A COLLECTION OF WRITINGS

THE CASE FOR GOD

Based on Reason and Evidence, Not Groundless Faith

A Response to the "New Atheism"

Athens and Jerusalem Meet in Mecca

"It is only by exercise of reason that man can discover God." — Thomas Paine, The Age of Reason

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This digital edition has been proofread for spelling, grammar and consistency. The author's arguments and wording are otherwise unchanged.

Dedication

This booklet is humbly dedicated to the long line of illustrious prophets and messengers of the Almighty Creator – some of whom we know, others we do not – including:

Adam

Noah

Abraham, the Friend of God (Khalil Allah)

Moses, the Staff of God (Kalim Allah)

Jesus, the Spirit of God (Ruh Allah)

And Muhammad, the Prophet of God (Rasul Allah)

May peace and blessings of the Lord be upon all of them, who gave everything they had to the Lord's cause. They struggled, toiled, fretted and carried out *jihad*, throughout their lives, not for themselves but for the welfare of mankind at large.

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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 WMDs, exploding population, environmental degradation, postmodernism and extremism.

Human history shows that while pluralism and tolerance are absolutely necessary, the overarching 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 globalized "One Earth" now demands this framework for it to prosper, or even survive. This cannot come from bottom-up human effort; it can only come from top-down guidance from the Creator. 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 the human mind. This raised the question of 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 Karl 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 present 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 Nobel 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 more productive as well as enjoyable, though it was not always easy to remain focused with all the wealth and diversity of material offered there.

I also have to acknowledge the push and assistance given to me 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 day.

Preface

Mankind has 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 Georgetown University. A number of bestsellers 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 everyone 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 yardsticks 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, then 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 supernatural 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 form 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 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 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 is by far 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 nondescript Arabs, their intellectual awakening which ultimately led 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 Qur'an 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 the 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.

CHAPTER 1

Response to "The God Debate" Lead Article in Newsweek

The first item in this booklet relates to the lead issue covered in *Newsweek* magazine of April 9th, 2007 which deals with atheism and faith. It contains a good discussion, at the popular level, by the editor Jon Meacham. It involved a discussion between Pastor Rick Warren of California's Saddleback church and Sam Harris speaking for the atheists. However, there was the common deficiency that the Islamic or Qur'anic viewpoint was not represented. This prompted me to write a letter to the editor of *Newsweek*, which should set the stage for the material to follow.

The Editors

Newsweek

Dear Sirs,

My heartiest compliments to your editor Jon Meacham for doing such a wonderful job in covering "The God Debate" in your issue of April 9th, 2007. I am in the process of writing a book on the same subject and have been studying the relevant literature for some time. Both sides of this topical issue were covered very well by Meacham, with sensitivity and understanding. The amiability of the discourse is another most welcome factor which today's world badly needs if our fragile civilization is to continue and develop.

The God Debate is a crucial one for all of humankind and it must be resolved by the pen and not the sword. *Newsweek* has performed a

yeoman service by setting the right tone for this discourse and deserves to be complimented. Apart from maintaining civilized courtesies, all concerned must agree that for the modern audience the yardstick of such a debate today can only be based on reason and evidence. Nothing less will do.

However, a basic flaw was evident both in the summation by the worthy editor as well as the discussion amongst the two participants, Rick Warren and Sam Harris, which I would like to bring out in order to focus the debate better.

An important hurdle in a meaningful discourse on reason and revelation arises out of the lack of relatively precise definitions of the terms involved. The meaning of reason is fairly well understood, but when we talk of revelation just what do we have in mind? Different people have widely varying understanding of revelation. Authentic revelation, originating from the Creator (and that alone should qualify as revelation) must be distinguished and set apart in this discussion from literature which, however well-meaning, is erroneously passed off as revelation. This would then rule out materials which over time have undergone translations or reconstructions (because translation simply cannot take the place of the original), and whose historical roots and continuity are quite doubtful, to say the least.

Editor Meacham, while doing an excellent job of presenting both sides fairly and constructively, takes for granted that "Scriptures are the products of human hands and hearts and have been translated and copied for generations upon generations; scholarship clearly shows that the texts present historical and literary problems that would seem to rule out the possibility that they are perfect books". It has to be admitted that few scholars of the subject would take issue with the above statement.

But therein lies the problem which needs to be addressed if we are to make any real progress with this debate. These comments of your editor are indeed applicable to the scripture of the Jewish and the Christian Bible and that only goes to make the objections of atheists

not just plausible but rather convincing. Indeed, how can a translation or a commentary double up for a text whose original is no longer available for reference, let alone claim divine writ for such a document? Honestly, it is not surprising at all, that atheists have had a field day with the Old and the New Testaments. Anything claiming its origin from the Almighty Hyper-intelligence simply has to be something unique and inimitable not only in literary style but its content too must be unique, be based on reason, and be amenable to falsification testing, amongst others. In other words, it must meet the critical standards of modern science and scholarship.

Believers cannot build their case on faith alone in today's world dominated by rationalism and expect to be taken seriously. They must be prepared to submit their case to the yardstick of reason. In chapter 3, I have proposed strict but objective and hopefully impartial criteria for consideration of all interested parties, whether believers of all hues or atheists and agnostics, to chew and agree upon, which can then be used to judge the veracity and validity of any claimed divine scripture. Once such a criterion is agreed upon then all claimants of divine revelation can submit their case for independent but objective examination. This would allow us to sift the authentic from the corrupted revelation and put this matter in its correct perspective. That revelation could then be put to test as to whether it is or can be the product of even the best endowed human hands and minds. This exercise can be done on the pattern of the search for extraterrestrial intelligence by NASA in their SETI experiment.

It is my contention, supported hopefully and convincingly, by a lot of evidence marshaled from various fields, i.e., the universe around us, the history of people of old, and finally human psychology that Al *Qur'an*, which claims that it is the final testament of which the Creator Himself declares to be the Guardian, is by far the only scripture existing today, which by a wide margin, meets such objective and rational evaluative criteria and claims to contain evidence which can even convince the reasonable skeptic.

In time, we shall make them fully understand Our messages (through

> *what they perceive) in the utmost horizons (of the universe) and within themselves, so that it will become clear unto them that this (revelation) is indeed the truth.*
>
> *Qur'an* 41:53

It was this teaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad which launched these primitive Arab Bedouins over the next five centuries or so to create a glorious enterprise, spread from China in the East to Morocco and Spain in the West, overcoming simultaneously the two superpowers of the day, Persia and Byzantium. Far more important, they embarked on an intellectual adventure which still surprises and amazes keen observers.

The Arabs collected knowledge from the four corners of the globe, i.e., Greece, Rome, Egypt, Byzantium, Persia, India and China. Not only did they translate these works into the Arabic language, but made significant additions to this storehouse of knowledge through discovering new fields of studies like algebra, trigonometry, optics, and major additions to astronomy, medicine, surgery and navigation, etc. Their unique contribution however was in developing the experimental method which laid the foundation afterwards, through European hands, of modern science.

What launched the primitive Bedouins on this intellectual adventure? What triggered this search for knowledge from wherever they could find it? What impelled the Abbasid Caliph Mamoun to pay Hunain-ibn-Ishaq, a Christian translator, the weight of a manuscript in gold for translating the same from Greek? What else but the admonitions of the Qur'an to think, to ponder and to deliberate over the universe, and the Prophet Muhammad's urgings that a Muslim should go even to China to acquire knowledge.

That is how Qur'an ushered in the age of reason and knowledge which spread to Europe through the dominions of the Arabs in Spain and Sicily and ultimately blossomed into the age of enlightenment and finally the modern scientific miracle through the astounding and admirable efforts of the Europeans. Qur'an still has the same message

for anyone willing to listen, which latter day Muslims forgot and sadly are paying the price for. Qur'an, of course, has much more to offer. Apart from emphasis on reason, it takes humans to areas beyond the ken of reason, but only after demonstrating through evidence that it is a book, nay an instruction manual, direct from the Almighty Creator to teach humankind what they know not and cannot know except through top down guidance from the Creator of the Universes, if there are multiple ones.

It is a pity that believers only weaken their case when they keep giving divine status to books which they know are products of fellow humans, even if they be inspired. Let it be stated clearly that the revelations originally given to Moses, David, or Jesus, as stated in the Qur'an, were without the shadow of a doubt genuine and authentic, but equally it must be admitted that today no trace of them is unfortunately available to us. The Old Testament, the Psalms, and the New Testament, as we know them today, may indeed carry the kernels of the originals, but there is no evidence to show which part of them can claim to be authentic revelation, i.e., the true word of the Creator.

A uniqueness of the *Qur'an* lies in the fact that it is the dividing line between the age of magic and miracles and the age of reason. Almost a thousand years before the European Enlightenment, *Qur'an* had already ushered in the age of reason by insisting upon the need for rational reflection rather than blind faith. Instead of appealing to the emotions through supernatural actions, *Qur'an* calls its addressees to use their reason, to ponder, to think, to reflect, to use all one's faculties to weigh the evidence before accepting the same.

> *And do not follow (blindly) any information of which you have no (direct) knowledge. You will be held accountable for your hearing, sight, and the faculty of reasoning.*
>
> *Qur'an* 17:36

Keeping the current state of tense relations between the West and Islam in view, one can anticipate the likely reaction. What are you

saying? If today's Muslims are any example of this revelation, i.e., the *Qur'an*, then our response is thanks, but no thanks. We just are not interested! My answer to that may surprise you, but I fully agree with that sentiment. I contend that sadly, it must be accepted that Muslims of today collectively do not represent either the principles of the Qur'an or the practices of the Prophet Muhammad. They have turned their backs on the *Qur'an*. In fact it would not be wrong to say that they have abandoned the *Qur'an* all but in name which states categorically that those who follow the principles laid down in the *Qur'an* will naturally become ascendant in this world.

> *God has promised those of you who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds that, of a certainty, He will cause them to accede to power on earth.*
>
> *Qur'an* 24:55

Explaining this verse, the eminent translator of the *Qur'an*, Muhammad Asad says, "this *Qur'anic* reference to God's promise contains an oblique allusion to the God-willed natural law which invariably makes the rise and fall of nations dependent upon their moral qualities". Thus, the fault clearly lies with the Muslims and not the *Qur'an*. It would not be wise to throw away the baby with the bathwater.

In fact, the dismal condition of today's Muslims in the world comity is one eloquent proof of the veracity of the *Qur'an*. *Qur'an* should not be considered a monopoly of the Muslims; rather, it is a book of guidance for all mankind to be studied and examined afresh and objectively to benefit from, and to tell man what he knows not. Indeed, *Qur'an* was sent down to tell man what he can never know by depending on his intellect alone or by using the powerful yet limited capabilities of the brilliant scientific methodology. It is only top-down guidance from the Almighty, the Hyper-intelligent Creator, which is capable of defining what is the place of humans in this universe and what we are doing here.

In short, humans, according to the *Qur'an*, have been given pride of

place and a position of honor in this universe. We are, according to science, quite literally and not just poetically, children of the exceptional few stars which experienced supernovae convulsions, as evidenced by the presence, *albeit* in traces, of the elements heavier than iron in our bodies. Being a pleasurable by-product of the reproductive cycle, our valuation in economic terms, on the basis of supply and demand may turn out to be quite low, but when valued in engineering terms, i.e., adding the cost of materials, energy, and labor involved, the value of each one of us is simply incalculable. This will perhaps explain the *Qur'anic* statement:

> *whoever kills a human being other than for manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind, and whoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he has saved the life of all mankind.*
>
> *Qur'an* 5:32

Only when each of us learns to recognize the honor given to us by the Creator by declaring us as His "vicegerents on earth" shall we be able to honor our fellow humans and be better able to end the constant strife and bickering based on race, nationality, creed, or material ownership. That is what *Qur'an* teaches us, and will be its crucial contribution in guiding modern day humans to meet the challenges of today and keep us from tearing each other apart. Genuine revelation fully respects the need for evidence, as so rightly emphasized by Sam Harris towards the end of the debate. Revelation has absolutely no quarrel with that requirement. In fact it demands and repeatedly urges the need for reason and reflection.

In conclusion, it should be stated that the atheists' attempt to ridicule 'revelation' by targeting the Old and New Testaments, is like Martians arriving on earth and attacking the cosmological views of the Ptolemaic system, representing them as views of modern science and cosmology instead of the current Copernican and Einsteinian versions. That would not only be a pointless exercise but a travesty of truth and reality. Yet, this is what Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, and associates are doing.

If atheists really want to discuss and debate the existence of God or the veracity of revelation and its relevance to the modern world, they have to look to the Qur'an which is the only genuine version of revelation available today. Their study, attention, critique, and comments are welcome so long as they are based on objective considerations and not on knee jerk prejudices based on the European past and reinforced by the unfortunate conduct of many Muslims of today who have turned their backs on Qur'anic teachings and are an affront to its sublime message of peace and reason. Let it be remembered that Qur'an is not a monopoly of the Muslims; rather it is meant as a blessing and guidance for all of humanity. I trust this will help in clearing the picture somewhat.

Yours Truly,

Tariq Mustafa

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CHAPTER 2

In Rebuttal of Atheism

Alongside the recent rising interest in the religion and science interface, atheists have come out with bestselling books denigrating all religions, maintaining that there is no evidence of the existence of a Creator. Using their claimed tool of reason and evidence, this essay shows that this question cannot be answered by bottom-up search of humans, but only by top-down information originating from the Creator. Such information exists, but we need to rise above our preconceived notions and give it a fair hearing, based on rational considerations alone. The reality will then become manifest.

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Background

There has no doubt been increasing interest in developing a productive relationship between science and religion over the past few decades, demonstrated by the rise of centers affiliated with reputable universities like Harvard, Princeton, Berkeley and Oxford dealing with studies in science and religion.

In parallel, the forces of atheism are aggressively getting organized and have mounted concerted attacks on religion, especially the Abrahamic religions, and have tried to exploit the weaknesses of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, by referring to their internal contradictions, inconsistencies, and conflicting viewpoints with modern knowledge. These have been exploited by the atheist crowd to discredit revelation *per se* and by implication infer that this shows that the existence of a super-intelligent Creator is a delusion.

This chapter has been prompted by those recent bestsellers appearing on the market by prominent atheists like Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Victor Stenger. Atheists are to be congratulated on bringing to the fore this most basic and important question about the existence or otherwise of the Creator. The author could not agree more that this issue needs to be resolved once and for all.

Let us also shake hands with them on the contention that the currency of discourse (as it is not fruitful to handle it in the form of a

debate) should be based on reason and evidence and not faith. Nothing less will do in today's world. Let it also be remembered, as this book will show, that reason and evidence are not the monopoly of the atheists. In fact, reason was introduced by revelation in the 7th century, at least 1000 years before the start of the European "Enlightenment" during the 17-18th centuries.

My case is based on the 'Argument from Scripture' but with an essential difference. Dawkins tries to tear apart the Old and New Testaments which is tantamount to discrediting the Ptolemaic and Newtonian sciences in today's context. The framework of today's science is based on Einsteinian Relativity and Quantum Mechanics just as the case for revelation ever since the 7th century relies on the final testament i.e. the Qur'an and not the Bible. So in all fairness, Dr. Dawkins and associates should match their wits with the Qur'an and see where they end up. To date, the atheists have not fully addressed a critique of the Qur'an as part of their writings against revelation, thereby ignoring a major pillar in the argument.

Clear Definition of Revelation

In order to have a meaningful discourse revelation must be defined precisely. Revelation is neither merely inspiration, under influence of which the four Apostles of the New Testament are said to have penned their letters, nor can it be something which has undergone translation, alteration, adulteration or any form of human addition. It must be the pristine word of the Creator and literally be word for word from the Creator, such as the tablets of the Ten Commandments received by Moses on Mount Sinai (and not the ones quoted in the extant Bible where they have again been translated if not also altered somewhat), for example the commandment about Sabbath.

Of all the claimed revelations, I will demonstrate that only the Qur'an lives up to this standard based on the objective yardstick enumerated therein (see chapter 3). Furthermore, let it be pointed out that it is a common mistake to treat the Qur'an only as a holy book of the Muslims, which it undoubtedly is; but it certainly is not a monopoly of

the Muslims. It is guidance from on High for all of humankind without any exceptions.

Qur'an clearly belies the charge that it was written by Muhammad under inspiration of the biblical stories reaching him. It is true that it was brought in parts to the Prophet by Archangel Gabriel over 23 years who commanded the Prophet to recite Words which came verbatim from the Almighty Creator. Thus there is no mixture whatsoever in the text with the Prophet's own thoughts or ideas. Revelation was received by the Prophet always in a wakeful state and never in a dream. Muslim tradition describes in detail how the Prophet, while receiving revelation, would start sweating even in cold weather, his weight would increase and he would feel and show signs of distress. The point is that revelation was unmistakably differentiated from the Prophet's own thoughts and statements. There has been no confusion in Muslim literature on this count.

The Case For Atheism

In the twentieth century, the case for atheism was projected in a paper published in the 1950s by the philosopher Antony Flew who later on was dubbed as the guru of 20th century atheism. As it happened, rather to the chagrin of his followers Mr. Flew, quite courageously, changed his mind somewhat towards the end of the century when he announced that recent developments in genetics especially the extreme complexity of the genetic code and DNA demonstrated that chance mutations and natural selection alone could not explain the rise of such complexity and that left room for super intelligent intervention. This was quite a shock for the hard-core atheists.

Recently, there has again been a resurgence in the advocacy of atheism and a spate of books has appeared represented best perhaps by "*The God Delusion*" of Richard Dawkins "*Letter to a Christian Nation*" by Sam Harris, and "*God is not Great*" byChristopher Hitchens which have become bestsellers showing that the core case for atheism still draws a lot of attention and interest. The notable new feature of these bestsellers is the aggressive tone employed by the authors

especially Dr. Dawkins who while putting his case effectively, in his usual manner, has also been sufficiently abrasive to jolt Dr. Deepak Chopra, an otherwise mild writer to comment that, "In his new book Dawkins expresses his position with deep disdain for those who disagree, and his poisonous tone weakens the argument."

A common view about these books is that the arguments used and the case presented are not all that different from one another. Their books mostly reflect the differences in the backgrounds of the authors and their fields of work so much so that it has led Prof. Terry Eagleton to club the two authors, the first and the last, together as Ditchkins. I will thus be treating Dawkins to represent the atheists' position.

Dawkins feels that "why" is a foolish, probably meaningless question, totally devoid of scientific interest. So be it. But "why" happens to be the single most important question humans ask, particularly when it comes to ourselves. Ultimately we want to know who we are and our purpose for being here. Dawkins doesn't seem to have any doubt about who he is: he's the evolutionary byproduct of chemical forces, physical laws, random events, natural selection, competition, adaptation, and survival. So is an amoeba. Sadly, this reductionist picture of human life is devoid of meaning. It's merely a map of how a physical machine called the body came to be built. Such knowledge is like knowing everything about a computer except how to plug it in.

McGrath's Summary of Dawkins' Case Against Religion

Let us look at the case made by Dawkins in favor of atheism which has been well summarized by the Oxford theologian Alister McGrath in the following words in his book *Dawkins' God*:

Dawkins' hostility to religion is deep rooted, and not grounded in one specific concern. Four interconnected grounds of hostility may be found throughout his writings:

1. A Darwinian worldview makes belief in God unnecessary or impossible. Although hinted at in the *Selfish Gene*, the idea is

developed in detail in the *Blind Watchmaker.*

2. Religion makes assertions which are grounded in faith, which represents a retreat from a rigorous, evidence-based concern for truth. For Dawkins truth is grounded in explicit proof. Any form of obscurantism or mysticism grounded in faith is to be opposed vigorously.
3. Religion offers an impoverished and attenuated vision of the world. "The universe presented by organized religion is a poky little medieval universe, and extremely limited." In contrast, science offers a bold and brilliant vision of the universe as grand, beautiful, and awe-inspiring. This aesthetic critique of religion is developed especially in Dawkins' 1998 work "Unweaving the Rainbow."
4. Religion leads to evil. It is like a malignant virus, infecting human minds. This is not strictly a scientific judgment, in that, as Dawkins often points out, the sciences cannot determine what is good or evil, "Science has no methods for deciding what is ethical." It is however, a profoundly moral objection to religion, deeply rooted within Western culture and history, which must be taken with the greatest seriousness.

Reply To Dawkins By McGrath

McGrath quotes Dawkins, "Darwin has changed everything. Newton would be an atheist if he had been born after Darwin. Before Darwin, atheism was one amongst many religious possibilities; now, it is the only serious option for a thinking, honest, and scientifically informed person. To believe in God nowadays is to be "hoodwink'd with faery fancy".

Intellectual history is thus divided into two epochs: before Darwin, and after Darwin. As James Watson, the Nobel Prize winner and co-discoverer of DNA arguably put it, "Charles Darwin will eventually be seen as a far more influential figure in the history of human thought than either Jesus Christ or Mohammed."

In reply McGrath asks, But why Darwin? Why not Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud? Each of these is regularly proposed as having brought about an intellectual earthquake, shattering prevailing assumptions and ushering in radical new ways of thinking which lead to the bifurcation of human thought. The theory of biological evolution, historical materialism, and psychoanalysis have all been proposed as defining the contours of humanity coming of age. All, interestingly, have been linked with atheism, the movement that the 19th and early 20th centuries hoped would prove to be an intellectual and political liberator. So why Darwin?

Reply to Dawkins By Chopra

Dr. Chopra summarizes Dawkins' arguments in his characteristically clear manner as follows:

> *Dawkins makes many points to support his claim that religion is nonsense and that there isn't the slightest shred of rational proof for God, miracles, the soul, etc. That science is the only valid way to gain knowledge. Nothing about God is needed to explain the world. Eventually, Science will uncover all mysteries. Those that it can't explain don't exist.*
>
> *This is the bedrock of Dawkins' arguments, as it is of most skeptics and scientific atheists. In his new book Dawkins expresses his position with deep disdain for those who disagree, and his poisonous tone weakens the argument. Yet, there is no doubt that with current advances in genetics and brain research, scientists have more confidence than ever that mysteries are being unraveled as never before. By the same token, something as primitive as faith in God looks more and more pointless and misguided. At best, God is a matter of personal belief, at worst a superstition that blocks progress (in the way the Bush administration uses theology to block stem cell research).*

Dr. Chopra taking serious issue with Dawkins has the following to say about the core point of Dawkins that science alone is the route to valid information in the modern age:

The unfairness of this argument is that it squeezes God into a corner. Dawkins makes it an us-versus-them issue. Either you are for science (that is, reason, progress, modernism, optimism about the future) or you are for religion (that is, unreason, reactionary resistance to progress, clinging to mysteries that only God can solve). He goes so far as to tar anyone who believes in God with the same brush as extreme religious fanatics. Sadly, the media often follow his lead, erasing the truth which is that many scientists are religious and many of the greatest scientists (including Newton and Einstein) probed deeply into the existence of God. Not to mention the obvious fact that you don't have to go to church, or even belong to a religion, to find God plausible.

Inadequacies of Responses of McGrath and Chopra

To both Dawkins and Dr. Chopra, one would like to point out that God does not need to expound the intricacies of Quantum mechanics or Relativity or the Theory of Evolution to humans through revelation. For this purpose, the Creator has endowed us with a brain and our senses which are sufficient to do the needful. Qur'an says emphatically that man has been given the power through the judicious use of his intellect not only to understand the physical universe, but to use and exploit it for his own ends.

Qur'an Introduces the Currency of Reason

There was a time such as that of Moses and even in the times of Jesus that the entire world thought that magic and miracles were the way of convincing both the plebeians and the elite.

When Moses confronted the Pharaoh no one in the Pharaoh's court made fun of him when he started to demonstrate his bevy of miracles. Pharaoh's courtiers only said that this was nothing but magic and thus in reply Pharaoh summoned the best known magicians of Egypt to come and confront Moses. The currency of the debate of the day was thus acknowledged by both sides to be one of magic and miracles.

Interestingly when the magicians threw their ropes which appeared like slithering serpents Moses was directed to throw his staff which ate up the snakes of the magicians. It was the magicians who gave up first, acknowledging that whatever Moses had done was certainly not magic, which was something they well understood and they declared their willingness to believe in the Lord of Moses. Pharaoh's anger knew no bounds and he thundered that how dare the magicians surrender to Moses without the permission of Pharaoh, the God of all. But the magicians insisted that they knew their trade and could distinguish magic from something which was other than magic, and based on their knowledge they were compelled to accept the logic of Moses. They told Pharaoh that they knew that he could have their skins pulled and have them killed but that is all he could do. Pharaoh had no control over the magicians' hearts and minds which had now come to accept the Lord of Moses as their master and Creator.

The rest as they say is history. Pharaoh was unmoved by this, not being able to distinguish magic from miracles and kept up with his persecution of the Israelites until he and his hosts were drowned in the bigger miracle of the parting of the waters. The point being that those with knowledge, the magicians, could see the difference but those without knowledge, i.e., the Pharaoh and most of his courtiers remained unconvinced. It was only while drowning that even Pharaoh had no choice but to say that he too was willing to believe in the God of Moses, not by voluntary choice but under circumstances of compulsion. Qur'an declares that it was too late for Pharaoh to repent. Repentance is meaningful only when done voluntarily and by exercising one's free choice.

Even during the peak of Greek philosophy and logic, the common populace whether of Greece or Rome was still governed and carried away by magic and superstition. The halls of the Oracle of Delphi were much more popular than the schools of Plato and Aristotle.

Coming to revelation, the New Testament, like the Old Testament, bases its case on miraculous cures and doings of Jesus rather than an appeal to reason. Of course, according to the Qur'an the revelation

received by Jesus was not quite the same as the extant New Testament, which at best is a humanly written account of what certain apostles or individuals could gather about the teachings of Jesus. It is the accepted view of historians that none of the four Apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke or John had the honor of meeting or learning directly from Jesus or any of the original apostles. Even Paul, often called the founder of modern Christianity, as will surprise many people, never personally met Jesus or had the opportunity to benefit directly from the guidance of Jesus. What happened to the original revelation of Jesus, which must have been in Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus, is shrouded in the mists of history.

Instead what we have as the New Testament are accounts, claimed as God inspired accounts, but written almost a century later on the average in old Greek and only remnants of those are available. In addition, the books of the extant New Testament were selected by a council of Bishops under Emperor Constantine, held in the 4th century at Nicea out of almost 20 books presented for inclusion in the Bible. What goes as the New Testament is the translation into modern languages of the modern Greek version which was claimed to be based on fragments of the writings of the four apostles, who albeit may have been inspired but never actually met Jesus or even his original disciples.

To what extent the New Testament then reflects the revelation originally received by Jesus can only be a matter of individual inclination and guess work. Thus it is quite surprising, when one thinks about it, the amount of energy and ink wasted by the atheists of all hues in demolishing the basis and content of both the New Testament and the Old Testament which is on even weaker grounds, which stands documented so copiously in world literature that it is not worth repeating here. The point is that whatever the status of these scriptures they seem to have staked their case on the basis of miracles and supernatural occurrences, which was the commonly accepted norm of the age.

Case For Revelation Based on Reason And Not Faith

There is a lot in what has been expressed by the viewpoints stated by McGrath and Chopra, but it does not appear likely that people of Dr. Dawkins' thinking will be impressed by this line of reasoning because they have in their minds already rejected such reasoning however sound it may look to the other side. I would like to approach the subject from a different direction.

I would like to take up Dr. Dawkins on his own turf of using reason as the yardstick and not allow faith based arguments to intrude into our discussion.Let us accept the stance of Dr. Dawkins that reason is and can be the only arbiter and every assertion must be supported by and be based on objective evidence which can be verified or falsified in the manner practiced by science. Faith, or other feelings, not amenable to the measuring techniques of science will be kept out of consideration.

In Dr. Dawkins' framework, miracles are hogwash because they do not measure up to the critical criteria of science. But what if some miracles did live up to the criteria of science? Perhaps then Dr. Dawkins will say that they are not miracles. We all are aware that the classical miracles starting with the flood of Noah's time followed by Prophet Abraham not being affected by the intense heat of fire, or the well known miracles of Moses preceding the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, the staff of Moses turning into a serpent which ate up the snakes of the Egyptian magicians and sorcerers, the hand of Moses turning white and finally the parting of the waters to drown the hordes of the Pharaoh as well as the miracles of Jesus in curing the lepers and the blind and in resurrecting the dead are all based on the authority of the scriptures and not much else. Any other evidence which may have been marshaled by proponents of miracles, archaeological or other is arguable and suspect.

