

I'JAZ AL-QUR'AN

The Miraculous Nature
of the Qur'an

Asif Tufal
Safar 1414 A.H.

A Book which We have revealed to you,
in order that you might lead mankind
out of the depths of darkness into light
by the leave of their Lord -
to the Way of the Exalted in Power, Worthy of all Praise!

Of Allah,
to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth.
But alas for the Unbelievers, a terrible doom.

Those who love the life of this world more than the Hereafter,
who hinder (people) from the Path of Allah
and seek therein something crooked:
They are far astray

Surah Ibrahim (14:1-3)

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INTRODUCTION

Humans by their nature worship their Creator. The problem is, how can we define a relationship with something we cannot see? At one point or another, we will ask ourselves the most fundamental questions of life: Where did we come from? Why were we created? And, What happens when we die? God is the Creator of man and to make matters clearer, to give man more detailed knowledge of God and to show him in a more specific way how to relate to Him, God has since the creation of mankind sent messages to men through persons chosen and inspired by Him.

Where can we find God's written instructions for us? This issue has become confusing as it is a fact that there exist many books in the world which are sometimes described as "Holy": There is the Vedas and the Bhagavat Gita among Hindus. There is the Avesta and its various parts among the Zoroastrians. There is the Bible and various versions of it used by Christians and partly by the Jews. There is the Qur'an of the Muslims. Closer to our own times are such writings as the Adi-Granth of the Sikhs and the Book of Mormon of the Church of Latter-Day Saints in the United States.

Some of these writings or scriptures are regarded as the message or the words of a Supreme Being, or at least inspired by the Creator and transmitted by prophets or people chosen by God. How do we know this? How do we know who these people are? How do we know these people are true and what they say is true and not invented by themselves or others? And since many people have claimed and still claim to be Prophets, how do we know a true Prophet from an impostor or a charlatan? Even if we can establish that a Prophet is true, how can we be sure that the message he brought is preserved exactly as he brought it and has not been changed or distorted in any way?

Let us turn to the Qur'an as it has serious implications for all people because it says many things about Muslims, and about Jews, Christians and other *Kafir* (non-Believers). The Qur'an contains good news for practising Muslims, and warning of punishment for non-Believers who reject the Qur'an and for *Fasiqs* (transgressors). We need proof, based on fact, as we are living in a hi-tech world, that the Qur'an really is the Book of Allah. The aim of this booklet therefore, is to show Muslims and non-Muslims of inquiring mind that the Qur'an is the Revelation of God to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

According to a number of Orientalists, Muhammad wrote the Qur'an in the belief that it was Allah's revelation to him; according to others Muhammad claimed that the Qur'an was the revelation of God merely in order to prove the genuineness of his message. In other words, they simultaneously maintain that he was a "psychotic" and a "forger" - that he was deceived in his own mind and that he deceived on that same issue. They say that he himself believed that he was a prophet and yet they say that he lied about being a prophet! Of course, a man cannot be true and false to himself regarding precisely the same point: if he believes that he is a prophet, he does not fool people into believing him. The claims of the Orientalists are often based upon flagrant motives. Their motivation was not the establishment of historical facts but the derogation of the Prophet Muhammad in the eyes of his Muslim followers, and those who seek the truth of Islam.

Muslims and non-Muslims must not be too ready to accept what the Orientalists say and regard it as true knowledge. There are grave errors which the Orientalists make although

some of these Orientalists appear candid and scholarly despite their errors. Error nonetheless finds its way into their conclusions either, a) because of their lack of mastery of the nuances of the Arabic language, or b) because of their prejudice against religion as such, or Islam in particular, which in turn, conditions them to seek to destroy the fundamental basis of religion. Both shortcomings are unworthy of scholars. Muslim readers therefore, should watch out more carefully when they read a religious study by a Westerner whose secret aim may be to cast doubts into the minds of Muslims (as well as non-Muslims) about the authenticity of the Qur'an and Islam. They should scrutinise every claim these studies make for the truth.

Some Orientalists undoubtedly arrive at the truth in some cases; others have not been as fortunate. If these critics and sceptics spent as much time in an honest and unprejudiced study of the Qur'an and Islam, as in seeking defects to justify their futile attempts of discrediting Allah's divine message to humankind, they would have accepted Islam.

Above have been laid some of the charges which have been hurled against Muhammad over the last centuries. I have tried to answer them rationally. I have let the facts speak for themselves. In addition to my personal views I have quoted the studied observations of highly respected persons/authorities, both Muslim and non-Muslim; their testimony lends weight to the assessment of the various issues under dispute. Success comes from Allah; on Him I rely and to Him I turn for help.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Naeem Iqbal for having typed this work for me (making hundreds of alterations without hesitation).

Finally, it is important to note that there can be no absolute or perfect translation of the Qur'an and at best, only a translation of its understood meaning (TMQ) can be offered.

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PROPHETS AND MIRACLES

The Qur'an can be claimed to be the Book of God on the basis that it is itself a miracle. Whenever Muhammad was asked for a miracle, as a proof of the genuineness of his prophethood, he quoted the composition of the Qur'an and its incomparable excellence as proof of its Divine origin.

A miracle is a Divine act which defies and transcends universal norms and laws and which cannot be performed by the aid of learning and practice, which Allah grants to His Messengers in order to convince people of the truth of their message. With this heavenly support mundane laws and natural phenomena are caused to yield in such an overwhelming way that they cannot be rationally explained¹.

Miracles must invariably conform to the mentality of the society to which a Prophet is sent. Superhuman demonstrations in an area of knowledge in which its people are well versed make people believe in the truth of the Prophet and his access to divine power. For example, if the people for whom a Messenger has been sent to excel in sorcery, medicine or poetry, the miracle should also concern these fields. Only in this way can a miracle fulfil its purpose and this rule has been observed in all the divine miracles performed by the Prophets of Allah.

Hence, the miracle of Moses was the ability to perform acts which appeared to be magical in nature, because Pharaonic Egypt was expert in magic and illusions. Moses was challenged to a contest of magic. As soon as Pharaoh's magicians and tricksters saw Moses' walking staff transforming into a living serpent and devouring their illusory snakes they instantly believed in Moses as being a Prophet of God and without hesitation embraced his faith. Being in a better position than others to judge that that miracle was the supernatural work of a Divine power and not the result of a magical skill or an illusion, they were overwhelmed by what they witnessed.

Similarly, in the time of Jesus the science of medicine was a common practice as the people were attempting to acquire perfection in it. He restored sight to the blind, cured lepers and revived the dead under the command and will of God. When the experts of medicine watched Jesus healing the lepers and reviving the dead, they instantly knew through their experience that such powers were beyond the access of the science of medicine, and believed that it could be nothing but a miracle.

Divine miracles are not limited to the challenges they present to the people before whom they occur, but are also designed to provide them with the capacity to perceive them as signs of God's power and control over the laws of nature. This was illustrated by the miracle in which Allah protected Abraham from a burning fire. Abraham's miracle was designed to challenge the idolators who by burning him alive sought revenge against him after he had insulted their idols. When he was hurled into the fire, Allah caused its nature to burn to be suspended enabling Abraham to stand within the flames unharmed as a challenge to the idolators. The purpose behind this miracle was not only to save Abraham but to prove that the people were incapable of inflicting harm on the Prophet who had insulted them. Only in this way could the idolators be convinced of the falsehood of their idols and of the truth of Abraham's God.

The purpose of such miracles of Allah was to challenge the strengths of the people to whom a particular Prophet was sent. Each Messenger brought to his people a miracle commensurate with the kind of knowledge they most excelled in.

However these incidents could be dismissed as fairy tales - we have no proof in front of our eyes so we cannot justify the stories on the sole basis of their reports. These stories could have been fabricated, as we know that people can tell lies. We are Twentieth Century human beings and need solid proof of these miracles. Proof that we can see with our own eyes and can examine. We have not seen someone consumed by fire and say "No problem!" We have not seen someone part the sea. We have not seen someone raise people from the dead. Where is the proof for us? After all, "Seeing is believing."

The same criteria for miracles applies to the Prophet Muhammad. He was sent to the Arabs who claimed to be the best poets of the world. They were experts in language and literature, challenging each other in public contests². The miracle of Muhammad therefore, came in the form to challenge their understanding from the vantage of their linguistic skills. Muhammad, who was an *ummi* (unschooled man), brought forward Revelations in poetical form claiming them to be from Allah. The Arabs had become masters of the art of literary competition and the Qur'an came and its miracle was its composition. The Qur'an was a challenge, challenging them to produce a similar recital if they doubted its Divine origin. As soon as the Arabs heard the Qur'an, they knew from their experience that it was far beyond the limits of humanly conceivable perfection. They instantly realised that such superhuman eloquence could not exist in a human work.

There is one important difference between Muhammad's miracle and the miracles of his fellow prophets: it is permanent while other miracles were temporary, i.e., the miracles of his fellow Apostles ceased with them but the Qur'an still exists today as a miracle. Because the miracles of the former were performed only once, their impact was greatest on eye-witnesses. For those who had not seen them, they were matters of hearsay which had they not been affirmed in the Qur'an would have possibly been dismissed.

We know that historians can lie and that stories can be exaggerated and become distorted as they are passed on, but the Qur'an can be examined today by experts. If we are to believe in the Qur'an, we have to be one hundred percent certain that it is the Word of Allah. The Messenger left us but the Message remains, so now we can examine it:

Is the Qur'an a Divine Revelation or is it a human fabrication?

THE MIRACULOUS NATURE OF THE OUR'AN

What makes the Qur'an a miracle? The composition of the Qur'an has certain features which make it unique and unmatched by humans. This inimitability is called *I'jaz al-Qur'an*, the "miraculous nature" of the Qur'an. The Qur'an with its literary inimitability is all the more astonishing because Muhammad himself was *ummi* (unschooled) when the Qur'an was revealed to him. The miraculous nature of the Qur'an leaves its opponents powerless or incapable of meeting the challenges which the Revelation poses to them. The Qur'an contains challenges defying people to imitate it if they do not believe that it is from God. For example, Allah says in *Surah al-Tur* (52:33-34):

Or do they say "He fabricated the Message?" Nay, they have no faith! Let them then produce a recital like it - if (it be) they that speak the truth!

The Arabs failed to meet such challenges, though they had the necessary expertise, and there are many examples recorded in history that people were so moved by listening to the Qur'an when they heard it for the first time that they reverted to Islam simply by listening to it. For example, the second Khalif Umar (before he was a Muslim) came out of his house one day, sword in hand, with the intention of killing Muhammad. On his way, being informed that his sister had accepted Islam, he became mad with anger and went to her home where a Muslim companion was reciting part of the Qur'an to her. Upon reading a section of *Surah Ta-Ha* (Ch. 20) himself, Umar said "How excellent are these words!" He was so moved that he went to the Prophet and after further discussion accepted Islam.

Scholars have pointed out that there does not exist a piece of literature that can match the Qur'an, with respect either to style and form or to content. But technically speaking, what is the Miraculous Nature of the Qur'an?

1. The Muslim scholar Al-Qurtubi in his Commentary on the Qur'an has indicated the following ten aspects of the *Ijaz al-Qur'an*: its language excels all other arabic language; its style excels all other arabic style; its comprehensiveness cannot be matched; its legislation cannot be surpassed; its narrations about the unknown can only result from revelation; its lack of contradiction with the sound natural sciences; its fulfilment of all that it promises, both good tidings and threat; the knowledge it comprises (both legal and concerning the creation); its fulfilment of human needs; and its effects on the hearts of men.

2. The Muslim scholar Al-Tabari remarked in his Commentary on the Qur'an (Vol. 1 p10) that: "...it is obvious that there is no clear discourse more eloquent, no wisdom more profound, no speech more sublime, no form of expression more noble, than (this) clear discourse and speech with which a single man challenged a people at a time when they were acknowledged masters of the art of oratory and rhetoric, poetry and prose, rhymed prose and soothsaying. He reduced their fancy to folly and demonstrated the inadequacy of their logic... He let them know that the demonstration of the truth of what he said, the proof of the genuineness of his prophethood, was the *bayan* - the clear discourse, the *hikma* - the wisdom, the *furqan* - the discriminator between truth and falsehood, which he conveyed to them in a language like their language, in a speech whose meanings conformed to the meanings of their speech. Then he told them all that they were incapable of bringing anything comparable to (even) a part of (what he had brought), and that they lacked the power to do this..."

