

The Qur'an and Hadith

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Al-Islam.org

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Publisher(s):

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This text is an extensive examination that starts off by explaining what revelations mean, how they happened at the time of the Prophet sawaws and how they happened at the time of the Jewish and the Christian.

The book continues by describing the authenticity of the Old and New Testaments and talks about the Injil, Jesus's (as) book.

After the study of the previous revealed book we can dive in the explanation on the authenticity of the Holy Qur'an, how to interpret the verses, what ahadith are and how to prove their authenticity. The book also provides lots of examples and is a wonderfully way to learn about our holy book and the ahadith.

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Preface

This book was first published in 1971 as a part of the Islamic Correspondence Course, run by the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania. Since then it has been reprinted several times in Tanzania and Kenya.

Now I have thoroughly revised and enlarged it; and my son, Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi (Toronto), has rendered a great service by editing and annotating the book and streamlining its arrangement.

I hope this edition will prove even more popular than the previous one.

Wa ma tawfiqi ilia billah

Toronto

December 12, 1994

Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

Chapter 1: Revelation

1. Meaning of Wahyi & Ilham

“Wahyi” (وَحْيٌ) literally means inspiration, revelation, suggestion, to point out a thing to someone, to put a thing into the mind of someone secretly; letter, writing: something revealed or written or the idea inspired or revealed; saying; commandment; to dispatch a messenger to someone; to speak with someone secretly; to urge; voice. In Islamic terminology, *wahyi* means communication of idea, command and information from Allah to a chosen human being, conveyed either directly or through supernatural agencies like angels.¹

“Ilham” (إِلْهَامٌ) literally means to inspire: to put a thought or an idea into the mind of someone. In Islamic terminology, *Ilham* means inspiration of an idea or information from Allah to any chosen person.²

It will appear from above that while *Ilham* is limited to unspoken and unwritten inspiration, *wahyi* is used for spoken as well as unspoken and written as well as unwritten inspiration and revelation.

Every religion which believes in God believes in revelation.

2. Modes of Revelation

According to the Qur'an, there are three basic methods of revelation:

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بِإِنْذِنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ حِكْمَةٌ

“It is not possible for a man that he should receive the message of Allah except either by inspiration or from behind a curtain, or Allah sends angels and the angels bring the message of Allah, whatever Allah wishes. Verily Allah is High, Omniscent.” (42:51).

Inspiration

There are two types of inspirations:

1. True Dreams: This method is not new. There are at least four instances in the Bible where Israeli prophets received the divine message in dreams. The Dictionary of the Bible records under the word “Dream” about divine dreams: “Dreams, employed by God for the purpose of His Kingdom ... They are (a) intended to effect the spiritual life of individuals; (b) Directive and prophetic dreams... they seem to have carried with them credentials of their divine origin.”

Our Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) even before he was commanded to proclaim his prophethood, used to receive divine messages through this medium. In later days, he saw two dreams, which are mentioned in the Qur'an. In the first dream, he saw that the Umayyads were climbing his pulpit like monkeys.³ He was so grieved by that dream that he did not smile from then on till his last breath. This sorrow was based upon the sure knowledge that Umayyads would destroy his religion, as they actually did. They used the name of Islam to alter Islamic teachings and Islamic spirit. In the second dream, he saw (in the 6th year of *Hijra*) himself together with his followers entering Ka'bah.⁴ It was a time when, by worldly reasoning, he had no chance of doing so. Within less than 2 years, this dream became a reality.

This type of inspiration still continues. The Holy Prophet said, "There is no prophethood after me except the good tidings." He was asked, "And what are the good tidings, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Good dreams or true dreams."⁵ But the difference between a dream of a Prophet or Imam and that of others is that a Prophet or an Imam appointed by Allah never sees a false dream; whatever he dreams is a message or command from Allah; while other people's dreams are more often than not false, caused by physiological or psychological reasons.

2. Prophetic Inspirations: these inspired thoughts may be accompanied with clear words or may be in the form of a thought without words. The Qur'an says,

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ * إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

"He (i.e. the Prophet) does not speak of his own desire, it is nothing but a revelation revealed."
(53:3-4).

By the authority of these verses of Qur'an even the traditions of the Holy Prophet are treated as revelation. Their words are not from Allah; but the idea is.

From Behind a Curtain

The revelations, which are sent "from behind a curtain" are also of many kinds;

1. The first is like hearing some low murmuring sounds (like buzzing of bees) and knowing the interpretation.
2. The second is like hearing high-pitched sounds and knowing the interpretation.
3. The third is hearing the sound from a material object. The first call to the Prophet Musa (a.s) is one example. He was astonished to see a bush burning and yet remaining unconsumed by fire. As he turned aside, gazing at a sight so unique, he received an authoritative call from God, calling him to prophethood. Another example is of our Prophet (s.a.w) when he ascended to the heavens in *mi'raj*. He, at last, arrived at a sublime place where neither any prophet nor any angel had ever reached. He saw a

curtain of light, and then heard a voice from it.

4. The fourth type of this revelation is hearing the voice of an angel without seeing him. It should be mentioned here that this fourth type of revelation “from behind a curtain” is not reserved for the prophets. Other chosen people also may be honored by such angelic conversations. They are called “al-muhaddath” (المحدث) i.e. the one with whom the angels talk.

Through Angels

Now we come to the last type of the modes of revelation, i.e., receiving the message through an angel. Gabriel usually came to our Prophet (s.a.w) to convey the messages of Allah. Sometimes he came in his own image, other times in likeness of a man. Messages sent through an angel were mostly oral. But at least in one case it was a written one. The Torah was sent to the Prophet Musa (a.s.) as “written tablets”:

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الْأَلْوَاحِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

“and wrote we for him in the tablets lessons of every kind ...”(7:145).

3. Epilepsy & Revelation: A Christians’ Allegation Analyzed

These were, in short, some method by which the messages of God come to the prophets. As I have mentioned earlier, the Divine revelations to our Prophet (s.a.w.) began with “true dreams”; later on, he used to see the heavenly lights and visions and hear the voices, but without seeing the speaker. After that, he saw the angel Gabriel, who brought the Divine message. This was the easiest and clearest form of revelation.

Sometimes, continuous and high-pitched voices would reach his ears, at the end of which he would find the message of God imprinted on his heart. This was the hardest form of revelation. Often, at the time of receiving such revelations, he would be overcast with gloom. The color of his face would fade away. Sometimes he would bend his head, and his companions would understand that he was receiving the revelation and they also would bend their heads. At times, even during the coldest months, perspiration would pour down from his forehead.

After some time he would raise his head and relate the revelation to them. According to Shaykh as-Saduq, this mode was chosen by Allah when He wished to reveal something to the Holy Prophet without using the agency of Gabriel.⁶

Having recorded the above-mentioned effects of this type of revelation, Washington Irving says, that “The ringing of ears is a symptom of epilepsy”: A Muslim brother from Aden had asked me whether it was true, as many Christian writers had written, that our Holy Prophet was suffering from epilepsy. A

short article was published in *The Light* (May–August, 1968) in reply to that question, some parts of which are reproduced below:

This allegation is the outcome of Dr. Gustav Weil's imagination. He was an orientalist. Latter writers have blindly followed him because it suited their purpose. It is this tendency of the Christians about which Bishop Boyd Carpenter wrote in *The Permanent Element in Religion*: "Muhammad is by many seen only through the fog which dread and ignorance have spread around him. To them he is an object of horror against which anything evil might be said... But, now the mists of prejudice have cleared away, we can afford to see the founder of Islam in fairer light."

Did not those Christian writers know that such effects at the time of receiving revelation were not unique in the history of prophethood? Alfred Guillaume writes in his book *Islam* about the institution of prophethood that "the Hebrew religion gave content and meaning to the word 'Nabi', which, originally, applied to a person who in a state of uncontrollable emotion and excitement proclaimed a message which his hearers attributed to a god... the outward marks of a prophet in Israel were (a) impassioned utterance; (b) poetry: (c) intense pre-occupation with God and moral issues: (d) a sense of compulsion urging him to declare the will of God. Naturally these characteristics varied from prophet to prophet."

Also, the following statement from *Concise Bible Commentary*⁷ is worth noting; "The prophets of the (Old Testament) as their writings show, based their teachings largely on ecstasy and vision." Again it says; "Probably the main difference between false and true prophets was that the former used traditional methods to go into ecstasy, while the latter were seized, often against their will, by God."

So, it is crystal clear that "uncontrollable ecstasy" was a common feature of revelation even in Israelite prophets. Are the Christians prepared to say that all the prophets of Israel suffered from epilepsy?

Now let us see the charge of his suffering from epilepsy from medical point of view. *Pears Cyclopaedia*, 68th edition (1959–60) says about epilepsy: "Epilepsy manifests itself in various ways, the common being grand mal-seizures, in which the patient falls down unconscious, his muscles become tense, his jaws clenched so that he is in danger of biting his tongue, and the limbs begin to contract rhythmically. As this phase passes away the patient lays down his limb, and gradually recovers consciousness. Often he does not know what has happened. Sometimes, he is confused, forgets where he is, and wanders away in an attack of loss of memory (amnesia or epileptic fugue). In petit mal – the name means little sickness – the attack may be hardly noticeable. The patient is perhaps talking or doing somethings, when without any warning, he simply stops, looks dazed or confused for a brief period, and then carries on again."

The thing to note is that neither every attack of epilepsy is accompanied by unconsciousness nor every attack of unconsciousness is a symptom of epilepsy. The *Pears Cyclopaedia* says: "Fits may have many causes. It is important not to jump to the conclusion that because someone has a fit, they therefore have epilepsy, and all such cases should be carefully investigated."

So, according to the medical authorities unconsciousness (even if we accept that the effects at the time of revelation meant ‘unconsciousness’) and epilepsy are not inter-connected as cause and effect, either way. I fail to understand how can a sane person jump to the conclusion that a prophet must have suffered from epilepsy, just because he appeared to go into ecstasy (or even let us say, unconsciousness)?

The other facts are also worth considering. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w) generally received the Divine message when some event had either taken or was about to take place, or someone had put a question to him. We must remember that: “often (an epileptic) does not know what has happened. Sometimes he is confused, forgets where he is, and wanders away in an attack of loss of memory.”

Had the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) ever been attacked by epilepsy after question had been put to him, he would have forgotten as to where he was or who had asked him what. Instead, he always gave most satisfactory and to-the-point answers in an extremely forceful, fluent and eloquent language immediately after this so-called epilepsy attack. Another point to consider is that the fits of epilepsy are more likely to occur at the time of emotional stress on nerves. But no historian has ever said that there was ever such an attack on the Holy Prophet during any battle or distress.

The following words of Alfred Guillaume are enough to expose the hollowness of this malicious and baseless charge: “A past generation of Arabists... advanced the theory that Muhammad was an epileptic. The charge had been made by a Byzantine writer long before. Such a hypothesis seems gratuitous and can safely be ascribed to anti-Muhammadan prejudice. Study of the psychological phenomena of religious experience makes it extremely improbable. Prophets are not normal people; but that does not authorize the assertion that their abnormal behavior is due to a morbid condition.

Moreover, Muhammad was a man whose common sense never failed him. Those who deny his mental and psychic stability, do so only by ignoring the over-whelming evidence... had he ever collapsed in the strain of battle or controversy, or fainted away when strong action was called for, a case might be made out. But all the evidence we have, points in the opposite direction, and the suggestion of epilepsy is as groundless in the eyes of the present writer as it is offensive to all Muslims... ”⁸

1. At-Turayhi, Majma'u 'l-Bahrayn, vol.4 (Tehran: Daftar Nashr, 1408) p.479; Ibn Faris, Mu'jam Maqaiysi 'l-Lughah, vol.6 (Cairo 1371) p.93; Ibn Manzur, Lisanu 'l-'Arab, vol. 15, p.379; al-Mufid, Tashihu 'l-l'tiqad, vol.5 in “Musannafatu 'sh-Shaykhi 'l-Mufid” (Qum: I314) pp. 120-122.

2. Majma'u 'l-Bahrayn, vol.4, p. 146; al-Mu'jamu 'l-Wasit (Tehran: Daftar Nashr, 1408) p. 842;

3. As-Suyuti, ad-Durru 'l-Manthur. vol.4 (Egyptian edition) p. 191.

4. Ibn Hisham, Sirah, vol.2. p.308-322; at-Tabrasi, Majma'u 'l- Bayan, vol.5, p. 126

5. At-Tirmidhi, Sunan, vol.3, p.264; also quoted by Ahmad ibn Hanbal in Musnad , Nisa'i and Abu Dawud.

6. As-Saduq, al-l'tiqadat (in “Musannafatu 'l-Shaykh al-Mufid” [Qum, 1413] vol.5) p.81

7. Clarke, W. K. L., Concise Bible Commentary. London: Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K), 1952.

8. Guillaume, Islam, pp. 25-26.

Chapter 2: Pre-Islamic Revelations

1. Some Previous Books

The revelations sent to the previous prophets were often committed to writing. But only three of them have been mentioned by name in the Qur'an. The Tawrat which was revealed to Prophet Musa, the Zabur which was revealed to Prophet Dawud, and the Injil which was revealed to Prophet 'Isa (peace be on them all). Apart from those, there is a mention of "suhuf- books" of Ibrahim (a.s.).

Zoroastrians claim that the Zend Avasta is a divine book. Hindus claim the same about the Vedas. Allah had sent prophets to every nation and every region (Qur'an, 35:24.) Obviously they must have been given some books in their own languages (Qur'an, 14:4). However, we can neither confirm nor deny the claims made about the Zend Avasta or the Vedas because they are not mentioned in the Qur'an.

The Books of Ibrahim (a.s.) are completely lost, as is the Injil of Prophet 'Isa (a.s.). The two remaining books were all altered, added, subtracted and extensively changed by those very people who professed to believe in them. Some details of those alterations will be given in later chapters. Here this fact is mentioned just to explain why Allah sent a new shari'ah (Islam) and a new Book (the Qur'an). Our responsibility towards previous prophets and their books is that we should believe that they were true prophets sent by Allah and that they were given the books as mentioned in the Qur'an. But as we know that those books were either completely lost or extensively edited, we cannot accept anything written in them unless they conform completely with what is revealed in the Qur'an.

As the subject of this booklet is not the review of the previous books, I will not go into details about all of them. However, in these days our youths are mostly confronted with Christianity; therefore, in the following chapters, I will mention some aspects of the Old and the New Testaments only.

2. The Torah

History of its Present Compilation

The Torah (Law) is the name of the book of Prophet Musa (a.s.). The Jews and the Christians use this name for the first 5 books of Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Together they are called 'Pentateuch'. Pentateuch was believed to have been written by Musa (a.s.). He is probably to be dated in the fifteenth to thirteenth century BC and the belief that he wrote Pentateuch continued up to the 18th century CE; and this was in-spite of the inherent impossibilities of this belief, like the account of the death of Moses himself.

In the 18th century, some Christian scholars started what is now known as 'higher criticism'. Their views

are now accepted by majority of Christians. They proved that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses; that it is not even work of a single man or single era; that it contains the works of unknown number of people right up-to 1,000 years *after* the death of Moses.

Rev. W. K. L. Clarke in his *Concise Bible Commentary*¹ gives the following timetable and sequence of editing:

The book says that by the end of the 19th century, it was generally recognized that there were four main sources in the Pentateuch, to be assigned to 9th, 8th, 7th and 5th or 4th centuries BC respectively.

“The first book at the Pentateuch shows three characteristic styles illustrated by Genesis I, Genesis 2 and Deuteronomy and the documents marked by these styles were first to be noticed.”

“The obviously early source begins in Gen. 2:4. This source is called ‘J’ after the ‘J’ of Jehovah (pronounced Jahweh). ‘J’ is generally thought to have been put into written form about 850 BC.

“Another source...is D, so called from the book of Deuteronomy, which was the book law discovered in Josiah’s reign.

“The third source is called Priestly document, P for short. The writer is particularly interested in legislation and most of the laws of Exodus and all those of Leviticus and Numbers belong to P. A large part of the Priestly Code is believed to have been composed in Babylonia and brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in 397 BC. How much of P was omitted in final compilation of Pentateuch we have no means of knowing. Nothing has been said yet about a subordinate source found in Lev. 17–28 and known as the Code of Holiness, H for short. It was adopted into P but evidently had a separate history... Opinion is divided as to its date, whether it was written before 586 or whether exiled priests after the fall of the city committed to writing the Temple traditions ..:”

“Now comes the fourth source. After taking P, D and J from the Pentateuch a considerable amount of material remains, parallel to J, but in Genesis using Elohim for God and not Yahweh. This non-P Elohim matter begins in Gen. 20: 1–7... Altogether E is more mature religiously and is thought to have reached written form about 750 BC”

These are the four main sources of Pentateuch. How they were compiled to form the Pentateuch?

“The first step was to combine J and E. This must have been done after the fall of Samaria in 721 BC. The two were combined in a document which is called JE.”

“Then in 621 Deuteronomy was discovered, or at least a large part of it. The next stage was to put JE, and D together. This will have taken place during the exile... A perceptible amount of editing of JE took place.”

“P was written in Babylonia and brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in 397 BC. Later, editors used it as a

frame work and incorporated JED, thus producing the Pentateuch ... in about 300 BC."

We might as well sum it up in the words of the commentator himself. "Probably a multitude of persons have combined to give us Genesis (etc.), covering in their lives a span of 1,000 years." And this book, compiled 1,000 years after Moses is called the Book of Moses! But it appears from the same authorities that probably it was not attributed to Moses till 200 BC!