Response to Carl Sagan's Comments in *Contact*

Another icon of atheists has been the well known host of the wonderful TV series "Cosmos", Carl Sagan. In his usual inimitable

fashion Sagan, in his sci-fi novel *Contact* (p. 166 to 173) puts forth some concrete suggestions as to how the subject of the Creator's existence or otherwise can be approached:

> *But imagine that your kind of god – omnipotent, omniscient, compassionate – really wanted to leave a record for future generations, to make his existence unmistakable to, say, the remote descendants of Moses. It's easy, trivial. Just a few enigmatic phrases, and some fierce commandment that they be passed on unchanged…Joss leaned forward almost imperceptibly. 'Such as …?*
>
> *'Such as "The Sun is a star." Or "Mars is a rusty place with deserts and volcanoes, like Sinai." Or "A body in motion tends to remain in motion." Or-let's see now' she quickly scribbled some numbers on a pad. "The Earth weighs a million million million million times as much as a child." Or- I recognize that both of you seem to have some trouble with special relativity, but it's confirmed every day routinely in particle accelerators and cosmic rays – how about "There are no privileged frames of reference"? Or even "Thou shalt not travel faster than light." Anything they couldn't possibly have known three thousand years ago.*
>
> *'Any other?' Joss asked.*
>
> *'Well, there is an indefinite number of them – or at least one for every principle of physics. Let's see…."Heat and light hide in the smallest pebble." Or even "The way of the Earth is as two, but the way of the lodestone is as three." I'm trying to suggest that the gravitational force follows an inverse square law, while the magnetic dipole force follows an inverse cube law. Or in biology' – she nodded toward der Heer, who seemed to have taken a vow of silence – 'how about "Two strands entwined is the secret of life"?'*
>
> *What I am saying is, if God wanted to send us a message, and ancient writings were the only way he could think of doing it, he could have done a better job. And he hardly had to confine himself to writings. Why isn't there a monster crucifix orbiting the earth? Why isn't the surface of the moon covered with the Ten Commandments? Why should God be so clear in the Bible and so obscure in the world?*

"So how come fellas, why don't we see him with crystal clarity"? Oh come off it. You know what I mean. Where are the burning bushes, the pillars of fire, the great voice that says "I am that I am" booming down at us out of the sky? Why should God manifest Himself in such subtle and debatable ways when he can make his presence completely unambiguous?

If that signal is from God, why does it come from just one place in the sky- in the vicinity of a particularly bright nearby star? Why doesn't it come from all over the sky at once, like the cosmic black- body background radiation? Coming from one star, it looks like a signal from another civilization. Coming from everywhere, it would look much more like a signal from God.

Occam's razor says if you have two different, equally good explanations of the same experience, you pick the simplest. The whole history of science supports it.

How can a thoroughgoing conscientious scientist be an agnostic? If you can even imagine a world without God? Wouldn't you just have to be an atheist?

If the laws of nature explain all the available facts without supernatural intervention, or even do only as well as the God hypothesis, then for the time being I'd call myself an atheist. Then, if a single piece of evidence was discovered that doesn't fit, I 'd back off from atheism.

I say again, if your God wanted to convince us, He could have done a much better job.

In his inimitable manner Sagan is making two points:

First that God could have stated in the revelation (ancient book) things that could not possibly have been known to humans of the time and were only discovered by science much later.

Secondly, better still, being the omnipotent Creator some overwhelming piece of evidence such as "Why isn't there a monster crucifix orbiting the earth? Why isn't the surface of the moon covered with the Ten Commandments? Why should God be so clear in the

Bible and so obscure in the world?" or one might add "Why could He not make the sun rise in the West?"

Interestingly, the Creator responds in the Qur'an to both of these points very clearly. It is almost as if such observations/comments of the skeptics had been foreseen and answered in advance.

Regarding the first point, Qur'an, as touched upon in these writings, which will be more fully elaborated in my forthcoming book, gives dozens of instances, from various fields of knowledge such as Cosmology, Embryology, Genetics, Geology, Meteorology, Sociology and History, to name just a few of them. The overall effect of all this evidence is collectively so overwhelming, and it was that which brought me back to my senses when I too drifted close to skepticism. It adds up to showing beyond any reasonable doubt that it is indeed a revelation from the Creator of the Universes (if indeed they turn out to be more than one) and not a human product.

However, Sagan has every right to point out that instead of all these signs why could the Creator not produce one overpowering expression of his power and majesty which would have made all humans bow down to His authority and accept His existence. Not surprisingly, the same question was posed to Prophet Muhammad by his pagan listeners in Mecca. The Qur'an responds by stating that, for sure, this is the easiest thing for the Almighty Creator to do, but it happens not to be part of His design. It will happen but that will take place only on the last day, the day of reckoning if you like. Until that time, mankind has been given the freedom of choice, and if such an overpowering proof were to be forthcoming now then it would signal the end of that freedom.

Freedom of choice for humans is an important integral part of the Creator's design when Man was declared the vicegerent of God, and this would explain the lack of an overpowering sign.

Qur'an further elaborates that all the rest of nature i.e. the sun, moon, stars, mountains, physical phenomena, plants, even animals and birds unquestioningly obey the Creator's laws. It is only humans who have

been given the freedom of choice. But, it points out, they must remember that they will be held accountable for the choices they make. It is not going to be a free ride.

Distinguishing Authentic Revelation from Inspired Writings

This brings out the necessity and crucial importance of distinguishing genuine revelation from revelation which did originate from the Creator when it was initially made known. This was the case of the revelation given to Jesus called Injil in the Qur'an which would have been in Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus, but has subsequently either gotten lost in the vicissitudes of history or was reconstructed by human authors, at best under inspiration or at times to serve their own agendas. These works therefore cannot fully represent genuine revelation and can at best claim to be only second-rate representations of guidance from the Almighty.

It is well known in knowledgeable circles that a translation of any work into another language can never retain and carry the full meaning or import of the original, however sincere or capable the effort may be. Let alone when one talks of trying to translate or convey the meaning of God's own words which, stemming from the Super-intelligence, must perforce be unique and unmatchable. Professor Hanna E. Kassis of the University of California in his *Concordance of the Qur'an* states, "Translations lose much in tone and nuance, let alone the incommunicable beauty, grandeur, and grace of the original". He further states, "The Qur'an is unique among sacred books in style, unity of language and authorship, and significance in the life of the faith it governs. The western reader should be prepared to receive it on its own terms."

Similarly, Professor Arberry quotes Pickthall who maintains:

> *The Koran cannot be translated. That is the belief of old-fashioned Sheykhs and the view of the present writer. The book is here rendered literally and every effort has been made to choose befitting language. But the result is not the glorious Koran, that inimitable*

> *symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy. It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Koran – and peradventure something of the charm in English. It can never take the place of the Koran in Arabic nor is it meant to do so.*
>
> *Pickthall and Arberry* p.21

> *Briefly the rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Koran are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound in the nature of things to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendor of the original. Never was it more true than in this instance that "traduttore traditore" (translation traitor).*
>
> *Arberry* p.24

Thus, it is a *sine qua non* that any such claim to being authentic revelation must be available in its original language in which it was revealed and be in its original form and sequence in which it was announced by the recipient and stand the scrutiny of having been preserved over history and be available for study and reference by all concerned. The only claimed revelation which can stand such scrutiny and meet the above requirements, by a wide margin, is Al Qur'an, the recitation received by Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century A.D.

Criteria for Evaluating the Authenticity of Revelation

Anything claiming to originate from the Creator must be capable of meeting the most stringent, but reasonable criteria.

Such draft criteria have been proposed in my article appearing in the September 2008 issue of the Science and Religion journal *Zygon* along with an invitation to refine and expand the same by anyone seriously interested so that it can act as a common yardstick to ascertain the authenticity or otherwise of any claimed revelation. It then goes on to show how the authentic revelation can not only stand all the objections raised by the atheist viewpoint, but actually convincingly demonstrate that such authentic revelation simply could not be the product of any human agency and thus its origin has to be

accepted to be a "super-intelligent source".

Furthermore, the Qur'an explicitly explains what it is, who it is from, and then goes on to tell us what we need to know, and the limited degree to which human minds can comprehend the reality of the Creator and the "Big Questions" such as, What is the purpose and objective of life? What are we doing on this earth? What follows death, etc.

Advent of the Age of Reason

The challenge of deciphering genuine from tampered revelation changes radically when we come to the final testament i.e. the Qur'an. There we find a fundamental shift in the paradigm. Not only is the Qur'an available in its original language, Arabic, but its form and content are faithfully preserved in the form and shape that Muhammad passed on to his companions and associates and can be obtained readily from any large bookshop of the world in its original rendering and language. But the point that concerns us here really is that though the Qur'an calls itself the miracle given to Prophet Muhammad, it bases its whole case not on the old-style miracles of Moses and Jesus (which called for faith rather than reason), but on the need for reflection, pondering and thinking in order to understand the message of the revelation.

Six hundred years after Jesus, humanity had matured and by the time of Muhammad, for the first time we find that the currency of miracles has been replaced with the currency of reason and evidence. Qur'an says that it is the miracle of Muhammad which appeals to man not by overpowering his senses but by urging him to make full use of the senses bestowed upon him by his Creator. This was the beginning of the age of reason.

It is as if the sender of the revelations wanted to announce that mankind had matured and developed and come out of the age of old-style miracles and magic such that it will now be more amenable to the use of reason and logic. This was a giant step in the history of

mankind. Mankind had now come of age. The advent of the Qur'an can thus be rightly considered to be the beginning of the age of reason and not sometime in seventeenth-century Europe. The age of reason had now dawned. Its sun would never set and from now on reason would rule the day and be the touchstone of human progress.

The followers of Muhammad took this lesson to heart and it is amazing how these rough denizens of the Arabian desert who had little culture and no intellectual achievements to show until that time not only extended their physical domains from China to Spain but much more importantly developed open-mindedness and the ability to absorb all kinds of knowledge from all kinds of people they came in contact with, Greeks, Persians, Hindus or Chinese. For the next five centuries from the 7th to at least the 12th century the Arabs displayed outstanding allegiance to reason and gave rise to a remarkable civilization, which sparked off the new awakening in Europe through the Arab influence seeping through their dominions in Spain and Sicily which were still part of the Muslim lands. This story has been covered in greater detail in my forthcoming book.

The impetus for all this was none other than the status given to reason in the Qur'anic teachings and the rational conduct displayed by the Prophet Muhammad and the new spirit of reason inculcated in his followers. With the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols and the gradual reconquista of Spain by resurgent Christianity this phase seems to have come to an end and the torch of reason was picked up and so ably carried forward by the newly awakened and rising Europe through its Renaissance, Reformation and most importantly by the industrial and the modern scientific revolutions.

The difficulty faced by Europe was that this new spirit of rational enquiry and reason was totally incompatible with the spirit of the Old and New Testaments which still carried over their legacy of miracles and magic, and this could not be cured through the attempts made to bridge the gap through the Herculean efforts of the instigators of the Reformation. The result was that as the spirit of rational enquiry took deeper roots and developed further, the gulf with the scriptures

widened and the inadequacies of the scriptures kept showing up more and more leading to moves away from Christianity towards agnosticism and atheism typified by the philosophers preceding the French Revolution such as Rousseau, Voltaire and Hobbes.

In the Islamic world although there was a resurgence of military and economic power, after the debacles of Baghdad and Spain, under the banners of the Ottomans, the Safavids and the Mughal empires, the spirit of rational enquiry ignited by the Qur'an seems to have subsided and the gulf between practices of the Muslim peoples and the teachings especially the rational spirit engendered by the Qur'an kept getting wider and wider until a situation has been reached where it would not be wrong to say that the Muslims have almost abandoned the Qur'an, in spirit at least, if not in name. This will be covered in detail in my forthcoming book, *The Case for God*.

Thus, both in the West and the Islamic world, the position is that a big gulf has opened up between the proponents of reason and the proponents of scripture which is unfortunate. As this book tries to show there is no real conflict between reason and authentic revelation. As explained earlier, the age of reason in reality was ushered in not by the efforts of human philosophers after the European Renaissance but by the final revelation, i.e., the Qur'an. What is needed is for mankind to marry rational enquiry with the guidance of the final and rational revelation i.e. the Qur'an to find solutions to mankind's perennial problems of racial discrimination, gender inequalities, economic and social injustices, environmental concerns and the rising specter of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. This is not an attempt at proselytization; rather it is an effort to point out that there is a moral law pervading the universe, just like the physical laws of science. Without this, mankind cannot find its true bearings and that can only come through revelation from the Creator.

Effectively, it said that this is not only possible but is indeed the case for all nature, i.e., the sun, the moon, and the plants and animals. All follow the built-in laws of nature given by God—none of them dare to

question and disbelieve—only humans can do that—why? By the Creator's own design, they have been given the freedom of choice. They have been made free to either believe or disbelieve even in His existence. At the physical plane, life goes on, same for a believer or a disbeliever. Even the most arrogant of the disbelievers, the Pharaoh, is not denied the air to breathe or life-giving water to drink because everyone has been given the freedom of choice.

Dawkins has been guilty of the very fault that he so vehemently condemns in the Creationists, i.e., that of selectively picking the evidence which suits them. Here, Dawkins has done exactly the same by picking the Bible (the Old and New Testaments) as scriptures and accepting the claims that they are authentic revelation from the Almighty God, yet he has not even addressed the Qur'an.

The Argument From Scripture

Dawkins lists out the various arguments which have been used to prove the existence of God at various times such as the ontological arguments from beauty, personal experience, scriptures, and then proceeds to demolish them one by one. Here, I would like to take up his argument from scripture and show the crucial evidence that Dawkins has missed out.

This book maintains that while no absolute proof exists of God's existence as stated in the Qur'an itself, it is not because an All-Powerful God could not have produced an all-convincing show, rather it is purposely done by God to allow His creation, mankind, to retain the freedom of choice which God desired to bestow upon His creation.

While rebutting the argument from scripture, Dawkins quotes three points made by C.S. Lewis and then adds a fourth of his own.

Dawkins quotes C.S. Lewis in saying that the historical evidence that Jesus claimed any sort of divine status is minimal. If scriptures maintain that Jesus claimed to be the son of God, he must have been either right or else insane or a liar, i.e., "lunatic, liar, or lord." Dawkins

adds that a fourth possibility, almost too obvious to need mentioning, is that Jesus was honestly mistaken (*God Delusion*, p.92).

I would like to mention a fifth possibility which Dawkins seems to have missed out and that is the stand taken by the Qur'an, that Jesus never maintained that he was divine. It was his followers who venerated him and heaped divinity upon Jesus. If Jesus was to learn of what has happened, he would likely be most disappointed and angry. Qur'an clarifies this mistake by stating that Jesus was none other than an honored messenger of God just like Abraham, Moses, and Mohammed (May peace be upon them all).

Dawkins picks up on the New Testament citing paragraph after paragraph of inconsistencies and inaccuracies therein. No one can argue with this viewpoint. Qur'an too says the same. After all, that was the reason why the Old Testament was replaced with the revelation to Jesus (the original of which was either lost long ago or perhaps was never even compiled in the form of a book). The New Testament was an attempt by the followers of Jesus to do their best in recreating what they understood of his teachings and therefore cannot be categorized as revelation from God. When the same fate overtook the New Testament, it was replaced by the Qur'an—the Final Testament. The Qur'an claims that God himself is the guardian and the Qur'an cannot and will not be corrupted which is why it is dubbed the final testament. More relevant to this discussion, Qur'an rests its case not on miracles, as in the past scriptures, but appeals to reason and urges its readers to think, to ponder, to reflect, to deliberate, and use their minds and not to follow even verses of the Qur'an blindly.

According to Dawkins, "One of the truly bad effects of religion is to be satisfied with non-understanding" (*God Delusion*, p.126). Dawkins is exactly right, but this holds only for what might be called tampered religions or corrupted revelation. Genuine revelation, on the other hand, which is the Qur'an, totally supports this viewpoint. Qur'an, on no less than 44 occasions, invokes the need to reason, ponder, and think, leaving no room to be satisfied with non-understanding.

On page 127, Dawkins states, "On the other hand, evolution makes the strong prediction that if a single fossil turned up in the wrong geological stratum, the theory would be blown out of the water." Compare this with the statement of the Qur'an that this is a book in which there are no contradictions or inconsistencies and it is prepared to be judged on the same stringent yardstick.

Regarding the weaknesses of the God-of-the-gaps argument (stated by Dawkins, page 128), where he states that creationists adore gaps, the Qur'an's position is that gaps are of a temporary nature because there is no end to the extent of knowledge. The universe is infinite. Qur'an specifically states that, "if all the trees were pens and oceans ink, then knowledge would not end."

Qur'an – Unique Miracle of Miracles That Makes Its Case on Reason

Qur'an—a miracle of miracles, not just because it is supernatural, but because it is a miracle which can be verified by reason. Qur'an states that it is the miracle given to Prophet Muhammad. Now that does sound rather strange. Qur'an on the face of it is only a book, *albeit* one that claims to be revelation. But it is nothing as dramatic as Noah's flood, or Moses' parting of the sea, or Jesus giving life to the dead until one really examines and studies what it says to realize what an amazing piece of evidence it is. For example, Qur'an makes astounding claims about itself, about its unique style, its inimitable language, and priceless content which have been detailed in various places in this book.

Evidence of Veracity of the Qur'an

- Claims of the Qur'an, its majestic language, its consistency, its clarity. Lack of any contradictions therein.
- Various prophecies stated in the Qur'an, which have come true over time such as the triumph of Muslim armies over the Persians and earlier of the least likely victory of the Byzantines over the

threatening army of the Chosroes. (See Hitti's *History of the Arabs*).

- Reference to items of knowledge pronounced 1400 years ago which are found to be so compatible with modern knowledge that they could not be known to people of those times unless originating from the Almighty, Super-intelligent Creator.
- Allah being the guardian and protector of the Qur'an, which is so eminently borne out by its history ever since its revelation in the seventh century AD.
- The unusual claim that Qur'an has been made easy to remember, which is borne out by the hundreds of thousands of Qur'an memorizers all over the Islamic world.
- Underlying numerical patterns and design – Numbers 19 and 9, etc.
- Amenability to falsification tests.
- Living miracle, always available for reference, testing, and verification.
- Sad fate of modern Muslims who have abandoned its teachings resulting in the opposite of *istikhlaf fil ardh* (to be given paramountcy over this earth).

The above points have been discussed further in the following chapters. Fuller details will follow in my forthcoming book with the same title *The Case for God*.

Bold Claims of The Qur'an

At the risk of repeating, Qur'an is not a book of Science; rather it may be called a book of signs, containing guidance for mankind in the moral sphere. It teaches man what he knows not (and cannot know fully by his senses alone), i.e., it teaches us about who we are, what we are doing on this earth, what follows death, what is expected of us, and what our relationship with the Creator is. When Qur'an does talk of the universe, physical phenomena, human nature, etc., it is actually making some point and driving home some moral lessons or giving a sign about the existence of the Almighty Creator. This is the principal

theme of this book.

Qur'an boldly proclaims that it is consistent and free of any contradictions whatsoever. It has been made easy to remember, which is borne out by the amazing fact that hundreds of thousands of Muslims all over the Muslim world, even those who do not understand a word of Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, remember it by heart and can recite this book, of approximately the size of the New Testament, from cover to cover with felicity and ease. Such persons are to be found amongst all Muslim populations, Arabs and non-Arabs including Iranians, Turks, Indians, Chinese, Indonesians, Africans, and across Europe and North America and the rest of the Western world. Indeed no one can question or doubt that Qur'an has been made easy to remember. The question then arises, made by whom? No human, however exceptional, could have achieved this feat. Muhammad expressly stated that it was not his word and he was only a vehicle for its expression. What sayest thou Dr. Dawkins? How can this "feat" be explained except by the claim that it is indeed a special creation and a manifest sign of the Almighty Creator?

Perhaps it will be said that no human could have done this but who is to rule out that super-intelligent extraterrestrials could have pulled it off. If so to what end? The book has no other agenda but the welfare and future development of the human race. If the extraterrestrials had done it they would have taken some credit for it or left some clues and hints, however veiled, as to their identity, or how to contact them.

Qur'an, in fact, states categorically that it is the word of the Almighty Creator and goes to great lengths to spell out the attributes of the Creator. Most interestingly Qur'an repeatedly urges mankind to use their intellect and reasoning and even states that the verses of the Qur'an itself should be reflected upon and pondered over and not accepted blindly and just on faith. Now what else could Dr. Dawkins ask for? Instead of belief based on faith Qur'an says, "We will show you our signs in the four corners of the Universe and in yourselves that indeed this is the truth." If this is not using the yardstick of reason Dr. Dawkins, what is?

Qur'an allows full freedom to scientists and searchers to explore all nooks and corners of knowledge without any hindrance. If a scientist's findings are leading him away from the explanations or viewpoints mentioned in the Qur'an, he should not be stopped or discouraged from pursuing his work as was often done by the Christian church in the medieval days and by the communists in the recent days—e.g. the Russian scientist, Lysenko, who was denied continuation of his research which was going against the communistic ideology. Qur'an confidently maintains that the scientist's finding will invariably lead him back to the Qur'anic viewpoint for the simple reason that Qur'an is a revelation from the All-Knowing Creator and thus there can be no contradictions between the work of God, i.e., the universe, and the word of God, i.e., the Qur'an.

All earlier revelations could not stand the ravages of time or corruption by humans. They could not be preserved in their original form or languages. Qur'an, being the final testament, has been given the guarantee of protection by the Creator, who states in the Qur'an itself that "I am its guardian". Nothing like this has ever been claimed by any revelation. In the case of the Qur'an, it is not just a claim, but a historical reality. Qur'an has indeed been preserved intact in the form and fashion that it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Copies of Qur'an from any part of the globe, belonging to disparate peoples are identical and have been so ever since the time of Prophet Muhammad. Even those who do not accept Qur'an to be of divine origin do not deny that it is available today after 1400 years in exactly the same form as Prophet Muhammad recited before he passed away.

> *We have a book absolutely unique in its origin, in its preservation .... on the substantial authority of which no one has ever been able to cast a serious doubt.*
>
> Rev. Bosworth Smith in *Muhammad and Muhammadanism*

Rise and Fall of Nations

While talking of history of the people of old, the Qur'an often talks about the "people of the book" and in particular refers to the remarkable history of the *Bani Israel*, the Children of Israel, which it mentions no less than 22 times in its pages wherein it says there are lessons for all peoples—people who ponder and think. The Children of Israel have had a long and remarkable roller-coaster history. They have seen the glorious period of the rise of David and Solomon and have also experienced the ignominy of the total destruction of their holiest temple in Jerusalem on more than two occasions and prolonged captivity of the entire nation twice, once by the Egyptians and then by the Babylonians.

The purpose of the Qur'an in talking about the Israelites is not to cover their history *per se,* but to focus upon the lessons their history carries for all of us. What were the factors which led them to their peak (because they had patience and constancy (7:137))? And more importantly, what were the factors which dragged them to lows, such as their inordinate love of life (2:96), as well as tyranny and corruption on this earth (17:4) which have not been equaled by many nations. Along the same lines, what is meant by being the chosen people? It was indeed a privilege, but was meant to be discharged by the entailing obligations of leading the world by example and not meant as a license for the elite or the select, which many took it to be (2:80). Qur'an highlights their triumphs and their failures as a lesson and a warning, especially for Muslims and indeed for all peoples of the world, and promises that the laws of the rise and fall of nations—who as nations have no hereafter like individual humans have and hence face accountability in this very world here and now, without any exceptions whatsoever, and without any partiality or favors.

Reply to the Charge That Islam Merely Borrowed From Judaism and Christianity

Many Christian and atheist writers (*Ibn Warraq*) have wasted ink and

paper and their readers' time in building a case that there is nothing new in Islam and it offers so many similarities to Christianity and Judaism and even Zoroastrianism and Hinduism and that the Prophet mostly put down what he learnt from Jews and Christians.

They seem to not notice or deliberately ignore that Islam does not claim to bring anything new. It only once again repeats to humanity the message that all prophets of the Abrahamic tradition mentioned in the Qur'an as well as the Bible (Old and New Testaments) ever since Adam and Noah brought it to mankind. Since the origin of the message was the same, i.e., the Almighty Creator, is it any surprise that the message was essentially the same? If these messages were drastically different, then there would be inconsistency and cause for comment.

In fact, it would have been surprising and self-contradictory if the essence of the message was not the same. The Qur'an explains it clearly. Over time, the original message would get lost or transformed which would then call for a new messenger and a new message to refresh and rejuvenate the same eternal message. An essential aspect of Qur'an is to rectify the errors which had crept into the older revelations, i.e., Old and New Testaments. Qur'an emphasizes the deviations relating to crucial areas of differences, i.e., the divinity of Jesus in no uncertain terms and points out the fallacies which had crept into the Old Testament. It emphasizes that the scriptures no longer reflected the true messages which were brought by Moses and Jesus.

Then why is there an insistence on Mohammed having borrowed from the earlier scriptures? No borrowing happened; rather, the source, the origin, and the contents of the message were the same, as pointed out so clearly by the Qur'an itself.

Summation

Let me clarify what the proof of God's existence really means. Nothing can be proved to those who do not want to accept it. Isn't it a fact that there is no dearth of people all over the globe who even today refuse to believe that humans have landed on the moon? Also, as McGrath points out, for many years after the theory of relativity was propounded by Einstein and he had made three predictions as evidence for his theory, two of these had been borne out experimentally, but the third had to wait a long time before the right conditions arose to confirm the same. During the intervening period, most scientists had come around to accepting the theory without waiting for the last confirmation. The pattern is that evidence keeps accumulating; the scales keep getting tipped until increasingly, acceptance of a viewpoint becomes the norm.

Qur'an follows the same line of reasoning. It maintains that lots of evidence for the Creator's existence has been spread around:

- In the physical universe, i.e., in the galaxies, stars, the sun, moon, the earth, oceans, clouds, plants, and the like for those who want to see.
- In the history of the people of old times and the rise and fall of civilizations. What made them prosper and what brought them down.
- And within the nature of humans, in their desires, passions, needs, relationships, anger, love, rebellion, and submission.

The Qur'an then invites, draws attention, cajoles, and warns the reader to look at these signs, to ponder, to reflect, and to think as to what it all points to. Based on all this evidence and not blind faith, it explains that one should come to accept and believe in the same manner as science does, that indeed there is an Almighty Creator. This Creator is beyond the reach of our senses and understanding, not because there is any doubt in His existence, but because of limitations of the human mind. How can a finite mind fully comprehend the infinite?

It will be objected (as done by Sagan in his book *Contact*), that surely there should be no problem for an Almighty Creator, by definition, to show Himself in such a manner that all mankind will be forced to believe. Indeed, this question was hurled at the prophet by the non-believers which was answered by the Qur'an itself. Effectively, it said that surely this is not only possible but is indeed the case for all nature, i.e., the sun, the moon, and the plants and animals; all follow the built-in laws of nature given by God—none of them dare to question and disobey—only humans can do that—why? – Because by the Creator's own design, they have been given the freedom of choice. They have been made free to either believe or disbelieve in His existence. At the physical plane, life goes on, same for a believer or a disbeliever. Even the most arrogant of the disbelievers, the Pharaoh who claimed divinity for himself, was not denied the air to breathe or life-giving water to drink because everyone has been given the freedom to choose, but for an appointed time only.

Surely, a time will come—at death—when freedom ends and accountability begins. At that time, the Qur'an says that reality will become obvious to everyone—no questions will be asked on the day of judgment because all questions would stand answered, all veils and obstructions would have fallen, and man would be freed from his human limitations and be able to understand reality, something that he cannot do in this life.

Freedom of choice is thus the greatest gift to mankind befitting indeed a vicegerent on earth and one before whom the angels were asked to bow down.

> *If your Lord had so wished, everyone on earth would have believed, all of them together. So will you force mankind to become believers?*
>
> *Qur'an*, 10:99

The question thus arises as to how mankind is to learn about the Creator and what is expected of them. Qur'an says that it can only come through top-down guidance—what the Almighty Creator wants His creation to know and that is what revelation has been all about.

This includes the Old Testament of Moses, the Psalms of David, the New Testament of Jesus, and the final revelation, i.e., the Qur'an of Prophet Muhammad (and many others to different peoples and nations of which little trace is left). They are only hinted towards in the Qur'an. They all contained guidance and directions for mankind and addressed questions such as how do we fit into the scheme of this universe? What are we doing here? How should we conduct ourselves? What is good and what is evil? And what follows death?

Qur'an also contains guidance about questions crucial to human welfare in this life. Are all human beings equal or are some groups intrinsically superior to others as maintained by some people? Are there any groups chosen by God? What is the relationship between genders? Should sex be free amongst consenting adults or is it better not to stimulate this already powerful and headstrong instinct and keep it in check? Should there be laissez-faire in economic relationships in society or do the needy and underprivileged need any special considerations? Is "might is right" a correct philosophy of life or is "to meet evil with good" is a better course to adopt?

Can these and a host of other questions, crucial to human welfare, be fruitfully studied by science? Can unaided reason give us the correct answers without causing heaps of misery and bloodshed amongst innocent humanity? Have we not learnt anything from our long historical experience? Have the holocausts and interminable and unending wars taught us nothing? How do we deal with fellow humans of conflicting views and interests? Is war permissible under any circumstance? Is it not a reality that mankind has only recently woken up to the need for laws and rules to conduct wars and handle conflicts?

Qur'an, the final revelation, is full of guidance on just such questions and the quality of the content speaks for itself. It invites reflection, study, and emphasizes the need for rational understanding of this very content and pooh-poohs blind faith even on its content. It says successful are those who conduct their affairs through consultation. It advises that the correct policy of existence is not to look out for

yourselves, but to do unto your neighbor what you would like him to do to you. It claims unambiguously that this attitude will give us better and more satisfying results and lead to a much more wholesome win-win society.

Extreme atheists like Dawkins or Sam Harris are dismissing even the possibility of the existence of matters such as soul or afterlife or God, and feel that science should not come down from its high pedestal of recognizing only what it can measure or whose effects it can feel through instruments.

So let us look at things whose reality cannot be denied even by diehard atheists. As examples, let us take the Jeffersonian proposition that "It is a self-evident truth that all human beings are born equal" or the proposition of gender equality or that special people shall have equal rights regardless of whether they contribute equally to the society, or that might is not right, or what is good and what is evil. Now what does science have to say about such propositions? Does it have the tools to sift the various alternatives?