A number of scholars failed to compose anything to challenge the eloquence of the Qur'an and confessed their inability, voluntarily acknowledging the truth of what Muhammad brought. Some non-Believers however, focussed their attack on the personality of Muhammad³, while others pretended through arrogance not to understand or see the genuineness of Muhammad's prophethood⁴. However, the fact that the opponents of Muhammad preferred to fight wars against him and sacrifice their lives is enough to prove that they acknowledged the miraculous eloquence of the Qur'an and found it impossible to produce any passage comparable to the Qur'an. For example, in the Battle of Badr, the army of the opponents of Muhammad numbered over one thousand and had among its leaders some of the most experienced warriors of Arabia. In the battle, the leader of the Quraish, Abu Jahl, and several of their greatest men were killed, many were taken prisoner, and their possessions and camels were captured by the Muslims.

Non-Arabic speakers might not understand the miraculous quality of the Qur'an and its inimitability. They may rightly pause and ponder the truth of this claim. They cannot read Arabic and thus may not grasp what it is all about. Therefore, to prove its excellence there now follows several testimonies by *non-Muslims* that show the Qur'an is really admired for the beauty of its composition and for its unsurpassed magnificence.

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.

F.F. Arbuthnot, The Construction of the Bible and the Koran, London 1885, p5

It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue... The style of the Koran is generally beautiful and fluent... and in many places, especially where the majesty and attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent ... He succeeded so well, and so strangely captivated the minds of his audience, that several of his opponents thought it the effect of witchcraft and enchantment.

George Sale, The Koran: The Preliminary Discourse, London, 1891, p47-48

The truth is I do not find any understanding author who controverts the elegance of the Al-Qur'an, it being generally esteemed as the standard of the Arabic language and eloquence.

Dr. Hency Stubbe MA, Rise and Progress of Mohammadanism, London 1911, p158

All those who are acquainted with the Qur'an in Arabic agree in praising the beauty of this religious book; its grandeur of form is so sublime that no translation into any European language can allow us to appreciate it.

Edward Montet, Traduction Francaise du Coran, Paris 1929, Introduction p253

ISLAMIC LITERATURE... The Koran is composed in rhythmical and rhyming prose, held to be of miraculous and inimitable excellence.

Encyclopaedia Americana, 1968, Vol. 15 p414i

NOTE: This quote from the 1968 Edition (located at Regent's Park Mosque, London) has been removed from more recent editions without explanation.

Koran It represents for Moslems one of Muhammad's miracles and is a proof of the authenticity of his prophetic mission: it is also regarded as inimitable in style and content...

The language of the *Koran* is classical Arabic, and it has extraordinary vigour. The style reaches noteworthy heights, particularly in the first affirmations of the unity, uniqueness, and omnipotence of God, in the lively descriptions of the Day of Judgement, in the moralising passages, and in the apostrophes against polytheism.

... It is through the *Koran* that innumerable Arabic words have come into use in many languages, and expressions from the *Koran* have become proverbial throughout the Moslem world. Many persons know it by heart, and it is used as an alphabet book, as a dictionary, as a grammar book, and as a code of manners for hundreds of millions. The *Koran* is among the most difficult books in the world to translate: it is rare for a version in any language to convey the strength and vigour of the original Arabic, the rhythmic rhyming prose which is excited, slow, and majestic in its turns.

Because of its variety of uses, the *Koran* is the most widely-read book in the world. It has also ensured a common literary language throughout the Moslem world, whatever variations have taken place in the spoken world.

The New Caxton Encyclopaedia, 1977, Vol. 11 p3523

Briefly, the rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Koran are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound in the nature of things to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendour of the original... My chief reason for offering this new version of a book which has been "translated" many times already is that in no previous rendering has a serious attempt been made to imitate, however imperfectly, those rhetorical and rhythmical patterns which are the glory and the sublimity of the Koran.

The Koran Interpreted by Arthur J. Arberry, London 1980, Preface p24-25

NOTE: A.J. Arberry, the British Orientalist, was professor of Arabic at Oxford University.

MOHAMMED... Mohammed never claimed to have other supernatural or miraculous powers. The visions appeared to him while he was in a trance. He is said to have preached in a flowing, rhythmical prose so well-phrased that his followers were convinced it must have been divinely inspired.

New Standard Encyclopaedia, 1989, Vol. 11 p458

The Koran is the earliest and by far the finest work of Classical Arabic prose... It is acknowledged that the Koran is not only one of the most influential books of prophetic literature but also a literary masterpiece in its own right... translations have, in my opinion, practically failed to convey both the meaning and the rhetorical grandeur of the original.

The Koran Translated with Notes by N. J. Dawood, 5th Edition 1990, pp1.3

NOTE: Nessim Joseph Dawood is a Jewish Iraqi Scholar

KORAN ... The Koran In World Literature. As a literary masterpiece which mirrors the psychological, social, and spiritual elements, the Koran surpasses every other book... The Koran is foremost in the body of Arabic literature... Its place in Arabic literature and world thought has been established by its meaning

to Arab and Muslim, and by the revolution it set in motion. In the Islamic view, no writings can rival those that follow the Koranic literary forms.

Colliers Encyclopaedia, 1990, Vol. 14 p142

... The Qur'an is regarded as the only miracle brought by the Prophet. Muslim tradition is replete with stories of those who converted to Islam on hearing its inimitable message and of those pagan poets who failed the Qur'anic challenge (10:37-38) to create verses comparable with those contained in the Qur'an. Indeed, throughout history, many Arab Christians as well have regarded it as the perfection of Arabic language and literature.

John L. Esposito, Islam: The Straight Path, Oxford University Press, 1991, p21.

NOTE: This author is Professor of Religion at the College of the Holy Cross

MOHAMMED... The Message... That he, an *ummi* ("unschooled man"), could produce exquisite prose was adduced by him and his followers as the only miraculous proof of his prophethood.

Encyclopaedia Americana, 1992, Vol. 19 p315.

The Koran constantly stresses the need for intelligence in deciphering the 'signs' or 'messages' of God. Muslims are not to abdicate their reason but to look at the world attentively and with curiosity...

But the greatest sign of all was the Koran itself: indeed its individual verses are called *ayat*. Western people find the Koran a difficult book and this is largely a problem of translation. Arabic is particularly difficult to translate: even ordinary literature and the mundane utterances of politicians frequently sound stilted and alien when translated into English, for example, and this is doubly true of the Koran, which is written in dense and highly allusive, elliptical speech. The early suras in particular give the impression of human language crushed and splintered under the divine impact...

The early biographers of Muhammad constantly described the wonder and shock felt by the Arabs when they heard the Koran for the first time. Many were converted on the spot, believing that God alone could account for the extraordinary beauty of the language. Frequently a convert would describe the experience as a divine invasion that tapped buried yearnings and released a flood of feelings. Thus the young Qurayshi Umar ibn al-Khattab had been a virulent opponent of Muhammad; he had been devoted to the old paganism and ready to assassinate the Prophet. But this Muslim Saul of Tarsus was converted not by a vision of Jesus the Word but by the Koran...

... Muslims like Umar seem to have experienced a similar unsettling of sensibility, an awakening and a disturbing sense of significance which enabled them to make the painful break with the traditional past. Even those Qurayshis who refused to accept Islam were disturbed by the Koran and found that it lay outside all their familiar categories: it was nothing like the inspiration of the *kahin* [soothsayer⁵] or the poet; nor was it like the incantations of a magician. Some stories show powerful Qurayshis who remained steadfastly with the opposition being visibly shaken when they listened to a sura. It is as though Muhammad had created an entirely new literary form that some people were not ready for but which thrilled others. Without this experience of the Koran, it is extremely unlikely that Islam would have taken root.

Karen Armstrong, A History of God, London, 1993, p168-171.

From the above evidence the Qur'an is acknowledged to be written with the utmost beauty and purity of language. It is incontestably the standard of the Arabic tongue, inimitable by any human pen, and because it still exists today, therefore insisted on as a permanent miracle and sufficient to convince the world of its Divine origin. If the Qur'an was written by Muhammad, why were not Arab scholars and linguists able to rival the Qur'an? Advantaged by their knowledge in literature and poetry these scholars were in a superior position to Muhammad who was known to be illiterate. What prevented them from exposing him if he was an imposter as they claimed? The answer is that the Qur'an is Allah's Speech, and no man can compete with Him.

OBJECTIONS TO I'JAZ AL-QUR'AN

There are certain objections raised by the non-Muslims against the miraculous nature of the Qur'an.

For example, some argue that the claim that no one can write like the Qur'an does not make it exceptional enough to be considered a miracle because no one can write like Shakespeare. This would mean that books written in other languages, which have the highest standard of eloquence, should also be accepted as revealed, as well as implying that all kinds of false and abject works could claim to be miraculous simply on the strength of being composed in supremely eloquent language.

First of all, the claim by some that certain books of other languages demonstrate a standard of eloquence equal to that of the Qur'an, is not acceptable on the ground that every language has its own particular structure, grammar and idiom, which usually is radically different from any other language. In addition, at the beginning of this chapter were described the various aspects of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an (see Al-Qurtubi and Al-Tabari). Given those criteria, any objection is not valid unless a parallel description of equal eloquence is produced by other claimants to meet the Qur'anic challenge.

As for the contention that books written in other languages possessing the highest degree of eloquence should also be considered as miracles, this argument is not well-founded as no book in any language has been proved to have achieved the super-human quality of eloquence that is possessed by the Glorious Qur'an. The authors of such books (e.g. Shakespeare) never claimed them to be prophetic marvels. However, anyone making any such claim would be required to prove its transcendent quality of eloquence with effective arguments and specific examples.

Thus, the argument that no one can write like Shakespeare, which implies that the Qur'an is not miraculous, can be dismissed on the following grounds: 1) Muhammad was *ummi* (unschooled) whereas Shakespeare was educated; 2) The English language is totally different to Arabic; 3) Shakespeare never claimed his works to be prophetic marvels; 4) No one has ever proved, with effective arguments and specific examples, that authors today cannot write like and equal Shakespeare; and 5) The Qur'an fulfils human needs, i.e., our survival, spiritual and sexual instincts, and is thus more relevant to our daily lives than useless works like Shakespeare which cannot guide us to the Truth (*Haqq*). None of the issues dealt with in the Qur'an can be considered to be abject or unneeded.

The final objection to be considered is the argument that the Qur'an can only be recognised as a miracle by those who are proficient in Arabic:

A person does not have to acquire a high standard of proficiency and skill in the Arabic language to appreciate the eloquence of the Qur'an. The Qur'an challenged those few Arab linguists who had great pride in their eloquence. They were not only overawed by its eloquence but also admitted their inability to contest it because, through their perfect elocution, they instantly recognised its super-human eloquence. The common people have found out about this quality through these scholars. Thus the miraculous eloquence of the Glorious Qur'an has become known by all.

The miraculous eloquence of the Glorious Qur'an is so widely acknowledged that it has not been refuted by anyone in over 1350 years. The testimonies presented above are evident of this. Thus, those who do not speak Arabic can appreciate the qualities of the Qur'an from those who are knowledgeable in Arabic.

THE ORIGIN OF THE QUR'AN

Muhammad claimed the Qur'an to be the Message from God and in order to prove that let us consider the possibilities of all those alleged to have produced it: some critics said that as Muhammad was *ummi* (unschooled), another Arab taught him. We must also consider the likelihood of Muhammad having somehow written it himself⁶. As the Qur'an contains stories of prophets common to Judaism and Christianity, some critics alleged that a Christian youth, Jabr, taught him. Finally, as Muhammad and the Qur'an claim, the Qur'an could have originated from Allah.

1. THE ARABS

It is wrong to say the Qur'an came from the Arabs because it challenged all of them, individually or collectively, to produce merely ten *Surahs* (chapters) similar to it if they did not believe it was the Word of God. Allah told His Messenger, in Surah Hud (11: 13-14), to say to the non-Believers:

Bring ye ten surahs like it, and call (to your aid) whomsoever you can, other than Allah if you speak the truth! If they then answer not your call, then realise that this is revealed only with the knowledge of Allah, and that there is no god but He! Will you then be (of) those who surrender?

This challenge was taken up by the most eloquent men in Arabia, whose main ambition was to excel in poetical composition. Not only did they fail in this but they also failed in its second challenge: to prove its complete superiority and inimitability, the Qur'an contains a challenge to produce a single chapter that might be compared with it. In Surah Yunus (10: 37-38) Allah states:

This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by any other than Allah ... Or do they say "He forged it?" Say, "Bring ye then a Surah like it and call (to your aid) anyone you can beside Allah if it be you that speak the truth!"

For over 1350 years the Qur'an has remained unmatched and the shortest chapter in the Qur'an, Surah Kawthar (108), is only three lines long:

*To thee have We granted the Fount (of Abundance).
Therefore to thy Lord turn in prayer and sacrifice.
For he who hateth thee – he will be cut off (from future hope).*

No Arab could have taught Muhammad the Qur'an, for surely, if the Qur'an was an Arab's composition, other Arabs or Arabic-speakers, even unitedly, could rival at least three lines of the Qur'an? Muhammad was merely a man but illiterate; so how could it be supposed that he was capable of doing that which scholars were incapable? How could it be imagined that they were unable to do that which he was able? Surely if Muhammad had fabricated the Qur'an, and if the Arabs were to come together and help each other to produce the like of one of its surahs, they would have been more able to compose it, than Muhammad, since they could work as a group and he was on his own.