Even that minority of the Christian scholars which still holds fast to the theory of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch has to admit that it must have been re-written by the subsequent generations to modernize the language. This concession has to be given because "it is hardly probable that the Hebrew of Moses' day was like that of Biblical Hebrew." (See the *Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* under "Pentateuch").

Further Details about the Torah

The Bible itself states, explicitly or implicitly, that the Torah was destroyed twice: First, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar; after a long time, it was restored or re-written by Ezra. Second time, it was ruthlessly destroyed by Antiochus. Nothing is known as to how it was restored.

The early Christian scholars believed that there was no proof of the authenticity of the Old Testament until Jesus came and confirmed it. But, in fact, Jesus has never confirmed the Old Testament (which comprises of 39 or 46 books). He speaks about the authenticity of the 'Law' only.

If further proof is needed, one has only to compare the old manuscripts known as 'Dead Sea Scroll' with the relevant parts of the present Old Testament, to find out how great the differences are between the two.² We are not concerned with the judgment as to which writing is more acceptable. What we are concerned with is the fact that the scribes were free long before the coming of Jesus to add, subtract, change and alter the texts of the books attributed to the Israeli prophets including the book or books of Prophet Musa (a.s.).

Old Testament: Contradictions & Absurdities

Allah has said about the Holy Qur'an:

وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوْجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

"...Had it been from someone other than God, they would have found in it ample contradiction."
(4:82).

This verse provides us with a sure way of verifying the authenticity or otherwise of a book claimed to have come from God. If it is from God, there would be no discrepancy in it.

Judging the Pentateuch by this standard, we are astonished to find hundreds of wrong and contradictory

statements in it. It is not a place to go in detail; yet I will give here a few examples. There is no need to go any further than the very first two chapters.

Genesis 1 describes that Adam and Eve were created on the 6th day when, on the previous days, heaven, earth, seas, grass, herbs with seeds, fruits, stars, sun, moon, water creatures, birds, whales and earth creatures, cattle and beasts (in that sequence) were already created.

Genesis 2 says that man was created before the trees and vegetables, beasts, birds and cattle.

Which statement is correct?

Then Genesis 1 says that God created man (male) and female both together on the same day. Genesis 2 says that man (male) was created before flora and fauna, and it was after he was put in the Garden of Eden that woman was created.

The fact is that the writers have filled this book with all the trends of 1000 years during which time it was being compiled. Thus we find that to justify their own shortcomings they have put God and His prophets in such a bad light as leaves no room for any respect and dignity.

The God of Bible has human form, hair and legs, is jealous of Adam, does get tired and needs rest, walks like a man in garden of Eden, Adam hides from him and he calls out “Where art thou?”; wrestles with Ya’qub (a.s.) whole night without being able to knock him down; comes down on a mountain, enters into a cloud, and resides in Zion; repents after doing a work; tells lies while the serpent tells the truth.

The Qur'an pointedly ignores all such statements, which were paganistic in origin.

Now let us see the narrations about the prophets of God, chosen by Him to lead their people onto the right path. If we read the account of the people of Lot (a.s.) in the Qur'an we will find that it does not mention the conspiracy of the daughters of Lot (a.s.) to cohabit with their father, and the shameful details of alleged fulfillment of that capital sin. The Qur'an confirms the prophethood of Lot (a.s.) and destruction of his people: This is Confirmation. But it rejects, by not mentioning or hinting even once, the interpolation of human mind: it is the guardianship. Another example is the narration of the calf-worship of Israel.

In short, the Qur'an confirms the basic truths and rejects the interpolations of the scribes. It is *musaddiq* (confirming), and it is *muhammin* (guardian) of the previous books, all at one and the same time.

3. The Injil

Was it a Book?

The Qur'anic expressions denote that Injil was a book revealed to Prophet 'Isa (a.s.). But the Christians say that Jesus Christ did not leave any book behind him. They say that Injil (i.e. 'Gospel') means just

“the good tidings,” brought by Jesus Christ. Thus they use the name ‘Injil’ (or Gospel) for the first four books of the New Testament which are supposedly written by Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The scholars of higher criticism agree that Mark is the earliest of these 4 ‘Gospels’. It was written in or about 60–70 CE.

The ‘gospel’ of Matthew was written in or about 70–90 CE.

The ‘gospel’ of Luke came later and that of John in or about 100 CE.

Now the experts of higher criticism assert that a certain ‘written document’ was extant in the first half of the first century. They believe that there was a ‘written source’ of the gospels of Luke and Matthew which is called ‘Q’ in the Christian writings. Rev. W.K.L Clarke writes in his *Concise Bible Commentary*:

“That Mark is the earliest gospel is agreed by scholars who are not bound by the authority to maintain the priority of Matthew. Only so can the close resemblances be explained...”

“The arguments which convince us that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source, point also to a written source to the sections common to the two gospels but not derived from Mark. This is called ‘Q’ (German Quelle = source)... How much narrative ‘Q’ contained is unknown ... Again, had ‘Q’ a Passion-story? If so, does it lie behind Luke’s or John’s Passion-story? If not, what kind of Gospel was it that said nothing about the cross?”³

Now, a document which can be regarded as a ‘source of revelation’ cannot be denied a place in the list of revealed books itself. This source was extant in the first century; and we may presume that it was possibly the original ‘Injil’ brought by Prophet ‘Issa’ (a.s.).

Also, there are various references to ‘gospel’ (Injil) in the letters of St. Peter and St. Paul which, undoubtedly were written before these four so-called Gospels came into being.

Which ‘Gospel’ or ‘Injil’ do those letters refer to, if not to the written book of Prophet ‘Issa’ (a.s.)? Now that Injil is lost.

It will be of interest to note that these four so-called ‘Gospels’ were not given this title upto the end of the second century CE.

Who Wrote the ‘Gospels’?

Coming to the present four ‘gospels’ the first thing which must be mentioned is that it is not certain who wrote the first and the fourth books.

The first is the ‘gospel’ attributed to St. Matthew, who was one of the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ. But this ‘gospel’ is based mostly on the ‘gospel’ of Mark who was not a disciple of Jesus and had no first-

hand knowledge of the events of the ministry of Jesus.

Westminister Dictionary of Bible (under ‘Matthew’) mentions that according to many scholars it is difficult to accept that Matthew was the author of that gospel. “Matthew reproduces about 90 per cent of the subject matter of Mark in language very largely identical with that of Mark. Now it is highly improbable that an apostle would have used as a major source the word of one who in all likelihood had not been an eye witness of the ministry of Jesus.”

Moreover, Papias wrote in about 140 CE that “Matthew collected ‘logia’ (sayings or oracles) in the Hebrew language and each one interpreted them as he was able.” But the original ‘gospel’ of Matthew is not in Hebrew; it is in Greek; and Greek was not the language of Matthew!

It is thus clear that the book written by Matthew was lost and later his name was transferred to another edited work.

Likewise, it is not known who was John, the author of the fourth ‘gospel’. But Christian public is led to believe that it was written by John, the apostle of Jesus Christ.

But the above-mentioned dictionary (under ‘John’ the gospel according to) clearly says that many scholars believe that the author was some “disciple and follower of John the son of Zebedee (the apostle). His name is either unknown to us or, more likely, was John the Presbyter or Elder.”

Writers of the remaining two ‘gospels’ were disciples and followers of the Apostles, and most probably had not seen or met Jesus Christ at all.

Thus, not only that these four “books” were written decades after Jesus Christ, but also they were not written by his immediate disciples either. And at least two of them were written by unknown persons.

The Gospels: Not Trustworthy

Apart from this dubious authorship, the texts of these ‘gospels’ show that their writers were not trustworthy. Let me point to a few examples of blatant alterations;

The figure ‘7’ was considered very important by Israelites (no doubt, because of the paganistic idea that God was tired after creating the universe in 6 days, and rested on the 7th day). Thus they were fond of adjusting known historical facts to fit in the frame of ‘7’ or multiples of ‘7’. The author of the ‘gospel’ according to Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the first chapter. He divides it in 3 parts of 14+14+14. And to fit the names in this scheme of ‘14’, he omits 4 names in between. He has omitted the name of Jehoiakim between Josias and Jechonias (thus presenting the grandson as the son); and the names of Ahaziah, Goash and Azariah between Joram and Czias, (thus presenting a great-great-grandson as the son).

It is quite apart from other known historical inaccuracies, which permeate this genealogy.

Then if you compare this genealogy with that given in the ‘gospel’ according to Luke (chapter 3) you will find that the names between David and Joseph are completely different, putting one man in two different clans.

In the ‘gospel’ of Matthew, Joseph was son of Jacob, son of Matthew who was from the clan of Solomon son of David, and between Joseph and Solomon, were 24 generations.

According to the ‘gospel’ of Luke, Joseph was son of Heti, son of Matthat, who was from the clan of Nathan son of David; and between Joseph and Nathan were 39 generations.

Naturally, one man cannot be born in two different lines of David: he cannot be at one and the same time from the progeny of Solomon s/o David and that of Nathan s/o David.

This one example is enough to show that these so-called ‘gospels’ are not truthful. In this background the English phrase ‘gospel truth’ may mean anything from the newsbulletins of Goebels to the ‘informations’ of fighting countries. An observer has a right to ask that if the writers of these gospels could have changed the established facts to suit their whims, what assurance was there that they had not changed the creed to suit their fancy?

The New Testament: Misinterpretations

The New Testament was not free from serious ‘misinterpretations’. To give one most important example: ‘Son of God’ was an expression in Hebrew language, which meant ‘beloved of God’ or ‘chosen by God’. Adam, Jacob, Efraim, the whole tribe of Israelites, the whole group of the followers of Jesus Christ, and the whole mankind have been called ‘Son of God’ or ‘the Dear Son of God’ or ‘the Children of God’ in the New and Old Testaments.

This expression was never meant to be exported to other countries or cultures, because the Old Testament was a Book for the tribe of Israelites, and so was the ministry of Jesus who expressly limited his jurisdiction to the tribe of Israel and said: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:23); and sent his apostles saying, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles (non-Israelites), and into the city of Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!.” (Matthew 10:5–6).

But St. Paul, who had never met Jesus Christ in his life, overruled the apostles who had spent their times with him and were conversant with his ministry. He took the Christianity to the Gentiles and this transplanting bore out such fruits, which could never be palatable to Jesus Christ himself.

When that Hebrew expression reached the Greek civilization it naturally conveyed a different meaning to its people. The Greeks believed in scores of gods and semi-gods together with their wives, mistresses and children; they were used to hear about their rivalries, love and jealousy. No wonder they interpreted

the Hebrew expression in their own terms and made Jesus Christ ‘Son of God’ in the literal sense.

The differences of the Councils, in the 3rd and 4th centuries of the Christian era, about the relationship between Jesus and God, provide ample proof in themselves that the idea of Sonship of God (in its present sense) was not the original or universally accepted one. (The word ‘Trinity’ does not occur even once in the New or the Old Testament).

When the Nicea Council (325 CE) adopted the Nicene Creed, which contained the statement that the son was ‘of one substance with the Father’, reaction in the Christian circles was very violent. At least 13 more Councils were held between 325 and 381 CE. Meanwhile persecution of one or the other party continued relentlessly.

There emerged four groups:

1. Homoousians (Orthodox) – believing that the son was ‘of one substance’ with the Father;
2. Homoeans (Arian) – believing that the son was ‘like’ the Father;
3. Homoioustians (Semi-Arian) – believing that the son was ‘of like substance’ with the Father;
4. Anomoeans (Ultra-Arian) – believing that the son was ‘unlike’ the Father.

Numerous Councils were held to decide the issue. Sometimes one group succeeded and at other times the other group swayed the council with it; and the Roman Emperors played a very active part in influencing the decisions of the Councils. It was just a chance of history that the emperor, who influenced the last council on the subject, favored the old pagan idea of “sonship” and thus the Greek meaning superceded the original Hebrew meaning. Here we may see what damage was done to the basic faith, by neglecting the command of Jesus Christ about going ‘not beyond the house of Israel’.

Once that meaning was changed, it was just ‘natural’ to believe that the Son of God was himself God. I remember reading in the English *Summa Theologica* that “as son of man is man; son of horse is horse; likewise, Son of God is God.”

Then as the interpolations in the Torah had necessitated the coming of Jesus Christ, the changes in the pure belief of Christianity necessitated the coming of Muhammad (s.a.w.) with the Qur'an to confirm the truths which were still extant in the Torah and Injil of his time (which incidentally, are still extant, with periodical changes!), and to correct the wrong beliefs which had crept into these books as a result of pagan influence.

4. The Qur'an, Hadith Qudsi & Hadith

According to the Muslims, the revelations from God are of three kinds:

(a) **The Qur'an:** where the words and meanings both are revealed from God, and it is meant to be a miracle in itself. The only example of such Revelation is the Qur'an. No other Revelation was meant to be a miracle, challenging the antagonists to bring its 'like' if they could, and prophesying that they could never do so.

(b) **Hadith Qudsi:** where the words and meaning are both from God, but it is not intended to be a miracle. It is called *hadith qudsi*. It is found in the books of traditions and generally begins with these words: "The Holy Prophet said that Allah said".

These revelations are scattered in the books of traditions and have the same value as the traditions of the Holy Prophet and are subject to the same tests. One scholar has tried to collect them in a separate book. But that collection is obviously not complete.

The tablets of Torah given to Musa (a.s.) come into this category, because therein the meanings and words both were from Allah, but they were not sent as a miracle or as a challenge.

(c) **Hadith:** where only the meanings are from God but the words are of the prophet. Inspirations, and also traditions of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) come into this category.

Thus it will appear that according to the Muslims only the third kind of revelation is clothed in the prophet's own wordings; and even then there is no suggestion or hint that the prophet could or did alter the meaning conveyed by Allah.

It will be interesting to compare the above with the Christians' idea of revelation.

According to them, the message of God becomes tainted with human thoughts in its very origin, when it is received by the prophet. The above mentioned *Concise Bible Commentary* explains: "Note that there are three elements in revelation: God who initiates; the recipient who apprehends it according to his capacity and those who in each generation receive the message mediated through the first recipient. The corporate experience of the church, whether of the Old or New dispensation, is molding it all the time. In other words, revelation is continuous..."⁴

To comprehend fully what is meant by the second and third stages, I quote from the same Commentary: "the third stage is when the disciples of the prophet, if not he himself, write down the message that has been circulating in oral form. Some editing and accommodation to current needs is inevitable, though we need not suppose that anything of value is lost... editors do sometimes improve the work submitted by authors, if only by making it intelligible to the reading public, and those who arranged the utterances of the great prophets did a great service".⁵

Thus revelation, according to the Christians thought, is bound to be modified by the prophets, as well as the subsequent scribes and writers, according to the needs of their times. For them, editing and changing does not affect the authenticity of revelation, while for a Muslim, this editing makes it 'corrupt'.

It is evident that the Muslims and the Christians are not speaking the same language when they converse about either 'revelation' or alteration:

It just happens that the Christians cannot show any 'revealed' authority for their interpretation of Revelation. There is no sentence in the Bible to show that the words of God can be corrupted and still maintain their authenticity and originality. This interpretation, allowing for additions, alterations, editing and manipulations of scribes in the Books of God, is very late in its origin; and has been invented to accommodate the differences, historical inaccuracies and contradictory statements of the Bible. But for the Muslims such contradictions are definite proof that the text in question is not from God.

Looking at the conceptions of revelation in Islam and Christianity, if we try to fit the Old and New Testaments in the frame of the Muslims' belief, as mentioned earlier, we may be tempted to put it in the third category, in which the ideas come from God and the words are supplied by the prophet himself.

But this attempt would be unjustified, because:

- (a) Though Muslims do know and accept the presence of a number of forged traditions in the books of traditions, they do not attribute them to the Prophet himself. They have never thought that the Prophet himself could ever make any mistake in comprehending the message of Allah. The Christians, on the other hand, say that the mistakes could have started at such an early stage of revelation as the prophets themselves.
- (b) Resulting from this attitude is their respective treatment of the traditions and revelations. The Muslims have set severe tests to verify the genuineness or otherwise of a given tradition. All traditions, which are not up to the mark, are rejected as fabrications of the narrators. The Christians are not free to reject any part of the Bible, because, according to their belief, every single word of it is revealed.

Except for these two difficulties, the revelation of Christians' conception might be placed in the third category i.e. 'revealed thoughts'. Still they will not be the Torah and Injil of the Qur'an, which were 'revealed books'.

Anyhow, this difference in the conception of revelation is the basic factor in this whole argument. What is termed as 'continuous revelation' by the Christians is treated as 'corruption' in the academic world. Frankly speaking, if additions, mixing of different sources into one, changing the sequence of the events, and adjusting the facts to a self-imposed scheme, is not 'alteration' of a work, then the word 'alteration' should be removed from the dictionary.

1. I have just given a brief outline, omitting the technical arguments and reasons.

2. For example, fifteen strips of parchment were discovered in the last quarter of the 19th century. "After studying his acquisition for some weeks, Shapira realized that what he had was an ancient version of the Book of Deuteronomy, one which differed markedly from the established biblical text." See Baigent, M. and Leigh, R., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (London: Corgi Books. 1992) p.333.

3. Clarke, W. K. L., *Concise Bible Commentary*, pp. 685-687.

4. Concise Bible Commentary. p.4.

5. Ibid, p.3.

Chapter 3: The Qur'an

1. The Preliminary Details

The Revelation of the Qur'an

The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet of Islam from the beginning of his mission to the end of his life, that is from the 27th Rajab in the 40th year of his life up to the 28th Safar (or 12th Rabi'u 'l-Awwal) 11 A.H – a total span of 22 years 5 months 1day (or 15 days).