In conclusion it should be stated that if atheists really want to discuss and debate the existence of God or the veracity of revelation and its relevance to the modern world then they should look to the Qur'an which is the only genuine version of revelation available today. We welcome their study, attention, critique and comments so long as they are based on objective considerations and not on past prejudices of the Western world and not colored by the conduct of many Muslims of today who have turned their backs on Qur'anic teachings and are an affront to the Qur'an's sublime message of peace and reason. Let me repeat that Qur'an is not a monopoly of the Muslims; rather it is meant for all of humanity.

CHAPTER 3

Development of Objective Criteria to Evaluate the Authenticity of Revelation

My proposition in a nutshell is the following:

It is important for mankind to answer the "Big Questions".

Human intellect and science cannot answer these by bottom-up thinking, because most of these lie outside the reach of the intellect and the methods and reach of science.

To answer these questions, one needs outside help, from the designer and builder of the system itself i.e. top-down knowledge direct from the Creator. The question arises: how do we know there is such a Designer/Creator? The answer is, of course we do not and cannot know, except if the Designer/Creator has thought it fit to answer that for us.

So our search boils down to seeing if such an answer exists. If so, where and how can we find the answer and determine its authenticity. This calls for a SETI-like search based on reason and evidence.

Revelation has claimed to be from just such a Designer/Creator. But there are umpteen claimants of revelation. Which of these, if any, is genuine and authentic?

Science has given us rational tests for practically everything from gold, diamonds, gravity to neutrinos. Why can we not devise tests for evaluating the authenticity of claimed revelations?

Just such an effort has been made by this author for a start, which has been published in the September 2008 issue of the journal *Zygon* which is reproduced here for the reader's convenience.

You are invited, even urged, to study the proposed criteria and suggest ways of improving them. This cannot be a one-person show; a cooperative effort from keen minds of all faiths, or for that matter of no faith, is needed to establish objective tests and yardsticks to answer this most basic of questions, which alone can allow us to answer whether or not there is a Creator and where can we find that guidance to answer our "Big Questions".

Development of objective criteria to evaluate the authenticity of revelation

by Tariq Mustafa

Abstract. Science has been dazzlingly successful in explaining nature. Scientific advances also have led to certain undesirable, though unintended, side effects, one of which is alienation from the spiritual. Revelation comes from the Divine. But what is the status of authenticity of a particular piece claimed to be revelation? What is its historical validity and current state of preservation? This essay proposes to develop a list of rational criteria, in consultation with all stakeholders, for addressing the subject. The aim is to bring objectivity into this discourse by placing it more on the turf of reason rather than basing it on considerations of faith and prior allegiance.

Keywords: authentic revelation; Creator; evaluative framework; falsifiable statements; logical criteria; rational evidence; reason; revelation; SETI project; unfavorable side effects of science.

Many modern humans, because of the scintillating successes of science, have fallen into the trap of thinking that scientific method is all-powerful. However, they find themselves lost in many ways. I argue that alongside the powerful scientific method, which uses humankind's intellectual capabilities, there is another valid source of knowledge: knowledge through divine revelation. These two sources,

rather than conflicting, as some believe, positively reinforce, supplement, and complement each other. But this is so only if the revelation under consideration is authentic revelation from the Creator of the Universe, in pristine and unspoiled original condition, without any admixture of human thought.

With so many claims to revelation floating about, how is one to pick out authentic revelation from the rest? To answer this question in this age of reason, we must use a rational yardstick. Using both reason and revelation can give humans the guidance and information we need to save us from the pitfalls of earlier brilliant civilizations and bring out the potential that can usher in a golden age of living at peace with ourselves, our fellow beings, and our environment.

Just as there are physical laws governing the working of the universe, there are moral laws governing human activities that are far more important for the well-being of humans and society. Both sources, on reflection, lead to an evolutionary outlook regarding the development of humankind from inanimate to animate matter culminating in a unique being. The distinguishing feature of evolution appears to be increasing degrees of freedom, and this will not end with death. The essence of human personality, that is, the soul, freed from the constraints of the material body, will continue its onward march. Only by harnessing the intellect within the overall framework of divine revelation can humankind develop its potential and meet the increasing challenges of tomorrow to ensure the survival and full growth of the human civilization.

Scientific successes and unintended consequences

Development of the scientific method along with advances in technology over the last three centuries, coupled with the symbiosis of science and technology during the twentieth century, have changed our world. From a steady, slowly changing system the world has entered a new phase in which rapid change is the order of the day, and those societies that have failed to climb on the bandwagon have been left behind or marginalized. Science and technology with their

dazzling successes have given humankind not only a fascinating, deeper, and much better understanding of the universe and all material things but also unprecedented control over the environment. Humans have learned to move faster, fly farther, exploit the environment, produce more food, communicate globally, and reach for the moon and the planets and even beyond. Simultaneously, advances in medicine and health sciences along with increased supply of food have resulted in a sharp rise in population that still continues, despite all the Malthusian warnings, and in the opinion of some the population has already crossed the point of an optimum size for our planet.

These successes have had three unintentional consequences—much like the "miracle" drugs and antibiotics that today are recognized to have undesirable side effects that until fairly recently were not obvious. Two ill effects of science are generally accepted and recognized, but the third is increasingly controversial and needs to be addressed more seriously.

The first concerns the deteriorating quality of our environment. When world population levels were low and humankind's scientific and technological capabilities were limited, any damage that the activities of humans could levy on Earth, wittingly or unwittingly, could be easily repaired by the self-healing and -preserving actions and cycles of "Gaia," mother Earth.

However, with the exponential increase in population and our far greater technological capabilities, the world's ecological system can easily be destabilized beyond the point of no return. Humankind can end up doing irreparable damage to our environment, spelling doom for our progeny.

The second has to do with the stresses and strains arising out of inequities and inequalities, such as those between the haves and the have-nots, leading to the creation of steep differences in economic development around the world. In natural systems, such disparities and gradients are taken care of by periodic earthquakes and storms

that relieve the pressure and stress concentrations. In human societies, this role has been played by revolutions and wars, which are becoming increasingly costly with the presence of weapons of mass destruction. The fantastic increase in human capabilities in the areas of travel, communication, trade, and commerce has not been matched by equivalent developments in political, social, and cultural institutions. The result has been increasing tension at the societal level and strife at the international level, giving rise to new terrorist phenomena such as aerial hijackings and suicide bombings that the world community is still trying to understand, subdue, and control—without marked success or optimism.

The third, more controversial but arguably more pernicious, consequence of scientific developments has included a move away from traditional moral values, increases in materialism and atheism, and alienation from the spiritual. These have come about more from historical causes and not because developments in science necessarily led to them. Let me emphasize that blame for these effects cannot be laid at the door of science or the scientific method, which by itself is a powerful and desirable tool but is considered to be of neutral moral value. Rather, it was our failure as humans to use this knowledge properly that allowed these consequences to develop.

Physical, biological, and sociological sciences

Reason, working through the methodology of modern science, has banished a lot of superstitious and incorrect beliefs. The place of science is assured. It has had stunning successes in explaining the mysteries of the physical world. In the areas of mathematics and physics, its dominance is complete. In biological sciences such as biology and physiology it is not quite that confident, however, and in social sciences such as psychology and sociology it is on an even less sure footing. This difference most likely results from the fact that biological and sociological fields do not allow experimental conditions to be easily isolated from extraneous effects and ambient factors to be controlled, which is required for scientific experimentation. There

is also the question of time. Controlled experiments in these areas, even if they were possible, would take a long time, particularly in sociology where it could take a generation or longer, to yield findings. Science has not yet developed—and it is not certain that it ever can—satisfactory tools and techniques to handle such experiments. Moreover, there is the distinct possibility that some such experiments in the field of sociology could go out of control and cause unnecessary misery extending well beyond the participants, even causing widespread suffering. This actually happened not so long ago in the case of Adolf Hitler's Aryan-superiority claim. Excesses of the French Revolution could be cited as another example of such tragedies where good intentions ran amok.

And yet these are the very areas of knowledge that are of central concern to humankind. Relationships among peoples, nations, and the international community, as well as economic and gender issues, are what are in most need of addressing. With the increase in population and more and more powerful and invasive technologies, safeguarding our environment and assuring survival of the human race, or at least avoiding a serious breakdown of civilization as we know it, has become imperative.

Interestingly, it is this very realm of human development that falls within the preserve of revelation.

Revelation

Revelation has lost ground in recent years in face of the onslaught of science and through human interference, exploitation, lack of preservation, and tampering of revelation by those with vested interests. The traditional methodology of revelation is guidance and the transmission of messages through an inspired chosen messenger. It is a top-down process that calls for belief in the existence of a Creator.

Throughout history there have been many cases of claimed revelation. Some of the better-known ones are:

- The Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu scriptures
- Zend Avesta and Dasatir of the Zoroastrians
- The Torah of the Jews
- The Bible of Christianity
- Al Qur'an of Islam
- Guru Granth of the Sikhs
- Book of Mormon, of the Latter-day Saints
- "Revealed Text" of the Baha'is

Scientific knowledge and revelation

All scientific knowledge, by its own definition, is relative. It keeps growing continuously with new discoveries and new ideas. Revelation, coming from the All-Knowing Creator in order to serve its avowed purpose, by definition has to provide absolute guidance and *not* be relative or questionable. This is a red flag, of course, for skeptics who are not prepared to accept anything in human affairs as absolute.

It may seem surprising, but here the atheists are right, and I fully agree with the contention of the skeptics. Nothing originating from human endeavors, be it science or philosophy, a practical system of government, or an ideology, including a religion, can ever be perfect or claim to be based on absolute values. No human effort, however good or widely accepted, can be termed perfect or absolute. It will perforce remain relative. It will always be open to question and subject to revision and improvement. The point to note is that authentic revelation, as defined in this essay, is not of human origin. It is top-down guidance claiming to originate from the superintelligent Designer, Creator, and Sustainer of the Universe including humankind. Now, who could know the nature of humans and their role and place in the universe better than the Creator? (We will address the concerns of those who doubt or deny the existence of the Creator shortly. At this stage of the discussion, it is requested that they go along for the purpose of following the line of reasoning being

pursued.) For those who accept the Creator, surely there can be no other logical position, especially if it were to be found that the Creator says precisely that in revelation. Indeed, in the Qur'an, God states: "This Divine writ—let there be no doubt about it—is a guidance for all the God-conscious" (Al Qur'an 2:2, translated by Muhammad Asad). At another place in the Qur'an God proclaims, "Step by step has He bestowed upon thee from on high the Divine writ, setting forth the truth which confirms whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations] for it is He who has bestowed from on high the Torah and the Injil (Gospel) aforetime, as a guidance unto mankind, and it is He who has bestowed (upon man) the standard by which to discern the true from the false" (Al Qur'an, 3:3–4).

Revelation and the creator

How do we know that the Creator exists and that the so-called revelation is from the Creator? These are the million-dollar questions that lie at the heart of the problem and that I aim to answer here. Clearly, a satisfactory answer for the skeptics cannot come from the vantage point of faith. The answer has to be based on rational evidence and sound arguments that can stand the scrutiny of objective examination—similar, for example, to the efforts being made by NASA in their Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) project. We can follow the methodology of science to help us with this search by laying down strict criteria for evaluation of even such a seemingly preposterous claim. It should be possible for us as rational beings to formulate such criteria.

I propose to answer the above questions by reversing their order—establishing criteria that can help us evaluate the authenticity of revelation and thus establish its origin leading to the existence of the Creator. Although we have no way of directly confirming the existence of a Creator on the basis of reasoning alone, we do have access to the self-proclaimed owner's manual of divine revelation. Using our reason, we certainly can hope to, at least in principle, test and verify the claims and content of such revelation. If it turns out

that it is in fact something unique and beyond the capabilities and reach of human beings, we should be willing, as reasonable people, to accept this as sufficient evidence of the existence of the Creator.

Only God, as the Designer, Builder, and Maintainer of the Universe and of humankind, can truly know God's creation. Thus, knowledge emanating from God by definition will be like the instructions given in an owner's manual that we all recognize are ignored at our own peril. Reason is rightly unwilling to give absolute status to an idea or instruction emanating from any human source, however high and mighty it may seem, but it cannot logically deny that status to something emanating from the Creator and Designer, because none else can know the system better.

Revelation: criteria for evaluation

Let us try to lay down strict and demanding criteria in consultation with all stakeholders, both believers and atheists (who are again asked to bear with this line of reasoning for the present). If it turns out that the agreed-upon criteria are not met by any of the proclaimed revelations, the atheist point of view will stand vindicated. In the other case, they should be willing to review their position (as recently happened, at least partially, in the case of atheism's guru, Antony Flew[1]). The important requirement is to maintain objectivity and intellectual honesty in conducting this exercise. Let the results of the study show what the reality is.

With this aim in mind, I make an initial attempt here to draft the outline of such criteria. I present it to thoughtful people of all persuasions to try to make some progress in the spirit of a truly objective inquiry. Readers are asked to review the draft criteria and give their comments and suggestions for tightening and improving them, keeping in mind the objectives outlined above. Whatever preconceived points of view we may hold should not be allowed to impinge on objectivity in this exercise. Extremism should be avoided, and the exercise should not be turned into a polemical, partisan, or merely academic one for its own sake or to promote preconceived

notions. There is too much at stake.

My suggested evaluation criteria are as follows:

1. The revelation should be in a clear, intelligible, and understandable language, having some exceptional literary and other qualities—worthy of its sublime source, befitting the Creator. It must carry the stamp of the superintelligent Creator and be demonstrably so.
2. It should be consistent and free of any contradictions.
3. It should have depth of meaning so that it can simultaneously cater to the needs of both farmer and philosopher.
4. Its appeal must be based on rational grounds and must not call for blind faith.
5. It should retain its form, original language, and text to maintain its veracity for future generations and be attributable to the Divine.
6. It should carry convincing evidence of its divine, not human, origin and content.
7. It should contain information, or pointers, that can be verified or falsified, for example signs, predictions, or comments about the universe we live in and about the nature of humankind.
8. It should contain guidance, information, laws, and/or instructions that help humankind with its individual and community existence, assist and guide its development, and protect it from unnecessary strife.
9. Determine whether it contains any evidence of a fundamental and genuine code similar to the one, for example, being searched for by NASA specialists in their SETI project.
10. It should contain meaningful, useful, and convincing information about the existence and attributes of the Creator, about afterlife (whether there is one or not), and relationship of humans with their Creator.

11. The character, conduct, and behavior of the bearer of the message should display the impeccable standards befitting the lofty status of such a messenger.
12. It should clarify the role and status of other claimants existing before it was revealed, and correct and rectify their significant errors and/or distortions.
13. There should be a built-in mechanism of renewal, replacement, or preservation of the revelation to retain continuity and authority. The essential contents of the guidance should reach all peoples and be valid for all times.
14. It should focus on the welfare of humanity and identify desirable pathways in the march of humankind toward genuine progress with guiding signposts.
15. Ultimately, as recipients of divine guidance, humankind should be able to ask: What influence did the revelation have on humankind in general, and how has it stood the test of time?

Once such criteria have been broadly developed in consultation with the scientific and religious communities of different hues, the next stage of the exercise would be to use the list in judging the extent to which any claimed revelation meets the standard. Anyone would be free to conduct such an exercise and place the results for discussion and debate before acknowledged peers, as is the custom in sciences, for study and verification/falsification. This way, an agreed-upon framework would have been developed to move toward answering the question of whether there is a Creator and divine guidance and, if so, where such revelation can be found. In the end, it is such guidance that is needed to help humanity in its quest for progress, internal and external development, and peaceful coexistence.

Note

1. Interview of Professor Antony Flew with Liberty University's Gary Habermas in a 2004 Summit at New York University, reported in a DVD made by ScienceFindsGod.com. The complexity

discovered in the structure of DNA led Flew to acknowledge that such a complex structure could not have been the product of chance and natural selection alone, as maintained by evolutionists, but pointed the way to the existence of a superintelligent being.

CHAPTER 4

The Case for God

This item is a copy of selections from a slide presentation made by the author to a number of primarily non-Muslim audiences in the UK and the USA and particularly the Star Island Conference of the Institute of Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) on "Emergence" held in July 2008 making out The Case for God – based on reason and evidence and not mere faith. This is meant to respond to the atheists' viewpoint and to bring out the fact that while their emphasis on reason and evidence is fully supported, it is not the monopoly of atheists. In fact the author's forthcoming book on this subject makes the point that the age of reason and enlightenment did not emerge in 17th-century Europe, as is commonly espoused in western literature, but actually germinated in the 7th century with the advent of the Qur'an with its pointed and frequent urgings to its readers and listeners to think, to ponder, to reflect and to understand even verses of the Qur'an before accepting their content.

Note: This presentation can be downloaded in color PowerPoint from my website: www.tariqmustafa.com. The following is the text-only version of the presentation.

"The Case for God"

A Rationalist's Perspective

By:

Tariq Mustafa

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A Concerned Global Citizen

and Seeker of Truth

Three Themes of the Talk

- Science and Religion Discourse
- Atheist counterattack – The God Debate
- Not distinguishing between authentic and corrupted revelation

The real struggle is not between West and Islam, à la Huntington's thesis of "Clash of Civilizations", but between the forces of Belief and Disbelief

Successes of Science

- Astounding success of modern science – Acme of Reason
- Science can explain everything—Mechanistic Syndrome (Newton)
- Man's increasing control over his environment

New Trends of the Late 20th Century

- Growth of academic institutions studying relationship of science and religion
- Resurgence of atheistic thought via a number of bestsellers

Science and Religion Interface - Four views of Ian Barbour

- Conflict: Scientific materialism, Biblical literalism
- Independence: Separate domains, differing language and functions
- Dialogue: Presuppositions and limited questions, methodological and conceptual parallels
- Integration: Natural theology, theology of nature, synthesis

The speaker maintains, both science and religion share the value that truth will ultimately prevail

Science - Limitations

- Chinks started appearing with:
- The Atomic Theory – apparently solid matter being mostly empty space (Rutherford and Dalton)
- Duality of light – Particles or photons
- Theory of Relativity – Relativity of time (Einstein)
- Quantum Theory – Principle of Uncertainty (Heisenberg)
- Chaos Theory
- Complexity of the Genetic Code – DNA (Watson and Crick)

Bold Qur'an Claims

While Qur'an is not a book of Science, it is a book of Signs:

- *We will show them our signs in the Universe and within themselves, until it becomes manifest unto them that this (The Qur'an) is the truth.*

Al Qur'an, 41:53

- *If it had been from other than God you would have found in it many inconsistencies.*

Relationship of Science with Revelation

- The strong point of science is that it is relative, changing, developing, and advancing
- True revelation's strength is that it is absolute, deals with permanent values and teaches mankind what they know not and cannot know otherwise
- Both are ways of getting at the Truth

Value of Truth

- Foundation of Successful Society
- Bedrock of Equity and Justice
- Difference Between Functional and Dysfunctional Societies

The Rise of Atheism

- Replacement of the earth-centered scheme by the sun-centered system (Galileo-17th century)
- Rise of Evolution instead of traditional Creationism (Darwin-19th century)
- Libido, Id and Ego can explain human behavior and emotions (Freud-19th century)
- God is dead (said Nietzsche, late 19th century)

Evolution of Ideas

- 18th Century – Culmination of materialistic thinking: philosophers of the French Revolution, Rousseau and Voltaire
- 19th Century – Darwin, Marx, Freud
- 20th Century – Appearance of fundamental limitations in scientific understanding
- 20th Century, second half – Rise of the Reason/Revelation debate and the Evolution/Creation/Intelligent Design debate

The Case of the Atheists - Dawkins

- A Darwinian worldview makes belief in God unnecessary or impossible
- Religion makes assertions which are grounded in faith, which represents a retreat from a rigorous, evidence-based concern for truth
- Religion offers an impoverished and attenuated vision of the world. In contrast, science offers a bold and brilliant vision of the universe as grand, beautiful, and awe-inspiring
- Religion leads to evil. It is like a malignant virus, infecting human minds

The Case of the Atheists - Sam Harris

- Don't believe in anything without reason and evidence
- They go against religion for its wars, persecutions, bigotry

I fully agree with the first, but beg to differ with the second assertion

Golden Age of Atheism

- What about the excesses of the atheists?
- The atrocities of the French Revolution, considered by many to be the golden age of atheism
- Horrors of the Nazi Holocaust
- The Gulags of the Communists

Surely these were not doings of the religious

Use Reason and Evidence to Judge Revelation

- But let us agree with the Atheists on one important thing:

Let us judge the case of what claims to be "Revelation" on Reason and Evidence because in today's age, nothing less will do

Age of Reason

- Let us accept that in this age of reason, the days of miracles and magic are no more
- If there is a God, He will not hide and will let us know about Himself
- So, just where do we find out about Him and His revelation?

Qur'an—The Final Testament

- It is here, ready to be examined
- It is available in its original form, just as it was revealed, and not a translation
- It is clear and consistent without any contradictions
- It states unequivocally that GOD Himself is its guardian against corruption

Qur'an refutes Dawkins' Assertion

- *It is He who created several heavens closely fitting one another. No want of proportion will you see in the creation of one Who created things within a specified pattern. So turn thy vision again. Do you notice any flaw? So again turn thy vision a second time; your vision will come back to you dull and discomfited in a state worn out.*

Qur'an 67:3-4

Claimed Revelations

- The Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu scriptures
- Zend Avesta and Dasatir of the Zoroastrians
- The Torah of the Jews
- Bible of Christianity
- Al Qur'an of Islam
- Sri Guru Granth of the Sikhs
- Book of Mormon of the Latter-day Saints

- Writings of the Christian Scientists
- Books of the Baha'is
- The Urantia books of Chicago, by the Sleeper

How to Verify Authenticity

- Same way that we check other things i.e. through rational examination of their substance and content, for example:
- Gold – by its specific gravity and inertness
- Diamond – by its hardness and refractive index
- Gravity or Neutrinos – by their peculiar effects

So just how do we go about judging a book?

Test Criteria for Revelation

- Revelation should be UNIQUE in language, form, and content
- It should be consistent and free from contradictions
- It should explain itself, give its purpose, indicate its origins, and establish its credentials
- It should contain solid, meaningful, practical guidance, and not be airy-fairy
- It should address the needs of an illiterate as well as a Bertrand Russell
- Preferably, it should contain self-tests for its veracity, a code or a pattern for its genuineness and purity

Revelations: Suggested Evaluation Criteria

1. The revelation should be in a clear, intelligible, and understandable language, having some exceptional literary and other qualities – worthy of its sublime source, befitting the Creator. It must carry the stamp of the super-intelligent Creator and be demonstrably so.
2. It should be consistent and free of any contradictions.

3. It should have depth of meaning so that it can simultaneously cater to the needs of both a simple farmer and an accomplished philosopher à la Bertrand Russell.
4. Its appeal must be based on rational grounds and must not call for blind faith.
5. It should retain its form, original language, and text to maintain its veracity for the future generations and be attributable to the divine.
6. It should carry evidence of its divine, not human, origin and content in a suitable and convincing fashion.
7. It should contain information, or pointers, which can be verified or falsified, for example, signs, predictions or comments about the universe we live in and about the nature of mankind.
8. It should contain guidance, information, laws, and/or instructions that help mankind with its individual and community existence, assist and guide its development, and protect it from unnecessary strife.
9. Determine if it contains any evidence of a fundamental and genuine code similar to the one, for example, being searched for by NASA specialists while conducting their exploration for extraterrestrial intelligence, under the SETI project.
10. It should contain meaningful, useful, and convincing information about the existence and attributes of the Creator, about afterlife (whether there is one or not), and relationship of humans with their Creator.
11. The character, conduct, and behavior of the bearer of the message should display the impeccable standards befitting his lofty status.
12. It should clarify the role and status of other claimants existing before it was revealed, and correct and rectify their significant errors/distortions.
13. There should be a built-in mechanism of renewal, replacement,

or preservation of the revelation, to retain some kind of continuity and authority. The essential contents of the guidance should reach all peoples and be valid for all times.

14. It should focus on the welfare of humanity and identify desirable pathways in the march of mankind towards genuine progress with guiding signposts.
15. Ultimately, as recipients of Divine Guidance, mankind should be able to ask: What influence did the revelation have on mankind in general, and how has it stood the test of time?

Applying the Evaluation Criteria

- Once such criteria have been broadly developed, in consultation with the scientific and religious communities of different hues, the next stage of the exercise would be to use them in judging the extent to which any claimed revelation can and does fulfill this standard
- Anyone would be free to conduct such an exercise and place the results for discussion and debate before acknowledged peers, as is the custom in sciences, for study and verification/falsification
- This should lead to the development of an agreed framework to move forward towards answering the all-important question of whether there is indeed a Creator and Divine Guidance and if so where can we find such revelation

Seek the Truth With Humility

- The Creator's signs/evidence are spread all over
- We just need to open our eyes and our minds and make use of our rational faculties
- But only with humility and not arrogance
- Because the Creator of the Universe does not like arrogance. Remember what happened to Pharaoh! In his story are signs for all of us

Qur'an Bases Its Case on Reason and Evidence, Not Blind Faith

- Qur'an ushered in the Age of Reason; European Enlightenment followed 1000 years after the Qur'an!
- Look at the Companions of the Prophet as examples
- And not at today's Muslims, who have abandoned Qur'an and are an affront to its teachings
- Note that Qur'an is not the monopoly of Muslims
- When Bani-Israel turned their backs on the teachings of the prophets, they were abandoned and enslaved
- When any other group abandons Truth/moral values, they too will meet the same fate, like modern-day Muslims

Contributions of Islam to Human Civilization

- Ushering in of the age of reason in the 7th century by the Qur'an, well ahead of European Enlightenment in the 16th–17th centuries
- Beginning of the experimental/observational method of science (8th-13th centuries)
- Introduction of jurisprudence – the science of law (8th–12th centuries)

Note: Also study of history leading to the birth of sociology, begun by Ibn Khaldun (14th century)

Uniqueness of Qur'an

- Its approach—based on reason and not blind faith
- Final Testament, divine origin
- Continuation of the long series of revelations
- Old Testament › New Testament › Final Testament
- Final word of the Creator
- Corrector of corruption in ideas of God, Hereafter, life in this world, etc.
- Universal Constitution for Mankind

- Restorer of rational belief (see quote of Alphonse de Lamartine)

Lessons for Modern Civilization

- Humankind needs GOD for guidance
- Science has been dazzlingly successful, but its limitations are increasingly showing up
- Guidance is especially needed in the spheres of social and moral issues, the very areas that are not easily amenable to scientific experimentation
- GOD not only exists as He proclaims, but is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. We can look for His signs in the universe, history of peoples, and within ourselves
- Qur'an states, "We will show you our signs till you come to accept that this indeed is the truth"

Historical Background to Western Mistrust of Islam and Muslims

- Historical conflicts between the world of Christianity and Islam
- Islam displaced Christianity in Hellenized Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Spain, and the Byzantine Empire
- Led to counterattacks by Christian Europe
- Crusades of 11th–13th centuries
- Reconquista of Spain and Sicily
- Colonization of Islamic World in the 18th-20th centuries
- The European military reaction was accompanied by intense psychological warfare by:
- Distorting the picture of Islam and Muslims (e.g. accusing that Islam was spread by the sword)
- Denigrating the Prophet (calling him an impostor, a lecher, and now a terrorist)
- Mounting false attacks on the Qur'an
- The result was deep misunderstandings and a widening chasm

between Christianity and Islam

- The 19th–21st centuries saw some reversal of this trend in Europe with increasing confidence and growth of objective scholarship

Rise of Islam

- Pre-Islamic Arabia – a total non-entity
- Middle East was totally dominated by Persians and Byzantines, in perpetual conflict
- Tribal Arabia was subjugated by both
- Rise of Islam in the 7th century
- Explosive physical expansion, never seen before in human history, from China & India in the East to the Atlantic Ocean and Spain in the West, in less than a hundred years, simultaneously overpowering the Persian and Byzantine superpowers of the day

Spurt in Intellectual Advancement 8th-12th Centuries

- Unique display of intellectual openness—gathering of knowledge from all over the world
- Original contributions—anatomy, algebra, trigonometry, optics, medicine, Arabic numerals, zero digit (India), gunpowder and paper (China)
- Development of experimental method, leading to the rise of modern sciences
- Open sharing of knowledge with Europe through Sicily and Spain

What triggered this phenomenal burst of physical and intellectual energy?

The Only Convincing Answer Is ...

It was the impact of the Unique Qur'an, a revelation from the Almighty Creator, and the example of Prophet Muhammad, the revolutionary *par excellence.*

The Qur'an produced this effect then; it can repeat the same now

What Has Stood in the Way of Understanding of the Qur'an by Westerners?