2. MUHAMMAD

Muhammad could not have produced the Qur'an. Firstly he was one of the Arabs. Furthermore, Muhammad was not renowned for his Arabic as he was unschooled (*ummi*), yet he came forward with Revelations in a humanly unmatched form. It is historically established through the Qur'an that Muhammad, the "unlettered prophet," could neither read nor write poetry (a fact never doubted during his lifetime):

Those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet... (Surah al-A'raf, 7:157)

It is He who has sent amongst the unlettered an Apostle from amongst themselves ... (Surah Jummah, 62:2)

And you were not (able) to recite a book before this (Book came), nor are you (able) to transcribe it with your right hand: in that case, indeed, would the talkers of falsehood have doubted. (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:48)

These Qur'anic verses are a clear depiction of the Prophet's literary attainments before his prophethood. The Prophet did not read or write before his prophethood, nor did he receive any formal or informal education. Muhammad did not take part, before his prophethood, in the forms of poetry and rhetoric which were popular among the people at the time. There is no mention (from any source) of any distinction of the Prophet over the rest of his people, except in his moral commitments, his trustworthiness, honesty, truthfulness and integrity. Muhammad lived among them for forty years before his prophethood without their sensing anything distinguishing him from them, except his pure conduct.

There is unanimous agreement among scholars that Muhammad was unschooled and that he himself did not write down the Revelation. This ought to convince any unprejudiced person that the Qur'an could only have come to him through Divine revelation. Unfortunately, in recent times, the fact that Muhammad was unschooled has been doubted by a minority of non-Believers. However, the following testimonies from non-Muslims support the fact that Muhammad was unschooled:

We are here in touch with an untutored but fervent mind... Learning he has none, or next to none...

G. Margoliouth, Rodwell's Translation of the Qur'an, Introduction pIX-X

It is exceedingly strange that this illiterate person should have composed the best book in the language.

Basanta Coomar Bose, Mohammadanism, Calcutta 1931, p4

MOHAMMED... The Message... That he, an *ummi* ("unschooled man"), could produce exquisite prose was adduced by him and his followers as the only proof of his prophethood.

Encyclopaedia Americana, 1992, Vol. 19 p315

In the Qur'an, Muhammad is often called the *ummi* prophet, the unlettered prophet, and the doctrine of his illiteracy stresses the miraculous nature of his inspiration. Some western scholars, however, have claimed that the title *ummi*

should not be interpreted as illiterate and that, as a merchant, Muhammad probably would have mastered the rudiments of writing. They believe that he was claiming to be a prophet for the "unlettered" people who had not received a scripture from God... We have seen that for nearly a thousand years, Westerners have been unable to believe that Muhammad had a genuine prophetic vocation... In fact, it seems perverse to challenge the traditional Muslim interpretation of *ummi*. There is no mention in the early sources of Muhammad reading or writing. When he needed to send a letter he would dictate it to somebody like Ali, who was literate. To have concealed his ability to read and write all his life would have been a major deception. Apart from being uncharacteristic, this fraud would have been very difficult to sustain given how closely he lived among his own people. The interpretation of *ummi* as illiterate is very early indeed...

Karen Armstrong: Muhammad, A Western Attempt to Understand Islam, London 1991, p88

Additionally, Muhammad left some *mutawatir* (absolutely authentic) *hadith* (sayings) whose authenticity is beyond reproach. If we compare any of these traditions with any verse of the Qur'an, we will find no similarity between them in style. Because there is a clear difference between the *hadith* and the *Surahs* in style, the Qur'an is definitely not Muhammad's speech. In order to illustrate this point the following examples should be considered:

ISLAM - The Koran ... It should be remembered also that the revelations came to Mohammed in an ecstatic state. Under the inspiration of prophecy he spoke from a kind of a trance, and the revelations were expressed in a powerful, pithy, rhymed, and rhythmic language quite unlike his ordinary speech.

Encyclopaedia Americana, 1992, Vol. 15 p495

[In 622 the Prophet ordered his Emigrants and his Helpers to build a *masjid* him which would also be his home.] As they worked, they sometimes sang verses composed for the occasion:

0 God, no good is but the good hereafter

So help the Helpers and the Emigrants.

Muhammad used to change the last line to 'So help the Emigrants and the Helpers'. This amendment ruined the rhyme and rhythm; it was a sort of playful demonstration of Muhammad's 'illiteracy': he was no natural poet and his obvious ineptitude showed just how miraculous the Qur'an must be.

Karen Armstrong: Muhammad, A Western Attempt to Understand Islam, London 1991, p154

Finally, with regard to the totally unfounded allegation that Muhammad copied the Bible or was taught from the Bible, not only was Muhammad illiterate but the following evidences will clearly refute such accusations:

We have no *evidence* that Muhammad had access to the Christian scriptures... There is but one direct quotation (Surah XXI. 105) in the whole Koran from the scriptures; and though there are a few passages, as where *alms* are said to be given *to be seen of men*, and as, *none forgiveh sins but God only*, which might seem to be identical with texts of the New Testament, yet this similarity is probably merely accidental...

It should also be borne in mind that we have no traces of the existence of Arabic versions of the Old or New Testament previous to the time of Muhammad... The earliest Ar. version of the Old Testament, of which we have any knowledge, is that of R. Saadias Gaon, AD 900; and the oldest Ar. version of the New Testament, is that published by Erpenius in 1616, and transcribed in the Thebais, in the year 1171, by a Coptic Bishop... Michaelis thinks that the Arabic versions of the New Testament were made between the Saracen conquests in the seventh century, and the Crusades in the eleventh century - an opinion in which he follows, or coincides with, Walton...

The Koran translated from the Arabic by J.M. Rodwell, London 1909 & 1992, p10-11

Muhammad (pbuh) died in the year 632 AD. It is clear from the above passage written by a Christian *clergyman* that the Bible was not translated until approximately the Tenth Century of the Christian era, so no Arab living before the year 1000 would have had the opportunity to examine the written text of the Bible in his own language.

Furthermore, there are such fundamental differences between accounts in the Bible and the Qur'an that Muhammad could not have copied the Bible even if it had been accessible to him. For example, with regard to the Old Testament, the biographies of Abraham, Ishmael, Joseph and Moses are told in the Qur'an in fuller detail than in the Bible. Concerning the New Testament, the details of the status of Jesus, his apparent crucifixion, and the Unity of God are accounted differently in the Qur'an⁷. This has prompted the following statements from Muslim writers:

[The Qur'an speaks] of earlier prophets and their communities. It discusses events and crises in the life of these communities in detail unknown to the illiterate and idolatrous environment of the Arabian Prophet. Jewish and Christian learned men challenged the Prophet on more than one occasion, asking him to discuss their religious heritage. He met these challenges with great courage. The Qur'an fulfilled their demands without there being any way of explaining how the Prophet himself could have acquired knowledge of these details...

What overwhelms the observer is that the true accounts related in the Qur'an could not have been a simple case of plagiarism of the two testaments, even if we allow the idea that the two Books were well-known in the Prophet's milieu. Plagiarism is only a negative way of taking what someone else had to offer, whereas the Qur'an assumed the positive role of correcting and modifying these accounts. It presents details of a story with the purpose of purifying it from any accretions or contradictions which do not agree with inherent faith (*fitrah*) in Divine Oneness (*tawhid*), an enlightened mind and an uncorrupted religious view.

Muhammad Bagir as-Sadr: The Revealer, The Messenger, The Message. Tehran 1986, ppl22,124

... in the West, Jews, Christians and Atheists are unanimous in stating (without a scrap of evidence however) that Muhammad wrote the Qur'an or had it written as an imitation of the Bible. It is claimed that the stories of religious history in the

Qur'an resume Biblical stories. This attitude is as thoughtless as saying that Jesus himself duped his contemporaries by drawing inspiration from the Old Testament during his preachings: the whole of Matthew's Gospel is based on this continuation of the Old Testament... What expert in exegesis would dream of depriving Jesus of his status as God's envoy for this reason? This is nevertheless the way that Muhammad is judged more often than not in the West: "all he did was to copy the Bible". It is a summary judgement that does not take account of the fact the Qur'an and the Bible provide different versions of a single event. People prefer not to talk about the difference in the descriptions. They are pronounced to be the same...

The comparison of several Biblical and Qur'anic narrations of the same subject shows the existence of fundamental differences between statements in the former, which are scientifically unacceptable, and declarations in the latter which are in perfect agreement with modern data: this was the case of the Creation and the Flood, for example... Besides, there are major differences between the Qur'an and the Bible on other subjects: they serve to disprove all that has been maintained - without a scrap of evidence - on the fact that Muhammad is supposed to have copied the Bible to produce the text of the Qur'an.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille: The Bible, the Qur'an and Science, Paris. 6th Ed, pp131-132, 268-269

The above observations make the hypothesis advanced by those who see Muhammad as the author of the Qur'an quite untenable.

3. JABR

Some of Muhammad's critics thought that Muhammad was being coached by a Jew or a Christian instead of receiving revelations from Allah Himself. In particular, some alleged that he brought the Qur'an from a Christian youth called Jabr. As a result of this allegation, Allah defended His Messenger, saying in Surah al-Nahl (16:103):

We know indeed that they say, "It is a man that teaches him". The tongue off him they wickedly point to is notably foreign, while this is Arabic, pure and clear.

Jabr was a Persian shopkeeper in Mecca whom Muhammad used to visit whenever he passed by. Why would the Arabs claim Jabr wrote the Qur'an when they themselves could not have produced it? It was simple propaganda against Muhammad especially as they overlooked the fact that Jabr spoke Persian whereas the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic. Furthermore,

One can only marvel at the spiritual genius of Muhammad, who had practically no contact with practising Jews or Christians and whose actual knowledge of these earlier revelations was inevitably rudimentary, but who managed to get to the heart of the monotheistic experience.

Karen Armstrong: Muhammad, A Western Attempt to Understand Islam, London 1991, p98

While the Muslim sees but one divine source for the Qur'an, the non-Muslim will

search out human sources and explanations. This is particularly true where parallels exist between Qur'anic and Biblical stories. Christian and Jewish communities did exist in Arabia. Moreover, Muhammad's travels as a caravan trader brought him into contact with other People of the Book. He would have known and been aware of these forms of monotheism. However, determining the movement from social and mercantile contacts to religious influences and casual connections is difficult. Muslims offer a simple and direct solution. Similarities in revelation and practice are due to their common divine source; differences occur where Judaism and Christianity departed from their original revelation.

John L. Esposito, Islam: The Straight Path, Oxford University Press, 1991, p23.

It is quite indisputable that resemblances exist between narrations dealing with other subjects, particularly religious history, which are to be found in the Bible and in the Qur'an. It is moreover interesting to note from this point of view how nobody holds against Jesus the fact that he resumes the same sort of facts and Biblical teachings... As for the proof that Muhammad reproduced in the Qur'an what he had been told or dictated by the rabbis, it has no more substance than the statement that a Christian monk gave him a sound religious education.

A hint of resemblance is also advanced between other statements in the Qur'an and beliefs that go back a very long way, probably much further than the time the Bible appeared.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille: The Bible, The Qur'an and Science, Paris, 6th Ed, p154

One Muslim scholar has pointed out that *hanifs* (the ethical monotheists of pre-Islamic times) were not influenced by Jews or Christians, so how can it be asserted that Muhammad was influenced by them, especially since the Jews and Christians argued against him?⁸

Mecca was an idolatrous city both in its ideas and customs, into which neither Christian nor Jewish religious thought had penetrated. Religion had not entered into the life of its society in any form. Even the *hanifs* (pure ones) among the Arabs of Mecca who rejected the worship of idols were influenced by neither Judaism or Christianity. Nothing of Jewish or Christian thought appeared to have been reflected in the literary or poetical heritage left for us by Qiss ibn Sa'idah and others of the group. Had the Prophet made any effort to be acquainted with Jewish or Christian thought, it would have been noticed. In such a simple environment which had no relation with the sources of Jewish or Christian thought, such an attempt would not have passed without attracting much attention and without leaving its imprint on many of the moves and relations that followed.

Muhammad Baqir as-Sadir: The Revealer, The Messenger, The Message, Tehran 1986, p118-9.

