the macrophysical phenomena are deterministic, whereas in respect to the microphysical phenomena they are not governed by the causation doctrine. For example, take an atom, one of the electrons will leave its orbit, but it is unknown which one, as there is no evidence pointing to any one of them. It is a matter of chance and at random. This belongs to microphysics, where, they say, the law of causation does not rule, contrary to the phenomena of macrophysics, where that law does rule.

The correct thesis accepted to us and to the Islamic philosophy is that the doctrine of causation is necessary and bears no exception. If we could not, however, find out the cause of a particular phenomenon, the reason is our insufficient knowledge, not that it happened without any cause. It does have a cause, but we have not discovered it yet. However, this is philosophic topic which is irrelevant to our discussion. We mentioned it just to throw light on the connection between the causation doctrine and at-Tawhid, i.e. whether the cause acceptable to the Qur'an is regarded as a necessary and indispensable principle, or it happens, rarely or frequently, per chance, that is, in the terms of logic, it is acceptable as a positive partial proposition, not as positive universal proposition or a general law. The importance of this discussion appears only when we think of its connection with miracles. We do know that all divine religions, especially Islam in the Qur'an, declare that many of the world's phenomena do not happen because of merely material actions and reactions, as there is an apparatus other than that of material causation. It also rules the world, though unknown to people and is not put at their disposal.

The Connection Between Causation and Miracles

A characteristic of the religious and divine belief is the acceptance of the idea of miracles, which is unknown to the materialistic school. It is, in fact, one of the pretexts used by the materialistic schools against the theological schools, especially the religious, accusing them of violating the causation doctrine. They say that the acceptance of such religious matters actually is violation of the causation doctrine, which, if acceptable, must come into existence through its own cause and conditions, otherwise it will be impossible. "How can you say," they protest, "that a phenomenon may come into existence without having a material cause? "This is a denial of the causation doctrine". They regard this a weak point of the divine school. Maybe some Marxist literature had referred to this, saying that the religious school believed in the accidental happening of things, by which they mean the miracles.

Despite the fact that those who believe in accidentalism, in its incorrect concept, are the very materialists themselves, and of which they have no escape, yet they accuse us of being accidentalists. Realizing that we admit the happening of exceptional and miraculous phenomena, they say: here you have an accident, and, by admitting it, you reject the causation doctrine as a necessary general law. This is one of the allegations of which the materialists accuse the theologians. How much truth is there in this? Is the

causation doctrine a general and inevitable law? If we accept this law, are we, then, to deny the miracles, or can the question be solved in a different way?

It must be said that the causation doctrine is a philosophic, universal and necessary one. It accepts no exception. To explain this subject, we shall have to go into a thorough philosophic discourse, which is, in fact, out of the frame of our discussion. It is not in our intention to handle such a wide philosophic subject. If we do sometimes explain similar subjects, it is because they are related to certain Qur'anic questions which require explanation. Otherwise, we do not concern ourselves with irrelevant philosophic topics. The problem, now, is if the causation doctrine is a universal and necessary one, how can miracles be justified?

Taking Position in Respect to Miracles

The First Position:

It is the position of those who take the miracles to be superstitions and say that they are myths and legends which remained in the human mind from the mythical and legendary periods. Their residues transported to the next religious periods and rested in the deep depths of the human mind, to appear in the form of miracles, which are no more than unreal fabulous legends.

This is the position of the materialists and the scientists. Such thinkers basically deny all religions, since the prominent characteristic of every divine religion is to acknowledge miracles, especially Islam, as the Qur'an is quite explicit in this respect such that to deny miracles is to deny the Qur'an itself. That is, we are either to affirm that the Qur'an is a true Book and, thus, the miracle is also true, or to say that since the Qur'an is a miracle it is false - God forbid! - Otherwise it is irrational to accept the Qur'an and deny the miracle. The Qur'anic declarations in this respect are so extensive that there can be no doubt about the truth of miracles. Such being the case, some accuse Islam as being a false religion because it says, for example, that somebody had thrown his stick and it turned into a snake. This is more like a myth. How could a piece of wood turn into a snake? The Qur'an says: "So he threw his staff, and lo! lo! it was a real serpent"^[129]. They say this is a legend, and, consequently, the Qur'an itself is not a true Book. Or they say that the Qur'an states that Jesus (A.S.) was born without having a father at all, and that a spirit appeared before Mary (A.S.). Science does not accept such things. Therefore, the Qur'an is - God forbid! - a lie.

They also say that the Qur'an alleges that Jesus (A.S.), a child of one or two days, lying in its cradle, started talking and even claimed to be a prophet with a divine scripture. When Bani Israel accusingly said to Mary (A.S.): "You have done a strange thing. O sister of Aaron! your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother a harlot". Their attack was severe upon her. She pointed to the infant in the cradle: "They said: How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?" But he surprised them by saying: "I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and appointed me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined upon me the Salat and the Zakat so long as I remain alive; and dutiful to my mother..."^[130]

A new born infant, speaking from its cradle like this, astounded them all! What a story this is! Then the Qur'an adds that it was a divine sign which was brought among the people so that they may know Allah, that He is capable of doing everything and that they should submit to Him.

As for the scientific thinkers, they say such things are impossible, science has never proved them, they are but superstitions, of which there are many examples in the Qur'an. so, this position rejects the Qur'an for including such things.

The Second Position

This position is a little milder than the first. It is the position of those who apparently introduce themselves as Muslims and supporters of the Qur'an but they, out of ignorance or hypocrisy, resort to the interpretation of such ayahs as formerly stated. They say: the meanings of those ayahs are not as they had been understood by some people. They have different meanings. Or sometimes they ascribe them to be like superstitions. They say the Qur'an includes myths, too, and those are some of them. Myths, they say, have their benefits, if they are explained by the mythologists.

The Third Position

Those who take this position say that these are vocabularies from which you understand the said meanings, while the story was something else. People, and sometimes men of religion, gradually show such subjects to appear as superstitions. The subject is different. By saying that he would cure their patients Jesus; they say, intended to say that he would treat them, since Jesus was a clever physician. In that era of good medication, Jesus was a genius physician who dedicated himself to the weak and the poor. He used to tell the people to bring the patients to him for treatment. He wanted to offer his humanistic services to the society, not to show miracles: "...and I heal the blind and the leprous." means that he medicated their patients, as any physician would try to do. "and bring the dead to life" means Jesus used to dig out some dead bodies. These acts cannot mean that he miraculously cured the sick or brought the dead to life. No, he disintombed the dead as dead, not alive!

As regards an episode such as Bani Israel's crossing the sea, and the drowning of Pharaoh and his men in the sea, which was another one of Moses' miracles, they say: you misunderstood this one, too. Moses (A.S.) was brought up in Pharaoh's court. At those times astronomy and other similar sciences were very common among people. Moses (A.S.) was clever and talented. He had learned from the scholars of the court of Pharaoh the law of the seas ebb and tide. He could very well calculate the periods of high tide and low tide. His calculations showed him that a very strange low tide was going to start such that the bed of the sea would be exposed. He decided to cross the sea with his people at that very time. So, when he was told: "Strike the sea with your staff. And it parted, each like a huge mound,"^[131] it was a reference to this question of low tide, and the striking of the sea with his staff was ordering him to proceed, at the time of the ebb, and cross the sea. So, it was a natural phenomenon. Likewise the other

miracles stated in the Qur'an can be interpreted in similar ridiculous or tearful ways.

One of the prominent examples of such dull and distorting interpretations of the Qur'an is that of the Indian commentator Mir Ahmad Khan, who has a lot of such specimen. Some Egyptian commentators have quoted him. It is regretted that persons who consider themselves writers of exegeses and they did write them in the Persian language, quoted such matters, and made of these felts hats for their heads.

This is another position, which, in fact, distorts the Qur'an. If we want to make puns on words and explain things as we desire, there can be no specific meanings for words, and everybody may assign any meaning he likes for the words, such as being done by the hypocrites who interpret the ayahs of the Qur'an in any form they like.

If such a door is flung open, no discourse can be trusted and no word may retain its specific meaning, in which case two contrary meanings, both positive and negative, may be ascribed to a single word. If this is to be the case, it is better to leave the Qur'an aside than to fabricate such ridiculous interpretations of it. Every fair thinking with a knowledge of the Arabic language can realize that giving such meanings to the ayahs is more disgraceful than denying the Qur'an altogether. It is better to say that the Qur'an is a lie - God forbid! But to admit that the Qur'an is a divine Book and it is true and was sent to the people, cannot conform with such ridiculous interpretations.

The Fourth Position

This position towards miracles is also a mild one. The supporters of this position say that the truth about miracles is the miracle of science. That is, they say: We accept that Moses, Jesus and other Prophets (A.S.) did perform things contrary to the natural proceedings. Allah had bestowed upon them a power which was the sign of their prophethood. What they did was extraordinary, but the causes of those performances were not what others say, they were something else. Allah has given them the knowledge of knowing the natural causes of those phenomena, and they utilized their divine and extraordinary knowledge. It was not a knowledge that could be learnt by whoever liked it. Its appearance in certain persons was regarded as a miracle, but the effect was, actually carried out through natural laws.

For example, you do know that in chemistry there are uncountable actions and reactions with astonishing results. Those who know such formulae, solutions, pastes and chemical compounds can demonstrate amazing effects which would surprise the others. Ordinary people think that fire and water never come together, whereas a chemist can easily demonstrate an experiment in which we see fire on the surface of water. Such instances are plenty in chemistry. So, those who know nothing about such formulae think them to be miracles, but if some illiterate in a desert performed such demonstrations, they would be miracles, because the others knew nothing about them and could not do them. Later on, when the relevant secrets were discovered and everybody could do them, they could no more be regarded as miracles.

Consequently, a miracle is a proportional matter. Under certain conditions in a certain place, done by a certain person before a certain people, it is seen as a miracle, since that people know nothing, cannot recognize it and incapable of doing it. But the same performance loses its miraculous nature and becomes an ordinary affair when all the people can learn it and have all the required means at their disposal to do it. A hundred years ago if one could have his voice heard on the other side of the world, it would have been regarded as a miracle, but nowadays, when everybody can make use of the telephone to hear his friend's voice overseas, it can be no longer a miracle. So, the first person who can do it, especially if he lacks all learning and knowledge and is in an ignorant climate, it is surely regarded as a miracle.

They say that the prophets were like that. They were taught some scientific formulae by Allah. Others did not know them. But later, after the development and advancement of science and of people's knowledge, they ceased to be regarded as miracles.

This was another interpretation of the miracles, and a particular position towards the Qur'an's declarations about the miraculous performances of the prophets. But the fact is that all these positions are false. The first is a denial of the Qur'an, the second is a distortion of the Qur'an, the third and the fourth are caused by misunderstanding the Qur'an.

What the Qur'an and the true divine religions say is that there are phenomena which happen in this world caused not by usual causes, but by the will of the prophets and Allah's men, on whom He had bestowed a power and a special knowledge to govern the natural laws. As a matter of fact, there are happenings which look like miracles and may be mistaken for miracles, such as the performances of the ascetics. These, however, are facts, too, other than the deceitful magic. There are also the godly men who attain, with their strict self-discipline, to certain truths, which may appear as miracles to the little-informed lookers on, whereas closer observers realize that such performances can be learnt and taught, since they have their preliminaries and causes leading to their appearance. These are not miracles. A miracle is something given by Allah and has neither causes nor means, nor is it possible to learn or teach. It is a power granted by Allah's Will to whomever He pleases - a power to overpower nature. As to what the self-mortifiers do, they are acts acquired by training and can be performed by others, too, but a miracle is something else. The truth of the miracles is something beyond magic, self-mortification, strange sciences and the like.

Miracles are neither learnt nor taught, they are God-given talents, which are bestowed upon whomever Allah desires and to the extent He pleases. Now, one. may ask: Does accepting the principle of miracles, as such, constitute a contradiction to the principle of causation? The answer is that it does not. According to the principle of causation, every phenomenon and whatever is not self-existent depends in its appearance into existence on the effect of another factor.

Therefore, the self-existent, i.e. Allah's Holy Essence, is outside the limits of the principle of causation, that is, Allah is not an effect and need not to have a cause. As a matter, of course, Allah is at the head of the

principle of causation, since His Holy Essence is the cause of all things, though He is outside the circle of the caused. Allah needs no cause, because the principle of causation, according to its philosophic concept, means that, that which is not self-existent and is needy, its existence depends on something else which is to satisfy its needs, while Allah is a needless Being, and thus He is not included in the causation argument.

Secondly, the causation principle, as an intellectual tenet, says that the beings which are limited, conditional and needy, there must be behind them something connected to them and that which fulfils them. But as to what that "something" is, what shape it has and how it exerts its effect, they are not explained by the causation principle, i.e. it is not possible to know the particular cause of each phenomenon from the causation principle itself. The causation law is a rational one, prior to experiment and not dependant on it, whereas recognizing the particular causes is an experimental procedure and determined by experiments. That is, a scientist sits in his laboratory, changes the conditions, compounds, and analyzes until he attains to new discoveries. Then, as soon as a new phenomenon appears in the laboratory, such as the flushing of a light, the hearing of a sound or the facing of a new material phenomenon, he immediately understands that there must have been a cause for what had happened, according to reason.

This, however, is understandable by reason without having to do any experiment. But as regards what was the cause of the appearance of that phenomenon, the mind, alone, cannot help us in finding out the cause, as otherwise there would have been no need for, resorting to experimentation and the mind would have told us what caused the so-and-so phenomenon. Science and experiment can tell us about the particular causes, whereas the causation law is a - philosophic one. Detailed discussion of this subject comes in its place. Here I just wanted to show how far experimentation can help us in respect to finding out the cause of a happening. Experiment can tell us that under the conditions of the experiment what connection there is between the (A) phenomenon and the (B) phenomenon, such that whenever (A) is present (B) appears, too, and whenever (A) disappears, (B) disappears, too. Only experiment can demonstrate the connection.

However, can the experiment show us that (B) can never appear except through (A)? What experiment can answer such questions? To make a fire, man used for years a particular way. Had he the right to say that there was no other way to make it? It would have been childish to say so. He had no right to say there was no way to make a fire other than that. We usually obtain heat from fire, but do we have the right to say that heat can never be obtained except through this way? The only right we have is to say that, according to our so far acquired knowledge, the causes that make fire are so and so, but we have no right to exclusively confine the ways of making fire only to those which we know and that there can never be other factors producing fire, as only an ignorant can say so, and it is not expected from a researcher to disregard and deny the effect of an unnoticeable factor.

Experimentation can prove what is within the scope of its function, supported by man's senses, but it has no right to deny what lies beyond that. So, alleging that science denies such procedures as claimed by the prophets

is nonsense. Science cannot deny them. It only can say that experiment shows that a human being appears by means of its parents, but it has no right to say that it is impossible otherwise. Principally, experiment cannot prove impossibility. Impossibility is not an experimental concept, it is a philosophical one. If impossibility can be proved it can be proved only through reasoning. What experiment can prove is the non-happening, not the impossibility. So, no science, however advanced it may be, can deny miracles and say that they are impossible. What science proves does not contradict the existence of miracles. Consequently, confirming miracles does not mean denying causation in the happening of miracles. Actually, they confirm the existence of a cause beyond all causes known to people - a cause which is supernatural and extraordinary. They do not absolutely deny all causes. Therefore, causation principle, as a necessary and general one, can meet miracles and extraordinary events, without creating any problem.

Prompt and Gradual Acts of Allah

One of the discussions about Allah's acts is whether He does His acts gradually along the time, or promptly and on the spot. The reason behind this question may be the declarations of some ayahs in the Qur'an. It can be understood from certain ayahs that Allah's acts, or some of them at least, are done gradually, such as the ayahs concerning the creation of the heaven and the earth, as well as man who is created first from a semen and then he gradually grows up to perfection.

There are, on the other hand, a group of ayahs which give us to understand that when Allah wants something He tells it to be, and there it will be on the spot. The outer meanings of such ayahs denote that Allah's acts, in certain instances, are immediately fulfilled, and they need no time. The Qur'an says: "His command, when He wills anything, is only to say to it: 'Be!' so it is."^[132] This concept is repeated many times in the Qur'an. so, how is it possible to join these two groups of ayahs? A question arises in this respect: are Allah's acts gradual or prompt, or are some done gradually and some done on the spot? Many of the commentators have chosen the third version. They say that if a phenomenon appears gradually and takes time to become grown up and complete, Allah's relevant act will similarly be gradual, such as the creation of man who starts from a semen and takes some nine months to become a complete embryo. In this respect, Allah's act takes nine months, too, to be fulfilled. But if it was an immediate affair unconditioned by time, that is, if the creature was to wear the apparel of existence in no time, it would not, of course, be a gradually created. In this respect, it seems that to say: "prompt" or "all at once", is not quite correct. Nevertheless, anything which has nothing to do with time cannot be described as "gradual".

Now let us forsake whether this division of Allah's acts as gradual and immediate conforms with the ayahs revealed in relation to either of them, and what the opinions of the critics in this respect are. We intend now to present the third suggested opinion, which, besides solving this problem, also solves a number of complicated questions related to theology. To do so, we must first explain that when we say that an act is gradual or immediate, do we mean that the relevant result of the act happens immediately or gradually? Or is there a different meaning? For example, when we say that the creation of the world was immediate or gradual, do we mean that the world itself is immediate or gradual? This is very clear. Creation can be of two kinds: what is materialistic takes time and thus its creation is gradual, and what is not materialistic is abstract and its existence is not connected to time, and thus it is immediate, or, better to say: not gradual. So, there can be no question whether Allah's acts are immediate or gradual. Yet, the problem does not end by this.

The Infinitive and the Gerund

A verbal noun can have two moods:

1. As an infinitive

2. As a gerund

In the Persian language the verb is sometimes interpreted as an act and sometimes as the performance of the act. But in the Arabic language it seems that the word denoting the infinitive and the gerund is the same in many instances. It should be noted, however, that such words have two aspects, they are either infinitive or gerund. The basic difference between them is that as regards the infinitive it has a sort of connection with the subject, i.e. it has an additional meaning, which is a kind of verbal meaning: to do, besides denoting the act which is to be done, it always attracts our attention to the subject, the doer of the act.

So, to eat, to sleep, to go, to talk, denote some connection between the subject and the action. As regards the gerund, such a connection is not noticeable. Actually, an obstruction and non-connection are noted, such as: trying and to try. In the first the subject is not obvious, while it is in the second, as it denotes the one who tries, the subject. Similar are: creating and to create. When we say that creation is gradual or immediate, we must make it clear whether we mean "to create" or "creating", whether we mean the creation of this world, disregarding who created it, or the creation including our concern about the creator. More precisely, we realize that this verbal noun does not speak of a concrete fact, but of an abstract matter.

By way of explanation, we may say that an action depends on two elements:

1. The doer himself, who is real, i.e. he is an entity in the outside.
2. The act which is to be fulfilled and implemented. It can also be an entity.

For instance, Allah, Who creates the world, is a real entity that gives entity to all things. There is no entity higher than Allah.^[133] The world, being created, is also a real entity, because, having been created by Allah and got its entity in the outside, it could no longer be regarded as a mental image.

But what about creating? Is it an entity, too? Is it, like the subject and the object of a verb, an entity? Can we find in the outside something named "creating"? Or is "creating" an abstract mental concept, a proportion which we consider to exist between two things (from a certain view, of course)? Undoubtedly, there is nothing in the outside named "creating". What is outside is the subject and the verb meaning the object. But the verbal noun related to the subject cannot be an entity. It can only be a relation which we admit to be between the subject and its dependent. When I write something, a letter, I myself am an entity, the letter is an entity, too. Similarly are the movements of my hand, the paper and the pen. But the "writing" as something related to the writer, is not an entity. So, "writing" is an abstract concept taken from these entities. The hand which moves on the paper at the command of the writer's will result in the appearance of writings on the paper, from which we extract a concept and name it "writing", but it is not a separate entity beside these. All such concepts are abstract ones extracted from the relation between the subject and the object.

So, as regards the creation of the world, instead of having three things: Allah, to create and creating, we only have the creator and the created. When it is recognized by the mind that the world did not come into

existence by itself, but was created by Allah, we, then, say that Allah is the creator and the world is the created.

Of the other clear "annexed concepts" is the concept of "brotherhood". You may be given a son by Allah. As long as this is your only son, we cannot describe him to be a "brother" - whose brother? When Allah grants you your second son, only then you can say that it is the first's brother - Hasan is Husayn's brother. This "brotherhood" is nothing but Hasan and Husayn. We have nothing in the outside except Hasan and Husayn. There is no third entity named "brotherhood". Brotherhood is an annexed concept, a correlation between two things. It is not a real thing and has no entity. What has entity, in this respect, is Hasan and Husayn. As long as Hasan was the only son he was not a brother. The concept of brotherhood appeared only when Husayn was born. Did the birth of Husayn add something to Hasan? Did Hasan find a thing called "brotherhood" which he did not have in his existence? Hasan did not change at all. But when another son was born to Hasan's parents, you extracted from this incident a concept which you called "brotherhood".

Such are the annexed concepts - they are concepts that come true between two things, without adding anything to either of them. "To create" and "being created" can similarly be explained. When Allah created the world nothing was added to Him as a creative. Likewise when the world was brought into existence, we got nothing in the name of "creating" along with the world itself, so as to say we have got four things: "Allah", "creating", "the world" and "being created". In the outside we have Allah and the world, to create and being created, while the correlation between these two, the creating, is an extracted abstract concept.

Temporal and Non-Temporal Beings

When the two sides of a correlative matter are controlled by time, the extracted abstract concept related to the said two sides will also be a temporal one. That is, when you say: "I wrote a letter", your being will be controlled by time, because it happened in a materialistic condition related to a material. The letter, being written in a period of time, is also temporal. The writing (that relation between you and the letter, whose accepted infinitive is "to write") is also temporal. The writing is temporal because the writer is temporal, as well as what is written. This annexed abstract matter happens in time, too. But when the two sides of this correlation are non-temporal, the correlation will, of course, be non-temporal too, since the correlation itself has no independence of its own. So, if its two sides were non-temporal, the very concept would not be temporal. So far no problem. Whoever can correctly recognize the concepts of this proposition and predicate, will admit that the case is as has been explained.

But if there was a correlation between a non-temporal and a temporal being, such as is between Allah, who is non-temporal and the world, or man, who is temporal, there would be a correlation of creating and createdness. This abstract concept, which consists of correlation and annexation, is connected from one side to a non-temporal being, Allah, and from the other side to a temporal being, the world or man. What kind of correlation can this be? Does it follow the temporal or the non-temporal being. Naturally, there

can be two standpoints, depending on your own point of view. If you consider its connection to the non-temporal being, then it is non-temporal, and if you consider its connection to the temporal being, then it is temporal. But since we are not well-informed about the non-temporal and cannot quite explicitly imagine a being that is not conditioned by time, we press our intellect hard to imagine a mental picture of a being that is outside the limits of time.

It is the intellectual proof that takes us so far, as otherwise we cannot by ourselves imagine a being that is outside time, the same as we cannot imagine a being that is outside place. In which case we shall continually ask ourselves: if it is in neither time nor place, where is it then? Perhaps you have, within your argument with yourself about abstract things, felt that a question keeps pressing upon your mind: How can an abstract and non-material being be in no need of place? To ask "where" actually belongs to a being that is in a place, but if it has no place, we cannot ask "where"?, or "when"? it was, since this is used in respect to something that is conditioned by time. If a verb can have no time, no tense, there will be no meaning in asking about the time of its being carried out.

But this is how our minds are. According to Avicenna, the nature of imagination is such that we understand what is within time and place, while we are unable to comprehend what is outside time and place. At any rate, having understood, through mental reasoning, that Allah is outside time, and that it is He who creates the time. He is not in a place, but it is He who creates the place, while all the things of this world are in time and place. The relation which takes place between Allah and the things of time and place, is it temporal or non-temporal?

We said that in respect to the creator it is non-temporal, and in respect to the created it is temporal. But as our mind cannot perceive the being that does not belong to time and place, it commonly is inclined to think of its relation with the created, the temporal, and talk about it as temporal, too.

The Verb and Its Three Tenses

A notable point is that in our language, as in many other languages, in respect to the verb, we observe its main tenses, the past, the present and the future. Now, if we wanted to speak of something which is not connected to time, what verb should we use? Suppose we want to say that Allah, who is non-temporal, had created a being which is also non-temporal, what verb could we use to denote creation. If we said "created" we would be using the past tense, that is, a time in the past. But our supposition was that neither the creator nor the created belongs to time. So, how can we express such an idea. We know of no vocabulary in our language to express it, because all the tenses denote a certain time. Every act must be related to time. So, how are we to tell that a non-temporal being had been brought to existence by the non-temporal Allah? We lack such a word. We have but to use the ordinary words used for temporary acts.

The Timeless Verb

Men of literature use a noteworthy expression in this respect. They say that verbs ascribed to Allah are timeless. For example: ...and Allah is ever

Knowing, Wise".^[134] They say that this "is" is timeless [the English commentator had added "ever" to denote this meaning, although it is not in the original Arabic text. trans.]. Probably those who are acquainted with the Arabic syntax and grammar know this expression to mean so. That is, the verb, as it is, and according to its position, requires to denote time. But in this very instance it is timeless.

No time is observed in respect to Allah's acts. The indication of time is to be omitted from them. When we say that this verb is timeless we mean that time has been omitted from it, i.e. past tense minus its past time. What is observed here is its relation with the subject, disregarding time, since it has no place, too, for the simple reason that neither its creator nor the created is temporal.

Consequently, the relation is also not temporal. But when Allah creates a temporal thing, it is created with the limits of time, while Allah, who is non-temporal and who encompasses all times, His relations to the past, the present and the future are equal. He is not subject to any time - dimension to be bound by a certain limit of time. He encircles all times.