The first revelation was the first five verses of surah Iqra' which begins with the words "Read". And the last verse connected with the shari'ah was:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيَتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion" (5:3)

revealed in Ghadir Khumm.

Name

The only proper name of the final Book of Allah is al-Qur'an (القرآن) which means 'the Recital, 'the Recited'. For example, Allah says:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ

"The month of Ramadan, that in which was sent down the Qur'an." (2:185).

There are some other adjectives used in the Qur'an which throw light on some particular excellence or quality of the Book. For example:

(a) Al-Furqan (الفرقان): that which distinguishes truth from falsehood; distinction:

بَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا

“Blessed is He who sent down the Distinction upon His servant...” (25: 1)

(b) Al-Kitab (الكتاب): the Book:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَبَّ لَهُ فِيهِ

“This is the Book, there is no doubt in it.” (2:2)

(c) Adh-Dhikr (الذكرا): the Reminder:

إِنَّا هُنُّ نَزَّلْنَا الْذِكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

“Verily We have sent down the Reminder and most certainly We are its protectors.” (15:9)

(d) An-Nur (النور): the Light:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُّبِينًا

“...and We have sent down to you a manifest Light.” (4: 174)

But these words are not exclusively reserved for the Qur'an.

It should also be noted that the word “*al-Mushaf*” is not found in the Qur'an, although the Muslims have been using it for the Book since a long time.

Surah & Ayah

The Qur'an is divided into *surahs*. Until the last century, many cities had a wall around them for defense purposes; that wall was called *sur*. A surah thus is a part of the Qur'an complete in itself. In English, it is usually translated as 'chapter'.

The surah contains 'ayat (plural of 'ayah = sign) usually translated as 'verses'. It is not a good translation because "verse" is associated with poetry while the Qur'an is not poetry. However, I will use this word because it is now commonly understood. An 'ayah is not necessarily a complete sentence.

Sometimes one complete *surah*, sometimes one or more 'ayat were revealed, according to the need. The occasion or event connected with the revelation of a certain verse has some bearing on the understanding of its meaning and implications, but the verse is not confined to that event in its

application.

There are 114 *surahs* in the Qur'an; the longest of them is al-Baqarah with 286 'ayat and covering about 1/12 of the volume; and the shortest is al-Kawthar with four 'ayat, which may be written in one line.

As for the 'ayat, there are 6236 'ayat, as described in al-Mu'jam al-Ihsa'i by Dr. Mahmud Ruhani.[1](#)

The Muslims have divided the Qur'an into 30 equal parts (*juz'* in Arabic and *para* in Urdu), to enable the readers to recite the whole Book once in a month especially during the holy Ramadhan.

They have also divided the *surahs* into various sections of 'ayat – these sections are called *ruku'*, one *ruku'* contains 7 to 12 'ayat. For example, surah al-Fatihah (the 1st surah) has 7 'ayat, all grouped in one *ruku'*; the 2nd surah has 286 'ayat divided into 40 *ruku's*.

Makki & Madani

Surahs and 'ayat are called Makki or Madani according to the period of revelation; that is, the *surahs* and 'ayat revealed before Hijrah are called Makki (revealed at Mecca) and after the Hijrah are called Madani (revealed in Medina).

The following 20 surahs are accepted as Madani; 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 24, 32, 47, 48, 49, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 65, 66, 76 and 110. There is a difference about the following 21 *surahs* as whether they were revealed at Mecca or Medina: 10, 13, 22, 25, 36, 57, 61, 64, 83, 89, 90, 92, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 107, 112, 113 and 114. The remaining 73 *surahs* are Makki.

There is a marked difference between the Makki and Madani surahs. For example:

1. The Makki *surahs*, mostly, describe the matters of basic faith: refutation of paganistic beliefs, evidence of the oneness of Allah, His Attributes, proof of the resurrection on the Day of Judgment, prophethood of the Holy Prophet and of previous prophets, building good character, removal of the rust of evil from the hearts of people etc.

Madani surahs deal, mostly, with the code of life, rules of shari'ah like prayers, fast, zakat, khums, jihad, hajj, family affairs, social behavior, etc.

2. Makki 'ayat and *surahs* are, mostly, short; Madani 'ayat and *surahs* are, mostly, long. For example: 28th part (*juz'*) is mostly Madani and it has 137 'ayat, while 29th and 30th parts (mostly Makki) have 431 and 570 'ayat respectively.

3. In Makki *surahs*, whenever the audience has been addressed, mostly the words "O People" (بِأَيْمَانِكُمْ) or "O Children of Adam" (بِأَيْدِي آدَمْ) have been used; whereas in Madani *surahs*, mostly, the words "O you who believe" (بِأَيْمَانِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا) have been used.

4. All the *surahs* in which one is ordered to (or recommended to) do *sajdah* were revealed at Makka – thus emphasizing the worship of One and Only Allah.

2. Writing & Collection of the Qur'an

The Qur'an was committed to writing from the very beginning. There are at least 52 verses in which the Qur'an is called "al-Kitab" (the written thing; the book). In the beginning, at the time of revelations, the Holy Prophet used to repeat the wordings recited by Gabriel, lest he forgot something. Allah assured him that there was no need to worry:

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَكُرْآنَهُ

Move not thy tongue with it [the Quran] to make haste therewith. Surely on us is its collection and its recital. (75: 16–17)

Thus, Allah Himself was responsible to collect and promulgate this Book. In another ayah, Allah says:

وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ

"And it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it."
(41:41–42)

Scribes

Some companions were specially entrusted to write down the *surahs* and 'ayat revealed to the Holy Prophet. Some of them were 'Ali bin Abi Talib, Ubayy bin Ka'b, 'Abdullah bin Rawahah, Khalid bin Sa'id bin al-'As, and in later period Zayd bin Thabit among others.

As soon as a revelation was received, the Holy Prophet dictated it to one or more of the above-mentioned scribes.

Position of 'Ayat

At the time of dictation the Holy Prophet himself used to fix the position of that 'ayah or 'ayat in the

surahs. The Qur'an even before its revelation, was arranged as a Book in the "Preserved Tablet (الكتاب المحفوظ)"¹; but the events during the ministry of the Holy Prophet necessitated revelation of 'ayat in a different order. But the Holy Prophet knew the original arrangement of the "Preserved Tablet" and directed the revealed 'ayat to be written accordingly. It is for the reason that we find Madani 'ayat in Makki *surahs* and vice versa.

Memorizing the Qur'an

The Holy Prophet used to stress the importance and reward of committing the Qur'an to memory .And hundreds of people responded to this prophetic enjoinder. As the eagerness of the people for memorizing the Holy Book increased, the Holy Prophet selected four principal instructors who learnt the Qur'an under his personal guidance and then trained the others, who in their turn, used to teach it to still others. Those four were:

1. Abdullah bin Mas'ud.
2. Salim Mawla Abi Hudhayfah.
3. Ma'adh bin Jabal.
4. Ubayy bin Ka'b.

The number of people who had memorized the whole Qur'an during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet was so great that in the battle of Yamamah, fought just six months after the death of the Holy Prophet, 700 (or 500) *Huffaz* (those who had committed the Qur'an to memory) were killed in one day only.

A Set Arrangement

All this memorizing presupposes a set arrangement of the 'ayat, if not of the *surahs*. Also, the Holy Prophet said that Gabriel used to recite before him the whole Qur'an in the month of Ramadhan. Many companions used to recite the whole Qur'an once in a month and especially in the month of Ramadhan.

The following are among those who had the whole Qur'an in writing with them during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet: 'Ali bin Abi Talib, Sa'd bin 'Ubayd bin Nu'man, Ab-Darda, Ma'adh bin Jabal, Ubayd bin Ka'b, Ubayd bin Mu'awiyah bin Zayd, 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Zayd bin Thabit and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari.

There are numerous traditions of the Holy Prophet which prove that the Qur'an was already a written Book. For example: "I am leaving behind among you two precious things... the Book of Allah ... and my Descendants who are my family members..."

Also, when the Holy Prophet, a few days before his death, wanted to write something for the continued guidance of the Muslims, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab opposed it and said "إن الرجل ليهجر حسبنا كتاب الله" the man (i.e. the Holy Prophet) is in delirium; the Book of Allah is enough for us." These words at least

prove that the Book of Allah was readily available at the time of the Holy Prophet.

3. Collection of the Qur'an

The above-mentioned facts prove that at least the *surahs* had their definite forms, during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. But what was the arrangement of the *surahs* in those days?

It appears from various narratives that the various reciters and teachers of the Qur'an had arranged the *surahs* in their own ways, but the arrangement of the 'ayat within the *surahs* was fixed.

Thus, 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud and Ubayd bin Ka'b both are recorded to have arranged the *surahs* in the ways quite different from the arrangement of Zayd bin Thabit.

Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s) had arranged the Qur'an just after the death of the Holy Prophet, in the order in which it had been revealed. This, in itself, proves that the arrangement of the *surahs* and 'ayat at that time was different from the order of revelation and 'Ali bin Abi Talib wanted to record the sequence of revelation for the benefit of the Muslims.

However, the companions continued to follow their own various arrangements until 'Uthman bin Affan, the third caliph, forced the Muslims to follow the arrangement commonly in use at Madina and forbade other arrangements.

But difference in arrangement had not meant difference in *surahs* or 'ayat. Thus the authenticity of the Holy Qur'an is unparalleled in the history of Divine revelations.

This authenticity is universally accepted and admired even by those who do not follow the religion of the Qur'an.

Basanta Coomar Bose writes: "So there has been no opportunity for any forgery of pious fraud in the Koran, which distinguishes it from all other important religious works of ancient times... it is exceedingly strange that this illiterate person should have composed the best book in the language."[2](#)

Laura Veccia Vaglieri writes: "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 Qur'an; 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.”³

4. More about Authenticity

Shaykh Abu Ja’far as-Saduq (d. 381 AH) writes in his *I’tiqadatu ‘I-Imamiyyah*:

“It is our belief that the Qur’an which Allah revealed to His Prophet Muhammad is what is presently in book form. And it is that which is in the hands of people, and is not greater in extent than that.”

Again he says alluding to the false propaganda of the enemies: “And he who asserts that we say that it is greater in extent than this (the present text) is a liar.”⁴ Then he mentions some proofs to show that Qur’an is the unaltered word of Allah. He says that the following groups of traditions and revelations clearly show that the Qur’an is unaltered:

1. The traditions which describe the reward (*thawab*) of reciting individual *surahs* of the Qur’an. (If the *surahs* were not finalized and given permanency in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, neither he nor his true successors, i.e., the Imams, could have described the *thawab* of every surah separately).
2. The traditions which describe the *thawab* of reciting the whole Qur’an. (If the Qur’an were not final and complete, the Holy Prophet or the Imams could not have described that *thawab* in those terms).
3. The rule that after *surah* Fatiha, two surahs may be recited in the supererogatory prayers (*nawafil*), but not in obligatory prayer. (This rule shows that the *surahs* of the Qur’an had been authenticated by the Holy Prophet and the Imams).
4. The traditions which forbid the recitation of the whole Qur’an in one night and in less than 3 days. (This phrase ‘the whole Qur’an’ shows that what is in our hands is the whole Qur’an).

Even more important perhaps from present day’s way of thinking, are the manuscripts of the Qur’an dating back to the family members and companions of the Holy Prophet. There is the copy of the Qur’an which was used by the third Khalifa; there are the Qur’ans written by Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib, Imam Hasan bin ‘Ali, Imam ‘Ali ar-Rida (in the museum of Mashhad, Iran) and by Imam Zaynu’l-‘Abidin (in the library of Rampur, India). And all of them have the same text, same arrangement of ‘ayat and *surahs*, as we have today. This proof, apart from all other proofs, is enough to show that the Qur’an has reached us in the same form in which it was left by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w).

Marginal References

Before closing this subject, one thing should be mentioned here. It appears from many traditions that many companions of the Holy Prophet (including Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib and Abdullah bin Mas’ud) had written marginal references in their personal copies of the Qur’an. This would have been of much help to a reader in understanding the Divine text. But those marginal references were not part of the text. Perhaps, it was for this reason that even Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s) did not write those marginal notes

in any of the copies made by him which are in our hands.

Sometimes you will come across a tradition that a certain 'ayah was in such a way in the Qur'an of, let us say, Abdullah bin Mas'ud. For example, there is the 'ayah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلَّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۝ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ

O Messenger, proclaim the (message) which has been sent to thee from thy Lord; and if thou didst not, thou wouldst not have proclaimed His Message... (5:67).

You will find in some traditions that in the Qur'an of Abdullah bin Mas'ud, this 'ayah was written as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلَّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۝ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ

O Messenger, proclaim the (message) which has been sent to thee from thy Lord that Ali is the Leader of the Believers; and if thou didst not...

But you need not be confused by it. Abdullah bin Mas'ud had written that phrase (given above in italics) to make the 'ayah's meaning clear by pointing out its object and occasion at Khumm. Those wording were not the part of the 'ayah.

It should also be recalled that all the revelations sent to the Holy prophet were not part of the Qur'an. Revelations could be either Qur'an or hadith qudsi or hadith. In fact, if all the revelations were to be collected, it would be three times bigger than the Qur'an. But all those revelations were not sent as the Qur'an. Therefore even if we hear that a certain phrase was revealed to the Holy Prophet, it should not be assumed that it was part of the Qur'an.

Letters and Vowels Counted:

The extent of care devoted by the Muslims to safeguard the Qur'an from any possible alteration may be seen from the fact that they have not only counted the 'ayat and ruku', but every single letter of the alphabet and every single sign of vowel has been meticulously counted and recorded. For example, we know that there are 48872 (الف) and 11428 (ب) and so on. We also know that the Qur'an has 53243 fathah (ۚ) and 1258 shaddah (ۖ).⁵

5. The Qur'an: A Miracle Performer

It has been described earlier that Allah has sent the Qur'an as a miracle. The Qur'an is a miracle of language and style; it is a miracle of prophecies; it is a miracle of scientific revelations; and it is a miracle

of the best code of life. Not only a miracle: it is a miracle–performer: it accomplished the miracle of transforming an extremely ignorant and unlettered people into the guardians of knowledge and learning.

Hartwig Hirschfeld, Ph.D. M.R.A.S., writes: “We must not be surprised to find the Qur'an the fountain-head of the science. 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 Qur'an was responsible for great discussions, and to it was indirectly due the marvelous 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 Arabs' methods. Finally, the way in which Christian scholasticism was fertilized by Arabian theosophy need not 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 Qur'an gave an impetus to medical studies and recommended the contemplation and study of Nature in general.”⁶

Stanislas Guyard writes: “During the Middle Ages, the history of Mohammedanism 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 give 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 ... Mohammad gave them (Arabs) the Qur'an which was the starting point of a new culture.”⁷

Dr. A. Bertherand writes: “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 Qur'an. 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, skeptical and unbelieving may convince themselves that the importance of this Book and its doctrine was not to throw back, eventually, the intellectual 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.”⁸

This contribution is quite apart from the religious subjects which were initiated because of the Qur'an; and the development of literature and the codification of grammar and other allied subjects which were founded because of the Qur'an. In fact, all Islamic subjects, all subjects connected with Arabic literature and all subjects related to philosophy etc. came to the Arabs and the Muslims through the Holy Book of Allah, which is called the Qur'an.

Below we will look at the various aspects of the Qur'anic miracle: language, prophecies, being free from discrepancies, science, and ethics.

Miracle of Language

The language of Qur'an is of such highest standard that it is a miracle in itself, and nobody could meet its challenge. The difference between all other miracles and the Qur'an is that other miracles of other prophets and even of our Prophet were for those only who had witnessed them. For others they are mere news which may be believed or suspected according to the trend of the minds of the hearers. But the Qur'an is in our hands, a book complete in itself; it claims and brings the proof within itself. And its miracles are being unfolded every day.

Arabs in the time of the Prophet were proud of their language. They were proud of it, since Arabic language is very rich and sophisticated one. Poets and eloquent speakers were almost idols of their tribes. Poems were learned and read on every occasion, and yearly competitions were held for the best pieces of poetry in a place called Suq 'Ukaz. Thus literature was the best art the Arabs had mastered very well.

The Qur'an came and its miracle, to their surprise, was its language and style. The Qur'an was the challenge; God asked them to produce a similar Qur'an:

فُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِيَعْضُ ظَهِيرًا

Say: If the whole of mankind and Jinns gathered together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other. (17:88).

The whole of mankind to cooperate to produce just one book! But it was extended even to the Jinns!! And backing up each other!!! Still they could not bring its equal!!!

Then the challenge was reduced to ten *surahs*, to show them their weakness and helplessness:

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۝ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

"Do they say 'He has forged it?' 'Say, 'Bring you, then, ten surahs like unto it forged, and call (to

your aid) whomsoever you can, other than God! If you speak the truth” (11:13).

They could not meet even that challenge, and it was reduced at last to one surah only:

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ أَفْتَرَاهُ ۝ قُلْ فَاتُوا بِسُورَةِ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“Do they say ‘He forged it?’ ‘Say, Bring then a surah like unto it and call to your aid anyone you can, besides God, if you speak the truth” (10:38)

One surah may be only one line. Still the proud eloquent Arabs could not face the challenge. You can see the logical reasoning and rational approach to convince the Arabs of its miraculous quality. A surah may be only one line but the Arabs (and non-Arabs too) could not succeed in their attempts to meet the standing challenge. The beauty of the Qur'an, the strength of its conviction, its logic and simplicity, and its depth and wisdom are far above what the Arabs or non-Arabs know or conceive.