4. GOD

As it has been proved that the Qur'an is neither the composition of Arabs nor the speech of Muhammad, it must definitely be the Speech of Allah, and accordingly a miracle for the one who brought it. The Glorious Qur'an states:

Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternlt. It is He who sent down to you, in truth the Book ... (Surah al-i-Imran, 3:2-3)

The revelation of the Scripture is from Allah, the Almighty, the Wise. (Surah al-Jathiya, 45:2 and Surah al-Ahqaf, 46:2)

It is not the word of a poet; little it is you believe! Nor is it the word of a soothsayer ... little admonition is it you receive. (This is) a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds. (Surah alHaqqa, 69:41-43)

Even Rev. J.M. Rodwell was forced to admit (preface p13):

... if he was indeed the illiterate person the Muslims represent him to have been, then it will be hard to escape their inference that the Koran is, as they assert it to be, a standing miracle.

It has already been proven that Muhammad was illiterate. As Muhammad brought the Qur'an which is the Speech of Allah and contains His Divine Law, and because no one brings the Shari'ah of Allah except Prophets and Messengers, then consequently, Muhammad must definitely be a Prophet and Messenger through rational evidence. The Glorious Qur'an states in Surah al-Fath (48:29):

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

Muhammad is also the *khatam-un-Nabiyyin* (last in the chain of the true prophets). The Qur'an and *Hadith* are very explicit on this point:

... he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets
(Surah al-Ahzab, 33:40)⁹

THE QUR'AN AND SCIENCE

Although it is not strictly part of its miraculous nature (*I'jaz*), it is fascinating to discover that the Qur'an contains information on subjects which Muhammad, who was unschooled, could not himself have discovered or propagated and which was most certainly beyond the knowledge of the *jahil* (ignorant) Arabs at the time of the Prophet (610-632 C.E.). Proponents of the "Scientific Proof" of the Qur'an argue that its inclusion in the Qur'an shows the Divine origin of the Book. Rather, it is more accurate to say that the inclusion of scientific information is an indication of the Divine origin of the Qur'an.

One scientist was struck by the sheer abundance of subjects discussed: the Creation, astronomy, the explanation of certain matters concerning the earth, and the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and human reproduction. A complete survey of them is beyond the scope of this comprehensive booklet, so by way of example, one scientific fact from some of these areas will be cited and then verified by independent reference to show that it is accepted as correct and was not discovered by non-Muslims until after the Seventh Century, hence disproving the prevailing theories at the time.¹⁰

ASTRONOMY

In the field of astronomy there is an important verse on the orbits of the Sun and Moon. Surah al-Anbiyaa (21:33) tells us that Allah is:

The One who created the night, the day, the sun and the moon. Each one is travelling in an orbit with its own motion.

Here two essential facts are clearly stated: Firstly that the sun has its own motion, i.e., spins on its own axis and secondly, that the moon has its own motion, i.e., orbits the earth. It is now established fact that the sun rotates about its own axis and that the moon orbits the earth. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1992 Edition) states:

THE SOLAR SYSTEM... The Sun... The Sun's rotation and sphericity. Galileo gave the first proof of the Sun's rotation... (Vol. 27, p5 1 0)

MOON... The Moon rotates about its own axis in 29 ½ days, which is identical to the time it takes to complete its orbit around the Earth... The surface of the Moon has been a subject of continuous telescopic study from the time of Galileo's first observation in 1609. (Vol.8 p299).¹¹

The motions of the Sun and the Moon have been confirmed by the continuous observations of modern scientists, and it is inconceivable that a person living in the Seventh Century could have known or imagined them.

THE EARTH

The verses of the Qur'an relating to the Earth deal with general and specific subjects. Of the latter verses which deal with the Earth's water cycle, (something taken to be obvious even

though it was not during the time of the Qur'anic revelation) have been selected to be examined. The following verses inform us that rainwater is the source of rivers and springs:

(God) sends water down from the sky so that rivers flow according to their measure (Surah Ra'd, 13:17)

And We sent down water from the sky in measure and lodged it in the ground. And We certainly are able to withdraw it (Surah al-Mu'minun, 23:18)

Have you not seen that Allah sent down water from the sky and led it through sources into the ground? (Surah Zumar, 39:21)

Do you see if your water were to be lost in the ground, who then can supply you with gushing water? (Surah Mulk, 67:30)

Dr. Maurice Bucaille (The Bible, the Qur'an and Science, p181) points out that in the *Encyclopedia Universalis*, under the heading *Hydrogeologie*, two specialists state:

... Aristotle imagined that the water vapour from the soil condensed in cool mountain caverns and formed underground lakes that fed springs. He was followed by Seneca (1st Century AD) and many others until 1877, ... The first clear formulation of the water cycle must be attributed to Bernard Palissy in 1580: he claimed that underground water came from rainwater infiltrating into the soil. This theory was confirmed by E. Mariotte and P. Perrault in the Seventeenth Century.

In the above verses from the Qur'an, there is no trace of the mistaken ideas that were current at the time of Muhammad. The Qur'anic verses give a correct interpretation of the way rivers and springs are fed by rainwater. This can also be confirmed by reference to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1992, Vol. 17, p617-8:

EARTH SCIENCES ... Plato (c.428-348/347 BC). In one of his two explanations for the origin of rivers and springs, he described the Earth as perforated by passages connecting with Tartarus, a vast subterranean reservoir. A coherent theory of precipitation is found in the writings of Aristotle... the origin of the water in the Earth that seeps or springs from the ground was long the subject of much fanciful speculation... The French Huguenot Bernard Palissy maintained... that rainfall is the sole source of rivers and springs. In his *Discours admirables* (1580; *Admirable Discourses*) he described how rainwater falling on mountains enters cracks in the ground and flows down along these until, diverted by some obstruction, it flows out on the surface as springs.

HUMAN REPRODUCTION

Professor Keith Moore, a leading embryologist, discovered in the Qur'an the exact formation of a fetus, which is not something that Muhammad could have known about. In his textbook, *The Developing Human* (4th Edition, 1988, p8), Prof. Moore states:

Growth of science was slow during the medieval period, and few high points of embryological investigation undertaken during this time are known to us. However, it is cited in the *Koran* or *Qur'an* (seventh century A.D.), The Holy Book of the Muslims, that human beings are produced from a mixture of secretions from the male and the female. Several references are made to the creation of a human being from a *nutfa* or *small drop*, and it is also stated that the resulting organism settles in the womb like a seed, six days after its beginning. (The human blastocyst begins to implant in the uterus about six days after fertilization.) Reference is also made to the leech-like appearance of the embryo. (The embryo shown in Fig. 53A looks like a leech or bloodsucker). The embryo is also said to resemble "a chewed substance." (The somites of older embryo somewhat resemble teethmarks in a chewed substance.) For more information about embryological references in the Qur'an, see Moore (1986). *

*Moore, KL: A scientist's interpretation of references to embryology in the Qur'an. JAMA 18:15, 1986. [Journal of the American Medical Association].

Human reproduction is referred to in several dozen verses of the Qur'an. Of those that Prof. Moore has apparently relied upon, the following are examples:

Verity, We fashioned man from a small quantity of mingled liquids (Surah Dahr/Insaan, 76:2)

Was he [man] not a small drop of sperm which has been poured out? After that he was something which clings; then fashioned in due proportion (Surah al-Qiyamat, 75: 37-8)

Then We placed him as a small quantity (of sperm) in a safe lodging firmly established (Surah al-Mu'minun, 23:13)

... We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leech-like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed ... and We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term (Surah Hajj, 22:5)

We fashioned the thing which clings into a chewed lump of flesh and we fashioned the chewed flesh into bones and We clothed the bones with intact flesh; then We developed out of it another creature; so blessed be Allah, the best to create! (Surah al-Mu'minun, 23:14)

If the information given in the Qur'an about human reproduction was inaccurate or false, then the Qur'an would thus have provided the sceptics with the tools for its destruction. But science has proved what has been recorded in the Qur'an thus confirming beyond doubt that it is indeed Allah's Revelation. Because the information came from Allah it has survived all attacks and remained as challenging as on the day it was first revealed to Muhammad. In fact, Prof. Moore (at pp7-9) surveys the erroneous human ideas surrounding human reproduction that were prevalent before, during and after the revelation of the Qur'an:

A brief *Sanskrit treatise* on ancient Indian embryology is thought to have been written in 1416 B.C. This scripture of the Hindus, called *Garbha Upanishad*, describes ancient ideas concerning the embryo. It states, "From the conjugation

of blood and semen the embryo comes into existence..." Although the dates of appearance of the structure are inaccurate, the sequence is correct...

In the fourth century B.C., Aristotle wrote a treatise on Embryology... Embryologists regard Aristotle as "The Founder of Embryology," despite the fact that he promoted the idea that the embryo developed from a formless mass that resulted from the union of semen with menstrual blood. This is the same erroneous idea that appeared in the Sanskrit treatise on ancient Indian embryology described earlier... [Then follows the quotation on the Qur'an]

In 1651 Harvey ... concluded that embryos were "secreted by the uterus." ... In 1677 Hamm and Leeuwenhoek ... first observed human spermatozoa, but they misunderstood the sperm's role in fertilization. They thought that the sperm contained a miniature preformed human being (Fig. 1-6) that enlarged when it was deposited in the female genital tract and entered the uterus...

The preformation controversy finally ended around 1775, when Spallanzani showed that both the ovum and the sperm were necessary for initiating the development of a new individual...

In 1827, about 150 years after the discovery of the sperm, von Baer ... observed dividing zygotes in the uterine tube and blastocysts in the uterus. He contributed much knowledge about the origin of tissues and organs from the layers described by Malpighi. His significant and far-reaching contributions resulted in his later being regarded as "The Father of Modern Embryology."

Those who argue against the Qur'an overlook the fact that neither Muhammad nor his contemporaries could have had the slightest notion of complex physiological processes or the composition of the human foetus.

VERSES WHICH APPEAR TO AGREE WITH MODERN SCIENTIFIC THEORY

There are verses in the Qur'an which would appear at first sight to confirm the process of the creation of the Earth, the "Big Bang" theory and the theory of the expansion of the universe, amongst others. (Note: The latter being a consequence of the first.)

A) Surah Ha-Mim (41:1 1) states:

Moreover, He turned to the Heaven when it was smoke and said to it and to the Earth, "Come (together) both of you, willingly or unwillingly." They said, "We come, obedient."

The Heaven was smoke, which would imply that it was gaseous during one particular phase. This is an exact description of the nature of the Heavens as the most reliable of recent theories show. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1992, Vol. 1 0 p942 states:

SOLAR SYSTEM... According to the prevailing theory of the origin of the solar system, the Sun and the planets formed simultaneously from the gravitational collapse of a large cloud of dust and gas some 4,500,000,000 years ago.

The existence at an early stage of the universe as the "smoke" referred to in the Qur'an means the predominantly gaseous state of the material that composed it. Such a statement in the Qur'an concerning the Creation, which appeared nearly fourteen centuries ago, obviously

does not lend itself to a human explanation. (Note: The Qur'anic *ayah* "Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together, then We clove them asunder ..." (21:30) also seems to be in agreement with the notion of the "Big Bang.")

B) In Surah al-Dharyyat (51:47) Allah states:

The Heaven, We have built it with power, verily We are expanding it.

The phrase "We are expanding it" is the translation of the arabic words meaning "to make wider, more spacious, to extend, to expand." Older translations have mistranslated or misinterpreted this phrase simply because the notion that the universe is expanding had yet to be thought up much less confirmed. (Note: But Hamidullah in his translation of the Qur'an talks of the widening of the heavens and space, although he includes a question mark.)

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1992, Vol.4 p633 tells us (under the entry Expanding Universe that scientific research:

... led to the realisation in the 1920s that the distant galaxies are receding and the universe is expanding.

The expansion of the universe is a strongly attested theory with a large body of evidence to support it. In other words, Twentieth Century science is in keeping with what was revealed to Muhammad in the Seventh Century.

If a man was the author of the Qur'an, how could he have written statements in the Seventh Century A.D. that today in the Twentieth Century are shown to be in keeping with modern scientific knowledge?

THE CONCLUSION OF DR. MAURICE BUCAILLE

Dr. Maurice Bucaille states, in the conclusion of the introduction to part three of *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* (an invaluable book on this issue), at p 132, that:

The above observation makes the hypothesis advanced by those who see Muhammad as the author of the Qur'an quite untenable. How could a man, from being illiterate become the most important author, in terms of literary merit, in the whole of Arabic literature? How could he then pronounce truths of a scientific nature that no other human being could possibly have developed at the time, and all this without once making the slightest error in his pronouncements on the subject? The ideas in this study are to be developed from a purely scientific point of view. They will lead to the conclusion that it is inconceivable for a human being living in the Seventh Century AD. to have expressed assertions in the Qur'an on highly varied subjects that do not belong to his period and for them to be in keeping with what was to be revealed only centuries later. For me, there can be no human explanation to the Qur'an.