When we want to ascribe a temporal verb to the non-temporal, what kind of a verb must we use? Will it denote time or not? Being ascribed to the non-temporal Allah, it should be non-temporal, too, and being ascribed to a created thing, it should be related to time. To throw more light on this, imagine a piece of a string or a rope, of which one end is connected to the supernatural which has no time, and its other end is connected to the temporal nature. It seems that this example cannot incarnate the truth, yet it will do as an example. Or you may imagine a cone whose base is in the infinitive and whose head is placed on a concrete thing. It is possible for man to imagine such a thing.

The base which is in the infinitive has no limit, no distinct point and no time, but the cone's head connected to the world of limits must inevitably rest on a particular spot, where the limits, time and place are distinct. Similar are the acts of Allah. They are of two ends, one is connected to the limitless Allah, while the other end is connected to the created which is captured by the bounds of time and place. At one end it is connected to the world of constancy, eternity, infinity and divinity, and at the other end it is connected to the world of the limits, bounds, time and place.

Allah's Timed Acts

Consequently, it can be said that Allah's acts which are connected to temporal and material things, have two aspects, one is that which is connected to Allah, it is non-temporal. The act that is issued by Him does not happen in a frame of time. The other aspect connection to this world would be temporal. As a matter of course, this connection is an abstract one. We imagine the existence of such a connection between Allah and the creation, and say that the end with Allah is timeless, and the end with the creation is timed. Such an act, therefore, is, on the one side, untimed and not gradual, while, on the other side, it is timed. Why? Because it is issued by Allah who is beyond gradualness, since gradualness is twin to time. Because of this we say that all things, even the materialistic ones, are created by Allah without time.

On His part, He just says: Bet It is a will of Him. When Allah's Will decides that there should be a world and human beings, this Will happen in no time. He, of course, does not need to move, as it were, any hand or limb to "make" something. So, when Allah wants to create something, He has but to will, and there the thing is. But the created thing is governed by time.

Time as a Dimension of a Corporeal Being

It had already been proved that length, width and size are dimensions of the material being, likewise is time. It is another of its dimensions. Everything has its particular time, as it has its particular length, width and size. This had been proved by Sadrul Muta'allihin of Shiraz (may Allah be pleased with him). This is other than that problem which Albert Einstein said to have solved concerning time being the fourth dimension. The former idea is much wider than the latter. However, we are not to discuss it at this instance. If it is solved to us that time is originally the dimension of the very world, not a vessel in which the world is placed, and that it appeared simultaneously with the appearance of the world itself, we will very well understand that Allah's act does not happen in time, since there was no time yet.

. It was with the creation of the world that time appeared, just as the world's length, width and depth, which also appeared together with its creation. If we could understand that time is another dimension of this being, we would come to the conclusion that to create a thing means creating its time, since time is not something separate from the things. Therefore, Allah's acts, so far as connected to Him, are not characterised by time. When He creates a temporal thing, its time is also created with it, because time is one of that thing's dimensions, just as when a table is made its size is simultaneously made, too. The size is not made separately. Wherever there is a table there is its size, too. Similar is time.

Therefore, as the world is temporal, its creation is temporal, too, but as it had been issued by the non-temporal Allah its creation is non-temporal, too. But how? Like this: It is Allah alone who, when willing to create the world, says: Be! and there it is. But what kind of a world it would be? A world of a billion years old, and of, say, a billion km. long.

When Allah wanted to create the length' of the world, had He to go along the length while creating it? Had He to be present in the place? When He wants to create a being with length or size, has He, like an architect, who wants to draw a line on the ground, to walk along the line? Is He to be with the length? Certainly not! Allah is non-spatial. Likewise, He need not go along the time when He creates a temporal creation, since He is never simultaneous with time. Neither Allah nor His act, as far as it is ascribed to Him, has time, but if the act is ascribed to a temporal creation, it will be temporal, too. Therefore, if we consider an act as relevant to Allah, none of His acts are temporal: "His command, when He wills anything, is only to say to it: Be! so it is"^[135] What command? No matter what it is. Material or non-material "when He intends anything".

The opinion of some commentators that this ayah belongs to non-material thing is not in conformity with the ayah's generalization. The Qur'an does not say that when Allah wants to create any non-material thing,

He says to it "Be!". It says "When He intends anything He says to it 'Be!' so it is.". This is because Allah is non-temporal, and similar is His act. But what about the created? All the material creations have temporal and spatial dimensions. We say that the creation of the earth and the heavens was completed in six periods: "And he it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days"^[136] or the creation of man which takes nine months. But it does not mean that Allah accompanies these events along the time of their fulfillment and development, such as to be present at the time of ejaculating the semen, then at the time of its becoming a clot, then a lump of flesh, and so on. No, Allah does not move along time. All the times are in Him.

So, how is it that a human being is created in nine months, i.e. He creates something whose temporal dimension is nine months, and it has, at the same time, its particular length, width and depth. Taking these facts into consideration, the ayah, in its generality, comes true in respect to all things. Even in respect to a thing whose creation requires billions of years, we can say that Allah tells it to be, and there it is. What does it mean to say to something: "Be!"? It means: "O you whose age is six million year, come to existence!" What is it? It is a being which had been continuous for six million years, but not that Allah had been moving along those six million years, from one point to another (temporal point). A million light year or a single minute makes no difference to Him. Similarly being spatial is the characteristic of the created, not the Creator.

In short, Allah's acts, taken as issued from Him, are non-temporal because Allah Himself is non-temporal, but taken as belonging to material and temporal beings. They have their temporal dimension, as well as the acts issued from them.

Allah's Will and Talk

In the previous discussion concerning whether Allah's acts are prompt or gradual, we referred to some ayahs which denoted that when Allah willed to create something He just said to it "Be!" and there it was. Such ayahs spoke of Allah's Will and talk. Here also arises the following question: Does Allah's Will, or speech, take time to be fulfilled? Taking into consideration what has already been said, the answer will be easy. Considering Allah's Will and speech as being ascribed to Him, they are neither gradual nor temporal. But considering them belonging to a gradual and temporal matter, they can be regarded so. However, to expound this subject, which is extensively handled in the theological and philosophical writings, we shall touch upon it a little.

Attributes of Essence and of Acts Firstly, we must say that Allah's attributes are divided into two groups: the Attributes of Essence, and the Attributes of Acts. The Attributes of Essence are those which the mind independently comprehends, without having to consider any of His creations. For example, life is of Allah's Attributes of Essence: Allah, there is no god save Him, the everliving."^[137] The divine life is a divine attribute, and it has nothing to do with the existence or non-existence of any other living being. Allah is a living Being. He is not a dead thing like stone.

Life is an attribute which we ascribe to Allah's Essence as far as the very Essence is concerned, not that something comes forth from the Essence.

Similarly Allah's Knowledge of Himself is an attribute of Essence. Allah is Knowing. Allah's Knowledge of Himself is nothing but His Essence. Similarly the attribute of power, which means He is a powerful being. Even if we take the concept of power to include the concept of free will and explain power as to be something that can be used whenever wanted. He is not compelled, and no one can force Him to do anything. However, power is an abstract concept extracted from His sacred and divine state.

On the other hand, there are attributes which are ascribed to Allah only with connection to a creature. Such attributes are called "Attributes of Acts", or the attributes abstracted from the divine acts, such as: The Creator, the Provider, the Manager, and the like, which denote Allah's acts. Without thinking of a created thing we cannot say: Allah is the Creator, or He is the Provider without there being someone needing to be provided for. This is unlike the Attributes of Essence, such as life. When we say: Allah is alive, no object is needed here. Yet, if we consider the concept of "the Creator" to include "Power", i.e. the one who has "Power" to create, then it would be referring to an Attribute of Essence. Allah is the potential Creator of the world before its appearance. That is, in Him is the "Power" to create it. But when there is no creating, there can be no attribute as Creator. The existence of the two is simultaneous. Whenever there is a created there is a creator, too. When there is no creator there can be no creating and created, and the concept of Creator cannot be abstracted, too, unless our intention is directed to His "Power" of creating, in which case it means an Attribute of Essence. That is why the divine and theological books divide the attributes into Attributes of Essence and Attributes of Acts. After this dividing there were discussions about some other attributes, whether they were among the attributes of Essence or of Acts, such as: to want, to will, to talk, etc.

One of the earliest subjects discussed by the theologians is Allah's words. It is said the 'Ilmul Kalam [theology] began with discussing whether Allah's 'Kalam [talk] is eternal or new. Is Allah's talk to be abstract from His Essence, or from His creation? A group, Ash'aris, believed that the Qur'an, Allah's words, was eternal and one of Allah's Attributes.

On the other end, the Mu'tazilahs insisted on saying that the Qur'an was new and created, and it was not eternal. The situation was so grave between the two groups that they began to accuse one another of infidelity.

However, the dispute about whether Allah's words and His Will are of the Attributes of Essence or of Acts, continued till the blooming of the Islamic philosophy. Even the philosophers who used to consider the philosophic questions through the Islamic standpoint had their disputes and differences, until the matters ripened and became more acceptable. The philosophers used to say that Allah's Will is His Knowledge of what is good. When we say that Allah has willed to do an act, we mean that He knew that that act was the best and the most advisable, and since they believed that Allah's knowledge was an Attribute of Essence, it was natural to regard His Will also to be of the Attributes of Essence. They would sometimes take Allah's Words to be an Attribute of Essence, too.

The Attribute of Will as an Act

If one wanted to disregard the purely philosophic way of handling such a question, and study it from the Qur'anic standpoint, what should one say? If "will" is taken to mean "knowledge", then it is an Attribute of Essence because "knowledge" is an Attribute of Essence. If the reality of "speech" is Allah's knowledge, it will also be an Attribute of Essence. But as regards the will and the words stated in the Qur'an, are they to be taken as such, or are they differently regarded by the Qur'an? Disregarding the mental arguments of the philosophers, and resorting, instead, to the method of the exegeses of the Qur'an and the study of its concepts, we realize that the "will" is undoubtedly regarded by the Qur'an as an act, and thus it should be of the Attributes of Acts: His command, when He wills anything, is only to say to it: Be!" so it is!"^[138]

Is it possible to speak of the Attributes of Essence in the conditional or temporal moods? Can we say: during Allah's life, or when He was living, He did a certain act? No, of course not, because life is the very Essence of Allah, and cannot be expressed in conditional or temporal speech forms. It is true that we do not regard as temporal what is ascribed to Allah, though temporal, i.e. we do omit the time from it, but the style of speaking of Attributes of Essence is different from the style of speaking of Attributes of Acts. There should be a justification for using a conditional or temporal sentence.

Therefore, according to the Qur'an, willing and talking are two attributes of acts. Allah says: "And Allah spoke to Moses direct".^[140] Allah's speaking to Moses, to the prophets or to the angels, is abstracted from the state of act, i.e. there must be angels or else so as to may receive Allah's words and understand them. In this case we can say: "He said to them, spoke to them". As long as there is no listener, there will be no talking. So, talking is an attribute of acts.

But here is a point worthy of noting. All these attributes stem from the single Attributes of Essence. For example, creating stems from Power. If there was no Power of creation there could be no creating. Will is also Allah's acts, and its source, as a matter of fact, is an Attribute of Essence. Which one? Is it, as the philosophers say, the will of knowing what is best? To extensively handle this subject is out of our concern here. But those who have some studies of this subject are to pay . attention to the fact that the origin of will is "to love", which is of Allah's Attributes of Essence. Actually, the very word "will" or "want" is used in the Qur'an to mean "love": "you want the vanities of this world, while Allah wants (for you) the Hereafter".^[141]

"To will" and "to want" are the same in meaning, though "will" has another meaning that denotes taking decision, in which case it refers to a "work" that is willed by the doer. If the will mentioned in the ayah denotes decision on doing a work, then it must belong to work. But it says that you want this world, which is not your "work". So, "will" here means something else, i.e. you like and want it. "Want" in the Persian language has, like its Arabic equivalent, two meanings, too: one denoting decision to do something, such as when you say: "I wanted to get up but I could not." So, "I wanted" means here "I willed". But sometimes we say: "I want" to mean

"I like" or "I desire". Willing, in the Arabic language, also has two meanings: to like, to accept, to approve, to be pleased with, and another meaning is to decide, which, after all, also denotes liking doing something, to assent. Consequently, there is a kind of connection between "to decide" and "to like".

The origin of willing to act is not only knowledge. Knowledge is, of course, necessary. Without knowledge one would not voluntarily carry out an act. But the concept of wanting and willing is proportionate to loving and desiring, not to knowing, because desire results in deciding to perform the act. However, I think that to will is an attribute of the act, though its origin is self-willing, meaning love. In other words, the will can, from one aspect, be regarded as an Attribute of Act, while, from another aspect, it can be regarded as an Attribute of Essence. If it denotes deciding on doing something, it is of the Attributes of Act, but if it refers to its origin, the Divine Essence, denoting love, then it is of the Attributes of Essence.

This idea is inferred from the writings of Sadrul Muta'llihin and the late 'Allama at-Tabataba'i (may Allah be pleased with him). They explicitly said that the will can sometimes be of the Attributes of Act, and sometimes of the Attributes of Essence-from a certain point it is of the Attributes of Act, and from another point it is of the Attributes of Essence. Now, let us see what Allah's Will, as an Attribute of Act, means. Our decision to do something is usually preceded by some preliminary steps. When we want to decide upon doing something we first think it over, count its pros and cons, and accordingly we make one decision to do or not to do it. This would be our will to do or not to do something. But in respect to Allah, the Exalted, Who says: "His command, when He Wills anything, is only to say to it: 'Be!' so it is", words like "when" have no meaning, since Allah's acts are detached from time, and, as long as they are ascribed to His sacred Being, they are non-temporal. So, how is it that we say: "When He wills"? We had already said that if the attributes of act are looked at as being abstracted from a temporal act, they can be regarded as temporal. Allah's Will, when abstracted from a temporal act referring to a connection between Him and His act, will be temporal, too.

Seeing that the act was not implemented contrary to Allah's Will, and that during its implementation it received His contention and pleasure, we regard the will to act as an additional attribute, as, actually, the time limitation belongs to the act, not to its doer.

But if it is looked at through its connection to Allah, the act is to be detached from time limits, as we had formerly explained. So, what is the truth about Allah's Will? His Will means that His Acts are not carried out under the pressure and force of any subduer, and He likes doing them.

Later on we shall have discussions about the things Allah loves to do, and that the events that happen in the world belong to His Will. Now we turn to the Divine Talking When one talks the air quivers, that is, by passing the air through the respiratory tract to the vocal cords, sound-waves will be produced. When these sound waves enter the ear, they vibrate the tympanic membrane, and they will be translated, according to a certain process, into intelligible signs to be understood by the brain. So, if Allah produced a

sound exactly like human voices, producing sound-waves transforming intelligible concepts to the hearer, there would be grounds to say that He talked.

Moses (A.S.), when on Mount Tur, heard a voice coming from the tree - the tree from which a light was glowing - telling him: "O Moses! Surely, I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds".^[142] Supposing that Allah had produced the voice from it, and it was heard by Moses (A.S.), then it would be right to say that Allah talked to Moses (A.S.). But if there were other beings whose means of hearing are not the ear and the sound-waves - such as if the angels way of hearing is not through corporeal ears and air - talking with them would be in a different way, of which we have no idea.

We just know that Allah expresses Himself to everybody through "an act" understood by him, and this "act" is called "talking". In such cases, however, there must be a hearer with the ability to understand the subject under certain conditions, before being allowed to say that Allah talked and the hearer heard: "And when your Lord said to the angels: 'I am going to place in the earth a vicegerent'"^[143] He talked to the angels and they heard Him. But we know nothing about the mode of that conversation. We only know that Allah made them understand His intention. As to a non-existent being which Allah wants to bring into existence, how does He tell it: "Be!"? His command, when He wants something, is only to say to it: 'Be!' so it is."^[144]

Undoubtedly, Allah's talk here is different from other talks.

As far as Allah's talk with the angels, Moses (A.S.) or other prophets is considered disregarding the mode of the conversation, there was an addressee who understood the meaning intended by the speaker. But when there is no being yet, in what mode will Allah's talk to it be? Should there actually be any talk, there must also be a hearer. But as it is supposed that there is no hearer yet, talking in common meaning will not fit in. In such cases the talking, in fact, is a kind of metaphor, i.e. there is no interim of time between Allah's willing and the implementation of the thing. No sooner had the command been issued than the thing was implemented. This is a metaphor denoting that when Allah intends to do something, there will be no delaying and no hindering condition. Allah's act, being His own, is never conditional, since, as a Creator, He is in need of nothing. It is the created who is in need all the time.

The Effectiveness of the Factor and the Receptivity of the Recipient

Here a question arises: Does Allah create the things of the world with or without an agent? There is no doubt that the creation of the things of this world are governed by a system of causation, cause and effect. The sun is the cause of heat, the rain comes from the clouds. When there is no cloud there can be no rain. The cloud is moved by the wind, and so on. All the phenomena of the world appear only through causes and means. So, are they not conditional on these causes? Without father and mother no human being can be brought into existence, except a single instance in which Allah had caused Jesus (A.S.) to be born without having a father, and another

exception in which Adam (A.S.) was created without any father and mother. Except in those two instances, all human beings exist by means of mothers and fathers. Do fathers and mothers have no effect on the existence of their children? Of course, they have.

Through the mother and father Allah brings their children into existence. So, this act of Allah is conditional on the existence of a father and a mother. Heat is conditional on the existence of the sun and light. If it is so, then Allah's acts cannot be implemented without means. So, Allah's acts are conditional, too. What answer can be given to this? Here is the answer: The conditions needed for the appearance of an effect are divided into two groups: One covers the conditions of the effectiveness of the factor, that is, without carrying out the given condition. The factor will not have the power to be effective. The other group covers the conditions of the receptivity of the recipient.

The first condition for a teacher to be efficient is to have good knowledge of the subject he is to teach. He is to know it well. In this case the teacher is the "factor", the one who "gives" his knowledge. The teaching is the "act", which is implemented only when the teacher knows his subject. So, the condition for a teacher to be a qualified one is that he must have prepared himself to be a good teacher. This is called the effectiveness of the factor.

But sometimes it happens that there can be too many students in a class, in which case a loudspeaker should be used by the teacher, as otherwise some of the back benchers may not hear the teacher's voice. But this loudspeaker does not increase his ability. His ability is to know the lesson and explain it. That is what is related to the teacher. But there must be a means for the student to be benefitted by the lesson. This means increases the receptivity of the recipient, the student, but not the effectiveness of the factor, as it adds no perfection to it. The means offers a condition for the perfection of the listener, not the speaker. There is no deficit in the teacher. It is the recipient who is in need of a means to receive the lesson.

As a matter of fact, this example does not, all in all, fit in our argument. An example, we may say, brings nearer on one side and keeps at a distance on other sides.

The Conditions of the Recipient's Receptivity

If earth is to be changed into man, it must undergo certain stages under certain conditions. If food (vegetables, meat, etc.) is to turn into blood, it must undergo some stages of certain changes until at last it changes into blood, and later into a muscle. This condition belongs to matter. The condition for a matter to reach this last stage, is to go through the middle stages, similarly, when you want to reach a certain town, you will have to cover the distance to that town, whether on foot, by car or by any other means of transport.

This condition is connected to matter. The changes in matter are subject to these conditions, and this is not a deficiency in Allah's Power. If He wills to turn earth into man, the earth must undergo some stages before turning into man. If Allah wanted to take you from Tehran to Qum He must pass you through stages of transport to take you there. If somebody objectingly says that Allah is capable of taking us there without having to pass through

any stages, he is mistaken. If there is moving, journeying or taking someone to somewhere, the common steps are to be taken, as without passing through the middle stages no goal can be reached. Therefore, supposing that Allah turns a being into another, or moving from one place to another, requires that certain stages should be passed through, and this is not a deficiency in Allah's Power. In other words, Allah may, in an instance, want to create a being, which is not preceded by past nor present conditions, since it is free from matter and not subject temporal and special conditions, He has the power to create it. But such a being would not be made of matter, because a materialistic being cannot come into existence without passing through all the stages prescribed for it, in which case such a being would be an abstract, of which uncountable ones had been created by Allah.

In "Nahjul Balaghah" you read that the heavens are crowded with angels created by Allah, such that there is no room even for a foot, unless an angel is engaged in genuflection or kneeling in worship. They are unlike the beings of this world which we know to be made of matter that under go many stages of changing. They exist all at once and their perfections are in their inner potentiality. But if Allah wants to create a world of matter, it must be created accompanied with movement, time and place. The conditions of this world's phenomena are of the kind of the receptivity of the recipient, not of the kind of effectiveness of the factor. Thus, Allah's act, when ascribed to the Divine Potency and His limitless Power, is unconditional.

The Extent of Divine Potency and Will

The Relation Between Power and Will

Among the theological discussions concerning Divine Power and Will, there is the question whether everything does fall within the circle of the Divine Power, or whether the Divine Power covers only certain things, or whether the things which belong to Divine Power also belong to His Will. That is, is not there any limitation of Divine Power, as we frequently read in the Qur'an: "Surely Allah is capable of (doing) everything."^[145] Regarding the Divine Will there are many ayahs to the effect that Allah does whatever He wills. It is not that if Allah willed something it may not be implemented.

The Divine Will is ever-effective, and whenever the implementation of something is willed by Allah it would be carried out. The following are examples of such ayahs: "...Allah does what He Wills"^[146] and: "...surely Allah does what He Wills"^[147]

Allah Does not Will the Impossible

In this respect many questions are put forth. For example: Can Allah produce impossible things? Can He create another Allah like Himself? Can He grant to one of His creatures all that He has, such that He loses everything? Can He contain a mountain into an atom or, say, in a hen's egg? and so on. That is, are we to imagine that the meaning of saying: He is capable of doing everything, is that He must be able to do all such things, and that if He could not, it would mean that His ability is limited? In order to give a logical answer to these questions, a brief explanation of the concept of ability would be necessary. By saying that somebody is capable of doing something, or creating something, we mean that something is creatable or can be done, but it only needs a power to bring to existence this existable and implementable thing. To put it in a technical term we say that a power-dependent must be a possible being. Ability means doing what is possible to be done.

The conclusion is that ability does not cover the impossible. To ask: "Is it possible to create the impossible?" is a wrong question, because it contradicts itself. If it is impossible to exist, how can it be expected to exist? In other words, ability is dependant on the "thing". The impossible is not a "a thing", it is "nothing". Thus, when we say that Allah is able to do "everything", we must remember that the impossible is not a "thing". A thing is that which is doable possible to do. Here another question may be asked: There are many things, which are thought to be impossible and not power-dependent, yet we see or hear that they had been done by Allah. For example, if it is said that a huge heap of fire had been turned into a cool garden of flowers, we would say: impossible! Fire burns the flower, never turns to flower. How can a heap of kindled fire change into flowers? This is impossible, but we do know that Allah had turned the fire, in which Prophet Abraham (A.S.) was thrown, into a garden of flowers. To answer this, we must explain the kinds of the impossible.

Kinds of the Impossible

Things which are regarded, in the arguments of the gnostics as "the impossible", are divided into three kinds: Self-impossible, occurrence-impossible and common-impossible.

The self-impossible is that which is supposed to bear in itself its contradiction, such as to say that the light which is dark, or the light which has no light, the black which is white or the black which is not black. This very supposition is impossible, i.e. the very supposition is self-contradicting. (If we ask: a light which is like darkness in proportion to another light, it is a different subject. But the supposition that a light, though being a light, is not a light, is a contradiction.) So, the supposition which contradicts itself is called self-impossible.

Occurrence-impossible means that the supposition in itself is not impossible, but that we have added to it another supposition which made it impossible, such as supposing the appearance of an effect without its exclusive cause. In this case the appearance of this effect is not impossible in itself, because it certainly comes into existence when its exclusive cause is there. But we added the supposition that its cause was not there. So, the occurrence of such an effect without its exclusive cause is impossible.

Furthermore, this is not a power - dependant case, since it is contradictory. By saying that this effect has an exclusive cause we mean that without its exclusive cause it cannot come into existence. So, to suppose that it can be implemented without its exclusive cause is but a contradiction. Therefore, ability covers neither the self-impossible nor the occurrence-impossible. It belongs to common-impossible. Miracles are of the common-impossible kind, that is, the appearance of something not from its common outlet. For example, when somebody is dead, he would not commonly come to life again, but the mind does not see it impossible to find one way or another to bring it into life once again, and there will be no contradiction in it. But the people, commonly believe that there is only one cause for that.

So, when an extraordinary event happened they thought that an impossible event had happened! All miracles are imagined to be of the impossibles, since no other cause is thought for them. But, on a second thought, we realize that the mind does not regard them to be impossible. In other words, people think that every event has a single exclusive cause which cannot be replaced by another cause. Consequently, they think that without that very cause it will be impossible for the event to happen.

Where does a flower grow? It grows in a soil with almost a fixed temperature, together with moisture.. Then the flower's seed is sowed. If there is no water; if the temperature is higher or lower than necessary, no flower will grow. If there is no flower - seed no flower will appear. So as far as we know, flowers grow in this way. But is there any other way of growing flowers since we have never heard in our whole life of other than this common way, we say that it is impossible. But when we see another way of growing flowers, we realize that it is not impossible, and that it is possible to grow flowers in a way different from the common one. Even a man with a will overcoming natural forces can, to some extent, perform it, let alone Allah's Will intending to perform something not through its natural causes and common way. Here, of course, is an unknown cause, not that an

effect appears without any cause. This effect has another cause which is unknown to us.

To bring the idea nearer, we give an example: There are many phenomena whose causes are still unknown to man who thought them impossible to happen. Then he discovered that they can happen through other ways. The new inventions, which were possible by using the discoveries of the covered secrets of nature, are of this category. If somebody said, years ago, that he could talk to you from several thousand kilometers and you would hear him, you would have certainly told him that it was impossible, while now everybody knows that it is possible.

The supernatural causes are also one way of the implementation of phenomena, though we do not know them or cannot get to them. But it is not that there is no such ways. So, the common-impossibles (i.e. what people think to be impossible, which actually they are not) are power dependant, and Allah is, was and will be, able to carry them out. They are the very extraordinary events, miracles and wonders performed by the prophets and godly men.