When the Qur'an was read, the idolaters used to close their ears; some used to make noise, whistling and chanting, in order not to hear the Qur'an; lest they be ‘bewitched’. The nonbelievers could not give any reasonable explanation to this irresistible beauty and power of the Qur'an. However, they had to find some excuse to put people off and to justify their enmity. They invented lies and said, “The Qur'an is not but poetry or magic.” That was the excuse they could find for their utter failure and helplessness!

God refuted this allegation in this ‘ayah:

فَذَكِّرْ فَمَا أَنْتَ بِنْعَمَتِ رَبِّكَ بِكَاهِنٍ وَلَا مَجْنُونٍ

“Therefore continue to remind, for by the grace of your Lord you are no soothsayer, nor are you one possessed.” (52:29)

We also know that Arabs waged war upon war to silence the Holy Prophet. But the easiest way would have been to produce a short surah (like al-Kawthar) of equal standard and the claim of the Prophet would have been refuted. No sane person would use sword when a few words could serve his purpose in a more effective way. But the Arabs preferred war and by doing so they practically acknowledged that they could not produce the like of the Qur'an.

Not that they did not try to produce its equal. There is a short surah (al-Qari'ah) describing the Day of Judgment the opening ‘ayat of which are:

الْقَارِعَةُ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ

“The great calamity! What is the great calamity? And what should make thee know what the great calamity is? The day when mankind will be like moths scattered about; and the mountains will be like carded wool...” (101: 1-5)

A pagan Arab tried to reply it and produced these sentences:

الفيل ما الفيل وما أدرك ما الفيل

لله جسم ثقيل وزنب قصير وخرطوم طويل.

“The elephant, and what is the elephant? And what should make thee know what is the elephant? It has a heavy body and short tail and long trunk.”

Needless to say that all he earned in gratitude from his fellows was ridicule.

Likewise, in the days of Imam Ja’far As-Sadiq (a.s.), Ibn Abi’l-‘Awja, Abu Shakir ad-Daysani, ‘Abdu’l Malik al-Basri and Ibnu ‘I –Muqaffa’ planned to write the reply of the Qur’an. They decided to write the reply of one-fourth of the Book each. The time and place of their next meeting: during the hajj next year in the precincts of the Ka’bah.

When they gathered together next year, Ibn Abi’l-‘Awja, said: “Since we dispersed (last year), I have been pondering upon the verse,

فَلَمَّا اسْتَيَّسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجِيًّا

‘And when they despaired of him, they retired whispering’ (12:80);

and I found myself unable to write something comparable to its eloquence and meaning; I was too engrossed in this verse to look at the others.”

‘Abu’l-Malik said that the same happened to him about the verse,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ ۝ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا نُبَيْأَنًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ ۝ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبُهُمُ الظُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ۝ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ

“O you people! A parable is set forth, so listen you unto it! Verily, those whom you call upon besides Allah can never create (even) a fly, even though they all gather together for it; and should the fly carry away any thing from them, they cannot take it back from it; (how) weak the

invoker and the invoked!" (22:73);

and he could not compose anything like it.

Abu Shakir said: "Since I left you (last year), I am pondering on the verse,

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلَهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا

'Had there been in them [the heavens and the earth] gods except Allah, they both had been in disorder' (21:22);

and have been unable to write its like."

Ibnu 'l-Muqaffa' said: O people! This Qur'an is not from man's speech, I too since leaving you had been thinking about the verse,

وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ الْبَلْعَى مَاءُكِ وَيَا سَمَاءُ أَقْلِعِي وَغَيْضَنَ الْمَاءُ وَفُضَّيَ الْأَمْرُ وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ ۝ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلنَّقْوُمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

"And it was said, 'O earth! Swallow down thy water, and O sky! Withhold: and the water was made to subside, and the matter was ended; and it [the Ark] rested on the (mountain) Judi; and the word went forth: 'Away with those who do wrong'" (11:44).

The fact is I could not fathom its beauty and could not produce equal to it.

They were thus engrossed in this secret talk when Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) passed by them and read the following 'ayah:

قُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوْ بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

*"Say, if the whole of mankind and Jinns gathered together to produce the likeness of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they were helpers of each other" (17:88)*⁹

This challenge and the prophecy that they could never bring its equal is the most prominent feature of the miracle of the Qur'an. It is admitted even by non-Muslims.

F. F. Arbuthnot writes: "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 as yet succeeded.”¹⁰

J. Christy Wilson, writes: “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 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 Mohammed; in fact he repeatedly challenged his adversaries to produce anything like it.”¹¹

H. A. R. Gibb, writes: “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.”¹²

Harry Gaylord Dorman writes: “It (Qur'an) is a literal revelation of God, dictated to Muhammad by Gabriel, perfect in every 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 the illiterate Muhammad could never have gathered of his own accord.”¹³

And Paul Casanova wrote: “Whenever Muhammad was asked a miracle, as a proof of the authenticity of his mission, he quoted the composition of the Qur'an and its incomparable excellence as proof of its Divine origin. And, in fact, even for those who are non-Muslims nothing is more marvelous than its language which with such a prehensile plenitude and a grasping sonority with its simple audition ravished with admiration those primitive peoples so fond of eloquence. The amplexness 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 most skeptic.”¹⁴

Miracles of Prophecies

Another miraculous aspect of the Qur'an is its prophecies. For instance, the destiny of Abu Lahab and his wife was foretold to be the hell; and they both died idolaters. Hence both of them deserved the hell.

سَيَصْلِي نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ

وَامْرَأَتُهُ حَمَالَةُ الْحَطَبِ

“Soon shall he (Abu Lahab) enter into blazing fire, and his wife, the wood-carrier” (111:3-4)

When the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) was in Mecca, a war broke out between the Romans and the Persians in

which the Romans were defeated. The Meccans were overjoyed because the Persians were fire-worshippers, and the idol-worshipping Meccans took their victory over the Christians (nominally Unitarians) as a good omen that too would ultimately vanquish the Muslims.

Then came the revelation telling the Meccans that the Romans would be victorious in the second round:

غُلِبَتِ الرُّومُ

فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ

فِي بِضْعِ سِنِينَ ۝ لِلَّهِ الْأَكْمَرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدُ ۝ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَغْرِحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

“The Romans have been defeated, in the near land, and they after their defeat will be victorious within few years; Allah’s is the command before and after that; and on that day the believers will rejoice.” (30:2-4)

In a few years, the Romans defeated the Persians.

While the Holy Prophet was about to migrate to Medina, his heart was full of grief for leaving his hometown. Then came the good news to console him:

إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِرَادُكَ إِلَىٰ مَعَادٍ ۝ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

“Most surely He who has made the teaching of the Qur'an binding on thee, will bring thee back to thy place of return.” (28:85)

Within eight years the Holy Prophet returned to Mecca triumphantly.

The dream (in 6 A.H) that he was entering Mecca was followed by the ‘ayah:

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ رَسُولُهُ الرُّوْيَا بِالْحَقِّ ۝ لَتَدْخُلُنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ أَمِنِينَ مُحَلِّقِينَ رُءُوسَكُمْ وَمُقْصِرِينَ لَا تَخَافُونَ

“Surely has Allah in truth fulfilled for His Messenger the Vision; you will certainly enter the Sacred Mosque (i.e. Ka'bah) if Allah wills, in security, some having their head shaven and others having their hair cut short, and you will have no fear.” (48:27).

This prophecy also proved correct.

There are many other prophecies – some have already been fulfilled, and others will surely be fulfilled.

Free from Discrepancies

أَفَلَا يَتَبَرَّوْنَ الْقُرْآنَ ۖ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

“Do not they ponder on the Quran (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely find therein much discrepancy.” (4:82)

The Qur'an is a Book which covers many subjects and events. Its topics are not separated as is the case with scholar's books and theses. It discusses many topics in one page at times, but without losing the purpose and without going away from the main aim. The Qur'an is a book that you enjoy reading; and the more you read it, the further the desire to read it again. Indeed in every reading you see some horizons that you had not seen before.

Considering the range of the topics the Qur'an comments on, the repetition of some stories, the non-classification of the topics, it is hard to find such a book without contradictions and errors. By human standard, practically no book is free from mistakes whether it is on history, physics, chemistry, astronomy or biology.

But here is a book, which was not written at one time. It is a collection of piecemeal revelations, covering a span of about 23 years. Can any scholar believe that any human being, unlettered, will remember every single word, which he had uttered during the previous 23 years? It is impossible and hence the chances of contradictions. But Qur'an has no contradiction; and, according to that test, it is the word of Allah.

There is a tradition in *al-Ihtijaj* reporting that an atheist had mentioned some 'ayat to Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) which he thought were contradictory to each other. When 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) explained the meaning and purpose of those 'ayat, that atheist had to admit that the Qur'an was free from discrepancies.

Leaving that lengthy report aside, I quote here a paragraph from a shorter tradition in which Imam 'Ali (a.s.) had replied to a question of similar nature put by a Kharijite, 'Abdullah ibn al-Kawwa'. The Kharijite had claimed that the following three 'ayat contradicted one another:

1.

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ وَالْمَغَارِبِ

But nay! I swear by the Lord of the [many] Easts and [many] Wests... (70:40)

2.

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ

The Lord of the two Easts and the two Wests. (55: 17)

3.

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ

The Lord of the Easts and the Wests... (73:9)

He thought it contradictory, because in one place it speaks of one East and one West, while another ‘ayah’ mentions two Easts and two Wests and yet a third describes many Easts and many Wests.

Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) showed that there was no discrepancy at all. The ‘ayah’ speaking of “the East and the West” refers to the two cardinal points; the one mentioning “two Easts and two Wests” describes the two extreme points of the sunrise and sunset of the winter and the summer, and the one of many Easts and many Wests draws attention to the scientific exactitude because every day the Sun rises and sets in a different place from the previous day.[15](#)

Thus we should understand that whatever word or expression is used in the Qur'an it points out to one or the other great truth. Mankind will gain much by pondering upon the words of God, which has come to us in its purest form in the Qur'an.

Scientific Revelations

Now, a non-Arab may rightly wonder about the claim of the literary miracle. He does not know Arabic, so miraculous aspect of the language might not be appealing to him, or even to uneducated or half-educated modern Arabs. The reason for the latter is the deterioration of the colloquial Arabic and its distance from the classical standards.

Obviously in this era we are in need of a miracle in science, telling us what is in the heavens and within ourselves. The Qur'an, although not a scientific text, reveals many secrets and wonders of the heavens and of ourselves as part of its call to believe in the Creator of Universe.

Now any person who wants to be a biologist, physicist or astronomer needs to study for at least twenty years aided by sophisticated machines, tools and libraries and under proper supervision. Then he might be able to break through, and discover some of the hidden facts of the nature. The Qur'an not only

reveals many secrets of the Universe but also is not confined to a special field of the science.

أَلَمْ تَرَوْ كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ سَبَعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَابًا

وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا

“See you not how Allah created seven heavens one above the other? And made the moon a light therein, and the sun a lamp?” (71: 15-16)

The moon is a solid object which reflects light, hence it is a “light.” But the sun is a source of energy and light, so it is a “lamp.”

الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ

“The sun and the moon follow (their courses) according to a reckoning.” (55:5)

The sun is not static but moving in a path exactly computed. Remember the middle-ages’ belief that the sun is the center of the universe and the earth is a plane. Remember that for contrary belief scientists were burned alive or imprisoned. And see that the Qur'an declared these facts 1400 years ago.

وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقْرٍ لَهَا ۝ ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ

وَالْقَمَرَ قَدْرُنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ

لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ ۝ وَكُلُّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبُحُونَ

“And the sun is moving on the course determined for it. That is the decree of the Almighty, the All-Knowing; and the moon, we have measured for it stages (to traverse) till it becomes like the old date-stalk; it is not permitted to the sun to catch up the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day; and each swims along in (its own) orbit.” (36:38-40)

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ أَتَيْنَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعَينَ

“Then turned He to the heaven which was yet a smoke, and said He unto it and unto the earth ‘Come both of you, willingly or reluctantly.’ They said: ‘We come willingly.’” (41: 11)

The heaven was smoke – which means dark and containing gas and steam. It is the exact description of the so-called cloud in heaven as most reliable recent discoveries reveal.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۚ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۚ كُلُّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُسَمَّى ۚ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءَ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ

“Allah it is who raised up the heavens without visible supports, and He is firm in power, and made the sun and the moon subservient, each runs unto an appointed term; He regulates the affair; He makes clear the signs that you may be certain of the meeting your Lord.” (13:2)

The invisible support, naturally, means the force of gravitation that exists in the universe which holds the planets apart and within a predetermined limit.

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا مِنْ أَقْطَارِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَانْفُذُوا ۚ لَا تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ

“O Company of Jinn and men, if you can penetrate the regions of the heavens and the earth, then do penetrate (them): you will not penetrate except with a power.” (55:33)

This verse comes with undoubted encouragement to people to explore and travel through the outer space. Here one should pause and think of the society that the Holy Prophet was living in. The means of transport were camels, horses and donkeys. The people lived in tents and worshipped idols. They had not even dreamt of a car or an aeroplane or even an engine of any kind. How the Qur'an puts such a high idea to encourage people not only to fly but to travel to other planets and heavens? In materialistic thinking this should be impossible, because they claim that human thinking is a reflection of his material environment!

Then the only solution in this case is to believe that Qur'an was not a product of human mind, but a revelation from Allah. No human being could definitely put forth such an idea even if he were the greatest astronomer or scientist.

There are many verses of scientific nature and there are many volumes dealing with them, but the Muslims have shut their eyes from them.

People in our time are proud of their knowledge, and the Qur'an baffles them even now. There are so many examples that a certain 'ayah remained a puzzle for commentators, until the discoveries of recent times made its meaning clear. To quote two examples:

In the *surah*, 'the Believer' there is a verse:

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا هَامَانُ ابْنِ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلَّي أَبْلُغُ الْأَسْبَابَ

أَسْبَابَ السَّمَاوَاتِ فَأَطْلَعَ إِلَيْهِ مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لَأَظْنُهُ كَانِبًا

“And Pharaoh said, ‘O Haman, build for me a tower that I may reach the avenues, the avenues of the heavens, and may mount to the God of Moses, for I verily deem him a liar.” (40:36–37)

Rev. J. M. Rodwell writes in its foot-note: “Haman, the favorite Ahasuers and enemy of the Jews, is thus made the vizier of Pharaoh. The Rabbis make this vizier to have been Korah, Jethro or Balaam.”

The objection of Rev. J. M. Rodwell may be excused, because neither he nor any Rabbi knew before this century that “Amon” was the name of the great Egyptian deity who was often given the title “King of the gods.” He was patron of the most powerful pharaohs, and was pre-eminently the national god. Its high priest also was given the name “Amon” and he was responsible for all temples and religious buildings. All these things have been discovered by excavations during the last 100 years. Now that we know something about Amon and the high priest and the priest’s functions, does it seem strange that pharaoh should have asked Amon’s priest (also called Amon) to build a tower to look at the God of Moses?

But these things were unknown 1400 years ago. Still the Qur'an used the correct title of the priest and assigned to him the correct function. Does anybody want more scientific miracles? This single verse is sufficient to make one believe that this book is from God, not from any human being.

The second example is also connected with Pharaoh. Speaking about the drowning of Pharaoh, Allah says in the Qur'an:

وَجَاءَنَا بِنَيِّ إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ بَغْيًا وَعَدْوًا ۝ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنَتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا
الَّذِي آمَنَتْ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

الآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيكَ بِبَدْنِكَ لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلَفَكَ آلَهَ

“And We brought the children of Israel across the sea; the Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them in rebellion and hostility; 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 to him.’ ‘What! Now! While thou didst disobey before and waste of those who create mischief. So this day We will save thee in thy body, that thou may be a sign to those who come (after thee).’” (10:90–92).

These ‘ayat clearly say that Pharaoh’s body was recovered and it became a sign of warning to later

generations. But this thing is not mentioned in the Bible. Still the Qur'an claimed that the body of Pharaoh was recovered. And 1300 years after that revelation, excavations have brought into light that body which was mummified and preserved for future generations, and even after these long centuries his face and body clearly show the effect of drowning.

If the Qur'an was the work of a man, how did he know of this fact which was not known even to the Jews and the Egyptians of that time?

An extremely amazing quality of the Qur'an is that many of its 'ayat are capable of multi-layered interpretations. Our Imams have described this distinction in these terms: "The Qur'an has an inner meaning and that too has another inner meaning and it has an apparent meaning."[16](#) And it is worth noting that all strata of connotations are valid and correct.

For example, look at this verse:

تُولِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ

"Thou makes the night to enter into the day and Thou makes the day to enter into the night..."
(3:27).

The Muslim scholars have been explaining these sentences in terms of the continuously changing lengths of days and nights, throughout the year. In the northern hemisphere, from mid-winter to mid-summer, days become longer and longer and nights shorter and shorter – it is the entering of the day into the night. And from mid-summer to mid-winter, nights become longer and longer and days shorter and shorter and shorter – it is the entering of the night into the day. The position in the southern hemisphere is just opposite. When the nights are longer in one hemisphere, they are shorter in the other; the same happens with the days. In this way, Allah is always making the day to enter into the night, and the night to enter into the day.

This explanation is doubtlessly correct; but now we have witnessed another phenomenon, which seems even more appropriate to these sentences. Maurice Bucaille has written: "[The astronauts have seen] how the Sun permanently lights up (except in the case of an eclipse) the half of the Earth's surface that is facing it, while the other half of the globe is in darkness. The Earth turns on its own axis and the lighting remains the same, so that an area in the form of a half-sphere makes one revolution around the Earth in twenty-four hours while the other half-sphere, that has remained in darkness, makes the same revolution in the same time. This perpetual rotation of the night and day is quite clearly described in the Qur'an. It is easy for the human understanding to grasp this notion nowadays because we have the idea of the Sun's (relative) immobility and the Earth's rotation. This process of perpetual coiling, including the interpenetration of one sector by another is expressed in the Qur'an..."[17](#)

Now you see how the Qur'an has an apparent meaning and then another stratum of even more clear

meaning. The same may happen in the cases of inner meanings.

