
WHY THIS BOOK?

My book is not yet complete. So you might ask why then am I presenting a collection of my writings to you instead of waiting for the complete version? You deserve a short explanation. This collection should be looked at as the effort of a searcher and not a specialist scholar in the field of religion. It is directed not towards academics, but rather at the informed layman for whom commitment to a meaningful life appeals more than their "Ivory Tower Rigor".

The purpose of the book is basically, facilitation of fellow searchers. I am now 75 and wanted to share my work and thinking on this issue with my fellow searchers and not wait until the final completion of the detailed book. "The God Debate" is vast, complex, interdisciplinary and unending. Time is running out. Our fragile civilization is facing crucial, existential challenges of WMD's, exploding population, environmental degradation, postmodernism and extremism.

Human history shows that while pluralism and tolerance are absolutely necessary, the over arching principles and values cannot be sustainable if everything remains relative. There have to be absolute, permanent values at the core around which a flexible structure can be built which can adapt to varying and developing circumstances, something like the soft tissue growing around a skeletal framework of the human body. Increasingly globalised "One Earth" now demands this framework for it to prosper, or even survive. This cannot come from bottoms up human effort; it can only come from top down Creator's guidance. Almost by definition, we cannot expect to fully comprehend the Creator of infinite capabilities. The only way, the way of science is to look for clues, to amass evidence and collect facts, and then let those be taken to their logical conclusion. This is the approach I have tried to follow in my search. Since time was of the essence, I came to the conclusion that the best way forward would be

to make the results of my explorations to date, available to fellow searchers, in the hopes that they will be able to not only benefit from this work but will add, refine, develop and improve this search further. The task is overwhelming for any single person, and as holds for most human efforts, it is best handled collectively, in the fashion of a think tank.

I am a technologist by training, in fields of mechanical engineering, nuclear and space technologies, and in order to grapple with this subject I had to familiarize myself additionally with philosophy, theology, psychology, comparative religion, world history, the emerging field of science and religion, cosmology, biology, evolution of life and human development, and the case both for and against the existence of the Creator. This went on spasmodically over the last 50 years or so, during the early part of which I vacillated and oscillated between the two opposing viewpoints of the God Debate. My Engineering training had taught me that the best way of approaching a problem is to look at it from all sides. In particular, one must try to understand the opposing viewpoints before making up one's mind.

In the end it was the irrefutable and overwhelming mass of evidence, presented in the Qur'an which clinched the argument for me. It showed that here is something which simply cannot be the product of human mind. This raised the question that what else can be its source and origin. Either it is the product of an advanced alien civilization or, as it repeatedly proclaims, it has been revealed by the Creator. What could be the motive of the alien civilization? The Creator on the other hand has clearly stated it as "Guidance for Creation". So here is the irrefutable evidence so rightly sought by our secular humanist friends. Interestingly it is fully compatible with Carl Popper's test of "falsification".

All this impels me to place it before my fellow searchers. My purpose is not to try to convince anyone; rather it is to assist each with their own search. The fact is that there are already well over a billion Muslims in the world and merely adding even a few million will not make that much of a difference. The focus is to place the genuine authentic guidance from the Creator so that we can all, without any distinction of caste, color or creed, benefit from it in a win-win manner in trying to make a paradise on earth.

In presenting this effort, I have taken the cue from the Noble Laureate Prof. Abd-us-Salam who, during his tenure as Director of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics at Trieste, periodically published material originating from his pen or even others which he felt would be interesting and of use to his audience. The purpose, I can now better appreciate, was “facilitation” rather than anything else. To that end, I have deliberately included a rather focused and limited bibliography and list of websites which I found of considerable help with my own search.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am really indebted to the internet and in particular Amazon and Google which made my search so much easier and productive as well as enjoyable, though it was not always easy to remain focused with all the wealth of material offered there.

I also have to acknowledge the push and assistance given by my children, all seven of them, but especially Khadija, who works for Microsoft, without whose active assistance and urgings even this collection may not have seen the light of the day.

PREFACE

Mankind had always had clashing ideologies which have led to wars and conflicts. While pluralism is presented as a desirable objective, the fact remains it has not worked. There is a real need for a common ideology. However, history tells us that no man made or national ideology would ever be acceptable to all people. Common ideology will only be possible if it emanates from an independent, superior, knowledgeable source such as the Creator, transcending ethnic, national and social boundaries.

This, of course, raises the inevitable question that has agitated the academic, philosophical and theological circles for centuries, "is there a Creator, or did the universe come into existence by itself through increasing complexity based on chance mutations followed by natural selection?".... the well known "Atheist" versus "Creator" debate.

Whilst this debate has been ongoing for centuries, well before the time of the Greek philosophers, it has reappeared vigorously recently based on the neo-Darwinist foundations and has been dubbed as the "New Atheism" by John Haught, the theology professor at the Georgetown University. A number of best sellers have appeared on the book market on this theme, denigrating the role of religion and denying revelation and the existence of God.