The Connection Between Ability and Will

When we say that Allah is able to do everything, we mean that if He willed He would do it, if not He would not do it. So, when we compare the concept of ability with the concept of will, we realize that the scale of will is more limited than the scale of ability.

A simple example: you can talk or keep silent in a given moment, that is, you have the ability to do both. If you want to speak you speak, and if you did not want to speak you keep silent. So, your power covers both. But which one do you will? You will one of them. You either will to speak or to remain silent. So, your power is wider than your will, because ability covers both action and non-action, while the will covers only one of them, either action or non-action. Man has the ability to do something or not to do it in the same moment, but he cannot will the existence and non-existence of a thing in the same time. Thus, if we compare between ability and will, we realize that the range of will is more limited than that of ability.

Similarly, Allah does not will all that He is able to do. So many thing He is able to do, but He does not want to. Here one may ask: what is it that limits Allah's Will such that He does not will everything? Sometimes it happens that the will has nothing to do with doing or not doing an act, for the simple reason that to put these two together would produce a contradiction and an impossible, such as to will the existence of the sun and to will it not to exist at the very same time. It is obvious that such a thing is impossible. Yet, there are other things, which though not impossible, Allah would not will them. Why? What prevents Allah's Will from willing certain things?

Probably you had already heard that some scholars of theology say that "The issuance of ugly acts from Allah is impossible". This is exactly what we have been saying. But the principal question is: "Is Allah unable to produce an ugly act?" We do know that His ability is unlimited, and that He is able to do whatever is possible to do. But not all that is within the ability is willed. Allah's will does not cover particular things. He does not want to

do certain acts. He does not want to send the wrongdoers to Paradise. Why? If He did what would happen? Why Allah's Will does not cover this act? There are many other things which are not willed by Allah.

The simple answer given in this respect is that reason says that this act is bad, therefore Allah would not want to do it, nor would He will it. As a matter of course, an obvious objection can be raised here: Does Allah take orders from reason? Reason is one of His creatures; did He create it to issue its orders to Him, and to write down a list of instructions for Him?

Does Reason Rule Allah?

Some say that, in order to stop this problem, we claim that by reason we do not mean the human intellect, but it is Allah's intellect itself that tells Him not to do this. So, He is not ruled by a created being, but by His own mind. This answer can, to some extent, be acceptable to the layman and convincing. But upon a deeper thought we realize that it cannot be a correct answer, firstly because Allah is a Simple Being in whom there is no entity called mind so that another entity may obey it. Knowledge, power, life and all the Attributes of Essence are His very Essence - a single and simple one and with only a single entity. But to say that Allah's mind issues orders to Him would mean that there are two entities in His Essence: a commanding mind and an obeying one, while such a thing is impossible in respect of Allah.

Furthermore, mind's function is to understand the concepts through acquiring knowledge. The mind which understands the good and bad, and enjoins what to do and not to do, is a mind which understands the concepts, and the concepts are of acquired knowledge, while Allah's is intuitive, not acquired knowledge. In other words, to use the word "mind" in respect to Allah is a mistake. What are we to say, then? What does it mean to say that the act which is disapproved by the mind is impossible to be done by Allah? It neither means that the act in itself is impossible, nor that there is a ruler whose orders Allah is to obey, nor that there is a power which stops the act, as in which case Allah would be affected by a factor which blocks His act, preventing Him from willing. Whatever the factor may be, it would mean that Allah is under the effect of that factor, while Allah is a Being who would not be under any effect. Actually it is He Who has His effect on everything, and will never be effected at all.

By way of answering this question, we must first study the "will". What does it mean to say that somebody "wills" to do something? When we want to carry out an act, how do we will it? Inside us there are factors that attract us. They crystalize through our desires and change into special forms, such as the desire for food, for talking, for self-assertion and many other desires known of man. These desires and inclination take shape under certain material conditions and interactions. When we feel hungry a strong desire for food appears in us. The same is true with our other desires which are connected to our different instincts. When a desire starts inside us, we think it over to see if there is anything preventing us from meeting it and that it brings no harm to us, in this world or in the Hereafter, then that desire can be satisfied. In this way our will is implemented. So, the truth of the will is that it is a crystalized inner desire, under particular conditions, accompanied

with the usual ways of reasoning, finding out its pros and cons, its good and bad sides etc. Finding out that it is profitable and harmless, or its loss is less than its interest, it takes shape into a will leading to its being carried out. Thus, there can be no will without there being a desire cherished by the willer.

There are inside every being certain desires which cause the appearance of his will to satisfy them. For example, a hen does not will to have babies and never thinks of it (we, of course, have no knowledge of a hen's thinking, but we only guess), or the sparrow which builds its nest attached to the ceiling or near it, in a corridor, in a certain shape, but never hexagonal, contrary to the bees which build their hives in a hexagonal shape, and they never think of building them in, say, the cubic shape. The sparrow, too, never wills to have its nest in a hexagonal shape.

A special instinct in this creature appears, under particular conditions, in the form of a desire, and ends the performance of an act. Our will also stems from a desire deep inside us, i.e. coincides with our being and psychological disposition. There are creatures which live on certain food which we never desire to have them and we even feel repulsion on seeing such foods being eaten. You may have seen the pigs eating filth and stinking food, with such a good appetite that is quite disgusting to us. Some other animals find it very delicious to feed on rotten and bad smelling food.

Had we known their language, we would have heard them smack their lips, saying: "How delicious this is!" whereas we would be filled with nausea at the sight of it. We would never wish to have such food, though it is palatable to those animals. Why do we never will to eat a rotten, filthy and stinking food, nor to do any disgraceful and disapproved act? Because these are not in harmony with our beings. We are not instinctively attracted to such acts. There is a will when there is drive, though this remains vague until particular conditions obtain and the will appears. If we feel no inclination towards something, we will never will to do it, the same as we will never will to share with a pig its meal.

Matching Factor of the Will

Consequently, no will can take place without a preparation and a cause. The will has an instinctive element, an inner traction, which, under particular conditions, takes shape and turns into a desire, causing us to will to do something.

In short, no will is possible without the act matching the actor. There must be a sort of aptness between the willer and the thing he wills. This aptness appears in the form of an inclination, which, in its turn and under certain conditions, changes into a will. But, in respect to Allah, when we say that He, the Exalted, wills to do something, the act must be suitable to be done by Him. Yet, it is not that there should be first an inclination in Him, and then it gets stronger and stronger until it becomes an eagerness, then He considers it over to deem it advisable or not, as such methods belong to the possible beings - a being that is ill-informed, weak, poor, etc. Allah is above being affected by events and outside factors, or being under any effect, or unknowingness, so that He may want to understand something by way of thinking it over. These notions are inappropriate in respect to Allah.

Allah's Will is connected to an act that is appropriate and agreeable to Him - a fact which is an aspect of His perfection, i.e. any act that is perfect is of Allah's Absolute Perfection, since He is the Unlimited Perfect One. Everything that has an aspect of perfection is proportional to Allah's Essence, and enjoys His consent in proportion to its amount of perfection. But as for the aspects of imperfection, fault, defect, vice and nothingness (all of which actually stem from nothingness), because of their being so, are not willed by Allah. Allah is perfect, likes perfection and His Will belongs to something which has an aspect of perfection. "Allah is beautiful and likes beauty".^[148] Allah does not like any ugly act, and thus, His Will never belongs to an ugly act. Why? Because it is not in proportion to Him. This answer makes it clear why Allah does not will to do everything. It is because it has no aspect of perfection. If an act has an aspect of perfection, it may be, because of that aspect, willed by Allah.

The Best System

Here we are to consider another point in order to completely solve this question: Allah may create a being in a particular way that it would not be dependent on anything from outside itself, such as the abstracts. It is not to appear from anything, nor to live on anything. It will be self-sufficient being. Allah creates such beings endowed with perfection, according to a speech of Amirul Mu'minin [Ali ibn Abi Talib] (A.S.) in which he said: "There is no footing in the heavens without being occupied by an angel created by Allah - no shortage of them. They are so many that they are uncountable. Their number is out of my or your reckoning, nor can we, even with an astrologic scales, count the numbers of the beings, their quantity or their quality."

But, on this earth, the appearance of a being cannot happen isolated from other things. It is the nature of this world to be dependent, and that every being should be in need of the others. The human being existing on this earth is created from semen. Without the semen no human being is created. Once he is created he is to live on other things to stay alive: he is to breathe the air, to drink water, etc. and to digest and assimilate them in order to live. So, the existence of a being in this world equals the vanishing of other things from it. This is a characteristic of the world of matter. It is a world of struggle, limitedness, communication and consolidation. In such a world, the survival and perfection of a being means the imperfection and destruction of other beings.

Now, if Allah wills to create this world, a world containing imperfections while principally Allah's Will does not cover imperfection - it means that He actually wants the perfect beings to come to existence, but these perfect beings depend on the imperfections of other beings. Those imperfections are called, in the terms of philosophy, "corollarial objectives". That is, since our principal objectives cannot be fulfilled except through some other unintended requisites, we have but to approve and accept them, though they are not wanted for themselves. For example, man eats meat and vegetables in order to grow. From this point of view, Allah wants these to be eaten, but as corollarial objectives not as direct ones. Therefore, we are to look at the world as a whole. If there are any interactions in the world of matter, they

must be in a way leading to the appearance of valuable perfections. It is this world that belongs to Allah's Will.

On counting all the imperfections and perfections, adding and subtracting the pros and cons, and seeing that the perfections are heavier in weight, we say that such a world is willed by Allah. But if these interactions result in the abolishing of even the preliminary perfections, such a world would not be willed by Allah. Thus, Allah's Will originally belongs to perfection. However, when the perfection of a thing encounters the imperfection of another on a competition ground, if the perfection is triumphant, that imperfection will be willed by Allah as a corollary.

Consequently, we conclude that the system of this world is the best. That is, Allah had created it in such a way that its good overcomes its bad, leading to its perfection and procuring His pleasure. As to the world's deficiencies, shortcomings, faults, defects, weaknesses and abnormalities, they are not originally intended for themselves. They are as preliminaries required for the development of another being.

By referring to the Qur'anic ayahs we realize that it declares that the world of nature is entirely intended for the development of man. That is, the original intention is that great perfection to which man can attain, should he press on proceeding along the right path. But what perfection could it be, we leave it now. One thing man can find which is more valuable than the whole world of nature. It is the very secret about which Allah says: "what you do not know!"^[149] i.e. there is a secret in the creation of man which you do not comprehend, that is, man can attain to a sort of perfection the knowing of which is above your capacity. It is the perfection which was obtained by the holy Prophet and the ^[12] pure Imams (A.S.).

It is so invaluable, so precious, that the whole world of nature is nothing in comparison. It is like a piece of diamond excavated by throwing away tons of rocks and earth. It is a perfection whose greatness and value we cannot estimate. The Qur'an says: "He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth."^[150] In another ayah He says: And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days - and His dominion (extends) on the water - that He might try you which of you is best in action."^[151] This means that the creation of all the heavens and the earth was a preliminary step towards the creation of the human being - the being who is free to choose and whose perfection is to be looked for by his own free will. You are placed at a crossroad and asked to choose for yourselves. Then you are watched to see which one of you chooses the best and acts the best.

So, compared with the whole world of nature, the perfection obtained by the ideal and perfect people is more valuable and preferable. The whole world, with all its fruits, is run by the best order. Had it not been for the fact that this world was made of matter, this choosing being and those perfections which he is to get by choosing, would not have come into existence. The sun and the planets on their orbits must all be there, the order must function, so that the conditions for the appearance and the development of such an aware, free, choosing, of free will and evaluating man, can obtain. So, generally speaking, this order is the best, and there can

be no better. The insignificant deficiencies are purposely intended for significant aims.

As to other beings, each is so created, in its own particular existing conditions, that it, considering all the conditions of the world of matter, is also the best and perfect. The Qur'an says: "Who made good everything He has created".^[152] That is, every creature, according to its particular existing conditions, and the situation it has in the world of matter, is the best. So, Allah only wills the good and the perfect.

The deficiencies of some creatures are not originally intended by Allah, they are only wanted because of the perfections that depend upon them.

Thus, the correct answer to the question: "Why Allah's Will never pertains to an ugly act?" is that the ugly act is no match for Allah's perfections. The divine will has nothing to do with any act that has no relation with His Holy Essence and unlimited perfections.

The Targets of Divine Acts

One of the questions asked about the divine acts is whether Allah aims at any targets through His acts. In order to give an explicit answer we should give some explanatory preliminaries:

First: What Does "a Target" mean?

The word "target" in the Arabic language means some mark to be aimed at in shooting. The point at which the shooter shoots is called "target" or "objective". These two words are synonyms in the Arabic language.

Idiomatically, the target is the objective which is freely chosen by the concerned person for his act. He takes into his consideration the advantage expected from the intended act, before starting it, deeming that by that act his objective will be fulfilled, the same as the shooter who, by aiming at a target and shooting at it, expects to get a benefit. That advantage or benefit is regarded to be the target or the objective of an act. Besides, sometimes another intention is also foreseen in the concept of "objective". It concerns the advantage which is required to be valuable and reasonable - something worthy of the many troubles and pains taken in the performance of that act, and reason approves carrying out that act to attain to the objective aimed at. According to this latter consideration, if an act is not performed for a worthy and becoming objective, though with an advantage, it will be said that it is an aimless act, a useless and frivolous one, i.e. it is an act which has no valuable objective.

Second: Man's objective - Satisfying the Needs

The second point to be considered is that man, by doing some act, wants to meet a need (whether physical, emotional, mental or else). We eat to satisfy our bodies' need for food. We associate with a friend or a beloved to satisfy our emotional needs. We set on acquiring knowledge to meet our mental needs. Thus, the objectives of our acts are always to satisfy a need. Probably one may imagine that man may do something which meets none of his needs, yet it meets somebody else's. One may help a poor, a needy, a sick or a troubled person. He decides to help him and remove his affliction by giving him money, guiding him, taking him to a hospital. He may even give up his own needs for the sake of meeting the others, such as giving out

the money he himself needs. So, this act was not intended to meet one's own need. Such instances are true, but if we study them more carefully we will realize that when the said man sees the touching conditions of the afflicted person he will pity him. This special state of sympathy and emotion is to be responded to. Here there is no question of bodily need. It is an emotional need, a psychological state which needs to be satisfied.

The mother who gets up in the depth of the night to attend to her child, relinquishes her sleep just to comfort her child. She does this in order to respond to her child's need. Yet beyond meeting her child's need, there is her own need, too, which she meets through meeting her child's - it is the call of maternity which requires to be responded to, too. If she does not do it, she will feel uncomfortable. Actually, two objectives are met here, one is apparent and obvious - meeting the others' needs - the other is deeply concealed behind the first one, which is, actually, one's real motive to do the act.

This is true even in respect to the acts performed by pious people for the sake of Allah. If you ask anyone of them: "What was your objective for doing that?" He would reply: "Nothing, it was just for Allah's pleasure. I had no materialistic target, I only wanted to have Allah's pleasure." This pleasure of Allah is not always clear in its meaning. By Allah's pleasure they think of what comes as a result of Allah's pleasure, such as the reward in the Hereafter, or being delivered from torture in the next world, which is usually the motive of the middle pious persons. Weren't they afraid of the Hereafter torture, or hoping for a reward, the pleasure of Allah would have been no concern of theirs. So, by saying that they do it for Allah's pleasure, they mean that since the act is approved by Allah, they do it to get His reward or to be delivered from His punishment. The original aim, therefore, is deliverance from chastisement or getting a reward. If this is the case, then it is clear. The motive is to satisfy one's need, since we do need going to Paradise and avoiding Hell. So, the ultimate objective is also to satisfy the needs of man himself.

Now suppose that somebody had attained to a position of faith in which he regards Allah's pleasure to be his original objective, i.e. as he loves Allah he wants His pleasure. In ordinary affectionate relations, when somebody greatly loves someone else and knows that his beloved likes a certain act, he would certainly do his best to do it in order to please his beloved one, with no other objective, as he finds his ultimate happiness in seeing his beloved pleased with the act which caused so much toiling and difficulties to perform, and receives from him a nice smile of content. He wants nothing else. It is childish that somebody like him should expect any reward from his beloved.

Now, if somebody loves Allah like this, he will have no concern for this world nor the Hereafter. He thinks neither of worldly pleasures, nor of the rewards of the Hereafter. His world here and afterwards is Allah. Allah is his original objective. In one of the supplications of the Imam As-Sajjad [the 4th Imam] (A.S.) he says: "O my blessings and Paradise! O my world here and Hereafter!" That is, instead of thinking about the blessings of this world or the next world, or thinking of how to deserve Paradise, I only think of

You. My goal is to reach You, to acquire Your pleasure. When somebody attains to this position, it is observed that, as long as he thinks of himself, his personal needs are hidden behind all those apparently lofty goals and desires, i.e. if you ask him: "Why do you want to reach Allah? Why do you want to acquire His pleasure?" His answer would be: "What can be a higher perfection than getting to Allah?" This is an unconscious confession that behind the goal of reaching Allah there is one's personal goal of getting to the highest position of perfection, unless he may get, in his knowledge, to a position where he becomes no more interested in his own self, as if there is no "self" in between.

Probably we may be able to imagine such a state of mind, but its reality is too sublime and lofty to be attained to by people like us. If there happens to be such persons who could attain to this state of selflessness in life, and be so absorbed in remembering Allah and in His Lordship that they lose and forget themselves, the case is different with them, since we have not attained to that state, and cannot have a correct picture of it. Therefore, we leave it to its people. But as to the ordinary people, when they do something for the sake of Allah out of love, still they have behind that their own objective of attaining to their own perfection. Thus, as long as man thinks of himself, whatever he does he cares, after all, for his own interest. He satisfies his own needs even indirectly through meeting other people's needs, or, through getting Allah's pleasure, he ensures his own perfection.

Third: Middle and Final Objectives

The Third preliminary note is that we sometimes think of an objective, and our motive for action will be our desire to get to that objective. But when we start we find out that we cannot get to it without getting first to another goal. That is, our principal objective requires a preliminary step to be performed before being able to get to our objective. So, besides the original motive for the final objective there will be another motive and another want as a preliminary act. For example, when somebody wants to ascend to the roof of a house, he uses a step ladder. Here are two objectives. If you ask him when he is on his way to bring the ladder. "Where are you going?" He would say: "I am going to bring a ladder." Or he could say: "My intention is to get to the roof". So, there are two parallel objectives - first a mid-way objective as a means of attaining to a higher and final objective.

Or suppose you want to visit the holy shrine of the Imam ar-Rida (A.S.), with the objective of receiving Allah's reward for that visit. But carrying out this intention necessitates preliminary arrangements, such as getting an air-ticket or a train-ticket, going to the airport or the railway station, providing for some food for the journey and some money. When you leave your house in the morning, if you are asked: "Where are you going?" You may tell him you were going to buy the ticket, or get some food. But these are middle objectives which are not so important in themselves. You do them because you want to travel to Mash'had.

Here also you have two objectives which go longitudinally. One of them is preliminary to the other. It is both an objective and a means an objective for the first movement, and a means for attaining to the final objective. Such objectives, which are both goals and means at the same time, can be

recognized by certain signs. As you may ask yourself about the act: "Why are you doing this?" You may also ask yourself about the objective: "Why do you aim at this very objective?" and repeat this question at each objective until you reach to an objective about which you cannot ask "Why?", since no rational person may ask why. In the same above example, when you ask: "Where are you going?" he says: "I am going to buy a ticket?", you ask: "Why?" he says: "I want to go to Mashhad". You ask: "Why do you want to go to Mashhad?" "I want to visit the holy shrine of Imam Rida (A.S.)," he replies. "Why do you want to visit his shrine?" you continue asking him. He may reply: "For its reward."

Still you can ask: "What for do you want the reward?" He says: "Because it brings happiness, and as I seek happiness, I do what brings it". Now, is it reasonable to ask: "Why do you want to be happy?" No, here we cannot ask such a question. It is in man's nature to seek his happiness. No normal person rejects happiness, since it is an inborn desire. It is without cause. It is the final objective. The final objective is that about which one cannot ask "Why?". We reach a state which is philosophically termed as intrinsic, and "the intrinsic is inexplicable". The one who loves Allah, if asked: "Why do you leave your bed in the heart of the night?" he says: "I want to have supplication with my Lord." We ask: "What for do you want to supplicate Him?" "I want to be intimate with my beloved," he replies. "Why do you want to be intimate with Him?" you ask. Probably he would answer: "Because I feel pleased with that", or, if he had reached the stage of self-forgetfulness, there would be no mention of his own pleasure.

The final objective of a lover is his intimation with his beloved. There is no "why" in this case. He cannot but do it. The one who loves Allah cannot but proceed to Him, be intimate with Him; unless something keeps him back. This will be his final objective. Therefore, an objective can pass through many stages, even in a single act. As long as one has not yet attained to one's final objective, one can be asked about the objectives of one's acts.

Conclusion

Taking the afore-mentioned points into our consideration, we conclude that what we regard as the objectives of our acts, especially the final ones, are actually a number of movements and activities through which we can ensure our interests. Ensuring our interest and attaining to our perfection are innately demanded as final objectives.

The Objectives of Allah and of Man - The Differences

Now we present our principal question: Does Allah aim at any objectives by His acts? If we try to speak of such objectives, with the certain characteristics as we find in ourselves, and ascribe them to Allah, we will have first to say that Allah lacks particular perfections which He wants to obtain through His acts, just as we do to acquire the perfections which we do not have, the interests which we try to ensure by doing certain acts.

If Allah aims through His acts at objectives like ours, then He must lack something which He, by certain acts, tries to obtain. But Allah is not so. Allah is absolutely in need of nothing. He is the Absolute Perfection.

Therefore, He lacks nothing at all, as otherwise He must be subject to limitations. We cannot even think that Allah, before creating the world, was displeased with His loneliness and that He wished to come out of His solitude. So, He created the world so that He may no more be alone, and do away with His loneliness by keeping company with His creatures. No. Allah remains Alone in His Essence even after creating the world. This state of being alone is perfection and wanted. We cannot comprehend that Allah's loneliness is not a deficiency in Him, and He Himself is not displeased with His solitude, actually He is very pleased with it.

At any rate, let us start from this point which says that Allah is in need of nothing. So, if He disliked His loneliness, He must be regarded as a needy being, and there should be an outside factor to do away with that need. But Allah is far above being in need of anyone of His creatures, even the prophets, the godly men or the favourite angels. It is they who are nothing but needs.

Therefore, as far as the objectives, which we recognize in ourselves, are concerned, it is impossible that similar ones should be Allah's, too. He is in need of nothing. Otherwise it sometimes leads to speak of Allah's incapability. In our example about our intention to ascend to the roof, we knew that we could not ascend without a ladder, so we had to find one. Why had we to carry out some preliminary acts with middle objectives? Because without them we could not implement our final and principal objective. If we could jump with one leap to the roof we would not have needed the ladder. If Allah has to do some middle acts before attaining to His final objective, He will be an important Allah, while Allah is powerful and capable of doing everything.

Consequently, Allah has no objective like ours in his acts. But if we look carefully at the matter, we will see that we are stating the characteristics of our own objectives. The meaning of "objective" does not indicate these things. It does not mean that I must be needy. Being needy is coincident with our acts. It is a characteristic of man's objectives. The absence of such characteristic of man's objectives does not mean that there is no objective at all. There can even be middle and final objectives, but without such characteristics as are in man. How can this be explained? An object is a matter resulting from a voluntary act, and receives the doer's attention, acceptance and pleasure, no matter whether he needs it or not. The doer does the act in order to fulfill the objective. But to be in need of that objective or not to be, is not part of its meaning. It is of the characteristics proving a human objective. If it is said that the need is a part of the meaning of the objective, we say that it should be omitted in respect to Allah. Haven't we already said that the things which we see in ourselves accompanied with fault and deficiencies, must be omitted when we ascribe them to Allah? We even said that the concept of acting is accompanied with time when ascribed to human beings, but when ascribed to Allah, time is to omitted from it, since He has no time. Here it is the same.

Even if we suppose that the meaning of the objective includes an indication of need, it must be omitted, as it does not benefit Allah's sacred position. Yet, originally the meaning of need is not implied in an objective,

though it can be applicable to our understanding of an objective. When we had to do different acts with longitudinal goals, this was because we could not attain to our final objective without carrying out acts with middle objectives. But is it inevitable that the middle objectives should always mean that the doer can never attain to his final objective without them, or can the middle and final objectives be imposed without implying the doer's impotency and inability?

In a previous discussion it was stated that there can be certain conditions for the implementation of the divine and holy people's acts, but these are, in fact, conditions for the susceptibility of the susceptible, not the effectiveness of the agent. Here it is the same. It is possible that the act cannot be done without preliminaries which are the conditions of the susceptibility of the agent. If an actual tree is to exist, it cannot exist without soil and water. The prerequisite of a materialistic being is to come to existence through another phenomenon, and to be in need of other simultaneous phenomena.

If we suppose that there is a being which is not like that, then, it must not be a material being. Owing to the fact that this world is materialistic, the acts that take place therein require some preliminaries. Nevertheless, these preliminaries belong to the condition of the susceptibility of the susceptible, not the effectiveness of the agent. That is it does not mean that Allah cannot do the act except through this way. It actually means that to suppose an act is to suppose its preliminaries and conditions, too.

Suppose that someone does not need food and air, that he is not begotten by a father and mother, that he has no children, no growth, no development and no change at all. Such a person cannot be material. You may suppose that the person is of the Barzakh. [The intervening state between death and the Day of Judgement]. He would be a more human being affected by no change. But if you suppose that Allah has created a corporeal man, this man must be material, must be affected by changes and developments - these are inseparable requisites of the material.

These requisites do not mean that if Allah created a non-material man in a different way it would mean that His power had decreased. No, it is not that. It is your own supposition that implies these conditions.