- Hostile Islamic-Christian relations from the start; Christian psychological warfare leading to horrible distortions
- Abandonment of Qur'anic values by modern-day Muslims
- They are an affront to the Qur'an, having made suicide bombings and plane hijackings a totally misleading symbol of this religion of peace
- Muslims have turned their backs on Qur'an and they have in turn been abandoned by the Lord, like the Israelites of old
- To look at products of Qur'anic teachings, we have to go back to the Prophet and his companions

Where to Find Signs of the Creator

- Look into the far reaches of the Universe
- Look into the history of people of old
- Look into yourselves

Qur'an says: "We will show you our signs till you come to believe that this indeed is the truth"

Qur'an and Universe – 1/4

- Cosmology and Astronomy, *Al Rad*-2, *Anam*-101
- Arabs believed in flat earth and that high mountains supported the heavens, corrected by Qur'an
- Orbits of celestial objects – *Anbiya*-33, *Yasin*-38, *Dhurriyat*-7
- Layers of the atmosphere – *Fussilat*-11-12
- Big bang and expansion of the universe
- Deep seas and oceans

- Geology, continental drift and role of mountains

Qur'an and the Universe – Signs 2/4

- Growth of the embryo – *Momin*-14
- Fetus and its development, Dr Keith Moore
- Creation of man, in stages
- Marine phenomena, seas not mingling *Rahman*-19-20

Qur'an and the Human Body – 3/4

- New Diseases
- Qur'an and skin
- Sensory characteristics
- Resurrection and fingerprints
- Qur'an and clouds – *Zukhruf*-11
- Qur'an and cerebrum

Qur'an and Signs – 4/4

- Slaughter of animals
- Protective roof (sky) – atmosphere – *Anbiya*-32, *Tariq*-11
- Protective role of earth's atmosphere and Van Allen belts from meteors and radiation, etc.
- Qur'an has been made easy to remember
- Iron (Atomic No. 26) – *Hadid* 57:25–26; the *abjad* value of *hadid* is the same as the number of the *Sura*, i.e., 57

Muhammad – Restorer of Rational Beliefs

Alphonse de Lamartine in *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris, 1854.

- *If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astonishing results are the three criteria of a human genius, who could dare compare any great man in history with Muhammad?*

- *Philosopher, Orator, Apostle, Legislator, Conqueror of Ideas, Restorer of Rational beliefs.... As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?*

Is There a Purpose to Life? What Are Humans Doing on Earth?

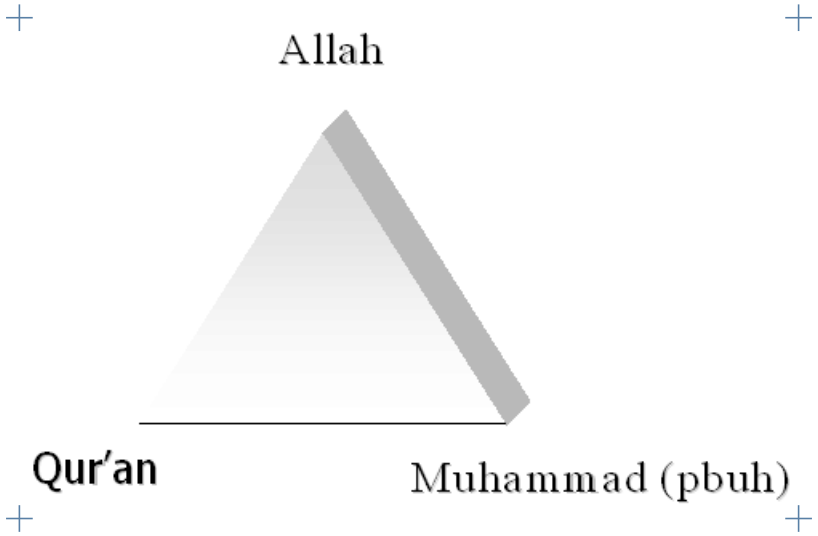
Atheists	Qur'an
Life developed steadily through random mutations and natural selection - evolution	Humans were created gradually through stages, then endowed with consciousness
There is no purpose to existence	There is a definite objective and purpose to creation
We make what we like of life, which ends with death	This life is a preparation for the afterlife which will be much more significant

Recommendations

- Form a circle to study the Qur'an to:
- bring out its relevance and guidance for the modern age
- clear the criticism and doubts being created by vested interests
- mount a watch on internet and media
- Help in my efforts to rationally demonstrate the uniqueness of the Qur'an by:
- Refining the Evaluation Criteria
- Identifying linguistic gems from the Qur'an, e.g.:

Inna Nahnu Nuhyi wa Numeeto wa Ilainal Maseer (50:43)

The Dynamic Relationship



The Old Testament—Target of Atheists' Fury

- The Atheists go especially for the God of the Old Testament – depicted as cruel and vengeful

Forgive me, but who said that the Old Testament represents the true God?

Why the God of the Torah and the Bible Appears Cruel?

- These were the images of God drawn up by a people fallen on hard days, made captive, degraded, and hopeless – perhaps wanting revenge after the Babylonian captivity. Their views are reflective of their own inadequacies
- This man-made picture of GOD has since been amply corrected by the final testament – the Qur'an

Conventional Reply of the Believers

- Based on scriptures, dependent on faith alone – Old and New Testaments
- Viewpoint of Vatican regarding this

But how can anything not in the original language be considered divine?

Islam, the Freshest, Cleanest Political Idea – H.G. Wells in *Outline of History*

- And if the reader entertains any delusions about a fine civilization, either Persian, Roman, Hellenic, or Egyptian, being submerged by this flood, the sooner he dismisses such ideas the better. Islam prevailed because it was the best social and political order the times could offer
- It was the broadest, freshest, and cleanest political idea that had yet come into actual activity in the world, and it offered better terms than any other to the mass of mankind

Is Islam Compatible With Modernity?

This is what Professor Ernest Gellner, a noted anthropologist, said in his book *Muslim Society, 1985:*

> *By various obvious criteria – universalism, scripturalism, spiritual egalitarianism, the extension of full participation in the sacred community not to one, or some, but to all, and the rational systematization of social life – Islam is, of the three great Western monotheisms, the one closest to modernity.*

Uniqueness of Qur'an

- *In Mohammadanism everything is different here. Instead of the shadowy and the mysterious, we have history....We know of the external history of Muhammad....while for his internal history after his mission had been proclaimed, we have a book absolutely unique in its origin, in its preservation....on the substantial authority of*

which no one has ever been able to cast a serious doubt.

Rev. Bosworth Smith in *Muhammad and Muhammadanism*

The Qur'an – Evidence of Divine Origin

- It has been made easy to remember (54:17)
- Allah Himself is its guardian (15:9)
- Its compatibility with knowledge
- Relativity of time
- All life originated in water (21:30, 25:54)
- Big Bang—*qurras* (spheres) – moving suns
- Stages of fetal development (Professor Moore, Maurice Bucaille)
- Fingerprints
- Code or pattern
- Predictions—Roman victory over Persians (see Gibbon and Hitti)

Evidence of Veracity of the Qur'an

- Claims of Qur'an, its majestic language, its consistency, its clarity
- Prophecies
- Reference to areas of knowledge compatible with modern knowledge – 1400 years ago
- Allah being its Guardian
- It has been made easy to remember - *Huffaz*
- Underlying numerical patterns and design – Numbers 19 and 9, etc.
- Amenability to falsification tests
- Living miracle, available for testing and verification
- Sad fate of modern Muslims who have abandoned its teaching

Simplicity and Rationality of Islam

- Edward Montet, *La Propagande Chrétienne et ses Adversaires Musulmans*, Paris 1890. (Also in T.W. Arnold in *The Preaching of Islam*, London 1913):

  Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term considered etymologically and historically.

  A creed so precise, so stripped of all theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvelous power of winning its way into the consciences of men.

Islam – Not Spread by the Sword

- Mahatma Gandhi, statement published in *Young India*, 1924:

  .... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle.

- De Lacy O'Leary in *Islam at the Crossroads*, London, 1923:

  History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.

Future of Genuine Islam

- Sir George Bernard Shaw in *The Genuine Islam*, 1936:

  If any religion had the chance of ruling over England, nay Europe within the next hundred years, it could be Islam. I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of

existence which can make itself appeal to every age.

I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today.

- See also Karen Armstrong's *Muhammad, the Prophet for Our Time* (2006)

Qur'anic Views About Man's Creation

- It is He Who created you from dust (inorganic matter) (82:6-8)
- (God) fashioned you in (different) stages (71:14)
- (God) fashioned man from a small quantity (of sperm) (16:4)
- Was (man) not a small quantity of sperm which has been poured out? (75:37)
- Then We placed (man) as a small quantity (of sperm) in a safe lodging firmly established (23:13)
- Man was fashioned from a liquid poured out (86:6)
- A despised liquid (32:8 and 77:20)
- Verily, we fashioned man from a small quantity of mingled liquids (76:2)
- (God) made his progeny from the quintessence of a despised liquid (32:8)
- We cause whom We will to rest in the womb for an appointed term (22:5)

Qur'anic Views About Human Reproduction

- O Man! Who deceives you about your Lord the Noble, Who created you and fashioned you in due proportion and gave you any form He willed (Al Qur'an, 82:14)
- (God) fashioned you in (different) stages (6:2)

- Verily We created them out of sticky clay (adsorption) (23:12)
- And We have created Man from the extracts of inorganic matter of clay (15:26)
- And verily We created man from old physically altered mud which after a lapse of time reached a certain stage of dryness (55:14)
- He created Man from mud nearly as dry as pottery (stage of near dryness) (18:54)

Two Strands—17th to 21st Centuries

- Renaissance › Enlightenment › Rise of Science
- Criticism of the Church › Reformation › Doubts about the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) based on Faith and not Reason

Conclusions

- Form your own ideas
- Stick to Reason and Evidence
- Be Fair and Objective (critical, maybe skeptical, but remain open)
- Finalize the criteria for evaluating the authenticity of claimed revelations
- Let Qur'an be studied by a think tank rather than approached parochially
- Remember, the Qur'an is not a monopoly of the Muslims, but a gift for all of humankind

CHAPTER 5

Introductory Note to the Qur'an

What makes this so-called "Final Testament" so unique that the author offers it as the evidence of the existence of the Creator? Qur'an is a miracle of miracles, not just because it is supernatural, but because it can be verified by reason. Qur'an, on the face of it, is only a book, *albeit* one that claims to be revelation. It is not a book of science, but very much a book of signs, providing evidence of the Creator in the far reaches of the universe, from within us and in the history of the people of old. It makes astounding claims about itself, about its unique style, its inimitable language, and consistent content free from contradictions.

Uniqueness of Qur'an

The entire argument in this book is based on the premise that Qur'an is so unique and matchless that it is a living testimony to the bold claims made in it by the Creator. It is word for word a revelation direct from the Creator which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad piecemeal over around 23 years, via the archangel Gabriel.

> *This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah.*
>
> *Qur'an* 10:37

Furthermore the Creator has made it easy to remember by heart, to ensure that it will withstand the vicissitudes of history and will not fall prey to what happened to all of the earlier revelations, that either got lost or got hugely adulterated, such that only translations or efforts at reconstruction have survived to reach us. It is no idle coincidence that today there are millions of Muslim men, women and children, all

over the world who are fluent memorizers of this New Testament-sized book rigorously from A to Z even when most of them can neither speak nor understand Arabic, the language of the Qur'an. Is there any such example which can be quoted or any other meaningful rationale rendered to explain this fantastic phenomenon?

The Qur'an boldly states that not only has it been preserved in its pristine form for all these 1400 years or so but the Creator is its guardian and preserver for all times to come since this is the final testament and the last of the revelations. This is the boldest and most unusual of claims that is available to critics and whomever else for verification or falsification.

In fact the Creator throws another challenge to all comers and especially the opponent Arabs of the day, who prided themselves on their verbal and poetic prowess, to produce a *sura* (chapter) or even one verse like this, if they can! The amazing fact is that no one has succeeded convincingly in meeting this challenge to date.

> *If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.*
>
> *Qur'an* 17:88

> *Or do they say, "He forged it"? Say: "Bring then a Sura like unto it, and call (to your aid) anyone you can, besides Allah, if it be that ye speak the truth!*
>
> *Qur'an* 10:38

> *And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Sura like thereunto; And call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah. If your (doubts) are true. But if ye cannot — And of a surety ye cannot.*
>
> *Qur'an* 2:23–24

Significantly, Qur'an is the only revelation which lays so much stress on the need to employ one's intellect. It pointedly asks the believers not to blindly fall for the verses even of the Qur'an, like cattle, but to

ponder, reflect and understand them. Without understanding how can one benefit from the guidance of the Creator, which after all is the real aim and goal of revelation?

Qur'an claims to be full of signs for those who are open to ponder and reflect. It claims that it shall continue to show such signs, in order to demonstrate that this indeed is the truth and a revelation from the mighty and omnipotent Creator, in:

- The far reaches of the Universe
- Within yourselves i.e. within human nature
- And within the history of the people of old

The first of the above encompasses most of the physical and biological phenomena concerning the creation of the Universe, the solar system, the earth, evolution and rise of life, conception and development of the embryo and its successive stages of development which have been listed (not exhaustively) in chapter 4. The interesting fact is that much of this information, described in the Qur'an is so much ahead of its time that no person, not only in 7th-century Arabia but even until the late 19th century, could have known the facts and information mentioned in the Qur'an.

Compatibility of Qur'an with Modern Knowledge

Dr Maurice Bucaille, a Christian and a French surgeon, studying the incompatibility of scientific facts and Biblical statements in the 1960s decided to do a similar comparison with the Qur'an and was amazed to find in his own words that:

> *These scientific considerations, which are very specific to the Qur'an, greatly surprised me at first. Up till then, I had not thought it possible for one to find so many statements in a text compiled more than thirteen centuries ago referring to extremely diverse subjects and all of them totally in keeping with modern scientific knowledge.*
>
> *..... I could not find a single error in the Qur'an. I had to stop and ask myself if a man was the author of the Qur'an, how could he have*

> *written facts in the seventh century A.D. that today are shown to be in keeping with modern scientific knowledge ... what human explanation can there be to this observation...*

Dr. Maurice Bucaille goes on to say that:

> *at the height of Islam, between the 8th and 12th centuries A.D. at a time when restrictions on scientific development were in force in the Christian world, a very large number of studies and discoveries were being made at Islamic Universities. It was there that the remarkable cultural resources of the time were to be found. The Caliph's Library at Cordoba contained 400,000 volumes ...Greek, Indian and Persian sciences were taught. This is why scholars from all over Europe went to study at Cordoba, just as today people go to the United States to perfect their studies. A very great number of ancient manuscripts have come down to us thanks to cultivated Arabs who acted as the vehicle for the culture of conquered countries. We are also greatly indebted to Arabic culture for mathematics (algebra was an Arabic invention) astronomy, physics (optics), geology, botany, medicine etc.*
>
> *..... How could a man, from being illiterate become the most important author, in terms of literary merit, in the whole of Arabic literature? How could he then pronounce truths of a scientific nature that no other human being could possibly have developed at the time, and all this without once making the slightest error in his pronouncements on the subject? ..... for me, there can be no human explanation to the Qur'an.*

This exercise of the amazing compatibility of Qur'an with modern knowledge has been repeated by many, including the present author, who finds this to be a demonstrable fact. There is just one instance where I have had difficulty with the contents of the Qur'an and that refers to the long ages of the pre-Noah prophets where interestingly both the Bible and the Qur'an talk of ages well into hundreds of years, which must be accepted, and are not in line with modern knowledge on the subject. But then who is to say that an adequate explanation may not be forthcoming with improved knowledge, as happens so often in science.

In all other instances, including evolution of life, the Qur'an has no conflict with modern knowledge (as far as facts are concerned). When it comes to the philosophical implications the two are wide apart, as has been shown in this collection and will be further elaborated in my forthcoming book. In fact the Qur'an goes much further than materialistic evolution and points to the continuation of evolutionary development even after death when it says that our souls (the real human essence) will be freed from the constraints of this material body so that its further development can continue unhindered and unencumbered by the drag of our material body.

Rationalists Paine and Kant echoing the Qur'an

Additionally two strong voices of the enlightenment, Thomas Paine and Immanuel Kant echo wonderfully some of the beautiful statements made in the Qur'an as will be seen in the following quotes:

Thomas Paine, in *Age of Reason* (Nu Vision Publications, LLC '07; ISBN#1-59547-910-4) puts in a plea to atheists:

> *lest in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and of false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true*
>
> *The philosopher knows that the laws of the Creator have never changed, with respect either to the principles of science, or the properties of matter. Why then is it to be supposed that they have changed with respect to man?*
>
> *Age of Reason*, p. 173

Compare this with the Qur'an: "God does not change His Laws!"

As Paine states again:

> *Do we not see a fair creation prepared to receive us the instant we are born–a world furnished to our hands that cost us nothing? Is it we that light up the sun; that pour down the rain; and fill the earth with abundance? Whether we sleep or awake the vast machinery of the universe still goes on. Are these things and the blessings they*

indicate in future, nothing to us?

Age of Reason, p.33

It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of a word of God can unite. The Creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this word of God reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible Whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not wanting to withhold the abundance even from the unthankful. In fine do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the scripture, which any human hand might make, but the scripture called the Creation.

Age of Reason p.48

It is only by exercise of reason that man can discover God.

Age of Reason, p.49

Kant said in his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 1788, that:

Two things fill the soul with wonder and reverence, increasing evermore as I meditate more deeply upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.

Compare with the following Qur'anic verse and see its modernity.

We will show them our signs in the Universe and within themselves, until it becomes manifest unto them that this (The Qur'an) is the truth.

Al Qur'an, 41:53

The case being made in this book is that Qur'an is full of evidence to show beyond any reasonable doubt to anyone willing to listen that it is a unique product which cannot possibly be the handiwork of humans. However as the Qur'an points out, it deliberately refrains from giving such overwhelming proof which simply will have to be accepted even by hardcore skeptics for the reason that God's design wants humans to be able to exercise their freedom of choice.

Qur'an loudly proclaims that "There is no compulsion in Faith."

An overwhelming proof would take away the freedom given to God's own creation which is not part of His design. However, short of that, all kinds of evidence from different quarters is marshaled to enable humans to make a rational choice in freely accepting that there is no other reasonable explanation for the origin of the Qur'an besides what it states: that it is a direct communication from the Creator of the Worlds.

Prophecies

This evidence is spread over the pages of the Qur'an and has been marshaled from different areas. Here is an example of one of the prophecies made in the Qur'an, which the Prophet's opponents made fun of when it was revealed, but it came true, to their chagrin, within a few years, as predicted:

> *The Roman empire has been defeated in a land close by; But they, (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious — within a few years. With God is the Decision, In the past and in the future: On that day shall the Believers rejoice.*

Qur'an 30:2-4

The above prophecy was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the year 615-16 of the Christian era. Byzantium (Eastern Roman Empire) had lost Jerusalem to the Persians, and Christianity had been humbled by the Magians. In this prolonged encounter between the two

superpowers of the day, the Mushriks (polytheists) of Makkah derived vicarious pleasure in the discomfiture of the Romans by the pagan Persians.

> *the pagan Arabs naturally sided with the Persians in their zeal, and thought that the destruction of the Christian power of Rome would also mean a setback to the message of the Prophet, the true successor to Christ.... while the whole world believed that the Roman empire was being defeated by Persia, it was prophesied in the Qur'an that the Persian victory was short-lived and that within a period of a few years the Romans would conquer again and deal a deadly blow at the Persians.*
>
> Abdullah Yusuf Ali (well-known translator of the *Qur'an*)

Within ten years of the revelation of this divine prediction, the most improbable prophecy at the time was fulfilled!

Challenge of the Qur'an

The Prophet claimed that the Holy Qur'an was from God Almighty, and that it was revealed to him. The proof of its divine authorship is its own beauty and nature, and the circumstances in which it was promulgated. To prove the veracity of this claim, the unbelievers were challenged. Can they produce even one sura (chapter) like it? This is a standing challenge! An eternal prophecy of mankind's inability to equal or excel, or to rival successfully any of its chapters.

There are millions of Christian Arabs living today, with Arabic as their mother tongue. The Christians claim that there are at least 10-15 million Coptic Christians in Egypt alone and these are not all *fellaheen.* Here is the challenge of God in His Own words:

> *If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.*
>
> *Qur'an* 17:88

> *Or do they say, "He forged it"? Say: "Bring then a Sura like unto it, and*

> *call (to your aid) anyone you can, besides Allah, if it be that ye speak the truth!*
>
> *Qur'an* 10:38

Amazing Impact of Qur'an on Seventh Century Arabia and The World

The world has never witnessed the burst of physical and intellectual energy released following the advent of the Qur'an in the seventh century. It made the primitive Arabian Bedouins masters of the land from China in the East to Spain in the West in less than a hundred years and propelled them to an intellectual adventure which paved Europe's way to enlightenment and discovery. It combined the unique physical outburst of the Mongol conquests with the even more impressive intellectual awakening of the fifty years of Periclean Greece. The extent, depth and intensity of this change had not been seen by mankind before or since, including even the subsequent remarkable contributions of Europe and the West. Philip Hitti, the reputable historian of the Arabs puts it thus:

> *After the death of the Prophet sterile Arabia seems to have been converted as if by magic into a nursery of heroes the like of whom both in number and quality is hard to find anywhere. The military campaigns of Khalid ibn-al-Walid and Amr ibn-al-As which ensued in al Iraq, Persia, Syria and Egypt are among the most brilliantly executed in the history of warfare and bear favorable comparison with those of Napoleon, Hannibal or Alexander.*
>
> *History of the Arabs*, p. 142

This has led me to remark that the roads from "Athens and Jerusalem meet in Mecca."

By leading us to a common ideology, based on universal brotherhood of humankind, justice, merit, rights of the underprivileged, disabled, and deprived (including women), rationality and objectivity, it will open up mankind's horizons and build trust and confidence which is

so badly needed to end the frenzy of terror that is creeping up on our world.

Evidence will be presented from a number of quarters and angles which it is hoped would be enough to convince any rational and objective person beyond any reasonable doubt that Qur'an simply cannot be the product of human minds. It can only come from either an advanced alien civilization (of which there is no internal evidence in the Book) or it is from the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, which the Book boldly states to be the case.

Critics often state that Qur'an is not for modern times. It does not subscribe to the values of modern civilization emanating from the enlightenment. As I have stated earlier, the core values of enlightenment i.e. the call for reason and evidence itself were actually kicked off by the Qur'an in the 7th century, almost 1,000 years before the advent of the European Enlightenment, which occurred through ideas filtering into Europe via the then Muslim provinces of Spain and Sicily.

Concerning Islam and modernity, in particular, let us not be swayed by the popular press but listen to an authority e.g. anthropologist Professor Ernest Gellner who has the following to say on the subject in his book *Muslim Society:*

> *By various obvious criteria–universalism, scripturalism, spiritual egalitarianism, the extension of full participation in the sacred community not to one, or some, but to all, and the rational systematization of social life – Islam is, of the three great Western monotheisms, the one closest to modernity.*
>
> *FAITHLINES – Muslim conceptions of Islam and society* by Prof. Riaz Hassan, Oxford University Press, 2002

Bold Claims of the Qur'an

> *We will show them our signs in the Universe and within themselves, until it becomes manifest unto them that this (The Qur'an) is the truth.*

Al Qur'an, 41:53

> *If it had been from other than God you would have found in it many inconsistencies.*
>
> *Al Qur'an*

> *This is the Book (the Qur'an) whereof there is no doubt.*
>
> *Al Qur'an, 2:2*

Summation

The important points made in this book can be summarized as follows:

- Acceptance of the Creator's existence, being a reality, is the ultimate answer to the problems of mankind. The Atheism vs. God debate has to be resolved once and for all. However, this must take place with the pen and not the sword.
- Unity and peace in this world can only come through that choice – by aligning ourselves and society with the Creator's design and more importantly to position ourselves correctly for the next stage of evolution, for death is not the end and only the hereafter is everlasting (as described by authentic revelation).
- The above calls for an urgent need to differentiate authentic revelation from tampered versions of revelations, which can only be done through the effective use of reason and evidence (my article in Zygon September '08 deals with how to go about this).
- Authentic revelation then must be studied and examined afresh, using reason and evidence to find out its guidance for today's world.
- Qur'an is the final revelation and testament from the Creator. It is not a monopoly of the Muslims but is meant to guide all of humanity. Qur'an is by no means the root cause of terrorism, militancy or extremism; rather, it is turning their backs on the Qur'an that has brought the Muslims to this state. Resultantly, the world must take care not to throw away the baby with the

bathwater. Sustainable development of civilization and its future depends upon our correct assessment of the situation.

Once a group of right-minded people own the message of the Qur'an and implement its guidance, the kind of unrivalled burst of energy that took place around Arabia and the Middle East in the Middle Ages could be duplicated once again, on a much larger scale in the whole world, nay the solar system, if not beyond. What a remarkable feat that would be, when there will be heaven on earth with all of mankind reaping the fruits, not only in this world but more importantly in the hereafter. Qur'an promises that, indeed one day soon, that will happen. Willy-nilly the world is moving towards the value system of nature expressed in the Qur'an. Nothing can stop this process. It is like water going downhill. It is a law of nature. If mankind willingly accepts this guidance then the progress will be rapid and on an accelerated basis as happened at the time of the Prophet Muhammad; otherwise progress will be slow and tortuous and may cost mankind unnecessary time and energy. Humankind cannot afford to defy this guidance, in our own interests, if we wish to survive and embark on a course of sustainable development.

CHAPTER 6

Dr. Gary Miller's Encounter with the Qur'an



(The True Call) A very important Christian missionary converted to Islam and became a major herald for Islam. He was a very active missionary and was very knowledgeable about the Bible. He loved mathematics, and with it logic. One day, he decided to read the Qur'an to try to find any mistakes that he might take advantage of while inviting Muslims to convert to Christianity. He expected the Qur'an to be an old book written 14 centuries ago, a book that talks about the desert and so on. He was amazed by what he found.

He discovered that this Book had what no other book in the world has. He expected to find some stories about the hard time that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) had, like the death of his wife Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) or the death of his sons and daughters. However, he did not find anything like that. And what made him even more confused is that he found a full "Sura" (chapter) in the Qur'an named "Mary" that contains a lot of respect for Mary (peace be upon her) which is not the case even in the books written by Christians nor in their Bibles. He did not find a Sura named after "Fatimah" (the prophet's daughter) nor "Aishah" (the Prophet's wife), may Allah (God) be pleased with both of them. He also found that the name of Jesus (Peace Be Upon Him) was mentioned in the Qur'an 25

times while the name of "Muhammad" (Peace Be Upon Him) was mentioned only 4 times, so he became more confused. He started reading the Qur'an more thoroughly hoping to find a mistake but he was shocked when he read a great verse which is verse number 82 in Surat Al-Nisa'a (Women) that says:

"Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy."

Dr. Miller says about this verse: *"One of the well-known scientific principles is the principle of finding mistakes or looking for mistakes in a theory until it's proved to be right (Falsification Test). What's amazing is that the Holy Qur'an asks Muslims and non-Muslims to try to find mistakes in this book and it tells them that they will never find any".* He also says about this verse: *"No writer in the world has the courage to write a book and say that it's empty of mistakes, but the Qur'an, on the contrary, tells you that it has no mistakes and asks you to try to find one and you won't find any."*

The Amazing Qur'an

Dr. Gary Miller

Calling the Qur'an amazing is not something done only by Muslims, who have an appreciation for the book and who are pleased with it; it has been labeled amazing by non-Muslims as well. In fact, even people who hate Islam very much have still called it amazing.

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Introduction

One thing which surprises non-Muslims who are examining the book very closely is that the Qur'an does not appear to them to be what they expected. What they assume is that they have an old book which came fourteen centuries ago from the Arabian desert; and they expect that the book should look something like that - an old book from the desert. And then they find out that it does not resemble what they expected at all. Additionally, one of the first things that some people assume is that because it is an old book which comes from the desert, it should talk about the desert. Well, the Qur'an does talk about the desert - some of its imagery describes the desert; but it also talks about the sea - what it's like to be in a storm on the sea.

Merchant Marine

Some years ago, the story came to us in Toronto about a man who was in the merchant marine and made his living on the sea. A Muslim gave him a translation of the Qur'an to read. The merchant seaman knew nothing about the history of Islam but was interested in reading the Qur'an. When he finished reading it, he brought it back to the Muslim and asked, "This Muhammad, was he a sailor?" He was impressed at how accurately the Qur'an describes a storm on a sea. When he was told, "No, as a matter of fact, Muhammad lived in the desert", that was enough for him. He embraced Islam on the spot.

He was so impressed with the Qur'an's description because he had been in a storm on the sea, and he knew that whoever had written that description had also been in a storm on the sea. The description of "a wave, over it a wave, over it clouds" (Surah Nur, 24:40) was not what someone imagining a storm on a sea to be like would have

written; rather, it was written by someone who knew what a storm on the sea was like. This is one example of how the Qur'an is not tied to a certain place and time. Certainly, the scientific ideas expressed in it also do not seem to originate from the desert fourteen centuries ago.

The Smallest Thing

Many centuries before the onset of Muhammad's prophethood, there was a well-known *theory of atomism* advanced by the Greek philosopher, Democritus. He and the people who came after him assumed that matter consists of tiny, indestructible, indivisible particles called atoms. The Arabs, too, used to deal in the same concept; in fact, the Arabic word *dharrah* commonly referred to the smallest particle known to man. Now, modern science has discovered that this smallest unit of matter (i.e., the atom, which has all of the same properties as its element) can be split into its component parts. This is a new idea, a development of the last century; yet, interestingly enough, this information had already been documented in the Qur'an (Surah Saba', 34:3) which states:

"He [i.e., Allah] is aware of an atom's weight in the heavens and on the earth and even anything smaller than that..."

Undoubtedly, fourteen centuries ago that statement would have looked unusual, even to an Arab. For him, the *dharrah* was the smallest thing there was. Indeed, this is proof that the Qur'an is not outdated.

