

STUDIES IN THE HOLY QURAN

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PREFACE

By the grace of God, a year's strenuous endeavours to procure articles for the Quran Number of *The Light* were rewarded and the compilation saw the light of print on December 24, 1970. The collection received general approval. Hazrat Ameer vouchsafed his appreciation by his directive that the Quran Number of *The Light* should be published in the form of a book which alone can ensure its preservation. It may be mentioned that the whole process from proof-reading to the present final shape was supervised by Mr. Nasir Ahmad who took pains to make it as acceptable as possible. For facility of reference, it is named "Studies in the Holy Quran."

MIRZA MUHAMMAD HUSSAIN

Editor — *The Light*

INTRODUCTION

بل هو قرآن مجيد في لوح محفوظ

“Nay, but it is a glorious Quran. In a well-guarded tablet” (85 : 22-23).

انا جعلناه قرآناً عربياً لعلكم تعقلون -
وانه في أم الكتاب لدينا لعلي حكيم

“We made it an Arabic Holy Quran that ye may see the truth. And it is truly in the mother of books with Us (preserved), most exalted and wise” (43 : 4-5).

The great theophany of Islam is the Holy Quran ; it presents itself as being a “discernment” (*furqān*) between truth and error.

In a sense the whole of the Holy Quran — one of the names of which is indeed *al-Furqan* (The Discernment) — is a sort of multiple paraphrase of the fundamental discernment expressed by the *Shahadah* ; its whole content is summed up in the words: “Truth has come and error (*al-batil*, the empty, or the inconsistent) has vanished away ; verily, error is ephemeral” (27 : 73). — Frithjof Schuon author of “Understanding Islam.”

It is impossible to give an adequate account of the transcendental graces and glories of the Holy Quran in the inadequate language of the mortals. It is because the majestic narration itself is revealed by God and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the whole-hearted and soulful performance of his Apostolic Mission conveyed it to the world. The preceding scriptures contained the spirit and sense of the divine commands.

Their narration, even according to the belief of their followers, was not the Revealed Word of God. Hence they had their day and ceased to be, because even a prophet's own words, however venerable they may be, could never be immortal and immutable as the Revealed Word of God must always be. As the ancient scriptures were meant for a tribe or a community and that also for a particular period, they, according to the Divine scheme of things, had to be what they were. With the lapse of time, they lost their pristine purity and their versions were distorted out of recognition. Their own followers chopped and changed them to suit the changing needs of times. But the Holy Quran being the last and everlasting Word of God, superseded and eclipsed the antiquated and obsolete scriptures. This records its spiritual paramountcy. All ancient sacred books pale into insignificance before the radiant narration and vitalizing thought-content of the Holy Quran.

Besides this luminous superiority, it has other supreme merits vis-a-vis other scriptures. The foremost is that the previous scriptures and the ancient prophets had prophesied its revelation and also talked of it as the Word spoken by God Himself. The Bible says : "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put My Word in his mouth ; and he shall speak unto them and that I shall command him" (Deuteronomy 18:18). The Gospel says : "Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you unto all truth ; for he shall not speak of himself ; but whatsoever he shall hear, that he shall speak : and he will shew you things to come" (St. John. 16 : 13).

The very name, Holy Quran, speaks volumes of the glories embalmed in it. It means the Book which will continue to be read till the end of the world. It also points to its frequent perusal as in the daily Prescribed Prayers and

its intensive and extensive reading in the Sacred Month of Ramazan. As the Exalted Book was revealed at a time when the art of writing was not fully developed, it had to be recorded on parchments, bones and such other material as could be made use of for writing. But it was best preserved on the tablets of hearts. The True Believers committed it to memory and the original recipients were the Arabs who, even up to this day, are known for their gigantic memory. Here again there is a miracle of miracles. Prose is difficult to memorise. But poetry with its deep impact on the heart-strings, sinks into one's soul. Thus it easily lends itself to memorisation. To facilitate its memorisation and its preservation on the tablets of hearts, Allah in His Boundless Wisdom vouchsafed His indestructible Word in a rhymed prose with a lyrical lilt. Caesar E. Farah in his book "Islam" says : "Neither form nor style necessarily follows a haphazard arrangement. The utility seen in both lies in the fact that the Holy Quran was intended to leave an impact on the listener which could be achieved only by means of oral recitation. His (the Holy Prophet's) audience being principally illiterate, the word they appreciated most was the oral" (page 84).

Its unique style is such a challenging merit as against the previous scriptures that the Holy Quran has thrown a challenge to the enemies to bring one chapter or verse like it. This challenge stands and will stand unanswered. This particular aspect has been fascinatingly highlighted by Hazrat Mirza Sahib (peace be upon him) when he says :

خدا کے قول سے قول بشر کیوں کر برابر ہو
 وہاں قدرت یہاں درماندگی فرق نمایاں ہے
 ملائک جس کی حضرت میں کریں اقرار لا علمی
 سخن میں اس کے ہمتائی کہاں متمدور انسان ہے

“How can human speech equal the Word of God? There is an obvious difference between the divine paramountcy and the human frailty.”

“When even the angels proclaim their ignorance in the Divine Presence, how can a human being venture to rival the Word of God?”

Sometimes a superficial reader observes “Obscurities, repetitions and tautologies” in the Holy Quran, when he is actually under the overwhelming influence of the Heavenly Word. The Holy Book should never be assessed as the writing of a mortal. As the Holy Book is for the heart and aims at its purification and elevation, its whole scheme is in tune with the working of a human heart, which at one and at the same time experiences currents, under-currents and cross-currents of apparently incongruous thoughts. Has any one ever found fault with this indescribable functioning of the human heart? Or is it ever possible to make human heart stick to one thought at a time and disabuse all other waves of thoughts? The Revealed Book must have its own unique style which is far above and beyond the usual literary criticism. Goethe has made a very apt observation about the style of sacred text. In his *Dewan* he says: “The song turns like the vault of heavens, the origin and the end are ever identical.”

In the Holy Quran Number of *The Light* we collected articles each of which deals with a particular aspect of the Exalted and Everlasting Holy Book. It is a puny attempt at a Himalayan task. The authors of the articles are accepted authorities on the topics they have dealt with. This being so, we hope this collection may prove a mine of knowledge for the seekers of truth. As such this is now being published as a book.

We dedicate this compilation to the Great Commentator — Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali of blessed memory, who

banqueted on the honey of the thoughts of his Spiritual Guide, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him). He also received light and guidance in abundant measures from Hazrat Maulana Noor-ud-Din (God be pleased with him) whose deep insight into the Holy Quran was and is still a byword among the scholars. We dedicate this book to the late Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali because he raised the dignity of the Ahmadiyya Movement by his universally-admired commentary of the Holy Quran.

MIRZA MUHAMMAD HUSSAIN

Graces, Excellences and Surpassing Merits of the Holy Quran

By HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD

(peace be upon him)

Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement

The Holy Quran establishes in a pragmatic manner the truth of the basic principles of Islam which form a basis for one's salvation. Its teachings are grounded in a convincingly philosophical reasoning. It proves to the point of conviction every argument advanced by it. For instance, it proves the existence of the Creator of the Universe. It establishes the truth of the Unity of God. It also marshals decisive arguments to vindicate the supreme need of the Divine Revelation. It is never at a loss to distinguish truth from untruth. This by itself is an incontrovertible proof that *Furqan Majeed* is the Revealed Word of God. This point also establishes its Divine reality and its supremacy. No revealed book before the Holy Quran nor any thinker or philosopher who exercised his talents in search of truth, had ever been able to highlight false beliefs by luminous reasoning nor had they ever been able to banish doubts and apprehensions from the human mind by radiant arguments. This glorious task has been accomplished in a unique manner by the Holy Quran. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) never attended any school even for half a day. He never learnt any knowledge, logical or practical, from any philosopher or logician nor did he come into contact with any sage or scholar. Still he based the divine philosophy on rational arguments and expounded such beliefs as guaranteed lasting salvation, in such an illuminating manner as has no precedent anywhere

in the whole history of mankind. This is an accomplishment of such a high order as is not possible or even thinkable without divine help. Here human reasoning has perforce to bow before the Holy Quran which was revealed by Allah Who has no rival. Hence human knowledge can never be equal to divine knowledge.

(*Baraheen Ahmadiyya*, Vol. I)

Why is the Holy Quran Superior to other Scriptures ?

Undoubtedly, all scriptures as revelations are equal. But from the point of the comprehensiveness of the narration and the excellences of the beliefs enshrined in them, some are superior to others. From this angle of vision the Holy Quran is superior to all scriptures, because it explains vigorously and convincingly the principles of true religion, expounds the principle of the Unity of God, unfolds the panorama of the forbidden things, and the range of the varieties of idolatry (*Shirk*), prescribes sovereign remedies for spiritual ailments, divulges the falsity of the false creeds and establishes the truth of the true faith in a manner which is conspicuous by its absence in other scriptures.

(*Baraheen Ahmadiyya*, Vol. II)

The Holy Quran Leaves no room for any Revealed Book

The Holy Quran was revealed at a time when mankind faced all such exigencies as it was destined to face. There was moral degradation all round. There was an anarchy of creeds. There was spiritual deterioration which vitiated every sphere of human life. Chaos and confusion of every hue and colour had reached the nadir. At this critical juncture, the teachings of the Holy Quran were revealed. Thus it marked the crown and completion of Divine Law for the guidance of mankind. The previous Laws were incomplete because when they were revealed, the disorder and mischief had not reached its climax. Hence the scrip-

tures were just enough to meet the needs of the times. Thus the marked difference between the past scriptures and the Holy Quran is that the former, even if they had remained immune, would have proved sadly inadequate. This emphasised the need that a complete and immutable scripture like the Holy Quran, should come. Thus the Holy Quran leaves no room for any book to supplement its teachings. The possibility of any type of scripture is completely ruled out, because there is no further point after the highest degree of excellence and completion attained in the Holy Quran. Its replacement is thinkable only when one wishfully presumes that the principle of the Unity of God like the Gospels and the Vedas will give way to idolatry and the crores of the True Believers will become idolatrous and animists. But all this is a sheer fictitious presumption as the events falsely envisaged shall never come to pass.

(Baraheen Ahmadiyya, Vol. II)

The Holy Quran and the Bible

It is blatantly shameless to presume that the Holy Quran has been shaped out of the anecdotes or stories or the thought-content of the Gospels. Is it not possible that the Revealed Book of God may have some likeness with the ancient scriptures? The Vedas of the Hindus had some truths which lay buried. The Holy Quran unfolded them. Does it mean that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had perused the Vedas? The mass-production of the Gospels by the modern printing presses, was unknown in Arabia. The Arabs were downright illiterate. If there was any Christian in Arabia, he also had only nodding acquaintance with his creed. In the circumstances why on earth is the charge that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had plagiarised the themes from the Gospels? This is a reprehensible notion.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was unlettered. He could not read even Arabic. How could he read books in Greek and Hebrew !

The onus of showing a book which was extant in the Holy Prophet's times and it was made use of, lies on our opponents. If there had been in the Holy Quran the slightest trace of borrowing from the Bible, the Christians of those days would have raised hue and cry and would have said that it was recorded after it had been heard from them. It must be borne in mind that it is the Holy Quran alone, which has claimed to be a miracle. Its contents whether they are stories or anecdotes are from the Unseen. It also contains prophecies about the future extending till the Day of Resurrection. Even from the point of rhetoric and eloquence, it is a miracle. Thus it was quite easy in the Holy Prophet's time for the Christians to single out what they could present as taken from their books and could call it plagiarism. It could then bring Islam to naught. But now it is too late to fabricate charges of plagiarism. It is simply unthinkable that the Christians held their peace out of courtesy although they had such books which could be trotted out as the original source of the stories narrated in the Holy Quran, no matter their books were real or false. Thus without doubt the entire theme of the Holy Quran is *Wahy* — Divine Revelation and this Revelation is so superhumanly magnificent that no man can bring forth the like of it. It is a matter for serious consideration that a person who has plagiarised his theme from other books and knows that it is from God, can never venture to come out into the open and challenge others to compete with him. It is stranger still that no one should come out to meet his challenge and should feel at a loss to expose him. The fact of the matter is that the Christians are naturally indignant at the challenge of the Holy

Quran and the reason for their indignation is that the Holy Quran has dealt a crushing blow at the Christian creed.

(*Chashma Maseehi*, p. 14)

Those Who Exalt the Holy Quran shall be Exalted

It is imperative for you not to violate the sanctity of the Holy Quran as your very life lies in it. Those who honour the Holy Quran shall be honoured in the heaven. Those who give precedence to the Holy Quran over every tradition and every saying, shall get precedence in the heaven. For mankind there is no other scripture on the earth except the Holy Quran. Likewise for the sons of Adam, there is no Apostle and Interceder except Muhammad Mustafa (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.) (*Kishti-i-Nuh*)

The Holy Quran is *Khatam al-Kutub*

The Divine Law and *Nubuwwat* reached their perfection in the person of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Likewise the Holy Quran is the Last of Scriptures. There is no room for the addition of a jot or tittle. But it is true that the blessings and graces of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the fruits of the teachings of the Holy Quran and its guidance shall have no end. (*Paigham-i Imam*, p. 26)

The Holy Quran as Peerless Divine Revelation

For full thirteen centuries the Holy Quran has been proclaiming its superior merits and challenging the whole world to compete with it. It has been trumpeting its claim that its merits, outward and inward, are peerless and without any equal and no man or genii can venture to meet the challenge. No one has come forward to stand up against it. Even its very small *Surah Fatihah* possesses such inward and outward merits as no one can venture to question or challenge. Thus it is an outstanding miracle and what can

be greater miracle than the fact that even from a rational point of view this Revealed Word is far and beyond human talents to compete with. The experience in the long stretch of time is also a corroborating evidence of its being a miracle. If anyone feels like questioning this statement and is proud of his knowledge and talent, and acknowledges any litterateur who can produce a writing like the Holy Quran, he should give specimens to stand comparison with the radiant diction and the super-human mysteries of the Chapter "Surah Fatihah". (*Baraheen Ahmadiyya*)

Experience of Millions of Saints

There are millions of saints whose experience is that by following the Holy Quran in the letter and the spirit, one attracts to oneself the divine blessings. There results a link with Allah. Revelations and illuminations from Allah descend on the saints' minds. They spell out fine words of gnosis. They are endowed with a firm faith in God and are armed with unshakable certainty. When they pray, God hears their prayers. When they call Him, He answers their call. When they need His refuge, He runs to them. He loves them more than their worldly fathers. Divine blessings rain on their habitats. (*Surma Chashma-i-Arya*)

Fruit of Following the Holy Quran

It is our experience and the experience of all those who have gone before us and it is an evidence of the fact that the Holy Quran attracts its true followers by its spiritual qualities and its intrinsic radiance. It illumines their minds. Then by its lustrous miracles, it binds their hearts with Allah with such ties as defy the sword which otherwise tries to cut them into pieces. It opens one's mind's eye and blocks the dirty fountains. It exalts its true followers by enabling them to have communion with God and enriches their minds with the knowledge of the Unseen.

When they pray, divine words descend on their minds. If any one tries to combat a man of God and a true follower of the Holy Quran, God manifests such terrible signs as bring home to the combatant that God is with the person who follows His Word. (*Chashma Ma'rifat*)

Attributes of the Holy Quran

1. It (the Holy Quran) is peerless and unrivalled.
2. It is an encyclopaedia of wisdom with miraculous brevity and pithiness.
3. It has been memorised by lakhs of people.
4. There is no page but is full of the remembrance of God. From beginning to end it is replete with the remembrance of God. No scripture has this quality. Every word of it is a pointer to God.
5. There is no scripture which recounts as many divine attributes as are given in the Holy Quran. This is in accordance with the saying :
 "One talks most of a thing which one loves most."
6. It abounds in the exaltation and praise of God and it reiterates them in different contexts. Such exaltation of God is not to be found in any other scripture.
7. In true education, wisdom and depth of meanings no human system can compete with the Holy Quran which says :

قُلْ لئن اجتمعت الانس و الجن على ان ياتوا بمثل هذا القران
 ياتون بمثله ولو كان بعضهم لبعض ظميرا

"Say, If mankind and the jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Holy Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even though they should help one another" (17 : 89).

8. Every divine command in the Holy Quran has its motive which is clearly stated and is attuned to some higher end. This is why it is repeatedly stressed that great use should be made of reason, understanding and discernment. No other scripture has invoked reason as the Holy Quran has done. (*Report of Annual Jalsa, 1897*)
9. Its ethical teachings are meant for the whole world.
10. It states everything in such a lucid manner as leaves no trace of doubt about it. Every claim is supported by reasons and arguments.
11. If one follows its teachings sincerely, it removes all barriers between God and man. All other religionists talk of God as they talk of some character in a story. But the Holy Quran reveals the divine visage in all its effulgence. The Unseen is made 'seeable' through the Holy Quran.
12. The Holy Quran enables its sincere followers to receive revelations and divine blessings which accompany them till death.
13. It has inexhaustible store of such holy knowledge as enables man in every age to meet his needs.
14. As the scientific knowledge advances and takes practical shape it will establish the supremacy of the Holy Quran.
15. Excepting the Holy Quran, there is no scripture on the earth which enshrines all attributes of God and is free from flaws and failings. If there is any scripture which has been revealed in the real and perfect revelational language, it is the Holy Quran.
16. It contains prophecies which have come out true on a splendid scale. No scripture can compete with it

in this respect, because its Quranic prophecies are not only those which were fulfilled in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), but there are such prophecies as have come out true even now and there are still more which will come out true in the future.

17. Every aspect of the Holy Quran is marked by a superb balance. There is no extremism anywhere. Its narration is exquisite and characterised by harmony. This is why its followers are named :

امة وسطا

(Balanced Community)

18. No scripture can equal it in imparting teachings which comprehend ethical, social and political aspects of society. This comprehensiveness guarantees its ultimate triumph.
19. It has laid the foundations of international peace and has exhorted respect for the prophet of each nation. It is its unique pride that it says :

لا نفرق بين احد منهم ونحن له مسلمون

“We make no distinction between any of them and to Him we submit” (2 : 85).

20. It has not presented such god as suffers some failings and his attributes are not faultless and has no sovereignty over soul and can neither confer salvation nor accepts repentance. The God of the Holy Quran is our Creator, our Lord, our Sustainer, Compassionate, Merciful and the Lord of the Day of Judgment.

Huroof-i-Muqattaat

(Abbreviated Letters)

By HAZRAT MAULANA NOOR-UD-DIN

(God be pleased with him)

الم (Alif Lam Meem) and such other single letters as are fully verbalised and articulated, precede twenty-nine Chapters (Surahs) in the Holy Quran. As they are articulated separately they are called *Harooof-i-Muqattaat* (Abbreviated Letters). They indeed are letters. But they point to the meaningful words. Each of these letters stands for some word. It is not unusual that letters should point to words. This rule obtains in all languages. Before Islam, the Arab poets adopted this method. One poet said :

قلت لها قفى فقالت ق

i.e. "I asked her to stop. She said, I have stopped". Here the letter ق stands for وقف. In the Quranic verses, there are punctuations. For instance ط stands for مطلق. In the course of recitation the *Huffaz* and *Qurra* (the memorisers and reciters of the Holy Quran) should pause at a point where ط appears, although the sense there is not complete as the thought-content proceeds further. The letter ج likewise stands for جائز which signifies that it is permissible to pause or not to pause, where it occurs. In Hadith ق stands for متفق عليه which means that tradition is reported both in Bukhari and Muslim. Similarly ت is an abbreviation of حدثنا *i.e.* "we have narrated". In calligraphy ص means صلى الله عليه و سلم *i.e.* "peace and blessings of Allah be upon

him” The sign رضى الله عنه signifies simplification of رضى الله عنه i.e. “Allah be pleased with him.” The Abbreviated Letters are used for brevity. The Arab linguists have never taken exception to the use of Abbreviated Letters. But in our own times, when freedom of expression knows no bounds, there was fear of criticism. But the Almighty God so willed that all civilised nations adopted the use of Abbreviated Letters which have become current coins. Thus the critics have been forestalled. In Europe and America this point is beyond doubt. There the people inscribe abbreviations on inkpots, pencils and all manufactured articles. The abbreviations as F.A., B.A., and M.A., are now all too common. People are also familiar with the abbreviation of N.W.R. In the case of titles, business-houses and firms, there are abbreviations, the meaning of which is deciphered after some pondering. But it is not concealed.

In the Holy Quran the Abbreviated Letters are parts of the Holy Quran and are the Revealed Words of God. There occurs in Hadith :

من قرأ حرفاً من كتاب الله فله حسنة - و الحسنة بعشر أمثالها لا
 أقول الم حرف بل الف حرف و لام حرف و ميم حرف (ترمذى)

i.e. he who recites one letter of the Holy Quran, will earn a spiritual merit—a merit equal to ten merits. I (the Holy Prophet) do not say *alif lam meem* as one word but *alif* as a separate letter, *lam* as a separate letter and *meem* as a separate letter. (Tirmizi)

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) illustrated this by pointing to the Abbreviated Letters and cited ميم as a part of the Holy Quran. It is not one letter. But الف (Alif) is one letter, لام (Lam) is the second

letter and **ميم** (Meem) is the third letter. Thus he declared **الم** (Alif Lam Meem) to be a part of the Holy Quran.