But mind it! We do not judge the Qur'an by contemporary theories and discoveries. Theories may change overnight; discoveries may be surpassed by further discoveries. These are passing phases. But the word of Allah is the eternal truth. Therefore, in our eyes Qur'an is not to be tested by ever-changing theories. These theories should be tested by Qur'an. If they are in total agreement with the Qur'an we know that they are right and correct. If not, then we shall wait till one day somebody discovers something which will tally with the Qur'an and then we shall know that it was right.

Miracles as the Best Code of Life:

Islam is not just a relation between the Creator and man as is understood in the West. Islam is a complete and perfect system of life, arranging human relationship with Allah as well as among the people themselves. The Qur'an has not left or neglected any aspect of human life without providing a code for it.

Economy is adjusted to achieve fair and just transaction and to preserve the dignity of every individual. Politics is given special attention since the course and stability of the society depends mainly on the leader and administration. Social life is built and bonded strongly in order to achieve maximum co-operation and cohesion.

Humanity has been striving to live under a system of justice, security and happiness. But these fruits were never tasted under any man-made system. Only the Islamic system, based on Divine revelation, has proved to be the best and the most perfect code of life. Dealing with each task. Hence confining ourselves to some brief examples is best suited here.

For the economic system, the Qur'an dictates two sets of fundamental laws: The first set deals with immuring the society against unfair or harmful transactions such as monopoly, usury, gambling, cheating etc.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالبغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدُّكُمْ عَنِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ ۝ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ

"O you who believe! Intoxicants, gambling, dedication of stones, and divination by arrows are an abomination of Satan's handicraft. Satan's plan is but to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will not you then abstain?" (5:90-91).

The second set aims at reducing and lessening the accumulation of wealth in a few hands. The Qur'an has imposed taxes on rich people and the money is spent on the needy people and social welfare. The Qur'an says:

وَلَكُنَ الْبِرُّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَآتَيْهِ الْأَخْرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ نَوْيِ الْقُرْبَى وَالْإِيمَانِيَّ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا

“... Righteousness is rather one who...gives his wealth, out of love for Him, to the kindred and the orphans and the poor and the wayfarer and to those who ask and for those in bondage: and establish prayer and pay the zakah: and who fulfill their promise when they make a promise ...”
(2: 177).

It should be noted that some of these laws are compulsory such as zakah while others are voluntary.

The Qur'an does not deny the self-interest of people and satisfies it fully by promising full reward in the life hereafter for those who donate and sacrifice. But this is not the only reward and satisfaction; they are promised a prosperous life in this world too. This fact reveals itself by looking at the stable co-operative society that Islam is aiming at.

Naturally one of the very important realities of a prosperous society is stability, i.e. freedom from crimes, friction, envy, and hatred between different classes.

Social life is built on family units.

وَقَضَى رَبُّكَ أَلَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَيَا أُولَادَنِ إِحْسَانًا

“And your Lord has commanded that you shall not worship any but Him and do goodness to parents ...” (17:23).

Islam has given the family the greatest attention, realizing the importance and weight that it bears on the whole society. First of all, marriage is emphasized and it secures for both partners equality of rights and restores their dignity. Then the Qur'an came with the most excellent bond which will keep the society coherent and healthy. Wayfarers are enabled to reach their homes; the old people are respected and looked after and the children are treated tenderly and brought up in good conditions.

John William Draper writes: “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.” [18](#)

Rev. J. M. Rodwell writes: “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.”¹⁹

6. How to Interpret the Qur'an

I have been asked, “Must we always take the literal meaning of the Qur'an or metaphorical?”

The answer is already given in the third chapter of the Qur'an:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَآخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ ۝ فَمَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفُتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ

“He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book, of it there are decisive verses: they are the bases of the Book; and others (which are) ambiguous. But those in whose hearts is perversity pursue, forsooth, that which is ambiguous, seeking to cause mischief and seeking to explain it (as they like).” (3:7)

Every literary work has some plain sentences and some metaphorical, and the Qur'an is no exception. Unfortunately, some sects like the wahhabiyah do not see the point and try to explain the metaphorical passages too in literal way. This trend has caused many absurdities.

As a matter of fact, the portions dealing with legal matters (the shari'ah) are decisive and clear; they are not allegorical. Other passages are sometimes clear and sometimes allegorical. Allegorical passages should be explained with the help of relevant clear verses and as taught by the Prophet and the Imams. That, and that alone, will be the true interpretation.

To interpret the Qur'an by twisting its meanings, or to try to find an interpretation which suits one's fancy, is a capital sin. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: “He who interprets the Qur'an according to his own views should prepare his seat in the Fire (of Hell).”²⁰

On the other hand, many 'ayat of the Qur'an invite mankind to ponder upon its meaning. How can these two directives be reconciled? It is very easy:

First, learn all those subjects which are necessary to understand the Qur'an.

Secondly, mould your thinking according to the teachings of the Holy Prophet and his rightful successors.

Thirdly, remove all personal prejudice and preferences from your mind.

Lastly, ponder upon the ‘ayat of the Qur’ān and follow them wherever they may lead you. Do not try to lead the ‘ayat to your goal. When you will ponder upon the Qur’ān in this way, with full knowledge and mature mind, without trying to mould the Qur’ān according to your preconceived ideas, and with a desire to mould your thinking in the light of the Qur’ān, you will find the right answer.

An Example of Absurd Interpretation

Anas relates that: “the Holy Prophet was playing with children when Gabriel descended, and putting him down on the ground, Gabriel opened the breast of the Prophet. He took out some thick blood from his heart, and said that so much was the part of the Satan in him. Then he washed his heart with water of the zamzam, in a gold basin, and having washed it properly, put it back into his chest and put stitches over it. When the children saw this, they ran to Halimah, his nurse, and told her that Muhammad was killed. When the people came, they saw that the color of his face had faded away.”[21](#)

This absurdity needs no comment. Alfred Guillaume says, “Really, what is the basis of this story is difficult to say, except that people have tried to put literal meaning to the literary aspect of the verse,

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ

'Have We not expanded for thee thy breast?' (94: 1)[22](#)

This idea gets strengthened further by the fact that this fiction is related to have taken place at different times from early childhood till the time of the Ascension. The author of Rawdatu ‘s-Safa’ has compounded the absurdity by concluding that this incident must have happened more than once; as if, God forbid, the Holy Prophet’s condition was such that every time Gabriel cleansed away the satanic portion from his heart, the Satan got the upper hand! No doubt, this is the result of commenting on the verses of Qur’ān, without the guidance of the Prophet or his Holy Family.

Guillaume says, “On the basis of this false story, the Arabic Scholars of the last generation propounded the hypothesis that Muhammad suffered from Epilepsy.... To propound such a theory on the basis of a fiction which has apparently no historical truth is a sin against historical criticism and research.”[23](#)

In fact the verse, “Have We not expanded for thee thy breast?” signifies exactly what the expanding of breast signifies elsewhere. For example, see the following two verses:

فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ

“So (for) whomsoever Allah intends that He should guide him aright, He expands his breast for

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي

“(Moses) said, ‘O my Lord, expand my breast for me.’” (20:25).

The expansion of breast signifies in fact, as a commentator puts it “its illumination with wisdom and its vastness for the reception of what was to be revealed to him.”

Another Example: The Fraud of Number 19

Even more damaging to Islam has been the latest example of unauthorized interpretation of the Qur'an by one American named Rashad Khalifa, and his fraudulent claim in the beginning that he could prove with his self-invented “code of 19” that the Qur'an was safe from alteration. Unfortunately, a vast majority of the Muslims swallowed his bait gladly.

They forgot the admonition of the Leader of the faithful, Imam ‘Ali (a.s), that when a person listens to someone's words, he in fact worships him; if the words are from Allah, then he worships Allah, but if not then he worships Satan. Unfortunately the common people are – to use again the words of ‘Ali (a.s) – followers of every croaking crow (atba'u kulli na'iq). They blindly accept whatever claim is made by any charlatan – especially if it comes from Europe and America, and is presented in an attractive packing. Previously that packing was the word, “science,” nowadays it is “computer!!”

So Rashad Khalifa used the word “computer” to make the Muslims believe what he claimed. And he planned his moves very carefully.

First, he took the verse 30 of the 74th chapter (al mukkaththir) out of its context to “prove” that it pointed to the “code of 19.” The verse says, “over it are nineteen.” In fact, it clearly speaks about the number of the wardens of hell. It occurs in a well-connected speech which begins from verse 11 and ends at verse 31. The verses 26 to 31 are presented here to give a clear picture:

سَأَصْلِيهِ سَقَرَ

وَمَا أَذْرَكَ مَا سَقَرُ

لَا تُبْقِي وَلَا تَذْرُ

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ إِلَّا مَلَائِكَةً ۝ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا عِدَّهُمْ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا

I will cast him into hell. And what will make you realize what hell is. It leaves naught nor does it spare aught. It scorches the mortal. Over it are nineteen. And we have not made the wardens of the fire other than angels, and We have not made their number but as a trial for those who disbelieve...

Although Rashad Khalifa was of Arab origin, it is surprising that he was unaware of such elementary grammatical facts that all names of hell were of feminine gender, whereas the word “al-Qur'an” (as well the adjectives used for it, like, Dhikr, Furqan, Nur and Kitab) were of masculine gender; and that the pronoun in this verse is feminine. This unawareness led him to think that the verse meant: “Over the Qur'an are nineteen.” He did not realize that the Arabic pronoun *ha* (translated here as “it”) is of feminine gender and refers to hell; had it referred to the Qur'an, it would have been of masculine gender, *hi*.

We do not wish to labor on his erudition and knowledge of Arabic or Islam. One more example will be of interest to the readers. He writes in his monthly bulletin, *Muslim Perspective* (April 1985), that ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab was the Prophet's son-in law.

Bismi 'l-lahi 'r-Rahmani 'r-Rahim is a part of every chapter of the Qur'an except the 9th. This is the belief of the Shi'ahs, the Shafi'is, the Ahlu '1-hadith and many other groups. Rashad Khalifa himself says in his book, *Quran: Visual Presentation of the Miracle* (p.74), that this “statement” has come 113 times in the beginnings of the *Surahs*, and once within the text of the Surah 27 (verse 30); thus restoring its frequency to 114 (19x6). He also counts various letters from *Bismi 'l-lahi 'r-Rahmani 'r-Rahim* at the beginning of various *Surahs*, when it suits his purpose. Yet he counts its words only at the beginning of the first chapter (Al Fatihah); and does not include the remaining 112 *ism*, *Allah*, *Rahman* and *Rahim* when counting these words in the Qur'an.

It should be mentioned here that every word of the Qur'an is counted and enumerated in detail by many authors, the most popular being *Al-Mu'jamu 'l-Mufahras* of Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abdu '1-Baqi, of Egypt, which is used in the Muslim word since last many decades. Yet there are a few omissions in it. A later work, *Al-Mu'jamu 'l-Ihsa'i*, by Dr. Mahmud Ruhani is more complete and trustworthy.

Rashad Khalifa twice revised his “computerized” total. According to his count, *ism* has come in the Qur'an only 19 times. But what about 112 *ism* in “*Bismi 'l-lahi 'r Rahmani 'r-Rahim*”? He first said, Allah

has come 2698 times (19x142). Then he said it was 2699 times.

Apparently his first count was based not on ‘computer’ but on the above-mentioned, *Al-Mu’jamu ‘l-Mufahras* in which Allah of the *Bismillah* of the first *Surah* is left out by mistake (although the other 3 words have been counted). Be as it may. But his revised number, 2699, shatters his theory. Actually it is neither 2698 nor 2699; it has come 2811 times (2699+ 112) which also is not divisible by 19.

On the one hand, he says *ar-Rahman* has come 57 times only. But, on the other hand, while counting the letters *alif, lam, ra, ha, mim* and *nun* of this word, he even counts the ones found in *Bismi ‘l-lahi ‘r-Rahmani ‘r-Rahim* of many *Surahs*. Then how can he leave out the complete word *ar-Rahman* in those 112 verses. The total number 169 (57+112) is not divisible by 19.

Likewise *ar-rahim* is not used 114 times as he claims, but 115 times. If we add to it 112, the total is 227. Both 115 and 227 are not divisible by 19.

Khalifa was so arrogant that he did not hesitate in committing alteration (*tahrif*) in the Qur'an. For example, in the Surah 68 al-Qalam, the letter *nun* (ن) even including the one found in *ar-Rahman* of *Bismillah* comes to 132. But he needed 133 letters to make it divisible by 19. So he wrote the Nun in the beginning of the surah phonetically as (نون) claiming that it was written like this in the original Qur'an! His audacity is truly amazing. Where did he find the original Qur'an? The oldest extant copy of the Qur'an is the one belonging to the third caliph, 'Uthman; and there too it is written (Arabic) (and not نون). He did not have the honesty to admit that his theory was wrong; he was ready to play with the Qur'an and commit *tahrif* to prove that there was no *tahrif*!

There are many examples of such deception – compounded by his ignorance of Arabic. He has claimed in his above-mentioned book that the first revelation, i.e. the first five verses of the surah 96, contain 19 words.²⁴ Now, words may be nouns, verbs, pronouns, conjunctions or prepositions. Therefore, if we thoroughly count the words in these five verses, the total comes to 24, not 19. But Rashad Khalifa's ignorance made him count the following 9 words as 4:

بسم = ب and 2 = بسم words.

ربك = رب and 2 = ك words.

وربك = و, رب and 3 = ك words.

بالقلم = ب and 2 = بالقلم words.

Unfortunately, Muslims swallowed his baits line, hook and sinker in the name of “mathematical proof” of the truth of the Qur'an. They remained blind to the *tahrif* being done by Rashad Khalifa himself. A sincere Muslim like Ahmad Deedat in his uncritical admiration of Rashad Khalifa's theory popularized this myth through his lectures, booklets and videos beyond the wildest dreams of Rashad Khalifa.

Then after all that hullabaloo about the previously “definite” computerized proof and test, Rashad Khalifa wrote in his news-bulletin, *Muslim Perspective*, that further checkings had shown that his theory of 19 could only be correct if the last two verses of the 9th chapter (at-Tawbah) were removed.

Even then, instead of admitting that his theory was wrong, he boldly and shamelessly declared that, God forbid, these two verses were “interpolation,” added by someone in the Qur'an!²⁵ What a champion of the Qur'an who claims that there was *tahrif* in the Qur'an in order to prove that there was no *tahrif*!

Why pick particularly on these two verses? First let us look at their wording and theme:

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنْتُمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

فَإِنْ تَوَلُّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

“Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively solicitous respecting you; to the believers (he is) compassionate, merciful (rahim). But if they turn back, say; “Allah is sufficient for me, there is no god but He; on Him do I rely, and He is the Lord of mighty power.”

1. The Wording: there is one *rahim* and one *Allah* in these verses. If they could be discarded, the total number of *Allah* would come to 2698, and of *rahim* to 114. [In fact, even these two numbers are not correct, as I have described earlier].
2. The Theme: The verses show the love and mercy, which the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) had for his ummah; and on reciting them, the Muslims, in their turn, felt intense love for their Prophet. This love and respect has been and is the major obstacle in the way of those who want to claim prophethood after the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).
3. And by claiming that these verses were interpolated, Rashad Khalifa discredited the Qur'an and paved the way for his own claim of “messengership.”

He says in his translation of the Qur'an that these verses were added by the companions who had “idolized” Muhammad. According to him, it was to eradicate that “idolizing of Muhammad” that 'Ali had to fight against Mu'awiyah, and it was for this reason that Husayn offered his life in Karbala! Have you ever heard of such fantastic research in Islamic history, theology, *'ilmu 'r-rijal* and *tafsir*?

However, after this audacity, he has felt bold enough to claim that he was a messenger sent by Allah.²⁶ He said that although the Holy Prophet of Islam was the final Prophet (*nabi*), he was not the last messenger (*rasul*).

This man did not know even the elementary things about Islam. He was not aware that prophethood (*nubuwwah*) is the basic root, from which messengership (*risalah*) branches out. Every messenger has to be a prophet, but not vice versa. The Qur'an, by using the words, "khatamu 'n nabiyin – the last of the Prophets" or as Rashad Khalifa says, the final prophet, for Muhammad (s.a.w.) has shut the door of the prophethood as well as the messengership.

As every charlatan is sure to get a few followers, he too got a handful of believers in his (messengership). According to them, the declaration, 'I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; said in *kalimah*, *adhan*, *iqamah* and elsewhere is shirk (polytheism). They have drastically changed the method of salat and many other rules and regulations of the shari'ah – all in the name of (Quran) [Rashad Khalifa always wrote 'Quran' while the correct transliteration is Qur'an].

There is a lesson in this unsavory episode for those who were glorifying Rashad Khalifa and translating his books and writings in Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Gujarati and other languages. Perhaps now the Muslims would realize that such blind acceptance of the words of every Tom, Dick and Harry, however religious he might appear, may easily take them to the brink of hell.

7. Orientalists on the Qur'an

The following few quotations from the writing of some non-Muslims show what impact the Holy Book of Allah has had on them.