Honey

Another example of what one might expect to find in an "old book" that touches upon the subject of health or medicine is outdated remedies or cures. Various historical sources state that the Prophet (s) gave some advice about health and hygiene, yet most of these pieces of advice are not contained in the Qur'an. At first glance, to the non-Muslims this appears to be a negligent omission. They cannot understand why Allah would not "include" such helpful information in

the Qur'an. Some Muslims attempt to explain this absence with the following argument: "Although the Prophet's advice was sound and applicable to the time in which he lived, Allah, in His infinite wisdom, knew that there would come later medical and scientific advances which would make the Prophet's advice appear outdated. When later discoveries occurred, people might say that such information contradicted that which the Prophet (s) had given. Thus, since Allah would never allow any opportunity for the non-Muslims to claim that the Qur'an contradicts itself or the teachings of the Prophet (s), He only included in the Qur'an information and examples which could stand the test of time." However, when one examines the true realities of the Qur'an in terms of its existence as a divine revelation, the entire matter is quickly brought into its proper perspective, and the error in such argumentation becomes clear and understandable.

It must be understood that the Qur'an is a divine revelation, and as such, all information in it is of divine origin. Allah revealed the Qur'an from Himself. It is the words of Allah, which existed before creation, and thus nothing can be added, subtracted or altered. In essence, the Qur'an existed and was complete before the creation of Prophet Muhammad (s), so it could not possibly contain any of the Prophet's own words or advice. An inclusion of such information would clearly contradict the purpose for which the Qur'an exists, compromise its authority and render it inauthentic as a divine revelation.

Consequently, there are no "home remedies" in the Qur'an which one could claim to be outdated; nor does it contain any man's view about what is beneficial to health, what food is best to eat, or what will cure this or that disease. In fact, the Qur'an only mentions one item dealing with medical treatment, and it is not in dispute by anyone. It states that in honey there is healing. And certainly, I do not think that there is anyone who will argue with that!

Prophet Muhammad (s) and the Qur'an

If one assumes that the Qur'an is the product of a man's mind, then one would expect it to reflect some of what was going on in the mind of the man who "composed" it. In fact, certain encyclopedias and various books claim that the Qur'an was the product of hallucinations that Muhammad underwent. If these claims are true – if it indeed originated from some psychological problems in Muhammad's mind - then evidence of this would be apparent in the Qur'an. Is there such evidence? In order to determine whether or not there is, one must first identify what things would have been going on in his mind at that time and then search for these thoughts and reflections in the Qur'an.

It is common knowledge that Muhammad (s) had a very difficult life. All of his daughters died before him except one, and he had a wife of several years who was very dear and important to him, who not only preceded him in death but died at a very critical period of his life. As a matter of fact, she must have been quite a woman because when the first revelation came to him, he ran home to her, afraid. Certainly, even today one would have a hard time trying to find an Arab who would tell you, "I was so afraid that I ran home to my wife." They just aren't that way. Yet Muhammad (s) felt comfortable enough with his wife to be able to do that. That's how influential and strong a woman she was. Although these examples are only a few of the subjects that would have been on Muhammad's mind, they are sufficient in intensity to prove my point.

The Qur'an does not mention any of these things - not the death of his children, not the death of his beloved companion and wife, not his fear of the initial revelations, which he so beautifully shared with his wife - nothing; yet these topics must have hurt him, bothered him, and caused him pain and grief during periods of his life. Indeed, if the Qur'an was a product of his psychological reflections, then these subjects, as well as others, would be prevalent or at least mentioned throughout.

Scientific Approach to the Qur'an

A truly scientific approach to the Qur'an is possible because the Qur'an offers something that is not offered by other religious scriptures, in particular, and other religions, in general. It is what scientists demand. Today there are many people who have ideas and theories about how the universe works. These people are all over the place, but the scientific community does not even bother to listen to them. This is because within the last century the scientific community has demanded a *test of falsification*. They say, "If you have a theory, do not bother us with it unless you bring with that theory a way for us to prove whether you are wrong or not." Such a test was exactly why the scientific community listened to Einstein towards the beginning of the century. He came with a new theory and said, "I believe the universe works like this; and here are three ways to prove whether I am wrong!" So the scientific community subjected his theory to the tests, and within six years it passed all three. Of course, this does not prove that he was great, but it proves that he deserved to be listened to because he said, "This is my idea; and if you want to try to prove me wrong, do this or try that".

This is exactly what the Qur'an has - *falsification tests*. Some are old (in that they have already been proven true), and some still exist today. Basically it states, "If this book is not what it claims to be, then all you have to do is this or this or this to prove that it is false." Of course, in 1400 years no one has been able to do "This or this or this," and thus it is still considered true and authentic.

Falsification Test

I suggest to you that the next time you get into a dispute with someone about Islam and he claims that he has the truth and that you are in darkness, you leave all other arguments at first and make this suggestion. Ask him, "Is there any falsification test in your religion? Is there anything in your religion that would prove you are wrong if I could prove to you that it exists – *anything*?" Well, I can promise right now that people will not have anything - no test, no proof, nothing!

This is because they do not carry around the idea that they should not only present what they believe but should also offer others a chance to prove they're wrong. However, Islam does that. A perfect example of how Islam provides man with a chance to verify its authenticity and "prove it wrong" occurs in the 4th chapter. And quite honestly, I was very surprised when I first discovered this challenge. It states (Surah An-Nisa, 4:82):

"Do they not consider the Qur'an? Had it been from any other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy."

This is a clear challenge to the non-Muslim. Basically, it invites him to find a mistake. As a matter of fact, the seriousness and difficulty of the challenge aside, the actual presentation of such a challenge in the first place is not even in human nature and is inconsistent with man's personality. One doesn't take an exam in school and after finishing the exam, write a note to the instructor at the end saying, "This exam is perfect. There are no mistakes in it. Find one if you can!" One just doesn't do that. The teacher would not sleep until he found a mistake! And yet this is the way the Qur'an approaches people.

Ask Those Who Have Knowledge

Another interesting attitude that exists in the Qur'an repeatedly deals with its advice to the reader. The Qur'an informs the reader about different facts and then gives the advice: "If you want to know more about this or that, or if you doubt what is said, then you should ask those who have knowledge." This too is a surprising attitude. It is not usual to have a book that comes from someone without training in geography, botany, biology, etc., who discusses these subjects and then advises the reader to ask men of knowledge if he doubts anything. Yet in every age there have been Muslims who have followed the advice of the Qur'an and made surprising discoveries. If one looks to the works of **Muslim scientists** of many centuries ago, one will find them full of quotations from the Qur'an. These works state that they did research in such a place, looking for something. And they affirm that the reason they looked in such and such a place was that the

Qur'an pointed them in that direction. For example, the Qur'an mentions **man's origin** and then tells the reader, "Research it!" It gives the reader a hint where to look and then states that one should find out more about it. This is the kind of thing that Muslims today largely seem to overlook - but not always, as illustrated in the following example.

Embryology

A few years ago, a group of men in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia collected all of the verses in the Qur'an which discuss *embryology* – the growth of the human being in the womb. They said, "Here is what the Qur'an says. Is it the truth?" In essence, they took the advice of the Qur'an: "Ask the men who know." They chose, as it happened, a non-Muslim who is a professor of embryology at the University of Toronto. His name is Keith Moore, and he is the author of textbooks on embryology – a world expert on the subject. They invited him to Riyadh and said, "This is what the Qur'an says about your subject. Is it true? What can you tell us?" While he was in Riyadh, they gave him all the help that he needed in translation and all of the cooperation for which he asked. And he was so surprised at what he found that he changed his textbooks. In fact, in the second edition of one of his books, called *Before We Are Born...* in the section about the history of embryology, he included some material that was not in the first edition because he found that what was in the Qur'an was ahead of its time and that those who believe in the Qur'an know what other people do not know.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Keith Moore for a television presentation, and we talked a great deal about this - it was illustrated by slides and so on. He mentioned that some of the things that the Qur'an states about the growth of the human being were not known until thirty years ago. In fact, he said that one item in particular - the Qur'an's description of the human being as a "leech-like clot" (*'alaqah*) at one stage (Surahs al-Hajj 22:5; al-Mu'minun 23:14; and Ghafir 40:67) - was new to him; but when he checked on it, he found that it was true, and so he added it to his book. He said, "I never thought of that

before," and he went to the zoology department and asked for a picture of a leech. When he found that it looked just like the human embryo, he decided to include both pictures in one of his textbooks.

Although the aforementioned example of man researching information contained in the Qur'an deals with a non-Muslim, it is still valid because he is one of those who is knowledgeable in the subject being researched. Had some layman claimed that what the Qur'an says about embryology is true, then one would not necessarily have to accept his word. However, because of the high position, respect, and esteem man gives scholars, one naturally assumes that if they research a subject and arrive at a conclusion based on that research, then the conclusion is valid.

Skeptic's Reaction

Dr. Moore also wrote a book on *clinical embryology*, and when he presented this information in Toronto, it caused quite a stir throughout Canada. It was on the front pages of some of the newspapers across Canada, and some of the headlines were quite funny. For instance, one headline read: "SURPRISING THING FOUND IN ANCIENT PRAYER BOOK!" It seems obvious from this example that people do not clearly understand what it is all about. As a matter of fact, one newspaper reporter asked Professor Moore, "Don't you think that maybe the Arabs might have known about these things - the description of the embryo, its appearance and how it changes and grows? Maybe they were not scientists, maybe they did some crude dissections on their own - carved up people and examined these things." The professor immediately pointed out to him that he [i.e., the reporter] had missed a very important point - all of the slides of the embryo that had been shown and that had been projected in the film had come from pictures taken through a microscope. He said, "It does not matter if someone *had* tried to discover embryology fourteen centuries ago. They could not have seen it!"

All of the descriptions in the Qur'an of the appearance of the embryo are of the item when it is still too small to see with the eye; therefore,

one needs a microscope to see it. Since such a device had only been around for little more than two hundred years, Dr. Moore taunted, "Maybe fourteen centuries ago someone secretly had a microscope and did this research, making no mistakes anywhere. Then he somehow taught Muhammad (s) and convinced him to put this information in his book. Then he destroyed his equipment and kept it a secret forever. Do you believe that? You really should not unless you bring some proof because it is such a ridiculous theory." In fact, when he was asked, "How do you explain this information in the Qur'an?" Dr. Moore's reply was, "It could only have been divinely revealed!"

Geology

One of Professor Moore's colleagues, Marshall Johnson, deals extensively with *geology* at the University of Toronto. He became very interested in the fact that the Qur'an's statements about embryology are accurate, and so he asked Muslims to collect everything contained in the Qur'an which deals with his speciality. Again people were very surprised at the findings. Since there are a vast number of subjects discussed in the Qur'an, it would certainly require a large amount of time to exhaust each subject. It suffices for the purpose of this discussion to state that the Qur'an makes very clear and concise statements about various subjects while simultaneously advising the reader to verify the authenticity of these statements with research by scholars in those subjects. And as illustrated by the previous examples of embryology and geology, the Qur'an has clearly emerged authentic.

Qur'an and Scientific Knowledge

You Did Not Know This Before!

Undoubtedly, there is an attitude in the Qur'an which is not found anywhere else. It is interesting how when the Qur'an provides information, it often tells the reader, "You did not know this before." Indeed, there is no scripture that exists which makes that claim. All of

the other ancient writings and scriptures that people have do give a lot of information, but they always state where the information came from.

For example, when the **Bible** discusses ancient history, it states that this king lived here, this one fought in a certain battle, another one had so many sons, etc. Yet it always stipulates that if you want more information, then you should read the book of so and so because that is where the information came from. In contrast to this concept, the Qur'an provides the reader with information and states that this information is something new. Of course, there always exists the advice to research the information provided and verify its authenticity. It is interesting that such a concept was never challenged by non-Muslims fourteen centuries ago. Indeed, the Makkans hated the Muslims, and time and time again they heard such revelations claiming to bring new information; yet, they never spoke up and said, "This is not new. We know where Muhammad got this information. We learned this at school." They could never challenge its authenticity because it *really* was new!

In concurrence with the advice given in the Qur'an to research information (even if it is new), when 'Umar was caliph, he chose a group of men and sent them to find the **wall of Dhul-Qarnayn**. Before the Qur'anic revelation, the Arabs had never heard of such a wall, but because the Qur'an described it, they were able to discover it. As a matter of fact, it is now located in what is called Durbend in the Soviet Union.

[Note: The city of Derbend (Durbend, Derbent, Derband) is located in Daghestan on the West coast of the Caspian Sea, about 150 miles southeast of Grozny, Chechnya and about 140 miles north-northwest of Baku, Azerbaijan. Derband was also known as Bab al-Abwab in early Muslim history. Al-Tabari mentions it in his famous work 'Tarikh al-rusul wa'l Muluk' when discussing the events of 14 A.H. (646 C.E.), during the reign of the second rightly guided Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra). The city is also mentioned by Yaqut in Mu'jam al-Buldan. It had fortifications meant to repel invasions from the

north of Caucasus, and where the once-powerful Kingdom of Khazar ruled. The history of Khazars has been well documented since the middle of the first millennium C.E., and their kingdom disintegrated in 966 C.E. Derbend was used as the main point of entry from the north of Caucasus to the south into Persian territory.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the famous translator of the meaning of the Qur'an, discusses some opinions on Dhul Qarnayn (Zul-Qarnain) in Appendix VII at the end of Sura 'Kahf', the 'Cave'. The famous historian Ibn Kathir mentions that Dhul-Qarnayn was a pious king, who lived during the time of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham, pbuh) and he performed the Tawaaf around the Ka'bah with Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) when he built it. See 'Muslim Minorities' site for a Map showing Derbend.]

Proof of Authenticity: An Approach

It must be stressed here that the Qur'an is accurate about many, many things, but accuracy does not necessarily mean that a book is a divine revelation. In fact, accuracy is only one of the criteria for divine revelations. For instance, the telephone book is accurate, but that does not mean that it is divinely revealed. The real problem lies in that one must establish some proof of the source of the Qur'an's information. The emphasis is in the other direction, in that the burden of proof is on the reader. One cannot simply deny the Qur'an's authenticity without sufficient proof. If, indeed, one finds a mistake, then he has the right to disqualify it. This is exactly what the Qur'an encourages.

Once a man came up to me after a lecture I delivered in South Africa. He was very angry about what I had said, and so he claimed, "I am going to go home tonight and find a mistake in the Qur'an." Of course, I said, "Congratulations. That is the most intelligent thing that you have said." Certainly, this is the approach Muslims need to take with those who doubt the Qur'an's authenticity, because the Qur'an itself offers the same challenge. And inevitably, after accepting its challenge and discovering that it is true, these people will come to believe it because they could not disqualify it. In essence, the Qur'an earns their

respect because they themselves have had to verify its authenticity.

An essential fact that cannot be reiterated enough concerning the authenticity of the Qur'an is that one's inability to explain a phenomenon himself does not require his acceptance of the phenomenon's existence or another person's explanation of it. Specifically, just because one cannot explain something does not mean that one has to accept someone else's explanation. However, the person's refusal of other explanations reverts the burden of proof back on himself to find a feasible answer. This general theory applies to numerous concepts in life, but fits most wonderfully with the Qur'anic challenge, for it creates a difficulty for one who says, "I do not believe it." At the onset of refusal one immediately has an obligation to find an explanation himself if he feels others' answers are inadequate.

In fact, in one particular Qur'anic verse which I have always seen mistranslated into English, Allah mentions a man who heard the truth explained to him. It states that he was derelict in his duty because after he heard the information, he left without checking the verity of what he had heard. In other words, one is guilty if he hears something and does not research it and check to see whether it is true. One is supposed to process all information and decide what is garbage to be thrown out and what is worthwhile information to be kept and benefited from immediately or even at a later date. One cannot just let it rattle around in his head. It must be put in the proper categories and approached from that point of view. For example, if the information is still speculative, then one must discern whether it's closer to being true or false. But if all the facts have been presented, then one must decide absolutely between these two options. And even if one is not positive about the authenticity of the information, he is still required to process all the information and make the admission that he just does not know for sure. Although this last point appears to be futile, in actuality, it is beneficial to the arrival at a positive conclusion at a later time in that it forces the person to at least recognize, research and review the facts. This familiarity with

the information will give the person "the edge" when future discoveries are made and additional information is presented. The important thing is that one deals with the facts and does not simply discard them out of apathy and disinterest.

Exhausting the Alternatives

The real certainty about the truthfulness of the Qur'an is evident in the confidence which is prevalent throughout it; and this confidence comes from a different approach - "*Exhausting the alternatives*." In essence, the Qur'an states, "This book is a divine revelation; if you do not believe that, then what is it?" In other words, the reader is challenged to come up with some other explanation. Here is a book made of paper and ink. Where did it come from? It says it is a divine revelation; if it is not, then what is its source? The interesting fact is that no one has yet come up with an explanation that works. In fact, all alternatives have been exhausted. As has been well established by non-Muslims, these alternatives basically are reduced to two mutually exclusive schools of thought, insisting on one or the other.

On one hand, there exists a large group of people who have researched the Qur'an for hundreds of years and who claim, "One thing we know for sure - that man, Muhammad (s), thought he was a prophet. He was crazy!" They are convinced that Muhammad (s) was fooled somehow. Then on the other hand, there is a group which alleges, "Because of this evidence, one thing we know for sure is that that man, Muhammad (s) was a liar!" Ironically, these two groups never seem to get together without contradicting.

In fact, many references to Islam usually claim both theories. They start out by stating that Muhammad (s) was crazy and then end by saying he was a liar. They never seem to realize that he could not have been both! For example, if one is deluded and really thinks that he is a prophet, then he does not sit up late at night planning, "How will I fool the people tomorrow so that they think I am a prophet?" He truly believes that he is a prophet, and he trusts that the answer will be given to him by revelation.

The Critic's Trail

As a matter of fact, a great deal of the Qur'an came in answer to questions. Someone would ask Muhammad (s) a question, and the revelation would come with the answer to it. Certainly, if one is crazy and believes that an angel put words in his ear, then when someone asks him a question, he thinks that the angel will give him the answer. Because he is crazy, he really thinks that. He does not tell someone to wait a short while and then run to his friends and ask them, "Does anyone know the answer?" This type of behavior is characteristic of one who does not believe that he is a prophet. What the non-Muslims refuse to accept is that you cannot have it both ways. One can be deluded, or he can be a liar. He can be either one or neither one, but he certainly cannot be both! The emphasis is on the fact that they are unquestionably mutually exclusive personality traits.

The following scenario is a good example of the kind of circle that non-Muslims go around in constantly. If you ask one of them, "What is the origin of the Qur'an?" He tells you that it originated from the mind of a man who was crazy. Then you ask him, "If it came from his head, then where did he get the information contained in it? Certainly the Qur'an mentions many things with which the Arabs were not familiar." So in order to explain the fact which you bring him, he changes his position and says, "Well, maybe he was not crazy. Maybe some foreigner brought him the information. So he lied and told people that he was a prophet." At this point then you have to ask him, "If Muhammad was a liar, then where did he get his confidence? Why did he behave as though he really thought he was a prophet?" Finally backed into a corner, like a cat he quickly lashes out with the first response that comes to his mind. Forgetting that he has already exhausted that possibility, he claims, "Well, maybe he wasn't a liar. He was probably crazy and really thought that he was a prophet." And thus he begins the futile cycle again. As has already been mentioned, there is much information contained in the Qur'an whose source cannot be attributed to anyone other than Allah. For example, who told Muhammad (s) about the wall of *Dhul-Qarnayn* - a place hundreds

of miles to the north? Who told him about embryology? When people assemble facts such as these, if they are not willing to attribute their existence to a divine source, they automatically resort to the assumption someone brought Muhammad (s) the information and that he used it to fool the people.

However, this theory can easily be disproved with one simple question: "If Muhammad (s) was a liar, where did he get his confidence? Why did he tell some people outright to their face what others could never say?" Such confidence depends completely upon being convinced that one has a true divine revelation.

A Revelation - Abu Lahab

Prophet Muhammad (s) had an uncle by the name of Abu Lahab. This man hated Islam to such an extent that he used to follow the Prophet around in order to discredit him. If Abu Lahab saw the Prophet (s) speaking to a stranger, he would wait until they parted and he would go to the stranger and ask him, "What did he tell you? Did he say, 'Black'? Well, it's white. Did he say 'morning'? Well, it's night." He faithfully said the exact opposite of whatever he heard Muhammad (s) and the Muslims say. However, about ten years before Abu Lahab died, a little chapter in the Qur'an (Surah al-Lahab, 111) was revealed about him. It distinctly stated that he would go to the fire (i.e., Hell). In other words, it affirmed that he would never become a Muslim and would therefore be condemned forever. For ten years all Abu Lahab had to do was say, "I heard that it has been revealed to Muhammad that I will never change - that I will never become a Muslim and will enter the Hellfire. Well, I want to become Muslim now. How do you like that? What do you think of your divine revelation now?" But he never did that. And yet, that is exactly the kind of behavior one would have expected from him since he always sought to contradict Islam.

In essence, Muhammad (s) said, "You hate me and you want to finish me? Here, say these words, and I am finished. Come on, say them!" But Abu Lahab never said them. Ten years! And in all that time he never accepted Islam or even became sympathetic to the Islamic

cause. How could Muhammad (s) possibly have known for sure that Abu Lahab would fulfill the Qur'anic revelation if he (i.e., Muhammad) was not truly the messenger of Allah? How could he possibly have been so confident as to give someone 10 years to discredit his claim of prophethood? The only answer is that he was Allah's messenger; for in order to put forth such a risky challenge, one has to be entirely convinced that he has a divine revelation.

The Flight

Another example of the confidence which Muhammad (s) had in his own prophethood and consequently in the divine protection of himself and his message is when he left Makkah and hid in a cave with Abu Bakr (ra) during their **emigration** to Madeenah. The two clearly saw people coming to kill them, and Abu Bakr was afraid. Certainly, if Muhammad (s) was a liar, a forger and one who was trying to fool the people into believing that he was a prophet, one would have expected him to say in such a circumstance to his friend, "Hey, Abu Bakr, see if you can find a back way out of this cave." Or "Squat down in that corner over there and keep quiet." Yet, in fact, what he said to Abu Bakr clearly illustrated his confidence. He told him, "Relax! Allah is with us, and Allah will save us!" Now, if one knows that he is fooling the people, where does one get this kind of attitude? In fact, such a frame of mind is not characteristic of a liar or a forger at all. So, as has been previously mentioned, the non-Muslims go around and around in a circle, searching for a way out - some way to explain the findings in the Qur'an without attributing them to their proper source. On one hand, they tell you on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, "The man was a liar," and on the other hand, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday they tell you, "He was crazy." What they refuse to accept is that one cannot have it both ways; yet they need both theories, both excuses to explain the information in the Qur'an.

An Encounter with a Minister

About seven years ago, I had a minister over to my home. In the particular room in which we were sitting there was a Qur'an on the table, face down, and so the minister was not aware of which book it was. In the midst of a discussion, I pointed to the Qur'an and said, "I have confidence in that book." Looking at the Qur'an but not knowing which book it was, he replied, "Well, I tell you, if that book is not the Bible, it was written by a man!" In response to his statement, I said, "Let me tell you something about what is in that book." And in just three to four minutes, I related to him a few things contained in the Qur'an. After just those three or four minutes, he completely changed his position and declared, "You are right. *A man did not write that book*. The Devil wrote it!" Indeed, possessing such an attitude is very unfortunate – for many reasons. For one thing, it is a very quick and cheap excuse. It is an instant exit out of an uncomfortable situation.

As a matter of fact, there is a famous story in the Bible that mentions how one day some of the Jews were witnesses when **Jesus (pbuh**) raised a man from the dead. The man had been dead for four days, and when Jesus arrived, he simply said, "Get up!" and the man arose and walked away. At such a sight, some of the Jews who were watching said disbelievingly, "This is the Devil. The Devil helped him!" Now this story is rehearsed very often in churches all over the world, and people cry big tears over it, saying, "Oh, if I had been there, I would not have been as stupid as the Jews!" Yet, ironically, these people do exactly what the Jews did when in just three minutes you show them only a small part of the Qur'an and all they can say is, "Oh, the Devil did it. The devil wrote that book!" Because they are truly backed into a corner and have no other viable answer, they resort to the quickest and cheapest excuse available. [Jesus ('Isa) and other Prophets of Allah].

The Source of the Qur'an

Another example of people's use of this weak stance can be found in the Makkans' explanation of the source of Muhammad's message. They used to say, "The devils bring Muhammad that Qur'an!" But just as with every suggestion made, the Qur'an gives the answer. One verse (Surah Al-Qalam 68:51-52) in particular states: "And they say, 'Surely he is possessed [by jinn],' but it [i.e., the Qur'an] is not except a reminder to the worlds."

Thus it gives an argument in reply to such a theory. In fact, there are many arguments in the Qur'an in reply to the suggestion that devils brought Muhammad (s) his message. For example, in the 26th chapter Allah (SWT) clearly affirms:

"No evil ones have brought it [i.e., this revelation] down. It would neither be fitting for them, nor would they be able. Indeed they have been removed far from hearing." (Surah ash-Shu'ara 26:210-212)

And in another place (Surah an-Nahl 16:98) in the Qur'an, Allah (SWT) instructs us: "So when you recite the Qur'an seek refuge in Allah from Shaytan, the rejected." Now is this how Satan writes a book? He tells one, "Before you read my book, ask God to save you from me?" This is very, very tricky. Indeed, a man could write something like this, but would Satan do this? Many people clearly illustrate that they cannot come to one conclusion on this subject. On one hand, they claim that Satan would not do such a thing and that even if he could, God would not allow him to; yet, on the other hand, they also believe that Satan is only that much less than God. In essence they allege that the Devil can probably do whatever God can do. And as a result, when they look at the Qur'an, even as surprised as they are as to how amazing it is, they still insist, "The Devil did this!"

Thanks be to Allah (SWT), Muslims do not have that attitude. Although Satan may have some abilities, they are a long way separated from the abilities of Allah. And no Muslim is a Muslim unless he believes that. It is common knowledge even among non-Muslims that the Devil can easily make mistakes, and it would be expected that he would

contradict himself if and when he wrote a book. For indeed, the Qur'an states (Surah an-Nisa 4:82):

"Do they not consider the Qur'an? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy."

Mythomania

In conjunction with the excuses that non-Muslims advance in futile attempts to justify unexplainable verses in the Qur'an, there is another attack often rendered which seems to be a combination of the theories that Muhammad (s) was crazy and a liar. Basically, these people propose that Muhammad was insane, and as a result of his delusion, he lied to and misled people. There is a name for this in psychology. It is referred to as *mythomania*. It means simply that one tells lies and then believes them. This is what the non-Muslims say Muhammad (s) suffered from. But the only problem with this proposal is that one suffering from *mythomania* absolutely cannot deal with any facts, and yet the whole Qur'an is based entirely upon facts. Everything contained in it can be researched and established as true. Since facts are such a problem for a *mythomaniac*, when a psychologist tries to treat one suffering from that condition, he continually confronts him with facts. For example, if one is mentally ill and claims, "I am the king of England," a psychologist does not say to him "No you aren't. You are crazy!" He just does not do that. Rather, he confronts him with facts and says, "O.K., you say you are the king of England. So tell me where the queen is today. And where is your prime minister? And where are your guards?" Now, when the man has trouble trying to deal with these questions, he tries to make excuses, saying "Uh... the queen... she has gone to her mother's. Uh... the prime minister... well he died." And eventually he is cured because he cannot deal with the facts. If the psychologist continues confronting him with enough facts, finally he faces the reality and says, "I guess I am not the king of England."

The Qur'an approaches everyone who reads it in very much the same way a psychologist treats his *mythomania* patient. There is a verse in

the Qur'an (Surah Yunus 10:57) which states:

"O mankind, there has come to you an admonition [i.e., the Qur'an] from your Lord and a healing for what is in the hearts - and guidance and mercy for the believers."

At first glance, this statement appears vague, but the meaning of this verse is clear when one views it in light of the aforementioned example. Basically, one is healed of his delusions by reading the Qur'an. In essence, it is therapy. It literally cures deluded people by confronting them with facts. A prevalent attitude throughout the Qur'an is one which says, "O mankind, you say such and such about this; but what about such and such? How can you say *this* when you know *that*?" And so forth. It forces one to consider what is relevant and what matters while simultaneously healing one of the delusions that facts presented to mankind by Allah can easily be explained away with flimsy theories and excuses.

New Catholic Encyclopedia

It is this very sort of thing - confronting people with facts - that has captured the attention of many non-Muslims. In fact, there exists a very interesting reference concerning this subject in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. In an article under the subject of the Qur'an, the Catholic Church states:

"Over the centuries, many theories have been offered as to the origin of the Qur'an... Today no sensible man accepts any of these theories!!"

Now here is the age-old Catholic Church, which has been around for so many centuries, denying these futile attempts to explain away the Qur'an.

Indeed, the Qur'an is a problem for the Catholic Church. It states that it is revelation, so they study it. Certainly, they would love to find proof that it is not, but they cannot. They cannot find a viable explanation. But at least they are honest in their research and do not accept the first unsubstantiated interpretation which comes along.

The Church states that in fourteen centuries it has not yet been presented a sensible explanation. At least it admits that the Qur'an is not an easy subject to dismiss. Certainly, other people are much less honest. They quickly say, "Oh, the Qur'an came from here. The Qur'an came from there." And they do not even examine the credibility of what they are stating most of the time. Of course, such a statement by the Catholic Church leaves the everyday Christian in some difficulty. It just may be that he has his own ideas as to the origin of the Qur'an, but as a single member of the Church, he cannot really act upon his own theory. Such an action would be contrary to the obedience, allegiance and loyalty which the Church demands. By virtue of his membership, he must accept what the Catholic Church declares without question and establish its teachings as part of his everyday routine. So, in essence, if the Catholic Church as a whole is saying, "Do not listen to these unconfirmed reports about the Qur'an," then what can be said about the Islamic point of view? If even non-Muslims are admitting that there is something to the Qur'an - something that has to be acknowledged - then why are people so stubborn and defensive and hostile when Muslims advance the very same theory? This is certainly something for those with a mind to contemplate - something to ponder for those of understanding!