In the Arabic language the roots comprise one to five letters. Likewise the Abbreviated Letters also range from one as **ص** to five letters as **كهيعص**. The secret of adopting the Abbreviated Letters lies in pondering over the Holy Quran. Hazrat Shah Wali Ullah says: "The Abbreviated Letters of each Surah point to the theme stated therein." It is recorded in *Tafseer Mazhari*: "In a gnostic vision, the Holy Quran looks a vast bottomless ocean of blessings, which boil forth in the form of the Abbreviated Letters." Allama Zamkhshari and Baidhawi have found a clue to the science of *Qiraat* and the highlights of grammar through these Abbreviated Letters. Hazrat Ali, Ibn Abbas, Masood, Abi bin Kaab (God be pleased with them all), Mujahid, Qataadah, Ikrama, Hassan, Suddi, Shaabi and Akhfash maintain that these Abbreviated Letters are sparks from the Divine Attributes. The most noted commentator, Ibn Jareer writes: "Not only do these Abbreviated Letters enshrine great meanings, they are also parts of the sacred names of Allah. They are the names of the Surahs. According to the science of the Numerical Value of Letters **حروف جمل** they enshrine in them the history of some nations." **الم** (Alif Lam Meem) has been explained by two eminent sages whose knowledge of the Holy Quran has always been above criticism. They are Hazrat Abdullah ibn Abbas and Hazrat Masood. They both have interpreted it in one and the same way and the Companions of the Holy Prophet never dissented from them, nor do they say that their interpretation is against the canons of due caution. I therefore also accept their interpretation according to my understanding. Moreover in our own times the Ordained Imam has also inter-

preted الم in the same way. It is my conviction that he has not done so to observe conformity with Ibn Abbas and Ibn Masood, but has interpreted it according to his own light. The interpretation is that *Alif Lam Meem* stand for انا الله اعلم *i e.* Allah is All-knowing. In the structure الف (Alif is an Abbreviation of انا ل (Lam) stands for الله and ميم (Meem) stands for اعلم *i e.* I know full well. They all put together are الم.

The Theory of Abrogation

By HAZRAT MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI

(God be pleased with him)

That certain verses of the Holy Quran are abrogated by others is now an exploded theory. The two passages on which it was supposed to rest, refer really to the abrogation, not of the passages of the Holy Quran but of the previous revelations whose place the Holy Quran has taken. The first verse is contained in the Chapter *al-Nahl*, a Makka revelation and runs thus : "And when We change one message for another message, and Allah knows best what He reveals, they say, Thou art only a forger" (16 : 101). Now it is a fact admitted on all hands that details of the Islamic Law were revealed at Madina, and it is in relation to these details that the theory of abrogation has been broached. Therefore a Makka revelation would not speak of abrogation. But the reference in the above verse is to the abrogation, not of the Quranic verses but of the previous Divine messages or revelations, involved by the revelation of the Holy Quran. The context shows this clearly to be the case, for the opponents are here made to say that the Prophet was a forger. Now the opponents called the Prophet a forger, not because he announced the abrogation of certain verses of the Holy Quran but because he claimed that the Holy Quran was a Divine revelation which had taken the place of previous revelations. Their contention was that the Quran was not a revelation at all : "Only a mortal teaches him" (16 : 103). Thus they called the whole of the Quran a forgery and not merely a particular verse of it. The theory of abrogation, therefore, cannot be

based on this verse which speaks only of one revelation or one law taking the place of another.

The other verse which is supposed to lend support to the theory is 2 : 106 : "Whatever communication We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one like it". A reference to the context will show that the Jews of the followers of previous revelations are here addressed. Of these it is said again and again : "We believe in that which was revealed to us ; and they deny what is besides that" (2 : 91). So they were told that if one revelation was abrogated, it was only to give place to a better one. And there is mention not only of abrogation but also of something that was forgotten. Now the words "or cause to be forgotten" cannot refer to the Holy Quran at all because no portion of the Holy Book could be said to have been forgotten so as to require a new revelation in its place. There is no point in supposing that God should first make the Holy Prophet forget a verse and then reveal a new one in its place. Why not, if he really had forgotten a verse, remind him of the one forgotten ? But even if we suppose that his memory ever failed in retaining a certain verse (which really never happened), that verse was quite safely preserved in writing, and the mere failure of the memory could not necessitate a new revelation. That the Prophet never forgot what was recited to him by the Holy Spirit is plainly stated in the Holy Quran : "We shall make thee recite, so thou shalt not forget" (87 : 6). History also bears out the fact that he never forgot any portion of the Quranic revelation. Sometimes the whole of a very long Chapter would be revealed to him in one portion, as in the case of the Sixth Chapter which extends over twenty sections, but he would cause it to be written down without delay, and make his Companions learn it by heart, and recite in it

public prayers, and that without the change of even a letter ; notwithstanding the fact that he himself could not read from a written copy ; nor did the written copies, as a rule, remain in his possession. It was a miracle indeed that he never forgot any portion of the Quran, though other things he might forget, and it is to his forgetfulness in other things that the words ‘except what Allah pleases’ (87 : 7) refer. On the other hand, it is a fact that parts of the older revelation had been utterly lost and forgotten, and thus the Holy Quran was needed to take the place of that which was abrogated, and that which had been forgotten by the world.

“The Ahadith speaking of abrogation are all weak,” says Tabrasi. But it is stranger still that the theory of abrogation has been accepted by writer after writer without ever thinking that not a single hadith, however weak, touching on the abrogation of a verse, was traceable to the Holy Prophet. It never occurred to the upholders of this theory that the Quranic verses were promulgated by the Holy Prophet, and that it was he whose authority was necessary for the abrogation of any Quranic verse : no Companion, not even Abu Bakr or ‘Ali, could say that a Quranic verse was abrogated. The Holy Prophet alone was entitled to say so, and there is not a single hadith to the effect that he ever said so ; it is always some Companion or a later authority to whom such views are to be traced. In most cases where a report is traceable to one Companion who held a certain verse to have been abrogated, there is another report traceable to another Companion to the effect that the verse was not abrogated. It shows clearly that the opinion of one Companion as to the abrogation of a verse would be questioned by another Companion. Even among later writers we find that there is not a single verse on which the verdict of abrogation has been passed by one without being questioned by

another ; and while there are writers who would lightly pass the verdict of abrogation on hundreds of verses, there are others who consider not more than five to be abrogated, and even in the case of these five the verdict of abrogation has been seriously impugned by earlier writers.

The theory of abrogation has in fact arisen from a misconception of the use of the word *naskh* by the Companions of the Holy Prophet. When the significance of one verse was limited by another, it was sometimes spoken of as having been abrogated (*nusikhat*) by that other. Similarly when the words of a verse gave rise to a misconception, the word *naskh* was metaphorically used in connection with it, the idea underlying its use being, not that the first verse was abrogated but that a certain conception to which it had given rise was abrogated.

Many instances of this may be quoted. In 2 : 284, it is said : "Whatever you manifest what is in your minds or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it." While according to 2 : 286. "Allah does not impose on any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability." A report in Bukhari says that one of the Companions of the Holy Prophet, probably 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Umar, held the opinion that the first verse was abrogated (*nusikhat*) by the second. What was meant by *naskh* (abrogation) in this case is made clear by another detailed report when 2 : 284 was revealed, "the Companions entertained an idea which they had never entertained before (or according to another report, they were greatly grieved) and thought that they had not the power to bear it. The matter being brought to the notice of the Holy Prophet, he said : 'Rather say, We have heard and we obey and submit', and so God inspired faith in their hearts". As this report shows, what happened was this, that some Companion or Companions thought that 2 : 284

imposed a new burden on them, making every evil idea which entered the mind without taking root or ever being translated into action, punishable in the same manner as if it had been translated into action. 2 : 286 made it plain that this was not the meaning conveyed by 2 : 284, since, according to that verse, God did not impose on man a burden which he could not bear. This removal of a misconception was called abrogation (*naskh*) by Ibn ‘Umar.

It may be added that there is nothing to show that 2 : 286 was revealed later than 2 : 284. On the other hand, the use of the words “we have heard and we obey” by the Holy Prophet to remove the wrong notion which some Companions entertained — these very words occur in 2 : 285 — shows that the three verses, 284, 285 and 286, were all revealed together, and hence the abrogation, in the ordinary sense of one of them by another is meaningless. There are other instances in which a verse revealed later is thought to have been abrogated by a previous verse. But how could a later verse be abrogated by a previous one ? Or what point can there be in giving an order which was cancelled before it was given ? If, on the other hand, the word *naskh* is taken to mean the placing of a limitation upon the meaning of a verse, or the removal of a wrong conception to it, no difficulty would arise, for even a previous verse may be spoken of as placing a limitation upon the meaning of a later verse or as removing a wrong conception arising therefrom.

Earlier authorities admit this use of the word : “Those who accept *naskh* (abrogation) here (2:109) take it as meaning explanation metaphorically” and again : “By *naskh* is meant metaphorically explaining and making clear the significance”. It is an abrogation but not an abrogation of the words of the Holy Quran ; rather it is the abrogation of

a misconception of their meaning. This is further made clear by the application of *nāskh* to verses containing statement of facts (*akhbar*), whereas, properly speaking, abrogation could only take place in the case of verse containing a commandment or a prohibition (*amr* or *nahy*). In the ordinary sense of the word there could be no *naskh* (abrogation) of a statement made in the Word of God, as that would suggest that God had made a wrong statement first and then recalled it. This use of the word *naskh* by the earlier authorities regarding statements shows that they were using the word to signify the removal of a wrong conception regarding, or the placing of a limitation upon, the meaning of a certain verse. At the same time, it is true that the use of the word *naskh* soon became indiscriminate, and when any one found himself unable to reconcile two verses, he would declare one of them to be abrogated by the other.

The principle on which the theory of abrogation is based is unacceptable, being contrary to the plain teachings of the Holy Quran. A verse is considered to be abrogated by another when the two cannot be reconciled with each other; in other words, when they appear to contradict each other. But the Holy Quran destroys this foundation when it declares in plain words that no part of the Holy Book is at variance with another: "Do they not then meditate on the Quran, and if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy" (4 : 82). It is due to lack of meditation that one verse was thought to be at variance with another; and hence it is that in almost all cases, where abrogation has been upheld by one person, there has been another who being able to reconcile the two has repudiated the alleged abrogation.

It is only among the later commentators that we meet with the tendency to augment the number of verses thought

to have been abrogated, and by some of these the figure has been placed as high as five hundred. Speaking of such, Sayuti says in the *Itaqan* : “Those who multiply (the number of abrogated verses) have included many kinds — one kind being that in which there is neither abrogation nor any particularization (of a general statement), nor has it any connection with any one of them, for various reasons. And this is as in the word of God : ‘And spend out of what We have given them’ (2 : 3) ; ‘And spend out of what We have given you’ (63 : 10) ; and the like. It is said that these are abrogated by the verse dealing with *Zakat* while it is not so, they being still in force. Sayuti himself brings the number of verses which he thinks to be abrogated down to twenty-one, in some of which he considers there is abrogation, while in others he finds that it is only the particularization of a general injunction that is affected by a later verse; but he admits that there is a difference of opinion even about these.

A later writer, however, the famous Shah Wali Allah of India, commenting on this in his *Fauz al-Kabir* says that abrogation cannot be proved in the case of sixteen out of Sayuti’s twenty-one verses, but in the case of the remaining five he is of opinion that the verdict of abrogation is final. These five verses are dealt with here :

(1) 2 : 180. “Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth for parents and near relations, according to usage”. As a matter of fact, both Baidzawi and Ibn Jarir quote authorities who state that this verse was not abrogated ; and it is surprising that it is considered as being abrogated by 4 : 11, 12, which speak of the shares to be given “after the payment of a bequest he may have bequeathed or a debt,” showing clearly that the bequest spoken of in 2 : 180 was still in force. This verse in fact speaks of bequest for charitable objects which is

even now recognized by Muslims to the extent of one-third of property.

(2) 2 : 240 : "And those of you who die and leave wives behind (making) a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for a year without turning them out." But we have the word of no less an authority than Mujahid that this verse is not abrogated : "Allah gave her (*i.e.* the widow) the whole of a year, seven months and twenty days being optional, under the bequest ; if she desired she could stay according to the bequest (*i.e.* having maintenance and residence for a year), and if she desired she could leave the house (and remarry), as the Quran says : 'Then if they leave of their own accord, there is no blame on you'. This verse, therefore, does not contradict verse 234. Moreover, there is proof that it was revealed after verse 234 and hence it cannot be said to have been abrogated by that verse.

(3) 8 : 65 : "If there are twenty patient ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred, etc." This is said to have been abrogated by the verse that follows it : "For the present Allah has made light your burden and He knows that there is weakness in you, so if there are a hundred patient ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred." That the question of abrogation does not arise here at all is apparent from the words of the second verse which clearly refer to the early times when the Muslims were weak, having neither munition of war nor experience of warfare, and when old and young had to go out and fight ; while the first verse refers to a later period when the Muslim armies were fully organized and equipped.

(4) 33 : 52 : "It is not allowed to thee to take women after this." This is said to have been abrogated by a verse which was apparently revealed before it : 'O Prophet ! We

have made lawful to thee thy wives" (33 : 50). The whole issue has been turned topsyturvy. As I have said before, a verse cannot be abrogated by one revealed before it. Apparently what happened was this : When 4 : 3 revealed, limiting the number of wives to four, should exceptional circumstances require, the Prophet was told not to divorce the excess number, and this was effected by 33 : 50 as quoted above ; but at the same time he was told not to take any woman in marriage after that, and this was done by 33 : 52.

(5) 58 : 12 : "O you who believe ! when you consult the Apostle, then offer something in charity before your consultation ; that is better for you and purer ; but if you do not find, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." This is said to have been abrogated by the verse that follows : "Do you fear that you will not be able to give in charity before your consultation ? So when you do not do it, and Allah has turned to you mercifully, then keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate." It is not easy to see how one of these injunctions is abrogated by the other, since there is not the slightest difference in what they say. The second verse merely gives further explanation to show that the injunction is only in the nature of a recommendation, that is to say, a man may give in charity whatever he can easily spare, *zakat* (or the legal alms) being the only obligatory charity.

Thus the theory of abrogation falls to the ground on all considerations.

The Holy Quran Excels all other Scriptures

By HAZRAT MAULANA SADR-UD-DIN

(Head of Ahmadiyya Jamaat, Lahore)

It is a common practice with an author, who composes or compiles a book, that he sometimes writes notes whereon he erects the structure of his work. Sometimes he begins his book without any preliminary notes : and during the course of his writing he gathers suitable references from other books, and inserts them into his own. As he proceeds with his work he expunges here and there some portions, and also rectifies and corrects mistakes. It sometimes so happens that after writing a portion of the book he looks over it again for the purpose of making improvement upon it and strikes off some portions that are irrelevant to the topic of the book. When the manuscript is ready, the author gives it another intensive revision, amplifying certain statements and eschewing others. It then goes to the press and the author approaches some friend requesting him to go through the proof in order that errors may be avoided. In short, authorship is a hard and difficult art, having several aspects of which the most arduous is the exposition of the principles enunciated therein. Therein is reflected his capability and integrity, the degree of his mental development and the extent of his vision. He is helpless in this affair ; he cannot shape his limited powers and faculties as he desires, he cannot change and transform his particular way of thinking ; nor can he set himself free from different kinds of prejudice and bias that are in his mind. There is besides the discussion of various aspects of the subjects, the question of the language employed by him just as suitable dress serves to enhance the dignity of

a hero, in the same way appropriate language enhances the style and effect of the subject discussed. To couch statements in a suitable language is the most essential part of authorship. The Holy Quran excels all the other scriptures in respect of the principles enunciated by it and in respect of the elegance of its language. This distinctive characteristic and superiority can never be achieved by human efforts. The Holy Quran possesses these perfect qualities and excellences for the reason that it is the Word of the Almighty God. In the words of the reputed poets of the East and the West, the different aspects of the poet's life can be easily discerned ; and people adept in the art of poetry can tell at a glance whether a certain composition belongs to the early or the later period of the poet's life.

With all these points in view, a contemplative look should be cast on the Holy Quran. The Book has been given by a personality who is known in history as unread and unlettered. The Holy Quran reads : "Thou didst not recite before it any book, nor did thou write anything with thy right hand" ; still, he taught that the Creator of the whole universe is One God Who is the Lord of all the nations of the world, and inculcated along with the Divine Unity, the respect and reverence of all the Prophets of the world, he established such a singular Brotherhood amongst the human race as abolished all false distinctions, and solved the problems of language and colour complex, which resolved the problem of the East and the West ; and all this astounding success fell to the lot of an unlettered person. These teachings which meet the requirements of humanity in general, are not the product of human brain. They are from Gods, Who is the Lord of all the nations.

As for the language, the authors of present age look upon and consider the Arabic idiom of the Holy Quran as

the crown-jewel of literary excellence ; and this verdict has been pronounced not only by the Muslim scholars but also by the non-Muslim savants, as is evident from lexicons of the Christian scholars of Egypt, Syria and Beirut who in order to justify the meaning of words used by them, quote for their support the Holy Quran as authority. Obviously, they believe the language of the Holy Quran to be of a high and supreme elegance, and instal it on the highest seat in the domain of literature. The greatness and grandeur of the Holy Quran reigns supreme in their minds. It is indeed a miracle of the Quranic diction that it has captured and captivated even the hearts of its implacable enemies ; otherwise it was a good opportunity for a Christian lexicographer to pick out and publish its grammatical mistakes, its errors in the use of words and idioms, if any, and bring discredit and disrepute to the Holy Quran in this most effective way, but he could not do it in spite of his unrelenting prejudice.

The more Muslim lexicographers have pondered over the Quranic idiom, the more charmed and fascinated they became. *Taj al-Urus* and *Lisan al-Arab* feel particular pleasure in explaining the words and idioms of the Holy Quran and the splendid significance which they carry. If they had found the language of the Holy Quran below the mark, and had discovered errors therein, they would have, instead of being enamoured of it, condemned it as a book of inferior quality. In short, both the Muslim and Christian lexicographers, wax eloquent in commending the beauties and excellences of the language of the Holy Quran and call it a book of the modern age, that is to say, its language and idiom have not become antiquated and obsolete. Passage of time has had no effect on its language. Just as the principles and truths taught by the Holy Quran are immutable, in the same way, the language employed by

it has the lustre of gold that knows no tarnishing and it is certainly not within the power of a mortal to work such a wonder. The Laws of God, functioning in this universe, are immutable and changeless, as stated in the Holy Quran :

“The laws of God are unalterable.” Likewise, the Laws which He has made for the spiritual world are also immutable and unsusceptible to any change. In brief, the principles of religion promulgated by the Holy Quran are exalted and dignified, and the language too, is a wonder of excellent eloquence and delightful diction. The compilation of such an exalted Book is surely above and beyond the power of human brain and intellect.

The Greatness of the Holy Quran from another angle

There is another important point the mention of which may be made in this context. The Holy Quran was revealed piecemeal during a period of twenty years according to the need and exigency of the occasion. In so doing the Providential wisdom was that the Holy Prophet and his Companions were afforded an opportunity to absorb and assimilate the Holy Quran in their minds, and act and live up to its teaching. Side by side with inscribing it, with an ardent love and reverence, on the tablet of his mind, the Holy Prophet, under Divine directions, got it written on parchment of skins and bones, bark, and leaves of tree, and stones. During this period of twenty-three years, the Holy Prophet passed through different conditions of life. Sometimes he suffered hunger and starvation, and sometimes he suffered severe persecution. The enemies forced him to go into exile. They waged a continuous war against him. The Holy Prophet, at last, returned to his homeland, the city of Mecca, in triumph and glory. The peoples of other nations began to live as subjects under the Holy Prophet's rule. Agreements were signed with the non-Muslims.

Occasions also arose to deal with the non-Muslim prisoners of war. Under such varied circumstances, a change is bound to come over the ideas and notions of a man. A need is felt for the alteration of rules and regulations. Decisions are swung and swayed by different considerations. But the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him), even unto the last day of his life, introduced no manner of change in any verse of the Holy Quran ; and if he had done so, how could he have been able to insert any change in the memory of those persons who had learned the Holy Quran by heart, and record a change on the stone, parchment and bones whereon it had been preserved ? Moreover, the belief that the Holy Quran was the Sacred Book of God would have shaken. The Muslims would have been perturbed by the idea that the Holy Prophet considers it permissible to alter the text of this book which, he said, was the Word of God. But no change, no alteration of the sacred text whatsoever, ever took place although kingdoms and states alter and amend their laws every now and then. The Holy Prophet was the only personality in the world who introduced no change in the principles and commandments that were propounded during the long period of twenty-three years. What a profound and perfect personality was the Holy Prophet who never stood in need of making a change in any law or regulation ! The reason of this was that these laws were not the product of a human brain; on the contrary, they had been revealed by God Almighty Whose knowledge and wisdom is All-comprehensive, and is above and beyond error.

The Quran — A Necessity

By HAZRAT KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

Soon after the time of Jesus, an age of utter decline and decay settled down on the world as though it had been waiting for his departure. The Divine Flame which he had kindled in the human breast in the valley of the Jordan began to smoulder, and had already gone out utterly in other parts of the world. Religion had everywhere deteriorated into a code of the emptiest sort of ritualism promulgating a sickly species of theology that killed the spirit of material progress. While the Church in the West taught that man was a vile creature on God's earth and that everything in the earth had been created to pamper the flesh and kill the spirit, Brahmanism, in the East, preached that man had no intrinsic worth at all, nor was there anything of good in him. His only salvation lay in separating himself from all worldly affairs and in leading the life of a recluse in the jungle. Such theologies and philosophies were fatal to progress. Absolute death — spiritual, material — overtook the world, and dense clouds of wickedness and ignorance darkened its horizon. In this gloomiest epoch that had ever been known, a silver line appeared on the Arabian coast. A voice like a thunderclap came to a son of the desert, who sat meditating over the miseries of the world in the recesses of Mount Hira near Makka. It was a Message from on High, a Message that was unique in its character even in the world of Revelation. All former Messages either spoke of tribal well-being — like that which came from Sinai or through the Vedas or they alluded to personal favour, like that heard on the banks of the river Jordan. The Revelation in the cave of Mount Hira

brought a Universal Gospel to humanity and revealed that the lowest of the low (for such had men become at that time) was destined to be greatest of the great. The words declared that the Most Honourable God intended to raise him to a degree of eminence that would mark him out as the best among His creation. It also disclosed the way whereby man must attain such a dignity, and the acquisition of a new learning was the remedy ordained by the Revelation to raise him from his degradation.