If we say: "Couldn't Allah create man without using earth? Why did He create him from earth? The answer is that man means an earthy being. If man was not made of earth, he would not have been man. If, for example, he were made of light, he would have been, according to our belief, an angel. Or if he were made of fire, he would have been a jinn, and no more a man. So, to say that Allah does this act in this particular way; or supposing some middle objectives in His acts, does not mean that He is in need of these objectives. It, in fact, means that the nature of the job is such that it cannot be done in a different way.

Therefore, we may say that Allah does aim at certain objectives, but not in the meaning that they satisfy His needs, nor that He has to resort to middle objectives, without which He cannot do. Actually, the disposition of the act demands that it should be performed through a certain channel, and passing through each of its stages represents an objective for the doer, but not an objective which He needed, though needed by the job itself.

Now, we reach at the point where we have to ask: "What can Allah's objective of creating the world be?" Since we know that He is in no need of the world, we can say that Allah's objective of creating the world is to bestow His favour upon the people, to bless them with His mercy. This is expressed in poetry by Mawlana Rumi, who says:

I did not create the people to get a profit, But to show my generosity to the servants.

If we say that Allah's objective is not for his own interest, but for His servants', we are not wrong, though not precise, because by admitting that we would mean that we have ascribed to Allah an objective outside His Essence. One may still ask: "Why does Allah want to bestow His favours on His servants?" We had already said that as long as we could ask "why?" the final objective would have not been reached yet. We say that Allah had created the world as well as the favours in order to bestow upon me and you a benefit, a mercy. Still one can ask: "Why does Allah want to do us these favours?" Unless the question is returned to a matter inside His Essence, the asking will never stop. Is there any need in His Divine Self? Never! He is never in need of any thing. So, how can the objectives of His acts be returned to His Divine Self?

The Quality of the Objectives in Allah's Acts

Allah's Attributes of Essence necessitate that He should have mercy upon His servants, because He likes Himself, and, consequently, He likes what He creates, i.e. Allah likes to be manifest, to have His names and attributes displayed. Thus, the original cause of Allah's acts and their final objectives are Allah Himself. That is why when the philosophers speak of the Necessary Being, the Exalted, they say: "The why of finality and the why of agency are the same." The cause of agency and the cause of finality are the same, i.e. Allah has no objective outside Himself. All these are no more than technical and philosophical terms. The gist is that Allah does not do things in order to satisfy a need nor to obtain what He doesn't have. Allah needs nothing. It is His Essence that requires Him to be bountiful, generous and merciful. The original cause is His very Attribute of Essence, nothing else. Middle objectives can also be considered, as will be referred to presently.

The Objectivity of Allah's Acts in the Qur'an's View

Through the previous discussion we concluded that it can be admitted that Allah's acts have objectives, which turn back to His Divine Essence, as well as other ones, which can be regarded as middle objectives, or, from a point of view, they are regarded as preliminary ones. This conclusion was reached at through a reasoning analysis of the Attributes of Allah. Let us now see what the viewpoint of the Qur'an in this respect is. There are in the Qur'an ayahs which not only confirm that Allah's acts have objectives, but describe them to be worthy, invaluable and wise. These ayahs can be divided into two parts according to their concepts:

1. Ayahs which generally confirm that Allah's acts have objectives, and
2. Ayahs which point out the objectives of the acts.

We first deal with the ayahs which speak in general of the fact that Allah's acts are not done purposelessly and in vain, actually they have wise objectives.

Among this group are the ayahs which include the adjective "wise", i.e. by describing Allah as "Wise", it means that His acts are wisely done, they are not aimless, but have wise, reasonable and worthy objectives. So, whenever Allah is described by the Qur'an as wise, it is an indication of the said meaning. Furthermore, there are ayahs which stress in particular that Allah's acts are not purposeless. This group of ayahs can also be sorted out: some indicate the context that Allah's acts, such as creating and managing the world, are true and not vain. Some other, ayahs stress that His acts are not futile. A third group of them say that His acts are not for amusement and fun. From all these ayahs, which confirm both the negative and positive sides of the subject it is gathered that Allah's acts are done for worthy and true aims, and that they are not vain nor for fun or amusement.

Explaining Some Terms

Originally, the Arabic word haq (true, truth) means something which is established, certain and proved. This is its linguistic meaning. But, terminologically, it has different usages, though common in letter, i.e. besides its original linguistic usages, which are diverse, it has many further practical usages, which sometimes have conflicting meanings. It is

sometimes said that haq means a being which is self-existent, which exclusively means Allah. So, in this sense the word has but a single application.

Sometimes it indicates something which is consistent, continuous, no matter whether it is self-continuous or is caused to be continuous. So, because it has continuity we say it is haq, its opposite being that which is transient, perishing, not haq. The third usage of haq belongs to beliefs. It is said, for example, that so-and-so belief is haq, and so-and-so belief is batil (untrue, invalid). By a haq belief we mean that which is true and real: "I witness that death is haq (true) and Resurrection is haq." The questioning of Munkar and Nakir [the two angels who interrogate the dead in the gravel is haq. Such beliefs are true and real. Sometimes it is used to describe a statement, saying: "This speech is haq." Here we also mean that it complies with reality and truth. Formerly it was in respect to belief, while here it describes the speech. However, we may regard these latter two instances to be of the same meaning i.e. haq is that which complies with reality, be it a belief or a statement.

In both those examples, that is: a haq belief and a haq statement, the compliance is between the believer and the belief, or the speaker and the speech. Yet, sometimes haq is used as an adjective to a promise, which is predicative not compositive, i.e., somebody promises that he would do so-and-so. If he actually did it as he promised, we say that his promise was haq, but if he failed to keep his word, we say that his promise was batil (false). Here also it can be said that a promise is compositive, not predicative, so as to speak of something, though it may imply some sort of narration. The one who promises that he will do something, means to say that in a given time an act will be done. Though the style is compositive, not predicative, yet it includes a hint to a predication, i.e. he means to say something will happen at that time.

Now as it complies with reality according to its own condition, we say that this promise is haq or true, as is used in the Qur'an: "...that the promise of Allah is true"^[153] That is what Allah promises will undoubtedly come true. So, here, too, there is a kind of conformity between the speech and what is hinted at to happen. The state of conformity is obvious in this instance.

Why do we say that this promise is haq? Because it is in conformity with the reality, and it will be fulfilled under its conditions. So far we have been using the term haq in real and genetic matters. Sometimes haq has juristic and legal applications, and sometimes acquires ethical concepts. Here the subject takes a different trend. It refers to values when the subject is ethical, and it acquires conventional and nominal concepts when the subject is legal and juristic, in which case haq means "right, the right to possess, the marriage rights, etc.

This does not mean that something has, in itself and in actuality, the right to take place, as this right is nominal and based on mutual agreement. Likewise are the parental rights filial rights, the commander's right to be obeyed by his subordinates (the ruler's right upon his subjects) and vice versa. These are juristic concepts. The confirmation of real right is not

intended here. Actually the confirmation of a conventional right is intended. The same is true when it is used in ethical concepts, and even some scholars do not differentiate them, using the fallacy of literal similarity and the like, i.e., by way of argumentation, they use a syllogism in which the word "haq" is repeated and is placed, as it were, in a "middle" position, while in a premise a different meaning is meant than in another one. Or they take the word haq. to have a certain meaning in the premises of the syllogism, and to have another meaning in the conclusion of the syllogism.

For example, in order to prove that theism is an innate disposition, they conduct the argument saying that: everybody by nature seeks the "truth" (haq) ,for the reason that he shuns the "untrue" -the non-haq (1st premise),and since Allah is haq(2nd premise), then man by nature seeks the haq(conclusion), noting that the term haq in the 1st premise denotes an ethical value, and in the 2nd premise it denotes another meaning. It must be noted that although man's natural disposition to worship Allah is, as had already been said, correct, yet it cannot be proved by such reasoning. Or, to say the contrary, in order to prove that man is by nature inclined to goodness, they argue by saying that: since man has an innate inclination to Allah (1st premise), and, since Allah is haq (2nd premise), then man is, by nature, a seeker of haq, (conclusion), while what they want to prove is the inclination to haq in its ethical concept, but they used it in a different meaning in the premises.

Creation - A Truth

Let us now see what it is meant by saying that: "The world is created in truth, not in vain." There is no doubt that "truth" (haq) is not intended here to mean a self-existent being (Allah). It refers to a created being. It is also incorrect to describe a transitory and ephemeral being like that especially that the Qur'an says: "...Allah created not the heavens and the earth, and what is between them, save with truth and a prescribed term."^[154] So, whatever is in this world tastes for a while and then comes to an end-nothing is permanent in this world. Thus, "truth" does not mean here, the permanent and constant. Therefore, does saying "Allah created the world in truth", mean that this is a belief consistent with reality? This is inconsistent, too, since it does not concern the concept of truth and falsity nor of speech. It concerns creation. Creation is a truth, not a falsity, and thus it cannot be consistent with reality. Then, is the truthfulness of a promise? Allah says that this world, which He created, was created with the truth. There is no promise of any kind; therefore, haq, in this instance, does not refer to a promise which is to be fulfilled.

Has it, then, an ethical concept? Outside entities cannot acquire ethical concepts. It is a man's act that bears ethical values. No outside entity can have such values. The ethical concepts belong to the voluntary acts of man or of any other free-will being. Its legal meaning is also not intended, i.e. it has no intention to explain whether Allah has the right to create the world or not.

From among the many meanings of haq the one which suits this instance and which is supported by some ayahs, is that the creation of the world is an

act with a worthy objective, contrary to an act of play and amusement, which has no worthy objective.

What proof is there of this? We have already studied the different meanings of haq and found out that none of them was consistent with the subject of the ayah, except this latter one. Yet, a better proof is that the very ayahs place the haq in contrast with play and amusement, and say: "And We created not the heavens and the earth, and all that is in between them, in play. We created them not save with truth."^[155] So, it is clear that the meaning of haq intended in these ayahs is that which stands in contrast with play, amusement, falsity and futility. This can be explained more by a deeper study of these terms.

The Term Futility in the Qur'an

The Arabic word "abath" is equivalent to the English word "futility", some act with no reasonable objective that which would be futile because the doer did not intend a worthy objective for it. Play and amusement have two close concepts. This is evidenced by these ayahs: and We did not create the heavens and the earth, and what is in between them, in play. Had We wished to have amusement, We could have had it Ourselves, if We ever did."^[156] It is obvious that play and amusement are almost synonyms, i.e. the same thing can be said to be playful or amusing, and their evidences are not different, as otherwise the consistency of these two ayahs would be disturbed.

What are play and amusement? In the Persian language, amusement means pastime or entertainment, and play means sport or game. You do know that play is a sort of amusement, too. Therefore, both may be said of the same thing. In a way we call it play, in another, amusement.

The Qur'an uses these terms to describe this world: "The life of this world is but a play and amusement,"^[157] or: "And the life of this world is nothing save play and amusement."^[158] That is, if man takes the life in this world as his objective, he will be like the one who acts only for play and amusement. When one aims at a reasonable objective beyond that, using this world as a preliminary step to the other one, only then the world will have a value, or else, the very worldly life, disregarding its results in the Hereafter, is but a play in itself, and the achievements which he gains are not worthy of the pains and sufferings he accepts upon himself in this world. One's life in this world is to be regarded as a preliminary stage to an objective beyond it. Only then one may look for the Hereafter, which is to be his final goal. The preliminary will, then, melt in the final objective, losing its originality, if any, and will have no independence of its own.

The Term "La'ibun" in the Qur'an

What are meant by the terms "la'ibun"(play) and "lahwun (amusement)? Why do we speak of something as play, and of something as amusement? Play is a series of regular movements, performed to implement an objective which satisfies man's fancy, not his intellect, such as when some children gather to play and each of them undertakes to play a part of the game. There is no concrete outcome of playing, save that which tickles the player's fancy, through winning or losing. Sometimes there can be concrete results, but the

very nature of play is some movement with a fanciful result. As a matter of fact, there can be reasonable aims for playing, such as the horse races, or shooting, which are used to encourage people to learn them for war time. Nowadays, if the plane pilots conduct contests in piloting they will be better trained for wars, too. These sports, though for playing, have good objectives behind them.

Or football matches, which bring up strong bodies and encourage people to practise it. Actually, this objective belongs to sports, not to playing, as it can be achieved if practised at home, too. Strengthening the body is the result of movements, not the result of the concept of playing. The rules and regulations of a game have nothing to do with strengthening the body. What actually matter in this respect are the movements of the body. So, from this aspect, it is not playing, but since it also has fanciful winning or losing, it can be regarded as playing, too. Therefore, playing can have reasonable objectives, and the playing is only a means of attaining to its goal, which deserves it.

That was an explanation of the word play. The conclusion is that playing consists of certain regular movements based on certain agreed upon rules for the purpose of achieving a fanciful objective.

The Term Amusement in the Qur'an

As to the word "lahwun", amusement, it means in Persian, as in Arabic, amusement or entertainment, which implies that one engages oneself with something diverting one's thoughts from a particular subject. For example, a certain event requires us to think about a solution. This thinking is tiresome. We do not like too much thinking about that; so, we buy a newspaper with a crossword puzzle and busy ourselves solving it. This is an amusement. We may not want to carry out a duty, or we may want to relieve ourselves from a moral responsibility; in such cases we resort to an amusement to relieve our conscience. All these are amusement. Man was created so as to attain to his supreme humane objectives, as well as to the eternal happiness in the Hereafter. To attain to that happiness he will have to cover a road, a difficult one and with full responsibility. Man does not like, by nature, to cover that road. He likes to go without responsibility, to be free with no restrictions: "But man would want to burst off what (obstacle) is before him".^[159] He wants to do whatever he desires. No body is to tell him what to do and what not to do. So, in order to relief himself from these biddings, forbiddings , and from any responsibilities, as well as from having to think about it and in order not to feel uncomfortable, he indulges in other irrelevant affairs. It is a characteristic of this world to deter man from the Hereafter.

To engage oneself with worldly affairs, as final objectives, hinders one from the Hereafter and from pursuing the objective for which he was created, and which one has to try to attain to.

Thus, this world's nature is that of seeking pleasure and entertainment, a nature which prevents man from advancing along his own road. In the Qur'an, life is obscribed as "pleasure and entertainment". But Allah did not create this world for this purpose, since such an objective does not befit the position of Divinity. Had such an objective been intended, Allah's work would have been mere "pleasure and entertainment". The objective of

creation is, in fact, something becoming of Allah's divinity. We shall refer to that later on.

Conclusion

So, by saying that the creation of the world is true, not false, or it is not for pleasure and entertainment, we mean to say that it has a worthy purpose and a good objective, and not that Allah had aimlessly created it, just for play and amusement, since such unwise acts cannot be expected from the Supreme position of the Absolute wise.

The Purpose of Creation

Consequently, it is understood that Allah does His deeds for a wise purpose. The ultimate objective of all deeds is Allah Himself - the One who is of intrinsic qualities. These deeds are to display the said qualities. Here a question arises: Are there, besides the ultimate objective of all deeds, other intermediate objectives for each deed, or each creature? Are there, for all creatures of the same level, both intermediate and supreme objectives, or are there differences among the creatures in this respect? By considering the whole world of creation, that is, everything except Allah, the Exalted, it can be realized that there is no objective other than the manifestation of the Divine Essence, as we had explained in our former discussions. Thus, it can be said that the world had been created to receive the divine emanation. This emanation has no objective other than itself.

But if we consider the creatures in their separate individualities and take the kingdoms of the creatures according to their ranks, we may find that some of them have intermediate objectives, too.

The Abstracts

Among the creatures created by Allah, the Exalted - as is proved by rational argumentation, and probably can be concluded from some ayahs and narratives - there are series of creatures which are void of temporal, spatial, materialistic conditions and changeability. These are called "the complete abstracts". Now, these abstracts are of many kinds. They are proved by neither intellectual argumentation nor explicit statement in the Qur'an or the tradition, supposing that there is a world of complete abstracts without any change and alteration. From the beginning the Creator bestowed upon them what caused them to exist. Their existence is not gradual, and they undergo no change. Therefore, they cannot be more perfect. They remain the same from beginning till end, or, actually, with a deeper look, they have neither beginning nor end, since such beings are above time and place.

Maybe the ayah, quoting the angels who say: "And there is none of us but has an assigned position,"^[160] denotes that they cannot move out of their positions and be more perfect than they are. They have a limit of existence. The one who was more perfect than the others from the beginning remain at the same degree of perfection, and the one who was in the second degree from the beginning remains so till the end.

Similarly the other degrees, whose numbers only Allah knows, and every one of them is in his prescribed position. There is no meaning in their being

created to become more perfect, as their existence is the same from the beginning to the end. What perfection was possible for such a being, it had been given to him from the beginning. His capacity can contain no more perfection. Hence they can have no middle objectives.

They had been created to be benefitted by Allah's benevolence. Why should he be benevolent to them? Because it is in His Essence. But they themselves cannot have any objective other than receiving divine benevolence and emanation. They undergo no evolution so that we may say that they move from a stage to the next as their sought - for objective. Their complete existence is the same from the beginning to the end. Having passed through the world of the abstracts, we come to the world of matter and materialistics. That is, those beings which have no aspect of abstraction, or they have, but belong to matter, though essentially being abstracts - like the spirit of a human being, which is essentially an abstract being, but is united with, and belongs to, matter are under the shadow of this connection with matter, and attain to their perfection, too. The spirit, unlike the complete abstracts, does not have, from the beginning of its creation till its separation from the body, the same and unchanged degree of perfection.

As long as it is connected to matter, the body, it attains to its perfection under its shadow. Therefore, everything that is material and belongs to matter is changeable, alterable and perfectable. Such beings can have middle objectives. Generally speaking, the entire world is created so that perfection can take place, i.e. as a result of evolution it can be prepared to receive more of divine emanation. So, the difference between the realm of the abstracts and the realm of the materialistics is that the evolution and perfection have no meaning in respect to the abstracts, while in the realm of the materialistics, besides that, there are middle objectives, too. There is no doubt that if these are wise objectives, they will inevitably be such as to lead to further perfections in the next stages.

If you suppose that Allah created a human being, endowed him with utmost ability, intelligence, wit, wisdom and other human faculties, the best in both the body and the soul, and suppose that this person gradually began to bodily deteriorate, worn out and get old, his soul also gradually declined, losing his knowledge, learnings, faith and thus, he began a downward movement, both materially and morally. Well, such a being who underwent changings and evolutions, but without any perfectness, would his creation be a wise act? It is clear that such an act could not be wise. The wise act is to prepare the preliminary arrangements for the creation of a worthier and more perfect being.

If somebody takes a worthy raw material, makes some changes in it such that it becomes less valuable; say, somebody takes a precious gem which worths billions of Tumans [Iranian currency], and uses it for a worthless and trivial experiment, this would not be a wise act, because the result of this experiment would be less valuable. Not any kind of changing can be regarded wise and reasonable. The change and alteration must be such that the result would be a more perfect being.

The supposition that Allah creates from beginning a completely perfect human being, and then due to the effects of natural factors and reactions, his

perfectness decline and deteriorate, would not be an act based on wisdom. So, in order to make the evolution of this world wise, it must be in such a way that the result of the entire actions and reactions would lead to more perfection. It would be possible, however, that in this process, in some instances, some beings, due to the competition existing in the kingdom of nature, take a downward advance. Yet, if this system, which we had explained in our previous discussions, is a single one whose parts, within the whole system, enjoy inseparable coherence and totally connected to each other in a way resulting in the appearance of a more perfect and worthier being, despite there being within the process of actions and reactions instances of deterioration and downfall - such a system will be a wise one.

Now, as we believe in the Divine Wisdom, we think, as we had formerly proved, by reason and through the Qur'anic ayahs that the world of nature proceeds towards perfection. That is, the entire world of nature is such created that the evolution, which it undergoes along the time, will be better prepared for the appearance of more perfect beings.

This argument is not based on experiment, since experiments are less sufficient to form a ground for talking about the beginning and the end of the world. Experiments show a limited period of time under certain conditions. Therefore, through experiment we can never judge the post- and the pre-eternity. For example, experiment cannot prove that the world has always had a perfective advance. Likewise, it cannot prove that it will have such a perfective advance in the future.

Graduation in Creation

The hand of experiment is too short to be extended to the post- and pre-eternity. But through intellectual and philosophic argument it can be proved that since Allah is wise and never does whatever is vain and absurd, the advance of creation is, thus, to be towards perfection. Hence, it can be said that the world of nature had been created to reach its perfection. The perfection which we think of is the philosophic one, not the biological. By perfection we do not mean a change of species. By it we mean that the world of nature is so created that its parts are connected to each other and exchange action and reaction, effecting each other. These actions and reactions gradually pave the way for the appearance of more perfect beings.

For example, the earth, when it was first created, was not suitable for living beings, according to the experts. There are some traditional narratives which confirm this opinion. Nahjul Balagah also contains information which support it. Then gradually many changes took place in the universe. Allah alone knows how many millions or billions of years those changes took to happen, since there is neither a definite scientific, nor a devotional, proof.

Nevertheless, we do know that the earth had passed through several stages during which it underwent many evolutionary changes, which, gradually, prepared the earth for plantation and for animals to come to existence. Then, after the elapse of a long time, it became prepared to receive the appearance of human beings. Those who believe in the change of species say that man had evolved from other animals, while those who believe in the constancy of species say that man is a separate species that

had been created under particular conditions. It is not our intention, however, to handle this subject for the time being. Generally we know that the evolution of the earth was in such a way as to prepare it for the appearance of man and for his living in it. This is regarded a kind of perfection for the earth, i.e. the earth, along its history, was proceeding towards its perfection. If the entire world of creation can, in this way, prepare the earth, through actions and reactions, for the appearance of more perfect beings, it will be a process of perfection.

The Middle Objective

Consequently, each of the beings of this world, before the appearance of man, must have had a middle objective, namely, the preparation for the appearance of a more perfect being, namely, man. The creation of the sky and the earth, besides their final objective, have a middle objective, too. It is the paving of the way for the appearance of man. Man himself, as a corporeal being susceptible to change and evolution, undergoes certain changes, both materially and spiritually. Thus, we can say that man was created in order to attain to more perfections so as to deserve receiving the emanation of a more perfect mercy.

Somebody may ask: "If Allah's objective of creation had been bestowing mercy and emanation, it would have been better to grant man whatever he could receive at the beginning of his creation, and to create him in Paradise. What are all these troubles and adventures of man's creation and appearance, for?" If the original objective had been that man should gain Allah's mercy, then it would have been better to place that mercy in man's hand at the very beginning and rest carefree. Or, as the heavenly Books say, Adam and Eve had been, driven out of Paradise, it would have been better if they had stayed and begotten their children and lived there and there would have been no quarellings, killings and corruptions.

Such questions are usually put forth by naive and simple-minded people. This means that we think that any kind of perfection can from the beginning be given to any being, like an empty vessel, which we can either gradually, or immediately, fill with water, and that the creatures of the world are like that vessel - the belief which arises the question: since the vessel is to be filled with water, why should it be filled drop by drop, causing it so much pains? Let what is to be given to him be given at the beginning, disregarding the fact that the final emanations which Allah prepares for man, and whose real nature we cannot now understand, require special capacities which must be prepared by man himself, i.e. it is up to man himself to choose these capacities. If these are forced on man at the beginning, without his consent, he will acquire none of the required capacities, as our minds are incapable of understanding their truth. This can be brought nearer to our understanding by way of an example.

The Significance of Man's Optional Acts

Suppose that an instrument or a machine, in the shape of a statue, had been invented and stationed at the door in order to receive whoever opens the door by greeting him: "Salam! You are welcome!" Now, when you open

the door to enter, which one will have more effect upon you: encountering a machine greeting you with a smile and a nod, saying:

"Salam! You are welcome!", or facing your host receiving you with his own sweet words, saying: "I'm very pleased to see you! You are very much welcome!" Will both these greetings have the same or different effects upon you? The former is an automatic act done with no free-will. It is just a sound made by a machine. You attach no importance to it; except when you do not know that it was from a statue. But if you do know that it is a statue made in such a way to issue a sound, unknowingly and involuntarily, you would not take it to be a sign of respecting you. The greetings can be valued only when the saluter is free to greet or not to greet. If he did, on his own free will, you would endear it. But a being that greets you without knowing what it is doing, can be of no value at all.

Thus, you realize that the originality and credibility of some matters depend on their being done voluntarily and according to one's free will. They are to be done knowingly and consciously so as to be regarded valuable, as otherwise, a more mechanical gesture can be of no value. The mercy which Allah bestows upon man, as a reward for his voluntary good deeds, is such that man would not have deserved it had he not advanced along the voluntary path of free will. If man, from the beginning, had been created in Paradise, he would not have deserved understanding the divine blessings and spiritual pleasures. His highest pleasures would have been those of an animal.

Consequently, we can say that man had been created in this world of matter so that he might acquire such perfection that it would enable him to understand the supreme divine blessings.

Therefore, we may assign many objectives and several stages for man to go through to attain to the position of becoming worthy of understanding those divine blessings. Each one of his objectives would be one of his middle objectives. The conclusion is that the entire universe, i.e. the world of existence, minus Allah, if taken as a whole, it can have no more than a single objective, because whatever perfection that may be obtained along the passing of time would be part of that whole. All the degrees of existence and the diverse realms, taken altogether, have but a single objective, i.e. obtaining Allah's blessing - the blessing which, as a divine act, has no objective except the very Divine Essence, in accordance with the gradation mentioned before.

Therefore, Allah's objective in creating the world is the manifestation of His Attributes, whereas the objective of the creatures, the world, and everything other than Allah, is to obtain His blessings. But if we take the realms of the world of existence separately, we realize that this is true of the realms of abstracts, too, since these are not subject to any further perfections, changes and alterations. So, their objective is also to obtain Allah's blessings, while Allah's objective in creating them is the manifestation of His Attributes and Names. But the non-abstracts or the semi-abstracts (such as the human soul), besides having the said final objective, they also have middle objectives, the total of which can be placed

under the title "perfection" - that is philosophical, not biological perfection, as had formerly been explained.