Testimony of an Intellectual

Recently, the leading intellectual in the Catholic Church - a man by the name of **Hans Küng** – studied the Qur'an and gave his opinion of what he had read. This man has been around for some time, and he is highly respected in the Catholic Church, and after careful scrutiny, he reported his findings, concluding, "God has spoken to man through the man, Muhammad." Again this is a conclusion arrived at by a non-Muslim source - the very leading intellectual of the Catholic Church himself! I do not think that the Pope agrees with him, but nonetheless, the opinion of such a noted, reputed public figure must carry some weight in defense of the Muslim position. He must be applauded for facing the reality that the Qur'an is not something

which can be easily pushed aside and that, in fact God is the source of these words.

As is evident from the aforementioned information, all of the possibilities have been exhausted, so the chance of finding another possibility of dismissing the Qur'an is nonexistent.

Burden of Proof on the Critic

If the book is not a revelation, then it is a deception; and if it is a deception, one must ask, "What is its origin? And where does it deceive us?" Indeed, the true answers to these questions shed light on the Qur'an's authenticity and silence the bitter unsubstantiated claims of the unbelievers. Certainly, if people are going to insist that the Qur'an is a deception, then they must bring forth evidence to support such a claim. The burden of proof is on them, not us! One is never supposed to advance a theory without sufficient corroborating facts; so I say to them, "Show me one deception! Show me where the Qur'an deceives me! Show me, otherwise don't say that it is a deception!"

Origin of the Universe and Life

An interesting characteristic of the Qur'an is how it deals with *surprising phenomena* which relate not only to the past but to modern times as well. *In essence, the Qur'an is not an old problem. It is still a problem even today - a problem to the non-Muslims that is.* For every day, every week, every year brings more and more evidence that the Qur'an is a force to be contended with - that its authenticity is no longer to be challenged! For example, one verse in the Qur'an (Surah al-Anbiya 21:30) reads:

"Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together, then We clove them asunder, and made from water every living thing? Will they not then believe?"

Ironically, this very information is exactly what they awarded the 1978

Nobel Prize for - to a couple of unbelievers. The Qur'an reveals the origin of the universe - how it began from one piece - and mankind continues to verify this revelation, even up to now. Additionally, the fact that **all life originated from water** would not have been an easy thing to convince people of fourteen centuries ago. Indeed, if 1400 years ago you had stood in the desert and told someone, "All of this, you see (pointing to yourself), is made up of mostly water," no one would have believed you. Proof of that was not available until the invention of the microscope. They had to wait to find out that *cytoplasm*, the basic substance of the cell, is made up of 80% water. Nonetheless, the evidence did come, and once again the Qur'an stood the test of time.

More on Falsification Test

In reference to the falsification tests mentioned earlier, it is interesting to note that they, too, relate to *both the past and the present*. Some of them were used as illustrations of Allah's omnipotence and knowledge, while others continue to stand as challenges to the present day. An example of the former is the statement made in the Qur'an about Abu Lahab. It clearly illustrates that Allah, the Knower of the Unseen, knew that Abu Lahab would never change his ways and accept Islam. Thus Allah dictated that he would be condemned to the Hellfire forever. Such a chapter was both an illustration of Allah's divine wisdom and a warning to those who were like Abu Lahab.

People of the Book

An interesting example of the latter type of falsification tests contained in the Qur'an is the verse which mentions the **relationship between the Muslims and the Jews**. The verse is careful not to narrow its scope to the relationship between individual members of each religion, but rather, it summarizes the relationship between the two groups of people as a whole. In essence, the Qur'an states that the Christians will always treat the Muslims better than the Jews will

treat the Muslims. Indeed, the full impact of such a statement can only be felt after careful consideration of the real meaning of such a verse. It is true that many Christians and many Jews have become Muslims, but as a whole, the Jewish community is to be viewed as an avid enemy of Islam. Additionally, very few people realize what such an open declaration in the Qur'an invites. In essence, it is an easy chance for the Jews to prove that the Qur'an is false - that it is not a divine revelation. All they have to do is organize themselves, treat the Muslims nicely for a few years and then say, "Now what does your holy book say about who are your best friends in the world - the Jews or the Christians? Look what we Jews have done for you!" That is all they have to do to disprove the Qur'an's authenticity, yet they have not done it in 1400 years. But, as always, the offer still stands open!

A Mathematical Approach

All of the examples so far given concerning the various angles from which one can approach the Qur'an have undoubtedly been subjective in nature; however, there does exist another angle, among others, which is **objective** and whose basis is *mathematical*. It is surprising how authentic the Qur'an becomes when one assembles what might be referred to as a list of good guesses. Mathematically, it can be explained using guessing and prediction examples. For instance, if a person has two choices (i.e., one is right, and one is wrong), and he closes his eyes and makes a choice, then half of the time (i.e., one time out of two) he will be right. Basically, he has a one in two chance, for he could pick the wrong choice, or he could pick the right choice.

Now if the same person has two situations like that (i.e., he could be right or wrong about situation number one, and he could be right or wrong about situation number two), and he closes his eyes and guesses, then he will only be right one-fourth of the time (i.e., one time out of four). He now has a one in four chance because now there are three ways for him to be wrong and only one way for him to be right. In simple terms, he could make the wrong choice in situation number one and then make the wrong choice in situation number two;

or he could make the wrong choice in situation number one and then make the right choice in situation number two; or he could make the right choice in situation number one and then make the wrong choice in situation number two; or he could make the right choice in situation number one and then make the right choice in situation number two.

Of course, the only instance in which he could be totally right is the last scenario where he could guess correctly in both situations. The odds against his guessing completely correctly have become greater because the number of situations for him to guess in has increased; and the mathematical equation representing such a scenario is ½ × ½ (i.e., one time out of two for the first situation multiplied by one time out of two for the second situation).

Continuing on with the example, if the same person now has three situations in which to make blind guesses, then he will only be right one-eighth of the time (i.e., one time out of eight or ½ × ½ × ½). Again, the odds of choosing the correct choice in all three situations have decreased his chances of being completely correct to only one time in eight. It must be understood that as the number of situations increases, the chances of being right decrease, for the two phenomena are inversely proportional.

Now applying this example to the situations in the Qur'an, if one draws up a list of all of the subjects about which the Qur'an has made correct statements, it becomes very clear that it is highly unlikely that they were all just correct blind guesses. Indeed, the subjects discussed in the Qur'an are numerous [some of them are listed in the **Qur'an and Scientific Knowledge**], and thus the odds of someone just making lucky guesses about all of them become practically nil. If there are a million ways for the Qur'an to be wrong yet each time it is right, then it is unlikely that someone was guessing.

The following **three examples** of subjects about which the Qur'an has made correct statements collectively illustrate how the Qur'an continues to beat the odds.

The Female Bee

In the 16th chapter (Surah an-Nahl 16:68-69) the Qur'an mentions that the *female bee* leaves its home to gather food. Now, a person might guess on that, saying, "The bee that you see flying around - it could be male, or it could be female. I think I will guess female." Certainly, he has a one in two chance of being right. So it happens that the Qur'an is right. But it also happens that that was not what most people believed at the time when the Qur'an was revealed. Can you tell the difference between a male and a female bee? Well, it takes a specialist to do that, but it has been discovered that the male bee never leaves his home to gather food. However, in Shakespeare's play, *Henry the Fifth*, some of the characters discuss bees and mention that the bees are soldiers and have a king. That is what people thought in Shakespeare's time - that the bees that one sees flying around are male bees and that they go home and answer to a king. However, that is not true at all. The fact is that they are females, and they answer to a queen. Yet it took modern scientific investigations in the last 300 years to discover that this is the case.

So, back to the list of good guesses, concerning the topic of bees, the Qur'an had a 50/50 chance of being right, and the odds were one in two.

The Sun

In addition to the subject of bees, the Qur'an also discusses the **sun** and the manner in which it travels through space. Again, a person can guess on that subject. When the sun moves through space, there are two options: it can travel just as a stone would travel if one threw it, or it can move of its own accord. The Qur'an states the latter - that it moves as a result of its own motion (Surah al-Anbiya 21:33). To do such, the Qur'an uses a form of the word *sabaha* to describe the sun's movement through space. In order to properly provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the implications of this Arabic verb, the following example is given. If a man is in water and the verb *sabaha* is applied in reference to his movement, it can be understood

that he is swimming, moving of his own accord and not as a result of a direct force applied to him. Thus when this verb is used in reference to the sun's movement through space, it in no way implies that the sun is flying uncontrollably through space as a result of being hurled or the like. It simply means that the sun is turning and rotating as it travels. Now, this is what the Qur'an affirms, but was it an easy thing to discover? Can any common man tell that the sun is turning? Only in modern times was the equipment made available to project the image of the sun onto a tabletop so that one could look at it without being blinded. And through this process it was discovered that not only are there spots on the sun but that these spots move once every 25 days. This movement is referred to as the rotation of the sun around its axis and conclusively proves that, as the Qur'an stated 1400 years ago, the sun does, indeed, turn as it travels through space.

And returning once again to the subject of good guesses, the odds of guessing correctly about both subjects - the sex of bees and the movement of the sun - are one in four!

Time Zones

Since fourteen centuries ago people probably did not understand much about *time zones*, the Qur'an's statements about this subject are considerably surprising. The concept that one family is having breakfast as the sun comes up while another family is enjoying the brisk night air is truly something to be marveled at, even in modern time. Indeed, fourteen centuries ago, a man could not travel more than thirty miles in one day, and thus it took him literally months to travel from India to Morocco, for example. And probably, when he was having supper in Morocco, he thought to himself, "Back home in India they are having supper right now." This is because he did not realize that, in the process of traveling, he moved across a time zone. Yet, because they are the words of Allah, the All-Knowing, the Qur'an recognizes and acknowledges such a phenomenon.

In an interesting verse it states that when history comes to an end and the Day of Judgement arrives, it will all occur in an instant; and

this very instant will catch some people in the daytime and some people at night. This clearly illustrates Allah's divine wisdom and His previous knowledge of the existence of time zones, even though such a discovery was non-existent fourteen centuries ago. Certainly, this phenomenon is not something which is obvious to one's eyes or a result of one's experience, and this fact, in itself, suffices as proof of the Qur'an's authenticity.

Conclusions

Returning one final time to the subject of good guesses for the purpose of the present example, the odds that someone guessed correctly about all three of the aforementioned subjects - the sex of bees, the movement of the sun and the existence of time zones - are one in eight!

Certainly, one could continue on and on with this example, drawing up longer and longer lists of good guesses; and of course, the odds would become higher and higher with each increase of subjects about which one could guess. But what no one can deny is the following: the odds that Muhammad (s), an illiterate, guessed correctly about thousands and thousands of subjects, never once making a mistake, are so high that any theory of his authorship of the Qur'an must be completely dismissed - even by the most hostile enemies of Islam!

Indeed, the Qur'an expects this kind of challenge. Undoubtedly, if one said to someone upon entering a foreign land, "I know your father. I have met him," probably the man from that land would doubt the newcomer's word, saying, "You have just come here. How could you know my father?" As a result, he would question him, "Tell me, is my father tall, short, dark, fair? What is he like?" Of course, if the visitor continued answering all of the questions correctly, the skeptic would have no choice but to say, "I guess you do know my father. I don't know *how* you know him, but I guess you do!"

The situation is the same with the Qur'an. It states that it originates from the One who created everything. So everyone has the right to

say, "Convince me! If the author of this book really originated life and everything in the heavens and on the earth, then He should know about this, about that, and so on." And inevitably, after researching the Qur'an, everyone will discover the same truths. Additionally, we all know something for sure: we do not all have to be experts to verify what the Qur'an affirms. One's *iman* (faith) grows as one continues to check and confirm the truths contained in the Qur'an. And one is supposed to do so all of his life. May God (Allah) guide everyone close to the truth.

Addendum 1

An engineer at the University of Toronto who was interested in psychology and who had read something on it, conducted research and wrote a thesis on **Efficiency of Group Discussions**. The purpose of his research was to find out how much people accomplish when they get together to talk in groups of two, three, ten, etc. The graph of his findings goes up and down at places, but it reaches the highest point at the variable of two. The findings: people accomplish most when they talk in groups of two. Of course, this discovery was entirely beyond his expectations, but it is very old advice given in the Qur'an (Surah Saba 34:46):

"Say, 'I exhort you to one thing - that you stand for Allah, [assessing the truth] by twos and singly, and then reflect...'"

Addendum 2: 'Iram

Additionally, the 89th chapter of the Qur'an (Surah al-Fajr 89:7) mentions a certain city by the name of **'Iram** (a city of pillars), which was not known in ancient history and which was nonexistent as far as historians were concerned. However, the December 1978 edition of *National Geographic* introduced interesting information which mentioned that in 1973, the city of Ebla was excavated in Syria. The city was discovered to be 43 centuries old, but that is not the most amazing part. Researchers found in the library of Ebla a record of all

of the cities with which Ebla had done business. Believe it or not, there on the list was the name of the city of 'Iram. The people of Ebla had done business with the people of 'Iram!

In conclusion I ask you to consider with care the following (Surah 29:50-51):

"And they say, 'Why are not signs sent down to him from his Lord?' Say, 'Indeed, the signs are with Allah, and I am but a clear warner.' But it is sufficient for them that We have sent down to you the Book [i.e., Qur'an] which is rehearsed to them. Verily, in that is mercy and a reminder to people who believe."

Allah: Allah is the proper name in Arabic for The One and Only God, The Creator and Sustainer of the universe. It is used by the Arab Christians and Jews for the God (Elohim in Hebrew; 'Allaha' in Aramaic, the mother tongue of Jesus, pbuh). The word **Allah** does not have a plural or gender. Allah does not have any associate or partner, and He does not beget nor was He begotten. SWT is an abbreviation of Arabic words that mean 'Glory Be To Him.' **s or pbuh**: Peace Be Upon Him. This expression is used for all **Prophets of Allah.** ra: RadiAllahu Anhu (May Allah be pleased with him).

"The Holy Qur'an," Text, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1934. (Latest Publisher: Amana Publications, Beltsville, MD, USA; Title: "**The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an**," 1992). Includes subject index.

"**The Meaning of the Glorious Koran**," An Explanatory Translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, a Mentor Book Publication. (Also available as: "The Meaning of the Glorious Koran," by Marmaduke Pickthall, Dorset Press, N.Y.; Published by several publishers since 1930).

"The Bible, The Qur'an and Science (Le Bible, le Coran et la Science)," The Holy Scriptures Examined in the Light of Modern Knowledge, by Maurice Bucaille, English version published by North American Trust Publication, 1978. Copyright © 1992 Abul Qasim Publishing House (AQPH). All Rights Reserved. "The Amazing Qur'an," a lecture delivered

by Dr. Miller, was published as a booklet by AQPH. Posted by permission of AQPH.

CHAPTER 7

Prophet of Islam: Revolutionary Par Excellence

Prophet Muhammad brought about the most lasting and effective revolution in the annals of mankind. The beauty is that such a wide-ranging revolution in thought and action was brought about at minimum human cost, i.e. a few hundred lives. Although any loss of life is unacceptable, this was, without doubt, the least costly of the major revolutions in terms of human life and suffering and the most productive in terms of mankind's development.

In his book, ***Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris, 1854,** historian Alphonse de Lamartine sums up his assessment of the uniqueness of the Prophet in the following words:

> *Philosopher, Orator, Apostle, Legislator, Conqueror of Ideas, Restorer of Rational beliefs.... The founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?*

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Bearer of the Qur'an

- Revolutionary *par excellence*
- His life story and achievements
- Societal changes
- What non-Muslims think of him

- Exposed to the full limelight of history, as no other prophet
- Last of the illustrious line, seal of the Prophets

Prophet Muhammad was born in a very rough and depraved society which was not known for having made any worthwhile contributions to human society except perhaps the development of the Arabic language. Arabic at the time had been developed to such a high degree of perfection that it had been dubbed, by linguistic scholars, as the most well-developed language of its time.

Prophet Muhammad had a very difficult childhood, having lost his father before his birth, his mother at the tender age of three, his grandfather (a man of considerable standing in his community) at the age of six, and finally his uncle, who provided him essential protection and support, indispensable in the hardy tribal society that Arabia was at the time.

He grew up in the full limelight of history. He was well-regarded in the community as an upright, truthful and caring young man who developed a reputation as an honest trader, such that he attracted the notice of an exceptionally talented and successful widow, Khadija, who had made her mark in a male-dominated society of the period, so much so that she proposed marriage at the age of forty to him, a much younger man of 25 years. They had a most successful marriage by all accounts until Khadija passed away after a partnership extending over almost 25 years.

He had an enquiring, searching mind and would often retreat to caves for contemplation and solitude. At the age of forty, he had the shattering experience of a visit by the Angel Gabriel who informed him that he had been chosen as a prophet by the Almighty and he was now expected to warn his community and the world, and convey the guidance of the Almighty revealed to him in stages over the next 23 years in the form of the holy book named Al Qur'an.

Until the age of 40, Muhammad was a quiet, unassuming man well respected and liked in society without a single enemy. He was widely known as Al Amin – the Trustworthy. Common people used to deposit

their valuables with him for safekeeping. These were the same qualities by which he caught Khadija's eye.

Until that time Muhammad had been a searcher, a shy, quiet, contemplative, private individual who kept mostly to himself and had never been known to indulge in any idle pursuits or poetry, which was a favorite pastime of the Quraish, nor was he known to have expressed any strong political or social views.

Then all of a sudden, one day, at the ripe age of about 40, Muhammad, then an illiterate man by all accounts, started a stream of philosophical, mystical, poetical outpourings in "singing prose" (a style unique to the Qur'an and quite different from Arabic poetry) and started talking about the creation and orderliness of the universe, the majesty and glory of its Creator, the purpose and objective of Man's existence, and the mysteries of the afterlife.

Just what happened to trigger this change?

What could be the motives of this erstwhile quiet and humble man? What force compelled him to embark on this hazardous journey? He had a good life, a rich, resourceful and doting wife, children, a good reputation and status in society. All that a person normally wishes for!

And yet Prophet Muhammad takes on this uncharacteristic, socially and politically active and most unpopular, almost rebellious course of action which divides and rips apart his ancestral tribal fabric of Mecca.

It is significant to note that all those who knew him intimately at once believed in him and his cause, not for a moment doubting his sincerity, his conduct or his motives. They included:

- His astute, successful and respected wife Khadija
- His socially well-regarded and successful trader friend Abu Bakr
- His young cousin Ali
- And his slave Zaid, given to him by Khadija

It is very instructive to note the behavior displayed by Muhammad on

getting this unexpected news from Gabriel; there was no triumphal shout on being nominated as a prophet, nor any display of exultation on getting "nirvana on seeing the light". Muhammad's reaction was that of a true searcher, one of wonder, almost doubt and incredulity at what was apparently being thrust upon him. In an agitated, almost frightened state, he dashed straight to his wife Khadija who consoled and comforted him saying that he was an upright person and his Creator would surely not put him to false trials.

With succeeding revelations, Muhammad gained the confidence and the certainty of his mission and then resolutely and firmly proclaimed the message to all, despite severe opposition and pressures by his community leaders.

Meccan Period of Training and Strict Non-Violence Despite All Provocations and Pressures

Gentle but firm persuasion, appealing to reason, study of the universe, pondering over the history of the peoples of old to learn lessons from there and an invitation to look within, i.e. study of human nature and psychology were the pillars used to propagate the message in an attractive and appealing form.

Hijrah to Medina Under Severe Distress and Helplessness

At Medina, the Prophet established a state where through an agreed charter (known as the *Mithaq-al-Medina*, which is a notable document) with the local inhabitants of Medina, known as *Ansars* (the Helpers) and the Christians and Jews who lived there under powerful tribes, he built a state established on the principles of Qur'anic guidance.

This was not acceptable to his opponents, the Qurashite Meccans, who launched attacks upon attacks to destroy this nascent Medinan state in the bud. Despite being outnumbered and totally deficient in resources, Muhammad not only successfully defended Medina but went on to subjugate and conquer his opponents at Mecca without

any bloodshed. Muhammad's treatment of Meccans is unique. Not only was there no bloodshed, but the Quraish, who were his mortal enemies, joined the message of Islam and became its major proponents.

Unique Ability to Influence Opponents

This ability to make his opponents join his cause is one of the hallmarks of the prophet's style and was followed successfully by his followers and companions well after the prophet left them. A well-known case would be the Berber General Tariq bin Ziyad. The Berber people were conquered by the Arab armies advancing into North Africa towards the beginning of the 8th century A.D. It resulted in a bitter struggle in which the Berbers were beaten, then rose in revolt under a queen, but were re-subjugated shortly and most of them accepted Islam.

Then came the most unexpected development, of which there is no comparison in the world. An Arab/Berber army, including a number of notable Arab nobles of the Prophet's clan of Quraish ably led by the young Berber General Tariq, advanced into Spain around 712 AD. They landed at a place later named the Rock of Tariq (nowadays known as Gibraltar) where Tariq burnt all his boats, and went on to conquer Spain in a lightning campaign to give birth to the shining civilization of Moorish Spain for almost 800 years, which later resulted in lighting the torch of the modern age in Europe.

Muhammad set about achieving a change in the fortunes of the people of Arabia within a short span of 23 years of his prophethood from 610-632 AD which is absolutely unique and unmatched in the history of mankind. Within his lifetime, the perpetually warring and ignorant Arab Bedouin tribes, who for centuries had been kept under the thumb of the rival Byzantine Roman Empire centered at Constantinople and the antagonist Persian Empire of the Sassanids centered at Ctesiphon, were united into a civilized and expanding force of which Hitti said:

> *If someone in the first third of the seventh Christian century had had the audacity to prophesy that within a decade some unheralded, some unforeseen power from the hitherto barbarous and little known land of Arabia was to make its appearance, hurl itself against the only two world powers of the age, fall heir to the one – the Sassanid – and strip the other – the Byzantine – of its fairest provinces, he would have undoubtedly been declared a lunatic. Yet that is exactly what happened.* ***After the death of the prophet sterile Arabia seems to have been converted as if by magic into a nursery of heroes the like of whom both in number and quality is hard to find anywhere.*** *The military campaigns of Khalid ibn-al-Walid and Amr ibn-al-As which ensued in al Iraq, Persia, Syria and Egypt are among the most brilliantly executed in the history of warfare and bear favorable comparison with those of Napoleon, Hannibal or Alexander.*
>
> *History of the Arabs* by Philip Hitti, p. 142

In less than 80 years, the Arabs simultaneously took on and defeated both the Byzantines and the Persians, the two superpowers of the day and also embarked on an intellectual enterprise which opened the age of reason and science.

During the course of his 10 years at Medina, the Prophet personally engaged in 27 battles and 55 battles/skirmishes were fought by his companions during which the entire Arabian Peninsula came under the fold of Islam. It has been said by many critics, especially Westerners, that Islam was spread by the sword and through the use of force. Against that misstatement is the fact that it was the most lasting of revolutions of the world brought about with the least spilling of blood as will be graphically illustrated by the following facts:

	Killed	Wounded	Captured
Muslims	459	127	11
Opponents	459	Not available	6524

The above brings out the amazing fact that the total loss of human life, on both sides was no more than 918 lives.

To put it in its correct perspective, we need to note the havoc and misery created by other world revolutions and wars:

- The French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century saw the death of almost 6.6 million people and the invention of the guillotine to facilitate such mass scale slaughter
- The Communist Russian revolution resulted in the death of around 10 million people and its followers have voluntarily abandoned Marxism-Leninism within 75 years
- In WWI, the Axis and Allies combined lost about 7.34 million people
- And WW2 topped the scale with a loss in human lives of 10.6 million souls, which again failed to solve the basic problems and led to a protracted cold war

See, ***Methodology of Prophet Muhammad's Islamic Revolution***by Syed Asad Gilani, Ferozsons Private Ltd, Lahore, 1989. ISBN 969-0-00742-4.

Organization of an Islamic State and Dealings with Jews and Christians

- Fighting was prescribed against those who had persecuted the Muslims and driven them away from their homes and hearths. Strict rules of war were laid down along with the rights of the enemy and captives which is unprecedented in human history
- Rights of women ordained
- The *Treaty of Hudaibiyah* and its significance as a great victory, which even surprised most Muslims
- Fall of Mecca and the unique magnanimity shown by Prophet Muhammad even to his bitterest of foes

What Non-Muslims Have to Say About the Prophet

Given below are samples of what a number of non-biased, non-Muslim scholars have said about the Prophet Muhammad, intellectuals who studied the life and practices of the Prophet objectively and wrote

about him during the past two centuries. This should assist the readers in formulating their views:

- **William Draper in, *History of Intellectual Development of Europe:***

  Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D. 569, was born in Mecca, in Arabia, the man who, of all men, has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race.... To be the religious head of many empires, to guide the daily life of one-third of the human race, may perhaps justify the title of a Messenger of God.

- **Edward Montet in, *La Propagande Chrétienne et ses Adversaires Musulmans*, Paris 1890 (also in T.W. Arnold in, *The Preaching of Islam*, London 1913):**

  Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term considered etymologically and historically....the teachings of the Prophet, the Qur'an has invariably kept its place as the fundamental starting point, and the dogma of unity of God has always been proclaimed therein with a grandeur, a majesty, an invariable purity and with a note of sure conviction, which it is hard to find surpassed outside the pale of Islam....A creed so precise, so stripped of all theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvelous power of winning its way into the consciences of men.

- **Alphonse de Lamartine in, *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris, 1854:**

  Never has a man set for himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, a more sublime aim, since this aim was superhuman; to subvert superstitions which had been imposed between man and his Creator, to render God unto man and man unto God; to restore the rational and sacred idea of divinity amidst the chaos of the material and disfigured gods of idolatry, then existing. Never has a man undertaken a work so far beyond human power with so feeble means, for he (Muhammad) had in the conception as well as in the execution of such a great design, no other instrument than himself and no other aid except a handful of men living in a corner of the desert. Finally, never has a man accomplished such a huge and lasting revolution in the world, because in less than two centuries

after its appearance, Islam, in faith and in arms, reigned over the whole of Arabia, and conquered, in God's name, Persia, Khorasan, Transoxania, Western India, Syria, Egypt, Abyssinia, all the known continent of Northern Africa, numerous islands of the Mediterranean Sea, Spain, and part of Gaul.

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astonishing results are the three criteria of a human genius, who could dare compare any great man in history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws, and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples, dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls.

On the basis of a Book, every letter of which has become law, he created a spiritual nationality which blended together peoples of every tongue and race. He has left the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality: the hatred of false gods and the passion for the One and Immaterial God. This avenging patriotism against the profanation of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Muhammad; the conquest of one-third of the earth to the dogma was his miracle; or rather it was not the miracle of man but that of reason.

The idea of the unity of God, proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of the fabulous theogonies, was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient temples of idols and set on fire one-third of the world. His life, his meditations, his heroic revilings against the superstitions of his country, and his boldness in defying the furies of idolatry, his firmness in enduring them for fifteen years in Mecca, his acceptance of the role of public scorn and almost of being a victim of his fellow countrymen... This dogma was twofold: the unity of God and the immateriality of God: the former telling what God is, the latter telling what God is not; the one overthrowing false gods with the sword, the other starting an idea with words.

Philosopher, Orator, Apostle, Legislator, Conqueror of Ideas, Restorer of Rational beliefs.... The founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?

- **Mahatma Gandhi's statement published in *Young India*, 1924:**

  I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind.... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle. When I closed the second volume (of the Prophet's biography), I was sorry there was not more for me to read of that great life.

- **Sir George Bernard Shaw – the celebrated Irish playwright, Nobel Laureate for literature in 1925, Academy Award winner in 1938, Fabian socialist and staunch pacifist, says in *The Genuine Islam***, (Vol. 1, No. 8, 1936):

  If any religion had the chance of ruling over England, nay Europe within the next hundred years, it could be Islam.

  I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him - the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity.

  I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much-needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today.

- **Michael Hart in, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons In History*, New York, 1978:**

My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the secular and religious level. ... It is probable that the relative influence of Muhammad on Islam has been larger than the combined influence of Jesus Christ and St. Paul on Christianity. ... It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history.

- **Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), considered the greatest British historian of his time, mentions in, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London, 1838, vol. 5, p. 335:**

  His (i.e., Muhammad's) memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid and decisive. He possessed the courage of both thought and action.

Thomas Carlyle in, *Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*, 1840:

The lies (Western slander) which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man (Muhammad) are disgraceful to ourselves only.

A silent great soul, one of those who cannot but be earnest. He was to kindle the world, the world's Maker had ordered so.

- **S. Tritton in, *Islam*, 1951:**

  The picture of the Muslim soldier advancing with a sword in one hand and the Qur'an in the other is quite false.

De Lacy O'Leary in, *Islam at the Crossroads*, London, 1923:

History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.

Gibbon in, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1823:

The good sense of Muhammad despised the pomp of royalty. The Apostle of God submitted to the menial offices of the family; he kindled the fire; swept the floor; milked the ewes; and mended with his own hands his shoes and garments. Disdaining the penance and merit of a hermit, he observed without effort of vanity the abstemious diet of an Arab.