Was it but a pleasing phantasy born of the Prophet's own mind, or a Promise from the Most High, or was it a matter for the coming events of history to decide? Yet the Revelation was of a character unique in its grandeur and sublimity, and such as had never been heard before; it remained silent, however, for full six months, when the bearer of the Great Gospel was bidden again to begin his work of reformation among the People of Ignorance, as they proudly called themselves. Many other Revelations followed, but it was sometime towards the end of the Prophet's Makkan Period that the nature of the prophesied greatness was defined in a Chapter entitled *The Bee*. It announced that the rule of the Lord on earth was going to be established very soon, and that this rule was no other than the self-same Kingdom of God, with man as His vicegerent on the earth, which had been so anxiously besought by Jesus in the prayer which has risen continually from every Christian home since then; the first three sections of the Chapter gave the salient features of the Kingdom. The first section dealt with the various animals already under human subjection, but the second described certain most surprising phenomena in the kingdom of Nature. It told that the water that comes from the clouds and causes the trees and plants and herbage to grow, comes for the service of man; that night and day, the sun and the moon,

and all other luminaries in the starry land, had been created by the Lord to serve the needs of man. After speaking of great oceans, mountains, rivers and roads as parts of the same Kingdom, it proceeded to put the whole case in a nutshell. It said that the world was full of gifts for man, that had not as yet come within his comprehension. Truly, a wonderful Gospel. A creature like the man, who at that time had lowered himself to such a state of degradation as to be ready to worship everything he saw as his lord was, all of a sudden, given these startling tidings that every other manifestation of Nature, including that greatest luminary, which had hitherto been worshipped as 'god' all over the world, were his servants and ministers, and that it was his lot to act as their sovereign. On another occasion the Revelation enunciated, one by one, all the objects that had received human adoration, till then, as God. The Book declared that all these things were the slaves of man. In short, everything which had been revered as his lord and master till yesterday was his servant. The Message came to a Man who belonged to a nation poor in all respects, yet he was chosen by God to take in hand this wonderful task. Let the worldly-wise people of culture and science look at the matter in the light of history and ask themselves whether this idea of man's greatness ever dawned on the human mind before Muhammad? It was not mere imagination but a reality; though much of it has not yet materialized. The days are yet to come when the acquisition of new sciences, as prophesied by the Quran, will enable us to bring even the mighty sun under our yoke, when it will work as a hand-maiden in our kitchen for the purposes of supplying light and heat.

The same chapter also gives us an insight into the things which had kept man down, and of which the reversal would carry us to the peak of greatness. All our present

eminence depends on our reducing Nature to our service. But we have accepted its various components as our God, and a worshipper, as in duty bound, cannot expect any menial service from his lord. We could not hope to change our destiny unless we cultivated in ourselves a strong sense of Monotheism (Ch. 16, Section 3).

The Book also taught us the way to achieve this miracle. We were told that the whole of Nature was ruled through the agency of angels who would be obedient to our will if we acquired the necessary knowledge. The Quran did not leave us in any uncertainty as to the nature of that knowledge. The service of God was clearly the first requisite in obtaining this ascendancy over the angels, but we have also to study the universe at large in the light of the said service. We had to understand Nature in order to discover the utility to ourselves of its various components. We had also to learn the manner and the law in and under which they would disclose their properties to our advantage. We had to find out the make and shape of things as well as their ingredients and the proportions in which they combine to create other things and the particular laws applicable to them. Our attention was drawn to the phenomena of Nature.

Approach to the Meaning of the Holy Quran

Changing Patterns of Interpretation

By MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD

For various reasons into which one may not go here, the exact message of the Holy Quran has for centuries been steadily kept out of view: so much so, that a very low standard of approach to it has come into vogue. This is noticeable not merely in the approach to the Quranic content but to almost everything connected with it—its language and idiom, its phrase structure and its style.

In every age, the author of a work is normally the product of his intellectual environment. It is only those who are gifted with vision and insight who form the exception. When we look back into the history of the commentaries of the Holy Quran from the earliest centuries of Islam right up to the close of the last century, we find that the standard of approach to the meaning of the Holy Quran had steadily deteriorated. This was the result of a gradual decadence in the quality of the Muslim mind itself. When the commentators found that they could not rise to the heights of the Quranic thoughts, they strove to bring it down to the level of their own mind.

If we are to see the Holy Quran in its true light, it will be necessary for us to lift all those veils which have, from age to age, been laid thereon under the stress of influences alien to the spirit of the Holy Quran and then search for the reality about it in its own pages.

Obstacles in the way of right appreciation

These influences are by no means few. They are numerous, and have pervaded every corner of Islamic thought. It is not, therefore, easy to set them out on a brief canvas. I have, however, tried in my Prolegomena to the commentary of the Holy Quran to sum them up under certain broad heads. The following are the leading aspects which call for consideration :

(1) The Holy Quran is not bound by conventionality in its form of presentation or style or its manner of address or argument, but follows a way of expression such as is germane to the character of its content or is natural to it. It is this distinctive peculiarity observed by all scriptures which distinguishes them from the conventional forms of literary expression employed in learned discussions.

The first generation of people among whom the Holy Quran was delivered were not a sophisticated race. Their mind was not cast in an artificial or conventional mould furnished by civilization. It was content to receive a simple thought in its plain simplicity. That was why the Quranic thought, simple as it was, sank easily into their hearts. No one at the time felt it difficult to catch its meaning. The moment the Companions of the Holy Prophet heard a verse recited to them, they forthwith caught its significance.

But hardly had the first generation of Muslims passed away when the influences of the Roman and Iranian civilizations began to sweep over the new Arab empire. Translations from the Greek literature gave them new literary tastes and initiated them into the art of dialectics. Zest for novelty and inventiveness in approach to everything came to be ever on the increase, with the result that the simplicity of the Quranic manner gradually lost its charm for them. Slowly, step by step, a stage was reached when everything

Quranic was attempted to be given an artificial mould. Since the Quranic thought could not fit into any such mould, serious complications in thought arose, with every attempt at resolving them ending in more intricate complications.

Whenever distance is assumed from naturalness, and artificially resorted to, we are disinclined to look at things in their natural simplicity. We cannot visualize beauty or grandeur in its simplicity. Whenever we choose to endow a thing with splendour, we invariably try to fix it in a network of ornamentation. This is what exactly happened with the Holy Quran, the dispositions of the first generation of Muslims were not cast in any conventional or artificial moulds. That was why they instantly caught the meaning of the Holy Quran. But the generation which followed would not let the Holy Quran present itself in its simplicity. Their love for inventiveness or novelty would not allow this. They began to dress everything in the Holy Quran in novel costumes ; and since the Holy Quran could not fit into such costumes, the effort to force on it things which did not suit it, repressed its genius and forced its meaning to assume forms by no means natural to it.

The first period of the Quranic interpretation was that which preceded the codification of Islamic learning. The second began with this codification and has continued, in its different phases, through the succeeding centuries. The second period had hardly opened when the urge to cloak the Holy Quran in new garbs took its rise, reaching its climax during the heyday of philosophic speculation among Muslims. That was the time when Imam Fakhruddin Razi wrote his Commentary to invest the Quranic word with an absolutely novel import. Had Imam Razi chosen to represent what exactly the Holy Quran stood for, at least two-thirds of what he wrote would have been left unwritten.

Be that as it may, one thing stands out clearly, and it is that to the extent the Holy Quran is freed from the unnatural moulds into which it is pressed, to that extent will it disclose its own reality. The difficulties which we feel today in appreciating the manner of presentation observed by the Holy Quran, or the arrangement of its parts and verses, or the phraseology employed therein are all due to the inclination inherited from our mediaeval past not to appreciate a simple thing for its simplicity. The Holy Quran is so simple to understand and yet we do not feel happy until we evaluate its worth by fanciful standards of our own making, standards so distasteful to the purposes of the Holy Quran. That is the picture which today confronts us at every turn.

(2) Whenever we are to know what meaning a particular piece of writing bears, we naturally prefer to accept the meaning given to it by those who have had the opportunity of ascertaining it from one who originally published it. The Holy Quran, be it remembered, was delivered piecemeal during the course of 23 years. Whatever portion of it was delivered was repeatedly listened to by the Companions of the Holy Prophet and was repeatedly recited in their prayers ; and whatever clarification they needed of anything therein, they obtained it directly from the Holy Prophet himself. Of those Companions, some were distinguished for the firm grasp they had of the Quranic meaning and this is endorsed by the Holy Prophet himself. It should have been in the fitness of things to give preference to their interpretation over the interpretation of those who came after them who had not the advantage of close association with the Holy Prophet. It is a matter for regret that those who came after the first generation, chiefly inspired by external influences, began to invent for themselves new and newer forms of approach to the Holy Quran and caused the original interpretation of it to fall into disuse. The idea came

to be entertained that "the earlier generation was strong in faith, and the later generation was strong in knowledge," although the earlier generation was reputed to be sound both in heart and mind, in faith as well as in knowledge. All the same, the real meaning of the Holy Quran was gradually relegated to the limbo of oblivion, and its simple message came to raise, in almost every sphere of life, issues too difficult to solve.

To make matters worse, an unwarranted attitude was assumed which hardened as time went. This led to complications which in their turn necessitated the employment in their support of a variety of methods of argument. And then came into vogue the habit of textual criticism, the writing of footnotes, and indices. This again gave rise to further complications in the approach to the meaning of the Holy Quran. In certain cases, it laid layers above layers of evils over it, one thicker than the other.

To understand the situation take any passage of the Holy Quran for illustration. First, look into the interpretation of it which the Companions of the Holy Prophet and the first generation of Muslims gave to it. Then turn to the commentaries of those who came after, and compare the two. The earliest commentaries present the Quranic meaning in its natural simplicity, whereas the later commentaries gave to it a strange visage by making it the subject of subtle disquisitions.

(3) From the very beginning, stories and anecdotes form the lore of new currency in Muslim circles. A great body of them were of Jewish origin, and exerted a powerful influence on the Muslim mind. The early commentators avoided to make use of them. But the anecdotes nevertheless succeeded in forcing themselves into the very texture of the commentaries of the Holy Quran written after them.

(4) The traditions of the Holy Prophet were usually employed to clarify the meaning of the Quran. But the tendency among the later commentators grew apace to refer not so much to the traditions known to the Companions of the Holy Prophet but to those collected indifferently in later times. This created further difficulties in the understanding of the Quranic word.

(5) The sad result of all this was that the manner of presentation adopted by the Holy Quran was lost in a maze of far-fetched conceits. The strength of the Quranic meaning lies in the manner of its presentation. It is that which lends clarity to its statements and observations, and makes significant the import of its stories and parables, its appeals and admonitions, and its purposes. Once the significance of this manner was missed, the true picture of the Holy Quran was lost to sight. In the words of poet :

“That very page was blackened whereon had been noted what was desired.”

The manner of argument observed by the Holy Prophet was not to assume logical poses and confuse the hearer. He adopted the natural way of direct appeal, such as might reach every type of mind, and touch every heart. But the commentators, obsessed by the philosophy and logic of Greece, could hardly bring themselves to look at reality in its naturalness and appreciate it. They thought that they were honouring their Prophets by turning them into dialecticians. They sought to demonstrate the greatness of the Holy Quran by pressing into the framework of Aristotelian logic, hardly realizing that it was never its primary object. The result was that the beauty and attraction of the Quranic method of argument and demonstrating its truth was lost in a network of dialectical disquisitions. In fact, the truth had already been lost. The tragedy was

that our commentators could not achieve even what they aimed at. They simply let the door wide open to doubt and endless speculation. Imam Razi showed the greatest alacrity and ingenuity in promoting this consummation.

(6) The trouble did not end here. The application of philosophy to the Quranic thought gave rise to numerous dialectical terms, with the result that the simple words of Arabic came to be invested with new connotations. The subject of the Holy Quran, it is obvious, is not the philosophy of the Greeks, nor was the Arabic language at the advent of the Holy Quran familiar with its philosophic terms. The words employed in the Holy Quran did not originally bear the meaning which was assigned to them in the light of Greek concepts. The transformations led to a variety of speculation, so much so, that words such as *Khulud*, *Abdiyât*, *Mithliyat*, *Tafsil*, *Hujjat*, *Burhan* and *Tavil* came to bear meanings which the earliest listeners of the Holy Quran would never have thought could bear.

(7) As a corollary to this attitude, the idea came to the fore that the Holy Quran should support and endorse every new discovery in scientific knowledge. An attempt, therefore, was made to read therein an argument in favour of the Ptolemaic system even as the present-day dispensers of intelligence who write commentaries of the Holy Quran, try to interpret it in term of every new development in the Science of the Cosmos.

(8) Every book or every system of teaching has something or other for its central theme ; so much so that everything pertaining to it revolves round it : and unless this central theme or its primary objective is understood, its significance of anything that is subsidiary to it is not possible properly to comprehend. The Holy Quran has certain fundamental objectives to present. Unless these are

appreciated in their proper perspective, nothing pertaining to them is possible to catch aright. When under the circumstances explained above, the essential objectives of the Holy Quran were missed, it was but inevitable that everything pertaining to them could not be viewed in proper perspective—the statements of the Holy Quran, its teaching, its method of argument and of address, and its remarks and observations. Space does not allow citation of illustrations here. Still, to catch a fleeting glimpse of what has been wrought by our commentators, attention may be drawn to but one or two examples. Take verse 160 of Chapter 3: “It is not meet for a prophet to act dishonestly,” and read the far-fetched commentaries thereon. Take another verse which reproduces the Jewish assertion—“The hand of Allah is tied up” (5 : 64). What a rambling do we find in the explanations given thereof in utter disregard of the context in which the verse occurs !

(9) A primary condition of proper appreciation of the Quranic meaning is the presence in the commentator of a right taste for literature. But for various reasons this taste steadily grew weaker among our commentators, resulting in inept approaches to the Quranic word or to the idiom and usage of the language in which the Holy Quran had been delivered.

(10) The field of interpretation of the Quranic word has always been affected, even as the fields of arts and sciences, by the atmospheric influence of every preceding age. It is no doubt a matter for pride that in the course of Muslim history, scholars possessed of upright character never yielded to political influences or tolerated compromises in the doctrinal beliefs of Islam. But atmospheric influence of an age does not penetrate through the door of politics alone. In its psychological aspects, it finds for itself

many a door to come in. Once such doors are thrown open, they scarcely close thereafter, however much one might try. The doctrinal beliefs might escape contamination, and, thanks to our upright scholars, they indeed were not seriously touched. But the general character of the minds of men could not remain unaffected.

(11) The period of enquiry and research in Islamic learning came to an end after the close of the 4th century of the Hijra, and thereafter, barring certain exceptions, the tendency to lean on the past for every idea took hold of the mind of the learned. Every one who ever attempted to write a commentary of the Holy Quran chose as a matter of course to have before him the work of some predecessor and to follow it blindly in every detail. If, for instance, a commentator of the third century had committed a serious blunder in the understanding of any particular passage in the Holy Quran, it became the bounden duty of those who came after him to reproduce word by word whatever he had written. No one for a moment paused to scrutinize the statement or question it. The result was that gradually few could develop the urge to write fresh commentaries. Every one contented himself thereafter to write only marginal notes to the commentaries already in existence. Read the marginal notes of Baidawi and Jalalain and see what energy was wasted by them to give mere coatings to the walls already raised by others.

(12) The prevailing ineptitude of scholars in the succeeding periods of Muslim history let every form of idiosyncrasy to prosper; so much so, that only those commentaries came into fashion and were read with zest which bore no trace whatever of the touch given to the interpretation of the Holy Quran by the earliest band of commentators. The tendency grew universal. It was felt in every

sphere of learning. The period of time which could prefer Sakkaki to Jurjani or prefer Taftazani to Sakkaki was indeed a period when only writers of the type of Baidawi and Jalalain could shine.

(13) Take the case of compilations wherein matter was gathered from commentaries already in existence. Whenever a variety of interpretations had been offered by previous commentators, the compiler would invariably choose the feeblest. Not that his eyes did not rest on appropriate or valid interpretations ; but with a view to pampering to prevailing taste, he would deliberately overlook them.

(14) To make matters worse, the type of commentary known as *Tafsir-bir-rai* or commentary which let the text subserve one's own personal opinion on any subject, came now freely to be written—a form of commentary strongly discountenanced by the Companions of the Holy Prophet. Not that reason and insight were tabooed in Islam. Were it so, all study of the Quranic thought would seem futile ; for the Holy Quran openly invites its readers to exercise reason in their approach to it, and ponder on what it states. At every corner of its presentation, it exclaims:

“Do they meditate on the Quran ? Or, are there locks on their minds ?” (47 : 24).

Tafsir-bir-rai is that form of commentary which does not aim to represent what the Holy Quran actually states. On the other hand, the commentator has some view to advance and he presses the Quranic text to lend support to it.

This style of commentary came into vogue in the day when every doctrinal belief of Islam came to be seriously examined and a number of schools of theology took their rise, each intent on exploiting the Holy Quran to uphold its own point of view. Commentaries written with this

purpose are styled *Tafsir-bir-rai*.

Further, when zealous followers of the different juristic schools among Muslims developed the passion for sectarianism, the verses of the Holy Quran were exploited to uphold, by hook or by crook, their own particular schismatic obsessions. Few cared to be guided by the plain meaning of the plain word of the Holy Quran, or by the clear purposes underlying the Quranic method of presentation of its contents, or by straightforward reason. Every one attempted to force the Quranic meaning to conform to the Imam or founder of his own schismatic school of thought.

To create further complications, certain sections of the Sufi school of thought, in their search for the hidden meaning of the Holy Quran, went so far as to press everything Quranic into the moulds of their own formulas. Thus every Quranic injunction and every basic belief came to bear some sort of esoteric connotation. This form of approach is also *Tafsir-bir-rai*.

Or take another instance of this *Tafsir-bir-rai*. Attempts were made during the period under reference to give the Quranic method the garb of Greek logic. In fact, whenever any reference was made to the sky, or the constellary order, attempt was made to square it with Greek system of astronomy.

Or take the latest examples of interpretation attempted by a certain type of commentators both in India and Egypt in the name of reorientation of the Quranic thought. Attempt is made to invoke the Holy Quran to lend its support to the achievement of modern research in the different spheres of scientific thought as if the Holy Quran was delivered over 1,300 years ago just to endorse in advance, in the form of riddles, what centuries after, men like Copernicus, Newton, Darwin, H. G. Wells, could find out for

themselves without the aid of any revealed scripture — riddles reserved to be noticed and unravelled only by the present-day Muslim commentators of the Holy Quran. Such commentaries are also to be classed as *Tafsir-bir-rai*.

Such in brief is the story of the Quranic interpretation attempted in the past. But, however brief this survey, it is enough to show what obstacles one has to overcome to reach the Holy Quran, or what thick veils to lift to catch a clear vision of it. The effort will involve a simultaneous survey of every nook and corner of the Holy Quran and the exercise of deep insight into the meaning of things. It is only then that for the sake of reality the Holy Quran may put in its appearance. I have tried to the best of my ability to negotiate with these obstacles. I cannot say to what extent I have succeeded in my attempt. But I may say this with confidence that I have opened a new avenue for an intelligent approach to the Holy Quran, and hope that men of understanding will notice that the method adopted by me is something fundamentally different from the method pursued in the past.

(*Tarjuman al-Quran*, Vol. II)

The Holy Quran

It Awakens Intellect

By ALLAMA MUHAMMAD ASAD

“Unlike any other book, the meaning and linguistic presentation of the Holy Quran form one unbreakable whole. The position of individual words in a sentence, the rhythm and sound of its phrases and their syntactic construction, the manner in which a metaphor flows almost imperceptibly into a pragmatic statement, the use of accoustic stress not merely in the service of rhetoric but as means of alluding to unspoken but clearly implied ideas : all this makes the Quran, in the last resort, unique and untranslatable, a fact that has been pointed out by many earlier translators and by all Arab scholars. But although it is impossible to “reproduce” the Holy Quran as such in any other language, it is none the less possible to render its message comprehensible to people who, like most Westerners, do not know Arabic at all or, as is the case with most of the educated non-Arab Muslims, not well enough to find their way through it unaided.”

The Holy Quran Aroused a Spirit of Intellectual Curiosity and Enquiry Amongst the Arabs

“Read in the name of thy Sustainer, Who has created man from a germ-cell !

“Read ! And thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful, One Who has taught (man) the use of the pen—taught man that he knew not...”

With these opening verses of the 96th Chapter with an allusion to man’s humble biological origin as well as to his consciousness and intellect began, early in the 7th

century C.E., the Holy Quran to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, destined to continue during the twenty-three years of his ministry and to end, shortly before his death, with verse 281 of the second Chapter :

“And be conscious of the Day on which you shall return to God, whereupon every human being shall be repaid in full for what he has earned, and none shall be wronged.”