The Objective of Creation In the Qur'an

In the previous discussion, with the help of both rational analysis and Qur'anic statements, we concluded that the creation of the world, as a whole, has an objective, and that the materialistic realms, besides their final objective, have middle objectives which altogether aim at obtaining perfection. Now we intend to refer to the Qur'anic ayahs which explain the divine acts and the reason, the wisdom and the management of the creation, the world and man. We shall read what is said in the Qur'an about the middle objectives which are in the world and man: "And He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six days - and His throne was upon the water-that He might try you, which one of you is best in conduct."^[161]

There are in this ayah expressions that need to be explained. Some are directly connected to our topic, and some will be explained in their more suitable places.

Stages of Creation

The heavens and the earth, which the Qur'an refers to, mean, as obtained from context indications that the whole world is material. Sometimes this is confirmed by saying: "and what is between them",^[162] [the heavens and the earth]. Thus the total of the heavens and the earth denote the world of matter. Here a question may arise about the meaning of "day" in the ayah. It is clear that it is not the day which appears as a result of the rotation of the earth. Before the creation of earth there were no day and night as known to us now. They appeared after the creation of the earth and its rotation.

The Arabic term "yawm", meaning "a day", denotes "a period of time", with no definite length of time. The ayah itself does not make it clear, either. As to the narratives known to us, no definite conclusion can be derived from them, although there are some possibilities which may further be enforced.

But to say positively what definitely is meant by those "six days" is quite doubtful and no decisive explanation can be offered. The phrase under our consideration is, however, "...that He might try you, which one of you is best in conduct.". Undoubtedly, this ayah tells what the purpose, or the objective, of the creation is. Allah had created the heavens, the earth, the world, the nature, in general, with the objective of trying the human beings in order to make known those who behave more piously. Yet, the connection between the deed and the doer is a bit vague. How can the world be created so that man may be tried?

What connection is there between creation and trying man? Brevity in speech is a style of eloquence which is frequently used in the Qur'an. That is, when the subject is obvious, a lot of phrases are omitted from the speech, as long as it can be understood from the context, and there would be no need to express it openly, especially when the situation requires conciseness. This conciseness is used in the Qur'an in many instances, especially when relating stories. Looking into the stories of the Qur'an, we realize what an amazing style of brevity is used.

From among the stories one sentence is selected from hundreds of sentences which should have been said and singled out, because there had been a reason for selecting it, and disregarding the rest. This style had also

been used in other instances, including the ayah being discussed, where instead of saying: "We had created the heavens and the earth as preliminaries for the appearance of man, then We created man in order to have the purpose of his creation (trying him) fulfilled." The sentences before and after are discarded and omitted, while the stress is put on the purpose for which man was created: "We created the world to try you". At the time of creating the heavens and the earth no human being had been created as yet to be tried. So what relation is there between the creation of the heavens and the earth with man? By considering the style of brevity we find out that, at least, one sentence had been omitted, that is, the heavens and the earth had been created in preparation for the creation of man, who was to be later created in order to be tried to find out whose conduct was better.

Trying Man

Finally, the gist of this ayah is that the Qur'an regards trying man as one of the objectives of creation. What does trying man mean? Actually this is an elaborate subject which is handled in anthropological topics as well as in Divine laws of managing man. Generally speaking, trying, or examining is to arrange the grounds for bringing a potentiality to actuality, or implementing a potential matter. A scientist, in his laboratory, moves around, arranges certain materials, gives them particular shapes, etc., until a new phenomenon appears. Why does he do this? In some instances the scientist locks knowledge. He does not know what would happen if he mixed certain quantities of some chemical elements. So, he carries out an experiment to find out the answer. In some other instances the experiment is carried out for teaching purposes so that the others may see and learn, and there can be many other purposes.

At any case, the aim of an experiment is to prepare the grounds for the appearance of a new phenomenon, which has the potentiality to appear under certain conditions. The required grounds are arranged for, so that the new form may take shape. When a teacher wants to examine his student, he asks him a question which can have positive or negative answer, or a question with several suggested answers, of which only one is correct and the rest are incorrect, or one is correct and the other is more correct. The teacher prepares the grounds for the student to help him to choose one of the answers, to discover the hidden, in order to know how much he knows, or he wants to have an answer to show to the others, while he does know the extent of his student's standard of knowledge and capacity such that he can guess his marks even before looking into his paper. Yet he may need the paper as a document to be shown to anybody who may have an objection. However, preparing the grounds for the student to express himself is called "examination".

We have no doubt that Allah, the Exalted is not ignorant of His servants' conditions. Allah's knowledge includes their final destiny, their past, present and future. We had also understood from the former discussion that Allah's existence was not a temporal one, and that He encompassed both time and place. To Him all times are the same, and His knowledge of all is the same, too. Nothing, then, is concealed from Him, neither the past, the present nor

the future. But He arranges the conditions for man to manifest themselves, or to bring to actuality what is potential, or to display what talents they have, especially that man is practically a gifted creature. Under certain conditions his talents manifest and blossom out. Allah, the Exalted arranges the grounds for everyone to show out his faculties, to demonstrate what is hidden in him, and, finally, to choose his own way, either a right or a deviated one, a way of development and perfection or a way of deterioration and degeneration.

The second ayah of Suratud-Dahr (or Insan) (The Time or Man), says: "We created man from a mixed sperm to try him, so We have made him hearing, seeing. We have shown him the way: either grateful or ungrateful." We are not intending to go into an exegesis on this ayah. We only refer to the word "try" which immediately comes after the creation of man, meaning "to examine" him. "We have made him hearing seeing." The one who is to be examined and to be left to choose a way, must have knowledge and be aware. Moreover, "We have shown him the way - the right way, and guided him to choose one of the two ways: either the way of being grateful, or the way of being ungrateful, and for either of them he will get the relevant result."

This is a fact which is repeated in the Qur'an many times: "We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in deeds."^[163] If we had created the earth without any embellishments, it would not have been attractive to man. Whatever is there on the earth, such as plants, animals and the results of actions and reactions, all help in making the earth attractive to man, or, according to the Qur'anic expression, an embellishment of the earth. Had the earth been dry, waterless, without plants, and monotonous, it would have had not attraction, and man would have loathed to live on it. But the jungles, the flowers, the ups and downs of the mountains, valleys and seas, all have made the earth so attractive that man would not stop looking at it. But why was the earth created so? "... so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in deeds", i.e. these are only means of examination. All are to be there to place man at a cross-road and see if he takes the aptor one. Thus, this ayah refers, too, to examining man as the purpose for creating the phenomena on the earth.

"Who had created life and death that He may try you which is best in deeds". Many exegeses had been suggested for this ayah. Generally, however, we gather that the objective of creating life and death in this world is to have man tried. So, to sum up, we gather from the Qur'an that the creation of the world, of the world's phenomena, which are the embellishments of the world, and of life and death, including human beings' life and death, are all for trying man. That is, the creation of lifeless world is a preliminary for the creation of the living world, and the creation of the living world is a preliminary for the creation of man, his development, perfection and means of existence.

There are other ayahs which explicitly state that everything had been created for man, such as: He it is who created for you all that is in the earth",^[164] and many other similar ayahs, which we do not intend to explain.

Consequently, middle objectives can be seen in the world of matter. The objective of the lifeless world of nature is to prepare the grounds for the living creatures. Naturally, the living creatures as regards their existence, are more perfect than the lifeless creatures, because whatever the latter have, the former also have, plus something else. Besides all the elements that are in lifeless creatures, as well as in the living creatures, the latter have, moreover, a phenomenon, namely, life, which makes them more perfect.

As far as we know, and as is confirmed by the Qur'an, no being is more perfect than man. The jinn, however, have their share of such perfections, as is gathered from some ayahs. It is not our concern, for the time being, to discuss what the jinns are. In many instances the Qur'an regards the Ins (man) and the jinn as to be equal and on the same footing: "O folks of jin and ins!"^[165] and "Which, then, of the blessings of your Lord do you (both) deny?"^[166] from which it is obvious that the hint refers to both the jinns and man, and that the jinns, like man, are also bound to perform religious duties.

At any rate, the Qur'anic ayahs do not state that there is any being more perfect than man on the earth. So, we may well say that the middle objective of the world of matter is to prepare the grounds for the appearance of a being called man. Therefore, we disregard what the philosophers, ancient and contemporary, ascribe to man, as to be a selfish creature, falsely claiming to be honourable, doubted whether he has any merits over other animals though a pessimistic view, it is also possible to intellectually prove that man is much more perfect than other beings and all kinds of animals. This is also gathered from the Qur'an.

We have to mention a parenthetical clause to the effect that the perfections ascribed to man, as the most honourable creature, are granted by Allah. Nevertheless, this man, with all his perfections, is placed at a crossroad so that he may by himself choose the way which would take him up to a position above that of the angels, while, by his ill-selection of his path, he would be the worst of all beasts. Thus, by saying that man is the noblest of all creatures we mean that there are among the human beings persons who choose the way leading to the highest positions known to any creature. But this does not mean that any man, under any condition and anywhere, is better than all creatures, because the Qur'an itself says that some persons are even lower than the quadrupeds.

The Qur'an does not look at man as the humanitarians look at him man, being man, is a noble creature. It says that man is more perfect than other creatures because he possesses God-given faculties and can utilize them. He can also be the noblest only when he, with his good choice, selects the best way: "Surely, the vilest of animals in the sight of Allah are those who disbelieve, and would not have faith".^[167] For "animals" the Arabic word *dabbah* is used, which means any "moving" creature, even worms and microbes, which move, too. The one who would not believe because of his obstinacy and would not accept what is right, is looked at by the Qur'an as to be worse than any moving creature and the beasts of prey, and is worthless. Hence, the Qur'an regards the killing of some men as a must, whereas it does not allow the killing of any animal as long as it shows no sign of an offensive intention that may endanger one's life.

In such cases one is allowed to kill the harmful animals. Even so the animals which disturb one's comfort and prevent one's growth. Otherwise the Qur'an does not permit killing living creatures for no good purpose. As regards the animals which are slaughtered for their flesh, they may be killed only after remembering the name of Allah over them, so as to be done with Allah's permission. Otherwise man must not bother any other moving creature. But despite all these advices and instructions, to the effect that even an ant must not be harmed, the Qur'an orders that certain persons to be killed.

Amirul Mu'minin Ali (A.S.) says: "By Allah, even if I am given all the domain of the seven (stars) with all that exists under the skies in order that I may disobey Allah to the extent of snatching a husk of a barley grain from an ant would not do it".^[168] This is the Islamic education. This same Ali (A.S.) draws his sword and chops off men's heads as autumn wind chops dry leaves off the trees. That is, those people were even lower than the ants, according to the Qur'anic view: "Surely the vilest of animals in the sight of Allah are those who disbelieve and would not have faith".

Therefore, Islam does regard every person to be honourable, but it regards man more perfect than other creatures, because of the faculties bestowed upon him. His destination, however, is up to his own freewill choice. If he could well benefit from those faculties, he would progress and advance to reach a position even higher than that of the angels.

But if he misused them, he would be debased and worthless, even lower than a worm in the swamps. Man, therefore, is at a crossroad, which is, expressed in the Qur'anic term, as "trying". This can be regarded as middle objective for creating him. But can either one of these two roads be chosen as the intended one, or only a particular one of them is to be chosen? That is, if he chose the good one, would, the bad one be a subsequent to that?

From some ayahs we gather that the original objective is that man should himself choose the way of Allah: "And I have not created the jinn and the ins(man) except that they should worship Me".^[169] This is the same as in Surat Yasin: "And that you should worship Me: This is the straight path."^[170] The straight path, in the viewpoint of the Qur'an, is the path which has the tint of servitude to Allah and worshipping Him. If a man performed an act with a tint of godliness, this would be a movement towards perfection. But if it was not so, then it would mean either to mark time or a turn back. Any movement which is not a kind of worshipping Allah is either nonsense, as the one who tries a movement but keeps marking time in his place, or falls down (may Allah protect us against that), i.e. it is a movement, but towards Hell. The movement which leads to perfection is that which is regarded by the Qur'an to be a sort of worshipping Allah, while other roads lead to the worship of Satan: "Did I not charge you, O children of Adam that you should not worship Satan? Surely he is your open enemy."^[171] Only one road is straight. The others are crooked and deviated.

The Final Objective

We can say, then, that the purpose of creating man is that he should worship Allah. Why? Because his perfectness depends on worshipping Allah. Undoubtedly, Allah is absolutely needless of everything. So, when

He says that He created the people - "that they should worship Me", is because their perfectness cannot be achieved without worshipping Him. This point will be explained, by Allah's will, later on.

Consequently, we must worship Allah in order to be worthy of obtaining the blessings which otherwise we will not have the merit of receiving them: "Yet they cease not differing, except those on whom your Lord has mercy, and for this did He create them."^[172] It has never happened that all people were on the straight path. It has also never happened that all people were on the wrong path. There have always been differences among people in choosing the right and wrong, except for those who had been favoured with Allah's mercy, as they would not deviate from the right path, and keep proceeding along the road of truth: "and for this did He create them". Concerning the phrase "and for this" the commentators offer two explanations.

A group say that "this" refers to their "differing". Another group say that it refers to the word "mercy". Therefore, "this" may point to "differing" or to "mercy". If it refers to "differing", that is, if man had been created with a free will to freely choose his way, then, naturally, one would choose the right and another the wrong way. So, man's free will naturally leads to different choices. Consequently, it can be said that man had been created for differing and dividing into two groups: "...a party shall be in Paradise and a party in Hell"^[173] But if "this" refers to "mercy", i.e. Allah has created man to receive His mercy, then man's final objective, brought about by his voluntarily done good deeds, would make him worthy of receiving Allah's mercy, which is a merit of the pious people. Hence, the final objective behind creating man is to attain to the highest degrees of Allah's mercy that is possible for His creatures to attain to.

Arranging these objectives together, we realize that they have a longitudinal sequence. They do not cross each other. It cannot be said that man has been created to be tried, and crosswisely, he has been created to worship Allah, and, also crosswisely, he has been created to receive His mercy. No, they are arranged in successive sequence.

If man wants to receive Allah's mercy specially prepared for him, he must follow the path of servitude, that is, he is to choose the way of Allah, and in order to choose the way of Allah, there must be two different ways: the way of Allah and the way of Satan. So, man must be tried. In order to let him choose the way of servitude on his own free will, the grounds for trying him must be prepared so as to find out whether he will choose the way of Allah or the way of Satan.

Therefore, trying comes prior to worshipping Allah, and worshipping comes before receiving Allah's mercy. So, we may say that man has been created to be tried, then to voluntarily choose worshipping Allah, and then to attain to Allah's final and eternal mercy.

Consequently, there can be many longitudinal objectives, none of them contradicting the other. Those who are not acquainted with the Qur'an, or with its style, probably think that these are a number of crossing objectives, or there is contradiction in the statements of the Qur'an. No, it is not so. In an instance, the art of eloquence required that a different objective should be

mentioned. These objectives are not contradictory, because they are longitudinal and are middle ones, while the final objective is the attainment of Allah's mercy.

Stages of Allah's Acts

The acts which we purposely do are preceded by preliminaries and pass through stages. One of these stages is to regard the act as to be correct, and it appears in a scientific and intellectual image in the mind.

The second stage is getting interested and inclined to it. After becoming interested, one is to consider whether it contradicts one's other interests or other people's. We have to study and investigate to see if this act, to which we are inclined, is really to our interest and if our interests necessitate it. Having done so, it will, then, be the turn for taking the necessary decision. The implementation of many acts requires conditions and preliminaries outside ourselves. That is, it is not that whenever we willed to do an act, it would be done immediately solely according to our will. We would have to do something upon the matter, to prepare the required conditions. Studying the outside preliminaries, causes and conditions are considered as part of the preliminaries of the act. Before starting a journey we must first select the means, know what we need during the journey, know what we need at destination. We have to reckon all these questions.

So, a correct plan of the act is to be drawn in our mind. It is possible that the outside conditions for an act are changeable. This must also be taken into consideration. Suppose if you want to travel by air, you will have to take into your consideration the possibility of the late arrival of your plane. In such a case you must have a plan to know what to do. All these considerations, thoughts, inclinations, desires, measurements, etc. are regarded to be the stages and the preliminaries of an act.

But how is it with Allah's acts? Have His acts to go through similar stages and preliminaries, or not? Most of the preliminaries which we need for our acts are caused by our ignorance and incompetence. We have, for example, to consider whether the act is advisable. Why should we consider this? Because originally we do not know. Had we known from the beginning, we would not have to consider anything. Why should we think about the pros and cons of an act? Because we do not know which one is better, which one is profitable, which one is harmful. If we knew from the beginning, we would not be in need of thinking.

So, this sequence of the matters - i.e. first we must imagine the case, then an inclination is to rise in us, then we are to think about it, then the pros and cons are to be compared besides considering the conditions. All these are caused by the fact that we are incompetent and ignorant creatures, as our knowledge does not cover everything. There is no doubt that such suppositions about Allah, the Exalted are incorrect. That is, we must not think when Allah wants to do something, He sits down to think whether it is profitable to do it or not. Allah does not need to think over. To think over is the characteristic of ignorant people, while Allah knows everything. We are never to think that there appears in Allah a desire which formerly was not there, as this will be another incorrect thought about Allah. It is impossible to think that there appears in the Exalted Divine Essence a thing that was

not there before. In other words, bereavement has no way to Allah. Or, in the philosophic terms, the Holy Essence of Allah is never subject to events.

In religious expressions, especially in Nahjul Balaghah, it is said: "...for whom one condition does not proceed another."^[174] That is, it cannot be supposed that Allah may be in a mood at a time, and in a different mood at another, like man who may be happy now and miserable later, or content at a time and discontent at another. Allah has no diverse conditions. Therefore, we are not to imagine that Allah thinks, is subject to moods or inclinations which may intensify into eagerness. These are impossible to happen to Allah. But how can we put our questions? How can Allah's acts happen? Do they happen randomly, unknowingly, unmeasured and unconsidered? Of course, Allah, the Exalted is far above doing things without consideration and unawares. So, what are we to say in such instances?

The Acts of Allah

As regards the Attributes of the Necessary Being, the Blessed, the Most High, it had already been said that, concerning our own attributes and acts, we first comprehend certain concepts, then we omit their deficiencies, and, having cast away these privational aspects, we ascribe those concepts to Allah. For example, we first realize in ourselves the faculties of knowledge, power and life, then we regard them as abstract concepts. The evidences of knowledge, power and life are limited ones, and being so, they are not becoming of Allah.

In order to make them suitable to be ascribed to the Glorified Essence of Allah, the Exalted, we drop off the negative and deficient sides of those attributes and say that Allah's knowledge, unlike ours, is limitless. It is knowledge, but boundless. It is knowledge, but essential, not acquired. Despite the fact that we do not have an outside evidence showing an essential, not acquired and limitless knowledge, yet we can imagine such a wide concept of knowledge that it can cover the limitless knowledge, too. Then we say Allah is knowing, but unlike our knowledge. Similarly we may apply abstraction to acts, i.e. the concepts, which are true of our acts, are accompanied by aspects of deficiency and negation, and so they cannot be ascribed to the Sacred Essence of Allah, the Exalted. But by discarding these deficiencies off the acts and looking at them as to be suitable to be ascribed to Allah, the Exalted, we may do so. Concerning the attributes too, after ascribing abstracted concepts of perfection to Allah, reason is used to offer evidences to prove that those attributes were the very Essence of Allah. As for acts we also consider similar ways, such as:

Firstly, when we ascribe the origin of the act to Allah, we must take into our consideration that, in respect to His acts, time is irrelevant. When we say that Allah knows, wants and likes to do this act, it does not mean that in a particular period of time He knows it, but He does not want it yet, and in another period of time He wants it, but has not considered it yet, etc. No, it is not like that. We did say that time is irrelevant in respect to the Essential Being. Time has to do with the material beings. Therefore it is impossible to imagine that there are in His Essence things arranged according to a sequence of time, requiring Him to be a place for the events.

Secondly, we must know that these concepts are abstracted from a state of action, i.e. they are abstract concepts which are derived by reason from comparing the Holy Essence of Allah with His creatures. In the outside we have nothing except the Holy Essence of Allah, the Exalted - Who is a Being of utmost greatness, void of all kinds of limitedness and deficiency - and His creatures whom He created in the outside according to His will. There is nothing except these two.

The acts which are ascribed to Allah are concepts which are abstracted by the mind. When it is realized that the issuance of acts, and the appearance of creatures, are caused by the will of Allah, not per force or pressure, not it is imposed upon Him to create the world, the mind abstracts the concept that the act is performed by Allah's "will".

Allah never does anything without a will, though it does not mean that His Will is something accidental and comes from outside. This does not coincide with Allah's divinity. No change whatsoever may happen in the Holy Essence of Allah, the Exalted, neither in His Essence nor in His Attributes. The same is true in respect to moods. In fact, ascribing moods to Allah is incorrect.

When the mind notes that something happens in a particular time, and is not against Allah's will, i.e. it is not imposed per force upon Him, it says that Allah wanted and performed it. But does wanting mean that it was caused by a certain state that appeared in Allah? No, no changings occur to the Divine Essence. When we ascribed the attributes of knowledge and power to Allah we did not mean to say that He had strong and muscled hands.

In fact, the mind noticed that the One Who created such a great world cannot be an impotent being. On this basis we used to ascribe power to Allah, but this power is nothing but His very Essence, His simple divine self. The same is true in respect to the divine attributes of action, as there is nothing, except the Essence of Allah and His creatures. There is nothing that can be named: will, want, permission, destiny and the like. These are mere abstract concepts.

Thirdly, there is no multiplicity in His Attributes of Action. That is, just as all His Attributes are His very Essence, His knowledge also is nothing but His Power, and His Power is nothing but His Life, and all these are nothing but His Essence. Similarly His acts. There is Allah and the world which He created. The other entities called: permission, will, want, etc. do not exist. It is the mind that abstracts other additional concepts - concepts which have two basis and two ends: one is linked to Allah and the other to Allah's creatures.

The evidence for all these is, in fact, the very divine act, which is of automatic function. Just as the Attributes are abstracted from Allah's Essence, without meaning any multiplicity in His Essence, similarly the Attributes of acts are also abstracted from His acts, without there being any multiplicity. This was an analysis which must be considered so that one may not commit a mistake in respect to Allah's act and attributes of acts.

The Stages and the Degrees of the Act

The Glorious Qur'an ascribes the world to Allah, the Exalted in the form of some concepts which conform with the attributes and the stages of act. The noble narratives state a certain system for those concepts. For example, some narratives say that the happening of everything in this world depends on four things: knowledge, will, measurement and decree. Some other narratives count them to be five or seven.

These, however, are sporadically stated in the Qur'an. But there is not a single ayah to count all the four, five or seven of them. The origins, the stages or the degrees of the act are the same as that named as to be the origin of, and the prelude to, our acts. The mind, after abstracting and purifying these concepts, ascribes them to Allah. We may not forget that, in respect to Allah, time is of no concern, and it does not appear in the Essence of Allah as an accidental event. Actually, they are concepts which the mind abstracts them from the connection between Allah and the world.

Allah's Knowledge

Knowledge is one of the said concepts. Talking about the Divine Attributes, we said that one of the essential attributes is knowledge, and, whether there is a world or not, the Holy Essence of Allah, the Exalted, is the very Knowledge itself. Allah is aware of His own Essence, because His Divine Existence is such that He cannot be unaware of Himself. This awareness, in a sense, awareness of all other things, as is explained in its place.

Besides the essential knowledge, the Qur'an ascribes other kinds of knowledge to Allah. In some ayahs we read about a knowledge which is registered in a book, such as: "He said: The Knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a Book; my Lord neither errs nor forgets,"^[175] or "And with Him are the keys of the unseen, no one knows them but He," up to "neither anything green nor dry is but in a clear Book."^[176] These ayahs say that Allah is aware of everything. No leaf of a tree falls down unless Allah is aware of it. No event happens unless Allah knows it. The ayah ends with "...neither anything green nor dry is but in a clear Book". It is quite clear from these ayahs that the divine knowledge, or a part of it, is registered in a book.

A number of scholars wrote analysis about this Book. They expanded on the meaning of the "Book" so much that it may include Allah Himself. We do not support such disposals of linguistic concepts. It is true that some concepts can be generalized by omitting their particularities so as to enlarge their capacities and widen their limits, but only to a commonly acceptable extent. Otherwise all the concepts would be amalgamated into each other. The ayah says that the knowledge of all things is in a Book. This expression does not fit in with saying that the Book is Allah Himself, and it is not commonly agreeable. This Book must naturally be one of Allah's creatures, as it is referred to in other instances as "The Preserved Tablet".

So, based upon the ayahs which mention the Book or the Preserved Tablet, we may ascribe to Allah knowledge other than the Essential Knowledge. It is a knowledge as a created being, i.e. Allah has created a being which reflects, like a mirror, what He will create afterwards. The one

who can get knowledge of this being, supervises and looks at it, will be able to see the events and be aware of the past, present and future happenings. This is a divine knowledge demonstrated in a creature.

An ayah says: "But it is a Glorious Qur'an, in a Preserved Tablet,"^[177] and another says: "Surely it is an honourable Qur'an, in a guarded Book, no one touches it except the purified ones."^[178] Those "ones", according to the Qur'an, are Ahlul Bayt (A.S.) [the progeny of the Prophet], because it says: "Allah only wants to keep away the uncleanness from you, O Ahlul Bayt and to purify you thoroughly."^[179] These two ayahs, taken together, give us to understand that only Ahlul Bayt (A.S.) are apt to get in touch with the truth of the Preserved Tablet. This is a God-given knowledge to a being whose truth we are unable to understand. We only know that the Qur'an speaks of a being by the name: a Guarded Book, a Preserved Tablet or a Clear Book, in which everything is quite clear, and, if anyone could reach it and get in touch with it, he would understand the truths of things. So, here is a knowledge ascribed to Allah in respect to this creature: "He said: The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a Book"^[180]

The Factual Knowledge

There is another knowledge which is ascribed to Allah by the Qur'an. It is of a lower degree. It covers the parts of any act that happens. We are inclined to name it: The Factual Knowledge. As a matter of fact, the Factual Knowledge is expressed in many terms: in philosophy it counters the emotional knowledge. In another instance it counters the essential knowledge, like the factual will and the essential will. Our intended Factual Knowledge is that which is not essential, which is ascribed to Allah in respect to the happening of any part of an act.