The final words of his book are, at p269:

In view of the state of knowledge in Muhammad's day it is inconceivable that many of the statements in the Qur'an which are connected with science could have been the work of a man. It is, moreover, perfectly legitimate, not only to regard the Qur'an as the expression of a Revelation, but also to award it a very special place on account of the guarantee of authenticity it provides and the presence in it of scientific statements which, when studied today, appear as a challenge to human explanation.

THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE UPON OUR BELIEF

Scientific theories, as they have not been definitively proven by repetitious and direct observation, are subject to change and revision (as opposed to scientific facts which are factual information amassed by repetitive observation or experimentation, which are not subject to change or revision). Thus we should not accept all scientific statements as absolute truths as they are rather what we presently know about them with our limited knowledge and will change as new elements of knowledge become available.

Ahmed von Denffer (*Ulum al-Qur'an*, p155-8) has posed the question, Would a discrepancy between science and the Qur'an convince us of the human origin of the Qur'an, and so refute its heavenly origin? In other words, until very recently, very many scientific theories were in utter disagreement with today's scientific facts - and if today's scientific truths are in agreement with the Qur'an, this means that perhaps a few decades or a century ago no believer in science could have been convinced of the Divine origin of the Qur'an. For example, embryologists of the Seventeenth Century who, in direct conflict with the Qur'an, believed that sperm contained a miniature preformed human being that enlarged in the female genital tract, would have thus rejected the Qur'an as the Word of Allah, due to their incorrect inconclusive limited knowledge.

Science and apparent scientific truths (i.e., theories) therefore, cannot generally be accepted as criteria for the genuineness of the Divine origin of the Qur'an *on their own*, although the Book contains scientific information conclusively proven which no man in the Seventh Century could have known. We Muslims believe the Qur'an to be guidance from Allah (based upon the "Literary Proof" of the Qur'an) irrespective of whether science, which changes continuously, seems to be in support of it or not.

The important implication of this is that should the scientific community at any stage refute their "Big Bang" or "Expanding Universe" theories, Muslims would be required to accept the validity of the relevant verses in spite of scientific disagreement. We could then assume any of the following explanations: a) a wrong translation of the meaning of the verse has been rendered; b) the meaning of the verse is unknown/unknowable to us (*Mutashabihat*); or c) the scientific research conducted is incorrect or incomplete (as it was with regard to, for example, the water cycle and human reproduction).

WAS MUHAMMAD JUST A BRILLIANT THINKER?

In the explanation of the above scientific verses, it has been asserted that it is inconceivable that a man living in the Seventh Century, however knowledgeable he might have been in his

day (and this was certainly not true in Muhammad's case) could have imagined the scientific facts contained in the Qur'an.

This view however, is sometimes challenged on the weak grounds that either the Arabs of the Seventh Century were knowledgeable scientists, or that other people in the past, e.g., Nostradamus and Einstein, made predictions or statements confirmed by modern science and that like them, Muhammad was a brilliant thinker.

Both these opinions ignore the facts that: a) Muhammad was illiterate or unschooled and cannot be compared with educated scientists; b) Arab scientists progressed only after the revelation of the Qur'an; and c) even the greatest of thinkers of the past, e.g. Plato, Aristotle, Pythagorus, Nostradamus and even Einstein, all made colossal blunders in their work whereas the Qur'an contains not one mistake:

MOHAMMED ... The Message... That he, an *ummi* ("unschooled man"), could produce exquisite prose was adduced by him and his followers as the only proof of his prophethood.

Encyclopedia Americana, 1992, Vol. 19 p315

It is an established fact that at the time of the Qur'anic Revelation, i.e. within a period of roughly twenty years straddling Hegira (622 A.D.), scientific knowledge had not progressed for centuries and the period of activity in Islamic civilization, with its accompanying scientific upsurge, came after the close of the Qur'anic Revelation. Only ignorance of such religious and secular data can lead to the following bizarre suggestion I have heard several times: if surprising statements of a scientific nature exist in the Qur'an, they may be accounted for by the fact that Arab scientists were far ahead of their time and Muhammad was influenced by their work. Anyone who knows anything about Islamic history is aware that the period of the Middle Ages which saw the cultural and scientific upsurge in the Arab world came after Muhammad and would not therefore indulge in such whims. Suggestions of this kind are particularly off the mark in that the majority of scientific facts which are either suggested or very clearly recorded in the Qur'an have only been confirmed in modern times.

This view is sometimes contested by examples from great thinkers of antiquity who indisputably predicted certain data that modern science has verified. They could hardly have relied on scientific deduction however; their method of procedure was more one of philosophical reasoning. Thus the case of the Pythagoreans is often advanced. In the Sixth Century B.C. they defended the theory of the rotation of the Earth on its own axis and the movement of the planets around the Sun. This theory was to be confirmed by modern science. By comparing it with the case of the Pythagoreans, it is easy to put forward the hypothesis of Muhammad as being a brilliant thinker, who is supposed to have imagined all on his own what modern science was to discover only centuries later. In doing so however, people quite simply forget to mention the other aspect of what these geniuses of philosophical reasoning produced, i.e. the colossal blunders that litter their work. It must be remembered for example that the Pythagoreans also defended the theory whereby the Sun was fixed in space; they made it the centre of the world and only conceived of a celestial order that was centered on it. It is quite common in the works of the great philosophers of

antiquity to find a mixture of valid and invalid ideas about the universe. The brilliance of these human works comes from the advanced ideas they contain, but they should not make us overlook the mistaken concepts which have also been left to us. From a strictly scientific point of view, this is what distinguished them from the Qur'an. In the latter, many subjects are referred to that have a bearing on modern knowledge, without one of them containing a statement that contradicts what has been established by present day science.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille: The Bible, the Qur'an and Science, pp129 and 169

(I am grateful to Brother S. Connolly for his invaluable advice on this chapter).

THE CHALLENGE TO ALL NON-BELIEVERS

Scholars have pointed out that there does not exist a piece of literature that can match the Qur'an, with respect either to style and form or to content. The diction and style of the Qur'an are magnificent and appropriate to its Divine origin. Above all, the Qur'an has by virtue of its claim of Divine origin, challenged mankind to produce, even unitedly, just a few lines comparable to those in the Qur'an. This *Tahaddi* (challenge) has remained unanswered to this day. The words of the Qur'an in Surah al-Baqara (2:23-24) are:

And if you are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a surah the like thereof and call to your witnesses or helpers besides Allah if you are truthful. And if you cannot – and of a surety you cannot – then fear the fire whose fuel is men and stones, which is prepared for those who reject Faith.

This challenge posed by the Qur'an has never been met, precisely because of the reason the Qur'an itself gives: that it cannot be done. The Qur'an declares that no one could possibly bring such a book:

... if the whole of mankind and jinn were together to produce the like, of this Qur'an, they would not be able to produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:88)

The *Tahaddi* which has not been met and, as the Qur'an says, cannot be met, is one of the main aspects of the unique and inimitable nature of the Qur'an called *I'jaz*.

What a challenge the like of which man has never seen and shall never see. The Challenge still exists and will continue to exist until the Day of Judgement. For those who deny the Qur'an to be the Word of God, this challenge shall, till eternity, remain as a perpetual source of humiliation and a proof of their ignorance, prejudice, incompetency and powerlessness.

O ye Children of Adam!
Whenever there come to you Messengers from amongst you,
rehearsing My Signs to you,
those who are righteous and mend (their lives)-
on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.

But those who reject Our Signs and treat them with arrogance-
they are Companions of the Fire, to dwell therein.

Who is more unjust than one who
invents a lie against Allah or rejects His Signs?
For such, their portion must reach them from the Book.

Surah al-A'raf (7:35-37)

THE PRESERVATION OF THE OUR'AN

German Orientalists such as Weil, Goldziher, Noldeke and others have put forward the false allegation that the Qur'an has been tampered with and changed after the death of Prophet Muham-mad. In this chapter I will address the issue of the textual authenticity of the Qur'an, refuting this erroneous charge:

Not long after the Prophet's death the Qur'an was compiled by Zaid Ibn Thabit, the Prophet's head scribe and an acknowledged expert on the reading of the Qur'an. In fact, the first Khalif Abu Bakr referred to him as the Scribe of the Revelation. Al-Tabari at pp25-28 of his Commentary on the Qur'an cites Zaid's account of his mission:

... Abu Bakr ordered me (to gather the Book together and write it down). I wrote it on page-size pieces of hide, small pieces of scapula and palm leaves.

When Abu Bakr died [634], and Umar became (Khalif), all this was written down (again) on a single scroll and deposited with him. When he died, the scroll remained with (his daughter,) Hafsa, the wife of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace.

... Uthman b. Affan [who held the Khalifate from 644-655] ordered me to write out a definitive scroll for him, saying: 'I will send in (to work) with you an intelligent man whose Arabic is pure; when you are in agreement on something write it down. But if you disagree on something refer it to me.' He assigned Aban b. Sa'id b. al-As to me...

Then Uthman sent word to Hafsa asking her to give him the scroll... and he compared the book (we had compiled) with it. No difference was found between them. Then he returned it to her. He was pleased and ordered people to copy several books (from the master copy).

Throughout his task Zaid consulted all the information he could gather, i.e., copies of the Book belonging to private individuals and reciters of the Qur'an, all with the objective of avoiding possible errors in transcription. The critical analysis of the authenticity of the text was carried out very rigorously. The result is a text containing an order of surahs that reflects the order followed by the Prophet in his complete recital of the Qur'an during *Ramadhan*.

The uncorrupt nature of the Qur'an stems from the following factors:

1. Fragments of the text were written down during the Prophet's lifetime. Whenever a part of the Qur'an was revealed, the Prophet would call one of his literate companions and dictate it to him. Muhammad would ask the scribe to reread to him what had been dictated so that he could correct any mistakes.
2. There is also the fact that Muhammad recommended his Companions to learn the verses by heart. Thus there were Hafizun who knew the whole Qur'an by heart and spread it abroad. The text of the Qur'an is much shorter than the Old Testament and slightly longer than the New Testament. Since it took twenty years for the Qur'an to be revealed, however, it was easy for the Prophet's followers to recite it by heart, surah by surah.

Uthman then sent copies of the text of the Qur'an to the centres of the *Khilafah* (Islamic State). Some copies still exist today, in more or less complete form in such places as the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul, Tashkent in Uzbekistan, and one is also believed to be in the Masjid of al-Hussain in Cairo. It has been said (Miller p30- 1) that one prominent missionary

dishonestly challenged the authenticity of Qur'anic manuscripts alleging that twenty different people, governments or institutions claim to possess the oldest copy of the Qur'an. The thought he wants his audience to finish is that there are twenty versions of the Qur'an. The truth is, all the ancient copies agree with today's text. Which one of them happens to be the oldest is irrelevant to considerations of authenticity.

The Qur'an does not incorporate a single maxim of the Prophet; rather the inclusion in this Book of any sayings of Muhammad has been scrupulously avoided:

Whatever the psychological explanation may be, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the term "revelation" was confined to those utterances which were not consciously produced and controlled by the Prophet and seemed to him to have been put into his mouth from without.

HAR Gibb, Mohammadanism, Oxford University Press, 2nd Edition 1962, p44

The Qur'an as we have it now is a record of what Muhammad said while in the state or states (of ecstasy) just mentioned. It is beyond doubt that his hearers recognised the symptoms of revelation, otherwise his obiter dicta which the literature of tradition purports to record would be included in the Qur'an... It must always be remembered that to Muslims the Qur'an is a faithful and unalterable reproduction of the original scriptures which are preserved in heaven.

Alfred Guillaume, Islam, pp58-59

On the strength of the following verse in Surah Yunus (10:15), Muhammad could not himself have altered the Qur'an:

And when Our clear Revelations are recited to them, those who look not for the meeting with Us, say "Bring us a Reading other than this, or change this". Say (Muhammad), "It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I follow only that which is revealed to me. If I were to disobey my Lord, I should myself fear the penalty of a Great Day

According to reports it is clear that the Companions were not prepared to tamper with the arrangement of the Qur'an:

Narrated Ibn Az-Zubair: I said to Uthman "This verse which is in Surah al-Baqara: 'Those of you who die and leave wives behind... without turning them out' has been abrogated by another verse. Why then do you write it in the Qur'an?" Uthman said: 'Leave it (where it is) O son of my brother, for I will not shift anything of it (i.e., the Qur'an) from its original position.' (Bukhari, Vol.6 No.60).

No impartial learned person can allege that the Qur'an has undergone any alterations, whether additions or omissions. Today's editions of the Qur'an are all reproductions of the original copies, and manuscripts dating from the first century of Islam authenticate today's text.

In fact, Allah has ensured that His Message will forever be safeguarded from human falsification. To protect its integrity, Allah has made it clear in the Qur'an that He will preserve it and protect it from corruption. For example:

To thee have We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety (Surah al-Ma'ida, 5:48).