Between the first and last verses (the first and the last in the chronological order of their revelation) it is to be borne in mind that in its final compilation, the Holy Quran is arranged in accordance with the inner requirements of its message as a whole, and not in chronological order in which the individual Surahs or passages were revealed. It unfolds a book which, more than any other single phenomenon known to us, has fundamentally affected the religious, social and political history of the world. No other scripture has ever had a similarly immediate impact upon the lives of the people who first heard its message and, through them and the generations that followed them, on the entire course of civilization. It shook Arabia, and made nation out of its perennial warring tribes; within a few decades, it spread its world-view far beyond the confines of Arabia and produced the first ideological society known to man : through its insistence on consciousness and knowledge it engendered among its followers a spirit of intellectual curiosity and independent inquiry, ultimately resulting in the splendid era of learning and scientific research which distinguished the world of Islam at the height of its cultural vigour ; and the culture thus fostered by the Holy Quran penetrated in countless ways and by-ways into the mind of Medieval Europe and gave rise to that revival of Western culture which we call the Renaissance, and thus became in the course of time largely responsible for the birth of what

is described as the "age of Science" : the age in which we are now living.

Never has any other book supplied to so many, and over so long a period of time, a comprehensive answer to the question: How shall I behave to achieve a good life in the world and happiness in the Hereafter ?

All this was, in the final analysis, brought about by the message of the Holy Quran : and it was brought about through the medium of the people whom it inspired and to whom it supplied a basis for all their ethical valuations and a direction for their worldly endeavours : for never has any book, not excluding the Bible, been read by so many with a comparable intensity and veneration : and never has any other book supplied to so many, and over so long a span of time, a similarly comprehensive answer to the question, 'How shall I behave in order to achieve the good life in this world and happiness in the life to come ?' However other individual Muslim may have misread this answer, and however far many of them may have departed from the spirit of its message, the fact remains that to all who believed and believe in it, the Holy Quran represents the ultimate manifestation of God's grace to man, the ultimate wisdom, and the ultimate beauty of expression : in short, the true Word of God.

This attitude of the Muslim towards the Holy Quran perplexes, as a rule, the Westerner who approaches it through one or another of the many existing translations. Where the believer, reading the Holy Quran in Arabic, sees beauty, the non-Muslim reader often claims to discern "erudition"; the coherence of the Quranic world-view and its relevance to the human condition escape him altogether and assume the guise of what, in Europe's and America's orientalist literature, is frequently described as "incoherent

rambling” ; and passages which to a Muslim are expressive of sublime wisdom often sound “flat” and “uninspiring” to the Western ear, and yet, not even the most unfriendly critics of the Holy Quran have ever denied that it did, in fact, provide the supreme source of inspiration in both the religious and cultural senses of the word to innumerable millions of people who, in their aggregate, have made an outstanding contribution to man’s knowledge, civilization and social achievement. How can this paradox be explained?

The Western critics of the Holy Quran frequently point to the allegedly “incoherent” references to God often in one and the same phrase as “He”, “God,” “We” or “I” with the corresponding changes of the pronoun from “His” to “Ours” or “My”, or from “Him” to “Me.” They seem to be unaware of the fact that these changes are not accidental, and not even what one might describe as “poetic licence”, but are obviously deliberate, a linguistic device meant to stress the idea that God is not a “person” and cannot, therefore, be really circumscribed by the pronouns applicable to finite things.

Western Translations of the Holy Quran

It cannot be explained by the too facile argument, so readily accepted by many modern Muslims, that the Holy Quran has been “deliberately misrepresented” by its Western translators. For although it cannot be denied that among the existing translations in almost all of the major European languages, there is many a one that has been inspired by malicious prejudice and especially in earlier times by misguided “missionary” zeal, there is hardly any doubt that some of the more recent translations are the work of earnest scholars who, without being actuated by any conscious bias have honestly endeavoured to render the meaning of the Arabic original into this or that European language;

and, in addition, there exists a number of modern translations by Muslims who, by virtue of their being Muslims, cannot by any stretch of the imagination be supposed to have "misrepresented" what, to them, was a sacred revelation. Still, none of these translations whether done by Muslims or by non-Muslims has so far brought the Holy Quran nearer to the heart or : minds of people raised in a different religious and psychological climate revealed something, however little, of its real depth and wisdom. To some extent this may be due to the conscious and unconscious prejudice against Islam which has pervaded Western cultural notions ever since the time of the Crusades — an intangible heritage of thought and feeling which has left its mark on the attitude towards all things Islamic on the part not only of the Western "man in the street" but also, in a more subtle manner, on the part of scholars bent on objective research. But even this psychological factor does not sufficiently explain the complete lack of appreciation of the Holy Quran in the Western world, and this in spite of its undeniable and ever-increasing interest in all that concerns the world of Islam.

It is more than probable that one of the main reasons for this lack of appreciation is to be found in this aspect of the Holy Quran which differentiates it fundamentally from all other sacred scriptures: its stress on reason as a valid way to faith as well as its insistence on the inseparability of the spiritual and the physical (and, therefore, also social) spheres of human existence: the inseparability of man's daily actions and behaviour, however "mundane" from his spiritual life and destiny. This absence of any division of reality into "physical" compartments makes it difficult for people brought up in the orbit of other religions, with their accent on the "super-

natural" element allegedly inherent in every true religious experience, to appreciate the predominantly rational approach of the Holy Quran to all religious questions. Consequently, its constant interweaving of spiritual teachings with practical legislation perplexes the Western reader, who has become accustomed to identifying "religious experience" with a thrill of luminous awe before things hidden and beyond all intellectual comprehension, and is suddenly confronted with the claim of the Holy Quran to being a guidance not only towards the spiritual good of the Hereafter but also towards the good life—spiritual, physical and social—attainable in this world. In short, the Westerner cannot readily accept the Holy Quranic thesis that all life, being God-given, is a unity, and that problems of the flesh and of the mind, of sex and economics, of individual righteousness and social equity are intimately connected with the hopes which man may legitimately entertain with regard to his life after death. This, in my opinion, is one of the reasons for the negative, uncomprehending attitude of most Westerners towards the Holy Quran and its teachings. But still another and perhaps even more decisive reason may be found in the fact that the Holy Quran itself has never yet been presented in any European language in a manner which would make it truly comprehensible.

When we look at the long list of translations beginning with the Latin works of the Middle Ages and continuing up to the present in almost every European tongue, we find one common denominator between their authors, whether Muslims or non-Muslims: all of them were or are people who acquired their knowledge of Arabic through academic study alone; that is, from books. None of them, however great his scholarship, has ever been familiar with the Arabic language as a person is

familiar with his own, having absorbed the nuances of its idiom and its phraseology with an active, associative response within himself, and hearing it with an ear spontaneously attuned to the intents underlying the acoustic symbolism of its words and sentences. For the words and sentences of a language — any language— are but symbols for meanings conventionally and subconsciously agreed upon by those who express their perception of reality by means of this particular tongue. Unless the translator is able to reproduce within himself the conceptual symbolism of the language in question, that is, unless he hears it “sing” in his ear in all its naturalness and immediacy, his translation will convey no more than the outer shell of the literary matter to which his work is devoted, and will miss, to a higher or lesser degree, the inner meaning of the original: and the greater the depth of the original, the farther must such a translation deviate from the spirit of the former.

The Peculiarities of the Arabic Language

No doubt, some of the translators of the Holy Quran whose work is accessible to the Western public can be described as outstanding scholars in the sense of having mastery of grammar and achieved a considerable knowledge of Arabic literature; but this mastery of grammar and this acquaintance with literature cannot by itself, in the case of a translation from Arabic (and especially the Arabic of Holy Quran), render the translator independent of that intangible communion with the spirit of the language which can be achieved only by living with and in it.

Arabic is a Semitic tongue: in fact, it is the only Semitic tongue which has remained uninterruptedly alive for thousands of years; and it is the only living language which has remained entirely unchanged for the last fourteen

centuries. These two factors are extremely relevant to the problem which we are considering. Since every language is a framework of symbols expressing its people's particular sense of life values and their particular way of conveying their perception of reality it is obvious that the language of the Arabs—a Semitic language which has remained unchanged for so many centuries—must differ widely from anything to which the Western mind is accustomed. The difference of the Arabic idiom from any European idiom is not merely a matter of its syntactic cast and the mode in which it conveys ideas ; nor is it exclusively due to the well-known, extreme flexibility of the Arabic grammar arising from its peculiar system of verbal “roots” and the numerous stem-forms which can be derived from these roots ; nor even to the extraordinary richness of the Arabic vocabulary : it is a difference of spirit and life-sense. And since the Arabic of the Holy Quran is a language which attained to its full maturity in the Arabia of fourteen centuries ago, it follows that in order to grasp its spirit correctly, one must be able to feel and hear this language as the Arabs felt and heard it at the time when the Holy Quran was being revealed, and to understand the meaning which they gave to the linguistic symbols in which it is expressed.

The Muslims believe that the Holy Quran is the Word of God, revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad through the holy medium of a human language. It was language of the Arabian Peninsula, the language of a people endowed with that peculiar quick-wittedness which the desert and its ‘feel’ of wide, timeless expanses bestows upon its children; the language of people whose mental images, flowing without effort from association to association, succeed one another in rapid progression and often vault elliptically over intermediate as it were “self-understood” sequences

of thought towards the idea which they aim to conceive or express. This ellipticism called *ijaz* by the Arab philologists, is an integral characteristic of the Arabic idiom and, therefore, of the language of the Holy Quran so much so that it is impossible to understand its method and inner purport without being able to reproduce within oneself, instinctively, something of the same quality of elliptical, associative thought. Now this ability comes to the educated Arab almost automatically, by a process of mental osmosis ; from his early childhood ; for when he learns to speak his tongue properly, he subconsciously acquires the mould of thought within which it has evolved and thus, imperceptibly grows into the conceptual environment from which the Arabic language derives its peculiar form and mode of expression. Not so, however, the non-Arab who becomes acquainted with Arabic only at a mature age, is result of a conscious effort that is through study : for what he acquires is but a readymade, outward structure devoid of that intangible quality of ellipticism which gives to Arabic its inner life and reality.

A Translator must Acquire an Instinctive "FEEL" of the Language

This does not, however, mean that a non-Arab can never understand Arabic in its true spirit : it means no more and no less than that he cannot really master it through academic study alone, but needs, in addition to philological learning, an instinctive "feel" of the language. Now it so happens that such a "feel" cannot be achieved by merely living among the modern Arabs of the cities. Although many of them, especially the educated ones, may have subconsciously absorbed the spirit of their language, they can only rarely communicate it to an outsider for the simple reason that, however high their education, their daily speech has become, in the course of

centuries, largely corrupted and estranged from pristine Arabic. Thus, in order to obtain the requisite "feel" of the Arabic language, a non-Arab must have lived in long and intimate association with the people whose daily speech mirrors the genuine spirit of their language, and whose mental processes are similar to those of the Arabs who lived at the time when the Arabic tongue received its final colouring and inner form. In our day, such people are only the bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula, and particularly those of Central and Eastern Arabia. For, notwithstanding the many dialectical peculiarities in which their speech may differ from the classical Arabic of the Holy Quran, it has remained, so far very close to the idiom of Holy Prophet's time and has preserved all its intrinsic characteristics. It is to be noted that under the impact of modern economic circumstances, which have radically changed the time-honoured way of life of the bedouins and brought them, by means of school education and the radio, into direct contact with the Levantine culture of the cities, the purity of their language is rapidly disappearing and may soon cease to be a living guide to students of the Arabic tongue.

In other words, familiarity with the bedouin speech of Central and Eastern Arabia in addition, of course, to academic knowledge of classical Arabic is the only way for a non-Arab of our time to achieve an intimate understanding of the diction of the Quran.

Two Important Points which a Translator must take into Account

Unlike any other book, the meaning and linguistic presentation of the Holy Quran form one unbreakable whole. The position of individual words in a sentence, the rhythm and sound of its phrases and their syntactic con-

struction, the manner in which a metaphor flows almost imperceptibly into a pragmatic statement, the use of accoustic stress not merely in the service of rhetoric but as a means of alluding to unspoken but clearly implied ideas : all this makes the Holy Quran, in the last resort, unique and untranslatable, a fact that has been pointed out by many earlier translators and by all Arab scholars. But although it is impossible to "reproduce" the Holy Quran as such in any other language, it is none-the-less possible to render its message comprehensible to people who, like most Westerners, do not know Arabic at all or, as is the case with most of the educated non-Arab Muslims, not well enough to find their way through it unaided.

To this end, the translator must be guided throughout by the linguistic usage prevalent at the time of the revelation of the Holy Quran, and must always bear in mind that some of its expressions, especially such as relate to abstract concepts, have in the course of time undergone a subtle change in the popular mind and should not, therefore, be translated in accordance with the sense given to them by post-classical usage. As has been pointed out by that great Islamic scholar, Muhammad Abduh, even some of the renowned, otherwise linguistically reliable Holy Quran commentators, have occasionally erred in this respect; and their errors, magnified by the inadequacy of modern translators, have led to many a distortion, and sometimes to a total incomprehensibility, of individual Holy Quranic passages in their European renditions.

Another (and no less important) point which the translator must take fully into account is the *ijaz* of the Holy Quran, that inimitable ellipticism which often deliberately omits intermediate thought-clauses in order to express the final stage of an idea as pithily and concisely as is possible within the limitations of human language.

This method of *ijaz* is, as I have explained, a peculiar, integral aspect of the Arabic language, and has reached its utmost perfection in the Quran. In order to render its meaning into a language which does not function in a similarly elliptical manner, the thought-links which are missing that is deliberately omitted in the original, must be supplied by the translator in the form of frequent interpolations between brackets; for unless this is done, the Arabic phrase concerned loses all its life in the translation and often becomes a meaningless jumble.

The Translator and the Rendering of Religious terms used in the Holy Quran

Furthermore, one must beware of rendering, in each and every case, the religious terms used in the Holy Quran in the sense which they have acquired after Islam had become “institutionalized” into a definite set of laws, tenets and practices. However legitimate this “institutionalization” may be in the context of Islamic religious history, it is obvious that the Holy Quran cannot be correctly understood if we read it merely in the light of later ideological developments, losing sight of its original purport and the meaning which it had and was intended to have for the people who first heard it from the lips of Holy Prophet himself. For instance, when his contemporaries heard the words *Islam* and *Muslim*, they understood them as denoting man’s “self-surrender to God” and “one who surrenders himself to God”, without limiting these terms to any specific community or denomination, e.g., in 3 : 67, where Abraham is spoken of as having “surrendered himself unto God” (*kana musliman* or in 3 : 52, where the disciples of Jesus say, “Bear thou witness that we have surrendered ourselves unto God”—*bi-ana muslimun*).

In Arabic, this original meaning has remained unimpaired, and no Arab scholar has ever become oblivious of the wide connotation of these terms. Not so, however, the non-Arab of our day, believer and non-believer alike : to him, Islam and Muslim usually bear a restricted, historically circumscribed significance, and apply exclusively to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. Similarly, the terms *kufr* ("denial of truth") and *kafir* ("one who denies the truth") have become, in the conventional translation of the Holy Quran, unwarrantably simplified into "unbelief" or "infidel", respectively, and have thus been deprived of the wide spiritual meaning which the Holy Quran gives to these terms. Another example is to be found in the conventional rendering of the word *kitab* when applied to the Holy Quran, as "book"; for when the Holy Quran was being revealed (and we must not forget that this process took twenty-three years), those who listened to its recitation did not conceive of it as a "book" since it was compiled into one only some decades after the Holy Prophet's death but rather, in view of the derivation of the noun *kitab* from the verb *kataba* ("he wrote" or, topically, "he ordained"), as a "divine writ" or a "revelation". The same holds true with regard to the Quranic use of this term in its connotation of earlier revealed scriptures ; for the Holy Quran often stresses the fact that those earlier instances of divine writ have largely been corrupted in the course of time, and that the extant Holy "books" do not really represent the original revelations. Consequently, the translation of *ahl al-kitab* as "people of the book" is not very meaningful ; in my opinion the term should be rendered as "followers of earlier revelation."

Two Fundamental Rules of Interpretation

In short, if it is to be truly comprehensible in another language, the message of the Holy Quran must be rendered

in such a way as to reproduce, as closely as possible, the sense which it had for the people who were as yet unburdened with the conceptual image of later Islamic development.

A translator must observe consistently two fundamental rules of interpretation. First, the Holy Quran must not be viewed as a compilation of individual injunctions and exhortation as one integral whole : that is, as an exposition of an ethical doctrine which every verse and sentence has an intimate bearing on other verses and sentences, all of them clarifying and amplifying one another. Consequently, its real meaning can be grasped only if we correlate every one of its statements with what has been stated elsewhere in its pages, and try to explain its ideas by means of frequent cross-references, always subordinating the particular to the general and the incidental to the intrinsic. Whenever this rule is faithfully followed, we realize that the Holy Quran is, in the word of Muhammad 'Abduh, "its own best commentary".

Second, no part of the Holy Quran should be viewed from a purely historical point of view ; that is to say, all its references to historical circumstances and events both at the time of the Holy Prophet and in earlier times must be regarded as illustrations of the human conditions and not as ends in themselves. Hence the consideration of the historical occasion on which a particular verse was revealed, a pursuit so dear, and legitimately so, to the classical commentators must never be allowed to obscure the underlying purport of that verse and its inner relevance to the ethical teaching which the Holy Quran, taken as a whole, propounds.

Courtesy : *Islamic Review*, June, 1966.

The Holy Quran is a Revelation from God

By ALHAJJ MIAN M. A. FARUQUI

The non-Muslim hostile critics of Islam advance two main questions against the authenticity of the Holy Quran. They cannot very well deny the fact that whatever was given out as the revealed verse on the Holy Quran by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was recorded, committed to memory in the proper sequence by many *hafizes*, and was carefully preserved and passed on in its purity to the latter-day generations of Muslims. But they say :

(1) The so-called revealed verses were nothing but the figment of the mind of the Prophet Muhammad.

(2) The moral teachings and incidents of past generations (especially those common to the Bible) were borrowed from the Jews and the Christians by Prophet Muhammad.

These nonsensical criticisms have been refuted by the Muslim scholars especially those belonging to the Ahmadiyya community many times before ; but here I would mention this much that the very moral codes advanced by Islam on one hand and by Judaism and Christianity on the other, can be compared and a fair critic would easily find out that the Islamic code is more human, perfect and appeals to the human nature and intelligence. Then again, in the matter of historical incidents, the Islamic narration does not relate absurd changes or detract from the holy conduct of the Prophets of yore. This is no place to go into details.

I would mention a few incidents as narrated in the Holy Quran to prove that the verses of the Holy Quran

were not fabricated by the Holy Prophet ; and secondly the incidents related in the Holy Quran were not borrowed from the Bible.

(a) If someone fabricates the statements in a book, and gives out that those are Divine revelations then he takes very good care to see that the statements made therein show his own knowledge to be perfect and his own conduct entirely blameless or faultless. Now let us examine the following two incidents :

(i) Part XXVII of the Holy Quran starts as follows :

“Allah indeed has heard the plea of her who pleads with thee about her husband and complains to Allah ; and Allah hears the contention of both of you. Surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing.

(ii) “Those of you who put away their wives by calling them their mothers — they are not their mothers. None are their mothers save those who gave them birth, and they utter indeed a hateful word and a lie. And surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving.”

The woman referred to here was Khaulah, wife of Anas Ibn Samit, who was separated by her husband in an old Arab form, the husband saying to the wife, “Thou art to me as the back of my mother”. The woman complained about it to the Prophet, who said that, as he had no revelation about it he could not interfere. The woman complained in her prayers to Allah to help her in her predicament. Then came this revelation to the Prophet, in which (verses 3 & 4) it was necessary that the husband should in such cases make an expiation before re-establishing conjugal rights. The Prophet thereupon sent for both husband and wife and told them about the new Divine revelation. This incident shows not only that the Prophet did not fabricate anything himself but when Allah guided him

then he issued the new instructions; Secondly, even a poor Muslim woman can in her prayers address Allah direct and what is more is not only heard but her complaint is redressed.

(ii) Chapter 80 (*Abasa*) of the Holy Quran begins as follows :

I—"He frowned and turned away." The Prophet did not scold the blind man, but being human he could not help following, and did not reply to him. The blind man of course could not see anything, but receiving no response from the Holy Prophet, went away. Then the above verses were revealed to him. This incident shows that the source of the Holy Prophet's revelation was other than his own mind. It was Divine.

In this case there was no ill-treatment of the blind man, but the Holy Prophet only disliked the interruption made by him, but did not scold him. Then again, even if he may be supposed to have repented for not having given an answer to the blind man, it would have been sufficient to have recalled him and attended to his queries properly. At any rate, if it were left to the option of an individual, he himself would be the last person to give permanence to a reproof for his own act. Incidentally, the Holy Prophet did send for the blind man later on and spread a sheet for him to sit on and then politely asked him as to what he wanted to know.

II—Verses, 90, 91 and 92 of the 10th Chapter (JONAH) of the Holy Quran run as follows :

90—"And We brought the Children of Israel across the sea. Then Pharaoh and his hosts followed them for oppression and tyranny, till when drowning overtook him he said : I believe that there is no God but He in Whom

the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit”.

91—“What ! Now ! And indeed before this thou didst disobey and thou wast of the mischief-makers!”

92 — “But this day We shall save thee in thy body that thou mayest be a sign to those after thee. And surely most of the people are heedless of Our signs.”