Taking this into consideration, many of the allagorical ayahs of the Qur'an concerning knowledge can be solved. On one side, we know that Allah is never ignorant of anything, but, on the other side, we encounter ayahs which say that Allah knew that at a certain time or will know. The way of coordinating these ayahs is to know that Allah's knowledge, which is His very Essence, is unchangeable, is not temporal, never transposable and is unlimited, while the knowledge, which is in practice, is a concept abstracted by the mind through observing the act and the one who performs it.

It had already been said that the abstract concepts follow the abstracting side and the origin of abstraction. As the origin of abstraction, here, is two things: one is essential and divine, the other is created, and, being ascribed to the created, it can be temporal. But as the Essence of Allah is not temporal and outside time, the latter, being ascribed to Allah, is void of time.

For example, the concept of creation, is taken from its relation to the created, it is temporal. So, when we say that Allah had created this creature at so-and-so time, this time is not referred to Allah, but to the world. But this concept of creation, being an annexed concept, and since one side of the annexation is a temporal being, it is possible to regard it temporal. Similarly, the knowledge which is abstracted from the position of action, can also be

temporal, with a view to its annexation, not with the view of the Divine Essence.

By the way of throwing light on this subject, we may better change it from the concept of knowledge to the concept of seeing, hearing, or the like. . It happens that somebody is unable to see, but in a time he is, or sometimes he is able to see, but there is nothing to be seen before him. So, despite the fact that his eyes are open and there is light, but because there is nothing to reflect the light, he sees nothing. At night you can see nothing in the lighted sky, but you can see the bird flying in it, in which case you realize the sky is lighted. You could see only because of certain conditions, that is, the seen object appeared in the required time.

Concerning the Factual Knowledge, the same thing is applicable. so, when we say that Allah knew at this time, is because the known thing appeared only at that time, not that Allah was ignorant and then He Knew. Therefore, there is a knowledge related to the act, such as the ayah: "Now has Allah lightened your burden, for He knew that there is weakness in you,"^[181] that is, the weakness appeared in them at that time, and belonged to Allah's Knowledge: "And certainly We will try you until We know those of you who strive hard and the forbearer."^[182] That is, till striving and forbearing blossom in you and become manifest, not that Allah was ignorant and He knew only when you showed striving and forbearance! In short, we ascribe three kinds of knowledge to Allah: first, the Essential Knowledge, which is the very Essence of Allah, second, the knowledge which is preserved in the Book or the Tablet, and which the others can be acquainted with, but only for a few whom Allah had purified, and third, the knowledge that belongs to act, i.e. it is the very act itself, and which is abstracted by the mind.

We must add that by Factual Knowledge we do not mean that when Allah had created the world and performed some acts. He got a new knowledge, or He had an Essential Knowledge and then He got a new Factual Knowledge. If we say that He got something which He lacked, it would mean deficiency and change in the Divine Essence. The Factual Knowledge is a concept which the mind abstracts, by way of comparison with the Divine Essence. It is not an actual reality added to the Divine Essence. In the Divine Essence there is nothing but the Essential Knowledge. That which appears is related to the created. Ascribing it to the Divine Essence is in the shape of annexed abstract concept.

The Divine Permission

One of the points related to acts is Allah's permission to do things, followed by the Divine Decree. Permission, conventionally, denotes the case of somebody, who has no legal right to dispose of something, but somebody else, who has the legal right, permits him to do so. For example, no one has the right to enter another's house unless the owner of the house gives him permission to enter it. The Qur'an, referring to good behaviour and the rules of good companionship and sociability, presents a number of ayahs concerning getting permission: asking the Prophet's permission, the children asking their parent's permission before entering their room and asking the permission of the owner of a house before entering it, etc.

Permission, in this sense, is a legal concept, i.e. when we say that one cannot enter a house without its owner's permission, the term "cannot" is not a genetic matter, because he can enter per force. It is, in fact, a legal prohibition, which is a relative, not corporeal, matter. The wise people decided, for certain reasons, that nobody should enter a house without its owner's permission, as otherwise the people's comfort and the society's order would be disturbed. On this basis, we say that this is a conventional, legislative or legal permission. But its usage in the Qur'an is not only confined to the legislative, legal or conventional use, as there is also the genetic permission.

In some instances the Qur'an refers to the natural factors as to be functioning by Allah's permission, and that no phenomenon appears without Allah's permission.

Legislative and Genetic Permissions

Consequently, we may divide permissions, according to the Qur'an, into two divisions: Genetic and Legislative Permissions. The Qur'an claims that all which happen in the world of reality, no matter who the doers are or the way they are done, are done by Allah's general permission. There is a general permission covering them all, otherwise nothing could have taken place. Besides this permission, the Qur'an refers to another connection for the appearance of the world's phenomena, namely: taqdir (divine decree). There is a third connection called: qada' (fate). There is further another connection named: knowledge. We may also refer to another connection by the name: "the written", i.e. Allah has written everything on a "Tablet", and it seems that the expression: "what is written on the forehead", denoting destiny or fate, is not irrelevant. That is, the teachings of the Divine Books tell that Allah has written down the events before their taking place.

The ayahs Related to "Permission"

There are many ayahs concerning the legislative permission, such as: "And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed, by Allah's permission,^[183] or that which denotes the legislation of jihad for the first time: "Permission (to fight) is given to those who are being fought because they have been wrong, and surely Allah is able to give them victory."^[184] This was when the Muslims had no reasonable defending power. They, of course, wished to be able to fight the infidels and the polytheists. Especially when they were persecuted and tortured, they used to ask the Prophet (S.A.) to permit them to fight their enemies, but they were told: "Withhold your hands, and keep up the Salat",^[185] until the Muslims migrated from Mecca to al-Madinah, where they established their headquarters and mustered their defending power. At that time the above ayah was revealed, which seems to be the first ayah permitting the holy war, jihad, for defence. This was a legislative permission, which told the Muslims: so far you were not permitted to fight, but from now on you are permitted to.

Regarding the genetic permission, the Qur'an says: "And as for the good land, its vegetation comes forth by permission of its Lord".^[186] The point here is the growing of the plants out from the earth. The Qur'an says that this happens by Allah's permission. That is, the natural elements which

cause the growing of the plant such as the seeds, the earth, the water etc., do their job by Allah's permission. If Allah had not permitted the land to cleave, the clouds to rain and the seeds to grow there would have been no vegetation. This permission is not a legal one, because the earth, the sun, the rain etc. have no sense so that a law can be coined for them. This permission, therefore, is a genetic one.

Here is another example about witchcraft. What is certain about it is its effect on one's perception. That is, there are people who believe that witchcraft has certain effects upon the world. Even if these effects were imagined and fancied, the very believing in them is an effect stirring one's imagination. As regards the magic of the Pharaohs, the Qur'an says: "...their cords and their sticks-he imagined them, by their magic, as if they were moving".^[187] In another story, the Quran tells about Harut and Marut who taught witchcraft, and says: "...and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah's permission."^[188] That is, no witchcraft can be effective without Allah's permission. What kind of permission is that: legal or genetic? Undoubtedly, legality is irrelevant here, as witchcraft is inanimate and cannot understand and obey. The permission, therefore, is genetic. There are ayahs which say that man appears and dies by Allah's permission: "No soul can ever die except by Allah's permission".^[189] Even more than that. There are ayahs which confirm that even man's voluntary actions would not take place without Allah's permission. In the Qur'an we read: "And it is not for any soul to believe except by Allah's permission".^[190] This is a genetic permission, too, as otherwise, the legislative permission is for all, even the infidels.

Conclusions

From the specimens of the above mentioned ayahs - of which there are much more - we gather that Allah wants to inform us, through these expressions, that no action and reaction can be out of Allah's control and will. Allah, who created the world, has in His control all its phenomena and effects. It is His power and will that appear in the world. No one can overcome Allah's will or wage war against Him to do anything contrary to His will. Those who rose against the prophets and the straight path are not considered to have risen against Allah, unlike what is stated in the current Torah that victory is sometimes Allah's and sometimes His servants'.^[191] As a matter of course, in the original Torah there are no such allegations. These are the distortions which had been inserted in it later. The Qur'an stands quite against such blasphemous ideas, and asserts that nothing is out of Allah's control "And the jews say The hands of Allah are tied up".^[192] The polytheists also used to say that the management of the affairs is in the hands of Allah's associates and the lords.

The Qur'an takes a firm stand against such allegations and stresses, in different manners, that Allah's power and will cover everything, and whatever happens anywhere, happens under the management of Allah. It further wants to guide man to understand Allah's unity of actions. It wants to educate and bring up the believer to realize that all effects are from Allah independently, and to recognize Allah's divine hand in all beings and their affairs. This is a reality to which a believing man should attain.

But how a man, who thinks himself and nature to be independent, can attain to that stage? We believe ourselves to be independent and do not feel being in need of Allah: it is we who say, it is we who hear, etc. In none of these we feel to be in need of Allah, and even it is we who turn the world upside down, it is we who fight, conquer the stars, roam through the space, without feeling any need of Allah in our activities.

Thus, man takes himself and the natural elements to be independent in their effectiveness. But the Qur'an wants to educate the believer in such a way, and to make him so aware, that he recognizes the hand of Allah in everything, or even to see the hands of the others under the light of His hand. That is why the Qur'an pays a special attention to its expressions and methods of declarations. It ascribes all acts to Allah in different forms, the simplest of which is to say that all events happen by Allah's permission. This is the least to be said in respect to His unity of actions.

So, when a believing man wants to become elevated in monotheism, he must begin with acquiring the belief that whatever happens is not without Allah's permission, and that He can stop it if He wills so. When He allows a number of people to do whatsoever they like for a short period, it does not mean that they had escaped from His control and that He can no longer curb them. This is, in fact, a sort of management. He wants them to feel as if they were the masters of the situation, and that they were free to do whatever they desired, so as to let them expose themselves and their deeds, but not that He has been overcome.

We are not to think that when the tyrants could dominate the people, they could overcome Allah, too. It was Allah Himself Who allowed them, in order to both try them and the society as well. This was by Allah's permission, and He could stop them any time, as He did when He destroyed Namrud by a gnat.

So, concerning these grace periods given to some groups, we should not think that these denote Allah's defeat, such as the Jews used to think that Jacob had defeated Allah and threw Him to the ground, and asked Him blessings and favours, but Allah told him that the day will break and His servant would come and see Him defeated, but Jacob told Him that He must give him first the blessings which He had given to Ibrahim and Isaac. Thus, Jacob could get those blessings per force. Such is their description of Allah, whereas the Qur'an says that the entire world belongs to Him and that nothing happens without His permission. That is, whatever happens everywhere in the world, in any form, quantity and details, happens by His permission.

Allah has given the fire the permission to burn, the sun to shine, the clouds to rain, the plants to grow and the earth to cleave. Had it not been for His permission, none of these would have happened. This was the first step of the monotheistic knowledge concerning action, i.e. believing that everything is by Allah's permission, which covers the lifeless nature, as well as the living creatures, including the human beings, even their voluntary acts come under His genetic permission. This is, even the servant who commits disobedience, his disobedience is covered by this genetic permission, though not covered by the legislative permission, i.e. Allah has not legally

permitted us to disobey Him, but genetically, He has. That is, He has created man with a free will, giving him the power to choose to disobey or obey.

There is difference between the genetic and the legislative permissions, between genetic and legislative wish, and between genetic and legislative will. Everything happens according to divine permission, wish and will, but this is true of the genetic kind only. That is, Allah has given the power of being effective to man and to other factors, so as to be able to show out their effects. This is the very genetic divine permission. In some instances He has given the legislative permission, too: "...all good things are made lawful for you".^[193] This is a legislative permission. In some instances there is only a genetic, no legislative permission. Something is legally forbidden. Similar division is true in respect to "wish" and "will".

Everything happens by the divine genetic will and wish, but not everything happens by Allah's legislative will and wish. Only those things, which are in accordance with the divine laws, happen by Allah's legislative will and wish. But there is nothing in the world to happen contrary to Allah's genetic permission, wish and will.

Teaching the Divine Unity of Actions

Actually, this kind of teaching, on which the Qur'an insists, saying that everything happens by Allah's permission, is a method of teaching Allah's unity of actions, which gradually brings man nearer to the truth of Tawhid, monotheism. First it says that things happen by permission, then it says they happen by will. It then says: Beware not say: "I will do such-and-such tomorrow", unless you add "by Allah's Will". The custom of using the phrase: insha'allah - by Allah's Will - common among the Muslims, is not a mere polite ceremony. Allah tells His Messenger: "And do not say of anything: I shall do it tomorrow, unless Allah wills".^[194] How do we know what would happen tomorrow?

It maybe that Allah willed something else. You may decide to travel to somewhere the next day. You reach the airport in time and wait in the waiting saloon. Suddenly they announce that your flight has been postponed for two hours. You wait for two hours. Then they announce again that the delay will be twelve hours. Your decision to travel was determined, but does everything happen in accordance with your desire? We have no control over all the factors of an act. Are our lives under our control? Is there anybody who knows that he will be alive the next hour that he may plan for this next hour? The one who believes in the Oneness of Allah and recognizes His hand in everything and that His management is apparent everywhere, will not allow himself to decide for the future. This is a question related to Tawhid, and it goes .far beyond self-reliance known to psychology.

In psychology the question is whether man should rely upon himself or upon others. The answer is that man should depend upon himself. What does that mean? It means that he must rely on himself, be brave in acting, and expect no help from the others. Those who have no such merits will linger behind in life.

In other words, man in his life should shoulder his own luggage, expecting no body to carry it for him. But depending on Allah and on His help is above all these things, it is a different chapter. A believer neither

depends on others, nor on himself. He always depends upon Allah, the power which is above him and above all mankind, nature and the whole world. This dependence creates a stronger power in man. Much as I try to depend on my own self, I know my power to be so limited, and I may reach a blind point where I can do nothing more. Even if I depended on others, their total human abilities would, afterall, be limited, too. But the one who depends upon the limitless divine power, will never feel being defeated, because no power can ever stand against His.

The monotheist is made up in such a model that he says: by Allah, I am afraid of nothing. Had he depended on his own power, he would have felt afraid even at the very first step. No one can allege this, unless he is depending on the divine power. He always says: "Allah did it", never says "I did it". This viewpoint, this spiritual dependence, makes man undefeatable. But the one who depends on himself, to whatever extent, will finally be defeated. How much power can an individual have?

Therefore, relying upon Allah is something much higher than the self-reliance taught to us. The monotheist believes that a great and complete management is governing the whole world, in which the human beings are but a small pieces in this huge system of divine management. Can such a small piece depend on himself? Having known Allah, he will always fix his eyes on Him. He decides, thinks, acts, but he still says: "insha'allah", by Allah's Will: "And you will not, unless Allah Wills."^[195] Your own will depends on Allah's. Allah wants you to will. Had He not willed, He would not have given you the power to will, to want, to think and act freely. This very free will which you have and your freedom to choose depend on Allah's Will.

When you decide on doing something, take all the needed steps, but your heart should be directed to Allah. It is He who causes you to succeed in your work and to be victorious. Should this frame of mind appear in man he would not be defeated, if not, he would be like a straw in the wind, or a hay in the hands of roaring torrents and universal factors. When man connects himself to Allah's Will, and places it under the rays of His Will, he would never be defeated, nor would he feel worried and disturbed. To proceed towards this monotheistic knowledge, man will have to pass through many stages, the first of which is to believe that nothing can happen without Allah's permission. The next stage is to note the divine decree and fate, the subject we will handle presently.

Divine Decree

Foreordainance is one of the stages of Allah's act. It is, thus, worthwhile to handle it in this chapter. As it had already been discussed in the past chapters, some narratives have references to the subject that every act or phenomenon which takes place in the world is preceded by a number of preliminaries: knowledge, will, want, permission, Book, term, divine, decree and fate and (perhaps there can be some differences in the transposition of the narratives. This arrangement, however, is temporal).

It suffices to arrange these concepts according to their intellectual sequence. There is no need, for example, to say that the stage of "knowledge" temporally comes before the stage of "will" or "permission". It is enough to have these transpositions done according to reasoning, taking into consideration the concepts which the mind abstracts from the relation between the act and the person who performs it. In some other instances the correlation is temporal and accordingly the transpositions would take place.

For example, there can be a temporal transposition between qada' and qadar, fate and divine decree, which would be obvious in the following explanation. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to attach big importance to the temporal transposition in all stages. By saying that "will" is preceded by "knowledge", we do not necessarily mean that there must be a temporal distance between them.

Fate and Divine Decree

One of the topics of theology which is used to raise a great fuss is the question of Fate and Divine Decree, which is not, practically, confined to the circle of the Islamic theologians. This question is noticeable in almost all sects and religions, even in the distorted ones. Scholars have diverse opinions about it. It appears to be so complicated to a topic that many scholars confessed being incapable of explaining it. In a number of narratives some persons had been advised not to think about it, though it can be gathered from other narratives, which explain the qada' and the qadar, that to think about it is not prohibited.

It is stated in Nahjul Balaghah that Amirul Mu'minin, Ali (A.S.) was asked about qadar. His answer was: "It is a dark path. Do not tread upon it. It is a deep ocean." Yet, in other instances, he himself and other Imams (A.S.), referred, in details, especially by the Imam al-Hadi (A.S.), to this subject, quoted in the books of narratives.

Is Determinism Concomitant of Divine Decree?

This is, anyhow, a complicated case accompanied with vagueness and ambiguity wherever it was discussed. The main difficulty in this respect is that to accept fate and divine decree inseparably requires accepting determinism. Some thinkers could not distinct between fate and decree, on one hand, and man's free will, on the other. They could not solve the problem so as not to necessitate determinism, and keep man's free will intact. Some even denied free will and said: "Fate and divine decree are inevitable, and we do not accept free will". Even among some scholars who belong to Islam such opinions can be heard - a notion which requires serious consideration, because it is unbelievable to be a Muslim, accepting the

Qur'an, and still consider man to be completely compelled. As a matter of fact, accepting the religion cannot be in harmony with admitting determinism in its strict sense.

Any how, it had been related that there were persons who did have such a belief, named: "al-mujabbirah" or "al-jabriyyah", i.e. those who believed in determinism, as referred to in theology. Even the ash'aris, who are a great section of the Sunni theologians, are said to believe in determinism. On the other side, those who believed in free will denied fate and divine decree, or interpreted it in such a way so as not to contradict free will. In this direction there were diverse inclinations.

Some said that fate and divine decree are true, but they do not cover man's free will acts. That is, they defined particular limits for them covering only the involuntary acts of man. They actually, agree that determinism is concomitant with fate and divine decree, with the difference that fate and decree are applicable only to the compulsory acts. They assign a particular circle for free will, too, excluding it from the effect of fate and decree. They attain to this by making a combination between the evidences proving free will and the evidences proving fate and decree, saying that the proofs of fate and decree cover a series of affairs and phenomena which are involuntary, while the evidences of free will cover another series.

Some others define fate and divine decree in such a way so as not to contradict free will, thinking that they have joined fate and decree in respect of all things, and free will in respect of the voluntary acts of man. For example, they interpret qadar as to be Allah's knowledge of the measures of things, and say that knowledge never contradicts free will. As to qada' they say that it means judgement, and judgement does not deny free will. A judge's judgement in the court does not prevent the other party from free will. In this way they tried to run away from the difficulties, saying that they accept qada' and qadar as not contradicting free will.

To present this subject as a theologic or philosophic case, and study their diverse opinions, doubts and evidences, would take a long time. Therefore, we try to handle it, like other subjects related to theology, based on the Qur'an. We shall explain the concepts of taqdir and qadar, then we refer to what can be gathered from interpreting and analysing qadar.

The Lingual Concept of Taqdir

Taqdir is the infinitive noun, derived from the three-lettered root q-d-r [qadr or qadar]. The literal meaning of these roots is: measure. Tadir can have two meanings: one is to measure something, and the other is to find a measure for something. Later on we shall explain that both meanings are intended by us, as measuring and establishing a measure. One is a scientific taqdir, i.e. measuring something, the other is material taqdir, i.e. creating a measure for something. So, it suffices us to know that qadr and qadar mean a measure, and taqdir means measuring, or knowing the measure of something, with the other version meaning finding something with a particular measure.

Qadr, meaning measure, sometimes means high position or noble status, and that is why some commentators said that "laylatul qadr" [in the Surah No. 97] means the "noble night", i.e. a very honourable night. In fact, high

position or nobility is concomitant with qadr, in some instances. Originally, qadr does not mean "noble", it means "measure", the same as when we mention the position and prestige of a great man. The word "position " or "status" does not mean "greatness" or "honour", and this loftiness is not part of the concepts of "position" or "status", but it is concomitant with a special evidence. Likewise " nobility" is concomitant with the special evidence of qadr.

Qadr and Taqdir in the Qur'an

Now we shall study the ayahs concerning qadr and taqdir to see what are meant by such expressions. An advantage of this study is that it will show us that they cover voluntary acts, too. The Holy Qur'an states: "...Who created every thing and ordained for it a measure".^[196] Here taqdir is used for everything". Also in another ayah it says: "We have created every thing by a measure."^[197] These ayahs are general and cover every thing, that is, if there is a decisive proof that the general covers the particular. It is not that the general cannot be particularized. At any rate, these ayahs speak in general, covering every thing, unless there can be an evidence proving that by this generation a particular is meant. Among the instances in which taqdir is used for particular cases are those concerning the movements of the moon and the sun. Concerning the sun, the Qur'an says: "And the sun moves to a station (ordained) for him. That is the measuring of the Mighty, the Knowing".^[198]

Now what does the movement of the sun mean? Is it its visible movement which we see, from the east to the west? Or is it its movement within the galaxy, as it has already been proved that the seen, together with the whole solar system have a special movement within our galaxy? For the time being we are not concerned about this. A movement of the sun is referred to. It says that this movement is Allah's measuring. It is He Who measured for the sun to have such a movement.

Likewise is the moon. It says: "And the moon, We have ordained for her stages until she becomes again like an old dried palm-branch."^[199] That is, the moon's movement passes through special stages. This very expression is also used in respect to other phenomena. Concerning the rain it says: "And We send down from the sky water in measure."^[200] That is, the quantity of water which is on the earth, and which is evaporated by the sun, and once again rains down, is a measured quantity. Should the quantity of rain be doubled many times, the surface of the earth would have been flooded with water, the buildings would fall down, the plantations and orchards would be destroyed, and the earth would no longer be suitable for dwelling. Was the rain to pour down like a torrent, it would wash away every thing. So, the way the rain comes down by drops is a measured method. Regarding eatables, grains and foodstuff, the Qur'an says: "...and measured therein its sustenance in four Days."^[201] Some narrations say that "four Days" mean "four seasons", i.e. the movements of the earth are so arranged as to have four seasons on the earth, resulting in the growing of different foods in different seasons.

However, "in four Days" means that in four temporal periods Allah measures out the sustenances of the earth, and that the appearance of the

four seasons, or periods, is effective in the preparation of foodstuff on the earth, measured by Allah's wisdom.

Taqdir in Particular Instances

The measurements, so far explained, concerned the general course. There are, sometimes, instances in which a special case of measurement is referred to. For example, in respect of "Noah's Flood", Noah (A.S.) tried to guide his people, for 950 years, to the right path and to frighten them of Allah's chastisement, but only a few responded to him. Finally, Allah's torment befell them in the form of a severe flood caused by the down pour of rain and the springing of water out of the earth, inundating the whole land, with nothing staying on the water except Noah's ship and its passengers. The Qur'an says: "...so that the water gather together according to measure already ordained."^[202] The rain which comes down by drops, as usual, has its measure, and this special downpour of rain has its measure, too.

Hence, taqdir can be in particular occasions as in usual generalities, and it is not confined only to the general course of nature. So far, our study of taqdir had no direct relation to man's voluntary acts. The sun's course, the moon's movements, the coming of water from the sky, Noah's flood, all have no connection with the voluntary acts of man, and are acceptable with no difficulty.

Now let us see whether taqdir also covers man's voluntary acts or not. All the former ayahs which referred to "everything" can be regarded as to cover man's voluntary acts, since these acts are "things", too. But what about the particular instances of the voluntary acts? Is there any ayah referring to such particular instances? The Qur'an includes ayahs in which taqdir and qadar are used in this respect, one of which is Moses' story.

After the disputes between the Israelis and the Copts, in which a Copt of the followers of Pharaoh, was killed by Moses, he ran away from Egypt heading to Midyan, a town where Prophet Shu'ayb lived. After suffering much difficulties, Moses reached the town, exhausted and hungry, for he had travelled the whole long distance from Egypt to the town of Midyan in few days, having nothing to eat but the grass of the desert, much that Amirul Mu'minin Ali (A.S.) describes him in Nahjul Balagah as the green of the grass was visible from under his transparent skin. He entered the town in a bad state of fatigue, hunger and weakness. Nearby there were water-wells from which people used to water their sheep. The stronger ones could get to the wells before others to water their animals. The weak had to wait till the departure of the strong ones, before they could proceed to the water.

Moses (A.S.), tired and wearisome, laid down under a tree. He noticed two girls shyly standing aside with a number of sheep. From their appearance and conduct he guessed them to be honourable. He stood up, and went to them: "Why do you not water your sheep?" he asked. "We do not hire any shepherded," they replied. "We are unable to draw water out of the well, "they added, and continued: "So, we have but to wait until the strong shepherds water their sheep and go away, and then we can use their leftover to water our sheep". Moses (A.S.), though weak and hungry, went to one of the wells, drew alone a big bucket of water, and told the girls: "Come , water your sheep". So they did, and went back home.

Their father, noticing that they returned much earlier than usual, asked them: "How is it that you came back so quickly?" They told him what happened between them and "a strong young man with an appearance showing nobility and magnanimity, helped us with the job". One of the two girls suggested: "It would be good if we gave him his wage for what he had done, and, also employ him to shepherd for us". "Go and fetch him here", said the father, consenting to the suggestion.