Rev. J. M. Rodwell quotes Rev. G. Margoliouth in the Introduction of his translation of The Koran: "The Koran admittedly occupies an important position among the great religious books of the world. Though the youngest of the epoch-making works belonging to this class of literature, yields to hardly any in the wonderful effect, which it has produced on large masses of men. It has created an all but new phase of human thought and a fresh type of character."[27](#)

A. J. Arberry advises the Western readers on the study of Qur'an: "Bad translation is not the whole story by any means. In fact the Koran has not been unlucky in its English translators: Sale and Palmer were talented writers. No, the fault lies not so much in the manner of translation as in the manner of reading the translations. The root of the trouble is that the ordinary reader, and for that matter the extraordinary reader as well, has not been sufficiently advised how to read the Koran."

"In the first place, the Western reader must get rid of the assumptions that the Koran is more or less like the Old Testament. The misapprehension is natural enough when the first casual glance picks out the names of Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, Joseph, Job; the Biblical style of the popular translations does not furnish exactly a corrective. Misled by these early expressions, the reader makes the fatal mistake of trying to take it too much at once; he opens at a likely place, the beginning of a surah, and is lulled into suspicion by the familiar layout of chapter and verse; he finishes his first surah and goes on to several more; he is bewildered by the rapid and seemingly illogical changes of subjects

and he quickly wearis of the frequent repetitions of themes and formulas, he misses the homely straightforwardness of Kings or Samuel, the sustained eloquence of the Psalm or Isaiah. Having no clue to the Koran's own Excellencies he compares it unfavorably with what he has known since childhood, and is now ready to concur with Carlyle."

"The Koran, like the poetry which it resembles in so many ways, is best sampled a little at a time; and that little deserves and needs meditation .. He (the reader) will become gradually familiar with the Koran's claim to be a confirmation of earlier scriptures. He will observe how the Koran assumes a knowledge of the contents of those scriptures, and only latter expands the individual narratives into something like connected stories. He now follows step by step the gradual unfolding of the full prophetic powers; and when he comes to the polemic and the legislation he is readier to receive and understand them."

"He, the uninitiated enquirer, however strenuous and sincere his purpose, will always be denied participation in the believer's joy because he is screened from it by the double veil of a printed page and a foreign idiom. Yes, a foreign idiom, for the Koran is God's revelation in Arabic, and the emotive and evocative qualities of the original disappear almost totally in the skilfullest translation.

"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." [28](#)

- [1.](#) Al-Mu'jam al-Ihsa 'i (Mashhad, 1990) p. 168.
- [2.](#) Bose, B.C., Mahomedanism (Calcutta, 1931).
- [3.](#) Vagliari, L.C. *Apologie de L'Islamisme*, pp. 57-59
- [4.](#) As-Saduq, *Kitabu 'l-Iqtqadat* (Tehran: 1370 AH) p. 43. See also its translation, *The Shi'ite Creed* tr. A.A.A. Fy. (Calcutta: 1942) p. 85.
- [5.](#) For further information, see my book. *The Qur'an: Its Protection from Alteration*, published in 1994 by Ahlul Bayt Assembly of North America, Toronto, Canada.
- [6.](#) Hirschfeld, H., *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qur'an* (London, 1902) p. 9.
- [7.](#) Guyard, S., *Encyclopedie des Sciences Religieuses*, vol. IX (Paris, 1880) p. 501.
- [8.](#) Bertherand, A., *Contribution des Arabes au Progres des Sciences Medicales* (Paris, 1883) p.6.
- [9.](#) At-Tabrasi, *al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 2 (Najaf, 1386/1966) pp. 142-143.
- [10.](#) Arbuthnot, *The Construction of the Bible and the Koran* (London, 1885) p.5.
- [11.](#) Wilson, J.C., *Introducing Islam* (New York, 1950) p. 30.
- [12.](#) Gibb, *Mohammadanism* (London, 1953) p.33 .
- [13.](#) Dorman, H.G., *Towards Understanding Islam* (New York , 1948) p.3.
- [14.](#) Casanova, "L'Enseignement de l'Arabe au College de France" in Lecan d 'ouverture (26/4/1909)
- [15.](#) Al-Ihtijaj, vol. 1, p. 386.
- [16.](#) Al-Kashani, *Tafsir as-Safi*, fourth muqaddamah, vol I (Tehran, 1374) pp. 17-18.
- [17.](#) The Bible, the Quran and Science (Indianapolis: North American Publications, 1979) p. 164.
- [18.](#) J. W. Draper. *An History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, vol. 1 (London, 1875) pp. 343-344.
- [19.](#) Rodwell, Rev. J.M., *The Koran* (London, 1918) p. 15.
- [20.](#) Al-Kashani, *as-Safi*, vol. I (Tehran: Islamiyya, 1374) p. 21

- [21.](#) Al-Khatib at-Tabrizi, Mishkatul Masabih, chap. "alamati 'n nubuwwah."
- [22.](#) Alfred Guillaume, Islam. p.25
- [23.](#) Ibid, pp. 25-26.
- [24.](#) Quran: Visual Presentation of the Miracle, p. 11.
- [25.](#) Muslim Perspective, March 1988.
- [26.](#) Muslim Perspective, May 1988.
- [27.](#) The Koran (London, 1918) Introduction.
- [28.](#) Arberry, A.J., The Holy Qur'an (London: Allen & Unwin 1953).

Chapter 4: The Hadith

1. Preliminary Details & Definitions

Hadith (Hadith) literally means 'talk'. Its plural is *ahadith* (احاديث).

In Shi'a terminology '*hadith*' means the talk of a *ma'sum* and also that narration which describes the talk, action or '*taqrir*' of a *ma'sum*.

Talk of a *ma'sum* includes his writings and sign (Isharah) also. If a *ma'sum* abstains from a work or thing, then this abstaining also is counted as an 'action' (in the above definition).

'*Taqrir*' of a *ma'sum* means that if a follower of a *ma'sum* did a work in the presence of the presence of the *ma'sum* and the said *ma'sum* did not prohibit that work – even though he was in a position to forbid it is he so wished – then it is called '*taqrir*' of the *ma'sum*. We may translate this term as 'tacit approval' or 'silent approval.'

If a narration does not reach up to a *ma'sum*, it is not counted as '*hadith*' according to shi'a terminology.(Though sometimes a talk of a companion of a *ma'sum* or a disciple of such a companion is called '*hadith*' just as a figurative expression.)

According to the sunni terminology, talk, action and *taqrir* of the prophet, his companions and disciples of such companions is called '*hadith*'.

Hadith is also known as *khabar* (خبر) i.e. news and *athar* (اثر) i.e. trace or track.

Many terms will be used in the following chapters. It is, therefore, necessary to explain important ones beforehand. Here a complete tradition is given with its translation:

حمد بن سلمة عن محمد بن إسحاق عن عمرو بن شعيب عن أبيه عن جده قال: "قلت يا رسول الله اكتب كل ما أسمع منك؟ قال، نعم. قلت في الرضا والغضب؟ قال: نعم، فإني لا أقول في ذلك إلا الحق".

Hammad ibn Salmah narrated from Muhammad ibn Ishaq who narrated from 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb who narrated from his father who narrated from his father who said:

"I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, should I write everything which I hear from you?' The Prophet said, 'Yes', I said, 'In pleasure and displeasure' (That is, Should I write everything said by you in every condition?) The Prophet said, 'Yes! Because I do not say any condition but the truth.'"

The first part of the hadith contains the names of the narrators who had transmitted it one to the other. This chain of narrators is called *sanad* (سناد) its plural is *asnad* (اسناد).

The second part is the actual narration beginning from "I said, 'O Messenger of Allah' up to the end of the hadith. It is called *matn* (متن) i.e. the text.

The narrator is called *rawi* (راوي). Its plural is *ruwat* (روات)

The *sanad* and *matn* together are called one hadith. A scholar of hadith is called *muhaddith* (محدث). Its plural is *muhaddithun* or *muhaddithin*.

2. The Status of Hadith

After the Qur'an, the hadith of a Ma'sum is the most important binding authority (*hujjat* حجة) in Islam; and if anyone wants to succeed on the Day of Judgment, then he must follow the Qur'an and hadith together.

For example Allah says in the Qur'an;

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولَئِكُمْ أَلْمَرِ مِنْكُمْ

"O You who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Prophet and those who are Masters of the Affairs among you." (4:59).

In this 'ayah Allah makes it obligatory for the believers to obey the Holy Prophet and the Masters of the Affairs, i.e. the Twelve Imams. Obviously nobody can follow the Holy Prophet and the Imams unless he knows what the Holy Prophet and Imams had said or done. And that brings us to *ahadith*.

Meaning of Obedience & Following:

To follow a *ma'sum* means to do the same work as has been done by the *ma'sum* with the same intention. For example, the Holy Prophet received some money from a Muslim by way of zakah; if now someone usurps some property or money from someone without any religious authority it will not be called following in the foot-steps of the Prophet.

It should be remembered that the *ahadith* of the twelve Imams (a.s.) and the Lady Fatimah az-Zahra

(a.s.) are the *ahadith* of the Holy Prophet himself.

The Imams themselves have made it quite clear many times. For example, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) said, “When I narrate a hadith without mentioning any chain of narrators, then my *sanad* is from my father, who narrated it from my grandfather (Imam Husayn) from his father (Imam ‘Ali) from the Messenger of Allah who heard it from Jibra’il who was informed of it by Allah.¹ The same declaration was made by Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) about his own *ahadith*.²

A person who did not see a *Ma’sum* or did not hear from him, the only way for him to know the religion is through the *ahadith* of the Holy Prophet, the 12 Imams and the Lady Fatimah az-Zahra (peace be on them all).

It is, however, necessary to see that the hadith is authentic before acting upon it. In the following pages some details about the categories of *ahadith* will be given to help the readers in this task.

3. The Categories of Hadith

The value of a *hadith* depends very much on the probity and trustworthiness of its narrators, the *ruwat*.

The Ruwat

Some important qualifications of a *rawi* are as follows:

The *rawi* of a hadith must be an adult (*baligh*), sane, muslim, just (*‘adil*), and of good memory; according to the Shi'a Ithna 'asheri sect, he should also be a Shi'a Ithna 'asheri, though in some cases, the *ahadith* narrated by non-Ithna 'asheri muslims are acceptable.

‘*Adil*’ means a person who does not commit any major sin (not intentionally) then he repents at once. Only an ‘*adil*’ person can be relied upon. If he is not ‘*adil*’, he might forge *ahadith* and mislead people.

Good memory is necessary for a *rawi* if he is to be trusted; otherwise, he may forget something and thus change, add or omit some wordings from the hadith.

It is not necessary that a *rawi* should be a scholar or learned person.

The Four Types of Hadith

Allamah al-Hilli and the ‘ulama coming after him have divided the *ahadith* into four categories according to the qualifications of the *ruwat*:

1. Sahih (Correct; True): A *hadith* all of whose *ruwat* are Shi'a Ithna 'asheris and all have been praised for their trustworthiness. For example, such wordings have been used for all of them: “إنه ثقى (he is trustworthy – *thiqah*)” “إنه صحيح الحديث (His *ahadith* are correct – *sahihu ‘l hadith*)” and such other

words which show their trustworthiness.

2. *Hasan* (Good): a *hadith*, all of whose narrators are Shi'a Ithna asheris but not all of them have been praised for trustworthiness; instead some or all have been praised in such word:

“إنه مُسْتَحْسَنٌ” (He is virtuous – *mustahsan*)” or

“إنه حَافِظٌ” (He is of good memory – *hafidh*)”

3. *Muwaththaq* (Reliable): a *hadith* not all of whose narrators are Shi'a Ithna asheri, but all have been praised for trustworthiness.

4. *Da'if* (Weak): a *hadith*, which is neither *Sahih*, *Hasan* nor *Muwaththaq*.

The first three categories are considered as genuine. *Da'if* has got no worth at all, unless it was accepted by all 'ulama of the early period, in which case it is called *maqbul* (مقبول) (acceptable) that is, accepted by early scholars.

As has been mentioned earlier, a *hadith* consists of a *sanad* (chain of narrators) and a *matn* (text). If a *hadith* is classified as *da'if* (weak), it means that that particular *sanad* is weak. But that same text might have been narrated somewhere else with *sahih*, *hasan* or *muwaththaq sanad*; and the value of *hadith* will change accordingly.

There are many sub-divisions of the *ahadith*; but it is not necessary to give all those details here.

Mutawatir & Wahid

Hadith is also classified into “mutawatir” and “wahid” categories based on the number of its *asnads*:

1. *Mutawatir* (متواتر): It means a *hadith* narrated at every stage by so many people that the very number of narrators is enough to create a conviction of its truth. A *hadith* is classified as *Mutawatir* only if it fulfills the following four conditions:

(a) There must be, in all stages of narration, so many people that common sense cannot accept their coming together to forge a lie. If the number is great, for example, in the beginning and the end but too small in the middle, such a *hadith* is not called *Mutawatir*.

For example, the number of the narrators of the *hadith* “Innama 'l-a'malu bi 'n-niyyat – إنما الأعمال بالنيات (Verily, the actions are valued by the intentions)” is too great in the middle and the later stages, but in the beginning its only narrator is 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. So, this *hadith* is not *Mutawatir*.

(b) The information conveyed should be about a thing which can be felt by one of the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch).

(c) The hearers should not have prior knowledge of that matter.

(d) The hearers should not have a prior doubt about that information nor a preconceived belief opposed to that information.

If a hadith is classified as *mutawatir*, then there is no need to look at its individual *asnad*, or the credentials of its *ruwat*.

Mutawatir is of two kinds:

i. *Mutawatir* in words:

A *hadith*, which is narrated by all narrators with the same wording. For example, the hadith “Man kuntu mawlahu fa hadha ‘Aliyun mawlahu (من كنت مولاه فهذا على مولاه) (He whose master am I, ‘Ali is his master)”, and also the hadith “Man kadhaba ‘alayyafal-yatabawwa’ maqadahu fi ‘n-nar من كذب على (متعيناً فليتبواً مقعده من النار) (whoever tells a lie on me, should prepare his abode in the fire)”, are *mutawatir* in words.

ii. *Mutawatir* in meaning:

If the narrators use different wordings but there is a common factor in all narrations, then that common factor will be called *mutawatir* in meaning. For example, let us suppose that someone says that ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) killed 35 enemies in the battle of Badr; another says that he conquered the fortress of Khaybar; a third one says that he stayed fighting in Uhud while others had fled away, and likewise. Now all such narrations have one common factor – that ‘Ali (a.s.) was extra-ordinarily brave person. Though each and every narration in itself may not be *mutawatir* but the bravery of Ali is *mutawatir*.

2. *Wahid*: The second main category of hadith based on the number of narrators is *wahid* (واحد). Every hadith, whose narrators are not so many as to make it *mutawatir*, is called *wahid*.

As the *mutawatir hadith* creates a sure knowledge of its truth, it is obligatory to follow it. But the *wahid hadith* creates not a sure knowledge but only a reasonable assumption of its truth. However, if the *wahid hadith* is substantiated by the context or association (*Qarinah* قرينة) which creates certainty of its truth, then it will be obligatory to accept and follow it like a *mutawatir hadith*. Here are a few examples of such contexts:

- Conformity with logical reasons;
- Conformity with the clear meaning of the Qur'an;
- Conformity with other authentic *ahadith*;
- Conformity with a unanimous belief of the Muslims and/or the Shi'a sect of Islam.

If a *wahid hadith* is associated with any of the above mentioned contexts, it must be accepted and followed. If it is not joined by any such context, then also according to many ‘ulama, it is allowed to follow

it, provided it is not against any accepted tenets of the religion.

4. Recording of the Ahadith

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) encouraged people to write down whatever they heard him saying.

Unfortunately, the first three Caliphs reversed this policy and forbade people to narrate or write any hadith of Prophet (s.a.w). The first caliph burned such writings and this policy was followed by the 2nd and the 3rd caliphs.

In contrast to this policy, Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) always emphasized the importance and essentiality of writing the *ahadith*. Many companions of the prophet like ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas, Salman al-Farisi, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Bilal and Abu Rafi’ wrote down the traditions of the Holy prophet. Likewise many of their disciples, like Mithan Tammar, ‘Ali ibn Abu Rafi’, Rabi’ah ibn Sumay, Asbagh ibn Nubatah, ‘Ubaydullah ibn al-Hur, and Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali also wrote the traditions heard from Imam ‘Ali and other trustworthy companions.

Unfortunately almost all those books are now lost except the book of Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali.

The system established by the Prophet (s.a.w) and ‘Ali (a.s.) was followed by the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt, and we find that thousands of famous companions of Imams (a.s) had collected all the ahadith they heard from them.

Some of those companions are so highly respected that a hadith narrated by any one of them is considered authentic by many Shi'a scholars. Such companions of the Imams are divided into three groups:

First group consists of six companions of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as follows:

1. Zurarah ibn A’yan.
2. Ma’ruf ibn Kharabbudh.
3. Burayd ibn Mu’awiyah al-Bijilli.
4. Abu Basir al-Asadi.
5. Fudayl ibn Yasir.
6. Muhammad ibn Muslim ath-Thaqafi.

Some people count Abu Basir al-Muradi in place of Abu Basir al-Asadi.

Second group consists of six companions of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as follows:

1. Jamil ibn Darraj.
2. 'Abdullah ibn Maskan.
3. 'Abdullah ibn Bukayr.
4. Hammad ibn 'Uthman.
5. Hammad ibn 'Isa.
6. Aban ibn 'Uthman al-Ahmar.

Third group consists of six companions of Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) and Imam 'Ali ar-Ridha (a.s.) as follows:

1. Yunus ibn 'Abdu 'r-Rahman Yaqtini.
2. Safwan ibn Yahya al-Sabiri.
3. 'Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah.
4. Muhammad ibn Abi 'Umayr al-Azdi.
5. Al-Hasan ibn Mahbub.
6. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Nasr.