Israelitic oppression was at its height under the Pharaoh Rameses II around 1800-1200 B.C. This Pharaoh ruled Egypt for 65 years. He and his wife were the ones who were instrumental in rescuing the infant Moses and bringing him up. When prophethood was conferred on Moses, he, along with his brother Aaron, were deputed to go and preach the Pharaoh Rameses II, and later on to ask him to allow Israelites to migrate out of Egypt. This was refused ; but secretly Moses made the necessary preparations and then one night he along with all the tribes of Israelites started on the long journey, intending to cross the Red Sea near its Northern tip and then across the Sinai peninsula to Palestine, if possible. But Pharaoh soon learnt of their departure and gave chase along with his hosts. Israelites had almost reached the sea, when they espied the enemy forces approaching in the distance ; and despaired of their escape. But Moses had firm faith in God Who commanded him to strike his wand at the proposed crossing across the arm of the sea. Some events happened to make the water there fordable for Israelites and they hastily crossed over. Pharaoh and his hosts soon tried to repeat this performance when high tide overtook them. Pharaoh Rameses II, clad in his armour, began to drown; when he was losing all other hope of rescue, he declared his faith in One and only God. It is to this incident that the above Quranic verses refer. But it was too late ! Allah, however, ruled that his

drowned body would be saved and remain as a sign (of warning) to the future generations.

Although the Bible does mention about the annihilation of Pharaoh and his hosts, but it nowhere mentions about the body of Pharaoh being saved and preserved as a mummy: nor does other ancient records mention it. It has only been mentioned in the Holy Quran as a prophecy, which was later on fulfilled to the glory of Allah and the veracity of the Holy Quran.

Now Pharaoh Rameses II was a great builder. The temple of Abu Simbal (hewn out of solid rock, and recently shifted bodily to a higher place to escape the waters of Aswan Dam in Egypt) was built by him. If he had lived long enough he would have built another pyramid for the preservation of his mummy after his death. But around the beginning of the century, his embalmed mummy was discovered in a coffin, laid in an ordinary room in the tomb of another Pharaoh, Seti. When the outer wrapping of the mummy was removed, a copper plate, bearing his name etc. and brief description of his burial (in hieroglyph) were found attached to the linen on his breast. It was properly certified as the mummy of Pharaoh Rameses II by competent authorities in the presence of the Khedive of Egypt. It is now lying in the Cairo Museum for the whole world to see and take warning. Glory be to Allah!

Significance of the Quranic Lord's Prayer

The Straight Path to a Healthier, Happier and Higher Life

By DR. ALLAH BAKHSH
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اهدنا الصراط المستقيم - صراط الذين انعمت عليهم - غير المغضوب
عليهم ولا الضالين -

“Our Lord, keep us always guided on the straight course (of rectitude), the path of the blessed ones, neither of the victims of wrath nor yet of the astraying ones.”

The opening chapter of the Holy Quran — *Al-Fatiha*, has been truly regarded as the quintessence of the Holy Book. At another place the Holy Quran has termed this small chapter as “the oft-repeated seven verses of the great Holy Quran.”

سبعاً من المثاني والقران العظيم

No prayer is complete without repeated recitation of these seven verses. In this manner, a Muslim who prays five times a day, recites this chapter about thirty to forty times, while during the month of Fasting he repeats it more than fifty times a day.

Why should a Muslim be required to repeat this prayer so many times ? The ordinances and prayers enjoined by Islam are neither of the nature of mysterious incantations nor mere magical formulae which when uttered by mouth and repeated, bring about some result in an unknown and a secret way. But they are truly pregnant with great mean-

ings, having underlying them deep significances for moulding our daily lives. We only require to reflect and ponder as to how our daily lives are to be influenced through repetition of such ordinances and prayers. According to the instruction itself of the Holy Book :

والذين اذا ذكروا بايت ربهم لم يخروا عليها صماً و عمياناً

“When the faithful are reminded of the verses from their Lord, they do not pass over them deaf and blind.”

Thus the Holy Quran explicitly instructs its followers to realise through reflection the great and true significance underlying its verses and prayers.

The Christians have their Lord's prayer. While the Muslims have their own Lord's prayer in the opening chapter of the Holy Quran in these words :

“Lord, keep us guided on the straight course, the path of the blessed ones, neither victims of wrath nor yet those led astray.”

What then is the true significance underlying the Lord's prayer of a Muslim ?

The Great and Universal Law of Harmony or Balance

It is an announcement of a great Law prevailing throughout the universe, from the great celestial orbits and planets to the tiniest invisible atom, from the lifeless sand-grain to the working of an animal-cell and from the physical system of man to his mental, moral and spiritual fields of activity. All are subject to this great and universal law of harmonious and equitable balancing. In the following few lines, an attempt has been made to unravel and unfold this great divine law as working in the various realms.

The commentators agree that the blessed Quranic course of life represents the path midway between the two contending, crooked and extreme paths. As an illustration they cite the typical example of the Jews and the Christians as peoples upon whom Divine wrath was brought down and those who were led astray, respectively. The Jews had grown hard-hearted and letter-worshippers, hence deserving of Divine wrath, while the Christians had gone to the opposite extreme and had become victims of excessive emotions of love and impracticable form of mercy and forgiveness. Both had forsaken the straight course of rectitude by becoming victims of excessive passions of anger and compassion. But the middle and right path of life has been truly prescribed by the golden teachings of Islam when it lays down :

جزاء سيئة بمثلها فمن عفا واصلح فاجره على الله

“Recompense of evil is a punishment proportionate to it, but when matters are mended through mercy and pardon, then the reward is with Allah.” In other words the object before a true Muslim is reform or mending the mischief and not giving vent to one’s own feelings of hatred or love. The real aim always to be kept in view, is Divine pleasure and the good of humanity and not the promptings of the self which are to be brought under complete control and discipline.”

Rotation of the Great Heavenly Planets

The Holy Quran when speaking of the heavenly globes says :

وكل في فلك يسبحون

“All of them are floating in the space”.

The Science of astronomy has testified to this Quranic truth when it explains the rotation of the heavenly bodies to be the harmonious resultant of two opposite pulls ; a

pull of some greater planet towards itself and an opposite pull of the smaller planet to become free of the former. For instance our earth revolves round the sun...Its revolution results from an equilising of two opposite forces.

The sun exercises a pull on the earth towards it, while the earth exercises a pull in the opposite direction. The result of these two opposing forces is the revolution of the earth round the sun. Similar is the case with other heavenly bodies. To give another instance, the earth exercises a drawing force on the moon, while the latter exercises a force in the opposite direction. The resultant of these two forces is the revolution of the moon round the earth. To this effect the Holy Quran alludes when it says :

والسماء رفعها و وضع الميزان

“He raised the heavens (planets) high and set up the balance (between them)”.

Equilibrium of the Atomic Structure

Let us now consider the structure of the invisible, tiny atom, as the Nuclear Science explains to us. Its structure has been likened to our solar system. The nucleus or the sun, so to say, of the atom, is composed of protons, positively charged electrical particles : while the electrons or negatively charged particles are revolving like the planets, round the atomic nucleus. The two forces, *i.e.* the positive charge of protons and the negative charge of electrons, are equal but opposite in direction. Thus so long as a balance in the two forces is maintained, the individuality or existence of the atom remains intact. But if through spontaneous disintegration or radiation, as in case of the uranium atom, or by artificial bombardment of the atom (Nuclear fission) as in the preparation of the Atomic Bomb, the equilibrium of the two opposing forces is unbalanced, the atom no longer is able to retain its existence, being disin-

tegrated or destroyed with the consequent release from it of immense energy in the shape of heat, light and electric power. Thus we observe that the same great law of harmonious balancing of forces which is working in keeping together intact our great heavenly solar system, is also operating in keeping the structure of the tiny atom in existence.

The Structure of Cells in the Living-beings

Let us now turn to the existence and multiplication of the cells of animals.

The Science of Biology tells us that there is a nucleus in each and every living cell. This nucleus is composed of a definite number of chromosomes, which in turn are constituted by a row of an equal number of opposing but united genes. Each gene is the carrier of a particular quality or trait of the living-being. Each quality of the living-being is represented by a pair of opposite genes which form a united row on the chromosome. To give an illustration, let us take the trait of colour in the pea. In the germ cells of the pea, the quality of colour is represented by a single gene but in the fertilised seed giving rise to the plant, this quality would be represented by a pair of genes, one each from the male and female parent. The two single and separate genes in the male and female germ cells, unite together at the time of fertilisation, to give a single and combined gene on a chromosome. All the cells of the plant produced from the seed contain a pair of united genes upon different chromosomes except its germ cells. Thus we have here again in case of a life-cell, the working of the universal law of harmonious unification of opposing qualities (genes) in its nuclear chromosomes.

Having observed how this universal law of harmony works in the three realms of celestial orbits, atomic struc-

ture and in the cells of living beings, let us now discover how this great law operates in the various fields of human activity, which may conveniently be divided into physical, mental, moral as well as spiritual realms.

The Physical System of Man

(a) Like all other animals, the physical system of man needs for its healthy living both work and rest in proper proportions. In the Holy Quran man has always been repeatedly reminded of the alternation of day and night, indicating thereby alternate work and rest :

وجعلنا نومكم سباتا وجعلنا الليل لباساً وجعلنا النهار معاشا

“We have made sleep for you to rest and (for which purpose) We have made the night a cover, while the day, We have made it for you (to work in order) to seek livelihood.”

The judicious alternation of rest and work or sleep and exercise is a universal law of healthy living for all animals, especially so with man. Without proper rest or sleep, there can be no proper activity or work and vice versa. A proper balance or harmony between the two should be maintained otherwise health is bound to suffer. Persons who indulge in sleep more than their needs, ultimately exhibit symptoms of neuresthenia such as lassitude, aches and pains in the body and nervousness, while those who work or take exercise excessively, fall a prey to many serious diseases such as high blood-pressure, dilating and failing hearts, etc.

(b) Optimum Ranges of Blood-Pressure and Body Temperature

Temperature of the human body and Blood-Pressure should be maintained to their optimum levels, within healthy and prescribed limits. As a matter of fact there is a

definite heat-regulating centre in the brain, with proper arrangement to dissipate the heat of the body if produced excessively, or conversely to conserve the same if heat-loss is greater. Similarly there are certain limits within which the blood-pressure in health should vary. Any trespassing of these limits on either side *i.e.*, abnormally high or excessively low blood-pressure, proves injurious and even fatal in extreme cases.

(c) **Balanced Diet**

In these days, of wide-spread knowledge of Health Laws, it is a well-known fact that our diet should be a well-balanced one, containing all the essential ingredients needed for repair and energy, in proper proportions. However, few people perhaps realise that the total quantity of food taken has also to be kept within limits for a healthy living. More persons know about the harm done by under-feeding but comparatively few realise fully that overfeeding is as or even of greater harm than underfeeding. It is true that barring the case of famines, more people fall sick and die of feeding themselves excessively than of eating less food. Hence the Holy Quran has given us this excellent direction :

كلوا واشربوا ولا تسرفوا انه لا يحب المرففين

“Eat and drink but do not exceed (the proper limits), for He loves not those who commit excesses.”

As more people are likely to err many a time on the side of excessive sleeping and eating, Islam has prescribed the institution of Fasting for a whole month in every year. During this month not only a healthy Muslim has to abstain from eating and drinking from dawn to dusk but for this purpose he has to change his normal times of taking food and sleeping. This is meant to inculcate in him the habit of controlling even his genuine bodily needs and appetites.

Thus this excellent institution on the one hand trains a man to feel the pangs of hunger which his less fortunate fellows are victim to and on the other hand turns his attention to the fact that perhaps he may be indulging too much in his daily dieting and sleeping, but it also teaches and trains him to exercise control over these functions in a proper and judicious manner.

(d) Sugar Level in the Blood to be Maintained within Limits

The body tissues are supplied with food by the blood carrying in it the absorbed and refined form of sugar from food, *i.e.* glucose. But the level of glucose in the blood must be kept within certain limits. Any great excess or lowering below this level are most serious conditions. In order to enable the tissues to utilize the absorbed sugar in the blood, insuline is secreted by the glands in the pancreas. This secretion of insuline is regulated according to the requirements, *i.e.*, according to the amount of sugar in the blood. Persons whose pancreas fails to meet the required demand of insuline for utilization of sugar in the blood, are the victims of the disease called diabetes. They must either curtail their sugar and starch intake in their daily diets or else must get insuline injected. Not only excessive amount of unutilized sugar is harmful but it is equally harmful to get the sugar-level drop below a minimum percentage.

In a similar manner proper proportions of various salts, of water, and of various red and white cells counts in the blood have to be maintained. Any excess or diminution of any ingredient is bound to affect the health of the individual.

Similarly blood possesses the property of clotting. This quality of coagulability should remain within

certain limits. If it becomes excessive, blood has a tendency to clot within the blood-vessels of brain or heart, with the most serious consequences. Conversely, if the clotting power is low, blood continues to flow through even a small wound and the person may bleed to death. Such persons are known as haemophilic.

(e) Role of Hormones

Though very small in amount the secretions of certain ductless glands such as the pituitary, the thyroid, the adrenal and the gonads, play (like vitamins) very profound influence on the growth and health of animals. These secretions are called hormones. They should be present in the blood in proper proportions. If their balance is upset, they cause serious diseases. Another point worth noting is that these products act as intermediary chemical reagents and links, between man's emotions and his bodily reactions. They help us to understand the great connection between the Psyche and Soma, between the mind and the body.

Functioning of the Human Mind

As we have seen above, in the working of the physical system, there is a middle course or limit within which the various ingredients should be present or the various organs should function. Any great deviation from the optimum whether on the side of excess or on that of shortage, results in a disease. This principle of keeping up the true balance is also seen working in the psychological realm of man with all the greater force. There are pairs of opposing qualities in the thinking process of the mind. For obtaining maximum good results and vigour of mind, one must strike the middle path. Any deviation on either side of the balanced measure, causes impediment in achieving the object and results positively in mental disease in extreme

cases. Hence the Holy Quran while speaking of a balance in heavenly system, also ordains man to hold a balance among his contending thoughts and among his relationship with his fellows as stated in the verse :

والسماء رفعها و وضع الميزان ، ان لا تطغوا في الميزان
واقيموا الوزن بالقسط ولا تخسروا الميزان

“The heavens raised high with a balance set up amongst them, therefore you should not also disturb the balance (in your working). Hold fast to the balance of equity and justice and in no case fall short of the measure.”

Balance or Harmony of the Conscious and the Unconscious Minds

Divine laws in the moral and spiritual realms run parallel to divine laws in the physical and intellectual fields. We have already seen the working of harmony and balance as it operates in the physical worlds of dead matter and animal life. Now let us notice its application to the moral and spiritual spheres.

It is now a matter of common knowledge that man has got two minds : a conscious which is the seat of understanding and volition and an unconsciousness which is the centre of feeling and emotions. A perfectly healthy and happy state requires the striking of a balance between the dictates and urges of the two minds. Any excess or domination of the one over the other brings about frustration of the aim and in the extreme cases the upsetting of their balance with consequent mental disease. To illustrate we may take the example of several pairs of the attributes in the intellectual, the moral and social as well as spiritual fields. As a matter of fact, each and every quality on the one side has its proper limitation beyond which it proves harmful. Speaking generally, there

must be a compromise between reason and instinctive urges. Any undue importance to the one or suppression of the other would become injurious, ultimately resulting in disease. The will-power which is a distinguishing attribute between man and animal must be exercised in a reasonable manner *i.e.* within the bounds of natural laws and one's prevailing circumstances. Without strong discretionary and volitional powers, there would be no action and no progress. But acceptance of existing environmental conditions on the one hand and submission to unavoidable circumstances or the excellent quality of surrender to divine will and one's own limitations on the other hand, are equally important issues to be taken into account.

Self-willed and ego-centric persons who either have weak discretionary powers or else weak controlling quality are prone to fall a victim to upsetting of mind such as insanity, hysteria or neuresthenia etc.

Hence a desirable and workable combination of the two in the optimum is the best and straight course. A few of the pairs of opposites are listed in the following lines as an example :

Reason (understanding) — versus — Instinctive Emotional urges.

Volition (will-power) — versus — Surrender and Submission.

Action (Effort) — versus — Relaxation (or rest).

Freedom — versus — Discipline.

Self — versus — Service.

Endeavour — versus — Vision.

The list can be enlarged by adding examples.

Thus it is a well established fact that reason and emotions must act in unison and coordination, in a compromised manner. Even in the various components of the

conscious and the unconscious there should be maintained a balance or harmony.

Emotions of Love, Fear and Anger

Any excesses on the one or the other side are harmful. Perhaps many people think that all emotions such as fear, anger, love are positively injurious and play havoc in our lives. But these emotions become injurious only when they go beyond their healthy limits. Otherwise they play equally a useful role when kept within bounds and under control. If without reason and control of our emotions, we may become brutes or insane, then without any healthy emotion or good feelings, our lives would become mere mechanical machines, devoid of all enjoyment and joys. For instance, a person who is absolutely devoid of fear would become reckless or a libertine and devoid of the excellent quality of caution. He would in such a case break the laws of health and hygiene, of social peacefulness and consider this point of the effect of balance or excess of emotions from the scientific angle. Recent medical researches have revealed an intimate connection in the emotional outburst, the amount of secretion by the internal glands such as the pituitary, the thyroid, the adrenal and the gonads on the one and the bodily changes on the other side. A fit of anger or fear generates within us the outpouring of an excessive amount of adrenaline which in turn has the effect of raising our blood-pressure by constricting our blood vessels.

This results in greater action by the heart and other organs. Similarly excessive emotion results in increased secretion of insuline, thus putting strain on the pancreas. Frequent or perpetual fear or anger then results in putting greater strain on or early exhaustion of our vital organs. Disuse of an organ is as harmful as its excessive use. For

proper functioning for a maximum period, a midway course or optimum functioning and alternate resting is essential. A true balanced combination of the two attributes of boldness and of caution is the equipoised quality described so often in the Holy Quran by the term *Taqwa Allah* generally translated as fear of Allah but actually signifying being cautious and careful about observance of one's being fearful of breaking duties imposed upon man by Allah or of breaking divine laws. Any excess in carefulness beyond the healthy limit may lead to a diseased state of anxiety which in itself is against the Quranic injunction of a true believer :

لا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون

"They have no fear, nor are they grief-ridden." But the opposite state of becoming negligent and reckless a person is equally undesirable and harmful. Hence the balanced state of mind required of a true believer is described as one between hope and fear. In the words of the Holy Quran, it is

ويدعون ربهم خوفاً وطمئناً

"they call upon their Lord, fearing and hoping."

We require for progress some ambition and urge to advance or a kind of dissatisfaction with our present conditions ; otherwise why should we endeavour and exert ? But for a proper exertion, we also need a sort of inner satisfaction and solace. Hence here also there is a middle path of urge and drive, of enthusiasm and fervour, in order to change the present as well as to maintain our inner happiness and satisfaction. Let us now consider the emotion of love. Contrary to general notion, love must be exercised and exhibited within certain healthy bounds and not recklessly. Not a few are the victims of mental imbalance from among those who indulge in it without propriety and

control. Then there are opposing sets of objects each one of them requiring our attachment of love. And therefore excessive love for one would lead to the neglect of its opposite. To this subject we would revert in detail while recounting the opposing pairs of qualities in the spiritual and moral realms. Here it is sufficient to quote a couplet from a poet :

عمرها در کعبه و بت خانه می نالد حیات
تا ز بزم عشق یک دانائے راز آید برون

“Life is sought for a very long time, till a wise arises in the society of lovers.”

The arising of a wise man amongst the society of lovers denotes a judicious and perfect balance of reason and emotion, apparently a contradiction and a paradox but truly a complementary compromise of both. Life without the control of reason and understanding is a reckless, aimless wandering, while life without true and controlled warmth of sentiments is a cold, unanimated existence. In the Quranic terminology it has been named in the chapter *Al-Rahman*, I have quoted before, as the confluence of the two seas. Here is the verse :

مرج البحرین يلتقین بینهما برزخ لا یبغین

“He has made the two rivers to flow. Between them is a partition which is not to be trespassed.”

Moses while travelling in search of knowledge also desired to reach the confluence of the two rivers of seas in the words:

انی لا ابرح حتی ابلغ مجمع البحرین اوامضی حقبا

“I would not stop travelling till I reach the confluence of the two seas or else I would go on.” Whatever its significance, whether it denotes worldly knowledge (reason) and Divine knowledge (revelation) or it indicates

the meeting place of human and divine love or again both of them.

Evolution or the function of the Divine attribute *Rab* then depends upon a true combination of the two opposite qualities or walking on a straight path, midway between the two crooked and extreme paths of life. This deep secret of healthy, happy and higher living has been expressed in the verse of the Holy Quran in several ways. As in this Quranic Lord's Prayer, it is a path of straightness, of moderation, of golden means between the two extremes. The same idea may be expressed by the statement that like a road-walker, man has to tread the course of this life by holding his balance in quite an equipoised and balanced manner, inclining neither to one side of deviation nor astraying to the other one. This has been dealt with clearly in the chapter *Al-Rahman*, one of its verses having been quoted already:

والسما ء رفعها و وضع الميزان ان لا تطغو في الميزان و اقيموا الوزن
بالقسط ولا تخسروا الميزان

"The heavens (planets) are raised high and a balance has been set up (amongst them). So also you should not deviate in the holding of balance. But maintain the balance with equity and do not fall short of the measure."