We have without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption) (Surah al-Hijr, 15:9).

... and indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it. It is sent down by One full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise. (Surah Fussilat, 41:41-42).

Because the Qur'an's authenticity is safeguarded by Allah and will remain intact and unchanged until the Day of Judgement, it cannot be altered, modified or denied by those Believers who worship Allah through it. Even non-Muslims testify to the uncorrupted nature of the Qur'an:

The conclusions which we may now with confidence draw, is that the editions of Abu Bakr and of Othman were not only faithful, but, so far as the materials went, complete; and that whatever omissions there may have been, were not on the part of the compilers intentional... We may upon the strongest presumption affirm that every verse in the Coran is the genuine and unaltered composition of Mahomet himself.

Sir William Muir, The Life of Mahomet, London 1878, p562

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

F.F. Arbuthnot, The Construction of the Bible and the Koran, London 1885, p5

So there has been no opportunity for any forgery or pious fraud in the Koran, which distinguishes it from almost all other important religious works of ancient times.

Basanta Coomar Bose, Mohammadanism, Calcutta 1931.124

The Koranic revelations followed each other at brief intervals and were at first committed to memory by professional remembrancers. During Muhammad's lifetime verses were written on palm-leaves, stones, and any material that came to hand. Their collection was completed during the caliphate of Umar, the second Caliph, and an authorized version was established during the caliphate of Uthman, his successor (644-56). To this day this version is regarded by believers as the authoritative Word of God.

The Koran Translated with Notes by N. J. Dawood, 5th Edition 1990, p2-3.

ISLAM - The Koran... As long as the Prophet was alive, he continued to receive revelations and to rearrange those that had already come to him. From the records it is clear that a certain amount of the Koran was written down under his supervision and that the basic structure of the suras was already established. There is unanimous agreement, however, that gathering the various piecemeal revelations into a standard text was undertaken by his successors, the pious

caliphs. Tradition gives the chief role to Zaid Ibn Thabit, one of Mohammed's secretaries. And most authorities agree that the collection was made in the time of Uthman, the third caliph (reigned 644 - 655), whose version is still accepted throughout the Muslim world today.

Encyclopaedia Americana, 1992, Vol. 15 p495

From a human point of view the Qur'an looks like a miraculous achievement of sublime artistry. In any event, being written down so rapidly during the lifetime of Muhammad, and being pretty much consistent in its teachings and prescriptions, it has not created the problems encountered in looking at the New Testament, which came into being through different hands over a much longer period, and has undergone great editing.

Ninian Smart, The World's Religions, Cambridge University Press 1992, p281

It is clear that the text of the Qur'an has been scrupulously preserved. It does not give rise to any problems of authenticity. The claim that the Qur'an has been tampered with is a piece of sheer nonsense unacceptable to either logic or history. Those Western Orientalists who have made this false claim are very few. The majority of them are absolutely certain that the Qur'an which we Muslims recite today contains all that Muhammad reported in all candidness as having been revealed to him from his Lord; and that it has not been tampered with. They admit this explicitly in their writings (while criticising the method by which the verses of the Qur'an were collected and its chapters arranged - a matter already mentioned above.¹²⁾

If a certain group of Orientalists do not agree and somehow insist that the Qur'an has been altered without regard to the rational proofs listed in this chapter (and which most Orientalists had in fact taken from Muslim historians and scholars), it is in order to slander Islam. Such is the dictate of hate and resentment. However clever and adept such Orientalists may be in formulating their slander, they will never be able to pass it as genuine scientific research; nor will they be able to fool any Muslims, or sincere seekers of the Truth of Islam.

THE SEVEN MODES OF RECITATION

It was recently brought to the Author's attention that certain non-Muslims are presently (as always) attempting to cast doubt on the textual authenticity of the Qur'an. In this particular instance, by stating that there are seven distinct versions of the Qur'an. The thought such a missionary would want his audience to complete is that they are 'partisan' versions leading to different doctrines/laws. I therefore felt it necessary to address the issue of the "Seven Modes" (*al-Ahruf al-Sab'a*).

Although the Arabs are all called by one name, they have different ways of expressing themselves, different manners of speaking. Reflecting this, the hadith reports tell us that the Qur'an was actually revealed according to seven *harfs*. *Harf* is the singular form of *ahruf*, and means mode of recitation. For example:

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Messenger of Allah said: 'An All-Knowing, Wise, Forgiving, Merciful sent down the Qur'an down in seven *harfs*.' (Tabari, p16)

Narrated Abdullah bin Abbas: Allah's Apostle said: Gabriel recited the Qur'an to me in one way. Then I requested him (to read it in another way), and continued asking him to recite it in other ways, and he recited it in several ways till he ultimately recited it in seven different ways. (Bukhari, Vol.6 No 513).

On another occasion, Umar complained to the Prophet that the Companion Hisham had recited Surah al-Furqan in a way different from what Umar had heard from the Prophet, but the Messenger of Allah said:

... this Qur'an has been revealed to be recited in seven *harfs*, so recite of it whichever is easier for you. (Bukhari, Vol.6 No 5 14).

Footnote 1 in Bukhari's collection of *hadithi* in Vol.6 p481 states that "This does not mean that everything in it [the Qur'an] can be recited in seven different ways, but it means that some of its words can be read in seven different ways which is the maximum number of variation."

There is a difference of opinion among classical Muslim scholars on the explanation of the "seven modes":

1. One opinion is that the different dialects of the Arab tribes led to different ways of pronunciation which could even affect the spelling, e.g.: *al-tabuh* and *al-tabut* (2:48), *hiyaka* for *iyaka* (1:5), and *atta* for *hatta* (12:35).
2. The *harfs* may also reflect the usage of synonyms in the Qur'an, i.e., that a variety of expressions describe one and the same concept. A well-known example is Surah 101:5, which reads as *Ka-l-ihnil-manfush*, but in another version *ka-s-sufi-l-manfush* both meaning 'like carded wool'. Also, in Surah 1:6 the word *arshidna* can be read in place of *ihdina*. (This view is also very close to the idea of various dialects, and it has been said that many scholars tend to accept this usage of synonyms as meaning the 'seven modes'.)
3. Some Qur'anic passages have slightly different wordings, such as e.g. in 9:100: 'Gardens under which rivers flow' which some read as 'Gardens from under which rivers flow,' adding the word 'from' (*min*) to the text.

From these different opinions (of which only some have been listed) a generally-accepted conclusion is that the 'seven modes/harfs' are at the basis of several distinct ways of *reciting the Qur'an*, reflecting the different usage of words at the time of revelation, comprising variations in pronunciation and even minor differences in wording. In each case there is no objection from the viewpoint of grammar or correct language. In fact, the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, 1992, Vol. 15 p495 states there are "...numerous variant reading of the text in minor points." Unfortunately, the extent of these minor differences has been distorted by a few misguided individuals.

These various readings do not lead to different Islamic laws. After all, if according to one *harf*, a certain action was declared lawful in the Qur'an, while according to another the same action was declared unlawful, the Prophet would never have said that they were equally permissible. When the Prophet Muhammad's Companion, Ibn Masud, left Kufa he said to his students:

Do not dispute about the Qur'an. It will not vary, nor will it dwindle or change because it is often repeated. The revealed law (*sharia*) of Islam, its legal punishments (*hudud*), its religious obligations (*fara'id*), exist in it in a single form. If something in one of the harfs forbade something which another commanded, that would be a variation, but it combines all that; there are no variations in it regarding the legal punishments or the religious obligations, nor in anything else in the laws of Islam.

AI-Tabari, The Commentaiy on the Qur'an, Vol. 1 p17-18

If someone were to hold the opinion that the different harfs actually led to different obligations or prohibitions they would be denying what Allah has stated about His Revelation and the legal authority of His Book:

Do they not ponder the Qur'an? If it had come from other than Allah, surely they would have found in it much inconsistency. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:82)

In Allah's declaration that the legal authority of the Qur'an is consistent, is the clearest proof that He sent down the Book to Muhammad with only a single judgement applying equally to all His creatures, not with judgements which differed among them. Even non-Muslim Orientalists concede that:

No major differences of doctrines can be constructed on the basis of parallel readings based on the Uthmanic consonantal outline, yet ascribed to *mushafs* [manuscripts] other than his. All the rival readings unquestionably represent one and the same text. They are substantially agreed in what they transmit...

J. Burton, The Collection of the Qur'an, Cambridge 1977, p171

Now there are only two modes of recitation in general use among reciters and in printed texts: Haf's transmission of Asim's Kufan reading, which was adopted for the standard 1924 Egyptian lithographed edition of the Qur'an, and Warsh's transmission of Nafi's Medinan reading, which is widespread in Africa (except Egypt). But note that nobody has ever accused anyone else of using a 'partisan' version of the text.

THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR NON-MUSLIMS

It has quite rightly been said that men of wisdom, people with literary and spiritual insight, who were honest enough to themselves, recognised and accepted the Qur'an as a genuine miracle. Therefore, the correct course of action for a non-Muslim is to profess faith in Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad), and to declare *Islam* as his/her *Deen* (way of life). There is a clear and plain statement in the Qur'an that Islam (submission to the will of God) is the only Deen which is acceptable to Him:

The Deen before Allah is Islam ... So if they dispute with you (Muhammad), say, 'I have submitted my whole self to Allah and so have those who follow me'...
(Surah al-i-Imran, 3:19-20)

The people who seek other ways and other systems of life than the Way of Islam are warned to be on their guard in these words:

Do they seek for other than the Deen of Allah? - while all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willingly or unwillingly, surrendered to His Will, and to Him shall they all return (3:83)

All such people are bluntly told:

If anyone desires a Deen other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he shall be in the ranks of those who have lost (3:85)

There are many accounts in his biographies, of the Prophet Muhammad inviting non-Muslims to Islam. For example:

When the Christians of Najran came to the apostle the Jewish rabbis came also... Abdullah b. Suriya ... said to the apostle, 'The only guidance is to be found with us, so follow us, Muhammad, and you will be rightly guided.' The Christians said the same. So God sent down concerning them both: 'And they say, Be Jews or Christians then you will be rightly guided. Say, Nay, the religion of Abraham a *hanif* who was no polytheist,' as far as the words 'Those are a people who have passed away; they have what they earned and you have what you have earned and you will not be asked about what they used to do.' [Surah 2:135-141] (Ibn Ishaq, p258).¹³

From the above Qur'anic verses it is clear that Allah has only indicated His Will to us: He has not compelled us to behave in the way indicated. God has given us freedom of choice: you may, if you so desire, willingly submit to His revealed Law and thus, as it were, co-operate with Him; and you may if you choose, go against Him, disregard the Qur'an, and suffer the consequences. However you decide, the responsibility is yours - with this freedom of will man was also made accountable for his decisions to Allah. It therefore goes without saying that your obedience of the Creator depends on your making the former choice.

Verily We created man from a drop of sperm intermingled, in order to try him: therefore We endowed him with hearing and sight. Verily We have shown him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will) (Surah al-Insan, 76:2-3)

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MUSLIMS

You should now be intellectually convinced that the Qur'an is the Book of Allah as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). *Iman* (faith) however, is useless without actions based upon that belief as Allah will question not only our belief but also our actions. You must therefore perform the Islamic duties otherwise your verbal submission to Allah will be meaningless. The Prophet Muhammad said:

Allah does not accept Faith if it is not expressed in action, and does not accept action if it does not conform to Faith. (Bukhari cited in Rahman, p 17).

The Prophet Muhammad directed Muslims to put their belief in the Qur'an into action:

Narrated Ibn Masud: The Messenger of Allah said: ... Allow what it [the Qur'an] makes lawful, prohibit what it makes unlawful, do what it commands you to do, forbid what it prohibits, be warned by its parables, act on its clear (passages), trust in its ambiguous (passages) ... (Hadith cited in Tabari, p29).

We all have to make decisions everyday in our lives but as Muslims, at every step in life, we are faced with two paths: one is the path of *Islam* and the other of *Kufr*. Islam means total submission to Allah alone and refusal to accept any ideas, laws or commandments which contravene the guidance received from God. *Kufr* means disobedience to Allah, refusal to obey God. One way to reach a decision in every eventuality has been laid down in the Qur'an and in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, i.e. the Path of Islam. Other ways are prompted by your desires, by your culture & society, or by man-made laws, i.e., the path of *kufr*. If you ignore or reject the way laid down by Allah, if you decide to conduct your lives according to some other way, you are then, following the path of *kufr*. And if you obey the directions of Allah in some matters, while in others follow your own self, desires, society or man-made laws, then you are guilty of *kufr* to the extent of your disobedience (and therefore sinful but still a Muslim.¹⁴

It should be clear then that by giving up the forbidden things of this world and bowing to the commandments of Allah, you adopt the path of *Islam*. By rejecting Allah's commandments in order to satisfy the desires of your hearts and the temptations of this life, you take the path of *kufr*. Whatever success you may enjoy in the present life, by following the path of *kufr* will not compensate you for the loss you will suffer in the Hereafter. But if you follow the Path of *Islam*, even if you materially gain nothing in this world, you benefit immensely in the life to come.