Some people count Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Faddal in place of Hasan ibn Mahbub; others add the name of Fadhlala ibn Ayyub or 'Uthman ibn 'Isa in this list.

Some other famous names are Abu Hamzah ath-Thumali, Aban ibn Taghlib, Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi, Muhammad ibn Qays, Hisham ibn al-Hakam, Hisham ibn Salim, 'Abdullah ibn Yahya al-Kahili, 'Ali ibn Ri'ab al-Kufi, Mansur ibn Hazim, 'Ali ibn Yaqtin ibn Musa, 'Abdullah ibn Mughirah al-Bijilli, Mu'awiyah ibn Hukaym, Zakariyyah ibn 'Adam, Isma'il ibn Mihran, 'Abdu 'r-Rahman ibn Abi Najran at-Tamimi, Husayn ibn Sa'id ibn al-Hammad, 'Ali ibn Mahazyar al-Ahwazi, Fadhl ibn Shadhan, Abu Ja'far Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Isa, Ayyub ibn Nuh ibn Darraj, 'Ali ibn Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s), Ahmad ibn Ishaq al-Qummi.

These are some of those highly respected companions of Imams (a.s) who collected traditions and wrote many other books, which are mentioned in their biographical details and in Shia bibliographical works.

In short, from the days of Imam 'Ali (a.s) up to the days of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), companions of Imams (a.s) wrote more than 6600 books, most of them containing the *ahadith* of the Holy Prophet

(s.a.w) and the Imams (a.s).

The Style of Ahadith Books

The recording of traditions varied in size and style as follows:

1. A narrator would record one long tradition on one subject. For example, Salman recorded the *hadith* of Jathaliq (Catholico). The earliest form of *hadith* literature was of this type.
2. Others collected the *ahadith* of one subject in one booklet. During the period of Imams (a.s) thousands of such booklets were written. The collection was usually known by the subject; such as “Kitabu ‘s-Salah – the Book of Prayer”, “Kitabu ‘l-Hajj – the Book of Pilgrimage” etc.
3. Some narrators collected *ahadith* of different subjects in one volume. Such collections were called “*an-Nawadir*” (النواذر)
4. Many companions noted down whatever *hadith* they heard from Imams, without any distinction of subject and without dividing them into chapters. Such collections were known as “*Asl* (أصل)” (pl. *Usul*), foundation. Four hundred such *Usul* were prevalent among the Shi’as at the time of the death of Imam Hasan al-‘Askari (a.s.).

These four hundred *Usul* were most popular of all collections and they formed the main source of the tenets, beliefs and laws of Shi’a Ithna ashari faith.

However, there were many difficulties in relation to the above-mentioned four styles of hadith collection:

Firstly, as there was no press in those days, those *Usul* and other hadith literature were not easily available everywhere. The persecution of the Shi’as compounded the problem by making the owners extraordinarily cautious: they did not give their copies except to those whom they fully trusted.

Secondly, none of those four hundred *Usul* contained *ahadith* concerning all aspects of religion in one place. Moreover, they were not divided according to subject. This resulted in great difficulty for anyone trying to find the relevant hadith.

Thirdly, there was a danger that these treasures of religious knowledge would be lost forever due to the persecution of the Shi’as and also because of the difficulty in obtaining and preserving the four hundred *Usul*.

The Four Books (Al-Kutubu'l-Arb'ah)

These problems warranted the need for a new style in recording in which the *ahadith* from all available sources be collected and arranged subject-wise, divided into chapters and sections. Such collections were called “*Kitab* Book.” However, the words *Asl* and *Kitab* are usually interchangeable.

The need for this type of hadith collection was felt by the Shi'a scholars after the death of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.). They believed that if the *ahadith* in those *Usul* were collected in one book and divided subject-wise into parts, chapters and sections, it would fulfill a great need of the time since handling one book would be much easier than four hundred booklets. This would also ensure the preservation of that vast treasure of knowledge.

It was, however, not an easy task: collecting the *Usul* from far and wide was an uphill task in itself; then editing and arranging them was another painstaking job. All eyes turned to Thiqatu'l-Islam Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni ar-Razi. When pressure mounted, he accepted the responsibility. This was during the Minor Occultation of our twelfth Imam who was accessible to the people only through his special deputies who resided in Baghdad.

Abu Ja'far al-Kulayni was the religious head of the Shi'a in Ray (near Tehran) and had moved to Baghdad just two years before his death. He spent twenty years of his life in collecting *ahadith*, several times traveling to other places and obtaining as many *usul* as he could. Thus, after twenty years of continuous backbreaking effort ***al-Kafi*** came into being.

Al-Kafi alone contains more *ahadith* than all the six books (*as-Sihahas-Sittah*) of the sunnis put together. It is divided into three parts: *al-Usul* (related to matters of belief) in 2 volumes; *al-Furu'* (related to shari'ah laws) in 5 volumes; and *ar-Rawdah*, one volume. Each volume is divided in sections, and in all there are thirty sections, containing 16199 traditions.

Al-Kulayni was born in 260 A.H. and died in 329 A.H/941 CE. In other words, his life began and ended with the Minor Occultation.

Other scholars also collected the *ahadith* from other books and *Usul*. The most famous among them are:

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Musa ibn Babuwayh al-Qummi, popularly known as Shaykh as-Saduq (born cir. 306 A.H; died 381 A.H/991 CE) wrote *Man la Yahduruhu 'l-Faqih*. This book contains 5963 *ahadith* divided into 666 chapters.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Hasan ibn 'Ali at-Tusi, popularly known as Shaykh 't-Taifah and Shaykh at-Tusi (born 385 A.H; died 466 A.H/1067 CE) wrote *Tahdhibu 'l-Ahkam* and *al-Istibsar*. *Tahdhibu 'l-Ahkam* has 393 chapters with 13590 *ahadith*; and *al-Istibsar* has 925 (or 915) chapters containing 5511 *ahadith*.

The later two books opened the way of critical study of *ahadith*, and thus laid the foundation of ijtihad.

You may have noticed that all three authors of these four books were named "Muhammad" and all had the kunyah of "Abu Ja'far."

In 448 A.H, the sunnis of Baghdad attacked the Shi'as and burned the house of Shaykh at-Tusi and his library, which contained many unique manuscripts. Disheartened, he left Baghdad and went to Najaf. His

disciples and seekers of knowledge followed him: this was the beginning of the town and the religious university of Najaf.

Many other collections of *ahadith* were written in the period under review, but only these four became popular and famous. There was another collection, *Madinatu 'I-lilm*, by Shaykh as-Saduq which would have formed, in view of Shi'a scholars, as the fifth of the “early books” if it would not have been lost.

A point, which students of *hadith* must bear in mind, is that if a *hadith* is found in any of the above-mentioned four books, it does not necessarily follow that that “hadith” is authentic. On the other hand, if a *hadith* is found in other collections and fulfils all the required conditions, then it will be accepted as authentic even if it is not found in the four books.

The Three Later Books

In later period the following collections of *ahadith* became very popular:

1. Muhammad ibn Murtada ibn Mahmud, popularly known as Mulla Muhsin Fayd al-Kashani (d. 1091 A.H/1680 CE) wrote *al-Wafi*.
2. Shaykh Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Hurr al-'Amili (d. 1104 A.H/1692 CE) wrote *Wasa'ilu'sh-Shi'a*. Its new edition has been printed in 20 volumes; and contains 35850 *ahadith*.
3. Muhammad Baqir ibn Muhammad Taqi, popularly known as 'Allamah Majlisi (d. 1111 A.H/1700 CE) wrote *Biharu 'I-Anwar* in 26 bulky volumes. Its new edition in typescript has been published in 110 volumes.

It is interesting to note that these three traditionalists were also named Muhammad. They are called “the later three Muhammads.”

In the 14th century, Shaykh Husayn Nuri (1254–1320 A.H) wrote *Mustadraku 'I-Wasa'il* in 1319 A.H. It contains 23,000 *ahadith*.

With the exception of *al-Kafi* and *Biharu 'I-Anwar*, the other six collections are confined to the *ahadith* related to the shari'ah laws. Among them, *al-Wafi* is considered the best in style, classification and other distinctions.

In our times, a new collection, known as *Jami'u Ahadithi'sh-Shi'a*, is being prepared and published which is sure to eclipse all the above-mentioned six collections. This work began by order and under patronage of the late Ayatullah Sayyid Husayn al-Burujardi (d. 1380 A.H) in Qum. The project has continued under patronage of succeeding maraji and is nearing completion. So far 25 volumes have been published.³

The Sunni Collections

It will not be out of place to give here the names of some famous collections of *ahadith* written by the sunni scholars:

1. Imam Malik ibn Anas ibn Malik (d. 175 A.H/795 CE) wrote *al-Muwatta*.
2. Imam Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari (d. 256 A.H/870 CE) wrote *Sahih al-Bukhari*,
3. Imam Muslim ibn Hajjaj an-Nishapuri (d. 261 A.H/875 CE) wrote *Sahih Muslim*.
4. Hafiz Muhammad ibn Yazid ibn Majah al-Qazwini (d. 264 A.H/886 CE) wrote *as-Sunan*.
5. Hafiz Abu Dawud Sulayman ibn Ash'ath as-Sijistani (d. 275 A.H) wrote his *as-Sunan*.
6. Hafiz Abu 'Isa Muhammad ibn 'Isa ibn Sura at-Tirmidhi (d. 279 A.H/893 CE) wrote *al-Jami'*, known as *Sahih at-Tirmidhi*.
7. Imam Abu 'Abdi 'r-Rahman Ahmad ibn Shu'ayb an-Nasa'i (d. 303 A.H/915 CE) wrote his *as-Sunan*. He also wrote *al-Khasa'is*.

The books nos. 2 to 7 are jointly known as *as-Sihah as-Sitta* (the six authentic books) among Sunnis.

8. The son of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal collected his *ahadith*, which is known as *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. (Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal died in 241 A.H/855 CE). This book is thought by many Sunnis to be as authentic as *as-Sihah as-Sitta*.
9. Imam Abul Qasim Sulayman ibn Ahmad at-Tabarani (d. 360 A.H) wrote *al-Mu'jamu 'l-Kabir*.
10. Imam Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Hakim an-Nishapuri (d. 405 A.H) wrote *al-Mustadrak 'ala Sahihayn*.
11. Imam Abdu 'r-Rahman Jalalu 'd-Din as-Suyuti (d. 911 A.H) wrote *Jam'u 'l-Jawami*
12. Shaykh Mulla Ali ibn Husamu 'd-Din al-Muttaqi al-Hindi (d. 975 A.H) edited the book of as-Suyuti and named it *Kanzu 'l-Ummal*.

It should be noted again that being included in, or excluded from, these books has no effect upon the authenticity or otherwise of a given hadith. As the writer of *Mishkatu 'l-Masabih* says, "The books of *as-Sihah as-Sitta* contain all types of hadith: *sahih*, *hasan* and *da'if*: Not only that. A thorough study will show that there are even many forged and completely baseless "ahadith" in these books; therefore, every hadith has to be judged on its own merits.

5. The Problem of Fabrication & its Solution

Mawdu' (موضوع) literally means forged. In Islamic Terminology it is used for a "hadith" which is not from any *Ma'sum* but has been forged by someone and attributed to a *Ma'sum*. It is haram and strictly unlawful to narrate a *Mawdu'* "hadith" except when it is first declared to be forged.

It is an extremely painful tragedy of early Islamic period that a good number of the companions of the Holy Prophet and many of their disciples used to fabricate *ahadith* for material benefits or for the sake of sectarian polemics. It is not possible to give full details of this tragedy here. I will enumerate some of the causes, which prompted such unscrupulous persons to lie against the Holy Prophet and Imams:

1. Some people fabricated *ahadith* to please the rulers.
2. Others fabricated *ahadith* on the spur of the moment to fit it in their talks so that their popularity brings them worldly gains.
3. Many apparently pious people forged *ahadith* to exhort their audience to do good work. Such *ahadith* are found mostly on the subject of abstaining from worldly affairs and in sermons dealing with ethics.
4. Many people forged *ahadith* to support their own religious views. For examples, the atheists (زنادقة) forged at least 12,000 *ahadith* and attributed them to the Holy Prophet. A kharijite said after repenting from his previous belief; "Be careful in listening to *ahadith*; because we used to forge *hadith* whenever we wanted to support an opinion." Also those people who believed that Imams were gods fabricated *ahadith* in support of their belief.
5. Mu'awiyah and his successor umayyad rulers started wholesale fabrication of *ahadith* in praise of the first three khalifas and in condemnation of Imam 'Ali and his family (a.s.).

Muslim history records that in the beginning of the umayyad rule, those people who forged 'the saying of the Prophet' according to the wishes of the rulers, were greatly encouraged. They were given handsome presents and heavy monthly allowances and thus they were immensely enriched. And those who dared mention any true saying of the Prophet which happened to be against the desires and wishes of the rulers, were denied their basic rights and their names were removed from the roll of *baytu 'l-mal* (public treasury). Such a person was turned away from the courts of the rulers and his statements were treated as false and were rejected.⁴

It is clear that those sayings of the Prophet, which were against the policy of the government, had more chances of being genuine than those, which were in favor of the reigning group. Those who wrote against the government were always in danger of losing their lives, property and honor. On the other hand, those who wrote for the government had a strong worldly motive to coin stories and forge traditions. The political needs of those sovereigns gave rise to many things in the hadith corpus, which were totally against the Islamic tenets.

Some examples have been given in my other books. See for example, the comment of ‘Allamah Shibli on the belief of predestination of man’s actions (in *Justice of God*) and the controversy about *mi’raj*– Ascension of the Holy Prophet (in *The Holy Prophet*).

One more example may be given here of such “*ahadith*” which attribute sins to the previous Prophets and to the Holy Prophet of Islam. Most of the rulers who are regarded as caliphs according to the Sunni belief, were fallible (*nonma’sum*), and most of them (especially from the Umayyads and then, the Abbasids) were of very low moral standard; they were more depraved than even a common man. ‘Allamah Shibli has slightly hinted at it, in the statement quoted in *Justice of God*.

Under these circumstances, it was the easiest thing for saving their skins from various charges, to invent stories and coin *ahadith* to show that even the Holy Prophet himself was not free from sins; and, therefore, there was no harm if those caliphs were guilty of various sins and crimes.

These “traditions” were forged by some companions of the Holy Prophet like Abu Hurayrah and his ilk. It is interesting to note that Abu Hurayrah accepted Islam at the end of the 7th year of hijra and remained with the Holy Prophet for about 3 years only during which period he also went to Bahrain. And he claimed to hear in such a short period so many things from the Holy Prophet that exceed by far the total *ahadith* narrated in Sunni books from the first four caliphs (Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, ‘Ali), the lady Fatimah, all wives of the Holy Prophet (including ‘Aishah), and Hasan and Husayn.

Traditionalists have counted that there are 5374 *ahadith* narrated by Abu Hurayrah. Now look at the *ahadith* of some of the above mentioned personalities recorded in Sunni books:

Abu Bakr: 142 *ahadith*

Umar: 537 *ahadith*

Uthman: 146 *ahadith*

Ali (a.s): 586 *ahadith*

TOTAL 1411 *ahadith*

And these 4 khalifas had spent together a total of about 86 years with the Holy Prophet. Now compare 1411 *ahadith* in 86 years with 5374 *ahadith* in less than 3 years!!!

What is more tragic is that Abu Hurayrah is not alone. There are scores like him, and their “*ahadith*” have found place in all Sunni books because they were companions of the Holy Prophet! It is such *ahadith* which serve as the armory for the enemies of Islam, who use them to cast doubt on the character, sincerity, integrity and truth of the Holy Prophet on Islam.

How to Test a Hadith?

Ahadith have been collected by Sunnis and Shi’as alike in different books. But all those books are a

collection of every kind of traditions. It must be clearly understood that there never was in Islam any system of canonization of the books. There was never any system of authorization by state or church for the publication of books. It helped tremendously in the advancement of knowledge, because scholars were free to write whatever they liked. But so far as traditions were concerned it corrupted the authenticity of the traditions. Forgery and corruption of *hadith* became a common disease. Soon devices had to be developed to test the authenticity or otherwise of traditions.

The first device was provided by the Holy Prophet himself. He told the Muslims to test any tradition with the Qur'an. It has been mentioned earlier that every word of the Prophet was based upon revelation. And Qur'an also was revelation. And truth from the same source of knowledge cannot differ. Therefore, if a hadith was not against Qur'an, it was to be regarded as genuine one; if, on the other hand, it was against Qur'an, the Holy Prophet ordered the Muslims to reject it outright as fabrication.⁵

The *second device* was to check the character and life of those who narrated that tradition right from the person who claimed to have heard it from the prophet to the last man in the chain.

If the chain was broken or one or more links were weak or unreliable, then the hadith lost its value. The subject which deals with the categories of the narrators is named “*Ilmu ‘r Rijal* – knowledge about men.” It is an objective critique of every person in the field of tradition. As it has direct bearing on the value of *ahadith*, which is a part of revelation, this is one of the most important subjects of Islamic Theology. Thus, it will appear that though the books of *ahadith* have not been purged from fabricated narrations, still we have full records by which every tradition may be tested, and accordingly accepted or rejected.

The *third device* is of *ad-Dirayah* (دراية) it literally means “knowledge.” In Islamic Terminology it means verifying a hadith with “known” factors. For example, if a hadith attributed to the Holy Prophet contains a word, which was not in use in his days, it will be a proof that that hadith was forged. Or if some *rawi* mentions an event, which he did not see himself, and then he does not mention the name of his source, it will be a proof of forgery.