In this chapter, *Al-Rahman*, most things are mentioned in pairs such as pairs of paradises, pairs of fruits of every kind, pairs of rivers and springs and of the Lord of two Easts and two Wests.

The Spiritual Realm

The materialistic civilisation denies and belies the evolution of divine qualities in man, believing only in the inferior aims and attributes of man and enforcing these aims through force and coercion or allurements and

deception, whereas the spiritual civilisation believes in the higher qualities and higher sense of appeal for ultimate acceptance.

The material outlook and view itself is not only inferior and lower but the very method of its prevalence is also animal-like. The appeal is to animal instinct in man through animal passions. Thus the basis and root of material civilisation is animal instincts whereas that of the spiritual or true religious movements is divine attributes and qualities. Love of the worldly acquisitions and enjoyments in the one case, to the ignoring of higher traits and love of divine attributes and service to mankind in the other; selfish attitude and earthly attainments versus service through development of sacrificial traits. The chord of divine love generated the chord of human love in the Holy Prophet Muhammad's heart. The two loves united together resulting in a straight path of perfect revelation in the form of Holy Quran. Though the Holy Prophet himself attained to meeting with the Lord but after having met Him, he wanted humanity also to meet Him. Thus his personality became the chord or straight path of rectitude by treading which man could unite with the Lord. Perfection and Finality of Prophethood therefore implies a twofold significance: Muhammad having discovered the perfect revelation of Holy Quran, the straight path by walking upon which man could have communion with Him. The two bows or chords of love of Divine Being and love of the Holy Prophet united together perfectly to found and create another perfect path of straightness (the Quran), the treading upon which leads again to the union of the two chords or bows of love of Divine Being and of mankind. It is a path which is truly a straight and correct course, inclined to neither extreme, neither to worldliness nor to asceticism, stunting and stifling neither the intellec-

tual nor the moral and spiritual qualities in man. It evolves and develops both the divine and human traits by preferring the former but not ignoring the latter, thus fulfilling the full aim underlying the divine attribute of *Rab* or Evolver of higher qualities.

This subject has been dealt with in the Holy Quran in the chapter entitled as *Al-Najm*. It is stated here that the Holy Prophet kept straight in view his cherished object of attaining to perfection. For this purpose he neither lost sight of the real aim nor was wanting in keeping balanced his equilibrium :

ما زاغ البصر وما طغى

“He neither lost sight nor did he deviate (towards either side) but kept straight his balance.”

Hence it is said that the resultant of such a unique balance was :

فاستوى و هو بالافق الاعلى ثم دنى فتدلى فكان قاب قوسين او ادنى

“He maintained his straight position while he was on the highest horizon. Then he drew near (to God), nearer still and thus became the distance of two chords, even nearer.”

Thus the equipoise of imbuing oneself in the divine love on the one side and the love of humanity on the other, the Holy Prophet attained to the highest possible position of becoming a chord between the two extremities of a bow. May the choicest peace and blessings of God be upon him !

Glowing Tributes to the Commentary of Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali

It is a result of labour of love, extending over seven years. It is a superb and handsome volume of 1460 Pages on the finest India paper.

The Introduction

Comprises a unique and masterly discussion of the credibility and authenticity of the Holy Quran, and a description of the special features of Islam.

The Arabic Text

A beautiful photographic reproduction of the transcription, especially made by competent calligraphists.

The Translation and Commentary

Based on the authentic sayings of the Holy Prophet, and the objections of Western critics, and correcting the mistakes committed by them in their translations of the Muslim Gospel.

Each chapter is preceded by an abstract of its subject matter, with the significance of its title and a discussion of the relation that it bears to the one before it, each section is preceded by an outline of its topic and every difficult verse has its context clearly established.

Opinions

“A handsome volume, printed on India paper, in flexible morocco binding. The printers have done their work excellently. The English and the proof reading are remarkable. There is a preface of over a hundred pages, ample footnotes, commentaries and cross-references, and

index. The chapters are supplied with abstracts of the sections, showing their connections with each other, and also explaining the interconnection of the chapters themselves, which are further broken up into verses being numbered. Indeed general appearance and get-up of *The Holy Quran* might have come straight from the Oxford presses of *The Holy Bible*. It is certainly a work of which any scholar might legitimately be proud. The skilful presentation of the results of his researches shows that he has been an apt scholar in the school of Western Methodology"—*The Quest*.

"We have here in an attractive form, and bound in flexible leather cover, the first English translation and commentary of the Quran by a Moslem theologian. The Arabic text, written by expert calligraphists in India, accompanies each verse. The commentary is based on the authentic traditions of the Prophet as interpreted by the Moslem savants. A preface of ninety pages discusses the special features of Islam as disclosed in the Quran, and the authenticity of the book."—*The Times* (London).

"I have always found a fascination in looking through occasional chapters of the Quran and have felt that there was something lacking in editions prepared by Christian editors. The lack is removed by the issue of a very fine edition of the Holy Quran by a distinguished Muslim, Maulvi Muhammad Ali of Lahore (India), who has devoted seven years to its preparation. The Commentary is remarkably full and interesting. The preface is both a summary of Islamic teachings and a history of 'the Book'. The thinnest paper, gilt edges, beautiful type and a limp green morocco binding make the volume an unusually sumptuous one."—*Westminster Gazette* (London).

"I have received the copy of the Holy Quran, and

hasten to congratulate you on the appearance of your Scripture in such a truly beautiful and chaste form. It is pure delight to handle such a book, but when one turns to its treasures of light and learning one is filled with thankfulness and gratitude for all the labour—it has been, I am sure, a work of love—which has gone to make the production possible. I rejoice to see the Holy Quran in my own language and explained by a deeply learned and pious Muslim, and I believe that the work will be found to mark a new epoch in the religious life of the world.”—S. H. LEEDER.

“Permit me once again to thank you for the Koran you sent me. I have spent many hours over it. With its careful notes, it is a monumental work, of which the translator and arranger may well be proud.”—PROFESSOR W. STEPHEN.

“Maulvi Muhammad Ali, M.A., has laid us all under a deep debt of gratitude by publishing his translation in English in a sumptuous volume of 1,400 pages, of closely printed, copiously annotated, and carefully indexed pages. It is an intellectual treat to follow the translator’s arguments in his remarkably clear and lucid notes. The clean get-up of the volume is inviting to an English-knowing non-Muslim also. This is high praise indeed for the method adopted. It is Western and I am inclined to say scientific, inasmuch as it has by breaking up the apparently disconnected chapters and verses of the Quran, into neat little sections, compact in themselves but connected with others as explained in the abstract that precedes and the footnotes that follow them, has introduced a novel feature in the treatment of this aspect of the Quran”—*The Tribune*.

“The arrangement of the book is highly praiseworthy

and the method adopted scholarly. The book is a valuable addition to the religious literature of Islam.”—*The East and West*.

“The publication is full of both external and internal beauties. Its green binding, which has the twofold qualities of flexibility and durability, with its golden floral designs, is simply fascinating. We have seen the translation critically, and have no hesitation in remarking that the simplicity of its language and the correctness of the version are all enviable. The writer has kept his annotations altogether free from sectarian influences with wonderful impartiality, and has gathered together the wealth of authentic Muslim theology. He has also displayed great skill and wisdom in using the new weapons of defence in refuting the objections of the opponents of Islam.”—*The Wakeel*.

The Excellence of the Holy Quran

The Testimony of Western Writers

Supreme Merit

“..... If a book come from the heart it will contrive to reach all other hearts; all art and autocraft are of small amount to that. One would say the primary character of the Quran is that of its *genuineness* of its being a *bona fide* book. Sincerity, in all senses, seems to me the merit of the Quran; it is, after all, the first and last merit in a book; it gives rise to merits of all kinds—nay, at bottom, it alone can give rise to merit of any kind”—Carlyle.

“The Quran contains pure, elevated, and benignant precepts.”—Washington Irving’s *Life of Muhammad*.

“The creed of Muhammad is free from the suspicion of ambiguity, and the Holy Quran is a glorious testimony to the Unity of God.”—Gibbon.

“We may well say the Quran is one of the grandest books ever written.

.....Such a work is a problem of the highest interest to every thoughtful observer of the destinies of mankind.” — Dr. Steingass.

Ethics of Quran

“That part of Islam...which most distinctly reveals the mind of its author, is also its most complete and its most shining part. We mean the Ethics of the Quran... Injustice, falsehood, pride, revengefulness, calumny, mockery, avarice, prodigality, debauchery, mistrust, and suspicion are inveigled against as ungodly and wicked : while benevolence, liberality, modesty, forbearance, patience, and

endurance, frugality, sincerity, straightforwardness, decency, love of peace and truth, and above all, trusting in one God and submitting to His will, are considered as the pillars of true piety and the principal signs of a true believer." — Chambers's *Encyclopaedia*.

A Standing Miracle

"By a fortune absolutely unique in history, Muhammad is the threefold founder of a nation, of an empire, and of a religion. Illiterate himself, scarcely able to read or write, he was yet the author of a book which is a poem, a code of laws, a book of common prayer, and a bible in one, and is revered to this day by a sixth of the whole human race as a miracle of purity of style, of wisdom, and of truth. It is the one miracle claimed by Muhammad — 'his standing miracle,' he called it — miracle, he called it — and a miracle, indeed, it is." — Bosworth Smith's *Life of Muhammad*.

"The morals of the Quran have not been less unjustly attacked than its dogmas. It condemns debauchery and excesses of every kind, usury, avarice, and pride, slander and calumny, covetousness, hypocrisy, the thirsting after worldly goods; it ordains, on the contrary, almsgiving, filial piety, gratitude towards God, fidelity to engagements, justice, especially towards orphans and without respect of persons, chastity and decency. Even in words, the ransoming of captives, patience, submission, benevolence, forgiveness of injuries, the returning of good for evil, and the walking in the path of virtue, not with the view of obtaining the approbation of the world but for being acceptable to God". — J. Davenport.

"The Quran is universally allowed to be written with the utmost elegance and purity of language ... It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue" — George Sale.

“That the best of Arab witnesses has never succeeded in producing anything equal to the merits in Quran To compose such revelations at will was beyond the power of the most expert literary artist.”—*Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Most Potent Influence

“The contents of the different parts of the Quran are extremely varied. Many passages consist of theological and moral reflections. We are reminded of the greatness, the goodness, the righteousness of God, as manifested in Nature, in History, and in Revelations through the prophets; especially through Muhammad, God is manifested as the One, the All-powerful. Idolatry and all deifications of created beings, such as the worship of Christ as the son of God are unsparingly condemned — *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. xv. p. 829.

“However often we turn to it (Quran)... it soon attracts, astounds and in the end enforces our reverence... Thus this Book will go on exercising through all ages [a most potent influence.”—Goethe.

Quranic Principles are Eternal

“Arabia was idolatrous when, six centuries after Jesus, Muhammad introduced the worship of the God of Abraham, of Ishmael, of Moses, and of Jesus. The Aryans and some other sects had disturbed the tranquillity of the East by agitating the question of the nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Muhammad declared that there was none but One God Who had no father, no son, and that Trinity imported the idea of idolatry...” He wrote on the fly-leaf of the Quran: “There is no god but God.”

“I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of

the Quran which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness."

(*Bonaparte et l' Islam* by Cherfils, Paris, France, 1914, pp. 105-125.)

Quranic Culture, a New Start for Science and Philosophy

"During the Middle Ages the history of Mohammadanism is the history of civilization itself. Thanks to the Muslims, Greek science and philosophy were rescued from neglect and came to awaken the West and gave rise to the great intellectual movement which terminated in the renovation of Bacon... In the seventh century of our era, the Old World was in agony. The Arabian conquests infused into it a new blood... Muhammad gave them (Arabs) the Quran which was the starting-point of a new culture."

(Stanislas Guyard, *Encyclopedie des Sciences Religieuses*, Paris 1880, Tome IX, p. 501).

Quranic Spirit Created Civilization of Science and Learning

"To seek knowledge is a duty for every Muslim man and woman. Seek knowledge even though it be in China." "The savants are the heirs of the Prophets." These profound words of the great reformer are an indisputable contradiction to those who seek and exert themselves in putting the responsibility of the intellectual degradation of Muslims upon the spirit of the Quran. Let them read and meditate upon this Great Book and they will find in it, at every passage, a constant attack upon idolatry and materialism; they will read that the Prophet incessantly called the attention and the meditation of his people to the splendid marvels, to the mysterious phenomenon of creation. The incredulous, sceptical and unbelieving may convince themselves that the importance of this Book and its doctrine was not to throw back, eventually, the intel-

lectual and moral faculties of a whole people. On the contrary, those who have followed its counsels have been, as we have described in the course of this study, the creators of a civilization which is astounding unto this day."

(Dr. A. Bertherand, *Contribution des Arabes au Progres des Sciences Medicales*, Paris 1883, p. 6)

Quranic Teachings—Which Win Men's Conscience

"Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term, considered etymologically and historically. The definition of rationalism as a system that bases religious beliefs on Principles furnished by reason, applies to it exactly. It is true that Muhammad, who was an enthusiast and possessed, too, the ardour of faith and the fire of conviction, that precious quality he transmitted to so many of his disciples, brought forward his reform as a revelation; but this kind of revelation is only one form of exposition and his religion has all the marks of a collection of doctrines founded on the data of reason. To believers, the Muhammadan Creed is summed up in belief in the Unity of God and in the Mission of His Prophet, and to ourselves who coldly analyse his doctrines, belief in God and a future life. Minimum of religious belief, statements that to the religious man rest on the firm basis of reason, sum up the whole doctrinal teaching of the Quran. The simplicity and the clearness of this teaching are certainly among the most obvious forces at work in the religious and the missionary activity of Islam. It cannot be denied that many doctrines and systems of theology and also many superstitions, from the worship of saints to the use of rosaries and amulets have become grafted on to the main trunk of the Muslim creed. But in spite of the rich development, in every sense of the term, of the teachings of the Prophet, the Quran 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. This fidelity to the fundamental dogma of the religion, the elemental simplicity of the formula in which it is enunciated, the proof that it gains from the fervid conviction of the missionaries who propagate it, are so many causes to explain the success of Muhammadan missionary effort. 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 marvellous power of winning its way into the consciences of men." (Edward Moutet, *La propagande chretienne at ses adversaries musulmans*, Paris 1890, pp. 17-18, as quoted by T.W. Arnold in his *The Preaching of Islam*, London 1913, pp. 413-414.)

Quranic Virtues : Kindliness, Consideration, Monotheism and Universality

"The insistence upon kindness and consideration in the daily life is one of the main virtues of Islam but it is not the only one. Equally important is the uncompromising monotheism, void of any Jewish exclusiveness, which is sustained by the Koran. Islam from the outset was fairly proof against the theological elaborations that have perplexed and divided Christianity and smothered the spirit of Jesus. And its third source of strength has been in the meticulous description of methods of prayer and worship and its clear statement of the limited and conventional significance of the importance ascribed to Mecca. All sacrifice was barred to the faithful; no loophole was left for the sacrificial priest of the old dispensation to come back into the new faith. It was not simply a new faith, a purely prophetic religion, as the religion of Jesus was in the time of Jesus, or the religion of Gautama in lifetime of Gautama:

but it was so stated as to remain so. Islam to this day has learned doctors, teachers and preachers ; but it has no priests.”

(*The Outline of History* by H. G. Wells, London 1920, p. 325).

Quran, a book of Poetic Inspiration

“The mission of Muhammad between 622 and 632 arising among the already vigorous and expansive Arabs, who only had to face the weakened and divided Roman and Persian Empires, had a greater promise of success. It still remains an almost incredible achievement for one man. Muhammad swept away the old tribal gods and replaced them by One God, Allah. Islam made a brotherly appeal to all men, it had a simple but exacting personal ritual, a theology reduced to bare monotheism, and it gave a sure hope of a realistic paradise for the believer. All this was conveyed in a poetic Book, the Koran, which was not only an inspiration but a manual of rituals, morals and law. It commanded then and still commands the devotion of the poor and rich alike.”

(J.D. Bernal, *Science in History*, London 1954, p. 193).

God of Quran : Universal and Just God

This beautiful poem, of which the last strophe is a monologue of Muhammad, is one of the fragments of the unfinished play of the twenty-four years old poet, in whose heart certain famous verses of the Quran seem to have resounded. For the first time in Western literature it was Goethe who represented Muhammad without reserve as a Prophet — a True Prophet of God.”

“(‘God’s is the Orient. God’s is the Occident, God is of the North and the South, all rest in the Peace of His hands) which is a free rendering in accomplished verse of

Surahs 11, 114, of the Quran. Then another Quranic verse : 'He, the only Just One, for every man desires the right. Of His hundred names, be this one highly praised. Amen.' (Dr. Ruth S. Gaellerniz, "Some Western Appreciations of Islam in the 18th and 19th Centuries." *The Islamic Review*, Woking, England, for March 1949.)

Influence on Human History

"Discussing the influence of the Quran on human history, Professor Arberry observes that "its influence on the course of history has obviously been immense, and will as obviously continue to be extremely great. The Quran was the prime inspiration of a religious movement, which gave rise to a civilisation of wide extent, vast power and profound vitality." — Prof. Arberry.

Quran the best Book in the World

"So there has been no opportunity for any forgery or pious fraud in the Koran, which distinguishes it from almost all other important works of ancient times...It is exceedingly strange that this illiterate person should have composed the best book in the language."

(Basanta Comar Bose: *Mohammadanism*, Calcutta 1931, p. 4)

Quran Abounds in Moral Precepts Excellent Maxims, Motives and Rules of Life

"It is more read than any other book in the world. The Christian Bible may be a world best-seller, but nearly 250 million followers of the Prophet Muhammad read or recite long sections of Alcoran five times a day, every day of their lives, from the time they can talk." (Charles Francis Potter, *The Faiths Men Live by*, Kingswood, Surrey, 1955, 81).

"The Koran abounds in excellent moral suggestions.

and precepts ; its composition is so fragmentary that we cannot turn to a single page without finding maxims of which all men must approve. This fragmentary construction yields texts, and mottos, and rules complete in themselves, suitable for common men in any of the incidents of life.”

(John William Draper : *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, London, 1875, Vol. I, pp. 332-333).

Quran : Unequaled in Literary Elegance

“The Koran is the Mohammedan Bible, and is more revered than any other sacred book, more than the Jewish Old Testament or the Christian New Testament. (Ibid., p.111.)

“From the literary point of view, the Koran is regarded as a specimen of the purest Arabic, written in half poetry and half prose. It has been said that in some cases grammarians have adopted their rules to agree with certain phrases and expressions used in it, and that, though several attempts have been made to produce a work equal to it as far as elegant writing is concerned, none has yet succeeded.

“It will thus be seen, from the above, that a final and complete text of the Koran was prepared within twenty years after the death (A.D. 632) of Muhammad, and that has remained the same, without any change, alteration by enthusiasts, translators, or interpolators, up to the present time. It is to be regretted that the same cannot be said of all the books of the Old and New Testaments.”

(F. F. Arbuthnot : *The Construction of Bible and the Koran*, London 1885, p. 5)

Quran : Marvellous Scientific Impetus

“We must not be surprised to find the Quran the fountain-head of the sciences. Every subject connected with

heaven or earth, human life, commerce and various trades is occasionally touched upon, and this gave rise to the production of numerous monographs forming commentaries on parts of the Holy Book. In this way the Quran was responsible for great discussions, and it was indirectly due to the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Muslim world...This again not only affected the Arabs but also induced Jewish philosophers to treat metaphysical and religious questions after Arab methods. Finally, the way in which Christian scholasticism was fertilised by Arabian theosophy need to be further discussed.

“Spiritual activity once aroused within Islamic bounds was not confined to theological speculations alone. Acquaintance with the philosophical, mathematical, astronomical and medical writings of the Greeks led to the pursuance of these studies. In the descriptive revelations Muhammad repeatedly calls attention to the movement of the heavenly bodies, as parts of the miracles of Allah forced into the service of man and therefore not to be worshipped. How successfully Moslem people of all races pursued the study of astronomy is shown by the fact that for centuries they were its principal supporters. Even now many Arabic names of stars and technical terms are in use. Medieval astronomers in Europe were pupils of the Arabs...

“In the same manner the Quran gave an impetus to medical studies and recommended the contemplation and study of the Nature in general.”

(Hartwig Hirschfeld, Ph.D., M.R.A.S., *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Quran*, London, 1902, p. 9).

Quran Created Wonderful Effect on New Thought

“The Koran admittedly occupies an important position among the great religious books of the world. Though the

youngest of the epoch-making to this class of literature, it yields to hardly any in the wonderful effect which it has produced on large masses of men. It has created an all-out new phase of human thought and a fresh type of character.”

(Rev. G. Margoliouth: *Introduction to the Koran*, by Rev. J. M. Rodwell, London, 1918).

Quran on Unity and Universality

“It must be acknowledged, too, that the Koran deserves the highest praise for its conceptions of the Divine nature, in reference to the attributes of Power, Knowledge, and universal Providence and Unity—that its belief and trust in the One God of Heaven and Earth is deep and fervent—and that it embodies much of a noble and deep moral earnestness and sententious oracular wisdom, and has proved that there are elements in it on which mighty nations and conquering empires can be built up.”

(Rev. J. M. Rodwell, M.A., *The Koran*, London, 1918, p. 15).

Quran : a Supreme Miracle of Literary Style and Diction

“Much of the Koran is in a sort of rhymed cadence that resembles poetry but may still be termed prose. From the point of view of literature, it is considered supreme in Arabic and has no doubt influenced the language to an even greater extent than the King James’s version of the Bible has influenced English. Being thus the absolute model for literary style and diction, as well as the authoritative pronouncement of Allah, it is considered the one great miracle of Muhammad; in fact he repeatedly challenged his adversaries to produce anything like it.”