This has led to vigorous rebuttals through books and debates, epitomized by the two well known British scholars, Richard Dawkins, the current champion of the atheists, and Alister McGrath, the British theologian. Interestingly, both are Oxford Dons and have been locking horns through live debates and writings. Although a lot of ink has been spilt and polite and not so polite exchanges have taken place, it is generally accepted that while both sides claim to have gotten the better of the other, we really are no closer to a conclusive

answer on the matter and more heat and less light has been produced to enlighten the confused and weary listeners and readers.

The second vexing issue that has also been the cause of much debate, even conflict, which the atheists make fun of, is the lack of agreement amongst the various faith traditions. Each faith claims that theirs is the genuine article and the others are all off the mark to varying degrees. The debates and even wars on this over the ages have done little to close the gap in understanding between the various traditions.

The principal reason for the lack of any real progress in the debates on both of these questions is that every one simply sticks to their pre-conceived positions and one is talking really to one's own camp followers. No ground rules have been agreed, no yard sticks have been laid, and there is no objective criterion on which the arguments made or evidence, if at all produced, can be verified or weighed. Is it any wonder that nothing of real substance has materialized out of these engagements?

One fact will probably be accepted by all those forming the audience that in order to achieve meaningful progress in both of the above mentioned areas, we will have to stick to reason and evidence and not resort to arguments or positions based on faith or prior allegiances.

This collection of writings attempts to answer this fundamental question. Furthermore, in agreement with the atheists that reason and evidence should form the basis of this discourse and nothing else, I will be restricting this discourse to rational considerations which rightly is the only language acceptable in the modern age and not magic or miracles, and especially not blind faith.

My compilation will attempt to answer this reasonable question asked by the skeptics, "What evidence exists for believing in a Creator?" However, I will approach the subject by reversing the question and demonstrating, to their satisfaction, that if an object such as a Book of revelation is found to exist which cannot possibly be the product of one or even a group of humans, than what other explanation can there be except that it has originated from a supernatural Creator. The argument becomes even more compelling if such a Book of revelation explicitly makes the claim that it

originates from the Creator of the Universe and bases it on reason and evidence and not blind faith.

This of course raises the attendant question, "Which of the various books of revelation that claim to come from a super natural source, is indeed authentic and fulfills this requirement?" This will require an objective search and not one based on prior allegiances. To that end, the author has developed an objective criterion for evaluating the authenticity of such claimed revelations (the very subject of the author's article appearing in *Zygon* titled "Evaluation Criteria"). This approach has been used as the basis for drawing up a list of questions or criteria that forms a yardstick, i.e. rules of the game. This can then lead the rational reader to evaluate the degree to which any of the various faiths is successful or unsuccessful in meeting the laid down criteria. This should lead to a much more rational and objective method of reaching at the reality, and thus in answering the all important question as to whether a Creator of the universe does exist and if so which of the claimed revelations emanates from that Creator, based of course on reason and evidence and not just faith, as the atheists so rightly demand.

In recent years, there has been a lot of attention focused, once again, on the fundamental questions facing mankind, "How do we know God or the Sacred?", "What is the nature of the relationship between God or the Sacred and the world?" Thanks to the atheists, with their current bestseller books, they have brought out the issue of the Creator's existence to the forefront and have effectively cleared the decks of all the false, gods by demolishing the conventional man made arguments in favor of the existence of the Creator. It is now up to us to separate the false gods from the one true God and to distinguish between altered revelation from authentic and genuine revelation, by using the very same technique the atheists so fervently advocate, i.e. by the application of reason and evidence and not just faith.

The author concludes that based on his evaluation criteria and evidence presented, the Qur'an by far is the only book which fulfills the yardstick of genuine and authentic revelation. What makes this conclusion even more compelling is the culmination of three simultaneous factors which could not be a mere coincidence, i.e. the unparalleled physical expansion in the seventh century of the non-

descript Arabs, their intellectual awakening which ultimately lead to Europe's enlightenment and the lasting impact of this revolutionary change in human society which none can compare with.

What triggered this?

So if this argument is so compelling, why have the majority of people not accepted it? The author feels there are two main hurdles that stand in the way of acceptance of this case beyond any reasonable doubt.

The first hurdle is the prejudices and biases against Islam which have colored Europe and the West ever since the Muslims wrested Jerusalem from the Byzantines in the 7th century. Professor Emeritus of history at Columbia University, Ainslie T. Embree has termed it as "a deeply ingrained prejudice against Islam rooted in Western history". The Quran deserves to be given a fair review, in light of its multifarious uniqueness.

The second hurdle has been the unbecoming conduct of us Muslims over the past few centuries, who, by turning our backs on the Qur'anic teachings, have not only brought it a bad name but kept others from fully appreciating its potential for the modern world. Muslims have been guilty of dereliction of duty for which the Islamic world is paying through its nose. So the Qur'an must not be judged on the basis of the performance of modern day Muslims, who are by no means the fruit of the Qur'anic tree. Rather, it should be judged on the basis of its contents and the impact it created on the world at the time of its inception.