Edward Gibbon and Simon Oakley in *History of the Saracen Empire*, London, 1870:

The greatest success of Mohammad's life was effected by sheer moral force.

It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder, the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Mecca and Medina is preserved after the revolutions of twelve centuries by the Indian, the African and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran....The Mahometans have uniformly withstood the temptation of reducing the object of their faith and devotion to a level with the senses and imagination of man. 'I believe in One God and Mahomet the Apostle of God' is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honors of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue, and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion.

Reverend Bosworth Smith in, *Muhammad and Muhammadanism*, London, 1874:

Head of the State as well as the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar, without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed revenue.

If ever a man ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the powers without their supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life.

In Mohammadanism everything is different here. Instead of the shadowy and the mysterious, we have history....We know of the external history of Muhammad....while for his internal history after his mission had been proclaimed, we have a book absolutely unique in its origin, in its preservation....on the substantial authority of which no one has ever been able to cast a serious doubt.

Arthur Glyn Leonard in, *Islam, Her Moral and Spiritual Values:*

It was the genius of Muhammad, the spirit that he breathed into the Arabs through the soul of Islam that exalted them. That raised them out of the lethargy and low level of tribal stagnation up to the high watermark of national unity and empire. It was in the sublimity of Muhammad's deism, the simplicity, the sobriety and purity it inculcated, the fidelity of its founder to his own tenets, that acted on their moral and intellectual fiber with all the magnetism of true inspiration.

Philip K. Hitti in, *History of the Arabs:*

Within a brief span of mortal life, Muhammad called forth out of unpromising material, a nation, never welded before; in a country that was hitherto but a geographical expression he established a religion which in vast areas suppressed Christianity and Judaism, and laid the basis of an empire that was soon to embrace within its far-flung boundaries the fairest provinces of the then civilized world.

Rodwell in the Preface to his translation of the Holy Qur'an:

Mohammad's career is a wonderful instance of the force and life that resides in him who possesses an intense faith in God and in the unseen world. He will always be regarded as one of those who have had that influence over the faith, morals and whole earthly life of their fellow men, which none but a really great man ever did, or can exercise; and whose efforts to propagate a great verity will prosper.

W. Montgomery Watt in, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Oxford, 1953:

His readiness to undergo persecution for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as a leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement – all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.... Thus, not merely must we credit Muhammad with essential honesty and integrity of purpose, if we are to understand him at all; if we are to correct the errors we have inherited from the past, we must not forget that conclusive proof is a much stricter requirement than a show of plausibility, and in a matter such as this only to be attained with difficulty.

D. G. Hogarth in, *Arabia:*

Serious or trivial, his daily behavior has instituted a canon which millions observe this day with conscious memory. No one regarded by any section of the human race as Perfect Man has ever been imitated so minutely. The conduct of the founder of Christianity has not governed the ordinary life of his followers. Moreover, no founder of a religion has been left on so solitary an eminence as the Muslim apostle.

Washington Irving in, *Mahomet and His Successors:*

He was sober and abstemious in his diet and a rigorous observer of fasts. He indulged in no magnificence of apparel, the ostentation of a petty mind; neither was his simplicity in dress affected but a result of real disregard for distinction from so trivial a source.

In his private dealings he was just. He treated friends and strangers, the rich and poor, the powerful and weak, with equity, and was beloved by the common people for the affability with which he received them, and listened to their complaints.

His military triumphs awakened no pride nor vainglory, as they would have done had they been effected for selfish purposes. In the time of his greatest power he maintained the same simplicity of manners

and appearance as in the days of his adversity. So far from affecting a regal state, he was displeased if, on entering a room, any unusual testimonials of respect were shown to him. If he aimed at a universal dominion, it was the dominion of faith; as to the temporal rule which grew up in his hands, as he used it without ostentation, so he took no step to perpetuate it in his family.

James Michener in, *Islam: The Misunderstood Religion*, Reader's Digest, May 1955, pp. 68-70:

No other religion in history spread so rapidly as Islam. The West has widely believed that this surge of religion was made possible by the sword. But no modern scholar accepts this idea, and the Qur'an is explicit in the support of the freedom of conscience.

Like almost every major prophet before him, Muhammad fought shy of serving as the transmitter of God's word, sensing his own inadequacy. But the Angel commanded 'Read'. So far as we know, Muhammad was unable to read or write, but he began to dictate those inspired words which would soon revolutionize a large segment of the earth: "There is one God."

In all things Muhammad was profoundly practical. When his beloved son Ibrahim died, an eclipse occurred and rumors of God's personal condolence quickly arose. Whereupon Muhammad is said to have announced, 'An eclipse is a phenomenon of nature. It is foolish to attribute such things to the death or birth of a human being'.

At Muhammad's own death an attempt was made to deify him, but the man who was to become his administrative successor killed the hysteria with one of the noblest speeches in religious history: 'If there are any among you who worshiped Muhammad, he is dead. But if it is God you worshiped, He lives forever.'

Lawrence E. Browne in, *The Prospects of Islam*, 1944:

Incidentally these well-established facts dispose of the idea so widely fostered in Christian writings that the Muslims, wherever they went, forced people to accept Islam at the point of the sword.

K. S. Ramakrishna Rao in, *Mohammed: The Prophet of Islam*, 1989:

> *My problem to write this monograph is easier, because we are not generally fed now on that (distorted) kind of history and much time need not be spent on pointing out our misrepresentations of Islam. The theory of Islam and sword, for instance, is not heard now in any quarter worth the name. The principle of Islam that "there is no compulsion in religion" is well known.*

Summary

All of the above come from the pen of reputable non-Muslim scholars and thinkers. Need one say more? Should this not be enough to indicate, even to the critics, that this mighty benefactor of humanity does not deserve the cartoons and comments by the Danish newspapers about the Prophet of Islam?

The essential point is that the life and conduct of Prophet Muhammad adds up to an amazing piece of evidence in support of the Qur'an being an authentic message from on High.

Muhammad lived his life in the full limelight of history. No other claimed prophet, before or after his time, has been so closely observed, with his smallest actions and sayings noted and recorded by his followers and even his opponents.

Had Muhammad been the author of the Qur'an, as maintained by some critics, would he have included passages in the text which are somewhat critical of his own conduct, at places, to show him the correct path and way of becoming a beacon of light? Where could he have obtained knowledge about matters physical, historical, sociological mentioned in the Qur'an which were not to become known to even knowledgeable people, even more than a millennium after his times, except that they were to be revealed to him by the Creator?

One can now understand what must have led Karen Armstrong to write two biographies of the Prophet and to pointedly title the second ***Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*** even after a lapse of 1400 years.

Prophet Muhammad has been chosen by reputed authors as the best amongst the humans who ever lived. I can almost hear the critics say, then so what? Someone will always be at the head of such a list. All that proves is that Muhammad was an exceptionally gifted person. True enough! But is it just a coincidence that Muhammad also happened to become the bearer of the Qur'an? Surely it is much more than a coincidence. It had to be so.

CHAPTER 8

Man's Place in the Universe

Science tells us that we are literally children of the stars. We would not be here without the supernovae where the trans-iron heavy elements were formed. Revelation tells us that humans have been given a special status and an honored place in the universe by being declared vicegerents of the Creator. The author maintains that both are correct. We need to recognize our potential worth in order to value others. This was the theme of this invited talk to the Muslim Education Forum in the UK.

Note: 'MAN' in this presentation has been used as a generic term for humankind.

Abstract

The author argues that modern MAN, while making breathtaking progress in studying nature, has failed to pay adequate attention to the central question of his existence *viz* what is his place in the universe? What is he doing here? And more importantly what happens to him after death? Because of the scintillating successes of modern science he has fallen into the trap of thinking that the scientific method is all-powerful and by neglecting to notice and respect its limits, is finding himself lost in many ways. The author argues that alongside the powerful scientific method using MAN's intellectual abilities there is another valid source of knowledge which has been given to MAN viz knowledge through divine revelation. These two sources rather than conflicting, as is commonly believed, positively reinforce, supplement and complement each other. Use of both together only can give MAN the guidance and information he needs in

this information-dominated age of today that can save him from the pitfalls of earlier brilliant civilizations and bring out the potential in him to usher in a golden age of living at peace with himself, with his fellow beings and with his environment.

The author maintains that just as there are physical laws governing the working of the universe there are moral laws governing man's activities, which are far more important for the well-being of man and society. Both sources, on deep reflection, lead to an evolutionary outlook about the development of man from inanimate to animate matter finally culminating in a unique being. The underlying principle of evolution has been increasing degrees of freedom and this will not end with death. Rather our essence i.e., the soul will be freed from the constraints of the material body to continue its onward march.

MAN thus possesses a much-honored place in the universe. We must learn to value ourselves, which should then lead us to value others.

Only by harnessing the intellect within the overall guidance of revelation can mankind develop its full potential and meet the increasing challenges of tomorrow and ensure the survival and full growth of the human civilization.

Introduction

Through the effective use of reason acting through the scientific method, modern man has learnt to overcome superstition and develop a much better understanding of the universe and to exploit natural resources for his comfort.

However, through excessive reliance on science by ignoring its limitations, he has tied himself in knots and even his survival is now at stake.

Revelation, the second source of information and guidance, has gone out of fashion because its latest proponents, we Muslims, have failed to demonstrate the relevance of its contents to guide mankind in modern times. Revelation is in fact incorrectly considered to be in

conflict with science, which it certainly is not.

The challenge lying before Muslims is to bring out afresh that mankind needs both these valid sources of information and guidance to bring out man's full potential of development.

We need to demonstrate that instead of being in conflict the two sources complement and supplement each other. They have their own spheres of influence. Reason working within the ambit of divine revelation, free from human injections - as in Al Qur'an – is the best recipe not only for mankind's survival but also for its further development not just in this life but also beyond death.

This should be the focal point of education of the young: To develop in them the capabilities to think for themselves, to make rational choices, and to learn how to educate themselves on a continuing basis in this age of extremely rapid advancement of knowledge. It is also necessary to help them realize that while we have the freedom to choose, we have to bear the consequences of our choices, and we will all be accountable for our choice and deeds to the Almighty the Designer, Creator and Sustainer of the universe in which He has given mankind a place of honor.

Exactly What Is Man's Place in the Universe?

This question has been posed time and again by thinkers across the ages, but without an adequate and satisfying response.

Is man a product of chance mutations and natural selection with no visible purpose or goal, as is maintained by the atheists and secular humanists? Or is man something special, which may well have developed over the ages and in gradual stages while possibly evolving through the stages of inorganic – organic – plant – animal – culminating in Man himself. But all the time this evolutionary growth had a purpose, a goal, and a direction.

This approach has been dubbed as ***Theistic Evolution*** and a typical representative of this viewpoint would be John Haught, a Professor at

Georgetown University in Washington. In the eyes of the author, this view is close to the guidance given by the Qur'an, which will be elaborated upon in the material which follows and was used for the talk given to the Muslim Education Forum, UK in 1998.

But the Qur'an differs significantly from the stand of ***Materialist Evolution*** in that it talks of direction and purpose in the development of life and rise of the human. It talks of the body having developed through regular evolutionary development but at some stage God endowed it with a *"Ruh"* (commonly translated as soul or consciousness) which was a special act, conferring upon the humans a special relationship with the Creator.

Let me say this upfront that this is not the view of the Creation/Evolution debate which would be expressed by a big majority of Muslims, as the author found out at the end of the talk. But in the author's view, Qur'an offers a unique perspective which has not been adequately brought out in relevant literature.

Qur'an carries *ayahs* (verses) which touch on both sides of the debate. But in the author's view, it clearly comes out on the side of Evolution, as will become evident from what follows.

Qur'an indeed talks of the creation of Adam from dust.

Why Are We Here?

Most modern management courses begin by asking employees:

- The objective of the organization
- How they fit into the organization i.e., what is expected from them, whom they report to and who reports to them
- How their performance will be measured, i.e. how they will be rewarded or punished in future

How strange that modern man often spends his entire lifetime without ever asking:

- How he fits into the universe? What is his place?

- Where is he heading? What is expected of him?
- What does the future hold for him?

Is it any wonder that we stand confused and uncertain!

The Role of Science and Religion in Life

As science tells us through:

- Cosmology, physics and biology - evolutionary development
- Universe - stars & galaxies - solar system – earth
- Inorganic matter › organic › plants › animals › man

Similarly, *wahhy* (authentic revelation) also tells us again about evolutionary development but with a definite purpose and not chance. In fact this development continues even after death. What characterizes this development is increasing degrees of freedom. Death frees the soul (which is what really counts) from the constraints of the body (which does not really matter) and increases its degree of freedom in *Akhirat* (the afterlife).

However while MAN is free to choose, he cannot escape the consequences of his choices. He is fully accountable and the choices exercised by him in this life will determine the course of his future development after death.

Thus, MAN has a purpose and an honored place in the universe. Science tells us that immense amounts of energy and time have been spent in the evolutionary development of MAN. He is truly a child of the stars since the heavy elements beyond iron could only be created in supernova explosions and MAN could only be formed in the second-generation stars & not the earlier ones.

Wahhy (authentic revelation) tells us that in addition he was endowed with a soul.

This honored place should put us well above the petty differences of race, color or creed and convince us that all Mankind is one

brotherhood and differences between white and black, man & woman, and rich & poor pale into insignificance.

Reason & *wahhy* must go together, like eyes & light, respectively to show MAN the right path, which is the only answer to the problems facing humanity today.

Valid Sources of Information

- In this age of informatics, we must start by asking, what are the valid sources of information for MAN?
- First is clearly the methodology of science:
- It has established its validity through its brilliant successes over the last few centuries
- It has freed MAN from lots of superstitions and given him seeming control over nature
- It has brought Western Civilization, its prime practitioner, total domination over all others
- The second claimant is divine revelation received by MAN through a succession of prophets
- This is considered by many as outdated, old-fashioned and invalid
- More importantly the two sources are considered to be at odds and in conflict
- It is high time that this matter be examined definitively since our life and future depend upon it

Methodology of Science

- Starts by collecting all available evidence and applicable facts
- Develops a hypothesis/model to fit/explain the evidence/ facts as best as one can
- Tries to set up controlled experiments, to check veracity, self-consistency, etc. of the hypothesis/model and make predictions/extrapolations

- Checks how well the facts fit the model, gathers more facts to check out the predictions
- Repeats procedure by different observers under differing conditions to rule out coincidences, frauds, mistakes
- If experiments are successful, model's validity becomes increasingly acceptable. The hypothesis can gradually become a theory and finally even a law.
- However, even a law is not absolute. It is open to changes/ amendments. It can even be overturned, but only by following the above process.
- Science is based on the systematic use of the **intellect**. It has proven its power, for some it is the only valid source of knowledge and is all-powerful, i.e., can find answers to all our problems.
- Recently however, major questions have been raised about the boundaries of the domain of sciences

Revelation and Reason

- Revelation is much older than science or even philosophy. Through the ages it helped man find many answers.
- Became suspect and increasingly ignored when **men** managed to use it for nefarious purposes by distorting its contents
- Revelation got a body-blow when its proponents took a position against the use of intellect and reason and staked their case on blind faith
- Qur'an, the last of the divine revelations, did not suffer the fate of addition/distortion of contents, but has not escaped from neglect
- This has happened despite the fact that Qur'an gives pride of place to the use of the intellect. So much so that **over 700 verses** of the Qur'an have the following endings, which urge man to use his intellect:
- Ponder ...
- Think ...
- Use their mind

- Use their ears
- Use their eyes
- Qur'an considers **intellect** to be the acme of evolution
- A tool which gives man the potential to tame and exploit nature
- Most powerful instrument
- Something without which even **revelation** cannot be properly understood

Limitations of the Intellect

- Having given such a primary and powerful role to the intellect, the Qur'an pointedly adds a warning, stating that **intellect** is most powerful, but beware it is not **all**-powerful
- Herein lies the beneficence of the Creator. He provides man with a very powerful tool and at the same time He informs him of its inherent limitations.
- Following this general warning, Qur'an specifically identifies three areas which epitomize the limitations of the intellect/ scientific method:
- The first covers the general area of **reality of the Creator**. Who is the Creator? The form and location of His existence? His authority, His relation with MAN.
- The second area concerns **life after death, and heaven & hell**

Qur'an clearly informs man that despite the power of the intellect, these two areas lie totally out of its reach. In fact it is futile for the intellect to even try to probe into these two areas. The reason given is that **man's intellect** simply has not been given the means to even try to unlock the multidimensional facets of these two areas.

- The third area is more grayish and pertains generally to the **social sciences,** i.e., brotherhood of mankind, man/woman relations, economic structures, etc. The intellect/scientific method does have the potential to work here, but in so doing, it can bring about unnecessary misery and suffering.

The reason given is that controlled experiments are either not really possible or the results will take generations to appear; hence they are not fit for study by the scientific method.

Man's Status in the Universe

- Mankind is **one brotherhood** on this spaceship Earth
- Man has an **honored** place. He is capable of rising above the angels but also of falling below the animals.
- Man has **evolved** along a designated path:

Inorganic › organic › plant › animal › MAN › beyond.

- Increasing **degrees of freedom** characterizes the upward march of evolution
- Man is free to choose, but cannot escape the **consequences** of his choice - he will be held accountable
- MAN's development will not end with death but continue into the **hereafter** which is the **real life**
- What we do here will affect and determine how our development continues in the **next life**
- Man consists of a **body** and a **soul**
- Man is literally a child of the stars

Evolution of the Universe – View of Science

- **Evolutionary development** of the universe leading to the rise of MAN has been the accepted view of science despite the recent outcries of creationists
- Starting with the famous **Big Bang** around 12-15 billion years ago, galaxies and stars were formed and the universe is still expanding at an enormous rate
- Our sun, which is a typical yellow star, was formed about 5 billion years ago along with its string of planets of which the **earth** alone has the right conditions for the rise of life

- Starting with **inanimate matter**, evolution proceeded progressively through development of complex organic molecules, then plants, animals and finally MAN himself
- According to science, life has evolved through random processes with no direction or design. On the presence of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe, science is still searching
- Man, with his superior intellect and almost total dominance over the earth and reaching out for the moon and the planets, is still, in the eyes of most scientists, merely a superior animal destined one day to die with nothing left to develop further
- Qur'an states otherwise

Evolution of the Universe – Views of the Qur'an

- Although the Old and New Testaments talk of the rise of man through creationism, and the Qur'an too at a number of places apparently refers to the creation of Adam and his partner, the fact remains that the dominant theme of Qur'an concerning development of the universe and rise of man therein, is clearly **evolutionary** and surprisingly in line with the modern scientific findings
- Qur'an also refers to the **gradual development of the heavens and the earth** in six stages lasting aeons of time. It talks of spheres of gases, rise of life from inanimate matter and its origins from water (in different stages)
- Most interestingly Qur'an talks of **relativity of time** where one day or a stage in Arabic would last 1000, 10,000 or 50,000 years of our time
- While the similarities between the Qur'anic statements and scientific findings on evolution are amazing, the more significant are the **differences**. The Qur'an tells us that:
- Evolution is not random but **directed**
- Life has a **purpose** as part of a **design**
- A **divine spark** was put into man (consciousness?)

- More important part of evolution is yet to come, i.e. **life after death**

Creation of the Universe

- Allah is the Creator, Nourisher and Sustainer of this Universe which was created for a purpose. It did not happen by chance.
- The Universe is governed by universal laws, while matter is governed by physical laws which can best be discovered by the human intellect using the scientific method
- Man on the other hand is governed by **moral laws**. They are not easily amenable to discovery by "scientific and philosophic enquiry" and have been revealed to man through a series of prophets culminating in the Qur'an
- Reason is very powerful; the Qur'an repeatedly enjoins use of it. However, reason has its limitations.
- Sovereignty belongs to the Creator who is the **Absolute, All-Knowing, All-Powerful, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient**
- Everything has a **purpose** - even if we cannot understand it at this stage

Environmental Challenge – Man and Nature

- During much of history, the population of mankind was relatively small and his control over natural phenomena was limited
- Under these conditions Mother Nature could in time heal any imbalance and damage caused by human activities and save man from the unintended causes of his own follies
- With the spectacular developments of modern science and technology and the exponential rise in human population across the globe, this safety valve is weakening rapidly
- Consequences of human actions can now no longer be taken care of by Mother Nature and we are now increasingly vulnerable to our own mistakes
- By gaining increasing power over nature, man has increased his

vulnerabilities

- It is becoming imperative that we now chart our future course of action with greater care to ensure not only the survival of the human race, but the optimal development of its full latent potential

Current Dominance of Western Civilization and Its Future

- The dominance achieved by Western Civilization in the last few centuries and particularly the 20th century, has been unique
- While a number of other civilizations, e.g., the Egyptian and the Chinese existed for millennia (much longer than Western Civilization has done to date), the fact is incontestable that the West's dominance has been far greater and almost total in various spheres, i.e., economic, social, cultural and most of all military
- The one area which has been the exception is religion
- To understand the reasons underlying this phenomenon, an effort has been made to list out the strengths and the weaknesses of the Western civilization in the next slides

Western Civilization – Strengths

- Supremacy of law, ***Magna Carta*** - Human Rights
- Conduct of affairs through **consultation** - Democracy
- Efficient **management** of their resources - Market Economy
- Human Resource Development
- Widespread Education/Training
- Dignity of Labor
- Development of **intellect, science and technology**
- **Military strength**, desire for exploration and enquiry
- Establishment of a **welfare system**
- Increasing **respect for the environment**
- Ability and **flexibility to analyze** their experiences and to learn

from them

Western Civilization - Weaknesses

- Excessive reliance on human intellect (treating it as all-powerful), even denying the Creator
- Breakdown of the family system
- Materialism, licentiousness, hedonism
- Drugs, alcoholism and preoccupation with sex and lately deviant sex
- Alienation leading to wanton violence against society and self (suicide)
- Denial of equal rights to others - Indians, Aborigines, and Blacks
- Weak belief/disbelief in the Creator and the Hereafter
- Advocacy of unbridled capitalism - riba (usury)

Western Civilization – Possible Future

A very instructive phase during the 20th century has been the meteoric rise and even more sudden fall of the communist-led Soviet Empire (which many historians consider a part of Western Civilization). Now that the Soviet empire has collapsed and the market economy and democracy, the two pillars of western society, have apparently triumphed, strangely, instead of gloating over this success, there are sounds of apprehension and doubts being expressed about the future of western civilization from within its influential ranks.

No, the reference here is not to the thesis of Prof. Huntington on the possible clash of the West with the Islamic Civilization, but rather to the historical analysis propounded by Western pundits like Prof. Arnold Toynbee in his monumental study of history and more so the essay on the **crash of western civilization** by Jacques Attali, a former Advisor to the President of the Republic of France and subsequently President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and

Development.

Mr. Attali maintains that the two pillars, i.e., democracy and the market economy, suffer from fundamental shortcomings. They often contradict each other and carry within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. Mr. Attali fears that such cracks in the facade of western civilization are only just beginning to show and **reveal fundamental weaknesses which could lead to the total collapse of the Western civilization,** (see also writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, George Soros, Kenneth Arrow, Joseph Schumpeter, and Robert Kaplan).

This is not being said by a fundamentalist Muslim gleefully awaiting the fall of the West, but by one who is an admirer of much good in Western civilization, and whose list of strengths given earlier is longer than its weaknesses. It also must be recognized and remembered that the veneer of civilization is neither very thick nor strong. Anarchy is not a desirable alternative. Every effort must be made to recover and retain what is good in each of our systems. This was just to show that masterpieces of intellect will not last unless their limitations are respected.

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire, the market economy and democracy appear to have triumphed.

But, warns Jacques Attali, former special adviser to the president of the Republic of France and President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development:

> *Despite the prevalent belief that the market economy and democracy combine to form a perpetual motion machine that propels human progress, these two values on their own are in fact incapable of sustaining any civilization. Both are riddled with weaknesses and are increasingly likely to break down. Unless the west, and increasingly its self-appointed leader, the United States, begins to recognize the shortcomings of the market economy and democracy, western civilization will gradually disintegrate and eventually self-destruct.*

Attali further goes on to say:

> *The fact that the West may disagree with some aspects of Islam as applied in some countries - the status of women, for example - does not mean that there is nothing to learn from Islamic societies.*

The Threat Of Unbridled Capitalism

One very successful GURU of capitalism, George Soros, has the following to say:

> *I now fear that laissez-faire capitalism is endangering our open and democratic society.*
>
> *In social sciences, as distinct from natural sciences, perceptions help to determine reality and facts do not necessarily constitute reliable criteria for judging the truth of statements.*
>
> *I contend that open society may be threatened by excessive individualism.*
>
> *Market values served to undermine traditional values.*
>
> *Unsure of what they stand for, people increasingly rely on money as the criterion of value.*
>
> *The cult of success has replaced a belief in principles. Society has lost its anchor.*
>
> *Laissez-faire ideology has effectively banished income or wealth redistribution - the inequities can become intolerable.*
>
> *Social Darwinism – survival of the fittest - is one of the misconceptions in human affairs. Cooperation is as much a part of the system as competition.*
>
> *With the end of the cold war - which was an extremely stable arrangement - no new world order has taken its place. We have entered a period of disorder.*
>
> *As things stand the global open society that prevails at present is likely to prove a temporary phenomenon.*
>
> *Laissez-faire capitalism would lead to great instability and eventual*

breakdown.

We now have 200 years of experience with the Age of Reason and as reasonable people we ought to recognize that Reason has its limitations.

Qur'an – What It Says About Itself

- A book of **guidance** in which there is no doubt
- Tells man what he knows not. A guidance for **all times** and **all peoples**
- Comes straight from the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe – His **literal** word
- Challenges **jinn and men** to produce even a part like it – they will not be able to do so
- Relation of revelation with **reason**. Revelation is like light while reason is the eye – one needs both to be able to see
- Discerning men cried for help (*Sura Fatiha*). The Qur'an is the Creator's response as the culmination of guidance through a long line of Prophets
- The Qur'an is free from **discrepancy**. It is divine - **consistent**
- The Creator **Himself** is the guardian of this Book
- While providing abundant evidence of the Creator's existence it still leaves man with the final choice - in order not to take away man's freedom
- It says look especially in the following three areas:

a) Orderliness in the Universe

b) History of people of old

c) Look within yourselves - study of human nature

Qur'an's Relevance to Modern Life

Challenges:

- Preservation of the family unit
- Control of war—when weapons of mass destruction exist
- Control of environmental pollution and destruction
- Alienation from society: loneliness in New York (*salaat*)
- Excesses of free sex, alcoholism, drugs, AIDS, etc.
- Exploitation of the weak, women, poor and downtrodden
- Racism, meaning of chosen peoples
- Economic disparities, steep differentials
- Capitalism vs. Communism. Islam offers the middle way
- Private property, YES, but as trustee and not as unbridled owner
- Need for rule of law

Thus, mankind's place in the universe is one of honor. We may seem insignificant when seen in terms of size, power, age compared to planets, stars and galaxies, but man has been endowed with faculties such as intelligence and understanding, freedom to act and the potential to exploit and perhaps control the sun.

Mankind needs to recognize this, accept this and let it drive our actions and behavior.

We should rise above the petty squabbles and differences between nations and races, men and women, rich and poor. We have passed through the same process of creation, we are literally children of the stars, made from the valuable debris of heavy atoms. We share a glorious future which is yet to come, provided we survive our own follies.

Qur'anic Guidance for the Modern World

The Muslim World has yet to show the intellectual resourcefulness, the objectivity, the creativity, hard work and commitment required to handle a project of this size and complexity.

This will call for putting together a multidisciplinary taskforce under leaders of proven research ability, capable of working together in an integrative manner to bring out the synergies of collective effort. The team will need in-depth knowledge of classical Arabic, Qur'an and intimate knowledge of philosophy, social sciences and in particular modern sciences. The approach will have to be creative and innovative.

Innovative must not be taken to mean new for the sake of new. It is of utmost importance that the effort be undertaken with the right approach and attitude of mind, i.e., by people who accept from the heart that there is a Creator, Almighty, of infinite authority and reach who has bestowed upon mankind this guidance through a series of revealed books and prophets. That MAN has been endowed with intellect of great power such that by use of his intellect alone man can conquer the forces of nature and use them to his advantage. Man is reaching out for the stars and is wresting from nature its secrets, yet it would be a grave mistake to assume that human intellect is "All Powerful" and has no need of guidance from his Creator.

> ***The powers of 'Reason & Intellect' must be used within the framework of 'Divine Guidance' to meet the ever-increasing challenges of modern life.***

If this can be accomplished then it can lead to heaven on Earth as well as providing man with the wherewithal to continue his development after his soul has been freed from the shackles and constraints of his material body.

What We Need

- We need peace, we need a truce of the type that Prophet Muhammad bargained for at *Hudaibiya*
- The need of the day is not confrontation, à la Professor Huntington's thesis of the *"Clash of Civilizations"*
- The challenge is to create an atmosphere where the divine guidance embodied in the Qur'an can be brought out of the veils and cobwebs which have been allowed to grow around it, to free it from the weight of tradition, and to bring out its positive form before mankind
- To show how society can benefit from this guidance (not by trying to bring back the glories of Islam of the old days in a parochial fashion)
- Life should not be treated as a zero-sum game, rather looked upon to maximize integrated potential of mankind, bring out human synergies. Go for win-win situations
- Yardstick of success - which side of the scales is heavier

Tips on Study of the Qur'an

- It is not a textbook dealing with a specialized subject
- Neither is it easy to read like a textbook
- Remember, it was revealed in stages in bits and pieces, spread over a period of 23 years
- Its subject is vast - man and his place in this Universe
- What is he doing on this Earth? Where is he heading?
- Apparently, not easy to understand on first reading, seems disjointed, repetitive, flits from one subject to another
- Consider the example of seven blind men describing an elephant
- Consider all relevant *ayahs* (verses) relating to a subject
- Apparent/slight contradiction gives it stereoscopic quality
- Apparent small differences in verses, on deeper reflection, actually lead to better understanding – almost give a

three-dimensional view

- Establish proper/wider meaning of the words used in the Qur'an through analysis of root words, pre-Islamic Arabic usage and usage within the Qur'an itself

Note:

Please consider the above as views of a student of the Qur'an and not those of a scholar.