(J. Christy Wilson : *Islam*, New York, 1950, p. 30).

Quran : an Unrivalled Superhuman Composition

“Well, then, if the Koran were his own composition

other men could rival it. Let them produce ten verses like it. If they could not (and it is obvious that they could not), then let them accept the Koran as an outstanding evidential miracle.”

(H. A. R. Gibb: *Muhammadanism*, London 1953, p.33).

An Ever Present Miracle of Style, Teachings, Information and Prophecies

“It (Quran) is a literal revelation of God, dictated to Muhammad by Gabriel, perfect in letter. It is an ever-present miracle witnessing to itself and to Muhammad, the Prophet of God. Its miraculous quality resides partly in its style, so perfect and lofty that neither men nor jinn could produce a single chapter to compare with its briefest chapter, and partly in its content of teachings, prophecies about the future, and amazingly accurate information such as never have gathered of his own accord.”

(Harry Gaylord Dorman: *Towards Understanding Islam*, New York).

Quran : an Incomparable Excellent Composition

“Whenever Muhammad was asked a miracle as a proof of the authenticity of his mission, he quoted the composition of the Quran and its incomparable excellence as proof of its Divine origin. And, in fact, even for those who are non-Muslims nothing is more marvellous than its language which with such a prehensible plenitude and a grasping sonority with its simple audition ravished with admiration those primitive people so fond of eloquence. The ampleness of its syllables with a grandiose cadence and with a remarkable rhythm have been of much moment in the conversion of the most hostile and the most sceptic.”

(Paul Casanova : *L' Enseignement de l 'Arabe au College de France, in Lecon d'ouverture* for 26th April 1909).

Quran : the Greatest Conquering Force

“On the whole we find in it a collection of wisdom which can be adopted by the most intelligent of men, the greatest of philosophers and the most skilful of politicians ... But there is another proof of the Divinity of the Quran ; it is the fact that it has been preserved intact through the ages since the time of its Revelation till the present day . . . Read and reread by the Muslim world, this book does not rouse in the faithful any weariness ; it rather, through repetition, is more loved every day. It gives rise to a profound feeling of awe and respect in the one who reads it or listens to it . . . It was, therefore, neither by means of violence of arms, nor through the pressure of obtrusive missionaries, that caused the great and rapid diffusion of Islam, but, above all, through the fact that this Book, presented by the Muslims to the vanquished with the liberty to accept it or reject it, was the Book of God, the Word of Truth, the greatest Miracle Muhammad could show to those in doubt and to those who remained stubborn.” (Laura Vaccia Vaglieri, *Appologic de l’Islamisme*, pp. 57-59).

The Quran is Supreme in Ethics, Religion and Science

“The Coran is the groundwork of Islam. Its authority is absolute in all matters of religion, ethics and science, equally as in matters of religion the Coran is supreme and much of the tendency is so plain as to admit no question, even among contending sectaries.”

(Sir William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, London 1903, Ch. The Coran, p. vii).

Quran : Its Beauty, Grandeur and Sublimity are Untranslatable

“All those who are acquainted with the Quran in Arabic agree in praising the beauty of this religious book ; its

grandeur of form is so sublime that no translation into any European language can allow us to appreciate it.”

(Edward Moutet, *Traduction Francaise du Coran*, Paris 1929, Introduction, p. 53).

Quranic Elegance, Purity and Harmony standard of beautiful Expression

“The Koran is universally allowed to be written with the utmost elegance and purity of language, in the dialect of Koreish, the most noble and polite of all Arabians, but with some mixture, though very rarely of other dialects. It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue

“The style of the Koran is generally beautiful and fluent, especially where it imitates the prophetic manner and scripture phrases....

“It is probable the harmony of expression which the Arabians find in the Koran might contribute not a little to make them relish the doctrine therein taught.”

(George Sale, *The Koran : The Preliminary Discourse*, London and New York, 1891, pp. 47-48.)

Quranic Repetition Adds to Clarity and Conviction

“When appreciation rests upon these foundations, the charges of wearisome repetition and jumbled confusion become meaningless. Truth cannot be dimmed by being frequently stated, but only gains in clarity and convincingness at every repetition ; and where all is true, inconsequence and incomprehensibility are not felt to arise.”

(Ibid., pp. 25-27)

Quran : the most often-read and Memorised and the most Influential Book in the World

“The Koran is probably the most often-read book in the world, surely the most often memorised, and possibly

the most influential in the daily life of the people who believe in it. Not quite so long as the New Testament, written in an exalted style. It is neither poetry nor ordinary prose, yet it possesses the ability to arouse its hearers to ecstasies of faith.

“The Koran was revealed to Muhammad between the years 610 and 632 in the cities of Mecca and Medina. Devoted scribes wrote it down on ‘scraps of paper, bark and the white shoulder blades of animals’. The early revelations were dazzling assurances that there was only One God, Merciful and Compassionate: ‘He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares His glory; and He is the Mighty, and Wise.’

“The Koran is remarkably down-to-earth in its discussion of the good life.

“It is this combination of dedication to One God, plus practical instruction, that makes the Koran unique. Each Islamic nation contains many citizens who are convinced that their land will be governed well only if its laws conform to the Koran.”

(James A. Michener, “Islam — the Misunderstood Religion” in *The Reader’s Digest*, American edition for May 1955).

Quran Creates a Universal Spiritual Nationality

“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern 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 and 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 of every race. He has left us as the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality and 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 his dogma was his miracle ; or rather it was not the miracle of a man but that of reason. The idea of the Unity of God, proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of 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 at Mecca, his acceptance of the role of public scorn and almost of being a victim of his fellow countrymen : all these and, finally, his flight, his incessant preaching, his wars against odds, his faith in his success and his superhuman security in misfortune, his forbearance in victory, his ambition, which entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire ; his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death ; all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. 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 the words.

“Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and 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 ?”

Lamartine, *Historic de la Turiquie*, Paris 1854, Vol. II, pp. 576-577).

Quran should be studied by Western World

“Thus through all the vicissitudes of thirteen hundred years the Koran has remained the Sacred Book of all the Turks and Persians and of nearly a quarter of the population of India. Surely such a book as this deserves to be widely read in the West, more especially in these days when space and time have been almost annihilated by modern inventions and when public interest embraces the whole world.”

(E. Denison Ross, *Introduction to The Koran* by George Sale, London, pp. 5-7).

Immutability of the Holy Quran

By NADIM ALJISR .

The ideas contained in the Holy Quran can be shown to be right and wholesome for all times and places, and with the proper approach and intention the Holy Quran yields lively principles applicable to the needs of all times, including the present. There is no such thing as "old" Islamic principles as contrasted with "modern" Islamic principles. They all are of the same kind and have the same vitality and validity ; and are all rationally verifiable.

The Holy Quran and Reason

The relationship between the principles enunciated in the Holy Quran and the dictates of reason is one of the most characteristic features of the religion of Islam. The Holy Quran ordains that reason is the final arbiter on the meaning and difference between right and wrong, and also gives reason for the task of determining the truth of things, including the question of the existence of God. There are in the Holy Quran more than three hundred verses in which reference is made to reason and the power and functions of reason, and where ignorance and lack of reason are deprecated. Perhaps the most meaningful of these verses is this :

“Surely the vilest of beasts, in God’s sight, are the deaf, the dumb, who understand not. And if God had known any good in them He would have made them hear. And if He makes them hear, they would turn away while they are averse” (8 : 22-23).

All belief not based on reason is not considered in Islam to be meritorious or wholesome. Faith not based on

rational conviction is acceptable only to those incapable of exercising the reasoning required for this purpose.

The Holy Quran also rejects the antiquated or reactionary traditionalism if this conflicts with the dictates of reason. Fallacies, fables of unproven traditions are all condemned by Islam. In Islam, also, there are no profound or unfathomable secrets incapable of rational analysis or proof. All the provisions of the Holy Quran are capable of being resolved in such a manner as to conform to the dictates of reason and to be capable of acceptance by the application of ordinary methods of analysis and reasoning.

It can be stated categorically and without reservation that Islam is a religion in which reason is recognized as the supreme arbiter on all things, and in which the various aspects of the faith are capable of rational demonstration and proof. This is one of the most fundamental characteristics of the religion of Islam, and any misunderstanding of this quality of Islam implies ignorance of the Holy Quran and the other sources of Islamic teachings.

The Holy Quran and Freedom

Freedom of the individual is one of the most important aspects of the teachings of Islam. The Holy Quran considers freedom and liberty in the various spheres of human activity to be a natural phenomenon. No restriction is recognized against such freedom except in those cases where wrong or evil is committed and harm inflicted upon other individuals or the community [at large. Freedom in Islam comprises freedom of thought, of worship, of speech, of work, of ownership, of property, and of methods of use of property. The main criterion in the practice of freedom is that it would not cause harm to others. Only in that case does the Holy Quran restrict the freedom of the individual.

The Holy Quran and Scientific Knowledge

The Holy Quran recognizes the validity of all scientific and ascertainable facts, and does not in any way seek to minimise their effect or relationship to the articles of faith. Indeed, the Holy Quran considers that scientific facts of all kinds are valuable proof of the existence of God and His qualities as mentioned in the Holy Quran, and their acceptance reaffirms the importance of reason, which is the main source of belief.

The accusation has often been levelled against Islam that the only scientific knowledge which the Muslim is urged to seek is in essence religious knowledge and philosophy, and not scientific knowledge concerning mathematics, physics or chemistry, for example. It is true, however, that Islam urged the acquisition of knowledge about religious matters, for religion is the most important code of conduct and has an important role to play in the regulation of the affairs of society and the promotion of harmony and human happiness. But medicine and other ordinary sciences are recommended to the Muslims to acquire all such knowledge as is beneficial to man in his everyday life. The following verse from the Holy Quran illustrates this point :

“Seest thou not that God sends down water from the clouds, then We bring forth therewith fruits of various hues ? And in the mountains streaks, white and red, of various hues and others intensely black. And of men and beasts and cattle there are various colours likewise. Those of His servants only who possess the knowledge fear God” (35 : 27-28).

The “knowledge,” here referred to, is not merely knowledge of religious matters, but knowledge of physical and other phenomena, scientific knowledge in the ordinary sense of the word.

The Holy Quran is not a Scientific Encyclopaedia

It must be pointed out, however, that Holy Quran is not a comprehensive encyclopaedia of scientific knowledge, but the Holy Quran is not intended to be taken as the limit of scientific knowledge of any matter. There has been misunderstanding of the verse in the Holy Quran which states :

“And there is no animal in the earth, not a bird that flies on its two wings, but they are communities like yourselves. We have not neglected anything in the Book. Then to their Lord they will be gathered” (6 : 38).

This does not mean that any knowledge gleaned from any source other than the Holy Quran is improper. The Holy Quran is not to be taken as the beginning and end of scientific knowledge on all subjects on this basis. The essential principles of scientific knowledge, however, are contained in the Holy Quran. The most important elements, the basis and the general idea of scientific truth is found in the Holy Quran. The details are not there, however, and it would be wrong to consider that if a matter is not mentioned in the Holy Quran it is not to be taken as scientific. This would be absurd, on any reasonable interpretation of the Holy Quran, and unjust to Islam and to the Muslims who have never understood Islam in any different way.

The Miraculous Nature of the Holy Quran

The miraculous nature of the Holy Quran is not based solely on its linguistic or rhetoric excellence as ascertained by the Arabs, a people noted for their appreciation of

rhetoric. It is based also on its tremendous capacity to express ideas on various subjects in a convincing manner, using methods not previously known to the Arabs. The words of the Holy Quran imparted their meanings as much to the simple and uneducated bedouin in the desert as to the learned and sophisticated philosopher. It is this quality of being understandable and comprehensible to all classes of people that is a miraculous quality of the Holy Quran.

The three stages of Quranic Revelation

By AMIR ALI

It is a well-known fact that the traditional sequence of the Quranic text is neither chronological nor subject-wise. The learned divine or scholar, or *hafiz*, who knows the whole Quran by heart in the traditional sequence, may not need to be shown which parts came first and which were revealed later. But the vast majority of those who are interested in understanding the Holy Quran have necessarily to take recourse to some kind of chronological order, however tentative that may be. Without such a sequence it is impossible for the layman to grasp the essence of this revered scripture.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) received his first revelation when he was forty years old. He died when he was sixty-three years old and the contents of the Holy Quran consist of the intermittent revelations spread over all these twenty-three years. One of the explanations of effectiveness of his teaching in obtaining the immediate and enthusiastic response of his followers ever growing in number, was that every verse of those revelations was promulgated at what we now call the psychological moment. The nature of following was continuously evolving and circumstances too changed from indifference to antagonism and through periods of peace and war, ostracism and relaxation. Throughout these variations the revelations were such as to meet the needs of the moment but without deviating from the basic and unalterable truths. In other words, the same lesson is taught, the same injunctions are conveyed but the tone and the rhythm have

changed to suit the particular circumstances. The passages revealed in times of peace are as the gentle breeze. Those revealed in times of war are as awesome as drums of battle. Unless we have some means of distinguishing the period and the circumstances in which a particular passage is revealed, we may understand the meaning of its words but its spirit will often elude us.

From this point of view the contents of the Holy Quran are most naturally classified into three more or less distinct periods.

(a) The first period covers the five years of the Mission when the essentials of the universal faith, revealed by earlier Prophets but forgotten and overlooked, were re-emphasized. This was the period when a small group of followers was forming a cluster around him. Almost from the very beginning, however, this re-emphasis of the true values and rejection of false idols and ideals began to arouse antagonism. Everyone who rallied to the standard of the new insistence served to increase the chagrin of the others. So the Suras of this period extending up to the time of the first emigration of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's followers to Abyssinia, have characteristics which are different from those of the other two later periods. They are brief, more replete with rhyme and assonance, more capable of being memorized. The 52 Suras out of a total of 114 constitute only a tenth of the whole Quranic text.

(b) Then come the Suras revealed in the second phase of the Mission extending over a period of eight years ending with the final Emigration of the Holy Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Madina. This was the period of violent questioning and severe malignment, molestation and ostracism. The Holy Prophet's insistence upon the essentials and the unbending nature of the new teaching as far

as basic principles were concerned, evoked an equally stubborn opposition and there was no alternative but to hammer away, like a patient goldsmith, at the same lesson over and again, each time from a different view-point and with the help of different examples from the historical experience of the Arabs themselves. This portion consists of about sixty percent of the Quranic text and it is in this Quranic text and it is in this portion that repetition and reiteration are most prevalent. Despite the gems of rare literary beauty and moral weight which are to be found interspersed throughout even this portion, it is difficult to reconcile one self to this repetition, over and over again, of the stories of Prophets—Abraham and Moses, 'Ad and Thamud and several others, unless one realizes that the circumstances themselves called for such repetition; and inspiration was continuously fashioning the vehicle of language by which the essential truths could be got across to the masses and made for them a living reality.

(c) The last of the three periods covers all the ten years of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's Mission in Medina. His steadfast efforts and his bitter sufferings over the preceding thirteen years in Mecca have at last made him a revered leader in Medina. He is now the Acknowledged New Prophet to a Community effective in number and influence. It was now time not only to teach the essential truths but to frame a Code of conduct leading to the good life of the Community that had accepted the essential truths preached over the previous thirteen years.

The Suras revealed in this period cover the remaining thirty percent of the Holy Quran and were revealed amidst the many cares of state with which the little Community was beset. Enemies had to be curbed, true followers encouraged, the hypocrites warned against and the tardy

invited to join the brotherhood of Faith. Codes of conduct had to be framed with regard to women and slaves, the old and the young, the Muslims and non-Muslims. A community fund had to be built up, marriages and divorces regulated. Naturally the revelations of this period have a different flavour, tone and content. Each of these three periods, if it is to be fully appreciated, has to be studied by itself.

Miraculous Nature of the Holy Quran

By HAZRAT MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI
(God be pleased on him)

The Holy Quran claims to be the greatest miracle which was vouchsafed to a prophet. It is a miracle the like of which could not be produced even if all men should combine together. This claim to uniqueness was not an after-thought on the Holy Prophet's part. It was consistently advanced from first to last as an argument of its Divine origin. As early as the fifth year of the Holy Prophet's mission, when there was no sign of the Qur'an finding acceptance in Arabia, to say nothing of the whole world, the claims to uniqueness were put forward in the clearest words: "If men and jinn should combine together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like of it though some of them were aiders of others." (17 : 88). Towards the close of the Makka period, when the people had shown themselves to be deaf to all appeals, the same claim was advanced again, reducing the demand to the production of ten chapters like those of the Holy Qur'an: "Or do they say, he has forged it? Say, then bring ten forged chapters, like it, and call upon whom you can besides God, if you are truthful." (11 : 13). This was soon followed by the still more forcible claim that human effort could not produce even a single chapter like it: "Or, do they say, he has forged it? Say, then bring a chapter like this and invite whom you can besides God, if you are truthful". (10 : 38). After the flight to Madina, when the Holy Prophet came into contact with the Jews who had the books of the prophets with them, the claim to the uniqueness of the Qur'an was still repeated

in the same forcible words : "And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant then produce a chapter like it, and call on your helpers besides God, if you are truthful". (2 : 23)

The golden days of the Arabic poetry were those which immediately preceded the time of the Holy Prophet, yet history bears clear testimony to the fact that the Arabs never attempted to dispute the claim of the Holy Quran. Why? Did they not consider this matter sufficiently serious? They no doubt looked upon the Holy Prophet at first as a mere visionary and then as a poet, but they soon began to realize the serious situation. Three or four years of work had brought to the Holy Prophet's banner a band of over one hundred devoted followers who, rather than give up their faith in him, had shown their readiness to suffer every torture and every privation, who had left their very country to take shelter in a neighbouring land. The opponents of Islam had taken the matter so seriously that, unable to seize the flying Muslims in their pursuit of them, they sent a deputation to persuade the Negus to hand over them to their kinsmen. They had seen how deep-rooted was faith in the hearts of those who had accepted the life-giving message of the Quran : they had tried all means to put a stop to the activities of the Holy Prophet ; they had persecuted him and his followers ; they had put as much pressure as they could on Abu Talib, the Holy Prophet's uncle, to hand him over to them : they had sent deputation to dissuade the Holy Prophet from speaking against their ancestral religion : and, therefore, if they could silence the Holy Prophet by accepting his challenge to produce a chapter like the Holy Quran, they would surely have done it. Being harassed with the question again and again, they made empty boast that, if they pleased, they could say

like of it, as it contained nothing but stories of the ancients (8 : 31) : but they knew well that stories could not bring about the transformation which the Quran was working in the lives of a dead nation, and hence they never made a serious attempt to bring forward anything to answer the challenge of the Quran.

The great gift which the Qur'an claimed from first to last as its special privilege was guidance, the purifying of man from the pollution of sin, and making him fulfil the purpose of life by the development of the faculties with which he was endowed. It opens with the statement that the Qur'an offers guidance to humanity to reach the great goal of life : "This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guidance to those who guard against evil". (2 : 2). Its purifying was so great that those who accepted the message, had their lives entirely transformed. Moreover, its convincing power was simply irresistible. The Arabs had strongly resisted long-sustained and influential Jewish and Christian efforts to give up their idolatry and superstitions, and monotheism had never appealed to them as a nation ; but the message of the Qur'an, notwithstanding all the efforts of the leaders to dissuade people from listening to it and with all their scoffing and jeering at it, made quite a different impression. It touched their very souls though, for the sake of their national honour, they would not accept it. When the 53rd Chapter, which ends with a commandment to prostrate oneself, was recited by the Holy Prophet in an assembly containing Muslims as well as idolaters, even the latter fell down in prostration, with a single exception of Umayya ibn Khalf, who raised some gravel to his forehead. When Abu Bakr recited the Qur'an aloud in the courtyard of his house, which was situated on a public way, the idolaters objected and sanctioned Abu Bakr's staying at Makka only on condition that he would not recite the

Quran aloud, because, they said, women and children were carried away by it. On another occasion, when 'Utba ibn Rabi' came to the Holy Prophet with a message from the Quraish that, if he desisted from speaking ill of their national gods, they were prepared to accept him as their chief and to offer what he desired, the Holy Prophet read out to him the opening verses of the 41st chapter. He was so impressed with the words and was such a changed man that he went back to the Quraish leaders and asked them not to oppose the Holy Prophet, for what he had heard from him was neither poetry, nor magic, nor a soothsayer's utterance, that his friends had to tell him that he was under the magic spell of Muhammad. 'Umar went out determined to put an end to the Prophet's life but, on listening to the first part of the 20th chapter, at his sister's house, his enmity gave place to devotion, and hatred was changed into admiration. The driving force of the Quran was absolutely irresistible. It flowed as a torrent from the mountain-top and carried away everything with it.