The Qur'an stresses the details in the story. It further says that one of the girls came back and shyly told Moses to answer her father's invitation. He accompanied her. It was natural for a tired, hungry and homeless fugitive to heartily accept such an offer. Shu'ayb further offered to spouse him to one of his daughters, for working for him for eight or ten years. Moses (A.S.) agreed and worked for him nearly ten years. He, then, asked Shu'ayb to permit him to take his wife and go back to his homeland. On his way home, he passed through the valley of Tur at night time. It seems that his wife was about to give birth to a child. It was cold, in a dark desert, with nobody to help. Naturally he was worried and disturbed: The coldness of the weather on the one hand, and the darkness of the night on the other, and his inability to get any help. Bewildered and confused, Moses (A.S.) was looking around, when he suddenly saw a glow of light on the right side of the mount Tur. He thought it was the fire of some shepherds. He told his wife to stay there till he could bring help and some fire from them. Getting nearer, he was surprised to see a tree glowing with a wonderful light. Approaching further he heard, stupefied, a voice addressing him: "O Moses! It is I, Allah, the Lord of the Worlds".^[203] It would really be an extraordinary scene, if we would draw it correctly. Moses goes to fetch fire, approaches a tree glowing with light, hears a voice telling him: "It is I, Allah, the Lord of the worlds".

Then the voice tells him that He had appointed him as His messenger, and orders him go to Pharaoh, he has transgressed".^[204] By relating this part of Moses' story concerning his going to the tree to fetch fire, but what happens is that he hears Allah's voice, and is ordered to go to Pharaoh and invite him to the right path, and to deliver Bani Israel out of his clasp. Moses had never expected to encounter such an event. He went for something, but found something else. In the address it was said: "...then you came hither as measured, O Moses".^[205] Your coming here was predetermined and according to a measure. It was not per chance nor it happened at random. It had been calculated that you should leave your home and come to this desert and to this spot so as to receive Allah's revelation: "...from the right slope of the Mount".^[206] It was a divine taqdir and measuring. As a matter of fact, Moses' travel was a voluntary act with a particular purpose. But its result and particular conclusion were not governed by him, they were in the hands of someone else. Allah had arranged the chessmen and the courses in such a plan that Moses should reach that very spot on that very night so as to become a prophet. Here the word qadar is used: "...then you came hither, as measured, O Moses."

As regards qada', fate, a similar event happened. In the war of Badr, the Muslims planned to attack Abu Sufyan's caravan to revenge themselves for their formerly confiscated properties. This was their intention and objective.

But the events happened in a way unexpected by the Muslims. Abu Sufyan's caravan passed by the well of Badr, where the Muslims had gathered. The army of Quraysh advanced from Mecca towards them, and all met near that well. The Muslims had not been thinking of a war, but Allah's taqdir so willed that a war should take place at that spot, and that the Muslims should win, despite the fact that the Muslims' number and preparations were quite unsuitable to wage a war. The war should have happened, but the Muslims had not been expecting it nor was it in their calculations.

The Qur'an has a beautiful expression in this respect: "...and had you made an appointment you would certainly have failed to keep it. But it was destined by Allah to bring about a matter that was to be done."^[207] Thus, it is clear that fate and divine decree are applicable to man's voluntary acts, too.

The Connection Between Divine Taqdir and Man's Free Will

From the past discussion it was noted that apparently the ayahs and narratives denote that the Divine Taqdir is general and covers everything, even the voluntary acts of the human beings. It is here that the problem arises: If there is a divine taqdir, how can we have a free will? To answer this question we have to present a preliminary introduction: The phenomena of this world happen under certain limits and restrictions, disregarding place, time and conditions.

In the kingdom of nature there is no such being as to be unlimited, measureless and unconditional. Whatever creature you may think of, you will realize that it has limits, dimensions and particular conditions, without which it cannot exist. From the greatest celestial body down to the smallest particle of the atom, all have the same characteristic, i.e. they are measured and measurable, whether big or small. They also have a limited life, that is a limited term. None of the phenomena of this world can have a limitless age: "...to an appointed term".^[208] Every thing has an end. It is a kind of limit, a temporal limit, which is termed in the Qur'an and the traditions as "ajal", the final end. The phenomena of this world are somewhat dependent on the other phenomena. Nothing in this world can be separate and independent from other things. At the same time, the shape, the characteristics and the features of any thing have their limits, too, as every thing has its features and specific marks.

To give an example, we take the human being. Man's existence is not limitless. This human species was never from pre-eternity till post eternity along history. This is contrary to the opinion of some ancient philosophers who thought that the original species were from pre-eternity. Since man was created in a particular historical sector, he is, temporarily, limited. That is, he has a beginning before which he did not exist, and he existed in a certain place, the earth. Is there in other than the earth any living being? It is doubted. But it is certain that the living beings are not in all other planets. Man must live on the earth, as he cannot live on the moon, Jupiter or Saturn.

So, as regards place, he is also limited and cannot live anywhere, nor inside the earth or in the space. This is also a kind of limitation on man's existence. Man's organs and systems are also subject to certain limits, such as size and position. The eye has a size-limit, though a little smaller or larger. It never becomes as large as one's head or the whole body. Likewise

are the other organs and limbs, they are proportional to the size of the body and do not exceed the standard limits, more or less. The heart never becomes as large as a man's head, and so on. Concerning place and position, everything has its size and measure. The eye is never placed inside the sole. It must be in its usual place in the head section. The heart is never positioned in the head. It must be inside the chest. Similarly the stomach, the liver and other organs and limbs, each has its limit and position in proportion to the other parts.

Acts are also performed by their respective organ or system, under particular conditions and limitations. We cannot see with our ears. Seeing can only be performed through the eyes. With the nose we cannot hear, as it is the means of smelling. With our foot we cannot write, which is done by the hand. With the hands we cannot walk, we walk with our legs. Each organ does its prescribed duty. The duty of an organ cannot be expected from another organ.

Consequently, our acts are limited and confined to special means and organs, which are to perform their defined functions. Even the duties of each organ have limits and restrictions. We see with our eyes, but can we see everything with our eyes? No, the too tiny things cannot be seen by the eye. Thus, our faculty of seeing is also conditional. Even the large things, can we see them at all times? No. Certain amount of light is necessary. Can we see it from any distance? No. When you are up in an airplane, not too high in the air, you can see the moving cars as small as ants. The higher you fly the smaller they appear, until you can no longer distinguish even a huge thing as a mountain.

So, things can be seen only at a limited distance, and the sounds can be heard only at a limited distance, too. The food which we eat is eaten through the mouth, not through other inlets. Can we eat whatever we put in our mouths? No. We cannot eat stones, bones and the like, though some animals can. Can we eat any quantity we like? Certainly not. The capacities of our stomachs and digestive systems are limited. Can we eat whenever we like? No. We must feel hungry and have the appetite, if not, we will feel nausea. Can we breathe through our eyes? No. We must use our breathing system. We must breathe air, i.e. a certain compound of gases. We cannot breathe any sort of gases, as some kinds of gases may kill us if we breathe them. Our breathing systems are to be so arranged as to enable the air to reach the cells which make the tissues of our body, organs and systems.

Each one works only under thousands of conditions and requisites, without which they cannot function. All these functions are to take place within the frame of limits and restrictions. With more careful consideration, we realize that uttering even a single word requires hundreds of conditions. In this respect, to know some physiology would help in showing how many conditions would be required for doing a single vital function.

Consequently, there is nothing in this world which can be without limits and measure. Everything is measured: "We have created everything by a measure."^[207] Among these measures is time, i.e. everything has a prescribed ajal, a life-time, a term. The narratives stating that everything has a term, is an evidence of this type of qadar, time-measure. Therefore, saying

that taqdir and qadar are true of every thing is correct. Everything has a measure. But who has decided these measures?

Having understood that the entire world was created by Allah, and its existence and all affairs are in His hands, it goes without saying that the limits and measures of all things are also in His hands and under His control. When Allah created us limited in time and place, who could measure these for us? The One who created us with such measures. We have been created in a particular section of the history of the world. Who decided this section of time for us? The One who created us. We are to live on an assigned planet. Who has assigned this qadar, fate, for us? The One who brought us to life on this planet.

Hence, all the taqdirs are from Allah. Everything has a measure, and it is decided by its creator.

Conditions of Voluntary Acts

We know that even the voluntary acts are limited and they are mostly not under our control. The first condition required for a voluntary act to be performed by us is that we must be alive. A dead person cannot do any voluntary act. But is it under our control to be alive or to preserve it? Can any one remain alive as long as he likes? Everybody knows that to remain alive is not in our hands. We have unvoluntarily come to existence, made to live and we unvoluntarily pass away. Had it been left to us, we would not have accept no less than a thousand years: "... everyone of them would like to live a thousand years."^[208] This ayah concerns Bani Israel who very much loved life. But, naturally, there are others who cherish such desires, too. Our sense, knowledge and attention are the second condition. When we want to perform a voluntary act, we must know the act. Sometimes one wants to remember something, but he cannot, much as he tries.

Naturally, he would not be able to do what he wants to before remembering what he had forgotten about that voluntary act. So, our memory is also not in our complete control such that we can remember whatever we want and whenever we want. Our own memory is out of our choice, let alone the other conditions and limitations. Is it to our own choice to eat our food through our mouths? There is no choice at all. To see by means of our eyes is also not our choice. It is a non-voluntary act. We were not consulted whether we want to see with our eyes or ears.

All of these are non-voluntary. After arranging for all the non-voluntary preliminaries, it will be our turn to choose. Now that you have all the instruments for speaking, you are free to speak or to keep silent.

Therefore, the circle of our choice is too small, there is no doubt in this. We all realize that these preliminaries and instruments are not chosen by us. In short, through a very limited frame, surrounded, at different dimensions, by non-voluntary conditions, there is a narrow passage open to us to move through. Each act has its limited circle, within which we are allowed to move, but never to step outside the circumference of the circle. Inside this limited circle we are free to choose the direction of our movements.

So, there is no question about qadar as meaning the different indispensable conditions, means and materials necessary for everything, all of which are provided for by Allah. It is enough for an act to be voluntary to

have the last section of the "complete cause" under our choice, as our elders say, while the other sections of the "Complete Cause", which may exceed hundreds or thousands in number, are mostly out of our control. It is strange enough, however, that man's highest perfection, as a human being, is performable within this small and limited circle of voluntary acts. Through this single channel, prescribed for us by Allah, man can achieve his perfection.

As regards the degree of qadar, it belongs to a period when the act, or the phenomenon, has not yet taken its final shape, and is still changeable, i.e. its Complete Cause has not yet completed. All the preliminaries are provided, but you have not yet made your choice. In other words, the stage of the qadar is confirmed to the period prior to the choice.

Therefore, the complication in respect to the qadar is much less than that of the qada' (divine decree), which will be the topic of our coming discussion. In conclusion we point out the following:

1. The two Divisions of Qadar: Specific and Personal

Some of the formerly mentioned examples belonged to the specific qadar, such as saying that man was destined to appear at a certain period of the history. This is a specific qadar. "And there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time"^[209] After the dwelling of Adam and Eve in the earth, this divine qadar was implemented, both spatially and temporally.

The individual characteristics, such as race, colour, shape, stature, etc., are the personal qadar. Each person has his personal taqdir: one has black hair, another is blond, and so on.

2. The Knowledge: Taqdir and the Corporeal Taqdir

Taqdir is also divided into the knowledge - taqdir and the corporeal taqdir. The first means that Allah knew the measures, the conditions, the limitations of time and place with which every being is created. The corporeal taqdir means that Allah had ordained the creation of each creature to be according to the prescribed limitations.

3. The Stages of Taqdir

For taqdir there can be stages according to its distance from the thing. We may consider a condition immediately needed for the happening of a thing. But this very condition requires the happening of another one before it. For example, to see there must be light, but for having light there is a condition. For the light's condition there is a condition, too, and so on. For our eyes to see it must be day-time with sunlight, should there be no other light. In order to have sunlight there is a condition, that is, our hemisphere should face the sun.

It is not only that, the sun must continue issuing forth its energy, and, according to the theory of the transformation of material into energy, a part of the body of the sun continually transforms into energy, creating light, which is to reach us, on the condition that nothing would block its way. So, for our acts, or for any phenomenon, we admit a series of direct and immediate conditions that have near connection with the act. There are also other remote conditions, and others in between:

Consequently, there are stages for the taqdir, according to its distance from the act. The farther the taqdir, the greater the possibility of its changeability, and the nearer the taqdir, the quicker its shaping and the better its clarity.

Similar are the other affairs of our lives. They have far causes whose possibility to change is great before reaching the affair. The more they get nearer to the affair's spatial or temporal condition, the clearer their entities, the less their ambiguities and the fewer their possibilities of changing, until the complete cause is obtained, and then the phenomenon itself would appear. Once the phenomenon is completed, there will be no further changing, and it keeps connected to its originator, though, to say the least, it may later have a weakening effect on the former act, or do away with it, like repentance, which weakens the effect of the former acts, or efface them for good.

So, when all the parts of a complete cause have not yet been obtained, the thing would not become inevitable nor necessary, i.e. it may change. But when all the parts of its complete cause are there, it will not be changeable any more. In the voluntary acts, the choosing is the last or the nearest part.

It, therefore, becomes clear that the qadar is changeable as long as the last part of the complete cause is not finally fulfilled. This is exactly what is said about the ajal [ordained term], which is a temporal qadar, as "the suspended ajal. Ajal is like a wave directed towards a certain point, on the condition that nothing hinders it or changes its course. Ajal denotes that this person, with his given particularities and under the usual conditions, is to live, say, for 60 years. So, the life-time of this person is measured to be 60 years. But there can be a handicap, such as an accident in the street, and the 60 years changes to 30 years. So, the 60 years life-time is "suspended ajal", and is conditioned that no accident may happen. This, actually, denotes a change in the Known, not in the Knowledge.

The Preserved, Tablet Eraseable and the Recordable Tablet

We had already hinted at Al-Lawhul Mahfuz [The Preserved Tablet], as a creature which reflects, like a mirror, the other creatures, and in which all the particularities of things, such as time, place, limits, shape etc. are strictly distinguished. If anybody could get in touch with Al-Lawhul Mahfuz, he would be able to know, beforehand, what event, with what particulars and when it would happen, as well as whether it would be voluntary or compulsory.

There are other tablets, besides Al-Lawhul Mahfuz, in which the events with their details are not minutely registered. Actually, they are ambiguous, or only parts and sections of the events and their taqdir are recorded. Suppose that it is registered in a tablet that so-and-so in such-and-such date would move from such-and-such place, but it is not stated when he would reach such-and-such place. It is gathered from the ayahs and narratives that besides al-Kitab-al-Mubin, Ummul Kitab, or al-Lawhul Mahfuz, in which the inevitable and final destinies are registered, there are other Lawhs in which ambiguous or conditional events are reflected. There are persons who can get in touch with those middle tablets, but not with al-Lawhul-Mahfuz. By way of contacting the middle tablets, they can foretell some events, though there may be some discrepancies in them. As regards the prophets and Imams, probably some of their profecies were based on their contact with those middle tablets, which are called 'the tablets for erasing and recording'.

It is narrated that the Prophet (S.A.) was one day sitting with his companions, when a Jew passed by them. The Prophet said: "This man is going to the desert where a snake will bite him". It happened that in the evening the same man showed up from the distance, carrying a bundle of firewood. The companions told the Prophet that that was the same man.

The Prophet said: "Let him get nearer". Then he called the man and told him to undo his bundle. There they saw a snake coiled in the middle of the bundle. The Prophet said: It was in the taqdir that this snake should bite the man. But, as he left his house he gave alms. The alms protected him against this misfortune. The taqdir which I first told you about was a suspended one, and its normal course was that this snake should bite this man, but there appeared an obstacle, though not a physical one. The natural effect of alms-giving is not to prevent the snake from biting. There is no such physical connection between the alms and the snake to prevent its biting. The connection is a metaphysical one.

The changes in the suspended and conditional taqdurs are termed as "bida". [Allah's innovation]. For example, observing family relations, being kind to one's parents, giving alms, and the like, change the taqdurs, while, on the other hand, disregarding family relations and incurring the wrath of one's parents, change the good taqdurs to bad ones.

It happens that Allah, the Prophet or the Imam may announce something, but not decisively, yet, the hearer takes it to be decisive because he does not notice its condition. Later on, the condition changes and the event does not take place. This is bada'.

In some narratives it is stated that one of the best worships is to believe in the bada'. That is, if we believe that the taqdir is final and unchangeable, and that we are deprived of the chance to choose, then we shall not implore Allah and exert no activity nor any effort, and say: let happen what it may, and we do not ask Allah to lift the calamity from us, because the belief in the effectiveness of benediction comes when we believe that the taqdir is suspended and conditional, and that the du'a' [invocation] can make an obstacle blocking the way of some taqdir, only at that time the motive for praying Allah obtains.

Those who do not believe in the bada', i.e. in the changeability of the suspended taqdir, will have no motive for invocation and for being active in that. That is why the disbelief in the taqdir and qadar cause a kind of inactivity, weakness, stillness and backwardness. It should not be so from the monotheistic point of view. The reasons and the conditions of each are effective at their proper time. Taqdir does not deprive man from his free will.

The very ability to choose is one of the things moving within the limits of taqdir, and one's optional acts should be carried out through one's attempts and hard work, despite the fact that we do not know what the final destiny is. Our duty, nevertheless, is to try. If our efforts are successful, we shall attain to our aim, but if we are not successful, we will be doing our duty. At any rate, it will have a definite result with Allah, which will never be lost.

As a result, the monotheist will always be thinking of what his duty is. You had repeatedly heard the Imam saying: "We perform our duty, but what would happen is not our concern. Our duty is to struggle, but whether we are going to be successful or not is not our concern. Whatever Allah wants will happen. Such a person will never feel perplexed, nor will he regret his work. So, this belief is a factor of success, not of failure. Consequently, qada' and qadar, if correctly understood, can be regarded as factors of progress, improvement and integrity of knowledge which is monotheism, not that they are factors of stagnancy, weakness and seeking excuses.

The Difference between Qada' and Qadar

Traditionally, qada' and qadar are of almost the same meaning and reciprocally used. It seems that this reciprocity has occurred long ago, in early days of Islam, as they thought them to be synonyms. But by careful study of these two terms and their lexical differences it can be realized that they differ in precedence, degree and status. Qadar's status is prior to that of qada'. Qadar means measurement, while qada' denotes an end and finishing. Comparing these two concepts, it can be observed that the status of qada', logically, comes later, because it is the finishing stage, whereas the concept of qadar denotes weighing and measuring, a stage which, logically, takes place before finality, and is regarded to be part of the preliminaries.

Therefore, it can be said that qadar is the stage in which the phenomenon has not yet reached the stage of necessity, i.e. the details of its Complete Cause have not yet been fulfilled completely, leaving them subject to possible changes, as they have not yet obtained their finality. But qada, being a final stage, is reached at when the complete cause is implemented, and there remains no room for expectations.

In some narratives, qada' and qadar are used, in general, as synonyms, such as the narrative which divides the qada' into two kinds: the changeable qada', and the unchangeable qada'. According to our studies, the changeable qada' is the very taqdir. Some other narratives confirm the difference between qada' and qadar, and that qadar precedes the qada'. In order to clarify the difference between the concepts of qadar and qada', and that the qada' comes after the qadar, as the qada' is the last and unchangeable stage, we shall study the Qur'anic ayahs using the term qada'.

The Qada' in the Qur'an

We refer first to the places in the Qur'an where the term qada' is used in order to study its concept as is intended through its exact meaning. Afterward we shall discuss the term according to its special meaning, which is intended by us.

1- The word qada' is used in the Qur'an, in some instances, to mean a prescribed duty: "And your Lord has decreed [qada] that you worship none save Him, and (show) kindness to (your) parents."^[210] What does qada [as a verb] mean here?

This verb denotes here that: you should worship none except Allah; and that you should be kind to your parents. These two are among the very much stressed duties which have no exception. The duties, as a matter of fact, are numerous, but two of them receive exceptional stress. There is no doubt that qada' in this ayah means a strict decree or an order which goes as a strong and confirmed law. The Schismatics used to grasp such instances as an excuse to say that, as far as man's optional acts are concerned, qada' is but a command, and nothing else.

2- In some other instances qada' means judgement, arbitration and settling disputes.

The Qur'an says: "And Allah Yaqdi (judges) with truth".^[211]

3- Sometimes it is used to denote "announcement, such as the ayah in Surat Bani Israel^[212] "And We decreed [qada'] for the children of Israel in the Book: You shall make mischief in the land twice, and you shall act with too great insolence",^[213] and finally says: "...But if you repeat We shall repeat."^[214] That is, if you repeat your mischief making, We shall also repeat our punishment. It seems that it refers to the attack of Nebuchadnezzar on Palestine and severely routed the Jews and destroyed al-Aqsa mosque and humiliated the children of Israel, dispensing them out to other countries. Group of the Jews moved to Arabia and dwelt in Khaybar and near Yathrib [al-Madinah]. Before this happened, Allah had announced it to the Jews: "And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Book: You shall make mischief in the land twice." There is no doubt that the word "qada" "announced" is understood.

In fact, "qadayna" [We decreed] does not originally mean "We announced". There is in the Arabic literary language style called tadmin and ishrab, which is to incorporate two meanings together, and the transitive article, or the genitive case, of one of them is transported to the other, a process which denotes that the incorporation has taken place, and that the twin meaning is wanted.

The verb "qada'" is transitive and it does not need the preposition "ila": "Wa qadayna ila bani Israel", means that a meaning is incorporated in it, and the preposition "ila" is used to make it transitive, without having to plainly state it. That is, instead of saying: We decreed, and announced that decree, the announcement is omitted. Or. We decreed and revealed the decree, but the word "revealed" is not mentioned and is satisfied with the genitive case instead of the very words. So, the concepts "announce" or "reveal" are not originally in qada, but they are incorporated in it.

4- In other instances qada' means the end or something finished, such as in "qudiy al amr" [the affair is finished] and it cannot be altered. In this context, the word is used in the Qur'an repeatedly, such as in the story of Yusuf, who, while in prison, two of his prison-mates tell him of their dreams, asking him to interpret the dreams to them. He does, and then says: "qudiy al amrulladhi fihi tasta, ftiyan" [the matter is decreed concerning which you inquired]. The interpretation of your dreams is as I told you and it will definitely happen.

Another instance is the dialogue between Satan and his follower in Hell: "Wa qalash-shaytanu lamma qudiy al amr [And Satan shall talk after the affair is decided]. After that the judgement had been completed, and everything had come to an end, and there remained no return, at that time Satan talks to his followers, who attack him and tell him it was he who misguided them. He retorts that he had no control upon them. He merely invited them to come and they came after him. This dialogue takes place when everything had ended, which is expressed through "lamma qudiy al amr" [after the affair is decided]].

From this survey of the many uses of this word we gather that the original lexical meaning of qada' denotes final end. But in other instances other meanings are incorporated in it, and it may appear later to form a single, though originally it has a single root. For example, by studying the word "qada'" we notice that when there is a dispute concerning a house. One says that it is his, the other says that it is his. A judge will hear the case and issue his decree, which is final and puts an end to the dispute.

So, when this judgement or arbitration is called "qada'", it means to put an end to an affair and to conclude the case. Therefore, there is a hint at the end included in qada', or in the duties which are confirmed, stressed and irrevocable, where "qada'" is used, the meaning is a decisive end and a finality, with no return. If in some cases there are exceptions in performing certain duties, or even abrogations and changes, in cases of qada' there can be no such thing, and the decree is final and unchangeable, and everybody should observe that. So, here also the meaning of ending is intended, though in respect of making laws, not genetically.

Hence, it can be said that the root of all usages qada' the intended meaning is finality and finishing, be it a genetic, legislative or legal affair. Another affair may be in a state of fluctuation, instable, with a possibility of changing. Sometimes it reaches a fixed state and becomes unchangeable, which is the final stage. As long as an affair has not yet finished, there is the possibility for it to change form, to be altered. But as soon as it reaches its full stop, it can never change. From this linguistic analysis we get to the

conclusion that the concept of qada in the genetic affairs is proportionate to the last stage of the act, i.e. when all the parts of the Complete Cause have been implemented, the existence of the subject reaches the limit of inevitability and finality, with no possibility of return. So, if in some narratives we notice a qada' which is not inevitable and changeable, it is, in fact, qadar taken as synonym to qada', divided into two stages.

The same thing is true to qadar itself.

Traditionally speaking, any event passes through stages before reaching its finality and regarded as finished. For example, when you finish the building of a house and prepare for dwelling, if you are asked whether your house has been finished, you will answer: "Yes, we are living there now". But when you are asked whether you had connected the house to gas supply, we will say: "No , not yet, but it will be done in few days". So, the completion of an affair goes through stages. It is out of carelessness to say the house is finished, while actually it is not. Or, on a journey, the traveller says: "We reached the town", while he still has to go a few more kilometres. It is one of the journey's stages, and to arrive at home is the last stage.

In the invocations recited during "the nights of qadr during the month of Ramadan, we implore Allah: "O' Allah! if it is in Your qada' and qadar that should be miserable, change this qada' very night and make me of the happy and the fortunate". So, if "qada' was unchangeable, then our invocation would be of no avail. It is also narrated that invocations change the qada' "even if completely ratified". At any rate, it is understood that there is a qada' which is stressed and ratified, and there is a qada' which is not finally ratified,. Even the ratified qada' can be changed through invocations. These changes denote that traditionally qada finishing and ratification pass through stages, and a change may be expected. Nevertheless, careful study of the concept of qada' implies that this word should be used when the stage is final and unchangeable.

Divine Qada'

In the previous discussion the difference between qada and qadar has been explained. It has also been said that sometimes both are taken to be synonyms. If qada' is used instead of qadar, there will be no need for a particular explanation. We need two discussions under the titles "qada'" and qadar only when each of these has a separate concept and particular precepts.