These three devices are the most important for sifting the authentic *ahadith* from the mass collected in the books of traditions.

^{1.} Al-Mufid, *Kitabu ‘l-Irshad* (Tehran, 1377) p.250; al-Majlisi, *Biharu ‘l-Anwar*, vol.46, p.288.

^{2.} *Kitabu ‘l-Irshad*, p.257; al-Kafi, vol. I, p.42. In Sunni sources, see ashSha’rani, *at-Tabaqatu ‘l Kubra* , vol. I, p.28; Abu Nu’aym, *Hilyatu ‘l Awliya’*, vol.3, pp. 193, 197.

^{3.} It will be of interest to note that the Shi'a 'ulama in Qum are keeping themselves up to date with the new technology in research. They have worked hard to put the hadith literature on data disks and CD Rom so as to make the work of scholars easier and faster. “*Markazu ‘l-Mu’jam al-Fiqhi*” under the patronage of the late Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Rida al-Gulpaygani (d. 1414/1993), in Qum was established for this specific purpose. It has already produced a data bank program which contains all the Shi'a collections of *ahadith*, as well as the important books on *fiqh* and *usulu ‘l-fiqh* on micro disks and CD Rom.

In addition to that, important books of Sunni *ahadith*, and Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali and Zaydi jurisprudence are also included in the program. As of October 1994, more than 500 books have been put in this data bank program. Another institution in Qum, “*Markaz-e Tahqiqat-e Computari*” under the patronage of the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, has

put the Four Early Books, Biharu ‘I-Anwar, Wasa’ilu ‘sh-Shi’a and Mustadraku ‘I-Wasa’il into a data bank program called “Nur.”

- [4.](#) Ibn Abi ‘I-Hadid al-Mu’tazili, Sharh Nahji ‘I-Balaghah vol. 11 (Cairo: Daru Ihya’i ‘I-Kutubi ‘I-‘Arabiyyah) pp.44-46.
- [5.](#) Al-Kulayni, al-Kafi , vol. I (Tehran: Daru ‘I-Kutubi ‘I-Islamiyya, 1388) p. 69.

Addenda: The Satanic Suggestion

It appears from a story narrated by many Sunni (traditionist) (fortunately this time not in their “six authentic collections”) that even after the supposed repeated removal of the pathetic satanic portion from the prophet’s heart, he fell prey to a very serious satanic suggestion --- and that too in conveying the revelation to the people!

As-Suyuti in his ad-Durru ‘I-manthur has quoted from ten traditionists several “traditions” to this effect, one of which is given here as a sample: –

“Ibn Abi Hatim has narrated through Musa ibn ‘Aqabah from Ibn Shahab that he said, ‘when the Surah an-Najm was revealed; and the polytheists used to say, “if this man (the prophet) were to mention our deities in good (terms) we would have accepted him and his companions; but he does not use such abusive and harsh words about others like the Jews and the Christians who oppose his religion, as he does about our gods”; and the messenger of Allah (s.a.w) was much distressed because of the troubles inflicted upon him and his companions by the idolaters and their rejection (of faith), and he was aggrieved by their straying; he therefore wished cessation of their harmful activities. When Allah sent down the *Surah an-Najm*, and he recited (the verses 19 and 20): *Have you then considered the Lat and the ‘Uzzah, and Manat, the third, the other?* The Satan inserted some words after the mention of the idols and said, “and surely they are the exalted cranes, and surely it is their intercession that is hoped for.”

It was the Satan’s rhymed composition and his mischief; and these two sentences entered the heart of every Meccan polytheist, and it was continuously on their tongues, and they congratulated each other and said that Muhammad had returned to his old religion and that of his people. When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) reached the end of (the Surah) an-Najm, he prostrated and with him did prostrate every Muslim and polytheist. This word spread among the people, and the Satan propagated it, until the news reached the country of Ethiopia. Then Allah revealed:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَنَّقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ أَيَّاتِهِ ۝ وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ حَكْمٌ

And we did not send before thee any messenger or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish his signs, and Allah is knowing, wise. (Surah al-Hajj, 22:52)

So when Allah made known his decision and freed him from the satanic rhymes, the polytheists turned back to their straying and their enmity of the Muslims, rather it became more serious!”¹

Similar “traditions” with minor or major variations are quoted in ad-Durru ‘l-manthur, vol. IV pp. 366–368.

Some of them say that the Prophet was praying in the Sacred Mosque and recited the Surah; but the fact is that the Prophet or the Muslims were not in a position to pray in the Sacred Mosque in the 5th year of the declaration of the prophethood, when this incident is said to have taken place.²

Others claim that he felt sleepy while praying and in that drowsiness the Satan made him utter these words!

Yet others say that Jibra’il came to the prophet and told him to recite again the revelation brought by him. The Prophet recited the Surah together with the satanic verses. Jibra’il said, “I had not brought this to you; it is from the Satan”. Then the verse 22:52 was revealed.

Still another “tradition” says, that the Prophet, on being informed of that satanic mischief was very grieved and felt remorse for “fabricating lie against Allah”. This depression continued until at the end Allah revealed the verse 22:52.

The actual meaning of the word, *al-gharaniq* (translated here as ‘cranes’) is obscure. It may mean wading birds (like cranes), or a soft grass growing with boxthorn, or a softskinned youth.³

There are twelve variations in as many traditions of the pathetic satanic verses, some of them difficult to understand, e.g. ‘they are surely in the exalted *gharaniq*’ and, ‘they are surely with the exalted *gharaniq*’.

This story is so diametrically opposed to many Qur’anic realities, that it should not be glorified by comment. But seeing that it has been used by orientalists like Alfred Guillaume to discredit the Prophet’s claim of divine revelation, some scrutiny is in order. After describing the story, he very “innocently” writes:

“In fact the incident is the strongest possible testimony to the sincerity of Muhammad. Of course it opens the door to the enquiry whether he may have been mistaken in supposing that his words were inspired on other occasion also.”⁴

If this story is true then certainly this question would arise.

As mentioned elsewhere, the people had started attributing false stories and forged traditions to the Holy

Prophet (s.a.w) even during his lifetime. The Prophet (s.a.w) had to warn the Muslims against this fitnah in these words:

“Surely there are many who forge lie against me, and their number is sure to increase; whoever intentionally tells a lie against me should prepare his abode in the fire. Therefore, whenever a hadith is narrated to you, put it (for testing) before the Book of Allah and my (established) sunnah, and whatever conforms with the Book of Allah, take it, and what goes against the Book of Allah and my sunnah, reject it.”⁵

Therefore we must check whether this story conforms with other Qur’anic statements:

First: The Satan himself had admitted that he had no power over the purified servants of Allah:

قَالَ رَبِّي بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

قَالَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ

‘He (Satan) said, “My Lord! ... and I will certainly cause them all to deviate, except thy servants from among them, the purified ones. He (Allah) said ... surely as regards my servants, you have no authority over them except those deviators who would follow you.” (Qur'an, 15:39–42).

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

“He (the Satan) said, ‘Then by Thy Might! I will surely make them deviate all of them, except thy servants from among them, the purified ones.’” (Qur'an, 38:82–83).

Then how could the Satan get power over Muhammad, the most purified of all servants of Allah?

Second: Allah himself is the protector of the Qur'an and he guarantees that falsehood shall not come to it from any side:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

“Surely we have revealed the reminder (the Qur'an) and most surely we are its protector.” (Qur'an, 15:9).

وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ ۝ تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ

“And most surely it is a mighty book; falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the wise, the praised one.” (Qur'an, 41:41–42).

Now with all this divine protection and guarantee how could the Satanic falsehood enter into it – and that also to such an extent that it was imprinted on the memory of the Prophet and he even repeated it before Jibra'il?

Third: Allah declares about the prophet:

وَلَوْ تَقُولَّ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ

لَأَخْذَنَا مِنْهُ بِأَلْيَمِينِ

ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ

فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ

“And if he had fabricated against us some of the sayings, we would certainly have seized him by the right hand, then we would certainly have cut off his aorta; and not one of you could have withheld us from him.” (Qur'an, 69:44–47).

Then how is it that in spite of such serious fabrication against the fundamental belief of monotheism and passing off the Satanic sayings as divine revelation, the Prophet's aorta was not cut off?

Now let us have a glance at the *Surah an-Najm*, and see if such insertion was possible in this Surah:

One: At the beginning of the Surah, Allah swears that the Prophet has not erred nor has he gone astray,

nor does he speak out of desire; it is nothing but revelation that is revealed. (Vs. 1–4).

Is it not amusing that after such a sworn divine statement, the narrators had the temerity to claim that the Satan inserted his own composition in this very Surah?

Vs.5–18 speak of the Prophet’s ascension and say that his heart was not untrue to what he saw there; and he certainly saw of the greatest signs of his lord.

Two: Then come the vs. 19–23 in condemnation of the idols:

“Have you then considered the Lat and the ‘Uzza, and the Manat, the third, the other? (vs. 19–20). What! For you are the males and for him the females? This indeed is an unjust division! They are nothing but names which you have named, you and your fathers; Allah has not sent for them any authority. They follow nothing but conjecture and the low desires which (their) souls incline to, while the guidance has certainly come to them from their lord.”

These “traditions” allege that the satanic rhymes were added after verse 20. How could those sentences fit in the above vs. 19–23? Were the Meccan idol-worshippers so naive that they were overjoyed and prostrated to Allah even after hearing such condemnation of their deities?

Three: Vs.24–26 describe Allah’s ownership of this life and the hereafter, and declare that intercession of many an angel will not avail at all except after Allah’s permission “to whom he pleases and chooses.” Vs.27–30 ridicule the idolaters’ custom of giving female names to the angels.

This right of intercession, denied even to the angels, was supposed to be bestowed upon the three idols through that interpolation!

The whole Surah proceeds in the same vein declaring Allah’s power and might and describing the punishment meted out to some previous peoples because of their disbelief and arrogance. In short, the theme of the whole Surah from the beginning to the end testifies to the incorruptibility of the divine revelation, condemns idol-worship, and emphasizes monotheism and divine power. How could that totally mismatched satanic sentence fool the idolaters?

Now, let us have a look at the V.52 of *Surah al-Hajj* (ch.22).

It is a part of a long speech, beginning with verse 49 and going to verse 54 and beyond. After declaring that the Prophet was a warner to the people, it mentions good reward of the believers and then says:

وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُولَئِكَ أَصْنَابُ الْجَحِيمِ

“And (as for) those who strive to oppose our signs, they shall be inmates of the flaming fire” (22: 51).

Then comes verse 52:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيًّا إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى الْأَقْوَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ أَيَّاتِهِ ۝ وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْمٌ حَكِيمٌ

“And we did not send before thee any messenger or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish his signs. And Allah is knowing, wise.” (22:52).

And then it proceeds:

لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْقَاسِيَّةُ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۝ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَنَفِي شِفَاقٌ بَعِيدٌ

“So that he may make what the Satan casts a trial for those in whose hearts is disease and those whose hearts are hard: and most surely the unjust are in a great opposition.” (22:53)

and so it goes on.

Now let us look at the claim that the verse 52 was revealed to console the Prophet after that satanic interpolation.

First: Had *Surah an-Najm* and the verse 52 of *Surah al-Hajj* been connected in any way, they should have been revealed at about the same time. But even according to Rev. Rodwell, *Surah an-Najm* (ch.53) was revealed at Mecca 5 years after the declaration of the Prophethood; and *Surah al-Hajj* (ch.22) was revealed at Medina. According to the order of revelation established by Rev. Rodwell, *an-Najm* is the 46th chapter while *al-Hajj* is the 107th. (Although Muir calls it a Meccan chapter, he too believes that it must have been revealed at the very end of the Prophet’s stay at Mecca, i.e. some 8 years after *an-Najm*). There can thus be no connection between the two chapters.

Second: To create the connection one has to look at the verse 52 in isolation and take it out of its context. Does academic honesty allow such exercise?

Third: The meaning of the above-mentioned ‘ayah is plain and simple. There is no need for any story to make its meaning clear. What is the desire of every messenger and prophet? Simply, to establish in the world the belief in the unity of divine being, explaining the truth, which is revealed to him. Satan interferes in this desire of every messenger and prophet; instigating men, making suggestions to them to oppose the prophets and to put obstacles in the way of truth. But god promises to establish truth of his revelation.

Now where is the need of any story to make its meaning comprehensible?

Fourth: Those who want to connect the verse 22:52 with that supposed satanic interpolation, have to interpret the word *umniyyah* (desire) as “recital.” Rodwell has translated this sentence as follow: “We have not sent any apostle or prophet before thee, among whose desires Satan injected not some wrong desire.”

Then he has written the following note: “It is said by tradition that Muhammad was consoled by this revelation for the satanic suggestion mentioned in sura liii, 20, p.70 (n). But in this view of the text, for ‘among whose desires’ or ‘affections’ we should render ‘when he recited.’⁶

So you see, the connection cannot be established unless the meaning of “unmiyyah” is changed from desire to recitation. But “desire” is the actual meaning of the word; and recitation etc. is metaphorical extension of the true meaning. Ibn Manzur explains in his *Lisanu 'l-'Arab*: “Recital is called *unmiyyah* because when a reciter of the Qur'an passes from a verse of mercy, he desires (to get) it, and when he passes from a verse of chastisement, he desires to be saved from it.” Further extension has given this word meanings of lie and forgery, “because when someone says a thing he does not know, then it is as if he desires it (to happen.)”⁷

And it is a well-established rule of Arabic literature that the real meaning should always be given preference, unless there is some solid reason to overlook it for metaphorical interpretation. Therefore, the translations, which use the word recital and reciting, are all off the mark. And without this change, no connection can be established between the two chapters.

Thus both external and internal Qur'anic evidence goes emphatically against this story of the Prophet's “lapse”. In view of these Qur'anic proofs, there is no need to look at the chains of its narrators. Even so, it should be mentioned here that this story appears for the first time in the book of al-Waqidi who is known to be unreliable and fabricator of reports. Moreover, six “traditions” end at one or the other *tabi'i* (disciple of a companion); and eight end at Ibn 'Abbas who was not even born at the time this incident is said to have taken place.

Who was the person who informed those narrators about it? We do not know – probably because there was no such person; and those reports were forged by some people in later days.

Although Alfred Guillaume rejects traditions everywhere indiscriminately, he has tried to prove this “tradition” as genuine, as it suits his purpose. He has this to say against this last argument:

“Critics of tradition have endeavored to discredit the honesty of those who reported this story; but it is impossible to suggest a motive for its invention other than a desire to discredit Muhammad, the Qur'an, and Islam itself – and such a supposition in regard to sincere Muslims is absurd.”⁸

In other words, if the real motive is disclosed, A. Guillaume would accept this story as false. In this connection, we shall have to remind our readers of the painful reality of the early days of Islam, and that is the currency of false and gorged “*ahadith*” as briefly mentioned in pp. 94–98. Alfred Guillaume himself

has written several pages about it in this same book.

The political needs of the Umayyads brought in very many things which were totally against the Islamic faith, e.g. about the predestination of human actions. 'Allamah Shibli Nu'mani writes:

"Although all these causes were present which were responsible for the difference in faith, yet the political differences started the ball rolling. The reign of the Umayyads was full of cruelty and bloodshed; and as against that there was a spirit of revolt among the common people; but the well-wishers of the government always silenced the people by saying that "Whatever happens takes place according to the will of the Almighty, and as such common people should not raise their voices against it at all. Everything is destined before-hand, and whatever happens, good or bad, happens according to the will of God; and we should bow down to that."⁹

The Shi'as believed that their Imams were *ma'sum*, sinless. And the Umayyad caliphs were certainly not sinless. In fact most of them were more immoral and depraved than even their subjects. It is not the intention here to prove as to whose idea about the "sinlessness" was correct; it is enough to point out here that this difference of the article of faith was present there with full force. Under such circumstances, it was the easiest thing to save their sinful caliphs from serious charges by inventing stories and "*ahadith*" to show that even the Holy Prophet himself was not free from sins and satanic snares. Why should the public be concerned if their caliphs were guilty of various sins and crimes, and if they were open to the temptations of Satan?

In this background not only the motive for forging this story of the Satanic verses, but also of all attempts which were made to smear and tarnish the image of the Holy Prophet becomes clear. It was due to these forgeries that Alfred Guillaume had to say that the Sunnis did not believe in the "sinlessness" of the prophets; and that it was only after they were affected by the "sinless Imams" of the Shi'as, and the "sinless Messiah" of the Christians that they also began to believe in the "sinlessness" theory of all other prophets.¹⁰

^{1.} As-Suyuti, *ad-Durru 'l-Manthur*. vol.4, p.367.

^{2.} Ibn Sa'd, *at-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, Beirut, vol.1, p.206.

^{3.} Lisanu 'l-'Arab, Qum, 1405/1363. vol. 10, pp.286-288.

^{4.} Alfred Guillaume. op. cit., pp.35-36

^{5.} Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi, *Safinatu 'l-Bihar*, vol. 2. p.474. Countless ahadith to this effect may be seen in the books of both sects, including *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol.I ("kitabu 'l-'ilm: Bab ithm man khadhiba 'ala 'n Nabi") p.38

^{6.} Rodwell, *The Koran*, p.58

^{7.} Lisanu 'l-'Arab, Vol.15. pp.294-295: see also *al-Munjid* under the root m-n-y.

^{8.} Alfred Guillaume, op. cit., p.35.

^{9.} Shibli Nu'mani. *Ilmu 'l-Kalam*, part 1, p.17

^{10.} Alfred Guillaume. op. cit., p.111.

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