In fact, the transformation wrought by the Holy Quran is unparalleled in the history of the world, and thus its claim to being unique stands unchallenged to-day as it did thirteen centuries ago. No other reformer has brought about an entire change in the lives of a whole nation. The Quran found the Arabs worshippers of idols, stones, trees, heaps of sand, and yet, within less than a quarter of a century, the worship of the One God ruled the whole country, idolatry being wiped out from one end to the other, it swept away all superstitions and gave in their place the most rational religion that the world could imagine. The Arab who prided himself on his ignorance had, as if by a magician's wand, become the lover of knowledge, drinking deep at every fountain of learning to which he could get access. This was the direct effect of the teaching of the

Quran, which not only appealed to reason, ever and anon, but declared man's thirst for knowledge to be unsatiable, when it directed the Holy Prophet himself to say : "My Lord! increase me in knowledge." (23 : 114) : Not only had the Quran swept away the deep vices and barefaced immorality of the Arab ; it had also inspired him with a burning desire for the best and noblest deeds in the service of humanity. The burying alive of the daughter, the marriage with a step-mother, and the loose sex relations had given place to equal respect for the offspring, whether male or female, to equal rights of inheritance for father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, husband and wife, to the chastest relations of sex and to placing the highest value on sexual morality and the chastity of woman. Drunkenness, to which Arabia had been addicted from time immemorial, disappeared so entirely that the very goblets and vessels which were used for drinking and keeping wine could no more be found and, greatest of all, from an Arabia, the various elements of which were so constantly at war with one another that the whole country was about to perish, being "on the brink of a pit of fire" (3 : 102), as the Quran so beautifully and so tersely puts it, from an Arabia full of these jarring and warring elements, the Quran welded out a nation, a united nation full of life and vigour, before whose onward movement the greatest kingdoms of the world crumbled as if they were but toys before the reality of the new faith. No Faith ever imparted such a new life to its votaries on such a wide scale—a life affecting all branches of human activity ; a transformation of the individual, of the family of the society, of the nation, of the country ; an awakening material as well as moral, intellectual as well as spiritual. The Quran effected a transformation of humanity from the lowest depths of degradation to the highest pinnacle of civilisation within

an incredibly short time where centuries of reformation work had proved fruitless. To its unparalleled nature, testimony is borne by the non-Muslim, sometimes anti-Muslim historians. Here are a few instances :

“From time beyond memory, Mecca and the whole Peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor. The slight and transient influences of Judaism, Christianity, or philosophical inquiry upon the Arab mind had been put as the ruffling here and there of the surface of quiet lake remaining still and motionless below. The people were sunk in superstition, cruelty, and vice ... Their religion was a gross idolatry ; and their faith the dark superstitious dread of unseen things . . . Thirteen years before the Hijra, Mecca lay lifeless in a debased state. What a change had these thirteen years now produced ! . . . Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of the men of Medina ; but it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life.” Muir’s *Life of Mohammet*, ch. VII).

“A more disunited people it would be hard to find, till suddenly the miracle took place ! A man arose who, by his personality and by his claim to direct Divine guidance, actually brought about the impossible—namely, the union of all these warring factions.” (“The Ins and Outs of Mesopotamia,” p. 99).

“And yet we may truly say that no history can boast of events that strike the imagination in a more lively manner, or can be more surprising in themselves, than those we meet with in the lives of the first Mussalmans : whether we consider the Great Chief, or his ministers, the most illustrious of men, or whether we take an account of the manners of the several countries he conquered ; or observe the courage, virtue, and sentiments that equally prevailed

among his generals and soldiers". "The Life of Mohamet" by the Count of Bonlainvellers (English Translation, p. 5).

"That the best of Arab writers has never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Quran itself is not surprising." (Palmer's Introduction to English Translation of the Holy Quran, p. iv.)

"It is the one miracle claimed by Muhammad — his standing miracle, he called it—and a miracle indeed it is" (Bosworth Smith's *Life of Muhammad*).

"Never has a people been led more rapidly to civilization, such as it was, than were the Arabs through Islam." ("New Research" by H. Hirschfeld, p. 5).

"The Quran is unapproachable as regards convincing power, eloquence, and even composition." (Ibid., p. 8)

"And to it was also indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Moslem world." (Ibid , p. 9).

"Here, therefore, its merits as a literary production should, perhaps, not be measured by some preconceived maxims of subjective and aesthetic taste, but by the effects which it produced in Muhammad's contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. If it spoke so powerfully and convincingly to the hearts of hearers as to weld hitherto centrifugal and antagonistic elements into one compact and well-organized body, animated by ideas far beyond those which had until now ruled the Arabian mind, then its eloquence was perfect, simply because it created a civilized nation out of savage tribes and shot a fresh woof into the old warp of history". (Dr. Steingass, in Hugh's *Dictionary of Islam*.)

The Holy Quran and the Method of Political Argument

By PROF. H. K. SHERWANI, M.A. (Oxon.)

At the outset, it should be noted that the method of political argument adopted in the Holy Quran is the historical method, wherein general precepts are explained with reference to instances from the history of Arabia and the neighbouring lands, and even where the Book enunciates an abstract notion, it nearly always illustrates it from conclusion from the past history of Arabian people like 'Ad or Thamud, from Egypt or Palestine or the Byzantine Empire, of Iraq or Persia. It makes a definite distinction between the ancient monarchies and other nations, and deals with the main causes of their decline so that it may be a lesson for those still to come. For example, among the ancient monarchies, Egypt is rightly put forward as the oldest and most powerful, yet Egypt crumbled to pieces because its rulers failed to recognise the insignificance of man and the omnipotence of Divine Law as revealed to the chosen few. Moses and his brother were sent to the Pharaoh of Egypt because he had "transgressed (the bound of the Law)" and had become a "tyrant in the land." Another of his great crimes was that, instead of being the representative of the whole nation, he "divided it into so many different castes", favouring one, maltreating the other, and so oppressing God's creatures with the anti-national doctrine of 'Divide at impere,' a doctrine which, as we know, works for a time but fails the moment the people realise their oneness and begin to understand the full implication of the wrongs done to them. Giving instances from

the people of Israel, the Holy Quran describes how God had granted them all His favours, and not only given them prophets from among themselves but also made kings, and when after the death of the Prophet Moses they were oppressed and driven from their dwellings, they were given a king in the person of Saul. It is remarkable how, in this incident, are depicted the real attributes of a good dictator *i.e.*, learning and strength, a rule which is as true to-day as it was millenniums ago.

Causes of Decline

The Holy Quran also generalises the causes of the decline of the nations without reference to their actual government and lay down the great principle that "God does not change the condition of a people till they have themselves changed their psychology." As the Laws of the Universe are not unjust in themselves, each people has first been provided with a measure of correct conduct, and it is only after its transgression that it has been wiped out and replaced by another nation. It is in the order of the Universe that, like the human species, which is for the essence of the State, the collective peoples should also have their rise and their fall, and when once the national ailments have become incurable, the people, like a human being, die according to the application of preordained Law, giving place to a new and more vigorous race.

God : The Real Ruler

The Holy Quran is a mine of precepts about the Unity of Godhead and the Kingship of God on earth. This entails three distinct conceptions which have a direct bearing on the political aspect of the Book. Unity of Godhead as the Ruler naturally implies legal unity and, as the Holy Quran distinctly says, its legal concepts are founded on — nay, are identical with — Universal Immutable Laws, this

legal unity must be based on these concepts. The second thing which should be borne in mind is that, in the same way as the subjects of a king are all of the same station in relation to him, the Kingship of God means that the members of the human species are necessarily of the same order in regard to him ; and thirdly, that man is utterly powerless before the Universal Laws and his sole concern in the realm of so-called law-making can be to try and discover the intricacies of that Law in much the same manner as the scientist discovers the forces of Nature or the economist discovers the natural relations between man and economic wealth. The reign of Universal Law also implies that those who accept it, or at least consent to live under its way, are immune from harm, but those who transgress it, lose the protection of the State in much the same manner as the transgressors of law to-day are liable to be punished—imprisoned, fined or even beheaded. God is The Real Ruler of the World, His Law is supreme, man is His vicegerent, and of the human species He appoints kings and magistrates whose most important duty is to do justice according to the Law and never to be led away by personal desires — such is the teaching of the Quran and this is the ideal of unselfish justice which was a definite break with the past and which, in turn, is regarded as the most sacred right of the citizen to-day the world over.

Abhorrence of Mischief

There are few things which the Holy Quran abhors more than mischief and disorder, and verses about this phenomenon, which eats into the body politic, are interspersed throughout the Book. When God creates man as His vicegerent, the great misgiving in the mind of the angels is that man will shed his fellow's blood and cause disorder. Again, God makes the Israelites enter into covenant with

him that "they will not shed each other's blood or turn anyone out of his house." This admonition is repeated in a number of places, perhaps because it is necessary to counteract the natural animosity towards man. Disorder is regarded as "worse than murder," and those who provoke it deserve "the curse of God," while the State is admonished to try and end it by peaceable means but, if possible to strike at its root by force of arms. Those who cause political turmoil should not be obeyed but should be killed or banished, and their action is likened to "war against God and His Messenger." It is related how, when Abraham made Mecca his home and the home of his progeny, the first prayer he offered was to "make the City a haven of peace and prosperity" for ever, and the secret of the success of Islamic polity is said to lie in complete unity between those who were once inimical to one another. Muslims are ordained to be completely united, kind and brotherly to one another, otherwise their end will be the same as that of the transgressors of the Law who may pretend anything but who are really at the root of all disorder.

The Quran Recipe for Unity of Humanity Through Unity of God

By DR. M. A. DRAZ

Immune to all external influences the Holy Quran has always had a profound effect on different types of people. It must have had some special attraction for them, as though it had the power of adapting them to each person's way of thinking and acting, as though it brought right solution to the major problems and cares of each individual. In a word, it must have fully satisfied his need for the true, the good and the beautiful, with a work which is a religious, a moral and a literary masterpiece.

It affirms categorically, not only that all the prophets constitute one visible religious body under the protection of God (21 : 92 ; 23 : 52) but also that at one time all mankind was similarly united in one body and that it were their descendants who became divided (2 : 253 ; 10 : 19), either because they had forgotten some part of the Divine teaching (5 : 13, 14), or because such teaching was improperly presented (2 : 75 ; 5 : 13, 14), or because of worldly ambition and self-interest (2 : 146, 174).

And, in its perennially logical and coherent way, the Holy Quran does not define or describe Islam as a "Muhammadanism" which has been set up as rival to Judaism and Christianity disputing with them the honour of being the sole repository of Truth. To be Muslim is at the same time to belong to Moses, to Jesus and to all the Divine Messengers who have appeared since the creation of the human race, by paying equal respect to all of them and accepting all their teachings, without making any distinc-

tion between them (Quran 2 : 138, 285 : 3 : 84 ; 4 : 152). Or, rather, it is to belong to God and to carry out His Will as revealed successively from their lips (the Holy Quran 2 : 133 ; 3 : 84). If this is accomplished, then there will be an end to schism and to rivalry (the Holy Quran 6 : 159 ; 42 : 13), for if it is true that the doctrine preached by so-and-so is the same as mine, there is absolutely no reason why I should try to shout him to silence, unless it be through egoism (the Holy Quran 2 : 91), or vanity (the Holy Quran 5 : 18).

The Holy Quran's Appeal for a Return to the Original Unity of all Religions

Thus the Holy Quran makes an appeal for a return to the original unity of all religions — "unification" ardently desired by all evolved souls, whose hearts are moved at the very mention of the word "unity". This would doubtless be the first step, although everything will depend on the plan to be followed and the method which is adopted.

We think that the point of departure, the nucleus around which we can organise our system of Quranic discussion, consists in the central idea of a transcendental Creator, All-Powerful and Almighty God, Who has created everything in the universe and on Whom everything, without exception, depends. The great advantage of this conception is that, on the one hand, it harmonizes perfectly with the postulate of that religious unity which we propose to establish, since schism could only arise from a pluralist conception (the Holy Quran 3 : 64 : 28 : 46). On the other hand, by erasing out all the various "peculiarities" of the different religions, it brings home to man that eternal truth which has never ceased to be acknowledged (or be easily acknowledged) by all. In fact, even the pagan Arabs, who had sunk to a very debased form of idolatry,

nevertheless acknowledged Supreme God, Creator of the universe and Lord of the heavenly world (the Holy Quran 20 : 61).

This recognition was not due merely to some vestige they had conserved of the religion of the Patriarchs Abraham and Ishmael—its germ is latent in the human soul, and there is a relevant passage in the Holy Quran to the effect that the souls of men acknowledged the Supreme Being before they were united with their bodies (the Holy Quran 7 : 172). But with these people this primitive monotheism, this “natural religion” as it is termed in the Holy Quran (the Holy Quran 30 : 30), was a kind of theoretical conception enveloped in and practically submerged by the adoration which they paid to a multitude of lesser divinities (the Holy Quran 12 : 106). Since they invoked God only when some great danger was imminent (the Holy Quran 10 : 22), they would set aside for him only a very small portion of their ritual offering (the Holy Quran (6 : 136). Owing to their everyday contact with the forces of nature, it was inevitable that they should attribute certain influences to the stars (the Holy Quran 53:49) and to heavenly bodies (the Holy Quran 4 : 37), before which they would prostrate themselves. Between God and man they set up intermediary powers which were able to bring man closer to his Creator (the Holy Quran 39 : 3), or to intercede with God on his behalf (10 : 18). Thus the angels whom they regarded as being the daughters of God, became the objects of their adoration (the Holy Quran 43 : 19, 20). Statues (the Holy Quran 22 : 30) and sacrificial stones (“raised stones”—the Holy Quran 5 : 90), which they considered as possessing hidden powers or which in their eyes were symbols of certain visible divinities, came in time to receive the same veneration as the objects symbolised.

Little by little the imagination of three highly superstitious people did not fail to invent a multitude of lesser gods, whom they considered as subservient to the Creator God—these lesser divinities presided over their less important affairs and enterprises. How could such inveterate anthropomorphism conceive of a king unless at the same time it provided him with assistants and collaborators who were equally worthy of veneration? Tradition has handed down a wonderful “salutation” which the pagan pilgrims used to recite during their invocation: “I am wholly Thine, O God! I am wholly Thine. Thou hast no partner except one, over whom Thou hast complete mastery, and also over all that he possesses.”

The idea that “the gods” were really a unity would for them have been something unbelievable (the Holy Quran 38 : 5); in fact, in their eyes, all the more monstrous and false, since they had never heard anyone preaching the Unity of God, either among their own people or during the previous revelations (“the former faith...” The Holy Quran 38 : 6) that is to say, Christianity as introduced into North and South Arabia by a few refugee sects. In spite of the difference between the deified personalities of both these regimes, the pagans found enough similarity between them to justify their debased form of polytheism (the Holy Quran 44 : 57, 58). For the people who followed the Holy Scripture had also succeeded in reconciling the Unity of the Creator God with the plurality of venerated divinities.

By siding with both factions, and then opposing them, the Holy Quran makes use of the first conception in order to destroy the second. It entraps its adversaries in their own argument in order to show them, if not the absurdity then at least the ingratitude of such a chaotic and confused

medley (the Holy Quran 2 : 21, 22 : 16 : 17 ; 32 : 73). Thus the unity it teaches stems from a pre-existing conception which was already in vogue, though buried under the debris of antagonistic idea. The Holy Quran extricates this pristine purity. It certainly does not "discover" it or invent it. It proceeds by elimination, not by addition.

The Cultural Process

Recommended by the Quran

By SAYYED ABDUL LATIF

Said the Prophet of Islam : "God does not accept belief, if it is not expressed in deed ; and does not accept deed, if it does not conform to belief."

The Holy Quran is essentially a code of human conduct. That is the claim which the Book itself advances. It is meant to offer guidance to those who seek. It differs from abstract ethics in this that it purports to possess a religious sanction for those who choose to follow it, and covers a wider field of activity than what is envisaged by the latter. That by itself does not divest it of its value to those who may fight shy of religion. For, however wide and deep the religious character of its background, the line of conduct delineated by the Holy Quran is to be endorsed in action by a rational approach to it, and is on that account a subject for consideration even by those who may not believe in any established religion, but who, nevertheless, dislike anarchy in thought and recognise the need for some standard of conduct to govern their daily activity. To such, it may be told that the essential purpose of the Holy Quran is to develop in man a mind the primary function of which is to enable him to live in peace with himself and in peace with his world of external relations, although in so doing he is to serve a deeper purpose as well.

This wider applicability, which is beyond the purview of abstract ethics or of any exclusively secular concept of life, is warranted by the notion maintained by the Holy Quran that death is not the end of life, but that, on the other

hand, it is a gateway to a new sphere of life, marking a further stage in the making of man. "From state to state shall ye, assuredly, be carried forward" is the vista of possibilities disclosed and the life to follow is conditioned by the life already lived. The ultimate purpose is perfection of man. It is this purpose which has to govern the character of the life one has to live in the present. The mind which the Holy Quran aims to build is, therefore, to view in one sweep the entire course of human life, the present and what is to follow, and treat it as a single entity, and adjust its movements accordingly. "Your creation and your resurrection are but like a single soul," says the Holy Quran.

The cultural process recommended by the Quran is summed up in but a single directive: *Amanu wa amilus salihati*, i.e. "Believe and work righteously." The line of action suggested is that one has to grow conscious of certain basic realities of truths of life and to see that whatever one thinks or does is in conformity with them. The basic truths are expressed in the form of doctrinal beliefs which every Muslim has to profess and earnestly attempt to implement in his activity. Of these beliefs, some are regarded as of primary importance from the standpoint of 'righteous living.'

Firstly—one has to believe in the entire universe, both visible and invisible, owe its existence to One Supreme Being and is sustained by Him.

As a corollary to this, one has to accept the idea that the Universe and everything therein are created with a definite purpose, and this purpose has a specific relevance to the life of man, and implies a specific message to mankind as a whole. One has, therefore, to believe that such a message—*al-Din*, as it is called by the Holy Quran—has been delivered, from time to time, in every part of the

world and to every section of mankind by good men styled *Mursalin* or Message-bearers or prophets, the Last in the order being Muhammad—peace and blessings be upon him!—through whom this message has been reaffirmed in its Final Form.

Lastly, one has to believe in a Life Hereafter. The present life is to serve as a preparation for what is to follow. The 'Life Hereafter' is to be a life of introspection and of burning out the impurities gathered in this recuperating man thereby for the march onward, if he has not already, in this life, equipped himself properly for the journey before him.

Such are the fundamental beliefs which one has to entertain in Islam and express in righteous activity. At the cultural plane, or in the process of implementing them, these beliefs, as explained later on, are to develop in man a living sense of God both in thought and action and equip him to work for a life of peace—peace within and peace without, peace in one's own self, and peace in one's relation with the external world around him, in order that mankind might live together, in the words of the Holy Prophet of Islam, as "a family of God" (Bukhari), or as a fold every member of which shall be a keeper or shepherd unto every other and be accountable for the welfare of the entire fold" (Bukhari). To live so is to live Islam. In other words, the cultural process in Islam is to develop in man a sense of inward peace operating for peace among mankind, a sense of peace which shall keep him company in the Life Hereafter as well. States the Holy Quran :

"Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the thought of God—indeed, it is in the thought of God that the heart (of man) doth really find rest,—those who believe and act righteously, joy is for them, and blissful home to return to." (14 : 29).

Review of Translations of the Holy Quran

By HASHIM ALI

Alexander Ross

As a memento of the late Ahmad Allauddin I have his rare first edition published in 1640, more than 300 years ago.

George Sale

In 1747, appeared his still-famous translation of the Koran. In 1735, he died while still in his thirties. He said a few unpalatable things about Islam ; but otherwise, in those days, he could have found neither patron nor readers; could he have lavished praise as he has done.

J. M. Rodwell

His first edition in 1861, established a landmark in Quranic interpretation ; it was the first-ever edition actually published with an aim of chronological arrangement.

E. H. Palmer

“Very nearly word for word the Holy Quran in the English language” (Sarwar). His translation in two volumes appeared in 1888. — *The Sacred Books of the East Series*.

Abdul Hakim

A little known and hardly available translation which appeared from Patiala in 1905. I have referred to it from a copy in the Salar Jang Library in Hyderabad.

Mirza Abul Fazi

His first translation into English, with the Suras arranged according to the sequence suggested by Noeldeke, was published in two volumes with Arabic text and English

rendering, both printed in type, in 1910. His last edition of The Koran in English appeared in 1955, a year before he passed away in 1956, at the age of 91.

It was he who, 18 years ago, aroused my interest in and reverence for the Holy Quran.

Muhammad Ali

The first work published by any Muslim with the thoroughness worthy of Quranic scholarship and achieving the standards of modern publications. He strongly defends the existing traditional sequence of the Suras.

Ghulam Sarwar

In his Introduction, he writes a detailed judgment on Sale, Rodwell, Palmer and Muhammad Ali. He also gives two Essays on the life of the Holy Prophet. He too is strongly opposed to a chronological approach to the study of the Holy Quran. The Woking Mosque published his translation in 1929.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Othodox and mystic viewpoint ; Homeric style of English translation : summaries in English verse intervening between Arabic text and English translation given in parallel columns. Copious notes, appendices and index ; published in Lahore in 1930.

Marmaduke Pickthall

An English Muslim, helped by annotators in Cairo. First edition with Arabic text and English translation, entitled "The Meaning of the Glorious Koran," published under the patronage of the Nizam of Hyderabad, 1930. Published in the Mentor Religious Classics in 1953.

Richard Bell

Translation in two volumes published in 1929-30. He strongly held the view that Quranic verses were often in

disorder because the compilation had been effected from loose scraps often written on both sides. Suggests innumerable possibilities of rearrangements. Often very illuminating in the rendering of words.

A. J. Arberry

A small preliminary volume. The Holy Koran, has an illuminating analysis of the different rhythms in the Holy Quran. The two-volume edition of *The Koran Interpreted*, facilitates comprehension by breaking up verse lines varying in length as in English poetry.

N. J. Dawood

Almost a free translation providing easy reading. Sequence of Suras changed without any reasons or principle being explained. Published in Penguin Classics in 1956.

“Each one does in his own manner: but your Lord best knows who is guided aright in the way”

(Sura XVII, Verse 86)