In the past discussion we took qadar to be changeable and explained it in details, whereas qada' is a stage past that of instability and changeability, and reached finality where no change would be possible, where one would say: It is the end. Allah had ratified the matter. So, our discussion concerns this concept, and therefore, we shall study "qada' as a separate topic.

Connection Between Divine Qada' and Man's Freewill

The dublicosity of determinism in respect to the divine qada' is more obvious, and explaining it is more difficult. If we have to accept the idea that all the world's phenomena, including man's voluntary acts, are governed by the divine qada', and that it is Allah Who brings everything to its final stage of fulfilment, and that every phenomenon exists by the divine command, there arises the question: "What about man's freewill, then?" As

regards qadar we could say that Allah would not bring the affair to its final stage. It would be as preliminaries for man to practice his right to freewill. Therefore, the qadar does not contradict freewill. But if the meaning of divine qada' is that Allah brings every phenomenon to its end, and, after the preparation of the preliminaries for its existence according to the divine taqdir, the final end is also brought about by His command: "When He decrees (qada') an affair, He only says to it:

"Be, and it is"^[215] Thus, there remains no chance for man's freewill activities.

In order to explain this dubiousity within the limit proportional to this discussion, a preliminary is needed:

When we try to study the causes of the appearance of a thing, and to know the parts of the Complete Cause, we usually take into our notice the immediate and direct causes. For example, we say that for the water to exist there must be measured quantities of oxygen and hydrogen and a space with a given temperature, no more, no less. These we regard to be the conditions needed for a chemical interaction to take place and a new chemical matter to appear. In this study of the parts of the Complete Cause we never ask about the one who created this laboratory and measured the degrees of temperature and pressure, let alone the more distant causes, factors and conditions which are necessary for each of the nearer causes and conditions.

So, to point out the parts of a Complete Cause we consider only the near and direct causes, and never the middle and remote ones. Another point is that, in order to know the parts of a Complete Cause, we are used to study only its physical experimental causes, neglecting its metaphysical cause which, naturally cannot be sensually examined in our laboratories, although it is effective. We confine ourselves to the natural and material factors which can be experimented and formulated.

But if we looked at a thing scrutinizingly and philosophically in order to obtain a strict philosophic account about its genetic existence, we must study everything that has, whatever trinsial, an effect in its bringing to existence, and find out the successive causes upto wherever they lead us. It happens, however, that we can mentally follow up the series of the causes, though of a general nature. If it could be proved that a metaphysical power had any role in the appearance of the thing, whether directly or indirectly, it would philosophically be regarded as a cause, too, and must be studied. It is noticed that even the Muslim scholars, in stating the causes of the appearance of a phenomenon, they do not mention Allah along with them. They do not say that for a chemical interaction to happen, Allah's presence, the Creator of the world, is necessary before everything else.

But when we carefully consider the statements of the Qur'an, we realize that it says that even the simplest natural phenomenon is created by Allah. We have already explained that to ascribe the appearance of the phenomena does not mean denying the near and middle causes, but it stresses a subject which had been neglected. The people's materialistic way of living does not require them to count upon them, nor they consider even the remote material causes, let alone the metaphysical or supernatural ones.

The divine teachings, however, are based on the command that we should insist, before everything else, on Allah's effect, ascribing the original effectiveness to Him, it is He Who is the originator of the whole existence, the Guardian and the constant Protector. The divine insight requires that man should direct his attention to Him, because the constancy of existence and the options are in His hands, the Sustainer, so how could He be forgotten. This is why this point is stressed in the Qur'an, which says: "We did, We shall do. He it is Who moves the sun, He it is Who sends down the rain, He it is Who grows the plants, it is He Who creates you, He it is Who forms you: "Into whatsoever form He wills, He casts you"^[216] "He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He wills."^[217] "He grants to whom He wills daughters and grants to whom He wills sons".^[218] None of these ayahs implies any denial of the materialistic and middle causes. They draw attention to the metaphysical cause, which is above them all and parallel to them.

This is true of qada'. By saying that He it is Who brings the affair to an end, takes the preliminaries to their finalities, and creates the creatures, Allah draws attention to the divine factor so that it may not be forgotten, as if to say: "You are used to count only the natural factors, but you do not see the hand which is above all and which has in its powerful grasp".

Therefore, the divine qada' does not cancel the middle and immediate causes. It, actually, stresses the high and longitudinal cause, i.e. all the phenomena and their cause should be ascribed to Allah. Everything is related to its causes, conditions and dispositions of common levels. Suppose a child is born to a father and mother. It is a material being, and so are they. There were in the father and mother conditions and particular organs which make it possible for the appearance of a child. But all the three of them, the father, the mother and the child, their existence is related to Allah. But we do regard the relations among things, but the relation between things and Allah is disregarded.

Consequently, the final stage of an effect is determined by the completion of the parts of its Complete Cause so that the effect comes to existence of necessity. Yet, this necessity does not disprove freewill, because one of the parts of the Complete Cause is man's freewill act. As long as we have doubt about some act we do not do it. So, we do not do anything before we will it and decide to do it voluntarily. Nevertheless, ourselves, our will and the phenomenon implemented by our will, all are related to Allah all the time. The father, the mother and the child receive their existence from Allah. That is, all these, with all their relations, have another relation with the Creator. It is not similar to the natural relations. Man's need of Allah is not like his need of father and mother. The existential relation is not confined to natural relation, it is a different relation. The relation is between the entire nature and the nature-creator, which runs along the other relations and is above them.

The best way to know the relations with metaphysics is to refer to the relation of the spirit with the psychological phenomena. One of the aspects, which are trusted by the religious leaders, the great gnostics and the wisemen, is contemplative thinking about oneself. This is the way to

understanding such facts which can never be caught in the net of experimentation. For this reason the heavenly religions direct people to self-knowing, meditation and self-reformation: "...mind your own selves"^[219] "And in your own selves, cannot you, then, discern?"^[220] Whoever Knows himself, Knows his Lord!"^[221] A good many problems of knowledge can be solved through contemplation, meditation, self-observation and self-introspection, due to the fact that the soul is different from the beings of nature, it is, originally, an abstract being, though it is, in some ways, connected to, or even united with, matter. On the other hand, our soul is the nearest thing to us, and we can observe it and think about it much better. This would be a way to know about the metaphysical things.

Upon contemplating ourselves we notice a kind of connection between the psychological phenomena and ourselves - a connection unlike that which is between the natural causes and their natural effects.

The best topics to think about are the mental images and their connections to the soul which imagines them. At the moment you are sitting here, you can imagine an orchard, a person, or an animal and incarnate it in your mind. No sooner it flashes in your mind than it is embodied there. So, what kind of a connection is there between this mental image and me, the imaginer, i.e. the power of awareness which automatically creates the image? When you obtain that image in your mind, do you take something out of yourself and shape it in that image? Is anything deducted from you? Does anything from outside enter into your mind? No, you had already been capable of imagining the image and present it into your mind.

Now that this mental image had appeared, can it continue to exist without your mind? Never! Its existence depends on you. If you do not exist, or even if you have no intention or will, the image cannot be there. Such are the connections between the things and the metaphysical causes. When we count the natural causes of a thing, this does not mean that it has no other connection with a higher level.

Divine Qada'-A Connection with the Metaphysics

Briefly, divine qada' is a kind of connection between Allah, the Creator of the world, and the world, a connection unlike the usual connections among the natural things, yet it does not negate those connections. It is a connection above them, governing them, along them and of the metaphysical kind.

We are not accustomed to take this connection into our consideration and count upon it. The Qur'an tries to draw our attention to it. So, to say that the divine qada covers our voluntary acts, too, does not negate freewill, because our freewill is a connection between us and our acts, while qada' is a connection between us, our freewill, our act and Allah, and which is along and above them. In order to throw more light on this subject, we refer to the example presented by the late Allamah Tabataba'i,^[222] who says: imagine a person who, by his own freewill, thinks, choses a good act, goes to prepare for it, and then he performs it. This imaginary person is connected to his act. He eats, prays, moves, does an evil act. All these acts he does on his own freewill. But he himself, his will, his acts and their results are connected to

you. The connection between him and his acts does not contradict their general connection with you.

The divine qada', thus, is not beside the physical causes, nor is it a substitute for them. It is something above them and a connection along the other connections. So, the relation between the voluntary act and the voluntary and freewill acter is preserved. But all of them altogether, have a different relation with Allah, i.e. the divine qada'.

In short, for an act to be regarded a voluntary it must be done by the acter on his own freewill, and his awareness, will and decision must play their role in the implementation of the act. If an act was imposed upon him, contrary to his will such that his freewill and decision had no effect on the act, it would be compulsory. Yet, both the voluntary and the compulsory acts are dependent, in a higher level, on the Creator of the existence, upon whom depend the existence of the acter, the will, the choosing, the act and its results. Had it not been for His will, there would have been no acter, no will and no act, whether voluntary or compulsory. Allah's will does not take its place so as to depend either on the acter's will or on Allah's. Actually it depends on both, but on two levels: the low one depends on the acter's will, the high one on Allah's will and qada'.

This subject, however, cannot be easily understood by those who have little experience in intellectual and philosophical question. For this reason, in many narratives it is recommended that we should not think about the truth of qada' and qadar. Amirul Mu'min [Ali] (A.S.) says: "It is a dark path do not tread upon it, it is a deep ocean, do not plunge into it."^[223] In fact, this does not mean that absolutely no one should ever discuss it, as, actually, it is mentioned in many narratives. Such recommendations are, in fact, addressed to those who have not enough experience and trainings in such subjects.

The Advantages of Believing in the Qada' and Qadar

Taking into consideration the difficulty of solving the problem of the qada' and qadar, particularly after the recommendations of some narratives to the effect that this subject is not to be thought about, there arises this question: If the case is so, what wisdom was there in stating this problem in the Qur'an and the tradition, and the stress of some narratives upon the believe in the qada and qadar? To answer the question it must be said that to believe in the qada and qadar has many advantages, at the top of which are the two theoretical and practical advantages.

As to the theoretical advantage, it is obvious under the light of what we had already said, which, briefly is that the more complete one's tawhid [monotheism], the greater one's everlasting happiness and self-perfection. One of the higher stages of tawhid is the belief in the "Unity of Action" in its gnostic concept. Man is to believe that all the phenomena of the existence are dependent on Allah's Will, and that there is no phenomenon that can take place outside His will and arrangement. This question had been mentioned by the Glorious Qur'an and the impeccable leaders - a fact described as to be fulfilled by the divine permission, will, taqdir and qada'. so, such statements are gradual teaching for the understanding of this fact aiming at knowledge integration and tawhid. As regards the practical advantage, which can be a moral or educational advantage, too, is that, on

the basis of believing in the qada' and qadar, man looks at the world's phenomena and events to be governed by a wise system ordained by Allah.

This viewpoint prepares such a psychological grounds for man that he would not feel frightened at the sight of any unpleasant event, and, at the same time. he would not be too much elated at pleasant news. He would do all his activities and efforts with the intention of fulfilling his duties and to please Allah.

The Glorious Qur'an says: "No evil befalls on the earth nor in yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it into existence. It is easy for Allah - so that you may not grieve for what escaped you, nor be exultant at what you have been given."^[224] Consequently, the person who believes in the wise system and divine destiny of the world he would not lose himself on encountering unpleasant events and disasters.

Likewise, he would not get inebriated and proud because of some pleasant events. No danger would frighten him off his duty nor would he be filled with despair and weakness at facing defeat and failure. nor his success and victories would cause him to feel conceited, proud and intoxicated. Understanding this subject was quite valuable and constructive to the Muslims of early Islam, who had been under great pressure, difficulties and tortures of the infidels, prior and after migration they had continually been warning against their enemies.

Today too, correctly understanding qada', qadar and Allah's unity of action, would be a great constructive factor for our new Islamic community, which resembles, from many aspects, the community built by the great Prophet of Islam (S.A.). I hope that Allah, the Exalted, will grant us all the ability to correctly understand all the learnings of Islam, so that under their light we, can ensure our personal and social happiness, as well as our eternal moral perfection.

The End

Glossary

'abath: vain, useless, ineffectual, uselessness.

ajal: a fixed or a prescribed period, end, death. Ahlul Bayt: literally: those living in a house, members of a family. As special term, it denotes the progeny of the Messenger of Islam, also called: the Ma'sums. ayah: a Qur'anic verse or part of it. Batil: untrue, invalid.

bida': Allah's innovation as the Originator. du'a': invocation, benediction, supplication. hajj: the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca at a certain time every year. halal: lawful, religiously legal. haq: Allah, true, truth. haram: unlawful, forbidden, religiously illegal. Iblis: Satan, the Devil.

ins: the human beings. jihad: any endeavour or practice, including holy wars, for the sake of Allah and Islam. jinn: genie, an unseen spiritual being. Ma'sum: infallible. An epithet given by the Shi'ites to the Prophet (S.A.) his daughter Fatimah, her husband 'Ali ibn 'Abi Talib, and their eleven successive offspring Imams, making altogether 14 ma'sums. qada': fate, destiny.

qadar: divine decree, predestination. rahman: an attribute of Allah, meaning: The Beneficent, the Bestower of existence on His creatures. rahim: another attribute of Allah, meaning the Merciful, the kind, the Compassionate. salat: the Islamic version of prayers. Special rituals performed five times a day, according to the Islamic regulations. shafa'ah: intercession, particularly to Allah.

shirk: polytheism, believing in deities besides Allah. sunnah: the traditions of the Prophet of Islam Sunni: a follower of the sunnah, a Sunnite. taqdir: qada, divine decree, predestination. tawhid: monotheism, believing in the Oneness of Allah. 'usul: principles, doctrines, basic elements of jurisprudence, methodology. Waliyye'asr: an epithet given by the Shi'ites to the still living 12th Imam (A.S.).

NOTES

1. [(A.S.) stands for 'Alayhis-salam. i.e. "Peace be upon him/her/them] translator.
2. "Nahjul Balaghah", Sermon No. 18.
3. [The Ma'sums (i.e., the 14 infallible ones according to the Shi'ite beliefs. They are: the Prophet, his daughter Fatimah. her husband 'Ali and the 11 Imams of his offspring]. translator.
4. Surat Sad/29
5. Surat Muhammad/24 6. [(S.A.) stands for sallallahu 'alayhi wa alihi wasallam = May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny)] translator.
7. Usul Kafi", Vol. 2. p. 238
8. The noble Prophet (S.A.) is described by the Qur'an to be the one who would: "...teach them the Book and wisdom..." (62:2) after saying that he would; "...recite to them His ayahs and purify them." (Surat Ali 'Imran/164). It should be noted that after "reciting" and "purifying", comes the turn for "teaching the Book". Thus, it is clear that teaching the Book is other than mere reciting its ayahs for learning, purifying and teaching. Thus, teaching cannot be mere reading of words, since, in this case, it would be the very reciting itself. Actually, it means the teaching of the meaning of the Qur'an to the people, that is, he was to teach them what they did not know. "...He teaches you what you did not know." (2:151). In another ayah Allah says; "...We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may explain to the people that which had been revealed for them..." (Suratun-Nahl/44).
It is clear, then, that some of the ayahs need explanation, which is different from reciting, and the Prophet's duty was to explain them. We, as Shi'ites. believe that this post of the noble Prophet (S.A.). from among his other ones, was true of the Ma'sum Imams (A.S.) as well.
9. Suratul-Ma'idah/42, Suratul-Hujurat/9, Suratul-Mumtahanah/8
10. Suratul-Ali 'Imran/146
11. Suratul-Ma'idah/64
12. It is possible that we can find such a connection in the Qur'an, but not at the first glance.
13. Suratul-Ra'd/ 17 14. "Usulul-Kafi", vol. 1, the Book of "He (the Almighty) cannot be recognized except through His own self."
15. Such as the narrative quoted from the Imam al-Baqir (A.S.) who said: "Whatever you recognize through your own imagination with its tiniest concepts is but a creature made like yourself and it returns to you." "Al-Mahajjatul-Bayda", vol. 1, p.219, printed by As-Sadiq press And a narrative quoted from the Imam As-Sadiq (A.S.) that: ""Whoever claimed that he worshipped [Allah] on the basis of attribute, not of understanding, he would be referring to an absent...Recognizing the present thing Itself comes before Its attribute, and recognizing the attribute of the absent comes before the very thing." (Tuhaful 'Uqul") in his speech about describing love for Ahlul-Bayt" (A.S.) 15. If used with capital "G", it is a proper name, and if used with a small "g", it is a general name.
16. Surat Bara'ah/128
17. Suratut-Tur/35
18. Look carefully into the formerly mentioned narrative: "...and recognizing the attribute of the absent comes before the very thing," quoted from Tahaful-'Ugul.
18. Suratut-Rum/30
19. "Al-Kafi", vol. 2, p. 12 Darul-Kutub al-Islamiyyah Publishing
20. Surat Ali 'Imran/19.
21. Al-Kafi", vol. 2, p. 13, Darul-Kutub al-Islamiyyah
22. Suratul-'A'raf/172
23. Al-Kafi, vol. 2. p. 13
24. "Al-Mizan exegesis, vol. 8, p. 340
25. ibid, p. 345
26. Suratul-An'am/95
27. ibid/102
28. Suratul-'A'raf/173
29. Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 12-13 and Al-Mizan exegesis.
30. Surat Yasin/60-61
31. Suratun-Nur/37

32. "Nahjul-Balaghah", Ser. No. 222.
33. "Nahjul-Balaghah", Ser. No. 222
34. A verse of a Persian poem-tr.
35. Surat Yasin/82
36. Suratul-'An'am/172
37. Suratut-Tawhid/1
38. Suratul-Baqarah/163
39. Suratul-'A'raf/85
40. Suratul-Baqarah/163
41. Surat Muhammad/19
42. Suratun-Nahl/36
43. Suratul-Fatihah/4
44. Suratul-Ma'idah/23
45. Suratul-Ahzab/39
46. Surat 'Ali 'Imran/175
47. Suratut-Tawbah/28
48. Suratul-Baqarah/191
49. Surauz-Zumar/3
50. ibid/38
51. Surat Yusuf/39
52. Suratul-'A'raf/12 and Surat Sad/72
53. Suratul-Hijr/39
54. ibid/36
55. "Nahjul-Balaghah", sermon 192, al-Qasi'ah.
56. Surat Sad/78
57. ibid/85
58. A saying ascribed to Amirul-Mu'minin 'Ali (A S.)
59. Suratul-'Isra'/109
60. "Arafah" Supplication of the Imam al-Husayn (A.S.)
61. Suratul Ma'idah/110
62. Surat Ali 'Imran/49
63. Suratun-Nisa, /171
64. Suratun-Nisa' /64
65. Suratun-Nazi'at/5
66. Suratul-'A'raf/54
67. Suratus-Sajdah/5
68. Suratun-Nisa'/59
69. Suratul-Zumar/3
70. Surat Yunus/18
71. Suratul-Baqarah/255
72. Suratul-Anbiya/28'.
73. Suratul-Anbiya, /22
74. The results of those premises are as below:
 - a. The "apparel" of existence, with respect to every "possible" being, must be bestowed by the "Necessary Being", and it is only the Necessary Being who is Self-Sufficient and cannot be imagined to be in need.
 - b. The "caused" is in need of the cause, both in its existence and creation. and its existence is its very creation. as it in nothing but a connection and affinity to the "cause".
 - c. Affiliating a single "caused" to two "causes" is impossible. like preferring without justification. From these premises we reach to the conclusion that in supposing that there are two or more gods, the existence of a being is to be attributed to them both. But, as the existence of a being is its very creation and affinity to its cause. and if it is affiliated to one of them, there we wilt have a preference without justification. which is impossible. If it is affiliated to many causes, then there must be as many "caused" as there are "causes", in which case the universe will be different and there will be chaos. For a detailed explanation, please refer to "The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism". Vol. 5, ch. on at-Tawhid, footnotes by the martyr Professor Murtada Mutahhari, [in Persian].
75. In the following lines we shall explain what we mean by "a single order".

76. Suratul Anbiya/22
77. Suratul-Baqarah/163
78. Suratul-Baqrah/164
79. Suratul-Qamer/50
80. The verses are ascribed to the gnostic poet, and man of letters Sahib ibn 'Abbad, minister of the Iranian Monarch, Fakhruddawlah ad-Daylam. He loved Ahlul-Bayt (A.S.) [the offspring of the Prophet (S.A.).] He died in 385 A.H.
81. Suratun-Nur/35
82. Suratul-Mulk/14
83. Suratun-Nahl/74
84. Suratul-Mu'minun/91
85. "Tawhid As Saduq", narrative No. 6, p. 100
86. "The Invocation of 'Arafah", by Al-'Imam-Al-Husayn (A.S.)
87. "The Invocation of 'Arafah", by Al-'Imam-Al-Husayn (A.S.)
88. Ibid
89. Ibid
90. Suratul-Baqara/260
91. Suratul-An'am/101 and Suratul-Furqan/2
92. Suratul-An'am/102 and Surat-Ghafir/62
93. Suratus-Saffat/96
94. Surat Yunus/3
95. Suratur-Ra'd/31
96. Suratul-'A'raf/54
97. Suratul-Baqarah/164
98. Suratul- An'am/95
99. Suratul-'Anfal/ 17
101. Suratur-Ra'd/26
102. Suratun-Nur/46
103. Suratul Hajj/61
104. Suratul Hajj/5
105. Suratul-Nahl/65
106. Suratul Hadid/17
107. Suratul An'am/91
108. Suratul Qasa/56
109. Surat Zumar/42
110. Suratus-Sajdah/ 11
111. Suratul An'am/61
112. Surat Fussilat/11
113. Suratul Anbiya'/30.
114. Suratus-Saffat/11
115. Suratul Hijr/27
116. Suratul Fatir
117. Surat Maryam/17
118. ibid
119. ibid/18
120. ibid/19
121. Suratun-Nas/1-5
122. Suratut-Tawbah/14
123. Suratul Ma'idah/15-16
124. Suratur-Rum/41
125. Suratun-Nisa'/160
126. Suratul A'raf/96
127. Surat Yunus/9
128. Suratul Mu'minun/111
129. Suratul A'raf/107 and Suratush-Shu'ara'/32
130. Surat Maryam/27-32
131. Suratush-Shu'ara'/63
132. Surat Yasin/82

133. It should be noted that by "entity" we do not mean something "material". Contrary to what the materialists say, entity does not mean corporeal. The entity is that which has its own existence, disregarding our opinion. It is real and outside our thought. Its existence does not depend on our recognition. Whether we exist or not, it does exist.

Consequently, Allah is an entity.

134. Suratun-Nisa'/17

135. Surat Yasin/82

136. Surat Hud/7. [In Suratul Hajj/47] it is said that "...a day with Allah is as a thousand years of what you reckon" -translator]

137. Suratul Baqarah/255

138. Surat Yasin/82

140. Suratun-Nisa'/164

141. Suratul Anfal/67

142. Suratul Qasas/30

143. Suratul Baqarah/30

144. Surat Yasin/82

145. Suratul Baqarah/20

146. Suratul Hajj/18

147. ibid/14

148. "Al-Kafi", Vol. 6, p.438

149. Suratul Baqarah/30

150. Suratul Baqarah/29

151. Surat Hud/7

152. Suratus-Sajdah/7

153. Suratul Kahf/21. This expression is repeated many times in the Qur'an.

154. Suratur-Rum/8

155. Suratud-Dukhan/38-39

156. Suratul-Anbiya' 16-17

157. Surat Muhammad/36

158. Suratul An'am/32

159. Suratul Qiyamah/5

160. Suratus-Saffat/5

161. Surat Hud/7

162. Suratul Ma'idah/17

163. Suratul Kahf/7

164. Suratul Baqarah/29

165. Suratur-Rahman/33

166. Ibid/13

167. Suratul - Anfal/55

168. "Nahjul Balagah", Sermon 222.

169. Suratudh-Dhariyat/56

170. Surat Yasin/61

171. Surat Yasin/60

172. Surat Hud/118-119

173. Suratush - Shura/7

174. "Nahjul Balagah", Sermon No. 63.

175. Surat Taha/52

176. Suratul An'am/59

177. Suratul Buruj/21-22

178. Suratul Waqi'ah/77-79

179. Suratul Ahzab/33

180. Surat Taha/52

181. Suratul Anfal/66

182. Surat Muhammad/31

183. Suratun-Nisa'/64'

184. Suratul Hajj/39

185. Suratun-Nisa, /77

186. Suratul An'am/58

187. Surat Taha/66
188. Suratul Baqarah/102
189. Surat Ali 'Imran/145
190. Surat Yunus/100
191. The Torah introduces Allah to be regretting His creating man. It says that Allah had descended from the heaven, wrestled with Jacob who knocked Him down!
192. Suratul Ma'idah/64
193. Suratul Ma'idah/4
194. Suratul Kahf/23-24
195. Suratul Insan/30
196. Suratul Furqan/2
197. Suratul Qamar/49
198. Surat Yasin/38
199. Ibid/39
200. Suratul Muminun/ 18
201. Surat Fussilat/10
202. Suratul Qamar/12
203. Suratul Qasas/30
204. Surat Taha/24
205. Ibid/40
206. Surat Maryam/52
207. Suratul Qamar/49
208. Suratul Baqarah/96
209. Suratul Baqarah/36
210. Suratul Isra'/23
211. Suratul Mu'min/20
212. It should be remembered that some surahs have two or more names. such as Suratul Isra' which is also called Bani Israel, or surat Ghafir which is also called Suratul Mu'min, and many others. So. when looking up a surah, you are to remember this.
213. Suratul Isra'/4
214. Ibid/8
215. Suratul Mu'min/68
216. Suratul Infitar/8
217. Surat Ali 'Imran/6
218. Suratush-Shawra/49
219. Suratul Ma'idah/105
220. Suratudh-Dhariyat/21
221. Of the Prophet's Maxims.
222. The celebrated author of "Al-Mizan" on the glorious Qur'an.
223. "Nahjul Balaghah", maxim No. 287.
224. Suratul Hadid/22-23

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