Rule of Law

- Essential if society is to develop
- Laws must be just - but must be obeyed nevertheless (if unjust, try to change them legally)
- Legal force to be accompanied by *Ihsan* (compassion for the underprivileged)
- Eye for an eye is allowed - but forgiveness is better (aim being to do what will improve the person)
- Be witnesses against yourself, if that be the case. It is better for you in the long run
- Do not let your anger or dislike of a person affect your judgment
- Rule of law applies even to war (contrast this with "all is fair in love and war")

***Muamlat* (Dealings)**

- Write down your deals, have them witnessed to avoid misunderstandings
- How to handle conflicts - appoint sympathetic counselors from each side
- *Fitna & Fasad* is worse than killing. Fight until persecution is no more
- No rumor-mongering, check your facts, inform only those who are responsible in society

- Why say that which you do not do?

In Order to Manage Others, Man Must Know How to Manage Himself

- Man's relation with the rest of creation
- Still carries the baggage of his earlier existence
- Must learn to tame and ride his desires
- Man is a Trustee of his possessions and not an absolute owner

Both an Individual and a Member of Society

- Apparent conflict between the two
- Why should man tell the truth?
- Man is essentially a social animal, cannot get very far alone
- Family is the basic unit of society, hence the importance of relations between MEN & WOMEN and later between parents and children
- No man should rule another, even if he be a prophet
- Sovereignty belongs only to Allah
- No laden one shall bear another's load

Need for Leadership

- Choose one amongst you to lead who should deal through a process of consultation (rather different from democracy because sovereignty does not reside in people but belongs to the Creator)
- Piety should be the sole criterion of choice of a leader
- Do unto others what you would like them to do to you
- Genius vs. collective approach

Status and Role of Men and Women

- They are equal in the important areas of soul and life after death and in terms of legal entities (there was a time in Europe when women were considered neither to have a soul nor could own property or exercise a vote)
- They are certainly not equal in biological and physical terms, neither in the eyes of *deen* (religion) nor of biology. Athletically speaking man is clearly stronger and physically dominant. Look at the difference in weight, height, strength and speed. If the fairer and gentler sex insists on physical equality, she will be the loser.
- From the beginning man has often been exploiting women and she needs protection, both legal as well as **moral** which **Qur'an provides** and women need to be more aware of that
- Qur'an enjoins **modesty**, not just for women but **also men**. It specifically asks men to **"lower their gazes"**. It talks of both being wheels of a cart and raiment for each other (protection, support and beauty).
- Both are **essential** members of a **family** which is the basic **social unit** and cannot be split into two identical persons which they are not

Attitude Towards Sex

- Sex is an essential biological need required for continuation of the species
- Nothing furtive or dirty about the activity
- Being required for perpetuation of the human race, nature has made it wholesome (within wedlock) and highly attractive
- Consequently, it needs no stimulation, rather needs to be kept in check like a strong horse
- Nature achieves control in animals through seasonal control on desires (heat). Humans, being free, are expected to exercise control voluntarily.
- Thus Qur'an enjoins modesty for both females and males:

- Females to cover their attractive parts
- Males to lower their gazes (no ogling)
- Unnecessary sexual stimulation can lead to imbalance in society, breakup of family, often to deviant sex, i.e., homosexuality, etc.

***Khumr* (Intoxicants) and *Maisir* (Gambling)**

- By common understanding Qur'an forbids alcohol and gambling which it indeed does
- However the words used i.e., *khumr* and *maisir* have far more comprehensive meaning:
- Khumr not only covers all intoxicants including alcohol, drugs and the like, but also other agents and activities which interfere with the proper use of one's intellect and reason. These include:
- Undue pride
- Anger
- Even blind faith (*taqlid*), where one gives up use of one's reason, falls in this category
- This is the status given by Qur'an to the proper use of our intellect and reason which are the crowning glory of evolution
- Similarly, *maisir* really means in Arabic anything that one gets with the left hand, i.e., without due effort
- *Maisir* includes gambling, illegal commissions, kickbacks, most of what economists call 'rental income', i.e., something which one gets without contributing anything useful to society. In fact such activities, though very profitable to the individual in the short term, are distortive and harmful to the society; hence they are forbidden

Did Islam Indeed Spread by the Sword?

Here is what H.G. WELLS has to say in *The Outline of History:*

It is not within our scope here to describe the wars by which in a hundred and twenty-five years Islam spread itself from the Indus to the Atlantic and Spain, and from Kashgar, on the borders of China, to Upper

Egypt. The vigorous impulse of the new faith carried the Arab idea and the Arabic scriptures to most parts of the known world, before worldliness, the old trading and plundering spirit, and the glamour of the silk robe had completely recovered their paralyzing sway over the Arab intelligence and will. The reader will note how the great tide swept over the footsteps of Yuan Chwang, and how easily in Africa the easy conquests of the Vandals were repeated in the reverse direction. And if the reader entertains any delusions about a fine civilization, either Persian, Roman, Hellenic, or Egyptian, being submerged by this flood, the sooner he dismisses such ideas the better. ***Islam prevailed because it was the best social and political order the times could offer.*** *It prevailed because everywhere it found politically apathetic peoples robbed, oppressed, bullied, uneducated, and unorganized, and it found selfish and unsound governments out of touch with any people at all.* ***It was the broadest, freshest, and cleanest political idea that had yet come into actual activity in the world, and it offered better terms than any other to the mass of mankind.*** *The capitalistic and slaveholding system of the Roman Empire and the literature and culture and social tradition of Europe had altogether decayed and broken down before Islam arose. It was only when mankind lost faith in the sincerity of its representatives that Islam, too, began to decay.*

But critics would say that may have been so for the 7th century A.D. Surely Islam cannot cope with modernity and does not have much to contribute to today's world. Think again and see what a noted western anthropologist, Prof. Ernest Gellner says in his book, *The Muslim Society:*

> *By various obvious criteria – universalism, scripturalism, spiritual egalitarianism, the extension of full participation in the sacred community not to one, or some, but to all, and the rational systematization of social life – Islam is, of the three great Western monotheisms, the one closest to modernity.*
>
> Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*

As quoted on the lead page of *FAITHLINES – Muslim Conceptions of Islam and Society* by Prof. Riaz Hassan, Oxford University Press, 2002.

Comparison of man and computer

ITEM	MAN	COMPUTER
Average Life	Over 60 yrs	5-10 yrs
Learning Capability	Self learning	Needs Programming
Flexibility	Versatile, capable of parallel processing	Quicker in specialised areas and
Parentage	Self replicating (cheaper) enjoyable	Repetitive acts. Needs extensive fabricating facilities
Repair Capability	Mostly Self repairing	Needs trained technicians
Capacity per unit size	Large	Moderate
Energy needs	Low	Moderate
Others	Mobile	Static
	Sensing ability mani-pulation capability Compassion Feelings	Obedient

Conditions Prevailing in the Country

- Utter lack of confidence in authorities › lack of enthusiasm
- Legislature, police › sectarianism
- Feeling of helplessness
- The black sides are becoming prominent
- Corruption is rife and getting worse
- Result is that exploiters are thriving and it is becoming difficult for better values even to survive
- Looks as if we are rushing headlong into chaos. Remember that the veneer of civilization is not very deep
- Exploiters are having a field day and the straight are feeling

helpless. One feels like sheep being led to slaughter or like the feeling of being in a traffic jam. Nothing moves. Is that what we want?

- Even a person like *Edhi* feels compelled to flee the country temporarily

International Scene Also Glum

- Industrial revolution has made the West prosperous and dominant; however, doubts are appearing (see *Crash of Western Civilization* by Attali and Soros)
- They are controlling resources. Are well organized but showing signs of decay
- Rampant materialism and Hedonism
- By concentrating on HOW, the WHY has been swept under the rug
- Result is they too, while still in control over the short term, have lost their longer-term moorings:
- Younger generation is adrift
- New order is deteriorating into an Islam bashing crusade
- Collective action essential, drops form rivers and oceans, links form a chain
- Need to organize like-minded people in a network
- Mobilize the young
- Provide constructive program of action
- Need to achieve criticality

[Work of the prophet has to be carried on by the *Ummah* now]

Three-Pronged Action Program

The best example for us is undoubtedly the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). *Makki* and *Madani* life (life in the cities of Mecca and Medina)

I. Ideological Foundation

- Can only be *wahhy-al-Qur'an*: study, understand, and act. Aim not at bringing back the glory of our past but rather to demonstrate how Qur'an can provide guidance to solve mankind's problems of today

II. Improvement Plan for Each Individual

- Need to de-rust, wash, overhaul and rebuild
- Instead of drifting gradually downhill we should start climbing up the moral plane
- To stress **obligations** to society rather than **rights**

III. Start a Social Action Program

- To develop a network of like-minded, action-oriented organizations.
- To attract and gain confidence of the masses – mass movement
- To bring back confidence, involvement of masses is a must

Conclusion

Stop feeling helpless and start taking charge of our destinies

Recommendation

Organize collective action on above lines

Education of the Young

Abstract

The principal guidelines of educating the young should thus be:

- To make them aware of their **"honored place in the universe"** and the immense potential of their intellect alongside the existence and needs of their souls. Only by recognizing that each of us is unique and priceless will we understand the value and rights of our fellow beings and treat them accordingly.

- The world should be run on **win-win** lines. Recent developments in knowledge have forced this realization and the world has become increasingly interdependent and human survival and development today demands a universal outlook. The leadership of the world tomorrow will automatically gravitate to the group that shares these values and act accordingly.
- Man's distinguishing characteristic is to have been endowed with **freedom** of choice. But at the same time he must recognize that he will have to face the **consequences** of his choice and be held **accountable** for his actions both in this world as well as the hereafter. Education must be focused on giving him this awareness of the two complementary sources of guidance and to endow him with intellectual resources of making his choices by weighing the evidence.
- Knowledge is advancing rapidly, almost exponentially at a breathtaking pace. Doubling time in many areas is now less than 5 years. The need of the day is for **continuing education** and the ability to educate oneself throughout life. This puts a premium not so much on accumulating facts but on acquiring the tools of analysis and their usage.

Education of the Young

What can one say to this audience of illustrious and distinguished educators?

First, to recognize that you have been given charge of "beings" which are valuable beyond the wildest imagination. None of us has the slightest idea of the value of raw materials, time and energy that nature has spent in fashioning the physical body of man, and then endowing it with intelligence and providing it with a soul. Regardless of the fact that billions of such "beings" have undergone creation, each is **unique** and really **priceless**.

Second, the Creator, Designer and Sustainer has given each of these beings **freedom of choice**. That right should never be tampered with. Your job is to assist each being in exercising this freedom sensibly

and optimally, because each of your charges is accountable for their choice and must face its consequences. Show them the sources of assistance and guidance that they can draw upon, i.e., their brains and the revelation. They need to be taught and made aware of their own value and recognize their potential so that they can place value on others and deal with them on that basis as equals - to be honored without any discrimination and treated like brothers and sisters.

Revelation - Evaluation Criteria

Having established that revelation, i.e., guidance from the Creator is a valid source of knowledge for meeting the problems faced by mankind and in developing our responses, one faces a number of associated issues:

How to choose which message is genuine and relevant?

Over the history of mankind a large number of claims have been made of divine guidance and inspiration etc. Not only have there been a large number of claimants regarded by contemporaries as *bona fide* or bogus, even fraudulent, but the more valid question is that even in the case of the *bona fide* claims, what assurance is there that the 'message' is available today in its original form? If that is not the case, then it really becomes of academic interest from the viewpoint of providing guidance to modern man whether the original message was *'bona fide'* or not.

In other words, it is of crucial significance, to the debate in hand that the message not only should have originated from the Creator, it should be free from any human inputs whether:

i. as additions/supplements by the 'receiver' of the message

ii. as errors/amendments in the original transcription, i.e., the integrity of the form/language in which the message was revealed

iii. its transmission to the audience at the time of its revelation or later from the recipient to his initial followers who heard it

firsthand and its subsequent preservation/transmission down the line

iv. The state of development of the language in which the original message was received. Had the language developed enough to be used as an effective vehicle for conveying the guidance to the recipient community or for mankind at large and for different periods/stages of development of societies?

In order to make any meaningful headway in sorting out/sifting of the large amount of material available under this head with multifarious levels of claims, it is important to develop some rules/yardsticks by which to grade/judge the value of the material available.

The following criteria could be helpful:

i. How well historically do we know the recipient of the guidance, his life before and after prophethood, the conditions prevailing in the society of his birth, his upbringing and maturity?

ii. What claims/introduction/explanation were made by the recipients, if any? Are any close witnesses and their views recorded in history/available to posterity? What light does this shed on the 'message', its integrity and content?

iii. Was the recipient actively seeking such enlightenment?

iv. Format of the revelation, language of the revelation? Could the language be written down? How developed was the language, to act as a bearer of 'complex' ideas and concepts?

v. Contents of the revelation itself - any inconsistencies, contradictions, and obvious flaws, conflict with the existing wisdom/history as known to the receiving audience or as perceived by the modern historian/anthropologist, etc.

vi. How have the contents stood the test of time? How understandable were they to the original audience? How understandable are they to 'modern man'?

vii. Were any predictions made which could be verified?

Apparent Conflict Between Religion and Science

- No doubt there is conflict if we compare views of science about the universe and its creation as well as the rise of man via evolution with Biblical verses especially regarding the age of the world
- But there is no conflict between the views of science and Qur'an (which is *deen*, i.e., divine revelation as distinct from religion which has been tampered with, although based on Bible and Torah.) However, these unfortunately are not available to us in their original form who claim that there is absolutely no conflict found. In fact, Qur'an states many facts, which were simply not known at the time of its revelation. The spirit of the Qur'an is wholly evolutionary.
- Universe was created in six *yaums* – not days but epochs or periods (Allah did not get tired or need rest on the 7th day, as per the Bible)
- One *yaum* is described as equal to 1000, 10,000 or even 50,000 years, i.e., a long time period. It also points towards the modern notion of **relativity** and time not being invariant. The old view of past-present-future being distinct is no longer acceptable. Relativity says what is past for one observer may be future for another observer.
- The Qur'an says that for the Creator there is no past, present or future; even man, on the Day of Judgment, will see this as one continuum.
- Qur'an refers to *Qurras* (spheres) when talking of the sun and planets, saying that they are moving/sun going towards an appointed destination
- Qur'an talks of creation of Man from:
- Dust or mud i.e., inorganic stage
- All life developed from water - life did evolve from the sea
- Man created from a clot of blood
- All this appears contradictory on the surface, but if one accepts

that all these are applicable to man's rise at different periods or stages of his development, then the apparent contradiction disappears and the broad view of evolution and the Qur'anic view come very close.

Inorganic › organic › plant › animal › man

- Let us ponder as to what is the common theme/thread in this evolutionary development:
- It is **increasing degrees of freedom**

Qur'an goes further than science; it says that the march of evolution continues even after death. The soul, which is the essence of life, gets freed from our body, which acts as a kind of container in this life, and the soul becomes free after death to continue its march.

- Qur'an attaches tremendous importance to **freedom**. Man is free to choose, while the earlier forms are not. Man can even deny his Creator – No calamity will befall him. **There is no compulsion in faith (Qur'an)**
- However, man, while free to choose, cannot escape the **consequences** of his choices. He is fully answerable and accountable for his deeds
- Differences from Science
- Life has a purpose. It is part of a design
- Evolution is not random, but directed
- A divine spark was put into man (consciousness)
- Qur'an is the only divine guidance available to mankind in its original and pristine form. If this were not so then Muhammad (PBUH) could not be the last messenger
- Allah Himself is the **Guardian** of this Book
- Qur'an exhorts man to use his **intellect** to make full use of this book
- Qur'an ***challenges*** men & jinns to produce even a part like it adding that they will not be able to do so
- Qur'an maintains that it contains no absolute proof of the Creator's

existence because that would take away man's freedom - the very thing that distinguishes man from the rest of creation

- However, Qur'an provides abundant evidence of the Creator. It says, look especially in the following three areas:

1. Orderliness in the universe
2. History of the people of old
3. Look within yourselves - study of human nature – psychology

- There is enough evidence cited to convince every thinking person, except those who do not want to believe. The underlying idea clearly appears to be that through progressive evolution, mankind was endowed with a reasoning ability, i.e., mind, through proper exercise of which (the scientific method), man has the ability to understand nature and to use it for his purposes.
- Whilst this is a most powerful capability, it has distinct limitations, which have been duly identified in the Qur'an:
- Reality of the Creator
- Life after death and
- The area covered broadly by social sciences. In these three areas, man is in dire need of divine guidance; in fact he will be lost without this
- Thus, to develop his inherent potential, man needs to use his reasoning ability to the full but remaining within the bounds of revelation. The relationship of reason and revelation appears to be that of eye and light: one needs both to see clearly; alone, neither is enough.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

We have a book, the Qur'an, which is absolutely unique, in its style, its language, its content, its references to natural and physical phenomena, human psychology and sociology, and history of the peoples of old times, its prophecies and predictions, and most of all touching on things which could not possibly have been known to any human being of the 7th century when it was revealed. It makes bold claims of being made easy to remember and that it cannot be tampered with, or the like of it reproduced. Furthermore, it challenges all comers to verify and falsify these bold claims. Is there a book anywhere near like the Qur'an?

In addition, we have this person, Prophet Muhammad, a revolutionary par excellence. Who trained him? Who taught him? Where did he get these strange but powerful and captivating ideas? No man in history has been revered, listened to, written about, his life and sayings so minutely recorded and followed. Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Alexander, Genghis, Napoleon, Socrates, Confucius or Marx pale in comparison. Is it any wonder that it led Lamartine to remark that:

> *Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?*
>
> Alphonse de Lamartine, *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris, 1854, Vol. II, pp. 276–277

And finally we have this explosive burst of energy, occurring in the backwaters of 7th-century, unheard-of Arabia, whereby the Arabs under the ideology of Islam overcame the two superpowers of the

day, Persia and Byzantium, flew their flags from China and India all the way to the Atlantic and Spain in less than a century, and most surprisingly, opened the intellectual horizons of humanity by ushering in the age of reason and enlightenment and introduced the study of sciences.

Hitti, in his *History of the Arabs*, (p.142) acknowledges this in the following words:

> *The two cardinal events of late ancient times are the Teutonic migrations resulting in the disruption of the venerable Roman empire, and the Arab conquests which demolished the Persian empire and shook the Byzantine to its very foundation. Of these two, the Arab conquests, culminating in the occupation of Spain marked the beginning of the Middle Ages. If someone in the first third of the seventh Christian century had had the audacity to prophesy that within a decade some unheralded, some unforeseen power from the hitherto barbarous and little known land of Arabia was to make its appearance, hurl itself against the only two world powers of the age, fall heir to the one – the Sasanid – and strip the other – the Byzantine – of its fairest provinces, he would have undoubtedly been declared a lunatic. Yet that is exactly what happened.* ***After the death of the Prophet (Muhammad) sterile Arabia seems to have been converted as if by magic into a nursery of heroes the like of whom both in number and quality is hard to find anywhere****. The military campaigns of Khalid ibn-al-Walid and Amr ibn-al-As which ensued in al Iraq, Persia, Syria and Egypt are among the most brilliantly executed in the history of warfare and bear favorable comparison with those of Napoleon, Hannibal or Alexander.*

The crucial question that arises here and needs to be answered is "How could all this happen at the same time and in one go in an nondescript land?" Could this be just a coincidence, a chance happening in human history? Is that within the realm of probabilities? Or is the alternative the better explanation, which the Qur'an maintains and the Prophet proclaims: that all this positive change in human affairs took place under the impact of the final revealed guidance from the Omnipotent, Almighty Creator, Designer, Nourisher

and Sustainer of the Universe including human beings.

Guidance originating from that source was bound to have such an amazing effect on mankind then, and it follows that it can have the same wholesome influence on the strife-torn and confused world of today, if only we were to listen to the guidance and implement this universal constitution and owner's manual of mankind that is the Qur'an.

This then is my "Case for GOD the Creator" which I rest and place before the worthy readers – based on reason and evidence to which faith then can only follow.

CHAPTER 10

Contents of the Forthcoming Book

What to Expect

My initial note on 'Why this Book' indicates that this is only an interim effort which will be followed soon, God willing, with the full book having the same title but expanded with much more content.

To provide a better idea of this forthcoming book, I have developed a detailed Table of Contents which provides a closer look into its depth. Most important are the detailed discussions on the Qur'an which show convincingly that it is so unique a product that it lies well beyond the capabilities of humans to produce even one chapter like it. This is a challenge thrown to all comers which still stands unfulfilled despite some desperate but unsuccessful attempts.

Next, it will identify and discuss facts mentioned in the Qur'an which could not have been known to anyone at the time of the Prophet, since science discovered them much later.

The bulk of the points in bullet form have been listed in Chapter 4, the PowerPoint presentation, and while all the supporting views of science on the one hand and Qur'an on the other have been collected and studied, they will be updated and then fully developed for the book.

The book will cover the following additional topics:

- Science and religion discourse
- The only two valid sources of information. One is scientific enquiry and the other is authentic revelation

- Creation, i.e. the universe as per the modern cosmological studies compared with what is hinted at in the Qur'an
- Areas of knowledge mentioned in the Qur'an and the viewpoint of modern science – similarities
- The reality and attributes of the Almighty Creator and relationship with Creation
- Guidance offered by Qur'an to modern humankind
- Companions and associates of the Prophet, the lessons they hold for us
- Qur'anic perspectives of humanity, which has a place of honor in the universe
- Western dominance of the world, its strengths and weaknesses
- Need for transformation of the world and future of mankind
- Conclusion and recommendations

Note: Significant editorial support is required

References need to be added

Relevant Qur'anic *ayahs* have to be inserted

Index and bibliography to be expanded

Connection amongst chapters needs improvement

Table of Contents of the Forthcoming Book

1. Preface
2. Introduction
3. Valid Sources of Information
   - Information obtained by the scientific method
   - Revelation, coming from the Creator
   - Skeptics' doubts answered, using approach of reason and evidence
4. Reason, epitomized by the method of Science

- What is the scientific method?
- Dazzling successes of Science
- Limitations of science came to light via relativity, quantum and chaos theories

5. Revelation, the other source of information

- Tampered Revelation
- Genuine, original, unspoilt revelation
- How to distinguish genuine from tampered Revelation. Use reason!
- Creator guides His creation through Revelation
- Revelation began with the creation of the first man
- Has continued with a succession of Prophets, some we know, others we do not
- Culminated with the last of the Prophets, when humanity had matured
- To be of real use revelation has to be "Authentic and free of any admixture"
- Amazing commonalities among revelations – Old Testament, New Testament and The Qur'an on matters of primary concern to mankind

6. Relationship between Reason and Revelation

- Could follow any of the following four possibilities, suggested by Ian G. Barbour
- Conflict – epitomized by "Science discredits Religion" of Richard Dawkins
- Independence – as per "Two separate Dynamics" of Stephen J. Gould
- Dialogue – as per "Theology and Scientific Methodology" of Nancey Murphy
- Integration – as per Process Theology of Alfred North Whitehead. See, *Philosophy and Religion* by Michael Peterson et al. (BL 51.P545) at Union Seminary Library, Columbia, NY

7. Creation

- The Universe, vast and complex. Amazing properties
- Gradual Evolution in stages, but with a design and purpose, i.e. different from materialistic evolutionary concepts.
- Development continues after death *"Wa nafakha fi Ruhe-hi"*
- Created by divine will and design, works according to universal laws, which operate not only in the physical, but also in the moral planes. "*You will not find any fault therein*" (Qur'an) "*Your gaze will come back fatigued*"
- Evolutionary development of the universe, appearance of life and the rise of man
- Continuation of evolution after death. Increase in degrees of freedom is the hallmark of evolutionary growth

8. The Creator

- God, *Allah*, *Rabb* – totally above and beyond human comprehension
- Evidence of existence of the Creator can be found in the universe, in the history of nations, and in ourselves
- However no absolute proofs given, since that would take away man's freedom of choice, which is a fundamental part of The Creator's design
- Knowledge about Creator and the Hereafter can only come through top-down revelation

9. The Qur'an

- Guidance for mankind, without which mankind can never achieve its full potential
- "Taught man what he knew not, and taught by the Pen"
- Uniqueness of Qur'an and its prophecies
- Criteria of the truth of revelations
- What Qur'an says about itself and its distinctive features
- Uniqueness of Arabic – the language of the Qur'an, most modern language of its time

- Significant teachings of the Qur'an
- Its relevance for the postmodern world
- Tips to facilitate proper study and understanding of the Qur'an

10. Areas of Knowledge Mentioned in the Qur'an

- Cosmology and astronomy
- Deep seas and oceans
- Geology
- Iron
- Growth of the embryo
- Fetus and its development
- Creation of mankind
- Marine phenomena
- Creation and role of mountains
- New diseases
- Qur'an and skin
- Sensory characteristics
- Fingerprinting
- Qur'an and clouds
- Qur'an and cerebrum
- Slaughter of animals

11. Guidance Offered by Qur'an to Modern Man

- Brotherhood of man
- Rule of law, even in war
- Importance of witnessing. You shall speak the truth, even if it be against yourself, or your friends and loved ones
- Importance of fair dealings (*Muamlat*)
- Status and role of women
- Attitudes towards sex
- Prohibition of *Khumr* and *Maisir* (not merely drinking and gambling)

- Economics, private ownership allowed, but as a trustee and not as absolute owner

12. Prophet Muhammad, Bearer of the Qur'an

- Exemplar *par excellence*, unequalled in the human race
- Lived in the full limelight of history
- Revolutionary and unique successes and services to mankind, at minimum cost to human life
- What many non-Muslim scholars have to say about the Prophet

13. Companions and Associates of the Prophet

- They were the products of Qur'anic values, not the Muslims of today
- Arabia became a nursery of heroes, never seen before

14. Mankind – "*Insaan*"

- Consists of both a body and a soul
- Vicegerent of God on earth, *Masjud-i-Malaik*, *Ashraf-ul-Makhlukat*
- Value of Man, in economic and in engineering terms
- Literally a child of the stars
- Has an honored place in the universe
- Development continues after death

15. Hereafter

- Next stage in evolution
- Man cannot learn about it through use of reason alone or the scientific method
- Lies outside the capabilities of human reason and understanding
- Knowledge of hereafter can only be learnt through top-down divine revelation
- It is the part of life that really matters and counts

16. Rationality, Science and the Scientific Method

- The scientific method
- Strengths and limitations of science

- Significant differences from plain common sense
- Popper's falsification criteria as a test
- Scientific method is the most powerful method of understanding, but not all-powerful
- Deleterious (unwanted) side effects of the powerful scientific method

17. Rationality and Revelation

- Complementary and not really contradictory
- Best results when both work together
- Can be likened to relationship of human eye and light, both needed equally to see

18. Western Dominance of the Entire World

- Strengths of the west
- Weaknesses of the west

19. Transformation of our World

- Fast becoming one global commons
- Increasing technological capability with massive exponential growth in population
- Leading to loss of self-regulatory control by Mother Earth (Gaia)
- Hence, the need to move towards a universal system. One world – one Creator – one set of guiding principles/law which has necessarily to be based on divine guidance

20. Future of Mankind

- World will invariably be drawn towards the Creator's design
- Future of mankind
- This will not be by force or compulsion, but by a natural process, like water flowing downhill
- Success or leadership will automatically go to the group with belief and practice in closest conformity with the Creator's design and laws
- This is no backhanded attempt to propagate the Muslim cause.

Muslims of today have abandoned revelation. It is rather a recognition of the superiority of divine guidance applied through rational understanding – the optimum combination to bring about paradise on earth for all of God's creation.

21. Conclusion

- There can be no conflict between the work of God, that is the universe, and the word of God, i.e., the genuine revelation, the Qur'an. Both must work together if mankind is to develop its full potential
- Honored place of man in the universe, which we need to recognize to value ourselves and all others
- Destiny of man, the ultimate goal on which we all need to focus our attention

22. Recommendations

- To establish an independent, objective think tank to take a systematic look, based on reason and professionalism, at all that claims to be revelation, to sift out the genuine from the man-made and to present it for adoption by mankind
- Strengthen the UN system and make it more people-oriented, instead of the current state representation
- UN must have its own source of funds in addition to national contributions, which should keep growing with time to make UN increasingly self-sufficient
- UN to develop its own quick-reaction security/intervention capability
- UN and International bodies such as World Bank/International Monetary Fund to be made more equitable and independent
- UN to get a kind of "Board", call it a "Council of the Sages" which advises the Secretary General and acts as a counterweight, when need be, to the Security Council
- Assist developing countries to help themselves through more equitable/favorable international trade laws and technology transfer/patent laws. The economic disparities of the world

population especially the north – south ones must be addressed quickly

- Make the world environment sustainable for the future generations

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