You can achieve real success only when you obey the commandments of Allah and not merely utter your belief in their truth. Similarly, you should not simply promise verbally to abstain from things which have been forbidden, but in fact abstain from them. That is why Allah has stated:

Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:92)

If you obey him you will be guided (Surah al-Nur, 24:54)

So let those who go against His command beware, lest a trial befall them or there befall them a painful punishment (Surah al-Nur, 24:63)

To be a Muslim, to follow the path of Islam, is an endless struggle. Although we may be subjected to the temporary discomforts of this world for our belief in Islam, ultimately we will be rewarded and in the end all *Kafir* (non-Believers) and *Fasiqs* (Sinners) will come to realise that practising Muslims were right and they were wrong.

THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF LIFE

The Qur'an has answered the most fundamental questions of life by stating that we have all been created by Allah in order to worship Him, and that all our actions will be examined by Him on the Day of Judgement which will be followed by an everlasting existence in paradise or hell, depending upon our actions. Allah has stated in the Qur'an:

I have only created jinn and mankind that they may worship Me (Surah al-Dharyat, 51:56)

Therefore, by your Lord, We will of a surety call them to account for all their deeds (Surah al-Hijr, 15:92-3)

Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it! (Surah al-Zilzal, 99:7-8)

All people should thus realise that we are accountable before Allah on the Day of Judgement, for every single action we perform in our lifetime whether good or bad.

THE PROVISION OF THE QUR'AN AND THE SUNNAH

Surely we need guidance on how to worship Allah, our Creator, and this guidance can only come from God. Since Allah makes us accountable for all our actions, every problem or event should therefore have an answer or solution up till the Day of Judgement. It is for such reasons that Allah has provided us with the Qur'an, for He says:

We have sent down to thee a Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and glad tidings to Muslim (Surah al-Nahl, 16:89)

Nothing have We omitted from the Book (Surah al-Anam, 6:38)

Allah has also obliged Muslims to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad and to accept everything he has brought from his Lord:

He who obeys the Messenger obeys Allah (Surah al-Nisa, 4:80)

Verify in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example for everyone who looks to Allah and to the Last Day and who remembers Allah much (Surah al-Azhab, 33:2 1)

Nor does he say anything of his own desire, it is no less than inspiration sent down to him (Surah al-Najm, 53:3)

Whatever the Messenger brought you take it; and whatever he forbids you abstain from it (Surah al-Hashr, 59:7)

And finally, Allah told Muhammad to say:

If you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you and will forgive you your sins, for Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (Surah al-i-Imran, 3:31)

We Muslims must therefore guide our lives by, and refer all problems to, the Qur'an and Sunnah.

IBADAT (WORSHIP) IN ISLAM

The sole purpose of our creation, Allah says, is to worship Him alone (see 51:56 above). The Arabic word used for worship is *ibadah*. It is an important word which people use a lot but understand little. It is very important that we understand the true meaning and significance of *ibadah*, otherwise you will not be able to fulfill the purpose for which you have been created.

Ibadah does not consist merely in canonical prayers (*salah*), fasting (*sawm*), charity (*zakah*), pilgrimage (*Hajj*) and reading the Qur'an. Praying, fasting, charity etc. are all obligatory (*fard*) and must be carried out, but in reality, the *ibadah* for which Allah has created us and which He has enjoined upon us is something quite different: our every action should be an act of worship.

Worshipping Allah means that His commandments should be carried out at all times. You should abstain from what He has forbidden and do what He has commanded. You must follow at every step in your life the Law of Allah and refuse to obey all laws which conflict with His law. In every particular event find out what the *hokm* (commandment) of Allah is. Only then will your entire lives turn into worship.

In such a life, everything is *ibadah*: the way you sleep, wash, dress, talk, eat, drink, work, or the way you have sex, all are acts of worship. All these actions which are usually considered secular and worldly become 'religious', provided that during their performance you observe the limits laid down by Allah and remain conscious every moment and at every step of what is allowed by Allah (*mubah*) and what is forbidden by him (*haram*), what is a duty (*fard*), and which actions please Allah (*mandoub*), and those actions which displease Him (*makruh*).

For instance, easy opportunities to earn money in a forbidden way may occur during your life. If you resist this temptation and, in obedience to Allah, confine yourselves to earning money in approved ways only, then your work is itself worship. And you will be rewarded for it. And the earnings that you bring home for yourselves, your wives, and your children will be blessed by Allah.

Another example is the fulfilment of your sexual instincts. If this instinct is naturally fulfilled in marriage, in obedience to Allah, and not through fornication, adultery and homosexuality, then satisfying your sexual needs becomes an act of worship. Indeed, the Prophet Muhammad once said that a man is to be rewarded for performing the sexual act with his wife, and when some of his surprised listeners wondered how could a person be rewarded for satisfying his own desire, the noble Prophet said: "Do you not see that if he were to satisfy it in a *haram* (forbidden) manner he would be committing a sin? So if he satisfies it in a *halal* (lawful) manner, he will be rewarded."

In summary, it is clear from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* that *Ibadah*, or worship, in Islam is not merely the performance of prayers but total obedience to Allah's commands. To worship Allah means intentionally living our lives by and within the boundaries of Islam: any action allowed by Islam is an act of worship and rewardable; and consequently, any action forbidden by Islam is a bad deed and punishable. Real worship of Allah, therefore, is to follow the Way laid down by Allah and lead lives according to His commandments from childhood to death.

THE SYSTEMS OF ISLAM

Islam is not a mere relationship between the Creator and man; it is not a religion in the limited spiritual sense. Islam is a *Deen* (complete way of life), a perfect ideology. It arranges the relationship of people with Allah and of people amongst themselves. The Quran and the Sunnah provide us with a Ruling System, an Economic System, a Social System, an Education System, a Legal System and a Foreign Policy etc., as well as governing our personal conduct. Islam provides a solution for every aspect of our lives and by its very nature it demands total application in all spheres of life. (NOTE: None of the present Muslim countries constitute an Islamic State as they do not meet the relevant criteria laid down, for example, by the classical scholar Imam Abu Hanifa, i.e., the implementation of Islam totally and the security of the State being in the hands of Muslims.)

One may often wonder at the misery and hardships which plague us. The reason is that we often ignore Allah's Law and His prescribed way, and substitute for them our own man-made laws, despite the fact that in Allah's Law is laid the foundation for the building of a perfect society. For Allah, being the Creator of the Universe, and of the human self, knows best what is good for man's welfare and happiness and how his life ought to be organised. So for example, consider the effect of the Islamic Economic System, when Islam was implemented in accordance with Allah's commands: the envoy sent by Khalif Umar ibn Abdul al-Aziz (717-720), Yahya ibn Sa'd, once wrote:

The Khalif sent me to collect the sadaqah [voluntary charity] from the Muslims of Africa. When I collected it I enquired if there were any poor on whom the money could be spent but I could not find one poor person.

Once the *Khilafah* (Islamic State) was disestablished in 1924, individual people (who were Western agents) were put into power over Muslim land. The lordship of man over man is the root cause of today's corruption: human beings who assume absolute powers to make laws of their own are bound to make mistakes because of their ignorance, and act unjustly and oppressively because of their selfish ends. First, they do not possess sufficient knowledge to

frame correct and just laws for human life; and secondly, devoid of fear of Allah (*taqwa*) and not seeing themselves accountable to Allah, they assume absolute powers.

The only way to reform and change is to accept the Sovereignty of Allah over man and to establish His order. Our present Muslim countries need to be reunited into one State under one leader, the *Khalif*, who will rule using the Quran and the Sunnah. *Insh'Allah*, the Khalif will discharge his duties and responsibilities with the consciousness that ultimately he will have to give an account of his rule to Allah who knows both the seen and unseen. All laws will only then be based on the guidance of that God who has knowledge of all realities, who is the source of all wisdom. (For further information see the booklets, *Khilafah is the Answer* and *The Way for Revival*, available from Al-Khilafah publications).

THE EXAMPLE OF THE PROPHET'S GENERATION

In order to illustrate how observant the first generation of Muslims was with regard to the limits set by Allah and how hard they strove to implement His commands, I cite three examples from their lives:

1. The Arabs loved drinking wine and greatly enjoyed drinking parties but when the Muslims heard about the prohibition of *khamr* (intoxicants), they at once brought out their stocks of wine and poured them into the streets of Medina as a declaration that they had abandoned drinking. Even more remarkable in expressing their total submission to what Allah had legislated was the action of those engaged in drinking wine when the verse, *Will you not then desist?* (5:9 1) reached them. Without hesitating for a moment, they threw away whatever drinks were left in their glasses upon the ground, exclaiming, "O Lord, we have desisted!"

2. Allah Ta'ala commanded Muslim women to be different and distinguishable from the women of the days of *jahiliyyah* (ignorance) by observing modesty and by drawing their head coverings over their hair, neck and bosoms in order to conceal them. The following are narrations from A'isha concerning the manner in which the Muhajir and Ansar women received the Divine injunction which required a major change in their life-styles, affecting their appearance, dress and ornamentation.

She said, "May Allah shower His mercy on the early Muhajir women. When the verse, *That they should draw their head-coverings over their bosoms* (24:31) was revealed, they tore up their garments to cover themselves."

Once when some women were in the company of A'isha, they mentioned the women of the Quraish and their merits. A'isha remarked, "The Quraish women were indeed good, but, by Allah, I have seen no one better than the women of the Ansar in applying the Book of Allah and believing in the Revelation. When the ayah of Surah al-Nur, '*That they should draw their head-coverings over their bosoms,*' was revealed, their men returned to their homes and recited it to their women. No sooner did the man recite it to his wife, his daughter, his sister, or any other female relative, then she tied any piece of cloth available to her, perhaps from a curtain having pictures on it (on her head), so that when they came to pray behind the Prophet (pbuh), it looked as if crows were sitting on their heads".

This was the response of the believing women to what Allah had legislated for them. They hastened to implement what He had commanded and to abandon what He had prohibited without hesitating, stopping to think about it, or waiting. They did not even delay

a day or two so that they could get a suitable, soft piece of cloth and sew it to fit their heads and cover their bosoms, rather, any cloth which was available was sufficient.

3. Kinship or blood ties are the strongest natural ties. However, a Muslim is not required to obey his parents if they ask him to believe in gods other than Allah or commit any acts which involve the disobedience of Allah. A person may in fact find himself combating his own parents or children if they actively seek to oppose or undermine that person's Islam. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, in the battles of Badr and Uhud, fathers in the Muslim army fought against sons who were in the armies of kafirs; or the son was on this side and his father was on the other side. One brother was in one army and another brother in the other army. Close relatives confronted each other and fought as if they were strangers - all for the sake of Allah.

Abdullah, son of Abdullah bin Ubayy, has presented us with a bright example in this respect. The Prophet called Abdullah, and said, "Do you know what your father said?" Abdullah asked "May my parents be a ransom for you; what did my father say?" The Prophet replied, "He said, 'If we return to Medinah [from the battle] the one with honour will throw out the one who is despised'". Abdullah then said, "O Messenger of Allah, by Allah, he told the truth. You are the one with honour, and he is the one who is despised. O Messenger of Allah, the people of Medinah know that before you came to Medinah, no one was more obedient to his father than I was. But now, if it is the pleasure of Allah and His Prophet that I cut off his head, then I shall do so". The Prophet replied, "No".

When the Muslims returned to Medinah, Abdullah stood in front of the gates with his sword drawn over his father's head, telling him, "Did you say that if we return to Medinah then the one with honour will throw out the one who is despised? By Allah, now you will know whether you have honour or Allah's Messenger! By Allah, until Allah and His Messenger give permission, you cannot enter Medina, nor will you have refuge from me!" Ibn Ubayy cried aloud and said twice, "People of Khazraj, see how my son is preventing me from entering my home!" But his son Abdullah kept repeating that unless the Prophet gave permission, he would not let him enter Medina. Hearing this noise, some people gathered round and started pleading with Abdullah, but he stood his ground.

Some people went to the Prophet and reported this incident. He told them, "Tell Abdullah to let his father enter". When Abdullah got this message, he then told his father, "Since the Prophet has given permission, you can enter now."

It was not for the sake of money or chauvinism or personal enmity that men fought against their own flesh and blood; it was for the sake of Allah and the Messenger that they had the strength and courage to sacrifice the love for their fathers, sons, brothers and whole families.

“To Allah do we belong and to Him shall be our return.”

Follow the Revelation given to you from your Lord
and follow no masters other than Him;
Little it is you remember of admonition.

How many towns have We destroyed (for their sins).
Our punishment took them on a sudden by night
or while they slept for their afternoon rest.

When (thus) Our punishment took them,
no cry did they utter but this:
"Indeed we did wrong."

Then shall We question those to whom Our Message was sent
and those by whom We sent it.

And verify We shall recount their whole story with knowledge,
for We were never absent.

The balance on that Day will be true:
those whose scale (of good) will be heavy shall prosper.

Those whose scale will be light will have squandered their souls
for they wrongfully treated Our Signs.

It is We who have placed you with authority on earth,
and provided you therein with means for the fulfilment of your life,,
small are the thanks that you give!

Surah al-Araf (7:3-10)

NOTES

1. Ahmad von Denffer (at p149-50) provides an alternative definition of a miracle:

According to Muslim scholars the following five conditions must be met before an event can be accepted as a miracle from Allah:

- a. That no one else apart from Allah the Master of the world is able to do it.
- b. That it breaks the usual norms and differs from the laws of nature (not the laws of Allah, but the way nature normally is).
- c. That it serves as proof for the truth and claim of the messenger.
- d. That it happens in accordance with the messenger's claim.
- e. That the event happens through the messenger and no one else.

2. At the yearly market of Ukaz (near Makkah), held during the holy months, poets from all tribes competed with one another in poetry. They recited their compositions in public and the greatest was given the prize of having his compositions written down and "hung" on the walls of the Ka'bah. (Haykal p601 Note 6).

3. Ibn Ishaq, in his biography of the Prophet reports (at p121-2) that.

When the fair was due, a number of Quraysh came to al-Walid b. al-Mughira, who was a man of some standing, and he addressed them in these words: 'The time of the fair has come around again and representatives of the Arabs will come to you and they will have heard about this fellow of yours, so agree upon one opinion without dispute so that none will give the lie to the other.' They replied, 'You give us your opinion about him.' He said, 'No, you speak and I will listen.' They said, 'He is a *kahin*.' [soothsayer, see n5 below]. He said, 'By God, he is not that, for he has not the unintelligent murmuring and rhymed speech of the *kahin*.' 'Then he is possessed,' they said. 'No, he is not that,' he said, 'we have seen possessed ones, and here there is no choking, spasmodic movements and whispering.' 'Then he is a poet,' they said. 'No, he is no poet, for we know poetry in all its forms and metres.' 'Then he is a sorcerer.' 'No, we have seen sorcerers and their sorcery, and here is no spitting and no knots.' 'Then what are we to say, O Abu Abdu Shams?' they asked. He replied, 'By God, his speech is sweet, his root is a palm-tree whose branches are fruitful, and everything you have said would be known to be false. The nearest thing to the truth is your saying that he is a sorcerer, who has brought a message by which he separates a man from his father, or from his brother, or from his wife, or from his family.'

At this point they left him, and began to sit on the paths which men take when they come to the fair. They warned everyone who passed them about Muhammad's doings.

See also, Ibn Ishaq pp 121-2, 130-1, 135-6, and p161. For physical persecution of the Muslims see p141 and p145. At p 142, Ibn Ishaq also points out that some of these people would go out by night to secretly listen to Muhammad as he was praying in his house. Everyone of them chose a place to sit where he could listen, and none knew where his fellow was sitting. So they passed the night listening to him, until as the dawn rose, they dispersed.

4. For example:

Ibn Ishaq reports (at p143) that Muhammad recited the Qur'an to the Quraysh and called them to Allah but:

"they said in mockery, 'Our hearts are veiled, we do not understand what you say. There is a load in our ears so that we cannot hear what you say, and a curtain divides us from you, so follow your own path and we will follow ours, we do not understand anything you say.' Then God revealed, 'And when you read the Qur'an We put between you and those who do not believe in the last day a hidden veil,' [17:47] as far as the words 'and when you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'an they turn their backs in aversion'..."

On another occasion, Ibn Ishaq (at p192) reports that the Prophet went to the leaders of the tribe of Thaqif for their help:

"The apostle sat with them and invited them to accept Islam and asked them to help him against his opponents at home. One of them swore that he would tear up the covering of the Ka'ba if God had sent him. The other said 'Could not God have found someone better than you to send?' The third said, 'By God, don't let me ever speak to you. If you are an apostle from God as you say you are, you are far too important for me to reply to, and if you are lying against God it is not right that I should speak to you!' So the apostle got up and went..."

Finally, some sceptics made many unnecessary demands of the Prophet. For example, one said:

'If you are an apostle from God as you say, then ask God to speak to us so that we may hear His voice.' So God revealed concerning that: 'And those who do not know say, Why does God not speak to us or a sign come to us? Those who were before them said the same. Their minds are just the same. We have made the signs clear to a people who are sure.' (Ibn Ishaq, p258)

5. The soothsayer (*kahin*) was a kind of spirit medium in pre-Islamic times, who was consulted on matters concerning the future as well as for the resolution of problems concerning the past. His oracular pronouncements were often expressed in rhythmic, rhymed, or assonant prose (*saj*), which is distinct from poetry and ordinary prose. (Tabari, p48 footnote 12).

6. For example, the booklet *Is the Bible History or Myth?* published by Fish Enterprises, the vocational training branch of Christian Corps, a missionary training school, states (at p9-10) with regard to the Qur'an:

... Where does Mohammed get this information? Obviously, since he calls mankind back to the religion of Abraham, he was able to get much of it from the original information that he read in the Old Testament.

The rest of it, however, he derived from subjective, mystical experiences or "revelations." Is there any way to confirm that these subjective insights actually came from the Creator? There is just no way to get inside a man's mind and

prove that the ideas existing there are from an external source rather than from his own imagination. In other words, Mohammed's ideas may exist simply in his own mind - we have no way of corroborating: we are at the mere of one man's subjective experiences.

Needles to say, all such false charges will be answered.

7. For contradictions between the Qur'an and the Bible see, for example, Kairanvi at p40-61 (and don't forget the contradictions within the Bible itself!).

8. For example, Ibn Ishaq states:

It was the Jewish rabbis who used to annoy the apostle with questions and introduce confusion, so as to confound the truth with falsity (p239).

Among those people concerning whom the Qur'an came down, especially the rabbis and unbelieving Jews who used to ask him questions and annoy him in confusing truth with falsehood ... was Abu Yasir b. Akhtab ... (p256).

For further details see Ibn Ishaq pp239, 255, 256, 257, 259 and 264, and also Haykal at pp 190-195.

9. Commenting on this verse (33:40) Muhammad Asad states:

I.e., the last of the prophets, just as a seal (*khatam*) marks the end of a document; apart from this, the term *khatam* is also synonymous with *khitam* the "end" or "conclusion" of a thing: from which it follows that the message revealed through Muhammad - the Qur'an - must be regarded as the culmination and the end of all prophetic revelation.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali states:

When a document is sealed, it is complete, and there can be no further addition. The Holy Prophet Muhammad closed the long line of Messengers. Allah's teaching is and will always be continuous, but there has been and will be no Prophet after Muhammad.

The Holy Prophet himself has said: There will be no prophet after me. On another occasion he said:

My relation to the (long chain of) Prophets can be understood by the parable of a palace: the palace was most beautifully built. Everything was complete therein except the place for one brick. I have filled in that place and now the castle has been completed.

(Bukhari and Muslim, cited in a footnote in Maududi (1980))

Finally, in his Last Sermon on Mount Arafat, the Prophet Muhammad said:

O People, no Prophet or Apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born.

10. Regarding science itself; it is essential to gain an understanding of what is meant by this term. Thus the scientific method is a specific method in research used to find the reality of something by performing experiments on that thing, or by making careful observations of a specific reality, and it is only employed in research on material things. It cannot be employed in the domain of ideas and therefore is particular to the experimental subjects. It depends on subjecting matter to conditions and environments other than its natural conditions, and then comparing the natural and the subjecting conditions. By this process a material reality is deduced as is the case in laboratories. The result that the researcher obtains by the scientific method is not absolute, rather it is hypothetical and carries an element of doubt and this chance of being wrong is a principle amongst the principles of the scientific method as laid down in scientific research. Nevertheless, at the same time certain factual information can be amassed by repetitive observation or experimentation and this is not subject to change or revision. Thus for example one would not now dare to suggest that the sun revolves around the earth due to the observed pattern of night and day because the reality that the earth orbits the sun and itself revolves on its own axis has been directly observed from a suitable observation point, i.e., from space. This fact is not subject to revision or change. What instead tends to happen in the realm of science is that theories, which are themselves based on observations, experimentation or facts, are subject to change and revision - and sometimes startling changes at that. Therefore taking these important factors into consideration a distinction has been made here between the verses in the Qur'an which accord with scientific **facts** (observations) not open to revision and those verses which appear to agree with certain current scientific **theories**, but which are clearly very much open to revision. In the final analysis though, one must jettison scientific theory in favour of Qur'anic verse, since the latter is based on certain fundamental premises which have remained unchanged throughout the history of human observation whilst the nature of the former is one of constant revision, readjustment and change due to the inclusion of new hitherto unknown factors.

One last point to note about science: Science simply cannot (by its legitimate methods) adjudicate the issue of God. It cannot either affirm or deny the existence of God. This question can only be resolved in the affirmative by using the intellect and intellectual/logical deductions and arguments, which themselves depend on certain undeniable facts and observations - better known as axioms.

The frontiers of science begin and end with the material reality - matter. Science cannot therefore admit of something beyond matter or the material reality since this is beyond its scope. Because science cannot comment on things beyond man, life and the universe, its exclusive use in certain circumstances inevitably gives rise to all kinds of faults and illogical answers (i.e., the theory of evolution).

(S. Connolly, letter to and conversation with the Author.)

11. The Moon does complete its orbit around the Earth in 29½ days. However, it does not revolve on its own axis because it always faces the Earth from one side continuously (S. Connolly).

12. The Qur'an follows the order of the recitation of the Prophet Muhammad in Ramadhan. There are three *ahadith* in Bukhari, informing us that the Angel Gabriel used to recite the Qur'an with the Prophet once a year, but he recited it twice with him in the year he died. See Bukhari Vol.6 No.520 and also Nos.518, 519.

13. The translation of the meaning of this section of Revelation (Surah al-Baqara, 2:135-141) is as follows:

(135) And they say, "Be Jews" -or, "Christians" - "and you will be rightly guided." Say "Nay, the *millah* (creed) of Abraham, the *hanif*, and he was not of the *mushrikeen* (those who ascribe divinity to anything beside Allah).

(136) Say, "We believe in Allah and in that which is revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes (i.e., their descendants), and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to all Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and it is to Him that we have surrendered."

(137) And if they believe in the way you believe, they will be rightly guided; but if they turn away it is they who are deeply in the wrong, and Allah will suffice you against them. And He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

(138) Colour is from Allah! And who could give a better colour than Allah? And we worship Him.

(139) Say, "Do you dispute with us about Allah? He is our Lord and your Lord - and we are accountable for our deeds and you for yours; and we look to Him alone.

(140) "Or do you say that Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes were Jews or Christians?" Say, "Do you know better than Allah? And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony from Allah? And Allah is not unaware of what you do.

(141) "Those are a people who have passed away. They shall have what they earned and you what you have earned; and you will not be asked about what they used to do."

Note re: Hanif and colour. According to Asad (p28), "The expression *hanif* derived from the verb *hanafa*, which literally means "he inclined [towards a right state or tendency]"... Already in pre-Islamic times, this term had a definitely monotheistic connotation, and was used to describe a man who turned away from sin and worldliness and from all dubious beliefs, especially idol-worship."

Regarding the word *sibghah* translated as colour in v.138, Abdullah Yusuf Ali states (p56) that "the root meaning implies a dye or colour; apparently the Arab Christians mixed a dye or colour in the baptismal water, signifying that the baptized person got a new colour in life."

14. A Muslim who commits a *haram* (forbidden) action is known as a *Fasiq* (transgressor); the one who does not carry out the *fard* (obligatory) action is referred to as *Assee*; and the Muslim who both does the *haram* actions and avoids the *fard* actions is called a *Fa'jar*.

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As for those who disbelieve
and hinder (others) from the Path of Allah-
their (good) deeds will He let go to waste;

But those who believe and do righteous deeds,
and believe in what has been sent down to Muhammad
- for it is the Truth from their Lord -
He will rid them of their bad deeds
and set their hearts at rest.

This, because those who disbelieve follow falsehood,
whereas those who believe follow the Truth from their Lord.
Thus does Allah set forth for mankind
their lessons by similitudes.

Surah Muhammad (47:1-3)